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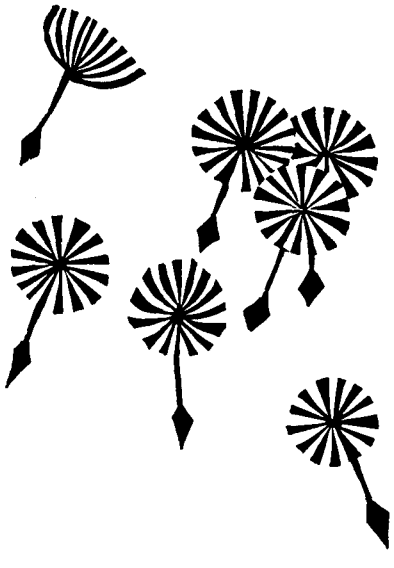

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YUPPIE TIME

THEY SAY THE YUPPIES are dying; some say dead. Dead without issue is what one message said. The messenger, of course, was said to lie. Myself I think . . . — well, what would Smith have thought, devoted as he was to eclectic detachment? Could he stand back, in the name of objectivity, let others see and say? or would he have combatted creeping rigidity, exposed the threat in a world where choice is anathema, profit the arbiter of moral decision, and fad the designer of judgment?

Politics, criticism, writing: all are involved. Politically, it seems, we live in a system increasingly unfamiliar with the principles that underpin it. We know the phrases — "representative government," "the will of the people," and all the rest — but more and more these translate in practice into government by pressure group and poll, where the organized and the uninformed insist they are the "representative" will. All other points of view, and openness to other points of view, are disallowed — dismissed, interestingly, as "special pleading." It's like living with Louky Bersianik's Euguelionne, in a photographic negative; all the words have taken on opposite meanings. Pollsters use them; poll-readers believe them. But they mean only their instant meanings, digital phrases for "this point in time."

The familiar words are those that make people cynical about politics and advertising together, as though they were enterprises of the same order: "progress," "tough," "reality" — they're bandied about with the same inconsequentiality as the sales-manager's "easy," "new," and "free." But what do they *mean*? Often not what they seem to say, leaving open the doors of suspicion. When "tough" decisions are recurrently those that hurt the old, the poor, the female, and the young, doesn't it really mean "easy"? When manufacturers reissue war toys under Old Testament and Fantasy names, have they stopped being war toys? In their new form are they giving credence to violence in our society? Do we accept unthinkingly whatever is implied by the phrase "safe weapons"? One of the effective strategies in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is to present this process of denaturing words as one of the techniques of desensitizing people to the threat of autocracy. "Aunts," "Angels," "Guardians," "Eyes" — in the controlled world Atwood writes about, these terms have lost in practice whatever nurturing connotations they once had, except that they're used by the agents in power to create the illusion that restrictive violence is the same as nurturing, and that one form of authority alone is worthy of support.

What does this have to do with "representatives"? It has to do with how we understand the principles that shape the systems we live by. Traditionally, "Representative" members in a parliamentary system were not in principle sent off just to tabulate the current prejudices back home and vote mechanically. Rather, they were to take on the "representative" responsibility of finding out what the people at home did not have the time to find out, to enquire into what is involved in any given issue, to vote intelligently, far-sightedly, therefore sometimes unpopularly, in the light of information. Wishful thinking? Maybe. (Or maybe cynicism is just idealism-with-walls.) At any time, the representative system is one open to abuse, both from within and from without. Legislatures sometimes become arenas for name-calling more than centres for thoughtful individual debate. But there is also a tyranny in poll-taking — in *identifying* a momentary wave of opinion with "the will of the people" or with public policy — that is as dangerous as any tyranny of one.

Parliamentary rule does not mean that people shouldn't be watchful, involved in political judgment and able to tell their representatives what they think. Nor does debate guarantee accuracy. But government-by-poll-and-publicity-agent is not preferable to government-by-anonymity; it's just a different version of authority. It is government by fad and fear, one playing in a closed system, for the appearance of safety, running to keep up with this instant "now" (whatever impulse may momentarily govern it) and therefore unable to rise above the "me"-generation's "mine"-field. As Travis Lane writes,

> In quarantine in castle rooms the poets
> sit crosslegged and chat. . . .
> the castle poets comb
> the skies for lust and trickery. Who is
> the latest star in the polls? 'Fly, fly
> the plague.'
>
> ("The Past is Never Irrelevant")

To put this point in a way that reflects more directly on critical method, it's an issue that discriminates between thoughtful argument and easy system, between discursive enquiry and presumptive closure. Like the legislature afraid of thinking for itself, the critic who is more intent on dismissing someone else than suggesting an alternative constructive way to read is acting insecurely. Plainly, alternatives are problematic. The "me"-critic dislikes them: wants to be seen to be clever, but is afraid of being wrong — therefore finds others "wrong" first. "Right," "wrong": guiding the "me"-critic's fear is this curious belief in absolutes of interpretation — absolutes that are somehow intrinsically moral. Such absolutes confirm the ego, because (allowing only two options) they separate the one set of judgments (neatly enclosed, pronounced "right") from all others. The

plurality of the others does not enter the argument: "others" (all being "not the one") are uniformly declared to belong to the simple category "wrong." Wickedness is thus made to live in critical procedure, and equated with those "special interest" groups called "not us." "Us," meanwhile, virtuously enclosed by system, is called "representative," confirmed by numbers (the result seen to be fixed, not susceptible to change), and pronounced "truth." Oddly, it seems to need the ratification of others to *be* "true" in these terms. It's not an alternative position; it's a group frame of mind, one that reads the world by yuppie time.

It's unfair, of course, to blame one generation for faddish absolutism; that's not the point here. "To be concerned with moral predicaments at all," writes David Malouf in *12 Edmonstone Street*, "is an indulgence, if all it involves is the desire to be in the right." The point is that no lock-step system of interpretation has yet proved an adequate measure of human behaviour and aspiration. The Yuppie clockface with digital exactitude does not tell time "righter" than the approximate durations other people live with ("going on noon," "just past three," "in a while," "later"); if anything it simply codifies a moment's history already finished, defines an illusion of accuracy ("truth") in a (still continuing) age of pulse and motion. Security is confirmed by "everybody doing it." Except the others — who don't, of course, count.

I was reading, some months ago, Michael Wilding's 1974 novel *Living Together*, which is a tidy, caustic vignette of the limits of living by fads. Joyously delivering its double-entendres as though they were revolutionary salvos, the novel ends up neatly espousing a set of such ordinary, traditional social values that it's ultimately hard to decide whether one ox is being gored, or two. Probably it's two, but for the moment that's a side issue. The delight of the novel lies in its asides:

> He feared isolation now, feared especially being left behind. He waited carefully to find the new idioms before trusting himself to these new experiences.

Inside the system, it's the code that matters: not what one means, but how one says.

There's a widespread assumption in literary criticism that there exists a connection between meaning and saying, though it doesn't always prove a workable premise. Some writers write in order deliberately to refuse or subvert "meaning," and there are also those for whom meaning is an accident of speech more than an act of mind. Sometimes, given the way our training shapes our expectations, it's not always easy to tell the difference. People do speak and write in codes, not always aware of their ramifications. When the code becomes a substitute for thought, however, then it also turns into a revelation of the fear of being seen not to be doing and saying whatever is in fashion. If that happens to literature and criticism, everyone's in trouble.

In Wilding, such an attitude has unwitting political and cultural overtones:

> "You've got an extraordinary collection of records," she said; not excitedly.
>
> "Probably," Paul said. Like a nation that has suffered sudden bouts of westernization and been forgotten in between, there was no continuity between the separate positions. "It's a sort of colonial culture," he said.

But Paul's apology is all cultural cringe: a defensive tic before an expected put-down. The fad espouses "system" after all, eschews plurality. For plurality (verbally derided here as "colonial") implicitly denies the exclusive validity of single systems. Hence while the apology presumes to identify system and nationhood with sophistication, the only kind of nationhood a "single system" can equate with is the authoritarian variety, one buttressed by an arrogation of "truth" and at the same time burdened by its blind, passive faith in a society "purified" of those elements that differ from a single defined norm. Some purity; some sophistication.

Where, in such a system, is there room for thought, or thoughtfulness? Back to Wilding once more:

> Within the cubbyhole he had arranged for himself he could place his box of filing cards. . . . He dreamed of his ideal information storage system, the key to all mythology on data cards. Wand-like he would stick in the slender rod and all the items on a chosen topic would come out with it. The automation of the punched card.

The passage is already out-of-date, 1974 being so long ago in computer time. The cabined, cubbyhole dream that Wilding describes is not of information but of exactness, the desperate need to fix by number, to find security in data, which can supplant the ability to deal thoughtfully and creatively with the inevitable inexactnesses of choice.

Yet data, of all things, is perhaps most insecure, a sign of likelihood at best, more often a code fixed by the expectations of the data-gatherer. ("Representative" and "mean" do not equate.) The "uncertainty principle" beloved of physicists is not, moreover, as it is often taken to be, an excuse for not knowing; it's a way of recognizing that light can function both as wave (motion) and particle (in a fixed moment), but that we cannot measure *at once* both the exactness of position and the speed of movement. We can measure only what we look for. But looking for one does not invalidate the other; it is a way of increasing options rather than digitally fixing them. Security doesn't rest, therefore, in polls; it lies in the knowledge that the language people bring to measurement or representation resists enclosure. And dismissal. Reading the workings of word and world is an informed gesture of creative interpretation, a thoughtful impulse, an exchange of ideas. It's a question of talking, in different ways, to tell the times.

W.N.

SOUTHEASTERLY

Andrew Wreggitt

for Randy Morrison

i

There are days I wake up,
worried hands of rain
against the window,
a southeast gale
blowing in from the strait

Each moment
moves into the room,
tangles
in the grey light
Insistent

I cannot stop thinking about Randy Morrison
Storm force winds,
has skipper mad as Ahab,
pulling up halibut skates
in the mouth of a gale
White needles of rain,
the swell breaking across the boat
until finally she lists over drunkenly,
both of them pitched into the sea
A single moment, grasped
like a lungful of air,
the skipper without a survival suit

Randy says
"You're a dead man. I'm sorry.
Goodbye."

ii

Southeasterlies are the worst
They bring in the rollers
through Hecate Strait
So shallow
the sea stands up on its back legs
like a bear
and swats you down

Hecate, the goddess with the bad temper

iii

Seventeen hours he drifted
the roller coaster sea,
eyes swollen shut by salt
Fifty miles from land
Alone, blind,
his body numb with cold,
tossed between walls of water

What is a moment to him?
What tick or measure
in the closed room of his mind?

iv

The skipper needed a good season,
his last chance
The hold spilling with halibut,
he wouldn't give her up

"What a sight he was
The rudder cables broken,
the cabin full of water,
waves breaking across the back of the boat
I'm yelling at him
to put on his survival suit

And there he is
up on the bow
nailing plywood across the broken
windows of the cabin
Calm, nails in his mouth
like a carpenter
like Jesus

Maybe he thought
he could just get out
and walk back"

v

There are days when the grey light of this room
urges me,
when the moments want to jump out of clocks
and exhort
like hordes of angry bees
They want to be an hour
or a century
They want to grow up and become responsible

For Randy Morrison, for the skipper,
his boat crammed with halibut,
still pulling up lines to fill
the bottomless numbers, impossible economics

The moments burst into the room
they want to make sense
they want to get organized

For Randy, seventeen hours in the water,
they want to sing with all their teeth
fiercely against the cold, the rain,
they want to hold him above the waves,
lift the coins of flesh from his eyes

They want to be survival, hot coffee, hope

vi

In the last hours
he saw a boat
through his shut eyelids
A wooden row-boat,
some men he didn't recognize
urging him
to reach out
When he did
his arms passed
through the wood
The men kept gesturing
but he knew
he was already dead

An hour before the helicopter
plucked him
like a seed
from the ten meter swell
and brought him
back to life

vii

There are days I wake up
to southeast gales
urging
more better stronger

will

D. C. SCOTT'S "THE HEIGHT OF LAND" & THE GREATER ROMANTIC LYRIC

Tracy Ware

> That very day,
> From a bare ridge we also first beheld
> Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
> To have a soulless image on the eye
> That had usurped upon a living thought
> That never more could be.
>
> — *The Prelude* (1850), VI, 523-28

> Those lines of Wordsworth embody a common experience. By the force of imagination we form ideas of the great natural scenery of the earth, which are usually disappointed when we stand face to face with the wonder.... Man is anxious to be carried away and awed by something outside himself,... but when he confronts the fact he finds it perfectly natural, and that he was greater than it after all.... But I find that, as a matter of course and by some generic law, the imaginative idea resumes its place, and is if anything heightened by remembrance.
>
> — Duncan Campbell Scott

EVEN THOSE SCOTT CRITICS who agree on almost nothing else agree on the importance, though not on the meaning, of "The Height of Land": for W. J. Keith, it is "surely a seminal poem for the study of D. C. Scott"; for Robin Mathews, it is "one of the great poems of the last hundred years"; for Catherine E. Kelly, it is Scott's "major poem."[1] Since Scott's place in the larger canon of Canadian literature is fairly secure, the paucity of criticism on the poem is surprising. Consider Stan Dragland's 1974 collection of Scott criticism: the longest discussions of "The Height of Land," by E. K. Brown and G. Ross Roy, are less than three pages long. When we notice that six of the eleven essays in this collection are simply entitled "Duncan Campbell Scott," and that two others bear the similarly unrevealing title "The Poetry of Duncan

Campbell Scott," we begin to wonder how closely Scott's poems have been read. We may be additionally disturbed by Dragland's statement that Gary Geddes' 1968 article was "the first to acknowledge any tradition of Scott criticism."[2] In this paper, I offer a close reading of "The Height of Land" in the belief that its peculiar complexities have sometimes been obscured by the distant perspectives from which it is viewed, and in the further belief that Canadian literary history is too often a good plot with few important incidents. As Desmond Pacey wrote thirty-five years ago, "close line-by-line analyses . . . have been far too rare in our critical history."[3] Although there is little close analysis, there have been some suggestive comments on "The Height of Land," and these comments will also be examined in this paper; as Pacey reminds us, "the play of ideas between . . . critics concerned with the same author is mutually stimulating."

"The Height of Land" calls into question many aspects of the received view of Confederation poetry, particularly the tendency to perceive Wordsworth's influence as responsible for an overemphasis on the benignity of nature. Though Scott's poem bears a resemblance to "the greater Romantic lyric," it fails to achieve the reconciliation of subject and object, of thought and nature, that M. H. Abrams regards as integral to this genre. Now to read this poem as an instance of the dimunition of idealism is not necessarily to adopt a Whiggish view of literary history, according to which, in Paul de Man's ironic summary, Romanticism "represents, so to speak, the point of maximum delusion in our recent past, whereas the nineteenth and twentieth centuries represent a gradual emerging from this aberration. . . ."[4] In Canada, such a view is represented in Margaret Atwood's claim that in Lampman and Scott we see "the gradual emergence of a language appropriate to its objects," and that this development is fulfilled in A. J. M. Smith's "The Lonely Land."[5] In "The Height of Land" and elsewhere, Scott takes pains to remind us that evolution and progress, like language and nature, are distinct entities. It could even be argued, with the aid of de Man and others, that Scott's poem bears the same relation to Abrams' concept of the greater Romantic lyric as the most authentic Romantic poems.

CONFRONTED WITH A PROBLEM of nomenclature for what he regards as "a distinctive and widely practiced variety of the longer Romantic lyric," Abrams adopts the following solution: "I shall call this poetic type 'the greater Romantic lyric,' intending to suggest, not that it is a higher achievement than other Romantic lyrics, but that it displaced what neo-classical critics had called 'the greater ode' . . . as the favoured form for the long lyric poem."[6] After stressing the importance of the tradition of topographical poetry in the lineage of the greater Romantic lyric, Abrams establishes William Bowles as a transitional

poet: instead of the public voice, "allegoric action," and "Pindaric artifice" of previous topographical poems,

> Bowles's sonnets opened out to Coleridge the possibilities in the quite ordinary circumstances of a private person in a specific time and place whose meditation, credibly stimulated by the setting, is grounded in his particular character, follows the various and seemingly random flow of the living consciousness, and is conducted in the intimate yet adaptive voice of the interior monologue.
>
> (Abrams, p. 543)

As the emphases on a "particular character" and a "living consciousness" indicate, Bowles increased the psychological element in topographical poetry. Abrams argues that Bowles' brief influence on Coleridge helped the latter produce the poems of 1796-97, including "The Eolian Harp," the poem that "established the persona, idiom, materials, and ordonnance of the greater Romantic lyric" (Abrams, p. 543). Coleridge, who was eventually to maintain that Bowles "has no native Passion, because he is not a Thinker" (cited in Abrams, p. 549), sought to combine the techniques of Bowles' sonnets with his own philosophical interests. Coleridge achieved that combination in the poems of 1796-97, in which "we can observe him in the process of converting the conjunction of parts, in which nature stays on one side and thought on the other, into the Romantic interfusion of subject and object" (Abrams, p. 550). For Abrams, this "interfusion" or "coalescence" of subject and object is central to Romanticism: "The best Romantic meditations on a landscape, following Coleridge's examples, all manifest a transaction between subject and object in which the thought incorporates and makes explicit what was already implicit in the outer scene" (Abrams, p. 551).

By way of defining the greater Romantic lyric, and of indicating its relevance to Confederation poetry, I shall briefly discuss Lampman's "Among the Timothy." According to Abrams, the speaker of the greater Romantic lyric "begins with a description of the landscape" (Abrams, p. 527). Lampman's speaker begins by imagining the actions of a mower who had been there before him, and then by describing the landscape:

> And here among the scented swathes that gleam,
> Mixed with dead daisies, it is sweet to lie
> And watch the grass and the few-clouded sky,
> Nor think but only dream.[7]

Abrams notes that the initial description quickly and imperceptibly modulates into meditation: "an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely intervolved with the outer scene" (Abrams, p. 527). The most significant aspect of the landscape in "Among the Timothy" is the effect of the breezes. As

D. M. R. Bentley argues, the fifth and central stanza of the poem provides the transition to insight from the "careless" and "potentially irresponsible" fancies of the previous stanza. For Bentley, the breezes, "blithe as they are blind" (Lampman, l. 42), are "purposeless, unobservant, annoying, . . . sensual and rambling."[8] The breezes "scarcely heed" the details of the landscape; the speaker does:

> And scarcely heed the daisies that, endowed
> With stems so short they cannot see, up-bear
> Their innocent sweet eyes distressed, and stare
> Like children in a crowd. (Lampman, ll. 47-50)

The next stanza describes the enlivening effect of the breezes on a "pale poplar" (Lampman, l. 52), which, as Bentley also argues, "demands to be seen in a manner akin to Coleridge's Aeolian harp as emblematic of a poetic imagination activated by the energies . . . of external nature."[9] At the imaginative height of the greater Romantic lyric, Abrams argues, the speaker "achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves an emotional problem" (Abrams, p. 528). The speaker in "Among the Timothy" purges his depression by coming to a sympathetic identification with nature. He is thus enabled to leave "The crossing pathways of unbournèd thought" (Lampman, l. 34) and gain the "sweet unrest" (Lampman, l. 83) in his concluding epiphany. The poem ends with an account of how "flower and blade, and every cranny brown," and the speaker are "soaked" with the illuminating and unifying sun (Lampman, ll. 89-90). Like other greater Romantic lyrics, "Among the Timothy" "rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation" (Abrams, p. 528).

To read "Among the Timothy" as a greater Romantic lyric does not resolve all the issues that the poem raises. In the first place, one is taken aback by the presence of an allegorical mower and an "emblematic" poplar in a "symbolic" landscape. In the second place, one may doubt that all of the details of the speaker's meditation are "already implicit in the outer scene" (Abrams, p. 551). Nonetheless, an awareness of genre provides a means of relating the poem to its Romantic antecedents. Furthermore, Abrams' concept of nature poetry is close to that held by Duncan Campbell Scott. "There are but few of Lampman's poems," Scott argues in "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," "that do not lead from nature by a very short path to human life."[10] Early in his career, in a letter to the anthologist J. E. Wetherell, he implies that in his own poetry the path between nature and human life is equally short: "It is inevitable that we should deal with nature and somewhat largely but I think that it will be found that much of this work rises from and returns again to man and does not exist from and by itself."[11] Finally, in an often-cited passage from his long introduction to Lampman's *Lyrics of Earth*, Scott argues that a "coalescence of subject and

object" is integral to all nature poetry: "Amiel said 'A landscape is a state of the soul,' and in the apprehension of some such truth lies the sole excuse for poetry in which nature is described; it is only tolerable if it brings with the vision of the world some harmony of the spirit."[12] It should not be surprising if such ideals attracted Scott to the greater Romantic lyric.

"THE HEIGHT OF LAND," written in 1915, is set in the region Scott visited in 1905 and 1906 as a Commissioner for the negotiation of Treaty 9. The poem begins calmly enough: after locating the setting between the Hudson Bay and Lake Superior watersheds, then describing the fading campfire sparks, the speaker gives the following account of his moment of apparent illumination: "Here there is peace in the lofty air, / And Something comes by flashes / Deeper than peace."[13] As in Abrams' paradigmatic greater Romantic lyric, the speaker appears ready to move from description into a related meditation; in Geddes' precise account of the poem's opening, "nature becomes an incentive to reminiscence and reflection."[14] There is even a general resemblance between Scott's sparks, which "play / At being moths, and flutter away / To fall in the dark and die as ashes" (Scott, ll. 13-15), and the "stranger" that "flutters" playfully on the grate in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight." There are some important differences between that Romantic lyric and "The Height of Land," however, as the reader begins to realize when the speaker's peaceful intuition does not immediately lead into a meditation. Instead, he returns to description, this time of the stars, then turns to memory. For over half of the poem the speaker vacillates between the past (ll. 25-48) and the present (ll. 49-59), between description and meditation (ll. 60-92), finally moving from the present into an extended memory (ll. 93-113), which is followed by one more return to the present landscape (ll. 114-19), and then by the meditation that concludes the poem. In the first half of the poem, the use of rhyme is fitful, and the verse paragraphs and individual lines vary in length; in the last half, blank verse is used. "The Height of Land" does not conform to the "out-in-out" movement of Abrams' paradigm (Abrams, p. 528), and it does not conform to the "description-vision-evaluation" movement of George Bornstein's adaptation of that paradigm.[15] The effect of the speaker's vacillations to and from the present is to foreground his hesitancy, and thus to heighten the uncertainty of his assertions.

The melancholy mood of "The Height of Land" indicates Scott's reluctance to accept the implications of his desultory meditation. This mood is well established in the opening section, when the speaker hears

> the long Ojibwa cadence
> In which Potàn the Wise

Declares the ills of life
And Chees-que-ne-ne makes a mournful sound
Of acquiescence. (Scott, ll. 7-11)

If this were not enough, the speaker finds the sound of the wind even "wearier" (Scott, l. 6) than the Indians' sounds. That the Indians then fall asleep and disappear from the poem implies that the guidance Scott sought from them was of a geographical rather than a philosophical nature.[16] Later, the speaker relates his melancholia to his isolation: in one direction is the "lonely north . . . Glimmering all night / In the cold arctic light" (Scott, ll. 42-45); in the other is the "crowded southern land / With all the welter of the lives of men" (Scott, ll. 47-48). Although he insists that he has "peace" on the height of land (Scott, l. 49), such peace proves even more transient than his necessarily brief stay in this site in the wilderness. His situation reminds one of Arnold's Empedocles: "With men thou canst not live, / Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine; / And being lonely thou art miserable. . . ."[17]

In his search for a way out of his plight, the speaker takes a number of tacks. At the end of the poem's first verse paragraph, he looks for an harmonious correspondence between the cosmic and the natural: "The spruces have retired a little space / And left a field of sky in violet shadow / With stars like marigolds in a water-meadow" (Scott, ll. 19-21). The flower-star analogy is a frequent component of the argument from design, as in Shelley's *The Sensitive Plant*, where, in Earl R. Wasserman's words, the analogy "takes on ontological meaning and establishes a relationship between earth and heaven."[18] Scott's speaker, however, is unable to maintain the sense of a benevolent and ordered universe. As the poem develops, his Huxleyan sense of the divorce between the ethical and the cosmic becomes stronger. The beginning of "The Height of Land" seems to move in the direction of *The Sensitive Plant*, but by the ending the stars are no longer symbols of permanence:

How strange the stars have grown;
The presage of extinction glows on their crests
And they are beautied with impermanence;
They shall be after the race of men
And mourn for them who snared their fiery pinions,
Entangled in the meshes of bright words. (Scott, ll. 114-19)

Both human life and the evolving universe are mutable, though in varying degrees. The stars may survive "the race of men," but not their own inevitable "extinction." The speaker is able to recognize that impermanence may be a source of beauty, but the "pathetic fallacy" in the statement that the stars will "mourn for" humanity indicates his inability to dissociate impermanence from a sense of loss. Equally disturbing is his realization of the limitations of language. Since it is impossible to decide whether it is the poet or the stars that are "En-

tangled in the meshes of bright words," this passage is an instance of those limitations. In either case, Scott suggests that the relation between language and nature is problematic.

As a consequence of his ambivalent attitude towards beauty and impermanence, the speaker is aware of both the appeal and the terror of nature. His first impulse is to appreciate the austere beauty of the North:

> On a wide blueberry plain
> Brushed with the shimmer of a bluebird's wing;
> A rocky islet followed
> With one lone poplar and a single nest
> Of white-throat-sparrows that took no rest
> But sang in dreams or woke to sing. (Scott, ll. 34-39)

Later in the poem, "the pungent fume / Of charred earth" (Scott, ll. 96-97) causes the speaker to remember another and more terrifying landscape:

> The last weird lakelet foul with weedy growths
> And slimy viscid things the spirit loathes,
> Skin of vile water over viler mud
> Where the paddle stirred unutterable stenches,
> And the canoes seemed heavy with fear,
> Not to be urged toward the fatal shore
> Where a bush fire, smouldering, with sudden roar
> Leaped on a cedar and smothered it with light
> And terror. (Scott, ll. 100-08)

Scott's subsequent allusion, in the phrase "Eft-minded things" (Scott, l. 121), to Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos," implies that he accepts Browning's critique of natural theology. Caliban, it will be recalled, feels the "eft-things course" about his spine before he describes the deformed God that he has created in his own image.[19] The point here is not that the Canadian wilderness is inimical to the religious or Romantic sensibility, but only that it is incompatible with naïve ideals of primitivism and progress. From Charles Sangster to Rudy Wiebe, there have been many religious responses to the sublimity of the Canadian wilderness, but "The Height of Land" is not one of them.

The various citations from Scott's criticism about the psychological significance of nature poetry are not corroborated by a close reading of "The Height of Land." Geddes notes that "although the landscape is technically a state of soul, the image of the predatory bush-fire seems rather to have been dragged up involuntarily from the poet's subconscious than to have resulted from a conscious search for secondary correspondences."[20] Scott's belief that nature poetry "is only tolerable if it brings with the vision of the world some harmony of the spirit" does not explain his procedure in "The Height of Land." It is difficult to maintain that Scott here makes "explicit what was already implicit in the outer scene"

(Abrams, p. 551). There are too many "outer scenes" in the poem, and they cannot be resolved into one landscape. The best one can do — and it is not much — is to argue that the duality of nature corresponds to a similar duality in man, who is the author of both "noble deeds" (Scott, l. 83) and of the "welter" of civilization (Scott, l. 48). D. G. Jones offers the following psychological interpretation of Scott:

> Certainly Scott is aware of the darkness as well as the glory, of the potential violence as well as the sweetness of nature's ferocious energy, of the difficulty of comprehending such a world as Jehovah unfolds before Job and, more especially, of man's frequent failure to comprehend such a world so that its vitality may flow harmoniously into the forms of human life.[21]

Although one can sympathize with Jones' and others' attempts to make Scott into a literary height of land between the lonely nineteenth century and the welter of the contemporary world, in this poem there is no hope that nature's vitality can "flow harmoniously into the forms of human life," no suggestion that man's failure to comprehend can be remedied, and little resemblance to Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*. Because in "The Height of Land" the significance of nature resides in its distance from humanity, the poem does not support Jones' thesis that Scott, like Lampman, advised his readers "to escape from the garrison" in order to discover "a more vital community, a larger and more inclusive view" in the wilderness.

Between the retrospective passages on the beauty and terror of nature comes the speaker's description of his present mood:

> But here is peace, and again
> That Something comes by flashes
> Deeper than peace — a spell
> Golden and inappellable
> That gives the inarticulate part
> Of our strange being one moment of release. . . . (Scott, ll. 49-54)

K. P. Stich argues that Scott's "spell" is "inappellable" in two senses: "on the one hand, the spell . . . is inappellable in the sense of unnameable and reflects something divine; on the other hand, the spell is inappellable and evokes fate or an ultimate prison from which the poet's words cannot release him."[22] Somewhat surprisingly, the *OED* supports only the second of these interpretations: there "inappellable" is defined as meaning "That cannot be appealed against; from which there is no appeal." "Inappellable" is actually synonymous with "inappealable," which the *OED* regards as obsolete. But even if Stich's argument is accepted, it is clear that a synthesis of nature and the "spell" is not possible, and thus the landscape never does become a symbolic one. For de Man, the Coleridgean organic symbol is based on "an illusory identification with the non-self"; in Wordsworth's poetry, de Man argues, the temptation to identify with

nature is resisted, and that resistance leads "to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny."[23] De Man's argument makes one less inclined to discuss "The Height of Land" as a failure. It also enables one to reconsider the terms of Roy Daniells' summary indictment of Scott: "Unlike those English Romantics who moved into the wilder hills along the avenues of pastoral tradition or cheerful pantheism, Scott has trouble in interpenetrating nature with human life."[24] Here Scott is criticized for not achieving a goal that he implicitly rejects in "The Height of Land." Moreover, Scott knew that there is more to Wordsworth than "cheerful pantheism." Earlier in his career he praised *The Prelude* for its depiction of the disjunction between man and nature: "Man is anxious to be carried away and awed by something outside himself, . . . but when he confronts the fact he finds it perfectly natural, and that he was greater than it after all." He then adds that the disappointment of such an experience soon fades: "But I find that, as a matter of course and by some generic law, the imaginative idea resumes its place, and is if anything heightened by remembrance."[25] Scott is critically aware of the complexities of memory, which can never be entirely faithful because it acts according to the "law" of its imaginative mediation, and because the poetic context is at least as important as the historical "source."

After the "spell," the sounds of the wilderness resume, and "The ancient disturber of solitude / Breathes a pervasive sigh" (Scott, ll. 63-64). Kelly, who interprets the poem as a "transcendent encounter," argues that the "ancient disturber" is probably identical with the parallel "region-spirit" in the following lines.[26] I would argue that the "ancient disturber" is a projection of the speaker's own sigh at the inevitable cessation of his "spell." His use of the verb "seems" reveals his uncertainty:

> the soul seems to hear
> The gathering of the waters at their sources;
> Then quiet ensues and pure starlight and dark;
> The region-spirit murmurs in meditation,
> The heart replies in exaltation
> And echoes faintly like an inland shell
> Ghost tremors of the spell. (Scott, ll. 65-71)

The last simile implies that the "meditation" that the speaker would like to think is external to him is really the echo of his own thoughts, just as the roaring sound we hear in a shell is an echo of ourselves. He never does attain a sense of a "region-spirit," and by the end of the poem he no longer expects to.

The speaker's inability to proceed smoothly from the "spell" to nature or to humanity is clear in the following lines: "Thought reawakens and is linked again / With all the welter of the lives of men" (Scott, ll. 72-73). His reference to the reawakening of thought suggests that his "spell" is an evasion, rather than a culmination, of thought. Furthermore, the apparently necessary connection be-

tween thought and humanity undercuts his attempt to establish the site "Here on the uplands where the air is clear" (Scott, l. 74) as a privileged one for meditation. The brief epiphany that he locates on the height of land will not suffice; the clarity that he gains is a consequence of a simplistic vision:

> And here, where we can think, on the bright uplands
> Where the air is clear, we deeply brood on life
> Until the tempest parts, and it appears
> As simple as to the shepherd seems his flock:
> A Something to be guided by ideals —
> That in themselves are simple and serene. . . . (Scott, ll. 77-81)

The key word is "appears": at this distance from civilization, life may seem as essentially simple as a shepherd's existence, but such a conception is irreconcilable with the twice-mentioned view of life as a "welter," a view that returns at the conclusion of the poem. The speaker formulates an ideal involving the interpenetration of "noble thought" and "noble deed, . . . Making life lovelier . . . " (Scott, ll. 83-86). Scott's following metaphor for this interpenetration stresses the fragility of the ideal:

> Thus we have seen in the retreating tempest
> The victor-sunlight merge with the ruined rain,
> And from the rain and sunlight spring the rainbow.
>
> (Scott, ll. 90-92)

Such an ideal is at once primitivistic, in that it is modelled on the shepherd's "simple" relation to his "flock," and progressivist, in that it projects life's qualitative improvement into the future. The ideal thus constitutes a double temptation for the nostalgic speaker, though it bears no relation to the immediate landscape, which shows no evidence of either primitive harmony or of progress.

After this section come the previously-quoted passages on the "lakelet foul with weedy growths" and on the "impermanence" of the stars. The former passage provides a critique of the speaker's previous primitivism, while the latter underlines the futility of his progressivist hopes. Instead of then rounding "upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding . . . " (Abrams, p. 528), "The Height of Land" ends inconclusively, with a long series of five questions expressing Scott's reservations about the concept of progress. An awareness of the differences between Abrams' account of the greater Romantic lyric and Scott's poem makes it difficult to agree with Pelham Edgar and others that the conclusion of Scott's poem is triumphant. "The summit levels," Edgar argues, "become for [Scott] a peak of vision, a spiritual height of land whence in the watches of the night he envisages the poet of the future and the burden of his message to the race."[27] Scott does not so much "envisage" the future poet as imply that the questions now asked will

remain unanswered. The "burden" of this scepticism is a heavy one; as Scott writes later in "At Derwentwater," it elicits "a sadness / of which it is vain to tell":

> It was not the fleeting beauty
> That gave the lasting pain,
> The stars shall rise in their courses,
> Day shall dawn again;
>
> I thought on the ultimate secret, —
> Long after the light had flown —
> That lies beyond all appearance
> And cannot be known.[28]

Immediately before the first of his five concluding questions, the speaker turns from the present dawn to future dawns:

> How often in the autumn of the world
> Shall the crystal shrine of dawning be rebuilt
> With deeper meaning! (Scott, ll. 123-25)

It is an exclamation that will acquire some of the force of a question as his certainty recedes. First, however, the speaker attempts to read a temporal symbolism into the landscape, so that the watersheds on either side would represent the past and the future. At the height of this attempt, in the third question, he wonders whether the future poet shall "stand"

> With deeper joy, with more complex emotion,
> In closer commune with divinity,
> With the deep fathomed, with the firmament charted,
> With life as simple as a sheep-boy's song,
> What lies beyond a romaunt that was read
> Once on a morn of storm and laid aside
> Memorious with strange immortal memories? (Scott, ll. 135-42)

Once again, he is lured by a progressivist optimism, and once again the pastoral diction in the phrase "simple as a sheep-boy's song" implies that the hopes are actually projections of a primitivist nostalgia. Even if the future were to see "the deep fathomed" and "the firmament charted," it by no means follows that such scientific advances will bring "closer commune with divinity." As "Meditation at Perugia" reveals, Scott knew that the claims of science and religion are not so easily reconciled.

So it is that the conjunction "Or" at the beginning of the next question indicates that the speaker must consider the alternative vision:

> Or shall he [the future poet] see the sunrise as I see it
> In shoals of misty fire the deluge-light
> Dashes upon and whelms with purer radiance . . . ?
>
> (Scott, ll. 143-45)

According to this vision, there is no symbolic height of land between the past and the future, and there is no "deeper meaning" (Scott, l. 125) to be discovered in the dawn. As the last question suggests, if the speaker stands "At the zenith of our wisdom," then the most that the future poet can obtain is a repetition of this vivid but indeterminate experience:

> O Life is intuition the measure of knowledge
> And do I stand with heart entranced and burning
> At the zenith of our wisdom when I feel
> The long light flow, the long wind pause, the deep
> Influx of spirit, of which no man may tell
> The Secret, golden and inappellable? (Scott, ll. 152-57)

With these lines the poem achieves a satisfyingly tentative closure: the assonance in "feel" and "deep," the half-rhyme of "tell" and "inappellable," the repetition of words used earlier in the poem — all these bring the poem to a conclusion while the interrogative form prevents a false conclusiveness. There is a significant variation in the repeated phrases: earlier the speaker said that "yet no man may tell / The secret of that spell" (Scott, ll. 57-58); now he declares that "no man may tell / The Secret." The omission of "yet" and the capitalization of "Secret" emphasize the incomprehensibility of life, while cancelling the expectation that this incomprehensibility will ever be alleviated.

The last question is the only one of the five in the present tense and also the poem's only apostrophe. According to Jonathan Culler, the apostrophe "works against narrative and its accompaniments: sequentiality, causality, time, teleological meaning."[29] Those narrative "accompaniments" roughly coincide with the aspects of Abrams' account of the greater Romantic lyric that are conspicuously absent from "The Height of Land." Culler suggests that we can "distinguish two forces in poetry, the narrative and the apostrophobic, and that the lyric is characteristically the triumph of the apostrophobic." In "The Height of Land" that triumph comes as a thematic defeat. Turning away from his quest into the wilderness and his concern for the future to consider the status of his poem, the speaker finds that his ultimate question is dependent on what Culler terms "a trope, an *O*." Instead of reaching the symbolic watershed of the old and the new, or of the civilized and the natural, the speaker finds that, in Gordon Johnston's words, "the stunning fact about a watershed . . . is that things look very much the same on either side. That is, the polarity is artificial; the border is a line drawn by reason, and is comic. It provokes questions about distinctions of all kinds."[30] Accordingly, to say that the past is dead and the future powerless to be born presupposes a certainty that the poem will not allow. Instead, to echo Scott's comment on *The Prelude*, "The Height of Land" ends by calling attention to the gap between the "imaginative idea" and the disappointing natural

"fact," and by tentatively equating a consciousness of that gap with "the zenith of our wisdom" (Scott, l. 154).

ALTHOUGH MY ANALYSIS has argued that "The Height of Land" cannot be reconciled with Abrams' conception of the greater Romantic lyric, it also argues that Abrams provides an important point of departure. Particularly valuable is Abrams' emphasis on the Romantic poem as a mental act: as Bornstein argues, in Romanticism and after "title and setting often simply indicate the place in which an act of mind occurs, and the act itself is the true subject of the poem"; the greater Romantic lyric, he adds, is especially suited to "the shape of imaginative experience."[31] I have not attempted to define Scott as a Romantic; rather, I have situated him "within the context of the nineteenth century," where, in Geddes' words, "most of his best verse belongs."[32]

Criticism of Confederation poetry needs to avoid the kind of narrow compartmentalization recently attacked by William C. Spengemann:

> Romantic literature is writing of a certain *kind*. Victorian literature is the work of a particular *time*. And American literature comes from a certain *place*. As a result, neither are the three subcategories logically compatible, establishing some necessary relation among Romantic, Victorian, and American works, nor are they mutually exclusive, precluding the existence, say, of a Romantic work written in America during the Victorian period.[33]

Can we not say that our major critics, such as W. E. Collin, E. K. Brown, A. J. M. Smith, Desmond Pacey, Northrop Frye, and Louis Dudek, among others, have avoided the "provinciality" of which Spengemann complains in American studies? Our best writers are not diminished by the realization that they are not the voices of a national self-reliance, a Canadian Adam, or the flowering of New Brunswick. In "Poetry and Progress," Scott made his own position clear:

> We talk too often and too lengthily about Canadian poetry and Canadian literature as if it was, or ought to be, a special and peculiar brand, but it is simply poetry, or not poetry; literature or not literature; it must be judged by established standards, and cannot escape criticism by special pleading.[34]

Recently, the nineteenth century, particularly English Romanticism, has been the focus for much of the most interesting literary theory and criticism of our time. There is every reason to believe that a renewed investigation of the Confederation poets' nineteenth-century contexts will confirm their importance and amplify our sense of their achievements.

NOTES

[1] Keith, "Editors and Texts: Reflections on Some Recent Anthologies of Canadian Poetry," rev. of *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English*, ed. and introd. Margaret Atwood, and *Canadian Poetry, Volume One and Volume Two*, eds. Jack David and Robert Lecker, introd. George Woodcock, *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews*, 12 (Spring/Summer 1983), p. 83; Mathews, "Margaret Atwood: Survivalism," rpt. from *This Magazine is About Schools* in *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*, ed. Gail Dexter (Toronto: Steel Rail, 1978), p. 124; Kelly, "Meanings Held in a Mist: The Major Poems," in *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*, ed. and introd. K. P. Stich (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980), p. 37.

[2] In *Duncan Campbell Scott: A Book of Criticism* (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1974), p. 163. Hereafter cited as "Dragland."

[3] "Literary Criticism in Canada," rpt. from *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1950) in *Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969), p. 48. The next citation is from p. 46.

[4] "Criticism in Crisis," rpt. from *Arion* (1967) in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, rev. ed.), introd. Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 13.

[5] *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 62.

[6] "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 527-28. Subsequent citations from this article will be included in the text, after the designation "Abrams."

[7] *The Poems of Archibald Lampman (including* At the Long Sault*)*, ed. and introd. Margaret Coulby Whitridge; memoir by Duncan Campbell Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 14, ll. 7-10. Subsequent citations from this poem will be included in the text, after the designation "Lampman."

[8] "Watchful Dreams and Sweet Unrest: An Essay on the Vision of Archibald Lampman, Part II," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 7, No. 1 (1982), 20-21.

[9] "Watchful Dreams, Part II," 21.

[10] "A Decade of Canadian Poetry," rpt. from *The Canadian Magazine* (1901) in *Twentieth-Century Essays on Confederation Literature*, ed. and introd. Lorraine McMullen (Ottawa: Tecumseh, 1976), p. 114.

[11] "To J. E. Wetherell," 13 November 1892, *More Letters of Duncan Campbell Scott*, ed. and introd. Arthur S. Bourinot (Ottawa: Bourinot, 1960), p. 68.

[12] Introd., *Lyrics of Earth, Sonnets, and Ballads*, ed. Scott (Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1925), p. 44.

[13] In *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1926), p. 46, ll. 16-18. Subsequent citations, for which I have provided the line numbers, will be included in the text, after the designation "Scott."

[14] "Piper of Many Tunes: Duncan Campbell Scott," rpt. from *Canadian Literature* (1968) in Dragland, p. 167.

[15] *Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 51.

[16] For an important account of Scott's relations with the Indians, see John Flood, "The Duplicity of D. C. Scott and the James Bay Treaty," *Black Moss*, Second Series, 2 (Fall 1976), pp. 50-63.

[17] *Empedocles on Etna: A Dramatic Poem,* in *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold,* ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 63, II.i. 18-20. What are we to make of E. K. Brown's two contrary comments on Scott's resemblance to Arnold? In 1943, he writes that "even Arnold was not so dubious as Scott here shows himself in his formulation of the Being that lies within nature and lends to it its deepest meaning"; "Duncan Campbell Scott," rpt. from *On Canadian Poetry* (1943) in Dragland, p. 90. Eight years later, he finds that Scott "has a faith firmer than Arnold could attain"; "Memoir," in *Selected Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott,* ed. Brown (Toronto: Ryerson, 1951), p. xxvii. There is indeed little agreement on the meaning of "The Height of Land."

[18] *Shelley: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), p. 160.

[19] In *The Poems, Volume One,* eds. John Pettigrew and Thomas J. Collins (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 805, l. 5.

[20] In Dragland, p. 167.

[21] *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 106. The subsequent citation is from p. 166.

[22] "North of Blue Ontario's Shore: Spells of Emerson and Whitman in D. C. Scott's Poetry," *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews,* 12 (Spring/Summer 1983), p. 7.

[23] "The Rhetoric of Temporality," rpt. from *Interpretation,* ed. Charles Singleton (1969) in *Blindness,* pp. 207, 206.

[24] "Crawford, Carman, and D. C. Scott," in *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English,* ed. Carl F. Klinck et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 421.

[25] In a column of 24 June 1893, in *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman, and Duncan Campbell Scott in* The Globe *1892-93,* introd. Barrie Davies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 338.

[26] "In the Listening World: The Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott," *Studies in Canadian Literature,* 4, No. 1 (Winter 1979), 76.

[27] "Canadian Poetry," rpt. from *The Bookman* (1919) in *Twentieth-Century Essays,* ed. McMullen, p. 125.

[28] In *The Circle of Affection and Other Pieces in Prose and Verse* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1947), p. 78. The resemblance of "At Derwentwater" to "The Height of Land" is noted in William Paul Denham, "Music and Painting in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott," M.A. Thesis, Western Ontario 1964, p. 80.

[29] "Apostrophe," in *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (1981; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 148. The following citations are from pp. 149 and 152.

[30] "The Significance of Scott's Minor Poems," in *Scott Symposium,* p. 14.

[31] Bornstein, pp. 2, 53.

[32] In Dragland, p. 165.

[33] "Three Blind Men and an Elephant: The Problem of Nineteenth-Century English," *New Literary History,* XIV, No. 1 (Autumn 1982), 155. The subsequent reference is to 158.

[34] Scott's 1922 Presidential Address to the Royal Society of Canada is rpt. in Dragland, p. 10.

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FIVE POEMS

Antonino Mazza

ARS POETICA

There is a splintering in our planet
and the ocean goes up and splashes as high
    as a Sanscrit prayer
and falls in an abyss of birds!
There is a deafening joy everywhere,
smashing like a bowling ball into ten pines.

Our comet was made by a master jeweler
    out of electricity.
We play on it as on an Ondes Martenot
    in fifty tones

and dance
thinly, mathematically, inventing every second.

FOREST

In the autumn it is good to eat roots in the woods
when the sun is a warm friend
        and blueness is everywhere harder than nuts
solitude is a gray dog circling an empty bottle

in the autumn it is good to eat wind in the woods
we are alone because someone forgot our names
in the night in the night
        a tiger is circling an empty bottle
luminously empty like god's mouth

DOORS

Places we go through
to come from

NIGHT

A tree of lights darkness
falls in with

PSYCHOANALYSTS

Persons who talk to themselves
through us

FREEZING RAIN

Dorothy Corbett Gentleman

Freezing rain sputters in puddles,
the street lamp flickers as a candle
through the rain wall.

Don't venture along the empty street.
The moon's eye cannot penetrate the lamination,
the sky is about to fall.

If you knock, I will not hear.
My ears are closed to the wind
roping around the chimney, snagging on eaves.

Remember my ceiling is wax
and I am learning to swim.
If the need arises, I will swallow the flood.

D. C. SCOTT'S VIEW OF HISTORY & THE INDIANS

L. P. Weis

ALTHOUGH THEY MAY DISAGREE — and sometimes disagree heatedly — on aspects of interpretation, critics of Duncan Campbell Scott's literary portrayals of the Indian usually agree on a basic point: Scott held one set of ideals as a bureaucrat and another as an artist. Depending on the critic, Scott is either a racist hypocrite or a vulnerable civil servant who held real — though necessarily hidden — sympathies for the Indian. Even though Scott appeared to be one kind of man, these readers say, he was really quite another. Scott himself, however, was convinced of the intellectual consistency between his bureaucratic work and creative writings, and readers who compare his sense of history with a number of his stories and poems may see how he was able to make the artistic and pragmatic sides of his life compatible.

John Flood delivers what is perhaps the most representative of these critical attacks upon Scott. In the article "The Duplicity of D. C. Scott and the James Bay Treaty," he accuses Scott of having failed the test of "moral engagement" regarding the Indian and the native way of life.[1] Scott, according to Flood, had consciously divided his life into two parts and wilfully ignored as a poet those morally objectionable aspects of the job he encountered as a bureaucrat.

Even for those critics who wish to defend Scott, his Indian policies have been a problem. Robert McDougall, for example, has warned against the dangers posed by a narrow sociological view of the poet:

> Aspects of that policy, questioned in some quarters even in Scott's day, have proved prime targets for attack in the native-rights atmosphere of the sixties and seventies. Because Scott implemented government policy, apparently without seriously questioning it, he has suffered the Nuremberg taint of guilt through compliance with unjust orders. Particular charges range from duplicity to genocide. And the reputation of the poetry, wrongly I think, is sometimes brought down with the reputation of the man.[2]

Although his purpose is quite different from Flood's, McDougall again draws a distinction between the sensibilities of the artist and the civil servant. For McDougall, the accomplishment of the artist comes first, and should remain untainted by other aspects of a man's life.

More recently, Gerald Lynch has argued that, although Scott began his career as a hard-nosed bureaucrat, he softened his attitude as he came into immediate

contact with the Indians. Eventually, he says, Scott was "resigned to the inevitability of assimilation, though certainly not the cold-hearted assimilation that critics of the socio-political school of Scott criticism read into the Indian poems."[3] Lynch qualifies his defence, however, saying that Scott was moved by the "loss of a people and a way of life worthy of preservation, if only in the poetry." We can attribute differences between the poetry and official statements, evidently, to the inherent constraints of Scott's official position.

An examination of pertinent prose writings reveals Scott believed that historical process necessitated the death of old orders, and that Indian culture was one of these archaic forms. He saw himself as a manager of that process — and not an unwilling one as is sometimes suggested. A high level of consistency exists between his official position, expressed often in the non-fiction prose, and his artistic depiction of Indians. This unity of vision has not been recognized by critics who have previously seen the medicine man in "Powassan's Drum," for example, as a poet figure or as an expression of the nobility of Indian culture.

Like a significant number of his contemporaries in Canada, Scott accepted current Victorian concepts of history and change. Because he believed in the necessity and inevitability of change — what he and his fellow English Canadians often called "progress" — he was able to view the death of Indian culture as beneficial to *individual* Indians. I emphasize the word individual because Scott clearly distinguished between the Indian as a separate person and the Indian as a racial group with distinctive cultural and religious values. A life-long admirer of Matthew Arnold, Scott undoubtedly saw in the Indians a clear illustration that, caught in the shifts of historical change, many people would become pathetic creatures "Wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born."[4]

Works such as "The Half-Breed Girl," "The Onondaga Madonna" and "Watkwenies" show a people suffering a racial and cultural death, but these poems also depict individuals who suffer tragically because they are neither of the past nor yet of the future.

Scott was determined, for both himself and his culture, to avoid being similarly helpless in the face of change. Through public service, he claimed in 1892 in a Mermaid Inn newspaper column, one could shape the future:

> By this service we are linked to the past, and its throes are triumphant in us. So between the two abysses we stand conservators of the past, pioneers of the future. But we are most of all pioneers, the function of our service is one for progress, for advance; by these acts of humanity and usefulness we increase the store of the beauty and goodness of the race.[5]

Convinced this vision of progress demanded a professional kind of service, Scott looked for, and found, models upon which he could pattern his own budding bureaucratic career. He discovered these models in men who had eagerly served

the expansionist dreams of their governments, men such as Sir George Grey.

In a book review published during the same period, Scott observes that a biography of Sir George Grey reveals "a most useful and eventful life."[6] Reflecting that Canadians "missed having the distinguished subject of these volumes as our own governor-general," Scott offers the opinion that Grey's was a life of service dedicated to the widening of Western civilization's influence in the world. In the early 1840's, he notes, Grey "administered the affairs of south Australia, and brought order out of chaos, saving the colony from threatened ruin" and, later, the commander had sent troops "in time for the relief of Lucknow and the saving of India."[7] Scott's admiration for the ability to bring "order out of chaos" was to be repeated in similar ways in later writings. This early review, clearly indicating his approval of a career dedicated to imperialist expansion and rule, suggests Scott defined his desire for order in ways compatible with dominant Victorian values and aspirations.

Toward the end of his life, Scott looked back upon his work in the Department of Indian Affairs and remarked to E. K. Brown that he had inherited a basic system and had felt no desire to alter it substantially:

> I had for about twenty years oversight of their [the Indians'] development and I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals, but there was a law which I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of severity.[8]

Both on the level of personal vision and in everyday matters, Scott's involvement with the civil service for almost fifty years revealed his desire for an encompassing sense of order in the world. Few of his fellow Canadians of the time — at least few of those who would have bothered to consider the matter — would have disagreed with his actions in the Department. For many people, the civilization of the Indian was part of Canada's grand scheme of expansion, which dated from the mid-nineteenth century: "The opening of the West was to be in the name of progress and that progress would be to the benefit of the whole Empire, and, for that matter, all of humanity."[9] The Europeanization of the Indian was simply a part of the story of progress, and questions regarding the uniqueness of Indian culture were drowned out by the noise of a nation under construction.

THE DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS had its roots, in practice and in theory, in the earliest days of political administration in Canada: the basic principles involved were "a carry-over of policies developed by the Imperial Government during the century preceding Confederation."[10] Up to and including the time of Scott's own administration, the Department did little to alter its aims, seeking the protection, civilization and assimilation of Canada's Indians.

In three articles written for *Canada and Its Provinces*, Scott himself helped chronicle and establish a tradition of history for the Department. His first goal in the history is to illustrate the natural superiority of the British method over the French method of dealing with Indians in North America. Not only was the British approach more humane, its greater degree of organization was evident from the time of the appointment of the first agent in 1744: "From that date to present there runs through the Indian administration a living and developing theory of government."[11] Scott's respect for continuity of organization is everywhere apparent in his study, as is his sense of a paternal and humanitarian mission. He never questions the "efforts which were made to civilize, educate and christianize the Indians"[12] because they, after all, had been living in a state of "squalor, dejectedness and intemperance." In Scott's view, the Indian himself would provide the ultimate justification for Department policy by becoming a fully enfranchised and Westernized member of English-Canadian society.

This paternalism creates the ambiguity in a work such as "On the Way to the Mission," where Scott portrays the native victim sympathetically and the white murderers as "servants of greed": although he is obviously critical of the representatives of white society, he is also creating native figures who, in their innocence, are vulnerable. In a similar way, Scott wrote a carefully-worded preface to Amelia Paget's *The People of the Plains*, in which he gives qualified praise to her study. She is, he says, a "cordial" advocate of the Indian:

> If there were hardship and squalor, starvation, inhumanity and superstition in this aboriginal life, judged by European standards, here it is not evident, all things are judged by the Indian idea of happiness, and the sophistication of the westerner disappears.[13]

The relativism of the above statement seems genuine; Scott did try, here and in other of his writings, to recognize that his view of Indian culture was coloured by "European standards," and he was not blind to the failings of "our so-called civilization."[14] Yet Paget, Scott implies, is at last sentimental because she ignores the most important fact about the Indian way of life: Indians were caught in the progression of time, and "the time for change was upon them."[15]

Nowhere in his writing does Scott overtly express belief in Darwinian principles of evolution, but he is convinced groups must adapt to survive. Beliefs and practices appropriate to Indian life before the coming of the white man had become inappropriate and even dangerous. Potlatches, the ceremonial giving away of wealth practised by tribes in British Columbia, had prevented the establishment of disparate economic groups within a tribe and so ensured a degree of social harmony. Scott, however, condemned these events as "degrading" and "wasteful feasts," and his position is easy to understand, given his belief that Indian social structures were anachronistic. In a letter to E. K. Brown, Scott defends his hostility to these practices, saying

> One can hardly be sympathetic with the contemporary Sun-dance or Potlatch when one knows that the original spirit has departed and that they are largely the opportunities for debauchery by low white men.[16]

The moralist in Scott clearly worried about the Indian's inability to protect himself against "vices not his own," but his objections surely went deeper than to the fear of the effects of alcohol and gambling. In white materialistic society, the accumulation and hoarding of wealth ensured the growth of personal power and the establishment of a hierarchy of status and order. If allowed to continue, the Potlatch threatened the creation of European economics in Indian societies. Scott knew that traditional custom and ritual resisted change, and so he continued the government campaign to stop these practices.

In his hostility toward specific social and economic structures of Indian life, Scott was simply adopting an attitude established by European travellers and missionaries well before his time. Alexander Mackenzie, in his 1801 record *Voyages*, advised that the civilization of the prairie Indians could only occur if the "savage people" were introduced to agriculture, which

> attaches the wandering tribe to that spot where it adds so much to their comforts; while it gives them a sense of property, and of lasting possession, instead of the uncertain hopes of the chase, and the fugitive produce of uncultivated wilds.[17]

Though Mackenzie emphasized the advantages of comfort and security that agriculture offered, his ultimate intention was that the Indian would discover a more civilized life. The missionary John McDougall, like Mackenzie, was convinced that nomadic life and tribal communism contributed to moral laxity; therefore, in *Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie* (1898), he interpreted the disappearance of the buffalo as a divine act designed to direct the Indian to more progressive ways. Dick Harrison identifies the unintentional irony of the missionary's remarks:

> Agriculture, individualism, and progress were surely no more than peripheral to his professed religious beliefs, yet they became the main burden of his mission, and must be the only considerations that could lead a humane man to call the destruction of the Indian's food supply a divine, paternal act.[18]

Mackenzie, McDougall, and Scott each in turn saw in the Indian way of life an absence of civilized order; if the representatives of the white world did perceive any patterns or order among native peoples, these aspects of social structure were invariably judged as immoral and destructive.

Scott realized the indoctrinization of Indian youth would help sweep aside outworn customs, and he seized upon existing laws to initiate the transformation. In 1894, amendments to the Indian Act had already given the government the power to commit children to industrial and boarding schools. On 11 March 1920

Scott mailed one of a series of letters to clergymen, politicians and others of influence, asking for support for the government's plan for residential schools:

> You will note first our proposals with regard to compulsory education. These classes will enable us to send children to residential schools and to have control over them while there, which we have never had in the past.[19]

If Indian children continued to live at home while attending school, they would often miss classes and accompany their parents hunting, trapping or otherwise helping the family. Not only did this practice interfere with their formal education, but it also ensured that the old economic systems of tribal life were perpetuated. Residential schools would enhance the civilizing process and have the added benefit of creating an instant form of assimilation, however artificial and small in scale.

DURING THE YEARS OF SCOTT'S ADMINISTRATION, the concept of assimilation, believed before to be attainable only in some distant future, changed significantly: "Assimilation was no longer regarded as a long term goal; it was one that could be attained immediately if the Indian were removed from the protective environment of the reserve."[20] The reserve had done its job too well, insulating Indians from the influences of white society. Increased pressures were applied to have Indians enfranchised, or given the same social and political rights as white men. In other words, if the Indian did not desire assimilation, the government would help him along by redefining him as a white man. In 1920, the Superintendent General was given the power to enact compulsory enfranchisement and strip any Indian of his or her special status. Indian protests followed these changes, and Scott defended the government position at a series of hearings on the issue:

> I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that this country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone. . . . that has been the purpose of Indian education and advancement since the earliest times. . . . Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill.[21]

When Scott speaks of "the purpose . . . since the earliest times," he is referring to processes larger than individual bills or people: he is pointing to the movements of history. And those who stand in the way of these processes are either a nuisance (he called the legal counsel for the Indians "trickster lawyers"), or a clear danger. In a poetic rendering, the medicine man Powassan is one of the latter, a threat to progress.

In works such as "Watkwenies" and "The Onondaga Madonna," the native

characters are caught in forces which they do not understand and cannot control. Because they are helpless, their plight becomes tragic in a classical, fated way. In "Powassan's Drum," Scott creates a figure who challenges the irresistible forces of history: Powassan is one of those Indians who attempts to hold to old customs, who tries to dam up the weight of mounting social and cultural change.

Though readers of the poem appreciate its incantatory power and forceful imagery, they differ over the poet's intentions. Fred Cogswell describes the "apocalyptic climax" in the final lines, but sees in Powassan a representational quality which depends heavily on another poem, "The Piper of Arll," for meaning. The medicine man, Cogswell asserts, is a model for the alienated artist in society because, like the artist, he is a man feared by the tribe for his physical deformities and his awesome spiritual powers:

> The vision, then, is both Powassan's revenge on his own tribe for his physical inferiority and an assertion of his own superiority, through magic. As such, it is psychologically appropriate.[22]

The appropriateness, psychological or otherwise, is consistent if one assumes this correlation between Powassan and the Piper in "The Piper of Arll," but I believe Scott clearly had another comparison in mind.

An entry in Scott's James Bay diary, kept during the 1905-06 expedition, records a confrontation between himself and a medicine man named Powassan who was conducting a forbidden ritual — the spirit dance. Scott, investigating a complaint made by the local Indian agent, spoke with Powassan and, in his own words, "warned the Indians not to dance."[23] Medicine dances, he believed, were a return to old tribal ways based on superstition. Tom Marshall, when he says that the headless Indian suggests "primitive instinct separated from reason,"[24] has grasped Scott's specifically moral intention. In other poems, Scott treats Indian characters sympathetically, but his purpose in this work is to illustrate as clearly as possible the dangers of instinct governed by irrationality, and therefore the two figures in "Powassan's Drum" emerge as forms of incarnate evil.

Powassan is a negative force who conjures the hatred and superstition Scott believes may hinder plans to bring the Indian into the modern, Europeanized world. The medicine man is a formidable threat because he is able to create a demi-world:

> He crouches in his dwarf wigwam
> Wizened with fasting,
> Fierce with thirst,
> Making great medicine
> In memory of hated things dead
> Or in menace of hated things to come,
> And the universe listens
> To the throb — throb — throb — throb —
> Throbbing of Powassan's Drum.[25]

By no means a foolish, ineffectual figure, Powassan makes the universe listen: Scott uses the repetitive sound of the drum throughout the poem to suggest a compelling, hypnotic state. Powassan's immediate universe is his tribe. Scott is not sure if the medicine man wishes to pose any specific threat, but his white moral sensibility rejects the incantations as irrational. The medicine man called Powassan, in Scott's view, offers only one part of a duality to his people: blind hatred. There is no resolution in the poem to a beautified state, no sense of the other part of the duality which is love:

> Is it the memory of hated things dead
> That he beats — famished —
> Or a menace of hated things to come
> That he beats — parched with anger
> And famished with hatred — ?

The passion is all-consuming, stretching from the past to the future; such hatred is an obsession that knows no place in human reason, and prevents the progress that leads to order. It is appropriate, then, that Scott chooses to capture the essence of Powassan's vision in the symbolic figure of the headless Indian.

Summoned by the relentless power of Powassan's drumbeats, the ghostly Indian rises out of a depth of horror, both visual and psychological. He comes in nocturnal mystery:

> A shadow noiseless,
> A canoe moves noiseless as sleep,
> Noiseless as the trance of deep sleep. . . .

The reference to sleep is made four times as the spectre is introduced; the repetition reminds the reader that this creature does come from a deep and awful slumber — the sleep of the reasoning mind. The horror Scott creates through visual detail is similar to the effect generated in a series of pictures by the Spaniard Francisco Goya, one of which is titled "The Sleep of Reason Begets Monsters." In Goya's engraving, fantastic monsters are seen flying above the head of a sleeping man and, in another graphic image of moral disorder, Scott shows that the trance induced by Powassan releases a monster of irrationality. Though the Indian figure is literally headless, Scott makes it clear that the image points to a symbolic loss of reasoning thought. The Indian sits "modelled in full power, / Haughty in manful power, / Headless and impotent in power." The power of this image is real enough, to Scott's mind: the superstitious appeal of magical conjuring, coupled with the recreated image of former Indian greatness, has the strength to draw others to it. But, ironically, the power is directionless and impotent because it has no application beyond the simple statement of rage. The power of the headless Indian and, by association, the power of Powassan, have their most direct correlative in the storm which gathers force throughout

the development of the poem. Scott emphasizes the correlation in a section which employs powerful visual images and directs the reader's eye along lines which define the relationships between the spectre and the world:

> The Indian fixed like bronze
> Trails his severed head
> Through the dead water
> Holding it by the hair,
> By the plaits of hair,
> Wound with sweet grass and tags of silver.
> The face looks through the water
> Up to its throne on the shoulders of power,
> Unquenched eyes burning in the water,
> Piercing beyond the shoulders of power
> Up to the fingers of the storm cloud.

The Indian, formerly described as a "statue," is again described in inanimate terms, "fixed like bronze," and is shown trailing his hair through "the dead water." The heavy inertia of metal is coupled with the image of travel through a lifeless element, while the head is held by the most tenuous of links to the body, hair. All elements in this verbal painting, even the small tags of silver, contribute to the tone Scott wishes to maintain. In a short story. "Charcoal," he mentions the way the philandering Bad-young-man dresses in "barbaric trappings, his hair full of brass pistol cartridges and the tin trademarks from tobacco plugs."[26] Bad-young-man's manner of dress is gaudy and vain but, more importantly, it reveals through the details of clothing the extent to which the Indian way of life is undeniably altered by exposure to white society. In "Powassan's Drum," the headless Indian's appearance, though initially awesome, is seriously qualified by this ironic reminder.

The eyes of Powassan's Indian, presumably "unquenched" because they are fed by hatred, look up and past the natural seat upon the shoulders of the body to the storm cloud where they find a present affinity. The line of "viewless hate" is clearly drawn, and when the question — "Is this the meaning of the magic . . . ?" — is again asked, the answer must be "yes." Powassan's vision represents an impossible return to a dead way of life: he succeeds only in creating an illusion of power based on memories of former Indian greatness. The line of viewless sight from the severed head suggests that Powassan's counsel can only lead to the destruction of the storm, as the irresistible forces of history break upon his people. A suppression of growth and development results in the murdered "shadow" of Indian dignity being swept from the earth. The concluding section of the poem must be read with a certain ironic appreciation because, though the sound of Powassan's drum "lives" at the centre of the storm, the "dark world" is nevertheless being crushed in a "wild vortex" of wind, hail and lightning.

IN SCOTT'S LITERARY WORKS a storm, such as the one which drowns Powassan's world, frequently marks the release of dammed historical processes which sweep over those who resist or ignore them. In "At Gull Lake: August 1810," Scott depicts irrational resistance to change as contributing to the suffering of an individual helplessly caught in processes beyond her understanding. Keejigo, the central figure in the poem, is a half-breed denied acceptance by representatives of both her worlds: the white trader Nairne, fearing the censure of his Indian neighbours, spurns her advances; the native women, enraged by her overtures to the trader, maim the girl and turn her away from the encampment. In their rejection of Keejigo, the Indians deny both her difference and the changes which are subtly coming upon their race. Their reaction is unreasoning, blind and terrible, and engenders a like response in the elements:

> Then burst the storm —
> The Indians' screams and the howls of the dogs
> Lost in the crash of hail
> That smashed the sedges and reeds,
> Stripped the poplars of leaves,
> Tore and blazed onwards,
> Wasting itself with riot and tumult —
> Supreme in the beauty of terror.[27]

The meteorological tumult in the poem has an emotional equivalent in the minds of those who suffer in the middle ground of change. In "A Scene at Lake Manitou," the cultural scene of change is a religious one and Scott internalizes the upheaval in one woman, giving her the appropriate name of Stormy Sky.

Grieving over the death of her son Matanack, Stormy Sky is a woman for whom neither the old native beliefs nor the new white religion can offer a resolution of feeling:

> She gazed at the far-off islands
> That seemed in a mirage to float
> Moored in the sultry air.
> She had ceased to hear the breath in Matanack's throat
> Or the joy of the children gathering the hay.
> Death, so near, had taken all sound from the day,
> And she sat like one that grieves
> Unconscious of grief.[28]

Scott creates in Stormy Sky a vision of grief so consuming that the sense impressions which define consciousness are drastically altered or even absent. Her emotional state is like a vacuum ready for the introduction of informing content: her thoughts wander to the past, to find recollections of Matanack's youth and, intermingled with these, to contradictory religious musings:

Mingled with thoughts of Nanabojou
And the powerful Manitou
That lived in the lake;
Mingled with thoughts of Jesus
Who raised a man from the dead,
So Father Pacifique said.

The naïve commingling of two religious viewpoints is marked by one common element: Stormy Sky takes from her pagan and Christian stores of belief a pragmatic, literal interpretation which allows her, however desperately, to believe that she can rescue her son from death. She believes the story of the resurrection — whether through her own lack of perception or through the literalist encouragement of the priest — without grasping the figurative importance of the miracle. For her, the rising of Lazarus from the dead and the spiritual resurrection implied through the use of Holy Water and Scapular are both to be accepted in the realm of earthly possibility:

To save him, to keep him forever!
She had prayed to their Jesus,
She had called on Mary His mother
To save him, to keep him forever!

But of course her son does not rise, and she must find her inner peace in the hope that he has gone "To hunt in the Spirit Land / And to be with Jesus and Mary." At last, neither the appeal to Christian miracle nor the sacrifice of goods to the Indian lake god are enough, and Stormy Sky must fall back upon stoical resignation, often the only solace left to Scott's sufferers in the middle ground of change. Her real peace is in acceptance, the willed surrender of desire that gives her character dignity.

Inner strength and dignity are at last the only reserves that Scott's native characters can draw upon in the hour of their extreme suffering, as the case of Charcoal illustrates. Scott claimed that he had patterned the story "Charcoal" as closely as possible on actual events that took place in Alberta in 1896 and his version is generally similar to that offered in a detailed historical study by Hugh Dempsey.[29] Charcoal was a Blood Reserve Indian who murdered his wife's lover and became the object of a celebrated manhunt. During his escape he killed a policeman and was finally captured and hanged. Not surprisingly, in Scott's telling, the events become a study of one individual trapped in a disjunction of cultural values and perceptions.

Readers of Scott's poetry will recognize a familiar plot in the story: an Indian drawn to white man's ways but still bound by his tribal heritage of beliefs is crushed in the ensuing dilemma of choices. Charcoal is a character caught in the transition of time and society, seemingly unable to attain happiness. The plot has many points in common with poems of the same subject, but the author gives

more explicit voice in this work to the internal confusions experienced by an Indian. In the following passage, Scott shows Charcoal striving to become something other than what his natural self dictates:

> Charcoal wanted to be what his agent called "a good Indian." He wanted to have a new cooking stove, and a looking-glass. He already had cattle on loan, and was one of the best workers in the hay fields.

It would be easy, and incorrect, to read an ironic tone into the phrase "a good Indian": Scott did not prefigure our contemporary scepticism of his culture's desire to turn Indians into white men. He was aware, however, of the difficulty that these changes created for Indians and of the inner confusion of values that resulted when individuals attempted the transition from old to new ways. Therefore, Scott polarized the duality within Charcoal, making him desire the new ways while falling back onto the old ways of irrationality and retribution when faced with a crisis.

When Charcoal seems to be successfully entering the white man's world by hard work and obedience, he is convinced that "the white man's ways [are] the best." Soon after, however, when frustrated by his wife's behaviour and threatened by a loss of prestige, he is equally convinced that "the old way was a good way." His personal confusion mirrors his ambivalent movement between Indian and white cultures, and he becomes an exile from both, running until he is finally betrayed into the hands of the police by Wolfplume, a relative. Charcoal's life verges on the pathetic; there is nothing he can do to solve the problem of living between two worlds:

> He had thought of many things which he did not understand. He was to be killed in the white man's manner; to his mind it was only vengeance, death for deaths, which the warriors of his own race dealt to their foes in the old days, and in a braver fashion. They had driven away the buffalo, and made the Indian sad with flour and beef, and had put his muscles into harness. He had only shot a bad Indian, and they rose upon him. His gun had shot a big policeman, and when they had taught his brother-in-law their own idea of fair dealing he was taken in his sleep, and now there was to be an end. He did not know what Père Pauquette meant by his prayers, and the presentation of the little crucifix worn bright with many salutations. It was all involved in mystery.

The "mystery" Scott describes is one the reader shares with Charcoal, since the author presents a moral dilemma which goes partly unresolved: the reader is able to understand and sympathize with Charcoal's confusion — up to a point. Charcoal as an individual is a sympathetic character, but Charcoal as the author's representative member of a race in transition must pay the price of his imperfect moral vision and behaviour.

Scott signals his own position in the final pasages of the story as Charcoal dies in a dignified manner, with "the calm of the stoic." The phrase is ambiguous,

because this form of stoicism bears little similarity to classical versions of the philosophy associated with writers such as Marcus Aurelius, and even less to concepts of Christian humility; Charcoal dies peacefully because he takes solace from the lingering scents of his medicine bag, another remnant of the archaic cultural beliefs Scott so obviously felt were detrimental to the Indian.

If Scott can be said to have entertained conflicting views of the Indian, these can only be seen in his distinguishing individuals as separate from the race as a whole; even then, the pattern of his characterizations reveals that he saw in people such as Charcoal, because of their unique historical situation, a ready type for the tragic form in literature. In the passing of a cultural heritage, however, Scott saw no such tragic dimension. Like Charcoal's medicine bag, the Indian way of life was empty, holding only a ghostly whiff of its former power to inform and enrich existence. D. C. Scott saw himself as a pioneer of the future; he saw the Indian as a victim of his own past.

NOTES

[1] John Flood, "The Duplicity of D. C. Scott and the James Bay Treaty," *Black Moss*, Series 2, No. 2 (Fall 1976), pp. 40-63.

[2] Robert L. McDougall, "D. C. Scott: A Trace of Documents and a Touch of Life," in *The D. C. Scott Symposium*, ed. K. P. Stich (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1980), pp. 139-40.

[3] Gerald Lynch, "An Endless Flow: D. C. Scott's Indian Poems," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 7, No. 1 (1982), p. 54.

[4] Matthew Arnold, "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. K. Allott (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 288.

[5] This untitled essay appeared 19 March 1892, and is collected in *At the Mermaid Inn: Wilfred Campbell, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott in* The Globe *1892-93*, ed. Barrie Davies (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 37.

[6] *Mermaid Inn*, 10 September 1892.

[7] *Mermaid Inn*, pp. 145-46.

[8] Public Archives of Canada, Scott Papers, Scott to Brown, 2 July 1941.

[9] Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 145.

[10] John Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, 6, No. 2 (1976), p. 13.

[11] Scott, "Indian Affairs 1763-1841," in *Canada and Its Provinces*, eds. Adam Shortt and A. G. Doughty (Toronto: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1913), Vol. IV, p. 698.

[12] Scott, "Indian Affairs," Vol. V, p. 331.

[13] Scott, "Introduction" to Amelia Paget's *People of the Plains* (Toronto: Briggs, 1909), pp. 13-14.

[14] Scott, *Plains*, p. 14.

[15] Scott, *Plains*, p. 12.

[16] Public Archives of Canada, Scott Papers, MG 30 D100, Vol. 2, Scott to Brown, 2 July 1941.

[17] Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages* (1801; rpt. Toronto: Radisson Society, 1927), p. xxv.

[18] R. Harrison, *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta Press, 1977), p. 49.

[19] Public Archives of Canada, Scott Papers, RG 10 Vol. 6810, File 470-2-3, Scott to Rev. T. A. Moore, 11 March 1920.

[20] Tobias, p. 22.

[21] Public Archives of Canada, Scott Papers, RG 10 Vol. 6810, File 473, Vol. 12, Hearings Testimony, 1921-22.

[22] Fred Cogswell, "No Heavenly Harmony: A Reading of Powassan's Drum," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 1-2 (Summer 1976), p. 235.

[23] Public Archives of Canada, Scott Papers, diary entry 6 July 1905.

[24] Tom Marshall, *Harsh and Lovely Land: The Major Canadian Poets & the Making of a Canadian Tradition* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1979), p. 31.

[25] *The Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1926), p. 59. Subsequent quotations are taken from this text.

[26] Scott, "Charcoal," in *The Circle of Affection and Other Pieces of Prose and Verse* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1947), p. 222. Subsequent quotations are taken from this text.

[27] Scott, *The Green Cloister* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1935), p. 57.

[28] *Cloister*, p. 49. Subsequent quotations are taken from this text.

[29] Hugh Dempsey, *Charcoal's World* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).

OUR NORTHERN TOUR

J. D. Carpenter

"A cold coming we had of it"
T S Eliot, *Journey of the Magi*

Put in
— Mattice

Osprey
— mile 2

Hipdeep in flowers
— Rock Island Portage

Our guide reading *Flaming Carrot* Comics
— mile 5

Wild rose petals, pink
— Black Feather Rapids

Rock gardens, pick and choose
— below Beam Rapids

The river wraps us
around the rock
like bacon
around a filet
— Kettle Falls

Dreams of my children
— Alice Island

Mystery shape ahead
turns out
to be
conical
perfect
(tiny flag at its peak)
sandcastle
— mile 29

Sculpture: balanced
atop a midstream rock
a storey high, a tangle
of spring flood timber
— mile 42

Inside the derelict cabin:
an empty bottle of mountain
white chablis, a full bottle
of french dressing four years
past its best before, a chipmunk
— mile 49

Queen Anne's lace six feet high
— micro-climate, Thunderhouse portage

Where
if you don't watch out
you die
— Thunderhouse Falls

Cliff diving
— Conjuring House Rock

Joe Collins and Ed Lewis
of St Joseph, Michigan, miss
the portage, capsize
— Stone Rapids

Under the foodpack
I slip in moosemud
come up like a negro
— Long Rapids portage

Drinking Jack
with Joe Collins:
"I went to school
 with Jack Daniels' granddaughter"
— Long Rapids camp

Where
in 1974
John Bemrose found
the body of a boy
from Kansas City:
barefoot, blue
sweatshirt, stench and bloat
— Bull Moose Bay

Mulligatawny
— mile 72

Where
in 1776
Thomas Atkinson
and a small party
of Englishmen and Indians
held siege against winter
after straining upriver
(56 days, 120 miles)
from Moosefort
in the search
for furs
— Wapiscogamy House

Wooden cross
picket fence
mark grave of
BABY JOSEPH MARTEN
    May 6 — September 4
            1925
— Pivabiska Creek

Dream the taxi
home from station
lost in city streets
— fifth camp

Wings
singing, an
immature sandhill crane
— mile 89

Pizza:
cubed salami
chopped onion
tomato sauce
gorilla cheese
on bannock
— mile 100

Paddle (naked) to the sea
— Giant Spruce Island

Chittering tree
to tree, kingfishers
provide escort
— Opasatika River

Behind the palisades
of spruce and poplar
that fence each side
of the river, endless
bog and the nightmare
noises that echo like
howls of the tortured
— night, Water Cabin

Our guide says, "Mmm, love
that may contain meat"
— morning, Water Cabin

Yahooing through
— McCuaig Creek Rapids

Headwinds force a halt:
we huddle like cattle
our backs to the rain
— mile 121

Trembling in the tent
its walls alive with lightning
we sip the last of the rye
— eighth camp

Confluence of rivers:
Missinaibi + Mattagami = Moose
— Portage Island

From the trestle
Cree children rain
pebbles on our picnic:
"Get off our land!"
— Moose River Crossing

Two of us give it
up, the river spits them
out; now we are six
— Murray Island

Grey geese
— Grey Goose Island

Gypsum caves
— mile 153

Gyrfalcon
— Mike Island

The northern lights lifting
like a curtain
— mile 163

So cold
I sleep with my ballcap on
— Little Asp Island

Red-breasted merganser
and young
— Baby Island

Twelve maps down, one to go
— mile 170

After the rollercoaster
my cup on the bow
is full
— Kwataboahegan Rapids

Floating lunch: corned beef balls
— mile 177

Air show: arctic terns
— Bushy Island

Rain
for the ninth day of ten
— mile 183

Our guide sings, "I've
come to take you home
whoo hoo (Talking Heads, *Swamp*)
— mile 190

Three canoes abreast
shower curtain and mylar blanket
for sails, we arrive
— Moosonee

The tripper
from Pays d'en Haut
tells us five
died last year, four
(mapless, thinking it was just
another rapids) at Thunderhouse
Falls
— Freighter canoe taxi, Charles Island

Cold beer
— Polar Bear Lodge

Epitaphs:

1. Alfred Louttit 16 Yrs.
Tommy " 15 "
Jimmy Sutherland 15 "
Arthur " 15 "
John Sailor's 11 Yrs
Rodirick Wascowin 9 Yrs
Sinclair Napanee 9 "
Pupils of Moosefort
Boarding School
Accidental Drowning
July 19, 1919
Asleep in Jesus

2. In
Loving
Memory
Of

Jane Caroline
Guaghigan
Born April 10 1913
Died April 20 1921
"There is a home for little children
Above the bright blue skies"

3. M
A
R.
10
WILLIE
M
O
O
R
E

4. Roy John Suthrlnd

Dogs
mauling
grave ornaments
— St Thomas Anglican Church, Moose Factory

Tide
— James Bay

Last portage: wharf to train
— Moosonee

Tourists
— Polar Bear Express

Bath
— Albert Hotel, Cochrane

Egg rolls
beef fried rice
beef with tomato
shrimp with garlic
chicken soo guy
cream pie
coffee
— Gold Star Restaurant, Cochrane

Entrain
— Porquis Junction

Our guide plays train music: John Fahey
— Cobalt

Traffic and joggers
— train window, Toronto

Missinaibi and Moose Rivers, July 1985

THE BLIND LEADING

Marlene Cookshaw

At dawn while fog obliterates
the line where sky and water touch
we pause on the cliffside path
to watch a tugboat in the wall of grey
align its molecules to hull and keel

When you left Vancouver that time, M asks,
was it like this, grey: were the details glorious?
There was fog, I tell him I remember nothing else
I drove to the ferry along that rocky spit
as if headed for the edge of the world

The tug swivels Coming in
But in three seconds
the boat pales into air

That's odd, M says When I left
the world rushed in at me: radios, women
in the hot sun, lined up at the dock
all afternoon with the window stuck shut

Gulls shriek and a puffin zooms over
the water line invisible from land
as if it drew the horizon in its wake

THE NATURAL WORLD IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY CANADIAN LITERATURE

Mary Lu MacDonald

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY the idea that early Canadian writers — and, by extension, early Canadians — perceived themselves as surrounded by a hostile natural world, has become part of the English-Canadian sense of identity.[1] This triumph of an idea over contrary evidence is generally buttressed with references to *Wacousta* and *Roughing it in the Bush*. However, before accepting the evidence of these works as conclusive, readers should consider two things. First, that while Susanna Moodie and John Richardson were compelling writers, they were only two of hundreds who wrote about life in the Canadas; second, that Moodie was a very reluctant emigrant, that Richardson was attempting to appeal to the tastes of thrill-seeking British novel readers in order to supplement his scanty half-pay income, and that both wrote very positively of the natural world of the Canadas in other works.[2] In this latter mood they are in accord with the majority of their contemporaries. The question of why negative myth-making appeals so strongly to the modern Canadian psyche must be left for others to resolve. It is a present-day problem, the answer to which must come from present-day Canadians. As far as the literature written and read by our ancestors is concerned, the fact is that before 1850, with few exceptions, all the evidence points to an essentially positive literary view of the Canadian landscape.[3]

In the final analysis, beauty has always resided in the eye of the beholder. However, throughout history, most beholders' eyes and minds have been trained or conditioned to perceive beauty in those things which their own culture generally values as beautiful. For early Canadian writers it happened that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries both theology and aesthetic theory came together in their society to reinforce the perception of the natural world as beautiful. The theological imperative stemmed from the prevalent Christian belief that all creation must be pleasing to man because the Creator could not possibly have produced anything unpleasant. Thus, the last stanza of almost every "nature poem" of the period routinely thanked the Creator for the gift of natural

beauty. The aesthetic imperative was rooted in the idea of the sublime as the pinnacle of all types of beauty. Sublimity was inherent in the thing viewed, but it could also refer to the emotion evoked in the viewer. It was more than mere beauty. Religious awe at the wonders of creation was a part of it. So was a shiver of awed fear. The grandeur of mountains, waterfalls, uninhabited wild spots, oceans, skyscapes, and vast panoramas were all considered to be sublime. In the middle ages and the early modern period these same elements had been perceived to have negative connotations, but in the late eighteenth century scientific enlightenment combined with dawning romanticism to transform them into the positive concept of the sublime. In Europe, travellers looked on evidences of the sublime in untamed nature and then returned to the city to write of their experiences. Painters set up their easels on remote, rugged terrain, and the results of their meeting with the sublime decorated the walls of city drawing-rooms. Poets and novelists used the generally accepted ideas of the sublime as a sort of shorthand convention through which they could convey the idea of beauty to their readers. In the Canadas these aesthetic and theological principles were further reinforced by the fact that most of the area was, as it still is, scenically very attractive.[4]

In early Canadian literature we are not dealing with the mystery of the creative process as found in singular works of genius. Our authors were not original thinkers, but rather men and women who accepted and worked within the dominant expressive modes of their day. Thus, whether they were French or English, whether they were born in Canada or elsewhere, most Canadian writers before 1850 both found the Canadas to be beautiful and accepted the convention of the sublime as the basis for much of their description of the natural world. It is not a question of "realism" as opposed to "romanticism" in descriptive writing. A craggy summit, a tumbling cascade, the view from a vantage point, could each be described either "realistically" or "romantically" according to variations in individual writer's responses, without affecting in any way the designation of the object as sublimely beautiful. "Sublime" as an adjective, noun, or adverb was the most frequently used word in the descriptive vocabulary of the period.

Scenic description, and the author's emotional response to the natural world are more often encountered in poetry than in prose. Except in the senses that the sun shone on the happy and righteous, or that storms were stirred up by a *deus ex machina*, the environment played little part in early Canadian fiction, particularly that written by the native-born. The first two novels in English, *St. Ursula's Convent* and *Matilda*, are concerned more with people and events than they are with the physical setting. Abraham Holmes tells us that *Belinda* takes place in the Chatham area of Upper Canada, but the novel is so lacking in environmental detail that the protagonists could just as well have sailed on the English Thames as the Canadian one, or journey between Russian country houses. *The Canadian*

Brothers begins with a panoramic view from the fort at Amherstburg and contains detailed descriptions of some battle sites — principally required for a critique of General Proctor's strategy — but the wild, romantic scenery of *Wacousta* is nowhere to be found in Richardson's other "Canadian" novel.

Similarly in French, Pierre Chauveau, having set the social-political-economic stage for Charles and Pierre Guérin, places his two heroes on a hill overlooking the St. Lawrence, "panorama le plus varié qui soit au monde,"[5] and proceeds to describe the view in four lengthy paragraphs. There is only one other extended description in *Charles Guérin*, and that one is of Quebec City, not of the natural world. Chauveau makes his early obeisance to convention, then concerns himself with action rather than contemplation.

Other novelists, notably Aubert de Gaspé *fils* and Patrice Lacombe, do not bother even with the perfunctory bow to convention. Critics have commented extensively on the absence of specific settings in *L'Influence d'un livre*, which begins:

> Sur la rive sud du fleuve Saint-Laurent, dans une plaine qui s'étend jusqu'à une chaine de montagnes, dont nous ignorons le nom. . . .[6]

and continues in a manner equally vague where all physical settings are concerned. Lacombe does devote two paragraphs in Chapter One of *La Terre paternelle* to the beauties of "Gros Sault," but his intention is more to evoke the idyllic nature of rural life, which will be contrasted later with the misery of the city, than it is to describe a particular place.

Short fiction in French follows the same pattern. In this form there is one type of sketch in which the city-dwelling author contemplates pastoral charm. Most of the genre is touched more than somewhat by the romanticism of early Lamartine. "[M]on âme suivit celle d'Alphonse de Lamartine dans la solitude . . . ," wrote "Amela" in *L'Aurore* on 12 November 1839, in "Une promenade champêtre." In "La campagne" as described by "Pietro," a Lamartinian melancholy prevails.

> Quand je laisse la ville, j'aime à gagner ces vastes solitudes où l'homme est seul avec lui-même, où la pensée règne sans obstacle et dans toute sa sublimité. J'aime que les vents fassent craquer sourdement les forêts; que les flots en furie viennent se briser à mes pieds, que la tempête gronde sur ma tête; et puis après l'orage vient le calme; j'aime alors le soleil qui perce les brouillards; j'aime le zéphyr qui détache des feuilles la rosée en milles petits globules étincelants. . . .[7]

While the idea of man in nature is absent from early Canadian novels in both languages, unlike the French experience, it does play a part in some of the short fiction written by the native-born English. In three numbers of the *Canadian Garland*, in November and December 1832, the twenty-one-year-old Charles Durand[8] described "An Adventure in the Woods of Canada." Durand was certainly not lacking in highly-coloured imagination, as his *Canadian Casket* and

Canadian Garland short stories indicate. However, being lost in the woods, while not a pleasure, was an experience more interesting than frightening:

> As much of my road lay thro' uncultivated tracts of country and wild and dense forest, I anticipated a feast of scenery similar to the above described. I love to view nature in her native wilderness; to gaze upon the silent workings of her mighty bosom; search into the sublime majesty of her actions, — and listen to the chorus of her groves.

Caught in a storm and lost in the woods, he spends an anxious night. Though he mentions his "anxiety," "despair," and "melancholy gloom," what he actually writes about is a calm use of survival techniques, and he describes the look and sound of a forest at night more in terms of beauty than menace. With the return of daylight he feeds on cranberries in a swamp, and drinks water from a "limpid stream." Climbing a hill, he can see nothing but "a waving ocean of foliage." Directing himself towards what he hoped was smoke, rising in the distance, he went forward all day, often leading his horse in the thick undergrowth. Just at sunset he heard a woman singing and followed the sound to a "cottage" where he spent the night, starting off in the morning on the right path to his destination. Durand's protagonist was well aware of the dangers of being lost in the woods. Nonetheless, he kept his head and emerged safely, while at the same time never losing his appreciation of the environment.

W. B. Wells was another Canadian who regarded the forest as a normal place to spend his time. In *Barker's Magazine* in 1846 and 1847 he published two first-person-narrated stories, "A Bear Hunt" and "Deer Stalking on the South Branch," which illustrate the pleasure he found in being in the woods.[10] There is also an element of ironic humour in both works which contributes to the impression of a man in control of his environment. In the opening paragraphs of the first, Wells makes fun of the accounts of Canadian hunting trips published by British officers and travellers in English periodicals. In a mock-heroic tone he describes the dangers of the bear hunt, then calmly explains the technique which ensures man's victory. As comic relief, while waiting for the bear to appear, the hunters amuse themselves by scaring two men and a woman looking for cows. Finally the bear emerges and, after much effort and excitement, it is killed. The author, ironic to the end, concludes;

> This is a most blood-thirsty adventure for the readers of Miss Maggy, and it is doubtful if I do right in forcing it upon them: but they have been *plomosed* with such nice things all along, that it is well for them to know some of the realities of a life in the woods. Think of the many women (I beg pardon! — *ladies*) and little children who may have been frightened by this monster, or by the very mention of his name. Perhaps he may have devoured some of them (in imagination) while they were out picking raspberries in the fallows. "Oh! dear! that horrid bear! I thought I saw him, or at least heard him! I am sure something stirred behind the gooseberry bush!" No doubt — and therefore, did we not do

> right to make his tough, grisly hide into a sleigh-robe, and to dispose of his hams in a way so satisfactory to all parties concerned?[11]

At the beginning of "Deer Stalking on the South Branch" Wells describes the attitudes of a Canadian backwoodsman to the natural world in which he lives:

> Now the backwoodsman has *his* home feelings. Nurtured roughly and healthfully in the sublimity of the pathless and melancholy forest, he acquires from his infancy that strange, awe-struck, undefinable feeling which gradually grows to be the luxury of his existence, and which can never leave him, let him be transplanted to what other part of the world he may. He has imbibed the spirit of solitude, and indulged in that placid, equable self-communion, which has been the charm of his existence while his character was being formed, and his spirit bears the impress unfaded and uppermost to the longest day he lives. This is universally true of the men of mind among the backwoodsmen.[12]

Admitting that he, too, has "imbibed the spirit of solitude" the narrator goes on to describe the annual deer hunt. Positive views of the wintry landscape abound:

> The sun came up gloriously through the sparkling vapor. Gorgeous and glittering and joyous shone out the morning. The air was balm and frankincense and myrrh, and the odor of many spices commingled. The trees with their drooping branches and feathery tufts, robed in vestments of silver and emeralds, and topaz, recalled to mind stories of eastern enchantment, and the land of the fairy.... yes, this unapproachable scenic effect of our forests in winter, will amply repay the beholder for the absence of those mountain prospects regretted by many accustomed to countries more broken and wildly sublime than our river-countries can pretend to be.[13]

Hunting, for "Cinna," is a companionable masculine occupation. "Then came laughing and storytelling until we lay down for the night."[14] Friendly rivalry exists in the hunt as each tries to bag more deer, with more accurate shots, than the other. Yet it is still, in part, a solitary activity:

> To commence the fifth day, I started before the first streaks of morning to take a lonely hunt by myself, and enjoy the luxury of a sun-rise in winter from the tops of some distant hills. That was a place for a man to ponder in. The air was cold and crackling, yet intensely exhilarating. The fibres of the brain were strung up to their highest tension — the muscles of the body were hard and wire-like, causing one to feel the tiger's strength and activity at every move. "Hi!" I shouted, as the sun came up — "Hi — hurra! hurra!" in ten thousand voices. "Glory!" I cried — "Glory!" responded the snowy savanagh.... [15]

Having spent a happy week in the woods, despite cold and discomfort, the hunters return home with their deer, convinced that the fresh air of the forest and the exercise of the hunt are "necessary to man's health."[16] Wells' "Legends of the Early Settlements" in the same periodical[17] are third-person narratives set in the past, which lack the immediacy of the two hunting stories, but the protagonists in all three display the same command of their environment as the hunters of deer and bear. Even in the prose works of writers like J. H. Willis and

Levi Adams, which tend to focus on haunted houses and languishing lovers, nature is treated as sympathetic to and reflecting the mood of the protagonists, not as a frightening, disinterested external force.

THE CANADIAN-BORN POETS were equally positive in their response to Canadian scenery. Of the poets who wrote in this period, Adam Hood Burwell is probably the best-known today. Burwell, born in 1790, became a clergyman, initially, in 1827, of the Church of England, and subsequently, about 1836, of the Catholic Apostolic Church (Irvingite). In many of his poems he portrayed nature as part of a divinely-ordained plan, associating the seasonal cycles with resurrection, life, aging, and death in the human cycle. In Burwell's view it is impossible for even the depths of winter to be hostile, since that season was planned by a benevolent deity. Of Burwell's early poems, "Talbot Road," dated 1818, has been the most widely reprinted. Praising the Talbot settlement, the poem celebrates nature for its potential use to man:

> Productive nature smiles o'er all this land,
> And strews her bounties with a lavish hand,
> In wild profusion — soft meand'ring rills,
> Deep woods, rich dales, smooth plains, and sunny hills,
> Sylvan recesses, dark o'erhanging groves,
> Where vocal songsters tune their throats to loves;
> Where lurks the fox in crafty, sly career,
> And in light gambols bounds the wary deer.
> A land like this, created for delight,
> Industry's hardy sons might well invite,
> And quickly call the energetic worth,
> The powers of enterprising freemen forth,
> Whose hands would soon transform the rugged wilds
> To fruitful fields, and bid tam'd nature smile.[18]

"Journal of a Day's Journey in Upper Canada in October, 1816"[19] describes Niagara Falls at length and concludes with precisely-recalled details from his childhood — scaring birds with slingshots, being frightened by an owl when driving cows home after sunset and then becoming brave and nonchalant in sight of his home, being chased by a neighbour for treading down a field of grain. Nature is essentially controlled and pastoral. In later years, Burwell's love of nature became part of his religion. The long poem "Summer Evening Contemplations" (1849), builds on an early short one, "A Summer's Evening" (1821), using some of the same phrases, but now to describe the feelings raised by a natural setting which lead to a general contemplation of the divine and to a specific resurrection and judgment day.

George Longmore's *The Charivari* describes urban *mores*, but his "Tecumthé" contains extended passages of description portraying the forest world of his protagonist. Since the noble Tecumseh is at home in this enviroment, it could not possibly be described as hostile.

> Far in those wilds, — where Wabash pours
> Its tributary tide, along, —
> Now gently skirting the green shores
> Now darkly lashing, swift and strong.
> O'er rocks, whose varied scenes, display'd
> The roaring rapid, or cascade,
> And the thick woods, threw shadowing down
> Upon the floods, — their hues of brown; —
> For many a year, untam'd, — unknown
> The Shawnee, call'd this his own
> Unconquer'd land. . . . [20]

Even in the personal Introductory Stanzas, Longmore writes with affection of the Quebec City environs — Cape Diamond, Montmorency Falls — and of his own childhood in "Fair Canada."

J. H. Willis, in a series of mixed poetry and prose works which appeared in the Montreal *Gazette* in January 1833 under the title of "The Romance of Canadian History — Scenery — Manners," invoked the sublime to describe the beauty of Canada.

> My country! thou art indeed to me
> ——— a land,
> Where Nature's fashionment betrays no lack
> Of bounteous design: displaying all
> We love to worship in her mighty skill —
> Of beauty's soften'd glow, and grandeur's pride,
> And wild sublimity of mien:
> ——— a clime,
> Whose fervid summer sun and winter sky,
> In their own strange contrasting seasons, still
> Beam forth, rich splendour over scenes which know
> Small parallel elsewhere: — Oh!, I am proud
> Of thy blue lakes, and deeping forests' gloom,
> And rushing cataracts, and blooming vales,
> And pine-clad mountains vast. — All, all which makes
> The raptur'd spirit seem a part of thee,
> Mine own lov'd native land.[21]

Those native poets who wrote in a more formal, less emotional manner, were even more likely to equate nature, beauty and the sublime. Holmes Mair's poem "Beauty" depicts a traveller standing on a "mountain brow" gazing at a panorama which seems to include every element of nature generally considered to be

sublime — a word which the poet uses as adjective, adverb, and noun in the course of his forty-five lines. Throughout Mair's poems "beautiful" and "sublime" are ideas which are almost interchangeable.[22]

In their prose works French-Canadian writers were precisely observant of human nature, but not of the physical world in which their protagonists moved. In their poetry, nature is most often used to support human emotion.

> Chante petit oiseau! Déjà sur la colline
> Le printemps qui renaît reverdit l'aubépine,
> Dans nos prés le muguet épanche sa saveur,
> Le ruisseau qui murmure arrose chaque fleur
> Qui parfume ses bords.[23]

The nightingale is being called upon to cheer the writer in his sadness. Similarly,

> L'air parfumé des bois, le tapis de verdure,
> Le ciel mélancolique et l'onde qui murmure,
> L'écho compatissant qui gémit avec moi.[24]

are all meant to sympathize with the poet whose beloved is absent.

"X," author of "Points de vue de la descente de la montagne de Montréal" begins:

> Qui n'a point contemplé, dans ses vastes regards,
> Ce coup-d'oeil enchanteur qui vient de toutes parts,
> S'offrir au voyageur dans la pente facile
> Du Mont Majestueux qui domine la ville?
> . . . .
> Ce qui d'abord le fixe et l'attire toujours,
> C'est le fier Saint-Laurent qui, dans son noble cours,
> Entre des bords rians, pompeusement promène
> Les flots toujours coulant de son urne lointaine.[25]

The viewer sees the city itself and the new church, before his eye is caught by villages on the far shore and he begins to remember the idyllic adolescence he spent in one of them. Present scenery touches off pleasant memories of childhood, just as it did for Burwell. Pierre Chauveau, in "Joies naïves," gives us a delightful child's-eye view of winter:

> Oh que j'aime la neige! Oh que j'aime à la voir
> Descendre par flocons sur le sol encore noir!
> Ou bien quand elle tombe en poussière si fine,
> Que l'on croirait qu'un ange épand de la farine
> Pour donner des gâteaux à nous, petits enfants.
> Et puis, maman, j'en fais des bonhommes tout blancs,
> Et j'élève des forts que mon grand frère assiège;
> Oh que j'aime le neige.[26]

Specific descriptions are very rare in French-Canadian poetry. One of the rare exceptions, "Les Sucreries Canadiennes" of Gérin-Lajoie, is a fairly detailed

account of a forest fête at the time of sugaring-off. It was sufficiently detailed, in fact, that Joseph Doutre complained in *L'Avenir* that Lajoie's description was incorrect.[27]

If women writers appear to be missing from this survey of descriptions of the natural world written by the native-born, it is because the ones we know of, Julia Beckwith Hart, Mary Graddon Gosselin, Rosanna Mullins, and Odile Cherrier, did not, at least in this period, either describe Canadian scenery or situate any of their characters in a distinctive natural setting.

THE FEW IMMIGRANTS WHO WROTE in French, Napoléon Aubin, Hyacinth-Poirier Leblanc de Marconnay, and Regis de Trobriand, give no evidence in their works that they had noticed the Canadian landscape. This is in contrast to immigrant writers in English, all of whom seem to have been impelled to describe, in one way or another, what they saw and how they felt about it. With a few exceptions, their response was as positive as that of the native-born.

Most modern Canadians would find it quite understandable if early nineteenth-century immigrant workers had found the Canadian winter disheartening. The immigrant literary response, however, was generally one of pleasure. Winter was no more depressing for them than it was for native-born writers like Wells, Willis or Chauveau. Winter was part of the North American mystique. J. H. Hagarty, writing as "Zadig" in *The Church*, sounds in his "A Canadian Winter Sketch"[28] like a "booster" trying to attract tourists. He dwells at length on the bright sun, "more dazzlingly, wondrously brilliant" than July. He walks out on the ice of Toronto Bay and is sure that he can see the spray of Niagara, forty miles away. The forest is silent, lakes are frozen blue, and sleigh bells ring out. Tandem clubs, skating clubs, and curling clubs are all in operation. Cheerful fires burn indoors, and outdoors the aurora appears "shifting and changing in the kindling ether." Another prose writer, "Atticus," describes "The First Fall of Snow"[29] in terms of the joys of sleigh-riding, and "A" compares "Early Winter"[30] to ladies' eyes. "Crossing the Portage"[31] by "W.R.B." describes the delights of winter travel from New Brunswick to Quebec.

Rhoda Ann Page, perhaps the most-quoted "nature poet" of the late 1840's, also saw winter as more beautiful than harsh. Her "Rice Lake by Moonlight — A Winter Scene" begins:

> Moonlight upon the frozen lake! how radiantly smiles
> The Queen of solemn midnight upon all its fairy Isles,
> And the starry sparkling frost-work, that like a chain of gems
> Hangs upon each fair islet's brow in glittering diadems.[32]

Yet winter is "like the sweet smile that mocks us yet upon the face of death" and she calls on the lake to wake in "summer joyousness." Page ends her poem, as always, with a reference to the Creator. Her "Frost on the Window"[33] follows a similar pattern, moving from wintry natural beauty to praise for nature's creator. In both cases, winter is related to death, but, as in Burwell's poems, it is also beautiful in itself because it is part of Creation.

Immigrant writers treated other seasons in an equally positive manner. Some welcomed spring:

> The foals and lambs around their dams
> Their graceful antic play:
> Alive and brisk, with joy they frisk,
> To meet the Queen of May.[34]

and others found a fertile summer land:

> Niagara is a heartsome spot,
> Its teeming orchards fair, I wot
> Are pleasing to the view;
> The landscape yields baith hill and dale,
> And prospects too, the pick and wale,
> In mony a charming hue;
> While daintily the peaches hang
> Frae many a bending bough. . . . [35]

Strangely enough, autumn is not much mentioned, except in a general way when writers are making a formal tour of all seasons, or when they use it as part of the death and resurrection metaphor which relates human life to plant life. In a country whose economy was so bound up with agriculture, the absence of poems celebrating the harvest season is most striking. The only poet who seems to have noticed autumnal detail was J. W. D. Moodie:

> To the woods! to the woods! the sun shines bright,
> The smoke rises high in the clear frosty air;
> . . . . .
> Hark! how the trees crack in the keen morning blast,
> And see how the rapids are covered with steam. . . . [36]

North American lakes and rivers were considered to be particularly sublime. One poetic genre traced the whole Great Lakes chain from Lake Superior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[37] However, many writers contented themselves with celebrating the nearest stream. Among the better-known immigrants, Susanna Moodie wrote a poem to the Otonabee River and James Haskins one to the Trent. Lesser poets produced doggerel like:

> Come, let us take a squint, eh!
> At the far famed Bay of Quinte;[38]

but others were obviously moved by the spectacle of great rivers like the St. Lawrence:

> Beautiful Stream! in all thy pride of strength
> Thou art enrobed in loveliness, and thou
> Doth whiles lay down thy angry might and come
> In calm serenity of majesty,
> Heaving thy crystaline wave most gently,
> As if within its undulations to
> Embrace a wider scope of beauty.[39]

Thomas Macqueen's praise of Lake Huron in "Our Own Broad Lake" appeared in many newspapers and periodicals,[40] and subsequently in Dewart's 1864 *Selections From Canadian Poets.*

One of the objectives of immigrant writers was to describe Canada to those "at home." As most people do in such circumstances, they tended to focus on the things which were different from those shared in the past by writer and reader. The *Maple Leaf* annuals for 1848 and 1849 were very much in this vein.[41] The intention was certainly not to frighten readers with the harshness of the Canadian landscape.

> Our forest-land borrows but slender charms from the treasury of the Past — she has but little food for the sort of stirring contemplations of Memory, but is rich in the ideal treasures of Hope — she lives in the rough strength of a fresh and lusty Present, and flushed with cheerful anticipations is the eager glance she bends on the Future. No retrospective repinings — no soft dallying with memorial glories — her step and voice are alike "Onward!" and the spirit of that watchword pervades alike the physical and moral features of her broad land.[42]

"Rough Sketches by a Backwoodsman" in the 1849 number begins its final paragraph:

> We have said that the scenes of CANADA ressemble those of HOME. So indeed they do, and in many instances excel them. . . .

The "rough sketch" is of a backwoods settlement. The author makes no attempt to call it beautiful — it is "no picturesque tour" — but he discounts the difficulties of forest life and points to the advantages of prosperity produced by hard work. "A Chapter on Chopping" and "A First Day in the Bush"[43] describe things which are strange to the newcomer, but if the writers were frustrated or frightened by their experience, they do not say so.

DETAILED DESCRIPTIONS OF PLACES and events like those which appeared in the *Maple Leaf* annuals were less common than descriptions of a more general nature, most often in verse, which were couched in the con-

ventional terms which would be understood by European readers. Perhaps the most common framework for these poems is best summarized in the phrase "it's beautiful, but it isn't home." Mary Ann Madden, for example, wrote in the *Literary Garland* of "Evening in the Woods":

> For a scene of quiet loveliness
> Spreads fair before mine eye;
> A forest dark, and pleasant fields,
> And a cloudless evening sky.[44]

But "How many things remind me / That 'tis a foreign land." The first six stanzas describe present beauty, the last four, her longing for the scenes of her childhood. The poem is typical of dozens. Although the Canadian scene could not be loved in the way that the remembered places of childhood were loved, it was certainly not described by nostalgic writers as hostile, repellent, or ugly.

The use of nineteenth-century conventional language, sentiment, and aesthetics has blunted for modern Canadians any sense of immediacy in most of the descriptive writing which has come down to us. Bishop G. J. Mountain recorded in *Songs of the Wilderness* his poetic impressions of a canoe trip from Montreal to the Hudson's Bay Company lands in the Northwest. The descriptions were intended for an English audience, since the book was published in England in 1846, with the proceeds going to Bishop's College, Lennoxville. The journey was an exciting one for both the Bishop and his readers, but to us his wilderness is a classical, Biblical, place. References to Greek and Latin classics are almost as frequent as the Biblical references. Nature is awful, in the old sense of inspiring awe in the beholder, but it holds no terrors for the Bishop.

The most idealized of all the views of wilderness scenery published in Canada appears in the long title poem of Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief*, printed in Montreal in 1830. The poet is on a journey through the Great Lakes by canoe.

> Now o'er a clear — a placid stream —
> Half burnished by the sun's last beam,
> Which through the lofty pines was thrown —
> Our little bark went proudly gliding,
> As mistress of the wave alone,
> Where we in safety now were riding,
> 'Midst scenes majestic, and as grand
> As e'er were shaped by Nature's hand.[45]

Like Adam Kidd and Bishop Mountain, those who viewed and wrote about that internationally-known natural phenomenon, Niagara Falls, had travelled away from home. The number of people who made the journey, even in the early nineteenth century, was considerable. On 25 August 1836, the St. Catharines *Journal* reported that there had been over a thousand visitors to the Falls in the previous two weeks. Of the many thousands of visitors, a great number were

moved to poetry, as a cursory glance at North American newspapers and periodicals of the time reveals. The most common response to Niagara Falls, from immigrant and native-born alike, was to describe them as sublime. The Falls were almost the perfect example of the sublime. They were grand, awesome and vast; they thundered; they threw up a rainbow; they produced strong emotion in the viewer.

> Une secrète et indéfinissable craint, mêlée de courage, une jouissance mêlée d'appréhension; une admiration mêlée de terreur; tout cela fond à la fois sur l'âme, l'accable, l'enchante.[46]

Without exception, all were reminded that man had not tamed God's creation. In addition, a few were reminded of the battles which had been fought nearby, and a few others enjoyed the conceit of imagining themselves as the first human ever to see the spectacle.

A small book containing the most quotable items written by visitors in the *Album of the Table Rock* was published under that title at Niagara in 1846. In it all the themes mentioned above can be found. They appear as well in J. K. Liston's three-canto, hundred-page, poem, *Niagara Falls*, published in Toronto three years earlier. Liston's unique contribution to the literature about Niagara comes in presciently relating the Falls to ideas of human progress.

> Nor are we sure but in some future age
> The vast descending sheet itself may not
> Lend power immense to some vast engine formed
> By human skill, and useful to the race
> Of then existing men, whose views enlarged
> By Science, with its still progressive march
> Of vast improvements, shall demand more power
> From Nature in propulsion of machines
> Of bulk and power exceeding far the bounds
> Which limit now the extent of man's designs.[47]

Whether the reference point is Niagara Falls or a small local stream, a thick forest or an isolated tree, positive descriptions were the rule among the immigrants as they were among the native-born. The examples above have been selected from hundreds of possible quotations. The exceptions, in contrast, are so few that they can all be mentioned. Other than *Wacousta* and *Roughing it in the Bush*, there is Joseph Abbott's snobbish, bad-tempered *Philip Musgrave*, a thinly-disguised autobiographical work by a Church of England missionary which elicited vigorous replies in letters-to-the-editor columns, and in at least one pamphlet, from Methodists and Presbyterians who resented his portrayal of them. Standish O'Grady's *The Emigrant* is a long poem, again by an Established Church clergyman, in which the author's intense dislike of the Canadas, and particularly French Canadians, as well as his resentment of the poverty which led to his emigration shine forth.

Niagara Falls had one disappointed visitor — Dr. Robert Hamilton of Scarboro, writing as "Guy Pollock" in the *Canadian Literary Magazine* of April 1833. He objected that the Falls had been overly praised, so that his expectation was too great; that they were "not surrounded by hills or precipices as other water falls usually are," but instead emerge from a flat plain; and finally, that they were of too grand a scale for the mind to assimilate.

The fascination with lakes and rivers which we have remarked on the positive side of the ledger extended, in two instances, to the negative as well. In both cases it is a sluggish stream:

> As the Chippawa Creek crept along by its banks,
> Or as poets would say was a flowing:
> Though a fish that had spent his whole life in its stream,
> Could scarce tell you which way it was going.[48]

The author of the other poem, Daniel Haydn Mayne, was a Scottish immigrant. It would appear from several of his poems that emigration had brought him neither success nor happiness. "To the River Don" certainly expresses disenchantment.

> O Don, Great Don! thy river may seem fine
> To those who never saw a nobler stream;
> Thy swampy banks may look like beauty's line
> To those who never saw a livelier green,
> To those who still delight in lowly mien:
> To me you bring the image of the snail
> That crawls in passive meekness o'er the scene;
> Thy face seems void of spirit, fierce and pale,
> And glorious when it dashes, as a queen
> Who pleases while she storms, like rain thro' sunny sheen.
>
> The ghostly vapour rising from thy bed,
> Like evil spirit shunning blue eyed morn;
> Takes deep revenge before the sun hath led
> Her column thro' the air like fiend forsworn:
> And thou art left to draw thy serpent form,
> Around thy sluggish heart Celestial Don,
> Till ev'ning falls, and then the vapour lorn
> Embraceth thee again, and lies upon,
> Thy yellow looking breast, which agues many a one.[49]

He goes on to write about swamps, snakes, carrion birds and malaria, before concluding in Stanza VI, that when the mud flats are eventually drained "thy flood / Will sweeter grow. . . ."

It should not come as a surprise that it was that bane of Canadian summers, the mosquito, which called forth the greatest number of disapproving literary comments, since mosquitoes were, and are, a natural menace, although not in the Frygian sense. Even Bishop Mountain devoted his fifteenth sonnet to them, com-

paring them, although of "lighter torment" to the plague visited on Egypt.[50] "To an Aged Mosheto," "The Moschetto's War Song," and "Sonnet to the First Mosquito"[51] are less elegant conceits, written by ordinary citizens. Most of the complaints about the natural world in the Canadas focused on things like swamps and mosquitoes which it would be difficult to praise. The difference is that those writers whose feelings about Canada were positive ignored such irritations, while those whose feelings were negative highlighted them.

Fortunately, most authors were content with their life in the Canadas. Thus, regardless of language or place of birth, they did not describe nature as cold and indifferent or "red in tooth and claw" as Frye has theorized, nor did they reject the North American wilderness as others have suggested.[52] The immigrant English, while as positive overall as the native-born, display the most complex response to the natural world. Their eyes, and their aesthetic conditioning, told them that their new homes were in a beautiful land. For most there was no conflict between expectation and reality. However, living close to the sublimity of wild nature was not, for some, as comfortable as reading about it, and in their writing a certain tension may be discerned between, for example, the idea of a tree as a thing of beauty and the idea of a tree as a thing which must be removed by physical labour in order to ensure survival. In addition, some immigrants were homesick for the family, friends, and places they had left behind. For them, the nostalgia which presented a different sort of natural world as an ideal was spatial as well as temporal. Nonetheless, almost all immigrants described the Canadas in very positive terms. Those who did not were the unhappy souls, wishing they had never left home, for whom Eden itself would have been flawed.

The native-born of both language groups accepted the Canadian landscape — the only one they knew — as their standard of beauty, applying European aesthetic ideas to the reality of their surroundings. In French-Canadian writing the natural world is generally perceived as an abstract convention mirroring the moods of the poet. Events had reduced the space perceived to be *Canadien* from that of the entire interior of North America to that of a narrowly-defined Lower Canada. It is possible that this change in political geography produced a literary reluctance to describe and possess the land, and a movement from exterior to interior space, both of which resulted in a concentration on human beings and their actions.

The absence of the natural world from the works of the four native-born women is probably explained by their social class and education. They were all city-bred daughters of prosperous merchants who had been given a convent, or convent-style, education which trained them to be "ladies" in the European manner. They would have been expected, as one of their "accomplishments," to be able to produce elegant verse on the contemplation of some natural object, but they would not have been trained to observe the natural world.

A number of the native-born English males did exhibit what A. J. M. Smith has called "the local realism of the pioneer."[53] For them, forests were not things to be contemplated, but comfortable, familiar places in which they hunted and through which they travelled. Their emotion was one of pleasure. Where nostalgia influenced their writing it was only in the sense of a temporal removal, not a spatial one, from the well-loved places of childhood. Even those who were inclined to the use of formal descriptive terminology seem to have been looking directly and delightedly at the natural world, although the resulting description is couched in conventional terms.

Thus, regardless of their place of birth or the language in which they wrote, and regardless of whether their works appeared in local newspapers or were printed in book form, it can be seen that the mass of Canadian writers in the first half of the nineteenth century perceived the natural world which surrounded them in positive terms derived from the internationally-understood concept of the sublime. *Roughing it in the Bush* and *Wacousta* to the contrary, the environment was not regarded as hostile.

NOTES

[1] The thesis has been most clearly stated by Northrop Frye in his "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada*. It was amplified in the 1970's in such thematic works as Margaret Atwood's *Survival* and John Moss's *Patterns of Isolation*. The phrases "terrifyingly cold, empty and vast" and "nature red in tooth and claw" against which I have argued in this essay are taken from Frye. The latter appeared originally in Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

[2] See Richardson's other "Canadian" novel, *The Canadian Brothers*, and such Moodie poems as "The Maple Tree" (*Literary Garland*, April 1849, p. 214), and "Canada" (*Victoria Magazine*, September 1847, p. 3).

[3] The word "Canada" as used in this essay refers to the pre-Confederation colonies of Upper and Lower Canada (or, after 1841, Canada West and Canada East). As literary evidence I have read all the books, periodicals, and newspaper literature published in both French and English in the period between 1817 and 1850.

[4] Although Carl Berger's *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1983) deals with a slightly later period, the background he gives is useful to an understanding of the perception of nature in early nineteenth-century Canada. A number of American works also provide helpful background. See, for example, Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967). Where the United Kingdom is concerned, Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 1983) should be consulted. The idea of the sublime in the period under study seems to have developed from the writings of the Rev. William Gilpin about landscape painting. There is a useful introduction to the concept of the sublime in art in Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime* (London: British Museum, 1980). Turner painted in the period 1790-1850.

[5] *Album Littéraire*, February 1846, p. 27.

[6] P. 3 of the Réédition Québec 1968 reprint, under the later nineteenth century title *Le Chercheur de trésors.*

[7] *La Revue Canadienne*, 13 September 1845. "Pietro" was subsequently identified as François-Pascal-Eugène L'Écuyer.

[8] The work is signed "C.M.D." Durand also used the pseudonym "Briton." In his *Reminiscences of Charles Durand of Toronto, Barrister* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1897) he acknowledged his youthful works. He also annotated the sets of the *Canadian Casket* and *Canadian Garland* which he donated to the Toronto Public Library.

[9] P. 46.

[10] They were published under the pseudonym "Cinna." The connection of Wells with "Cinna" of *Barker's Magazine* and the *British Whig* was made by Rev. Henry Scadding in 1877 — well within Wells' lifetime and not denied. Family papers in the Queen's University Archives refer to him as writing from his youth. The papers contain some poems. Wells also published a book on Canadian politics, *Canadiana*, in England in 1837. Despite its political intent, much of the book is given over to descriptions of Canada. The two stories appeared in July 1846, and February and March 1847, respectively.

[11] P. 160.

[12] P. 502.

[13] P. 508.

[14] P. 588.

[15] Pp. 590-91.

[16] P. 598.

[17] "Tula, or the Ojibwa's Leap," May 1846; "Maroon Hensey," August 1846; and "De Soulis, Runner of the Woods," October 1846 and January and April 1847. *Barker's Magazine* contains a number of other works by "Cinna."

[18] C. F. Klinck (ed.), *The Poems of Adam Hood Burwell, Pioneer Poet of Upper Canada* (London, Ontario: Univ. of Western Ontario, 1963), [published as No. 30 in the series "Western Ontario History Nuggets"], p. 6.

[19] *The Scribbler*, 18 July 1822.

[20] *Canadian Review and Literary and Historical Journal*, December 1824, p. 393. Different copies of the *Canadian Review* have different pagination. This extract is from the second stanza of Canto One.

[21] Montreal *Gazette*, 19 January 1833.

[22] Holmes Mair was an older brother of Charles Mair. He was born in Scotland and brought to Canada in the first year of his life. All his known poems appeared in the *Bathurst Courier* (Perth, C.W.). "Beauty" was printed on 14 January 1848.

[23] Charles Lévesque, "Le Rossignol," *Album Littéraire*, April 1850, p. 122.

[24] J. G. Barthe, "Le Bois Solitaire," *Le Populaire*, 30 July 1838.

[25] *L'Ami du Peuple*, 28 September 1833.

[26] *Le Coin du Feu* (1840); and *La Revue Canadienne*, 8 March 1845.

[27] Lajoie, *Album Littéraire*, February 1850; Doutre, 13 April 1850.

[28] 30 May 1840. The same piece appeared in the Montreal *Gazette*, 16 June 1840. The source given in the *Gazette* was the London (England) *Morning Herald.*

[29] Cobourg *Star*, 6 December 1831.

[30] Quebec *Gazette*, 15 November 1843.

[31] Quebec *Transcript*, 6 March 1839.

[32] Cobourg *Star*, 17 January 1849, and many other locations. This was the most widely reprinted Canadian poem of its day.

[33] *Star*, 25 October 1848.

[34] "J.E., York Township," "Spring," *Agriculturist*, 1 May 1848.

[35] G. W. Gillespie, *Miscellaneous Poems* (Toronto: 1843), p. 13. The Scots dialect is as originally printed.

[36] "To the woods! To the woods," *Victoria Magazine*, January 1849, p. 117.

[37] The earliest examples can be found in M. Gnarowski (ed.), *Three Early Poems from Lower Canada* (Montreal: 1969). They are dated 1789, 1797, and 1806. Kidd's "The Huron Chief" (1830), W. A. Stephens' "Hamilton" (1840), J. K. Liston's *Niagara Falls* (1843), and John Breakenridge's Canada," first published in 1837, are all in this vein.

[38] "Bay of Quinte Lyrics," Kingston *Chronicle*, 12 September 1835.

[39] Rustic Bard, "To the St. Lawrence," *Canadian Courant*, 20 October 1833.

[40] *Canadian Gem and Family Visitor*, July 1849, p. 157, for example.

[41] The first *Maple Leaf*, the annual for 1847, was written in Canada, but the subject matter was all non-Canadian. In response to requests from readers who wished to send the books as gifts to friends in the United Kingdom, the annuals for 1848 and 1849 contained many descriptive accounts of life in the Canadas for the benefit of those "at home."

[42] "A Chapter on Canadian Scenery," 1848. There is no pagination.

[43] "Chopping," 1849; "First Day," 1848.

[44] December 1846, p. 550.

[45] Pp. 68-69.

[46] C.A.N.L., "Description de la chute de Niagara," *La Revue Canadienne*, 9 January 1846.

[47] P. 55.

[48] Anonymous, "The Chippawa Creek," St. Catharines *Journal*, 3 December 1846.

[49] *Poems and Fragments*, p. 98.

[50] *Songs of the Wilderness*, p. 99.

[51] Theodore C. Wheeler, Cobourg *Star*, 20 October 1847; Gavin Russell, *Bathurst Courier*, 29 June 1847; Anonymous, Kingston *Chronicle*, 6 June 1840.

[52] M. Kline, *Beyond the Land Itself* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970).

[53] In "Colonialism and Nationalism in Canadian Poetry Before Confederation," Canadian Historical Association *Report*, 1944, p. 75.

INTRICATE PLAY

Marlene Cookshaw

Behind the school building
we enter the yard on its far side,
cross the tennis court where a man
reaches awkward in late sun spilling
from low cloud to find the perfect serve

On the track we link arms
and watch inside the oval

Two children tumble through
a distracted ballet His hands
slide along her arms Her legs lock
and loosen in the same hooked rhythm
Each head turns in the other's lap
familiar, unaccented

The air the temperature of old bathwater

At the base of the oval a youth
catches the football tossed
by a cheerful woman in sweatpants
She walks closer He chalks
on the track the intricate play

We stroll past the side bleachers
into the low rippling phrases of a tenor sax
The young man lifts his horn to the field, turns
his thin back on the neighbouring apartment

*

Tonight I walk the dog alone
the same route, circling the track
to heavy metal from the apartment's
open window
From the floodlit court
the white dog chalks the cool field west
Parallel clouds roll in an upward gesture
that takes me off balance:
the earth's
motion so obvious in the untroubled air

THE FALL OF PARIS

Andrew Parkin

Wanda Landowska (1879-1959) recorded Scarlatti's sonatas in Paris, 1939-March, 1940. On the recording the sounds of heavy guns can be heard at times in the background.

Landowska plays while Paris falls;
Scarlatti's energy relives its runs
though sullen drums, beleaguered guns,
affright the ancient air.

With subtle Janus for her god
the unreal city prays and flirting smiles.
St. Louis sleeps, and troops for miles
around blaspheme, despair.

The shadow of triumphal arch
again entices Prussian youths and men,
spreads wide for strutting pride and then
engulfs all marching there.

L'Etoile becomes a blackened web.

As Hitler jigs we drink down shame.
The Opera's hyperboles resound,
its lamps still glow, but underground
a fire begins to flare.

Beyond the barracks, yards, and cells
where victims face the brute who maims and kills
the Seine between the city's hills
spills like a woman's hair.

The rape is quick and sure; the troops
are satisfied, and Speer lets Paris live.
Can she survive this war?
She gives herself till forty-four
the spleen of Baudelaire,
the rictus of Voltaire.

"PROMPTINGS STRONGER" THAN "STRICT PROHIBITIONS"

New Forms of Natural Religion in the Novels of Robertson Davies

Patricia Köster

θεοσεβέστατον αὐτό ἐστι πάντων
ζῴων ἄνθρωπος;

Plato, *Laws* x.902.

Omnia illa per quae Deo reverentia exhibetur, pertinent ad religionem.

— Summa Theol. 2-2.q.83.3[1]

PHILOSOPHY HAS LONG STUDIED natural theology. Plato, in the tenth book of the dialogue *Laws*, establishes the existence, providence and justice of God(s), beginning from the reassuring point that both "Hellenes and barbarians" make "prostrations and invocations . . . at the rising and setting of the sun and moon, in all the vicissitudes of life. . . ."[2] Passages in many other classical writers attest a wide-spread discussion of such questions.[3] In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas Aquinas, like Plato, finds that the existence, providence and justice of God can be established without the aid of dogma, along with the immortality of the soul and the eternity of reward and punishment; other medieval writers study the same or similar points.[4] In *De Veritate*, Lord Herbert of Cherbury seeks the Common Notions which underlie all the local forms of religion, and finds them in the existence of God implying worship, piety, penance, reward, and punishment ("cultus Dei, pietas, resipiscentia, praemium & poena");[5] his rather conventional list had much influence on the Deists, who decided that "natural religion" was enough, and that anything further was priestcraft.[6] Since, however, Lockean psychology was already discrediting innate ideas, the whole concept of natural religion fell into disuse after the French Revolution, with the

aid of nineteenth-century science, as well as nineteenth-century romanticism.[7] In the twentieth century, on the other hand, natural theology has revived: John Baillie, for example, asserts that those religious truths which atheists "deny . . . with *the top of their minds*, they believe . . . all the time in the bottom of their hearts."[8] In literature, Robertson Davies appears to evoke new forms of natural religion in many actions of his fictional characters, who under extraordinary stress behave, contrary to their usual beliefs, attitudes, or customs, in accordance with some deep, but normally unrecognized, religious promptings.

The most startling example of natural religion in Davies's novels occurs in *Fifth Business*, when

> the Reverend Amasa Dempster christened it [his premature child] immediately, . . . This was by no means in accord with the belief of his faith, but he was not himself and may have been acting in response to promptings stronger than seminary training. . . . Dempster wanted to dip the child in water, but Dr. McCausland brusquely forbade it, and the distracted father had to be content with sprinkling. (FB 20)[9]

Since Dempster is a Baptist minister, his "seminary training" would have reinforced a lifelong belief that baptism can be granted only to those who are old enough to experience personal conversion, and who have experienced it. Paul's baptism, from this point of view, would be invalid on two counts: incapacity through his infancy, and the inefficiency of sprinkling as opposed to dipping.[10] Davies, who is obviously well aware of these objections, overrides them with Dempster's "response to promptings stronger than seminary training." Dempster has acted in accordance with the belief and practice of most Christian churches, but against those of his own, apparently because infant baptism is an element of a natural religion which lies deeper than and prior to any learning process. Dempster would undoubtedly have heard of infant baptism even before entering his "seminary," but he would have heard of it as of an abhorred and unscriptural practice. Beneath this learned response, however, he has an innate, and hitherto unknown, natural belief that baptism is necessary to salvation, that it is efficacious even for infants, and even by sprinkling.

In teaching the efficacy of infant baptism by sprinkling, Davies is reinforcing doctrines of his own church, the Anglican Church of Canada:

> The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ. (Article 27 of the 39 Articles, *Book of Common Prayer*)[11]
>
> . . . if . . . the Child is weak, it shall suffice to pour Water upon it. . . . (The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants, *Book of Common Prayer*)

By suggesting, however, that belief in such efficacy is part of a natural theology, Davies goes beyond any ordinary idea of natural religion, and might fall under the Thomistic condemnation: "Non licet inducere aliquem ad religionem per

falsam doctrinam."[12] Since baptism is one of the "Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel" (Article 25), it depends upon a Divine revelation, and cannot be part of that natural religion which predates all revelation. In fact, the episode seems to be a grotesque joke, showing that Baptists cannot *really* believe what they think they believe.

In his first novel, Davies had already made a similar joke in direct terms, through Tom Gwalchmai: "Now if this fellow Mackilwraith had been a believer — and I don't mind saying that I'm thinking of the C. of E. — he would have known that suicide is a sin, and his belief would have held him up in his trouble" (TT, 281-82). Hector Mackilwraith himself, as son of a Presbyterian minister, "knew from his earliest days that he was a dedicated boy" (TT 74), and although "it was many years since he had prayed, . . . he had always thought of himself as a religious sort of man, and he believed firmly in God" (TT 270). Tom's idea of "a believer" is clearly different from Hector's, and presumably better: Hector's belief leads only to a grotesque prayer ("O God, here I come!" — 270) as he attempts to kill himself, lacking both the knowledge and the support affirmed by Tom. The joke is only in part a joke; here and elsewhere Davies suggests that true belief and Anglican belief are the same: The Church of England exemplifies natural religion. As joke it parallels, and perhaps alludes to Fielding's joke via Parson Thwackum in *Tom Jones*, Bk. III, ch. 3.

Hector's effort to pray, although grotesque, does not need to overcome any resistance other than habit, but Professor Vambrace is surprised into a prayer which contradicts his conscious disbelief. "It was the Professor's contention, after his experiment in Catholicism [which he had never accepted], that man could lead a life of Roman virtue without any religion at all" (TT 122), and he educated his daughter, Pearl, as an agnostic. His aggressive insistence on agnosticism, during a period of at least seventeen years, made both school and home uncomfortable for Pearl (TT 122, LM 95). Nonetheless, when Bevill Higgin reveals that he "Never meant any harm to Professor Vambrace" (after Vambrace had assumed that the advertisement was part of "a plot . . . to bring him into disrepute and mockery" — LM 95),

> "God bless my soul!" said the Professor. It was a strange comment from a professed agnostic, and it rose to his lips unbidden. (LM 249)

Although the conscious mind has not "bidden" the words, some deeper part of Vambrace has sent them forth. Whereas the original stress of seeing the advertisement caused raging fury (LM 28-30, 47-48, 94-98), the surprise of learning that the supposed plot did not exist permitted that deeper (and probably truer) part to speak.

Similarly, David Staunton shows that his devotion to reason is merely the surface of his being. He tells Dr. von Haller, "I am no longer a Christian"

(M 191), though he wonders whether psychiatry were just an expensive substitute "for something the Church gave away, with Salvation thrown in for good measure" (M 43). Instead of confessing his sins to God, David has argued his behaviour in the court of Mr. Justice Staunton, acting himself as prosecutor, defence attorney, accused, and judge (M 60-61 et passim). Nonetheless, when he is oppressed with claustrophobia in the darkness of the bear cave, he cries out, "... for the love of God let's get back to the light" (M 274). Liesl comments ironically on his choice of words, and then worships at the bear shrine. As they crawl up the exit tunnel, he collapses in fright, and when Liesl urges him to pray for strength, he "must have called upon Maria Dymock [his promiscuous but courageous great-grandmother] and something ... gave [him] the power" to persevere (M 276). The second prayer is ambiguous: it resembles invocation of an unlikely saint, but of course it also means calling upon the strength of his own genes.

THE THEME OF THE UNLIKELY SAINT has already been treated at length in *Fifth Business*, where Ramsay's attachment to Mary Dempster leads to an interest in what constitutes saintliness, and to an investigation of saints generally. Later, Ramsay muses:

> I had sought God in my lifelong, unlikely (for a Canadian schoolmaster) preoccupation with that fantastic collection of wise men, virtuous women, thinkers, doers, organizers, contemplatives, crack-brained simpletons, and mad mullahs that are called Saints. But all I had found in that lifelong study was a complexity that brought God no nearer. (WW 42)

Ramsay comes to this realization late in his life; in a sense many of Davies's characters are engaged in the search for God, but never come to realize the fact. Furthermore, for most of them, the search remains, as for Ramsay, unfulfilled: they do not find God, and they cannot find a substitute.

Clement Hollier goes to Darcourt for information about the missing MS, and when quizzed about his embarrassment bursts out, "I suppose it's part of your job to hear confessions?" The outburst (and the subsequent confession) appear to be partly or even wholly undesired by his conscious mind, as he mutters "I was afraid of this when I came here" (RA 94). Although Hollier rejects the suggested penance (97), he is a second time shocked into recognizing an unsuspected orthodoxy in his own thinking when Darcourt mentions the importance of "sheer, bald-headed Luck." Hollier protests, "I would have expected you to say God's Saving Grace"; he acquiesces, however, in Darcourt's novel definition of God, and drinks a toast "to the Rum Old Joker" (101). He has not found God, but he has clearly indicated his need to believe, and his true, if hidden,

belief. His confession is not merely unloading on a fellow human being, as he has chosen a priest, and specifically mentions the office ("job to hear confessions").

Although God in the definitions of orthodox Christianity proves elusive, in other formulations He constantly recurs. Paul Dempster, brought up in his father's joyless creed, learning the Psalms to ward off almost inevitable inherited wickedness (WW 24) — a private version of Original Sin? — loses, during his various careers as Nobody, whatever faith he had achieved. He has, however, as Magnus Eisengrim, complete faith in what he calls "the Great Justice":

> . . . something I don't understand, but feel and serve and fear — does that [administers it]. It's sometimes horrible to watch. . . . But part of the glory and terror of our life is that somehow, at some time, we get all that's coming to us. Everybody gets their lumps and their bouquets and it goes on for quite a while after death. (WW 313-314)

Although Amasa Dempster would not approve, his son appears to believe in Purgatory, along with an apparently matching temporary Heaven, because they are necessary for the Great Justice to be complete.

Closely anlagous to the Great Justice, Madame Laoutaro's Balance "may be rough in showing us how weak we are" (RA 268). Clearly, the case of Madame Laoutaro is different from the others: there is no indication that her idea of Balance comes from her own subconscious, since it appears as part of her Gypsy wisdom. Although "in official matters, Gypsies call themselves Catholics" (214), Maria makes it clear that her mother and uncle's minds are "uncluttered by . . . conventional religion" (215). Whereas the other characters are products of "Canadian conventionality, which keeps religion strictly in its place, where it must not be mocked but need not be heeded, either" (215), the Laoutaro's presumably were brought up in direct contact with what Hollier calls the Wild Mind, in effect the Collective Unconscious. Whatever the source for the idea of Balance, Madame Laoutaro is too much in awe of Balance to call down a curse for Hollier (268-69), and would not "fake his fortune" in reading the Tarot cards (226-27). Although Balance lacks Christian theology, it apparently, like the Great Justice, serves as guarantor of morality.

For David Staunton, the guarantor of morality is the law. He has some "critical moments" of insight as he watches Bill Unsworth, who had led the other boys in vandalizing a summer home, achieve "the finishing touch" by defecating on the photographs of the unknown family. David remembers thinking:

> . . . there is nothing intellectual, nothing rooted in principle — even the principle of anarchy — in what he is doing. So far as I can judge — and I must remember that I am his accomplice in all but this, his final outrage — he is simply being as evil as his strong will and deficient imagination will permit. He is possessed, and what possesses him is Evil. (M 154)

The next day, on the train journey home, David decides to be a lawyer: "I was

against whatever it was that possessed [Bill], and I thought the law was the best way of making my opposition effective" (M 155). Although David does not see the decision in religious terms, it clearly has a religious aspect. In deciding to devote his life in a vocation against Evil, he is implicitly dedicating himself to Good. Uneasily aware of the implication, he later declares, "I had no notions of being a crusader" (M 195). Later still, he recognizes that by becoming a defence barrister he "stood very near to the power of evil . . . I have consciously played the Devil's Advocate and I must say I have enjoyed it" (M 228). His original dedication has somehow, in the intricacies of law and the need for recognition, become reversed, though never rejected: in this very passage, he expresses his dislike for those who are possessed by evil ("a force that is inimical to man"), who wish "to loose that force upon the world" (M 227). In rejecting Father Knopwood's certainties and "irrational notions" (M 196), he still retains an ideal of good against evil, and specifically connects the force for evil with the Devil.

Dean Knapp, as an orthodox Christian, believes in the Devil as a necessary corollary to God, and prays before entering the Cathedral, where strange music is sounding, late on Hallowe'en (LM 50). Many unorthodox characters in the novels, however, also find the Devil forcing himself on their attention. In particular, the Devil arouses considerable thought in *World of Wonders*. Magnus tells Ramsay about Willard's caress, and his own response: "I smiled up into his face . . . it made me an accomplice . . . It was the Devil promting me . . . " (WW 40). Ramsay then retires, thinking about the Devil. Despite the aesthetic appeal, he rejects "an operatic Devil, up to every sort of high-class deception, and always defeated at the end of the story by the power of sheer simple-minded goodness" (WW 41). He muses on the fact that theology has not defined the Devil "so splendidly" at it has God. He decides that the Devil is not sin, "though sin is very useful to him" (42). After sketching several further hypotheses to himself and to Magnus over the next days, Ramsay as "diabologian" (57) wonders "if humour isn't one of the most brilliant inventions of the Devil . . . it prevents us from seeing straight, and perhaps from learning things we ought to know" (WW 85). Liesl develops the idea in another direction, and Ingestree agrees that "we can't resist [the Devil] because he and his jokes make so much sense" (86). When, however, Ingestree toasts the Devil, Lind refuses to drink, because he (although not a religious believer) cannot accept the Devil as merely a joke, and Ramsay issues a warning:

> I quite agree that the Devil is a great joker, but I don't think it is particularly jolly to be the butt of one of his jokes. You have called his attention to you in what I must call a frivolous way . . . [he] might throw a joke or two in your direction that would test your sense of humour. (WW 86-87)

Ingestree rejects the warning, but soon becomes the butt of an extended joke, as

Eisengrim reveals the posturing past of "the genius" (203-69 passim). Part of Ramsay's warning is defused by the alternative explanation of "Merlin's laugh" (141-42, 152); Eisengrim is aware that he is going to humiliate Ingestree. The warning, however, remains at least partly relevant: Ingestree has toasted a joking Devil, and must abide a prolonged and unpleasant joke. In this case, then, the logic of the text supports Ramsay's belief in the Devil, however partial or hypothetical the belief itself may be. Although Ramsay, like many of the other characters, has abandoned the faith of his childhood (and has in addition eluded the challenges of Surgeoner to believe in God [FB 130-36] and of Father Regan, to adopt the Catholic faith [FB 138]), he is still searching to define both God and Devil with an energy which must come from some deep inward recognition of their reality.

The examples of Walter Vambrace, David Staunton, Clement Hollier, and Dunstan Ramsay all show professed agnostics revealing unconscious religious feeling, and, in the case of Ramsay, devoting considerable conscious effort to defining and explaining that which he does not consciously believe. A counter example shows the professed believer acting in a way which shows she does not really believe. Laura Pottinger, "who was . . . very High in her religious opinions, rather liked to be ordered about by clergymen, and was always impressed by the word 'priest'" (LM 49). Nonetheless, when she has heard "a dreadful, unholy sound" (48) issuing from the Cathedral at midnight on Hallowe'en, and Dean Knapp has ordered her to keep away ("as your priest, I forbid you to come to the Cathedral" — 49), she disobediently appears, as a "lurking figure" (50, 53). Her "High" Anglicanism makes her defer to the clergy, but her action shows that she does not really believe in any priestly authority. Furthermore, she probably lacks the faith which renders Knapp apprehensive: "while devotion undoubtedly brings its spiritual rewards it brings its spiritual terrors too" (50). Miss Pottinger lacks the terrors, and therefore, by implication, lacks the devotion. She herself sees her persistence in "snooping" (53) as courage — "I am a soldier's daughter" (49) — and never consciously realizes the nature of her hypocrisy. A deeper hypocrite is Canon Woodiwiss, who "was so broad-minded he did not even insist that [Boy and Leola] be confirmed" (FB 128) when they joined his congregation, despite the directive following the Order of Confirmation in *The Book of Common Prayer*: "And there shall none be admitted to the holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed. . . ." Presumably, at his ordination Woodiwiss promised "so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same . . ." — including that directive. His fault approaches apostasy, but he too disguises it as a virtue, this time as broad-mindedness. Thus, the natural irreligion of the hypocrites is more devious than the natural religion of the agnostics.

A FINAL, RATHER COMPLEX EXAMPLE of natural religion comes in Solly Bridgetower's prayer for his mother. Laura Bridgetower left a vindictive will, described by Cobbler as "a grisly practical joke" (MF 20), tying up her money until Solly and Veronica should produce a son — to be named Solomon Hansen Bridgetower. Meanwhile, Solly had barely enough money to keep up the large Bridgetower house, which he could neither sell nor rent, and became temporarily impotent from the strain of trying to beget a son (272-73). When a son was born dead, strangled in his navel cord, Veronica (and perhaps Solly) suspected the agency of Mrs. Bridgetower's spirit (271-72). When Veronica is found in Mrs. Bridgetower's bedroom "unconscious amid overturned tables and chairs" (373), turning out to be "very badly frightened, a bit irrational and quite a way in labour" (369), Solly is sure that he knows:

> He was neither mad nor fanciful: he had no doubt who, or what it was that had sought to prevent the live birth of his son. He knew what it was, also, that was at last defeated. (373)

Because this second son is alive, the Trust is at last broken, and Solly can begin to control his own life. He does not, however, exult over his victory, but continues:

> It was a time for forgiveness. Against the strict prohibition of his faith, Solly prayed for his Mother's soul. (373)

As described, the act is, like Amasa Dempster's baptism of Paul, an overturning of deeply-held conscious belief by yet deeper forces. Filial love, already shown at the funeral (4), makes Solly desire his mother's salvation; the apparent malignancy of her spirit makes him fear its unlikeliness: thus he prays for her soul, "against the strict prohibition of his faith."

In this case, however, no such strict prohibition exists. Anglican clergymen express surprise when asked about the supposed prohibition; *The Book of Common Prayer* does not forbid the practice. In fact, the Church of England, in this as in other matters, follows a via media. Jews and Roman Catholics pray for their dead; Calvinists do not; Lutherans and Anglicans are left free to their own consciences. Although Luther rejected the doctrine of Purgatory, the basis for such prayer, the Second Part of the Smalcald Articles notes that "Nothing has been commanded or enjoined upon us with reference to the dead" (II.12) and the Apology of the Augsburg Confession specifies: "... prayer for the dead we do not forbid" (XXIV.94).[13] Calvin, however, points out that such prayer is neither commanded nor described in the Bible, "Yet, the more important the matter is, the more it ought to have been expressly mentioned."[14] Thus, Luther permits in this case what is not expressly forbidden, and Calvin forbids what is not expressly permitted. For Presbyterians, prayer for the dead is prohibited in the

Westminster Confession of Faith (XXI.4) and in the Larger Catechism (q.183).[15] Robert Louis Stevenson could imagine a Scottish Presbyterian "[desiring] that it had lain in our religion to put up some prayer for [an] unhappy stranger" — even while resisting the desire.[16] For Anglicans, on the other hand, the Thirty-Nine Articles leave the matter open. Article 22 denies the doctrine of Purgatory, but does not mention prayer for the dead. Whereas modern Anglicans seem to interpret the omission in a Lutheran sense, the bishops who framed the Articles had a Calvinist bias, and may well have assumed a Calvinist consequence; certainly Sir Thomas Browne did so. In *Religio Medici*, while considering errors about the souls of the dead, Browne says:

> A third there is which I did never positively maintaine or practice, but have often wished it had been consonant to Truth, and not offensive to my Religion, and that is the prayer for the dead; whereunto I was inclined from some charitable inducements, whereby I could scarce containe my prayers for a friend at the ringing of a Bell, or behold his corpes without an oraison for his soule: 'Twas a good way me thought to be remembred by Posterity, and farre more noble then as History.[17]

Final evaluation of Solly's prayer remains difficult. To Solly, it is an upwelling of a natural religious impulse as irresistible as any described in this article, an impulse unconnected with and contrary to "the strict prohibition of his faith." Since, however, he is in error about the supposed prohibition, how does the error arise? Davies, who is fond of teasing his readers, does not give any hint that Solly is wrong, and has certainly been an enthusiastic reader of Browne, praising his "courageous humanism," finding in his book "an astounding mixture of deep wisdom, religious feeling, wit, thunderous declamation and superstition," and nonetheless choosing Browne as "his own philosopher."[18] Perhaps, then, Solly's belief in "the strict prohibition of his faith" derives from Browne, for although Solly was not raised a Presbyterian, he was, like Davies, more conversant with English literature than with Anglican theology.[19] Whatever the source of the error, the passage works its multiple ironies with great effectiveness, and remains a vivid example of the possible conflict between institutional and natural religion.

Ramsay, unlike Solly, was raised a Presbyterian, and genuinely opposes the Calvinist teaching of his youth by praying for Mrs. Dempster, but is less aware of that opposition than of the "impulsion" which moves him to it:

> I prayed for the repose of the soul of May Dempster, somewhere and somehow unspecified, under the benevolence of some power unidentified but deeply felt. It was the sort of prayer that supported all the arguments of Denyse Staunton against religion, but I was in the grip of an impulsion that it would have been spiritual suicide to deny. And then I begged forgiveness for myself. . . . (FB 245)

Ramsay is sixty-one at the time of the prayer, and has for many years been seeking God among the complexities of hagiography. At this crisis, however, he

finds that although God remains unknown ("unidentified"), His belevolence is "deeply felt." Ramsay's "impulsion" implies that God exists, that He is both benevolent and powerful to answer prayer, and that prayer to Him is appropriate and necessary (refusing to pray would be "spiritual suicide"). So far, Ramsay's unconscious agrees with the Presbyterian teachings of his youth. Further, however, it drives him to pray for a dead person, an act explictly forbidden by those teachings. At this remove from childhood, Ramsay is no longer consciously rebelling against the faith of his parents; he thinks rather of Denyse Staunton's rationalism. His mind cannot oppose rationalism with the ringing "authority" of the Westminster Confession (ww 41), because he no longer believes in that authority. Ramsay, the expert on religion, author of books and articles, is reduced to unconscious impulsion as irrational and as powerful as that of any other character here studied. His training gives him, however, one advantage over the others: he can to some degree analyze the impulsion. His unknown God might disgust Denyse, but would not shock the mystics: St. Paul preached "The Unknown God" to the rationalist Athenians (Acts 17:23-29), and declared His inscrutability to the Romans (Rom. 11:33-34). Ramsay cannot define God, and does not know where or how the soul of Mary Dempster may be, but he does know that prayer has vital importance. Whatever the source of the impulse, it is his deepest and truest self who prays. And strangely enough, he prays like an Anglican, where Solly felt the qualms of a Presbyterian.

IF WE PUT THESE SCATTERED REFERENCES together, we arrive at a natural religion derived from the depths of character. Some of the points resemble traditional formulations of natural theology: the existence of God; His providence (and the consequent value of prayer); His justice; reward and punishment after death. These points of natural religion unite such diverse thinkers as Plato, Thomas Aquinas, and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and are fundamental for Catholic, Anglican, and Calvinist theologians. A second list, however, is more interesting as unique to Robertson Davies, and may help us to understand one aspect of his fiction. This list includes invocation of private saints; the existence of purgatory (together with a [Hindu?] temporary heaven); prayer for the dead; auricular confession; the existence and power of the Devil; the existence of ghosts; the sacramental efficacy of Baptism. Much of this second list opposes Presbyterian pieties: Presbyterians are specifically warned against belief in purgatory, the invocation of saints, prayer for the dead, and auricular confession, and told that "... grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto [baptism], as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated."[20] For Anglicans, on the other

hand, although Article 22 rejects both the existence of Purgatory and the invocation of saints, a Table of Lessons in *The Book of Common Prayer* includes readings for services devoted to sixteen different saints, and for All Saints Day.[21] Anglicans are permitted to pray for their dead, and to make private confession to a priest; they are told that "Baptism is . . . a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God."[22] The existence of the Devil is accepted by the more orthodox of both churches, and the existence of ghosts is not usually discussed in connection with religious belief. In general, however, just as the original Protestants protested against the Catholic church, so Davies's fiction protests against the "strikingly cold and unsympathetic faith"[23] of his childhood. Even the relatively kind Rev. Donald Phelps tells Ramsay that "the age of miracles [is] past . . . , and . . . [seems] heartily glad of it" (FB 63). Ramsay, however, persists in believing: certainly, even if not dead when revived by Mrs. Dempster, Willie goes on to an unexpected total recovery (FB 62). Throughout the novels, the unexplained recurs; both God and Devil appear to intervene in human affairs.[24]

In addition to the religion of the novels, there is a morality. On the whole, it is a morality of self-knowledge, and of taking responsibility for one's own actions.[25] Each book provides a different field, and each character a different opportunity, for exercising (or failing to exercise) this morality. One particular aspect, however, appears three times, an unusual repetition for Davies, and apparently important enough to warrant such emphasis. Griselda Webster tells Roger Tasset:

> Do you know what chastity is? Not the denial of passion, surely. Somebody wise — I forget who it was — said that chastity meant to have the body in the soul's keeping. (TT 237)

She is declining a second passionate kiss, and thus declining the possibility of an affair, or even marriage, with Roger. For an eighteen-year-old, regarded by her sister (and others) as a fool, Griselda is acting with surprising wisdom and dignity, even if she cannot remember her reference. Some years later, Domdaniel finishes a lecture on true morality by admonishing Monica:

> . . . get this maxim into your head and reflect on it: chastity is having the body in the soul's keeping — just that and nothing more. (MF 242)

She is weeping because Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* has aroused not only guilt over her fornication with Giles, but also grief over the fact that Giles does not reciprocate her love. Domdaniel is consoling her on the first point, and urging full self-knowledge on both points; his wisdom is sincere, and presumably self-

taught in this matter. The maxim arises yet a third time in a wholly new context. When the prurient Urquhart McVarish teases Maria to say whether or not she is a virgin, Maria ripostes with an unidentified quotation:

> "What do you mean by virginity?" she said. "Virginity has been defined by one Canadian as having the body in the soul's keeping." (RA 53)

Darcourt gently corrects her: "I think the writer you are talking about . . . was defining chastity . . . "; perhaps the "Canadian" is Robertson Davies, whom Maria misquotes to fit the context. But whether Davies is quoting himself or somebody else, he clearly thinks this particular point the aspect of morality most in need of repetition to his readers. (Whether Maria's *soul* gave her body to Clement Hollier remains an open question; her "root" later perceives that it was all a mistake . . .)

In the end, then, Davies perceives a radical difference between morality and religion. The morality of all his books is a morality of self-knowledge, and in the thrice-used maxim self-knowledge is attached to the soul. Although, however, the word "soul" is a religious term, we do not find a corresponding insistence on the necessity of self-knowledge in religion. In *Tempest Tost*, Tom Gwalchmai asserted the importance of religious knowledge, and, throughout the Deptford Trilogy, Ramsay seeks such knowledge. We see, nonetheless, that a characteristically unconscious religious impulse recurs under many forms of stress. The logic of the narratives tells us that there is a spiritual world, and that it is important, but not that it can be known.[26] It is seated in the depths of the most unlikely individuals, and quite possibly in all individuals, yet even Ramsay, the most self-analytic of Davies's characters (and one of the most knowledgeable about religion), does not know that prayer is necessary for spiritual life until impelled by the stress of Mary Dempster's death. Neither does that conclusion force itself upon him as a general conclusion; having prayed at the coffin, he relapses into the spiritual coma of many years. He continues to seek religious knowledge from books, but does not return to the source of the mysterious and vivifying "impulsion." If Amasa Dempster ignored his "prompting" after baptizing Paul, we are not surprised: Amasa is insensitive and anti-intellectual and conformist. But Ramsay? We are left with the impression that religion in these novels, though natural to mankind, belongs to a different order of nature than morality. Whereas several major characters "have the body in the soul's keeping," only a few minor characters manage the higher achievement of having their *souls* "in the soul's keeping": Dean Knapp acts on knowledge and faith when he prays (LM 50); presumably Roy Janes the Anglican minister and his wife truly meant their charity during the flu epidemic (FB 105). For all too many, "promptings" or "impulsions" cause temporary religious behaviour, but not conversion, and not self-knowledge, or any other kind of knowledge.

There remains, however, the possibility that these intrusions will assert to the reader what they fail to tell the characters. Davies excoriates the rationalist (Denyse), the atheist (Sam West — FB 54-55), the hypocrite (Laura Pottinger, Arthur Woodiwiss), the self-seeker (Boy Staunton — FB 241), the woolly-minded (Hector Mackilwraith), and others with false or incomplete religious knowledge. He sometimes jokes about impulses of natural religion, but never laughs them to scorn. In all, he offers an impressive number of examples, proving that skeptics really believe, because the spiritual world exists as truly as the material one, and because in moments of stress people revert to their deepest and truest selves. To resist such promptings is spiritual suicide: perhaps even in the post-Freudian, post-technological, secularized world we inhabit, human beings remain "the most religious of animals."[27, 28]

NOTES

[1] Translations of epigraphs: "... is not man the most religious of all animals?" *The Dialogues of Plato*, tr. B. Jowett (New York: Random House, 1937), II, 644; "... all actions which offer honour to God are the office of religion," Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Latin text and English Translation*, ed. Thomas Gilbey and T. C. O'Brien, vol. 39, ed. Kevin D. O'Rourke (London: Blackfriars, 1964), pp. 54-55.

[2] *Laws* x.887, in Jowett, II, 629.

[3] See the overview of Clement C. J. Webb, "Introduction to the History of Natural Theology," *Studies in the History of Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), pp. 1-83.

[4] Webb, *Studies*, pp. 137-312. An Arabic writer, Abu Bakr Ibn a Tufail (or Tufayl), describes a self-taught philosopher, who reasoned out the necessity for an "*Effector* (or *Efficient Cause*)," whom he later saw as the *"necessary existent Beeing" — An Account of the Oriental Philosophy, Shewing ... The profound Wisdom of Hai Ebn Yokdan, both in Natural and Divine things; Which he attained without all Converse with Man* ... ([London]: n.p., 1674), pp. 54, 68.

[5] Edward Herbert, *De veritate, provt distingvitvr a revelatione, a verisimili, a possibli, et a falso*, 3rd ed. (London: n.p., 1645), p. 209.

[6] Not all Deists accepted the Common Notions of Herbert; see A. R. Winnett, "Were the Deists 'Deists'?" *Church Quarterly Review*, 161 (1960), 70-77.

[7] For Protestant theologians, the criticism of Immanuel Kant was fatal to "rationalist theology" — John Baillie, *The Idea of Revelation in Recent Thought*, Bampton Lectures in America, no. 7 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1956), p. 9.

[8] John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Scribner, 1939), p. 52 (original emphasis). Baillie repeats these phrases, with slight variations, in succeeding sections.

I wish to thank Rev. Dr. John Sandys-Wunsch for drawing Baillie to my attention.

[9] In this article, citations from the novels are taken from Penguin reprints, as dated below, with the following abbreviations used parenthetically: *Tempest-Tost* 1983 = TT; *Leaven of Malice* (1983) = LM; *A Mixture of Frailties* (1983) = MF;

Fifth Business (1977) = FB; *The Manticore* (1977) = M; *World of Wonders* (1977) = WW; *The Rebel Angels* (1983) = RA. The present quotation is from *Fifth Business* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1977), p. 20.

[10] "Only those who have personal faith in Christ are acceptable for baptism . . . infant baptism . . . stands for something done to or for, and nothing done by, the one who is baptized" — Rev. J. Gordon Jones, James Street Baptist Church, Hamilton, "The Faith by which we Live," *Our Baptist Fellowship, Our History, Our Faith and Polity, Our Life and Work* (n.p.: Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, Jubilee Editorial Committee, 1939), pp. 50-51. "Neither . . . — total immersion of life or identification with Christ in His Death, Burial and Resurrection — can be expressed by sprinkling . . . " — H. Cook, *What Baptists Stand For*, 5th ed. (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1964), p. 143.

[11] *The Book of Common Prayer . . . of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada*, rev. 1918 (Toronto: Cambridge Univ. Press, n.d.), p. 670. Further citations are from the same edition.

[12] "One may not persuade anyone into religion through false doctrine," my translation; summary of *Summa Theologiae*, 2-2, q. 189, art. 9 [the third possible false inducement to religion], in "Index rerum," *Summa Theologiae*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2nd ed., 5 (Madrid: La Editorial Catolica, 1958), 271.*

[13] Cited by Bernhard Christensen, "Prayer," sect. 13, *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1965), III, 1938.

[14] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.v.10, tr. F. L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics, 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 681.

[15] *The Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms . . .* (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1853), pp. 90, 268-69.

[16] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Merry Men*, ch. 3, in *Works* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1912), XXI, 91.

[17] *Religio Medici*, 1.7, in *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 8.

I am very grateful to Rev. Dr. John Sandys-Wunsch, for drawing this reference to my attention, and to Canon R. B. Jenks, for consultations about prayer for the dead.

[18] From a review in the *Peterborough Examiner*, 21 July 1943, reprinted in *The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies*, ed. Judith Skelton Grant (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), p. 121.

[19] See Davies's elegant apology to the theologians of Trinity College, Toronto, in "The Devil's Burning Throne," *One Half of Robertson Davies: Provocative Pronouncements on a Wide Range of Topics* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), p. 180.

[20] Westminster Confession, XXXII.1, XXI.2, 4, XV.6, XXVIII.5, in *Confession of Faith*, pp. 120, 89, 90, 65, 113.

[21] *Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 667-68, xlviii-xlix.

[22] *Ibid.*, Article 27, p. 670.

[23] "A Talk with Tom Harpur," *Toronto Daily Star*, 16 February 1974, repr. in *The Enthusiasms of Robertson Davies*, p. 315.

[24] This point is briefly discussed by Judith Skelton Grant, *Robertson Davies*, Canadian Writers no. 17 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), pp. 47-49.

[25] "You've got to know yourself and take personal responsibility" — "A Talk with

Tom Harpur," p. 316. Davies frequently inculcates or alludes to this morality; Patricia Monk discusses it throughout *The Smaller Infinity: The Jungian Self in the Novels of Robertson Davies* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982).

[26] Davies plainly tells us: "Defining God has always seemed to me a pompous and self-defeating exercise" — "Gleams and Glooms," *One Half of Robertson Davies*, p. 243.

[27] Plato, *Timaeus*, 42; *Laws* x.902; in Jowett, II, 23, 644.

[28] The present article was written and accepted before the publication of Davies's eighth novel, *What's Bred in the Bone* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1985). Although Francis, the main character in that book, finds that "religion, but not orthodoxy, is the fountain of everything that makes sense" (378), he is not clearly influenced by Natural Religion, and neither are the other characters. Religious promptings come from the Daimon Maimas, or from half-forgotten or misunderstood religious instruction, not from innate knowledge.

THE CONFESSIONAL POETS

Harold Rhenisch

Roethke

who was an unpleasant man

too loud

and a drunkard

wrote of flowers

Lowell
suffered from respectability
and total

fear of death

Schwartz'

words

are the scum at the bottom of a glass
but fermented anew

and sipped
through the haze of summer

These are
the children of Kunitz

metaphysician
craftsman

dispossessed

Confessional men
so easy to discard
as decades out of history

the 50's
the 60's

words spoken with a frown

what does such madness
mean
such
irreducable summer

spat out until the wind sighs up again
the colour of graphite
off the dusk river
and through heavy trees

but they are not so easily
dismissed

Hugo who choked at Hell

but who could sing
without a throat
how did he do that
except through lies
that couldn't conceal the truth

nor were meant to

pale hospital walls
the final prison
and bitter trial

Wagoner
of all of them
alive
dreaming of circusses

swamps are his strength
birds

clown
shaman

sedate scholarly men

What is there to confess

weight
certainly
and dishonour

but I do not understand
you Americans

who live so near to me
only 20 years away

Plath and Sexton
dead

by their own hands

The whole west
is spattered with your spawn

young poets of no
individual worth

writing clipped lines
as if cut out of sandstone
by the voice alone

but under it all
a dark slow river

shallow

bass flicking through the shadows
the water stained

with run-off

cut off from the world of men
yet ignorant of soil

The new poets

Graham
Dobyns
de Fries

your heirs

confess nothing

they have nothing to confess
nothing is forbidden them

it is all in the show

the craft
that builds
poems
out of will and thin air

and we believe them

Frankly
I am puzzled

there can be
no forgiveness
for emptiness

All your years
to me

are made most whole
by what you didn't say
thank god

BELIEF

Ann J. West

It goes. Like patience,
it goes in a flush, leaving
fingers a-grab
for nothing. The little
is gone, as is the absence.
There is no weight.
No matter. The going,
just the going,
must be enough. It
matters. It must.

"CETTE DANSE AU FOND DES COEURS"

Transparence des consciences dans "Le sourd dans la ville" et "Visions d'Anna" de M.-C. Blais

Jacqueline Viswanathan

LONGTEMPS, ON A REPROCHÉ à l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais une monotonie née de la répétition obsédante de certain thèmes. Jean Ethier-Blais a écrit par exemple que "ses personnages sont partout les mêmes, emportés par le mouvement extérieur de la vie, paralysés par leur sexualité, ayant peur de la mort, la sentant venir et comme figés devant elle. Faire de cette aliénation la matière d'une vaste oeuvre romanesque semble être l'entreprise de Marie-Claire Blais."[1] Par contre, un article récent d'Elène Cliche souligne heureusement "la recherche constante de nouvelles formes, une façon de questionner les moyens d'expression narrative et donc d'en multiplier les modèles"[2] dans l'oeuvre de la romancière québécoise.

C'est au niveau de la médiation, des techniques de présentation de la vie intérieure des personnages que je voudrais à mon tour explorer cette frappante diversité des romans de M.-C. Blais. C'est là qu'on peut suivre à travers son oeuvre l'itinéraire d'un rapport complexe et sans cesse renouvelé entre l'auteur et ses personnages. De la narration autoriale de *La belle bête* à la forme autobiographique des *Manuscrits de Pauline Archange*, de l'ironie du *Joualonais* à la compassion des *Nuits de l'Underground*, jusqu'au discours intérieur à focalisation multiple profondément original du *Sourd dans la ville* et des *Visions d'Anna* se poursuit une recherche jamais satisfaite, de nouveaux modes de présentation des consciences fictives.

C'est donc au niveau du discours, au sens où l'entend Genette, que nous voulons aborder l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais. Tout en utilisant la terminologie et les concepts du poéticien français bien connu, nous aurons aussi recours aux travaux de Franz Stanzel, Dorrit Cohn et Mieke Bal qui les complètent utilement.[3] Pour mieux saisir la diversité des procédés de narration, il importe de définir la situation narrative suivant les catégories de la voix: "qui raconte?" et du mode ou de la focalisation: "qui voit?" Il faut aussi tenter de préciser le

rapport de "consonance" ("compassion") ou de "dissonance" ("ironie") entre le (la) narrateur/trice et les personnages et analyser les techniques de présentation de leur vie intérieure: psycho-narration ("analyse psychologique"), style indirect libre ou monologue intérieur.[4]

Toute technique n'est intéressante que dans la mesure où elle exprime la vision de la romancière. Retracer l'évolution des procédés narratifs, ce sera donc aussi suivre les voies de la création de la vie intérieure du personnage et du désir de pénétration et de possession de la conscience de l'autre qui me paraît être une recherche fondamentale de l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais. A ce point de vue, *Le Sourd dans la ville* (1979) et *Visions d'Anna* (1982) me semblent présenter une tentative particulièrement intéressante. Après un bref survol des livres précédents, c'est dans ces deux romans que nous suivrons les méandres du discours intérieur des personnages à travers une exploitation fort originale de la focalisation multiple.

Le premier roman de Marie-Claire Blais, *La belle bête* (1959)[5] est aussi le plus traditionnel par sa situation narrative puisqu'on y trouve un narrateur hétérodiégétique de type autorial qui domine le récit par sa perspective temporelle, son champ de connaissance supérieur à celui des personnages, et la compétence morale qui autorise non seulement la pénétration des consciences mais aussi les explications et les jugements. Ainsi, du point de vue temporel, *La belle bête* est le seul roman de Marie-Claire Blais où le récit sommaire renvoie fréquemment à la perspective synthétique du narrateur. Volontiers sentencieux, ce narrateur/trice condamne à l'occasion les personnages: "Louise partit seule. L'enfant lui manquerait. Sans lui, elle était si faible, dépouillée de racines et de fleurs. A quarante ans, Louise était encore une poupée insignifiante, vide, sousieuse à l'excès de son corps miné. La beauté de Patrice n'était pour elle qu'un reflet de la sienne" (p. 22). On trouve aussi de ces maximes qui caractérisent les narrateurs/trices de type autorial: "Isabelle-Marie ne doutait plus d'elle-même ni de sa beauté fictive. Elle ne disait plus: 'J'ai les yeux lilas.' Elle le croyait. *La gourmandise dans le mensonge finit par suggérer la saveur de la foi*" (p. 97). (C'est nous qui soulignons.) Bien que quand même assez discrète, il s'agit donc ici d'une instance narrative autonome et supérieure dont le champ de connaissance et la sensibilité sont aisément dissociables de ceux des personnages.

Du point de vue des techniques narratives, *Tête blanche*, *Le Jour est noir*, *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, *L'Insoumise* et *David Sterne* correspondent à un stade différent de l'oeuvre. On trouve dans chaque roman, suivant des combinaisons variées, la coexistence de narrations à la première et à la troisième personne, autrement dit de récits assurés tantôt par un narrateur hétérodiégétique ("troisième personne"), tantôt par un narrateur homodiégétique ("première pesonne"). Marie-Claire Blais donne ainsi accès à la vie intérieure de ses personnages à la fois par la pénétration psychologique d'un narrateur imper-

sonnel et par l'introspection du personnage lui-même qui s'exprime par des lettres, un journal ou une autiobiographie. En dépit de la diversité des voix narratives, on est cependant frappé par l'unité de ton et de style de chaque roman. Les enfants ou les adolescents comme Tête blanche ou Jean-le-Maigre s'expriment dans un style châtié qui n'a sans doute rien de réaliste. On confond facilement les voix des quatre narrateurs-personnages du *Jour est noir*. Le narrateur impersonnel qui se manifestait de façon assez autoriale dans *La belle bête* semble ici avant tout soucieux d'encourager la compassion du lecteur pour les personnages les plus marginaux, les moins conventionnels. Un "monstre" comme le frère Théodule Crapula aura droit au monologue intérieur et au style indirect libre, un privilège que l'auteur n'accordera par exemple jamais à Monsieur le curé. L'ironie du narrateur, quand elle existe, est partagée avec un personnage comme Jean-le-Maigre.

Si les formes narratives (journal, autobiographie, lettres) mettent l'accent sur la vie intime de leurs auteurs, on trouve aussi chez Tête blanche, David Sterne et Jean-le-Maigre une curiosité commune vis-à-vis des secrets des autres: "Que se passe-t-il exactement derrière le front d'une petite fille"[6] se demande Tête blanche; "Que vous confiaient donc ses âmes malheureuses dans l'intimité du plaisir, tant de secrets que j'ignore, cette moisson d'aveux que vous avez retenus?" demande-t-on à David Sterne. Jean-le-Maigre confesse le Septième avec une intense jubilation; il est ravi de "surprendre les secrets d'Héloise," et bien qu'il en perde la vie, il découvre avec une inépuisable indulgence, les vices de Théodule Crapula et les mystères du couvent: "Jean-le-Maigre appréciait que le Noviciat fût ce jardin étrange où poussaient là comme ailleurs, entremêlant leurs tiges, les plantes gracieuses du Vice et de la Vertu."[7]

"Les yeux, les paupières, les mains de ces êtres que mon regard avait toujours touchés tant de fois, *fondant en eux pour saisir leurs pensées intimes*, comment pouvais-je m'en séparer maintenant qu'ils devenaient pour moi les yeux, les mains de créatures *volées en secret pour mieux vivre d'elles*."[8] Ainsi parle Pauline, l'auteur de l'"autobiographie" en trois volumes, *Les manuscrits de Pauline Archange*, *Vivre, vivre!* et *Les apparences*. On l'a vue avec raison très proche de sa créatrice qui disparaît cette fois complètement derrière son personnage. Pauline exprime ici ce besoin de pénétrer la conscience des autres qui, comme Jean-le-Maigre, fait d'elle une romancière en puissance. Une romancière dont la préoccupation majeure n'est pas de raconter de belles histoires ou de créer un monde mais de réussir, par l'écriture, non seulement à sonder les âmes mais à "se fondre en elles." Pauline éprouve un besoin irrésistible de "profaner les apparences des êtres." Du point de vue des techniques narratives, ceci entraîne parfois de

curieuses anomalies. Comme narrateur autodiégétique, Pauline ne peut que deviner les sentiments des autres; or, elle a reçu les dons d'omniscience d'un narrateur autorial. Ainsi, ce très long passage qui nous révèle avec autorité les pensées les plus secrètes de Germaine Léonard, présentées même parfois sous forme de monologue intérieur.[9]

La même situation narrative ne se répète jamais chez Marie-Claire Blais. *Le loup* est aussi un récit "à la première personne" mais qui se présente comme un monologue où n'intervient pas la dimension de l'écriture si importante pour la triade de Pauline Archange. Ici, les limites de la conscience du narrateur-personnage sont non seulement respectées mais constituent au fond le manque essentiel qui motive la narration: "cette méconnaissance que j'avais d'un autre, il était d'un être, une entité bonne ou mauvaise et je n'entendais de lui que la rumeur que l'on entend peut-être égaré au fond d'une caverne,"[10] recherche de l'autre donc encore, mais cette fois recherche d'un inaccessible.

Avec *Le Joualonais*, Blais prend des risques. Pour la première fois, elle fait parler à un narrateur un idiolecte qui doit le caractériser. On a jugé sévèrement ce roman mais il représente de nouveau une tentative intéressante pour repousser les limites de la narration à la première personne au-delà de la complaisance de l'introspection. "Le narrateur," dit Martel, "est assez curieusement peu bavard sur son propre compte. Il n'est que le haut-parleur des personnages."[11] *Une liaison parisienne* se distingue de tous les autres romans par l'ironie très marquée qui caractérise la perspective du narrateur (hétérodiégétique, cette fois). Ainsi, celui-ci se dissociera du point de vue de Mathieu, le protagoniste, par des guillemets: "n'allait-il pas enfin vers "la vie"?" ou des remarques comme "mais Mathieu ne savait pas encore que. . . . " Bien que fortement focalisé sur Mathieu, *Une liaison* déborde encore une fois les restrictions d'une conscience unique pour nous offrir de longues et nombreuses incursions dans la pensée et les sentiments de Monsieur d'Argenti qui doit sans doute ce traitement de faveur à ses amours clandestines et irrégulières. Contairement à l' "anomalie" de la partie consacrée à Germaine Léonard dans *Les Manuscrits de Pauline Archange,* ce changement de focalisation ne déroute pas le lecteur puisque l'instance narrative impersonnelle a toute liberté de plonger dans la conscience de n'importe quel personnage.

Les Nuits de l'Underground exploite de nouveau la flexibilité d'une situation narrative qui combine une voix impersonnelle avec la focalisation interne très marquée sur un personnage particulier. Nous sommes plongés dans le monde intérieur de Geneviève. On ne ressent jamais la présence d'un narrateur (d'une narratrice), distinct de la jeune femme par la sensibilité ou les connaissances. "Geneviève *sentait* qu'elle-même passait avec François du côté de la mort à celui de la vie, qu'un abîme d'indifférence ne les séparait plus. Mais de ce drame que Françoise avait vécu, abandonnée aux dures servitudes de la maladie, que resterait-il demain lorsqu'elle reprendrait sa montée vers le sentier des vivants,

sinon cette confession écrite dans la chair, cette confession impérissable.... Souvent, pendant qu'elle était séparée de Françoise, Geneviève avait imaginé sa souffrance (*car bien souvent c'est tout ce que nous parvenons à faire pour ceux que nous aimons le plus, imaginer ce que nous sommes trop faibles pour combattre.*)[12] On voit que même les aphorismes et les généralisations, domaine privilégié de l'instance narrative impersonnelle, s'associent aisément au discours intérieur du personnage et à sa sensibilité. On remarque ici le déploiement des techniques de présentation de la conscience rendues possibles par la voix impersonnelle et la focalisation interne: psychonarration ("Geneviève sentait que...") et style indirect libre ("Mais de ce drame, que resterait-il demain?"). Avec le désir de comprendre l'autre, de le connaître jusqu'aux replis les plus profonds de sa conscience et de son souvenir, de compâtir avec une souffrance qu'on est impuissant à combattre, on retrouve ici l'impulsion profonde qui anime tous les textes de Marie-Claire Blais et le besoin qui pousse les personnages dont on la sent très proche. Lali reste un mystère impénétrable pour Geneviève, ce sera un amour manqué mais Geneviève parvient à s'immiscer dans la conscience de Françoise: "car dormaient en Françoise, comme chez tant d'êtres, d'inestimables connaissances, d'inestimables dons dont les tableaux de sa vie, dans leur diversité touffue, étaient encore chargés d'éclairs et de poussières étincelantes" (265-66). Cet amour fondé sur la compassion durera. C'est aussi dans *Les Nuits* qu'on trouve pour la première fois, comme ensuite dans *Le Sourd dans la ville* et *Visions d'Anna*, la longue phrase sinueuse qui épouse les pensées des personnages, la texte fluide sans espace, ni divisions qui imite le "stream of consciousness."

Ainsi, plus on avance dans l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais, moins l'anecdote, le récit d'événements extérieurs prennent de place et plus le roman correspond à une exploration de la vie intérieure des personnages suivant toutes les possibilités offertes par diverses situations narratives. Cependant, ces personnages de romans intimistes sont étonnamment peu portés vers l'introspection. Leurs désirs s'orientent vers la possession de l'autre dans sa conscience intime. Le narrateur autorial, entité distincte, moralement et/ou philosophiquement supérieure aux personnages disparaît dès après *La belle bête*. Suivent les romans "à la première personne" qui donnent directement la parole à un ou plusieurs personnages mais où le désir de pénétrer la conscience des autres donne parfois lieu à de curieuses transgressions comme dans les "Pauline Archange." La situation figurale par contre (*Les Nuits de l'Underground*) permet la flexibilité d'une instance narrative impersonnelle tout en préservant une adhésion étroite à la perspective du personnage. Ce mode narratif est utilisé avec brio dans *Le Sourd dans la ville* et *Visions d'Anna* comme en témoignent les deux extraits suivants:

> "(p. 55) [Tim rêvait doucement, il oublierait peut-être pour une heure seulement, l'agonie sans murmures de Tim, le chien], et Florence se demandait si l'agonie des êtres ne commence pas lorsqu'ils ont perdu le désir, lorsque, comme elle, ils

n'attendent plus rien, une immensité désertique est là, devant soi, sur laquelle on peut marcher et courir, mais c'est une immensité sans horizon, la sensation d'avancer ou de reculer vers ces montagnes de givre est une sensation neutre, indifférente, et on ne peut plus se cacher ou s'enfuir par quelque brêche, le sol de glace est trop dur et trop fermé, on ne s'enlise que dans sa propre débâcle, mais Florence *qui avait longtemps eu l'illusion d'attendre quelque chose* découvrait qu'elle n'attendait plus rien, là où elle s'était réfugiée aucun regard familier ne pouvait la rejoindre, [mais dans ces *profondeurs* si ignorantes de la mémoire du vieux Tim, il y avait la mer, un rocher, une femme, une consolation qui venait de loin dépayser le mal qu'il éprouvait à vivre dans le temps présent,] mais Florence, elle, se demandait comment elle pourrait encore découvrir cette intensité, cette fièvre de l'attente."[13]

"Il faisait ni beau, ni froid, dans le coeur d'Anna, ni frais ou brûlant, c'était le vide, pensait-elle, pur et tranquille, une *profondeur* intacte qu'ils ne pouvaient même imaginer, *ils, étaient ces autres* qui la laissaient errer ainsi, sans but, sans raison, parfois, ils lui souriaient avec humour, l'effleuraient de leur dérisoire affection, puis ils revenaient à eux-mêmes, à leurs préoccupations d'adultes, ne lui demandant plus ce qu'elle ressentait en pensait, il y avait longtemps déjà qu'ils n'osaient plus rien lui demander, car dans leur découragement, ils avaient *peut-être* décidé eux aussi qu'elle était entièrement libre, qu'elle ne leur appartenait pas, elle sentait la volonté, la raideur aussi de ce jeune corps autonome contre ses os, toute l'exaltation de sa conscience se tenait là, enfermée et rigide, elle déposait délicatement sa fourchette sur la nappe rouge, observait les invités de sa mère, ses collègues, psychologues, éducateurs, thérapeutes . . . "[14]

Ainsi se poursuit "the inward turn of the narrative"[15] qui se dessinait déjà à travers l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais: le roman est tissé des pensées et des sentiments des personnages. Le monde extérieur des faits et des événements existe à peine. La continuité du texte est frappante: pas de dialogue (dans sa présentation conventionnelle du moins), pas de divisions en paragraphes ou en chapitres. De longues phrases sinueuses tentent d'épouser les méandres de la pensée des personnages, de pénétrer les *profondeurs* (le mot apparaît dans chaque passage) de leurs consciences, Florence comprend ("découvrait") l'impasse de sa vie et l'aridité du désespoir qui la conduira au suicide. Anna éprouve l'angoisse de la solitude devant l'indifférence égoiste des adultes. L'instance narrative formule des sentiments dont les personnages, en apparence fort lucides sont conscients ("Florence se demandait . . . "; "Anna pensait . . . "). Le narrateur ne dépasse pas leur sensibilité ou leur savoir: les nombreuses métaphores du premier extrait ("immensité sans horizon," "montagne de givre," "sol de glace") traduisent les sentiments éprouvés par Florence et contribuent à donner à ces réflexions philosophiques l'intensité de sensations. Les généralisations (utilisation du présent gnomique, passage au pronom "on" (références à tous les hommes ou les "êtres") paraissent émaner de la conscience même de Florence et non de la sagesse supérieure d'un narrateur puisqu'elles prolongent naturellement les réflexions du début du passage. La phrase soulignée ("Florence qui avait longtemps eu l'illu-

sion d'attendre quelque chose") n'est pas un jugement porté seulement par le narrateur. Elle dit ("Florence découvrait que...") la prise de conscience d'une erreur passée par le personnage lui-même. L'utilisation de l'imparfait ("elle sentait la volonté..."; "elle déposait sa fourchette") contribue à rapprocher le récit de l'expérience vécue du personnage.

A l'exception des phrases placées entre crochets dont nous reparlerons, on pourrait transformer ces deux extraits en narration à la première personne: c'est le test bien connu qui n'est possible que pour des textes focalisés suivant la "perspective" d'un personnage. Possible sans doute, mais la maladresse des versions résultant de cette transformation "et je me demandais si l'angoisse des êtres ne commence pas lorsqu'ils ont perdu le désir...," "je sentais la volonté, la raideur aussi de mon jeune corps autonome contre mes os" révèle aussi l'importance de la voix impersonnelle. C'est à ce niveau de la médiation narrative que se formulent ("se mettent en mots") les états de conscience du personnage suivant un style qui n'est pas censé reproduire son idiolecte. Là est tout l'avantage de cette situation narrative: il s'agit de pénétrer jusqu'à un niveau de la conscience qui ne peut s'exprimer directement dans la conversation ou même à l'écrit. De là, l'absence de réalisme de ce style extrêmement littéraire qui ne prétend évidemment pas imiter la langue d'une adolescente moderne comme Anna ou d'une femme aux prises avec une crise aigüe comme Florence. L'instance narrative parle avec la voix intérieure secrète des personnages.

FLORENCE ET ANNA: deux consciences souffrant en espace clos: (un hôtel minable, une chambre) pendant le temps d'une journée — un peu moins, on ne sait. Ce qui compte, c'est le temps extensible et malléable du souvenir car les deux récits s'organisent suivant les méandres de la mémoire. Il est souvent bien difficile au lecteur de ces deux romans de distinguer entre le passé et le présent, l'imaginaire et le réel puisque tout se présente comme le contenu d'une conscience. La progression du texte correspond à un cheminement qui conduit le personnage d'une solitude désespérée à un moment de "lumière" où la conscience s'ouvre à l'autre.

> "*Et Florence les regardait tous,* Lucia, Mike, Gloria, Tim et l'ombre de son chien, et elle se disait, comment n'ai-je pas su si longtemps qu'ils étaient tous là, qu'ils vivaient, comment ai-je pu les oublier, elle avait vécu de longues années sans même pressentir autour d'elle ce cercle infernal de leurs souffrances, de leurs besoins, car en ce temps-là, lorsqu'elle vivait sereinement, enfermée dans son opaque indifférence, sereine, oui, car les autres n'étaient pas là, de près ou de loin, ils n'avaient pas d'existence, elle avait vécu sans savoir qu'ils respiraient tous dans les ténèbres, et puis *soudain, elle était captive de cette lumière de la conscience*

qui la dénonçait, non, elle ne mourrait pas sans les avoir tous reconnus, ce cercle infernal qu'elle avait jadis ignoré, méprisé." (p. 62)

"Anna ouvrait la porte de sa chambre, elle quittait son île, Raymonde venait près d'elle, sans oser le croire, elle pensait en serrant Anna contre son coeur, je pense que cette fois elle est de retour." (p. 169)

Car même si, dans *Le Sourd*, Florence et dans *Visions*, Anna, représente chacune la conscience centrale, celle dont le lecteur partage le plus souvent les pensées, les deux romans créent un monde qui n'a rien d'égocentrique où le personnage n'existe qu'en interaction constante avec d'autres consciences. *Le Sourd* et *Visions* nous permettent en effet de partager la vision d'un nombre étonnant de personnages.[16] Avec l'agilité de la navette d'un tisserand, la narratrice se glisse successivement dans des profondeurs psychiques aussi nombreuses que diverses. Ces deux romans marquent ainsi l'aboutissement d'une recherche que nous avons pu suivre à travers toute l'oeuvre: l'exploration du moi qui éclate et se dépasse à travers la pénétration de la conscience des autres. Il s'agira tout d'abord de voir comment le passage d'une conscience à l'autre s'établit à travers le texte et comment se crée la continuité en dépit de changements très fréquents de foyers narratifs. Il s'agira ensuite d'établir un rapport entre forme et signification dans ces deux romans: de montrer comment la focalisation multiple peut correspondre à une certaine "idéologie," une certaine conception des rapports entre les êtres humains.

Qu'on se souvienne de l'extrait du *Sourd dans la ville* que nous commentions à la p. 9 de ce travail, où l'on partageait l'angoisse de Florence devant la mort et la solitude. Ce passage contenait aussi des phrases (marquées par des crochets) concernant le vieux Tim. C'est un vieil Irlandais, mal fichu, sans cesse bougonnant, amant de Gloria, la propriétaire de l'hôtel de passe où Florence a échoué pour une dernière journée avant son suicide. Rien en apparence ne rapproche la bourgeoise Florence de Tim l'Irlandais. Ils ne se parlent pas. Se voient-ils seulement? Et pourtant le texte du roman crée une continuité profonde entre leurs consciences hantées par la même angoisse, continuité syntaxique par la coordination et sémantique par la reprise du mot "agonie," trait d'union entre Tim et Florence, puis entre Florence et toute l'humanité souffrante ("Et Florence se demandait si l'agonie des êtres . . .). Ses pensées s'embranchent ainsi sur celles d'une grand nombre de personnages qui lui sont à peine connus, qu'elle a aperçus par hasard dans cet hôtel, lieu de rassemblement de pauvres déchets de l'humanité. Tel Mike, ce jeune garçon atteint d'une tumeur au cerveau dont l'agonie fait elle aussi écho à celle de Florence:

"Et Mike regardait tout cela, il avait peur, captif, on ne pouvait plus s'enfuir, pensait Florence, non, il ne pouvait plus, il était trop tard, il était au monde, on ne rêvait plus quand on était au monde, . . . (Et Mike voulait battre Lucia) . . . car il était captif, immobile et captif, son rêve, ou ce qu'il en restait encore, était

si ténu qu'il y croyait à peine . . . ah! comment rêver, il ne le savait plus en cet instant si cruel où toutes ses espérances étaient sur le point de le trahir . . . et Florence avait pitié de lui mais c'était une pitié morte déjà car ni Mike ni elle ne sortiraient vivants, pensait-elle, de cet espace dans lequel ils étaient tous les deux enfermés et si majestueusement calmes qu'un inconnu en franchissant ces lieux où l'on riait et s'amusait, buvait en forniquait, n'eût même pas senti le passage de ce râle silencieux qui allait d'un agonisant à l'autre." (p. 84)

Les premières phrases de cette citation donnent un exemple très frappant de l'empiètement des deux discours intérieurs: "Mike regardait tout cela, il avait peur, captif, on ne pouvait plus s'enfuir" marque clairement la focalisation sur Mike avec les verbes de perception (regardait, avait peur) et la phrase "captif, on ne pouvait plus s'enfuir" peut être du style indirect libre ("captif, je ne peux plus m'enfuir" dit, pense Mike) mais pourtant la voilà attribuée à Florence ("pensait Florence"). L'ambigüité de pronom "on" en élargit la portée: il peut s'agir de Mike, de Florence ou même de toute l'humanité. Autre écho curieux dans ce même passage entre les pensées de Mike et celles de Florence: "on ne rêvait plus quand on était au monde" (pensait Florence) et "ah! comment rêver, il ne le savait plus" (pensait Mike). La fin de la citation décrit bien les rapports inhabituels créés entre les personnages à travers le texte de ce roman: dans la diégèse, ils ne communiquent pas; un inconnu les verrait comme totalement étrangers mais la continuité du discours qui enchaîne les pensées communes de Mike et Florence exprime la compassion née de cette mort qui les rapproche ("ce râle silencieux qui allait d'un agonisant à l'autre").

Dans *Visions d'Anna*, chaque personnage paraît lui aussi enfermé dans un monde intérieur qui exclut les voies habituelles de communication. Anna, murée dans sa chambre, en est l'exemple le plus frappant. Cependant, dans ce roman comme dans *Le Sourd*, comme dans les romans précédents de Marie-Claire Blais mais suivant une technique narrative nouvelle, les personnages ne sont pas voués au soliloque et à l'introspection. Leurs pensées visent avant tout, et souvent coïncident avec la conscience des autres. Ainsi dans ce passage trop long pour qu'on puisse le citer en entier, où le lecteur partage la rêverie de Raymonde (la mère) promenant le chien dans la cour et puis celle d'Anna (la fille) contemplant le mur rose de sa chambre, toute absorbée par des pensées qui font curieusement écho à celles de sa mère (notamment par la répétition du mot "d'autres"): "Raymonde pensait à la réunion qui aurait lieu ce soir chez elle, d'autres Centre sécuritaires, d'autres prisons, diraient-ils . . . " (p. 131); "Anna elle les écouterait impassible, rigoureuse, on devrait ouvrir d'autres Centres, d'autres prisons qu'on nommerait Ecoles de réhabilitation" (p. 134). Le glissement d'une conscience à l'autre s'effectue par des reprises qui évoquent une profonde continuité de pensée entre ces personnages qui ne savent pas communiquer. Ainsi, cet "embrayage" ('shift") des pensées d'Anna à celles de son

père, placées dos à dos, en une étrange symétrie: "... et soudain, un mince nuage noir se formait dans le ciel comme dans le dessin de Sylvie, pensait Anna, Peter pensait mais pourquoi ce nuage dans le ciel quand il fait ci beau" (p. 159).

Le texte ne signale d'ailleurs pas toujours aussi clairement le changement de focalisation. Dans l'extrait suivant, il semble qu'on partage d'abord la vision et les pensées de Mike. Cependant, les dernières phrases de ce passage (à partir de 2), l'une en style indirect libre et l'autre en style direct ne peuvent émaner que de Gloria. On est passé insensiblement d'un personnage à l'autre, grâce notamment de nouveau à l'utilisation du pronom "on" qui élargit les référents possibles du sujet.

> "Mike voyait de loin cette femme, sa mère, il était imprégné d'elle, de son impudeur, cette impudeur charitable pour elle-même et pour les autres, ensuite, il ne la haissait pas, il la respectait, il l'aimait même parfois, surtout lorsqu'il faisait beau et qu'on avait l'illusion de voir de très près soudain ce visage et le mouvement acharné de tous ces trais, quand on croyait entendre monter du fond de ses entrailles des paroles qu'elle prononçait tous les jours, ce flot d'impudeurs qui étaient elle, aussi qui n'étaient qu'elle et personne. . . . "

TELLE EST DONC LA TEXTURE remarquable de ces deux romans, leur originalité et la source de certaines difficultés de lecture: on y trouve d'une part une très grande fréquence de changements de focalisation et d'autre part, une continuité de ton et de style, un souci des transitions que gêne parfois la différentiation entre plusieurs personnages focalisateurs: qui pense? qui parle? qui éprouve cette émotion?

Le passage de conscience à conscience est le substitut du dialogue impossible, presque entièrement absent des deux romans: "il eût aimé lui dire que . . . mais"; "elles ne se parlaient pas mais . . . ," "Raymonde lui eût sans doute dit que," "ces paroles qu'on croyait entendre . . . ," "Sa mère n'avait rien dit, pensait Paul, ces pensées, il pouvait les lire sur son visage. . . . " Les personnages ne poussent que des cris silencieux, ils ne pleurent que des larmes sèches.

L'agonie de Florence, la solitude désespérée d'Anna sont nées de l'effet profondément destructeur de rapports traditionnels: égoisme du couple pour Florence, indifférence du père et des adultes en général pour Anna. Mais en contrepartie, se nouent des dialogues muets qui évoquent la possibilité d'un dépassement de la solitude. Ces contacts fugitifs ont presque toujours lieu avec des inconnus (à qui on ne parle pas, qu'on n'entrevoit qu'une seconde) : ainsi, la sympathie d'Anna pour la "femme du métro," celle de Raymonde pour la "femme aux chaussures au talon de verre," celle d'Alexandre pour "l'homme à la veste de daim" ou de Rita pour une jeune femme aperçue sur la plage:

> "Et Rita voyait cette forme blanche qui rampait sous le ciel, vers cette reconnais-

sance lointaine, inaccessible de l'amitié . . . elle rampait doucement dans le sable, nulle ne la voyait, ne l'entendait . . . elle savait seulement que dans le tremblement de l'air, de l'eau, ces yeux, ces bras, ces lèvres paradisiaques dans leurs régions inaccessibles, lui disaient, "viens, viens plus près de nous, nous te consolerons de ce pli de tristesse qui a remplacé ton sourire, toi qui te crois invisible quand ton existence palpite si près de la nôtre, viens, viens plus près de nous." (*Les Visions*, p. 142)

A cette pénétration de la conscience de l'autre, dans ses régions "les plus inaccessibles" (quand l'une peut ainsi reconstituer le message secret de l'autre) correspondent alors des moments proches de l'extase, qui peuvent même transcender la solitude de la mort: ainsi, Florence qui, à quelques instants de la mort, se sent "habitée" par le visage d'un inconnu: "le visage de sa passion l'avait donc quittée puisque le visage d'un inconnu, d'un errant comme elle, habitait soudain ses derniers instants" (p. 210). Ainsi, Mike, lui aussi proche de l'agonie, qui imagine l'au-delà de la mort comme une "danse au fond des coeurs."

". . . l'âme s'en allait comme ça, toutes les âmes des morts erraient au soleil et *cherchaient quelqu'un à comprendre, quelqu'un dont on pourrait pénétrer les pensées.* Un jour, Mike comprendrait tout, tout ce qui dormait en Gloria, sur les lèvres de Judith, l'âme délivrée allait ailleurs partout où si longtemps elle n'avait pas été admise pendant le temps de sa joyeuse mais souvent terrible captivité et il faudrait peut-être encore un peu de temps et l'âme de Mike allait découvrir *cet essor, cette danse au fond de tous ces coeurs qui lui étaient fermés.*" (pp. 16-17; nous soulignons)

La répétition obsédante du mot "tout" ("il les regardait tous," "ils étaient tous là," "il comprendrait tout," "ils respiraient tous") exprime peut-être un désir de coïncider avec une conscience universelle. Ne trouve-t-on pas aussi dans ce passage comme l'évocation d'une possible transmigration des âmes? On pense à Alexandre (*Visions*) qui imagine les pensées d'un inconnu mort (l' "homme à la veste de daim") qui lui-même "se survit" dans la peau d'un pauvre paysan du Pérou:

". . . qui sait, pendant cette heure du soir, où le soleil déclinait sur la terre, il enviait peut-être, pensait Alexandre, une existence qu'il n'avait jamais connue, celle d'un paysan pénible . . . et celui qui avait été l'homme à la veste de daim pensait, même le plus destitué d'entre eux *vit et respire à ma place.*" (p. 28)

Déjà pour Pauline Archange, cette pénétration de la conscience des autres était liée à un dépassement de la mort:

"Et si un jour, je devais y survivre, ce serait peut-être simplement pour descendre dans cette cave de boue et de feuilles séchées, pour regarder une dernière fois, ces vivants et ces morts dégénérés, d'où il fallait tirer plus que la naissance, plus que la vie, ma résurrection."[17]

Dans leur vaste constellation, les personnages du *Sourd* et des *Visions* présentent divers degrés de pénétration de la conscience d'autrui, divers modes de

compassion. Pour Florence (*Le Sourd*) et Anna (*Visions*), il s'agit du passage crucial de l' "opaque indifférence" à l'ouverture à l'autre dans le contexte d'une crise personnelle. Personnages sacrificiels, figures proches du Christ crucifié, Mike (*Le Sourd*) et Michelle (*Visions*) possèdent le don et la malédiction de "mourir dans la chair des autres," de souffrir pour toute l'humanité souffrante. Judith Lange(nais), "soeur des martyrs et des exilés" (*Le Sourd*) et Alexandre, le romancier dostoievskien, modèle de compassion (*Visions*) sont des personnages médiateurs dont on partage relativement peu le discours intérieur mais qui hantent la pensée de divers autres personnages, effectuant ainsi une transition pour les changements de focalisation, jetant un pont entre des consciences aussi éloignées que Madame Langenais, bonne bourgeoise d'Outremont et Mike, le malheureux jeune garçon de l'hôtel de passe:

> "Ce rayonnement de Judith, si cruel que Madame Langenais le sentait encore frémir tout près d'elle, avec l'écriture de sa fille et caresse de ses bras sur ses épaules, ce geste qu'elle avait oublié derrière elle, comme un écho de sa pitié démunie et tremblante. Mais Judith Lange ne viendrait pas aujourd'hui, pensait Mike. . . . " (p. 126)

Tommy et Manon, misérables "drifters" noirs poussent jusqu'à ses limites, cette "descente" dans les profondeurs de l'humanité:

> " . . . mais dans ce mouvement d'une descente glacée jusqu'à nos viscères, ne plongeaient-ils pas en même temps vers ces *milliers* d'autres que l'on ne nommait plus, ces existences dont le pouls était si faible que *nous* ne l'entendions plus, car *nous* ne tenions pas à voir, à entendre ce qui se passait si loin de nous." (*Visions*, p. 80)

L'art est l'expression suprême de cette tentative d'enracinement au fond de l'aventure intérieure de l'humanité:

> " . . . elle comprenait pourquoi, maintenant, Lautrec avait consenti à être interné, à être désintoxiqué en clinique, c'est qu'il s'était épris de ces visages qu'il peignait, de cette *meute à la dérive*, il avait su qu'il fallait les aimer et les plaindre et soudain, par l'exaltation d'un art aussi transparent que la peinture, l'oeuvre vue et sentie, il avait rapproché du monde visible, de *notre* indifférence ce que *nous* tenions à oublier, ces visages, ces destins, ces existences dont il avait tenté de comprendre le secret, l'énigme." (*Visions*, p. 106)

Se rapprocher des autres, surprendre leur secret, pénétrer leurs consciences: tel est donc le projet commun qui lie: l'instance narrative qui plonge dans la conscience d'Anna, Anna "qui comprend" les pensées de Toulouse-Lautrec, celui-ci qui est "parvenu à surprendre le secret de ces existences": chaîne de consciences qui s'unifient par le passage au "nous" incluant à la fois la narratrice, les personnages et finalement sans doute le narrataire. Elène Cliche qui donne par ailleurs une lecture tout à fait convaincante du *Sourd* et des *Visions* comme "textes morcelés, fragmentés," signalait déjà l'importance de "l'empathie, qui est

une fontaine d'énergie émotionnelle permettant de se projeter dans l'autre ou les autres, ceci étant basé sur des considérations universelles."[18]

A travers la conscience des personnages, *Le Sourd dans la Ville* et *Visions d'Anna* présentent une société fragmentée, dominée par l'indifférence et l'égoisme où chacun souffre, enfermé dans sa solitude, mais la facture du texte de ces deux romans apporte un certain démenti à cette vision tellement pessimiste qu'elle évoque une humanité proche de son apocalypse. La continuité des discours intérieurs suggère la possibilité de rencontres d'interactions entre les consciences. Par ce privilège qui permet à tout romancier de sonder l'âme de ses créatures, l'instance narrative exécute cette "danse au fond de tous ces coeurs" et réalise ce désir intense des personnages de plonger dans la conscience de l'autre. Elle donne peut-être aussi une voix à une conscience universelle, promesse ou mirage d'harmonie.

NOTES

[1] Jean Ethier-Blais, "Monstres et transcendance," *Le Devoir*, 2 septembre 1967, p. 13.

[2] Elène Cliche, "Un rituel de l'avidité" *Voix et Images*, 8, no. 2, p. 229.

[3] Gérard Genette, *Figures* III, Paris: Seuil, 1972; Franz Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, Göttingen: UTB, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979; Mieke Bal, *Narratologie*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1977; Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978 (traduction française: *La transparence des consciences*, Paris: Seuil, 1982).

[4] Cf. D. Cohn, op. cit., p. 145.

[5] M.-C. Blais, *La belle bête*, Ottawa: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1959.

[6] M.-C. Blais, *Tête blanche*, Ottawa: Les Editions de l'Homme, 1960, p. 157.

[7] M.-C. Blais, *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, Ottawa: Les Editions du Jour, 1970, p. 49.

[8] M.-C. Blais, *Vivre, vivre!*, Ottawa: Les Romanciers du Jour, 1969, p. 13.

[9] M.-C. Blais, *Les Apparences*, Montréal: Stanké, "Québec 10/10," 1981, p. 64-92.

[10] M.-C. Blais, *Le loup*, Montréal: Stanké, "Québec 10/10," 1972.

[11] R. Martel, "Nous sommes tous des trous-de-cul," *La Presse*, le 19 mai 1973.

[12] M.-C. Blais, *Les nuits de l'Underground*, Montréal: Stanké, 1978, p. 263.

[13] M.-C. Blais, *Le Sourd dans la ville*, Montréal, 1979, p. 56. Toutes les autres citations renverront à cette édition.

[14] M.-C. Blais, *Visions d'Anna*, Montréal-Paris, 1982, p. 9. Toutes les autres citations renverront à cette édition.

[15] Erich Kahler, *The Inward Turn of Narrative*, Princeton, N.J., 1973.

[16] *Dans Le Sourd*, on trouve des passages focalisés sur les personnages suivants (par ordre d'importance quantitative et sans doute qualitative): Florence, Mike, Gloria, Tim l'Irlandais, Judith Langenais, Madame Langenais, Berthe, le Dr. Langenais, Lucia, Gabrielle Dubois, Charlie, Anne Dupré, John, le chauffeur de

taxi, le chat. A titre de curiosité, citons ce passage focalisé sur le chat: "Quelle calamité, pensait-il, par un si beau jour, dans une si chaude lumière, mais sâle et bourbeux comme il était avec son poil en lambeaux, il éprouvait une grande satisfaction de vivre" (p. 206).

[17] M.-C. Blais, *Les Apparences*, p. 112.

[18] E. Cliche, "Un rituel de l'avidité," *Voix et Images*, 8, no. 2, p. 235.

MECHANICS FOR WOMEN

Miriam Waddington

Late in life
I am finding out
the immortal names
of screwdrivers.

First there is
the plain screwdriver,
then there is
the star-shaped one
called Phillips,
and a few in-between ones
whose names
I never learned.

There are also wrenches
open and closed,
and hammers, soft-faced
or hard-lipped,
and pliars called
needle-nosed or blunt
like fish swimming
through the mighty
mechanical lakes
of the universe.

Among all the tools
I love the spanners
best because
you can do anything
with spanners
depending on the size
of them,
and you soon learn

which spanner to use
when and what signs
spell trouble in the
universal joint.

It's all so easy,
so enchanting so
absorbing, from
the newest sparkplug
to the smallest
distributor cap,
yet I still find it
impossible
to change a flat tire.

ORIOLE WEATHER

Ricardo Sternberg

Whether orioles
fly these skies
I do not know.

Enough to say
that birds attend:
a generic presence
that signals
winter is still at bay.

But oriole, the word,
flutters around me now
as it has all week
unaddressed
until at last I write

south

and it goes.

WHO'S THE FATHER OF MRS. BENTLEY'S CHILD?

"As For Me and My House" and the Conventions of Dramatic Monologue

Evelyn J. Hinz & John J. Teunissen

CRITICISM OF *As For Me and My House* has come a long way since Roy Daniells was "taken in" by Mrs. Bentley,[1] but scholars still tend to take her at her own word, concentrating their critical attention on the things she wants us to think are key issues and overlooking things she tries to play down. Following Mrs. Bentley's directives, criticism has focused on aesthetic and religious concerns rather than on emotional and domestic matters, on her *current* marital difficulties rather than on the circumstances *leading* to her unhappy marriage, on Philip and Judith and "their" child rather than on Mrs. Bentley and Philip and "their" stillborn child. Therefore, although critics now realize that *As For Me and My House* is a point-of-view novel,[2] they have not recognized that Ross is presenting us with a specific kind of "unreliable narrative" — namely, a dramatic monologue.

Exemplified in prose fiction by such works as *The Sun Also Rises*, *Heart of Darkness*, and *The Good Soldier*, such narratives give us not merely a biased observer but one with a guilty conscience; the narrator's past experience does not merely colour perspective but is the psychological *raison d'être* for the telling. On the one hand, therefore, such narratives are characterized by concealment, which takes the form both of dismissing essential information and of providing "honest" self-appraisals; on the other hand, such narratives evidence the "criminal who wants to be caught" syndrome and therefore involve the unconscious dropping of clues: the projection onto others of one's own motives and the inadvertent trapping of oneself in contradictions. A final major characteristic of such narratives is that they stand mid-way between private and public "confessional" literature, between interior monologue and written articulation; in dramatic monologue an audience is assumed/implied, with the narrative consequently taking the form of the narrator's attempt convincingly to present a case.[3]

To describe the genre in this way almost makes it unnecessary to say anything further about the way in which *As For Me and My House* fits into the category. With its diary format but with entries which are too structured and retrospective to create the sense of introspective and immediate personal jottings, Ross's novel perfectly embodies the public/private narrative mode of dramatic monologue. Equally skilful and in keeping with the tradition is the way Ross has Mrs. Bentley deflect attention from herself by making her initial entry focus on Philip, a self-effacing strategy which she employs throughout the novel and which enables her to dramatize what she says about herself as a self-sacrificing woman. Nor is Ross less masterful in alerting us to the necessity of ferreting out the truth behind appearances, for he does this precisely through the obsessiveness of Mrs. Bentley's concern with hypocrisy. Designed, on her part, to convince the unwary that she could not possibly have anything to hide, her excessive ridicule of "false fronts" has the effect of generating just the opposite impression. Further contributing to this impression, of course, is her intense paranoia and sense of exposure — which extends to seeing the roses of the wallpaper as so many prying eyes and to interpreting the fact that the house is built close to the street as a plot on the part of the town to spy on her and her husband (pp. 12-13).

In turn, a second of Ross's strategies is to convince those readers who may sense that she is hiding something that her fear of exposure pertains merely to her religious hypocrisy and her masking of her real feelings toward the town — an even more subtle deflection, since it involves disarming the reader through the admission of a "failing," i.e., that she herself has erected a false front (p. 9). Her fear of being found out on this score, however, hardly calls for the "Gothic" terms in which she expresses her paranoia — her feeling that the house is "haunted" by the smell of "repression and decay" and by the "faint exhalation of the past," by something "lurking in the shadows" (pp. 12-13, 25). Moreover, if it has been her twelve years of experience in small towns that has taught her to dissemble, it was also twelve years ago that she married Philip; and here we come to the first real cause of Mrs. Bentley's obsession with hypocrisy: namely, the deception which led to her marriage in the first place.

When they met, Philip was an aspiring artist, eager for culture and for "someone to realize in flesh and blood the hero-worship that he had clung to all through his hard adolescence." Lonely and hungry for companionship, he was nevertheless fearful of any relationships which might jeopardize his career. Thus "For a long time he held aloof," Mrs. Bentley tells us; "At heart, I think, he was distrustful not only of me but of all of my kind," knowing "instinctively that as a woman I would make claims upon him." What occasioned him to lose his distrust after three years of resistance, accordingly, was that Mrs. Bentley, apparently, was not just a woman but an artist, someone who not only knew that "he needed above all to be free" but who also shared the same need, which

indeed is what she also wants us to believe: "Before I met him I had ambitions too. The only thing that really mattered for me was the piano. It made me self-sufficient, a little hard. All I wanted was opportunity to work and develop myself" (p. 16). Furthermore, she was also apparently an intellectual, someone with whom he could relate on a non-*sexual* level. But this, of course, was merely a pose; throughout the present of the narrative she is totally unappreciative of Philip's books, just as art for her is/was merely a means to an end. Or as she herself explains of her meeting with Philip:

> he came and the piano took second place. . . . I forgot it all, almost overnight.
>
> Instead of practice in my spare time it was books now. Books that he had read or might be going to read — so that I could reach up to his intellect, be a good companion, sometimes while he talked nod comprehendingly.
>
> For right from the beginning I knew that with Philip it was the only way. . . . For a while, before understanding the lie of the land, I even read theology." (p. 16)

Now Mrs. Bentley, to be sure, would have us see her instant abandonment of her career and her attempt to make herself an ideal mate as evidence of her intense love for Philip, and perhaps that was her motive. Similarly, she may even generate a certain amount of sympathy as an unfortunately unliberated woman when she observes, "Submitting to him that way, yielding my identity — it seemed what life was intended for" (p. 16). But none of this alters the fact that the first "false front" was the image of herself that she presented to Philip before they were married.

Small wonder, then, that Mrs. Bentley harps so much upon Philip's romantic expectations and subsequent disillusionments. On the subconscious level it is her way of articulating her guilt for deluding Philip; on the conscious level it is her way of rationalizing her guilt by putting Philip in the wrong: if he had been more realistic he would have seen the "*lie* of the land." In turn, we now see the irony of Mrs. Bentley's description of Philip's naiveté *before* they met, and why it sounds so much like a description of their meeting and his reactions *after* they are married:

> After living so long and intensely in the future he couldn't accept a reality which, instead of the new way of life he had been striving for, turned out to be just an extension of the old. When he did try to make friends it was in the wrong places, among people who seemed to possess and offer this new way of life, who *deceived him with a shallow poise and sophistication.* His naive, country-town eyes saw a kind of glamor, I suppose, and for a while believed in it.
>
> He was forever being disillusioned, forever finding people out and *withdrawing into himself* with a sense of hurt and grievance. (p. 32; emphasis ours)

In short, if the Philip of the present is forever withdrawing into his study, it may have to do with the way Mrs. Bentley invaded his privacy by deceiving him before they were married.

But it was merely Philip's naiveté that led him to marry Mrs. Bentley and is her guilt merely a matter of having pretended to be an intellectual and an artist instead of a conventional woman looking for a man and content to realize her aspirations through him? If so, then in making this the cause of the marital tension between the Bentleys, Ross himself is guilty of the disproportion which Mrs. Bentley sees in the relationship between the size of the rectory and that of the church; the former looks so diminutive in contrast to the latter that she is "reminded of the mountain that did all the fussing and then gave birth to a mouse" (p. 13). But fussing that gave birth to a mouse is, of course, precisely what happened to the Bentleys — their marriage resulted in a stillborn child, an experience which seems to provide a more logical reason for Mrs. Bentley's guilt. Furthermore, this is the very reason which she herself hinted at, when at the outset of the novel she "wished for a son again, a son that I might give back a little of what I've taken from him, that I might at least believe I haven't altogether wasted him, only postponed to another generation his fulfillment" (p. 5). The problem with such an explanation, however, is first that it contradicts what Mrs. Bentley has just said about Philip's primary concern being artistic creativity rather than procreativity; second, if it is really her barrenness that Philip holds against her, then he is a monster indeed; and third, this is the explanation she would like us to entertain — a sure sign in dramatic monologue that it is misleading.

Accordingly, though clearly the "stillborn" child has something to do with the problem, we have not yet arrived at the full explanation. Nor, significantly, do we, until near the end of the novel — specifically not until Mrs. Bentley has become convinced that Philip has committed adultery. Then she tells us, in the context of explaining that the rhapsody she is practicing is the same one she played the night Philip proposed, that on the night in question he came to her "erect and white-lipped" and asked her to marry him. Such a description sounds less like that of a lover and more like that of a man who has steeled himself against his natural inclinations. And this Mrs. Bentley admits — but explaining it in terms of Philip's pride, which makes it difficult for him to admit that he needs her. She also lets slip, however, that on that night she had an "expectant" audience and that her desire to reach him "put something into [her] hands that had never been there before" (p. 141).

If the reader is beginning to suspect that it is not merely artistic talent but a different kind of trump card that she holds, such suspicions are confirmed by the off-hand way in which she refers to their marriage. After preparing us to see it as the climax of three long years of courtship, she dismisses the crucial event with the brief statement, "Anyway we were married."[4] This statement, moreover, follows from her observation that "Had I not met him then he might have *got*

away as he planned, eventually realizing his ambitions" (emphasis ours), an observation which led to her wondering why she did not feel better about "the way [she] won [her] place in his life despite him." Furthermore, one should note that for a woman who is very conscious of dates, Mrs. Bentley is extremely vague in referring to when their child was born, saying only, "The next year there was a baby" (p. 33). And finally, of course, Mrs. Bentley presents both her living with Philip and the birth of the child as dating back to twelve years ago. Bearing in mind that a stillborn child is a full term pregnancy, one realizes that if the child had been conceived in wedlock it would today be eleven, not twelve.

In short, although Mrs. Bentley would have us believe that Philip is a man "trapped" by the church, the real trap in which he found himself was the biological one; although she would have us believe that he was seduced by the church's promise to finance his education, the real "whore of Babylon" — as it were — is herself. It was not the church which took advantage of him but she who took advantage of his innate sense of moral responsibility. His stiff-necked resolution to marry her was not a matter of his overcoming his pride to admit his dependency on her but rather a matter of ensuring that his child should not go through life with the stigma of illegitimacy which plagued him. That Mrs. Bentley should devote so much of her recapitulation of Philip's past to this very stigma thus now begins to fall into place — less as a way of explaining *him* than as a way of explaining the reason for their marriage. Similarly, one begins to understand why the entry in which she explains how Philip "compromised" himself with the church is also the entry in which she explains the way in which she "yielded" her identity.

Even more importantly, perhaps, one begins to understand why Mrs. Bentley has such mixed reactions to Philip's commitment to the church and why she emphasizes his moral integrity at the same time she ridicules his institutional affiliation. His uprightness was the very quality she depended upon for their marriage in the first place, and upon which — believing that he does not love her in her own right — she must depend for its continuance. Hence the significance of her terror when she dreams of Philip's crashing down his Bible and of the fact that it is this dream that is the catalyst for her first confession of how they came to be married. Hence also the significance of the church board meeting where she interrupts Philip "before it was too late, before he could do what he should have done twelve years ago" (p. 73) — namely, leave the church and her.

What also begins to make sense is Mrs. Bentley's eagerness to adopt Philip's adulterous offspring when she did not support the adoption of Steve — indeed, there is a clear suggestion that she was the "someone" responsible for his removal to the orphanage. To adopt Steve would have been to give Philip a replacement son, but it would not have been to balance the moral score; to alleviate her guilt it is necessary for her to be in the position of the wronged party — a situation

which explains, first, why instead of being bitter about Philip's adultery she responds as if she were "the guilty one" (p. 124), and second why her narrative creates the impression that if she did not somehow engineer the adultery she was nevertheless waiting for something like this to happen.

Nor is Mrs. Bentley only subconsciously aware of the kind of fundamentalist guilt-for-a-guilt morality she is practising, for she explains the logic very clearly in her analysis of why Philip accuses her of having an affair with Paul: "is it a sense of guilt that drove him to it. Unknown to himself even, deeper than his consciousness. . . . Guilty himself, is his impulse to find me guilty too? Does the thought that he has been unfaithful rankle? Is he trying to bring us to a level where we must face each other as two of a kind?" (p. 135).

As much as such an acute analysis helps to explain why Mrs. Bentley wants to see Philip as an adulterer, however, so much does it also undermine her conviction that he is guilty in this respect. Just as we know that Philip's accusations are unfounded, so we begin to see that her evidence for his unfaithfulness is without substance. That Philip is fascinated by Judith's appearance and agonizes over sketching her can be explained by his being an artist. That Judith weeps when Mrs. Bentley sends her oranges is explicable either as the natural reaction of an outcast to a gesture of sympathy or — if the oranges are meant to brand her as a prostitute — as the equally natural reaction of a woman who feels betrayed by an erstwhile friend. Further contradictory evidence is that the sexual relationship of the Bentleys seems to improve at the same time that Philip is supposed to be looking elsewhere and also by Mrs. Bentley's own admission that the baby does not look like his father.

Less easy to invalidate at first reading is that Mrs. Bentley awakens one night — a date corresponding with the gestation period of Judith's child — to find Philip not beside her, and when going in apparent search of him she overhears from the lean-to shed Judith's little laugh: "A frightened, soft, half-smothered little laugh, that I've laughed often with him too. There's no other laugh like it" (p. 123). Actually, however, Mrs. Bentley has uttered a relatively similar sound not very long ago — specifically when Paul came by to show off his horse: "I stroked him too, and when he took my collar in his teeth and gave a pull let out a sudden, high-pitched laugh. I remember the laugh, because there was such an abrupt, self-conscious silence afterwards" (p. 41). Moreover, in response to the sexual connotations set in motion by this laugh Philip gives his own "forced, derisive little laugh" (p. 145) when she attempts to convince him that she really was not playing for Paul on the night of the "duplicate" Liszt concert.

Nor should one forget that the apparent conception of Philip/Judith's child takes place in the lean-to shed reconstructed as a room for Steve — the would-be

replacement for the Bentley's "stillborn" — which comparable site was the location of Mrs. Bentley's first decision to become a hypocrite: "It was twelve years ago, in our first town, that I learned my lesson, one day when they caught me in the woodshed making kindling of a packing box" (p. 3). Since twelve years ago is also the supposed age of the stillborn child, one begins to suspect that the remark she now interprets as evidence of small-town notions of propriety was really an indication of matronly concern for a pregnant wife — with the further implication that Mrs. Bentley was in some way responsible for the stillbirth as a result of extensive physical exertion.

Suggesting even further that Mrs. Bentley's "discovery" of Philip's infidelity is predicated by her own guilt is the dream which precedes it — a dream in which someone is stealing Minnie's hay, while El Greco seems too far away to hear her, and Paul explains to her that it wasn't in the dog's nature anyway to chase burglars. Focusing only on the theft of Minnie's hay, and identifying with the horse, Mrs. Bentley interprets the dream as a forewarning of what she is about to discover, thereby deflecting attention from the fact that Minnie was Steve's horse — whose "hay" she had in effect stolen, just as she had in effect stolen Steve from Philip, occasioning the latter, she would have us believe, to turn to Judith. Equally played down in her conscious intererpretation is the fact that she and Paul appear together, with Philip appearing in the lonesome guise of a dog howling at the moon — or the threatening guise of the skeleton-unburying dog of Eliot's *Waste Land* (see here the ominous dog references pp. 121, 128). One should also not forget that when Mrs. Bentley hears the "tell-tale" laugh she is under sedation — so that the likelihood of her having heard anything, or the likelihood of her hearing correctly, is seriously questioned in a very concrete medical sense.

Ultimately, therefore, the only real proof that Philip is an adulterer is his refusal to deny her accusation to this effect. But does Philip's refusal to exonerate himself really constitute an admission of guilt, or does it rather signal his awareness of the burden of guilt under which his wife has laboured all these years and his understanding of how much she needs this form of absolution? — and how little she understood his previous attempt to provide it with the words: "If a man's a victim of circumstances he deserves to be" (p. 19)? Has Philip always loved his wife and has his apparent coldness really stemmed from the way in which she made him feel that she did not want affection? Does his seeming acquiescence to her charge stem from a recognition of her tremendous need for a child and his own feeling of not having fulfilled her in this respect? Has he seen in her repeated complaints about his inadequacy as a provider and in her relationship to Paul a criticism of his masculinity, and does he see in going along with her assumption that he is an adulterer a way of regaining sexual stature in her eyes? If it is not illogical to see Mrs. Bentley imagining herself barren even though she

has conceived, is it not also possible to see Philip in imagining himself infertile even though he has impregnated her?

Such is the complex of motives we would like to advance, especially because Philip's refusal to set his wife straight about his supposed paternity constitutes his single instance of hypocrisy or deception — in a novel in which these are the major concerns.

BEFORE ONE CONCLUDES that Philip may be having the "last laugh," however, one must further consider the way in which his alleged paternity of Judith's child reflects on the question of his paternity of the "stillborn" child. If Philip is not the father of the former, does the logic of symmetry suggest that neither was he the father of the latter? Encouraging one to consider such a possibility — and in keeping with the premise of dramatic monologue that all information reflects on the problems of the protagonist — is the otherwise gratuitous introduction of a former admirer of Mrs. Bentley, in a recollection she provides when she and Judith go for a walk along the railway tracks and risk scandal by riding back to town on a handcar with two trackmen who have picked them up. Out along the tracks, the two of them make "angels" in the dust, indentations which are mainly "behinds and wings." In this context, Mrs. Bentley observes that Judith "used to do it with the neighbor boy who keeps asking her to marry him and I used to do it with another neighbor boy called Percy Glenn." With this boy, despite parental opposition, Mrs. Bentley became "fairly good friends. Later we played duets together, and helped each other studying harmony and counterpoint" (p. 77). Given the way in which music is associated with sexuality in Philip's proposal, and his reading of sexual connotations into Paul's response to her playing of the "duplicate" Liszt concerto, to interpret the playing of "duets" etc., as a sexual euphemism does not seem far-fetched. Indeed, Mrs. Bentley herself does not allow one to read her association with Percy on a purely aesthetic level, since she goes on to explain that after she married Philip she wrote to Percy that she had become a small-town preacher's wife, and when he replied that "it seemed a pity," her response was to "[worry] Philip with amorous attentions in the middle of the afternoon" — recall here that Mrs. Bentley regards Philip's sexual attentions after the Judith affair as symptomatic of his guilt.

Moreover, Mrs. Bentley emphasizes that this second child is "his" — "Your baby" — and that she twice refers to the first as "the boy *of his own* I haven't given him" (pp. 36, 49; emphasis ours). In short, if Philip can afford to be magnanimous in allowing Mrs. Bentley to believe he was an adulterer because he knows he is not guilty, she can be gracious in adopting his bastard because it compensates for the way in which she had cuckolded him.

Indeed, Mrs. Bentley specifically suggests that Philip "came second" sequentially as a lover — although ultimately first in her affections — when she tries to analyze whether Judith really means anything to him: "If she did he would hate me now.... I know if I were married, not to Philip, and then Philip came, I know I would hate the first one. I know I would never submit to him again" (p. 124). Designed to emphasize her commitment to Philip, the observation also suggests that Mrs. Bentley is capable of having "submitted" before she met her husband. Similarly, when Mrs. Bentley testingly tells Philip about Judith's pregnancy and he responds "It's the kind like that, who slip just once — " she breaks in, "You can never tell though. Sometimes it's the mild, innocent ones that are the sly ones. A woman usually knows what she's about" (p. 147). In addition, one should notice how much of Mrs. Bentley's attention to Steve focuses on the true nature of his parentage and on whether heredity will assert itself regardless of upbringing — an issue she never had to face in the case of her own child.

Perhaps this is the main reason why, for all the apparent signs of renewal and reconciliation which attend the conclusion of the novel, many readers have not felt comfortable about the prospects for the Bentleys. The really important false front has not come down, and there remains the question of how Mrs. Bentley and subsequently Philip will respond when the child begins showing its true paternity.

As for who the likely father might be, David Williams has recently argued that the "Scarlet Rompers" belong to Paul[5] — an argument he could seemingly have greatly strengthened had he considered Ross's onomastics. That is, while Mrs. Bentley believes she is naming the child after her husband, "Philip" — as Paul explains — derives from the Greek and and means "a lover of horses" (p. 162), an epithet which describes Paul much more accurately than Mr. Bentley. Conversely, the name "Paul" calls to mind the Apostle noted for his asceticism and misogyny and thus a likely prototype for Mr. Bentley, the preacher. Similarly, to the extent that Williams argues that only Mrs. Bentley sees Judith's child as premature and that if we look at her diary references to Paul and Judith for a month prior to the "little laugh" episode we find suggestions of their "affair," he could have pursued to his own ends the implications of Mrs. Bentley's observation, when Paul enters the novel for the first time, that "there had been a mistake in dates somewhere, and his country friends weren't expecting us for another week" (p. 7).

Having provided Williams with this added ammunition, however, we must ultimately withdraw support, and in doing so recognize that the author in dramatic monologue uses factual details and names to forestall faulty leads. Thus three types of evidence indicate that Judith's child was indeed premature: first, the information relayed by the doctor's wife (p. 146); second, the physical strain which brought on the labour; and third, the description of the newborn child

(p. 161). Although the "mistake in dates somewhere" is a key clue, therefore, it needs to be aligned with the "prematurity" of conception of Mrs. Bentley's child. Equally, upon reconsideration one realizes that the names of Philip and Paul are actually most appropriate to their characters. Mr. Bentley, for example, is indeed a "lover of horses" in the form of his association with the mythical steed, "Pegasus" (see pp. 53, 106). Similarly, Paul Kirby is another "St. Paul" in the sense that like the Apostle who was knocked off his horse and subsequently changed his name, so the schoolteacher loses his initial belief in the value of a horse (p. 127), just as his interest in word changes is a central aspect of his character.

Moreover, although Williams' argument (that Paul's attentions to Mrs. Bentley are really his way of explaining his "affair" with Judith and of asking Mrs. Bentley to act as a type of mother-confessor) would suggest a nice symmetry to the likelihood that Philip's "affair" with Judith was only that of priest to penitent, too much evidence indicates that the schoolteacher is indeed courting the minister's wife. Not only are there the amatory innuendoes of his etymological derivations which culminate in his analysis of the origin of words like *cupidity*, *eros*, *venereal* and *aphrodisiac* (p. 76), but he pointedly explains to Mrs. Bentley at their first meeting that his liking of the hymns she plays has nothing to do with religion (p. 8), just as he later asks her to understand the real reasons why he, a rationalist, keeps coming to church (p. 84).

Nor is it possible to accept Mrs. Bentley's view that Paul is really seeking the intellectual companionship of Philip, for to do so one would have to discount the numerous times the schoolteacher tries to diminish Mr. Bentley in his wife's eyes. Thus he tells her that Steve has no hero to emulate and, when she catches his drift, quickly pretends that he is not discrediting Philip *per se* but only in his role as a minister (p. 70). Equally, though his gift to Philip of an easel sounds like a gesture of friendship, the spirit in which the offering is made becomes clear when he goes on to explain that the word comes from the Dutch for "little ass" (p. 104). At the same time, Paul would like to encourage Philip in his art for, as he explains to Mrs. Bentley when they come out of the study after Philip has "caught" them there looking at his pictures, "Why there was a French artist who decided one day he couldn't stand his business or family any longer, and just walked off and left them. It's a good sign." Missing his drift, Mrs. Bentley then asks if Paul thinks that this is the fate in store for her, to which he replies, "He'd be a fool" (p. 128). These hardly appear to be the attempts of a man to explain his affair with another woman, just as to see Paul as Judith's lover one would have to ignore totally his jealousy of Mrs. Bentley at the ranch and the significance of his explanation of the sexual connotations of a cowboy asking a woman to come and see his horse (p. 98) — and who should know better than Paul who gets all dressed up to come around and show Mrs. Bentley his bronco (p. 40).

YET WILLIAMS MUST BE CREDITED for pointing us in the right direction when he identifies the "exchange" at the Ladies Bazaar as the key passage for discovering who is the father of Judith's child. The exchange begins with Mrs. Wenderby selling to Paul "a pair of rompers" (p. 256) and, since she has throughout the narrative been critical of Paul's use of physically suggestive language, according to Williams her sale is designed to brand him as fornicating father of Judith's child. *Actually*, however, the "brand" does not stay with Paul; instead, he gives the rompers to Mrs. Bentley who in turn sells them to *Mr. Finley*!

Nor does Ross wait until the Bazaar, or the end of the novel, to indicate that Mr. Finley is the likely suspect; in keeping with the tendency in dramatic monologue of dropping clues via the narrator's projection of his/her problems, Mr. Finley is introduced at the outset of the novel by Mrs. Bentley's criticisms of Mrs. Finley: "Her husband, for instance, is an appropriately meek little man, but you can't help feeling what an achievement is his meekness. It's like a tight wire cage drawn over him, and words and gestures, indicative of a more expansive past, keeps squeezing through it . . . " (pp. 5-6). Moreover, Judith is presented from the outset as a thorn in Mrs. Finley's side, as a "little country upstart" who ignores the mores of the town and whom Mrs. Finley wishes "would go home and marry some good, hard-working farmer with a background like her own" (pp. 11-12). Similarly, it was for the Finleys that Judith first worked when she came to town and from whose employ she was dismissed by Mrs. Finley — who was "afraid [she'd] come to no good end" (p. 57). It is also Mrs. Finley who objects to the Bentley's adoption of Steve, arguing that because of his parentage and age "he'll never really belong to you. If instead now you'd take a baby — . . . there are so many deserving cases — our own kind — clean, decent people — " (p. 61). As Mr. Finley's bastard, Judith's child is indeed of Mrs. Finley's kind!

Furthermore, that Mr. Finley would be capable of such moral impropriety is suggested by Mrs. Bird when she advises Mrs. Bentley how to handle Mrs. Finley's objections: "Only today I told Mrs. Finley that worse sins can come home to roost than those of your peasant ancestors" (p. 60). Finally, that Mr. Finley — Chairman of the Church Board and husband of the self-styled guardian of the morals of the town — should be the adulterer is as ironically appropriate in this novel about religious hypocrisy as it is poetically just that Mrs. Bentley should be adopting the offspring — as it were — of her chief antagonist.

Accordingly, a good way of concluding this discussion of *As For Me and My House* is to consider the charges of aesthetic failure that have recently been brought against it. According to Paul Denham, Ross fails to be true to the "diary" format he has chosen: things that one expects of such a mode are

missing — references to the time and place in which Mrs. Bentley does her "writing"; conversely, background information is included which jars with the "private" insights we expect of personal literature — "Is Mrs. Bentley really likely to write a summary of Philip's past life in her diary . . . " after twelve years of marriage? Comparing the novel with such *Bildungsromane* as *Great Expectations* and *The Stone Angel*, Denham argues that "we never get a mature Mrs. Bentley's account of her own past self. . . . no such helpful perspective is available. . . . what we get is Mrs. Bentley's lucid and articulate awareness of her own blundering obtuseness in the present." As a result, there is "ultimately, no way of knowing what to make of Mrs. Bentley, and therefore no way of knowing what to make of her narrative." To similar effect, Denham complains that Ross's tactics of characterization are faulty: presenting a concrete example of her vindictiveness, Mrs. Bentley then goes on to admit this quality, thereby preventing us from seeing her as truly vindictive. Denham also objects to the number of contradictions the novel contains — in particular to the fact that Philip hates music, at the same time that it was through music that "[Mrs. Benley] was able to reach him . . . in the first place." Although ironically he is the only critic to realize the real age of the stillborn child had it been conceived in wedlock and had it lived, he presents this awareness as a complaint that "the drought seems to have lasted for eleven years, since the death of their baby (p. 44), a violation of the historical facts. . . . " Finally, Denham complains about the "implausibility" of the Judith affair — particularly her becoming "conveniently pregnant after one lapse from chastity." To Denham, therefore, *As For Me and My House* has serious narrative flaws, and "we do the novel, and the study of Canadian literature itself a disservice if we call it a great work."[6] As our study should indicate, however, all of the failings Denham notes derive from no inadequacies in Ross's text but instead from his own failure to approach the work as a dramatic monologue.

Such an approach, furthermore, answers precisely to the call for responsible criticism articulated by Morton L. Ross in his castigation of recent critics who argue that Mrs. Bentley is an unreliable narrator but then go on to conclude that the entire novel is without any definiteness and that the responsibility for *creating* meaning is left up to the reader. Designed to suggest the "modernism" of the novel, which in turn is supposed to be the grounds for its "canonization," such criticism according to Morton Ross not only proceeds simply by an "I want it so" assertion that what were initially alleged as flaws are really virtues, but also such criticism has the effect of diminishing Ross's role as directing intelligence. As he sees it, "Once we agree that Ross deliberately sacrificed the control of a reliable narrator, it would follow that we need to articulate the techniques and structures . . . by means of which he might continue to shape and guide his readers' perception and understanding."[7]

Such an articulation we have provided by approaching the work as a dramatic monologue, for in works of this kind — even much more than in straight point-of-view fiction or narratives in which the mature recording intelligence ironically undercuts an earlier self — the author remains firmly in control and functions as the reader's friend, encouraging him to use his emotional response not as an end in itself but as a means to ferreting out the clues he has provided. As such, dramatic monologue also perfectly combines the two poles of art exemplified by the Bentleys — human interest and careful structuring — just as our reading of the novel also comes responsibly to terms with earlier criticism of the work as repetitive and discursive, with such flaws being the inevitable consequences of the use of the diary form. For we now see that Mrs. Bentley is not *writing*, but *presenting*, her case to an implied audience, just as we now have a concrete explanation for her paranoia which also has the effect of creating an undercurrent of pity and terror which prevents the reader from *ever* becoming bored.

NOTES

[1] Roy Daniells, 1957 Introduction to *As For Me and My House* (1941; Toronto, 1970), p. vii. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] To date the best discussion of *As For Me and My House* as a point-of-view novel is to be found in Wilfred Cude's *A Due Sense of Difference: An evaluative Approach to Canadian Literature* (Maryland: Univ. Press of North America, 1980).

[3] Although many of these features of dramatic monologue characterize the "fictional diary" as described by Valerie Raoul in *The French Fictional Journal* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 26-32, distinguishing dramatic monologue is the extent to which guilt prompts the narrative and an immediate listener — as opposed to reader — is implied.

[4] One should notice that "anyway" is a word used repeatedly by Mrs. Bentley to dismiss issues she feels compelled to raise but the implications of which she does not want to explore. For example, after seemingly analyzing whether she was right to believe that Philip — like water — couldn't be blocked if he truly is/was an artist, she concludes, "Anyway I kept on. It was easier that way" (p. 103). Similarly, after raising the question of why she insists on sending Philip out to see the pregnant Judith, she turns quickly to a description of the *fait accompli* with the words, "Anyway I sent him" (p. 152). Or again, after touching on the subject of how she subtly encouraged Philip to investigate the possibility of their buying a second-hand bookstore, she excuses herself with the observation "Anyway it worked . . . " (p. 160).

[5] David Williams, "The 'Scarlet' Rompers: Toward a New Perspective on *As For Me and My House*," *Canadian Literature*, 103 (Winter 1984), 156-66.

[6] Paul Denham, "Narrative Technique in Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 5 (Spring 1980), 116-24.

[7] Morton L. Ross, "The Canonization of *As For Me and My House: A Case Study*," in *Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honor of Sheila Watson*, eds. Diane Bessai and David Jackel (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 195.

WHITE RAGS

Larry Towell

White rags tied
into branches mean
something is dying
The moon rises from
its message of gore
Birds flutter like light
wordless & wild
Here the children were tied
& led away, grandmother
face-down, gun stuck in
her anus. The smell of lilac
& napalm mix. A peasant's
heart pumping in a basket of
grenades
It might have been
Americans wrapped in
newsprint like eggshells
or peels. Luisa learning
English sleeping with
servicemen whose hearts
shrivelled in their mouths
Among morning stalls of fruit
& the skin of dried salamanders
she is calling,
"There is no time!"
A truck rolls silent
No headlights. The motor
off. Just the sound of
tires. You hold your breath
You think of dogs &
slip into knife-point
stars & tinfoil
corn

The old tank in *New*
York, a redhead sitting
under its muzzle of snow
The pregnant woman eating
lemon ice cream

The nicest people somehow
seem vulnerable even in
peacetime. Newsphotos
of the tortured wrap
coffeegrounds, grapefruit
rinds & bites of morning
donut. A peach pit grows
in the alley, a small
piece of sky, pink & shiny
a tongue being swallowed
backwards
Someone digs in the news
for a scrap of raw meat
    We have found the white
rags even in *New York*
the decomposed bodies of
campesinos caught in branches
Each morning spring flowers
raise their clenched fists
& freeway medians hold
them up all the way
to *Jersey*

Manhattan

ROLL OVER MCFADDEN (78)

Terrance Cox

"Take good care of St Catharines for me, ok?"
Dave McFadden, in a letter

Even though William Butler Yeats
resided & recited
but a block away at the Welland House
briefly once in 1914,
not a single gyre has turned up
yet in my work.
No fairies either.

David McFadden, on the other hand,
sees fairies
in his Hamilton backyard,
forty miles distant down the QEW.
He also once visited the Welland
for refreshments & to write,
in the very room where Yeats
lectured on beauty & where now
topless dancers gyrate,
a poem perfect for organic form.

You see the problem already,
if you know McFadden.
Fool that I am, I read his books
from cover to cover & find,
ever since, his feats
strutting thru my stuff.
I'll be seeing fairies next.

Consider another case,
that of Al Purdy,
from A-burg, across the lake
& hours down the river,
who has been to this city
one time only that I know of
& has yet to mention
the Welland in a published poem.
Just to make sure,
I read each new volume &, of course,
thereafter too often taste
Purdy wild gripes in my homebrew,
which makes me goddamn mad
for I am a sensitive man.

Let this serve as notice
to all visiting poets.
I shall be the one
that makes the poems of this city,
lock, stock & barrel.
Dave, you have till sundown
to get your assonance out of here

& tell Al Purdy the news.

"THE OTHER SIDE OF THINGS"

Notes on Clark Blaise's "Notes Beyond a History"

Robert Lecker

IN A STATEMENT THAT SERVES to describe his own art, Clark Blaise says

> A writer is always trying to suggest the *other* side of things. He's trying to create a subject and an object, not only the centerpiece but the frame, and sometimes he feeds the frame first and withholds the picture. Other times he gives the picture and withholds the fact that he's going to hang it in the garage next to an old nudie calendar. Sometimes it may be a very beautiful thing to be deliberately destroyed. . . . It's always a matter of working by indirection and by surprise and suggestion, which means that everything you state directly has a shadow meaning, implied.[1]

Since Blaise is a writer given to fictionalizing his life and his aesthetic development (by his own account he is "wedded . . . to the epic of my own becoming"[2]), we can never take his self-critical pronouncements at full face value. The face is always masked. But Blaise's words do point to two aspects of his work that critics tend to ignore. First, they direct us to the fact that Blaise is preoccupied with binaries. "The *other* side of things" evokes a world of otherness and proliferating opposites that seldom merge: subject counters object, centrepiece repulses frame, picture subverts setting, narrative preys on fact. My list is merely a departure point: for Blaise, everything is structured in twos. And as I will try to show, this two sidedness is by no means a purely thematic concern. By entering "the *other* side of things" we can understand the profound dualism central to Blaise's approach to narrative strategy and form. Second, Blaise's words direct us to the realization that what is *said* in his stories always covers a deeper level of meaning or consciousness that can only be exposed by probing beneath a deceptively finished surface. Blaise is right to argue that the language of his stories "reveals its kinship to poetry."[3] It demands to be read as "a single metaphor and the exfoliation of a single metaphor through dense layers of submetaphors" (Hancock, p. 56).

My sense is that the "single metaphor" most fascinating to Blaise is connected with "the other side of things" so central to his life as art. This connection is

subtly displayed in "Notes Beyond a History" — one of Blaise's most powerful and representative stories — yet few readers have commented on its form or structure. In an earlier commentary I suggested, briefly, that "Notes Beyond a History" is "concerned with a morality of *seeing*" that involves the narrator in a search for "the imagined story beyond the recorded history," for the " 'mythic moment' which may define an entire period in one's life."[4] True, but I ignored the formal implications of "the *other* side of things." Barry Cameron recognized that this "densely textured, richly descriptive story . . . explores 'the other side' of Florida, of history, through a dialectic between the primitive and the civilized, memory and history, myth and fact,"[5] but space restrictions made it impossible for him to follow the exfoliation of this dialectic. So I return to it now, hoping to reveal the other side of Blaise's world by allowing myself to make connections, to pause, to double back, to play, to live in and out of this two-sided space.

THE OPENING. Draw a map of the geography described in the first two paragraphs. The other side jumps out at you. On one side there is Theodora Rourke's "stone cottage that was a good eighty years old" and "set far back" from the lake near which she lives. She "had not wanted to see the lake." "She didn't need the water." And "she was ninety-two." That's *her* side. Now draw "the hedge at the side that separated us from Theodora Rourke." "We" (the Sutherlands) lived in a four-year-old "fine Spanish-style home of tawny stucco," surrounded by "a rich Bermuda lawn reaching to the water." She: divorced from water, surrounded by "two hundred yards of twisted trees" that had once been a Valencia grove, self contained, reclusive, timeless in her mystery. We: reaching for the water from a contrived lawn, reaching the lawn from a contrived house, imbuing the house with a contrived history that allows Sutherland to say, "we've always been known as the leading family and one of the oldest."

She/We. From the first sentence, in the first paragraph, on the first page, the narrator (why is he tagged only by a *sur*name?) tells us that like the geography surrounding him, he is split. Watch him enumerate the divisions that plague him from the start. "I should divide the history of Oshacola County into 'Modern Era' and 'All Time' so that both the Rourkes and the Sutherlands could enjoy their prominence." "We were the first family of Lake Oshacola," but she "had come with the place." She was comparable in stature to Cy Young; we reached the less stellar prominence of Early Wynn. She knew the landscape when it was untamed, when the lake was "but an ocean of alligators, the breeder of chilling fevers." We knew the lake from the groomed stretches of our Bermuda lawn. Let the hedge dividing their properties become a line between signifiers:

Rourke	*Sutherland*
"stone cottage" (ca. 1852)	"Spanish-style home" (1928)
"set far back" from the beach (200 yds.)	"fifty yards from the beach"
"She didn't need the water"	"reaching to the water"
"an ocean of alligators"	"a rich Bermuda lawn"
"the Rourkes had come with the place"	"We were the first family of Lake Oshacola, then"
Cy Young	Early Wynn
"All Time"	"The Modern Era"

It is clear that Sutherland sees the Rourkes as others representing an other*ness*. But the dividing force behind his opening words is not simply the desire to enumerate difference. The "shadow meaning, implied" is that Sutherland wants desperately to cross the hedge, to move out of the tamed, recognized, protected world of his "Modern Era" and into the mysterious, eternal, and hidden realm of "All Time" aligned with Rourke.

On one level this desire implies Sutherland's unhappiness with his own past and what it forced him to become. He wants to be other than what he is. Yet his assertion of difference, and the obsessive she/we dichotomy he sets up, speak powerfully of his need for identification with Rourke. The more he divides himself from the other side the more he knows he wants it. But why? To claim priority of social status? It's more. Rourke represents something other than permanence, prestige, and lineage in social terms. She represents a narrative realm that Sutherland, as speaker, must penetrate if his "notes beyond a history" are truly to go *beyond* the history embodied in his family, his home, his tale. History, then, becomes a metaphor for the narrative world that enfolds him in the safety of recognized progression and place. History is known, named, mapped, controlled, just as the story aligned with history will be locked into Sutherland's lanscaped consciousness: "a rich Bermuda lawn," "a fine Spanish-style home."

All false. His problem: to go beyond the lawn, the house, the history, and find *another* world, ungroomed but stable, something that will last, something "set far back" from the "Modern Era" in a period that resists change. A mythical world? Sutherland seems to be saying that his story (his life) will only be fulfilled when he manages to escape the social and narrative conventions that have limited his life as a man. In this sense, his attempt to resurrect Rourke's story speaks for his need to regress, to find the childlike consciousness that once allowed him to be drawn into an experience without distancing himself to describe it. If this is true then we know the problems his maturation has brought: to be severed from experience, removed from mystery, caught in time, place, death. To move back in time is to evade this death, reverse progression, and inhabit an eternal, im-

mutable realm. But eternity can be problematic: it promises no death, and without death there is no reason to write. One writes against death. Blaise writes against death. Sutherland writes against his death. To keep telling the story, to go beyond history, he must paradoxically recognize that he must never go beyond it. The opening of the story confirms his profound but repressed consciousness of this paradox informing every word he writes. He wants to cross the hedge; he fears crossing it. He wants permanence; he wants change. He wants to be "the first family of Lake Oshacola"; he wants to be its last. The binaries move on.

The second two paragraphs introduce a new set of "other" sides that enlarge upon the implications of those we already know. The mythical dimension of Rourke's life is now aligned with Catholicism, a religion strange to Sutherland in his childhood, not only because "we had no admitted Catholics in Hartley," but also because Catholicism was a "conspiracy" of unknown rituals and rites whose power is predominantly narrative. For Sutherland, Catholicism is a story his mother tells, a nightmare tale of "Black Sisters" who "walked in loose black robes . . . and then at night they shed their robes and took to flight." By crossing the hedge and entering Rourke's domain Sutherland might penetrate a new kind of story diametrically opposed to his own, which is characterized by whiteness, daylight, learning, history — things that can be known. This story, his story, is pointedly aligned with his mother, who, as "a south Georgia disciple of Tom Watson," was repelled and fascinated by "everything strange" about Rourke. By enclosing the m(other) view within a single paragraph, Sutherland conveys both the dichotomies of faith that haunted him as a child as well as his desire to find a surrogate mother who will provide him with a new narrative life. Two worlds keep warring; Sutherland tries to win both wars.

He can't. For even within these separate worlds the other side appears. As soon as Sutherland describes his mother's realm he feels compelled to describe his father's in other terms. While she was a "poor tormented woman" who taught her children "to love each other, Florida, F.D.R., and the Christ of her choice," he was "a Hartley man with education," an "old father" characterized by his "white suits, stoutness, and eclectic learning." Mother was obsessed with "collecting the goods on Theodora Rourke." Father stood for "wisdom," "self-righteousness," "justice," "legality," "history." The oppositions *within* Sutherland's family ultimately reflect the oppositions he finds *outside* through his impression of Rourke's domain. These oppositions further reflect a dilemma Sutherland confronts: if he chooses to go beyond history he simultaneously chooses to go beyond the father who embodies history and ultimately to reject him. One of the reasons Rourke's existence fascinates him is that (as we soon discover) her world is fatherless. The implication is that only by abandoning a literal and figurative father can Sutherland find the narrative and personal freedom from his telling so desires to find. But in this conflict, as in all his conflicts, Sutherland can never

abandon either of the other sides. He wants to lose his father, yet without him he must answer for everything he does. He wants to be "freed . . . for my manhood" and to remain the protected child. He wants to invent a new story of himself but realizes that he has only his history to tell. When he wonders why his brother became "a builder of rockets . . . and left me here in Hartley, a teacher," we know. His brother, who *is* named, managed to leave his past for the future symbolized by the "Apollo moon probes" he designs. Tom got to the other side. But his brother stays caught in the story of his past as he dreams of transcending the stable world he so loves.

NOW THERE IS A BREAK, a demarcation point in the narrative that tells us a frame has been made. The frame: story of a man telling the story of his youth as he wonders how to become that youth; story of a youth telling the story of his maturation as he wonders how to become a man. My description of the frame is meant to suggest the personal pull Sutherland feels between development and regression, but it also describes a structural pull that determines narrative perspective. When the story opens, Sutherland remembers the other side as another time; his viewpoint is retrospective. Then, having confronted the dilemma posed by his recognition of time past, he tries to evade memory by focusing on his present. But because the present provides no solace he tries to evade it by focusing on his past. For Sutherland, then, the other side of things is temporal as well as spatial.

The second section of the story finds him in his air conditioned office, "wrapped in tinted glass," eight floors above the Lake Oshacola of his childhood. There is no mystery here. Sutherland has become the product of his family's rich Bermuda lawn. And Oshacola itself ("beautifully landscaped now") is the product of that "civilizing" impulse that wants to make the wilderness "humanized," ordered, safe. Sutherland would like to believe that he can control his environment. He images himself as inhabiting a fortress from whose height his view "commands the lake." Then he wonders: "if eight floors of perspective can do *this* to Oshacola why shouldn't Tampa be creeping slowly to my front lawn?" Notice that the idea of commanding the landscape reminds Sutherland of his lawn; in other words, his need for control is linked to the safety of his "civilized" childhood. Moreover, he is not interested in subduing the landscape through physical intervention. His methods of obtaining command are expressed in terms of elevated perspective, as if he could dominate the landscape through his vision. Sutherland's problem, however, is that he confuses elevated perspective with true vision. While the height he inhabits may seem to provide a commanding view, Sutherland is actually defeated and trapped — in his office, in his memories, in

his dreams of grandeur. To obtain true vision he must abandon his false commanding view, get back to ground level, tear up the Bermuda lawn, cross the hedge to Rourke's world (remember: "She didn't need the water"). Sutherland still needs it because his self understanding is intimately tied to the lake and its surrounding terrain. He knows that "not only has the lake been civilized, but so has my memory, leaving only a memory of my memory as it was then," and he wonders why "places are always remembered as larger and more unruly than they now appear to be." The answer, of course, is that as a child he had not yet developed the perspective that allowed him to believe he was in control, he had not yet abandoned his sense of the "clusters of snakes threshing mightily on Theodora Rourke's warm sand beach."

Now he has. Why? Because he never left the father image that controlled his early life. Even today, he admits, he is "more than a little bit my father's son." The father's son is tied to an imposed perspective, to a view of life seen from safe distance. Sutherland claims that "what I see with my eyes closed, books shut, was also true." That's not enough. You can't tell us you *choose* to see truth this way because you're a "shrewd man." You can't choose to have true vision. Either you shut your books, go beyond history, and live in the truth of your imagination or you remain sanitized and air conditioned, overlooking the lake. You can't have it both ways. But that's how you want it. Is that why you tell us about seeing things with your eyes closed and then give us a documentary, historical view of Hartley with your eyes (and books) wide open? Does it matter how many people lived in Hartley in 1932? Why have you gone back to the years of your childhood? Does it matter how many cars there were, or whether the buildings were dark brick? Where are *you* in the picture you paint? Still thinking of your father and the power he had. "He knew them all," all those Hartleyans you would never know. Still thinking of your brother and how he managed to escape. That pizza stand you imagine near "the complex at the Cape." Is that near where Tom builds his Apollo moon probes? Let's find out *your* name. You won't tell. You hide behind your surname, your father's name, and give us facts. Then you try to convince us that "history is all about" knowing "that *change* merely reflects the unacknowledged essence of things." History, for you, is about knowing the way things are. That kind of knowing has been your project. Rourke fascinates you because she represents mystery and a spiritual essence that will never be fully known. If you get to that other side, you might see with your eyes closed, books shut.

Try. The third section of the story finds Sutherland crossing the hedge that has obsessed him since he was a child. Theodora Rourke wants him to deliver the Jacksonville paper. This means that he must now enter her domain; their relationship is bound to change. It does. As soon as Sutherland receives the invitation to make contact with Rourke he gives her a new and significant name. Now she

is "Big Mama" to him, the Big Mama who will in some way become a surrogate mother to the paper boy who is reluctant to cross borders and enter a new life. His entrance to her world marks a conversion experience for Sutherland and a turning point in the story: now he will be introduced to a way of seeing (and by extension, to a way of knowing) that subverts the linear, pragmatic modes of perception aligned with his family and his childhood. I say his "entrance" to underscore the sexual implications of Sutherland's initiation. This is the first time we see him conscious of making entry to an unknown world that is explicitly signed as a female domain. He hesitates "at the foot of the steps to Big Mama's back porch," but finally he does "go inside." I'm forcing things here. The truth is that Sutherland "followed Big Mama inside, but not into the house." Although Sutherland does not go right inside Big Mama's place ("How I wanted to step inside") it is clear that some culmination takes place on the porch as Sutherland peers into the parlour and eats a piece of cake impregnated with the image of Christ.

What is the nature of this culmination? On one level, it is aesthetic. The house is filled with "paintings and photos" while "the tables were piled with metal and porcelain objects that reflected the pale sunlight like the spires of a far-off, exotic city." Rourke is obviously connected with two kinds of art, one that represents life as "vivid" and "eternally moist, eternally in the sun," and another that sees it as "exotic," "far-off," "faint," and "vague." Her house bridges the gap between the immediate and the imagined, between verisimilitude and vision. This is the bridge Sutherland tries to find in his own art — a way of telling that will enable him to turn his past into a vision that he can fuse with the hard reality of his present. His conversion involves the knowledge that two worlds can be housed together when borders are crossed. On another level, the culmination is spiritual. Sutherland realizes that his religious training has fixed him in history, rather than in the "All Time" he associates with Rourke and her belief in "His immortal body."

I want to be able to say that Sutherland embraces this body, and he does transcend the self limitations he is coming to understand. But the fact is that at this point in the story he still rejects the knowledge that is offered to him; he refuses to go *all the way* inside. This explains why he will not eat the holy wafer his cake crumbs have become ("I pressed the last crumbs into a wafer and let it drop back on the plate"), why he cannot understand Rourke's quivering prayer sounds, and why he bolts from the room ("my only chance to get away before she could drain my blood into a cup"). Although this section ends with Sutherland's evasion of Big Mama, it is clear that something in him has changed, for now he is ready to touch the line that divides Sutherland from Rourke. "I threw myself into the brier hedge between our properties." I threw myself a bit beyond my history.

Not for long. The next section finds Sutherland contemplating history again, listing the "facts" about Rourke that will be recorded in his *History of Hartley*. At the very mention of this title we know that Sutherland will fail in his attempt to get beyond the book that defines his life and his mode of perception. Although his narrative might be seen as an attempt to subvert history, the fact remains that it is only a brief interlude in the life of a man who has chosen to be "responsible" for "records" and "facts." I begin to lose faith in Sutherland, want him to throw away the history and give up the data. He won't. His security, now and always, is tied to what is known. Look at the information he provides about the Rourkes. The only thing interesting about the "facts" is that Theodora's husband, like Sutherland's father, was a state senator and judge. The implications of this kinship are important, for they cast Bernard Rourke in the role of surrogate (and absent) father to Sutherland; and as we have already seen, Theodora acts as his Big Mama. So Sutherland wants new parents, replacement parents, a replaced life. The details he provides tell us he is unhappy with what he has become. But at the same time, his refusal to become anything other than what he is suggests that the influence of his safe, Bermuda-lawned childhood has been overpowering, crushing in its safeness, crushing in its ability to deprive him of his manhood.

THIS WORD — "MANHOOD" — is the one I wanted to reach in order to explain Sutherland's opening description of the "discovery that determined my life." He is going to tell us about "the old canal" connected with Rourke's origins. But first, he gives us "a word, historically, on the old canal system." The explicit connection Sutherland makes between word, history, and geography indicates that his upcoming narrative will reveal something about his own life and art. Now picture Florida, limp phallus of the South, and wonder why Sutherland is so preoccupied with "a dream of the mighty ditch" that could be "a natural divider between the productive and enlightened north of Florida and the swampy, pestiferous south." For Sutherland, the mighty ditch would cut the phallus hanging from the body; the "natural divider" he contemplates is only an outward symbol of the much deeper psychological and sexual division he fears he will experience as a man. Sutherland is obsessed with division because he wants to remain whole. (Remember the hedge that divides him from Rourke, the glass that divides him from Hartley, the canal that divides him from his past.) Whole? Unsullied by Rourke, unsullied by time, unsullied by the act of telling. If Sutherland moves on the canal, then, he also inhabits a dividing line. Things may change. Does anything change for Sutherland that August morning on the old canal?

He is fishing with Tom. A "black, blunt" tub that comes into view, poled by a

tall man in black robes. The man lands on Rourke's "scummy beach." Sutherland realizes he is "a Catholic priest." Maybe Rourke is dead. The priest leaves. They follow him. They get lost. They find a wide ditch banked with mud and crushed stone. The ditch narrows. Grey shanty shapes appear. Then "two boys, our age" who were "squatting in the water on either side of the dike" emerge.

I follow the Sutherland boys away from their home. Watch them get lost. Wait for the significance of their journey to appear. Get bored. I know that the voyage is symbolic. When I first read the story I wrote that the search for Rourke's secret "is clearly a heart of darkness voyage that deliberately refuses light" (*OTL*, p. 53). But this refusal is not part of Sutherland's attempt to affirm Rourke's mysteriousness or his own, as I claimed. He refuses to acknowledge what is blatantly revealed: that Rourke's ancestry is not "noble," "eternal," or socially elevated in the conventional sense he respects. Her blood may be mixed. And she seems connected to the albino boys who play along the ditch (when Sutherland sees them he "seemed to be looking into the opaque, colorless eyes of Big Mama, and into the bleeding side of Jesus"). More important, she is linked to a people that reject Sutherland and call for his immediate death. Big Mama's "tribe" wants to kill Sutherland. My mother and her family want to kill me, the son. My mother wants me dead.

Any reader would say that Rourke wants nothing of this; she is *already* dead and never cared much for Sutherland anyhow. Yet it is precisely through her death, through her absence, through her neglect of this boy, that she signals her desire to leave him alone, out in the open, prey. She offers him up to a metaphorical death. Sutherland retreats from the metaphor, pulls away from Big Mama, tries to go back to a time when innocence was easy. Back to the Bermuda lawn. Back to his side of the hedge. "I started paddling backwards. . . ." "We were reeling backwards now, as fast as I could paddle." Reeling back into known time, history, daylight, commanding views, sterility, record keeping, death. Sutherland cannot win. To pursue the unknown is to find death; to return to the known is to find death. Death, death, death. Death in life. Narrative implications? He is *sentenced*. There is no safety in language or form. No solace offered by tradition. No way of telling that can ground the teller in time and guarantee his safe passage to eternity. No way of beginning that does not acknowledge every sense of the end. No way of ending that does not lament every lost beginning. No way out.

Faced with these narrative implications, Sutherland can only continue to write. Yet the mode of narration he resorts to in the last section of the story shows how completely he has failed to find the other side he claimed to want. He goes right back to the "records" that offer him a haven from the other side. This historical haven allows his tone to change: before, it could be involved, frightened, variable in its pace; now, it is reportorial, direct, rational to the point of obsession. Listen

to him recite the facts about Spanish or Creole populations, about Big Mama's estate, about her husband's paintings, about how he is not concerned with her genes "in any quasi-legal sense — only historically." He means *personally*, but by now the personal and historical are synonymous — a sign of Sutherland's failure to transcend his ordered past and the ordered narrative he fashions to enclose that past. This is why he substitutes the personal for the historical when in the next sentence he tells us that Rourke "is one of many who have left scars on my body and opened a path that time has all but swallowed up." "Scars on my body": initiation into the other side.

Sutherland is right when he suggests that this initiation "opened a path" for him that was inevitably "swallowed up." But does he recognize that by recording time — by telling — he swallows up himself? In a final attempt to identify with Rourke he compares her "lost people" to the "two children" who found them: "they too are only wanderers." Nonsense. Tom is eminently located in his Apollo moon probe quest. And you, Sutherland, are ensconced in your air-conditioned office, meditating on your narrative quest. You won't step outside, break the glass, make the passage you want come true. So you sit there telling us your tale of loss and think the story you tell has power. Wrong. There is power, but it is the power of rampant impotence. We follow you, amazed by how little you've done, shocked by how little you've grown. In the end, your story has the power of absence; it is a story thriving on its inability to be told. Perfectly, *nothing* happens to mark its closure. So confess your failure. Tell us you know you write out of nothing but your castrated consciousness. I turn the page and wait to see if you will redeem the final lines. Confess: "I live in the dark, Tom in the light." Yes. Confess more: "my experience that afternoon" did "compel me to become a historian" and did "prevent me from becoming a good one." Go on: Tom, "eyes skyward," is "indifferent to it all" while everything around me is "crumbling into foolishness." Is this the sudden end? Did I push you too far, turn you into something other than what you wanted to be? I don't care. Your other side might be mine. Let me start over. Come closer. Now tell me your story again.

NOTES

[1] Geoff Hancock, "An Interview with Clark Blaise," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, Nos. 34-35 (1980), p. 51. All further references to this work (Hancock) appear in the text.

[2] Clark Blaise, "A North American Memoir: Revenge," *The North American Review*, 269, No. 4 (Dec. 1984), 57.

[3] Clark Blaise, "To Begin, to Begin," in *The Narrative Voice: Short Stories and Reflections by Canadian Authors*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 22.

[4] Robert Lecker, "Clark Blaise: Murals Deep in Nature," in his *On the Line: Readings in the Short Fiction of Clark Blaise, John Metcalf, and Hugh Hood* (Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1982), pp. 51, 52. All further references to this work (*OTL*) appear in the text.

[5] Barry Cameron, *Clark Blaise and His Works* (Toronto: ECW, [1985]), p. 45.

THE BARONESS ELSA

Stephen Scobie

Imagine, then, a meeting
which never could have taken place:
somehow on leave from Manitoba
a small-town schoolteacher called Grove
has made it down to New York City
all alone. Old, half-forgotten intuitions
draw him to Greenwich Village: the bold
bohemian life of the streets allows him,
for the first time in years, to relax,
to be Felix. He remembers a life
of silk and champagne (a life of sordid
toil and translation) : warm cafés in Bonn
where people would actually talk
serious art, with no need to explain
who Flaubert was, or André Gide.
The years in Rapid City slip away
as he sits at a sidewalk table, young
and planning his first novel, Fanny
Essler: elsewhere: Elsa. Then
he sees her walking down a sunlit street
towards him. He cannot believe what
his thoughts have summoned: this woman seems
to have shaved her skull and painted it
bright purple, as far as it shows
from under the coal scuttle, tarnished brass,
she wears as a hat; on each of her cheeks
are small, pink, 2-cent postage stamps;
her skin is powdered yellow, her lipstick black;
a ratty old fur coat hangs loose and open,
her only clothing; from her breasts
two rusty tea-immersion balls perform

the role of jewelry; they clink in the wind
as she passes his table. "Who in hell
was *that*?" he asks aloud, involuntary,
and a tall lean Kansan sitting nearby
grins with his thin pressed lips, and says
"The Baroness? You must be new in town.
Von Freytag-Loringhoven, quite a name
and quite a character. There's a doctor I know
and a damn good poet, name of Williams,
once told her he loved her, big mistake,
she's been after him ever since, she says
she wants to give him syphilis, good for his art.
Dragged him out of his car once. She's mad
of course, but who of us isn't? Had a husband
— the Baron, I guess — who shot himself
when Germany went to war. Now all she's left
are three damn dogs, the scrawniest things,
and the usual pile of lousy poems
that no one will publish. Not even me."
Is Felix, is Frederick listening? thinking
her eyes caught mine, held, and released
something forgotten onto a night
ferry to Sweden. He turns and asks
her name again, this time in full:
"the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven —
and mine, by the way, is Bob. . . . "
is Elsa! as if conjured by his dreams
of Bonn, of Felix, of another life.
Imagine this meeting which never happened:
what can he do next? go back to Manitoba
to write of Clara Vogel and her mask,
burying Greve again, and never allowing
their ghosts to rise; or lurch from his table,
follow her down the street, grab hold
and spin her round, the crazed eyes meeting
blank, after eleven years? The meeting
never took place; she told his name
to Djuna Barnes, you can read him there
in the opening pages of *Nightwood*,
the Baron Felix; but the meeting never took place
and Frederick Philip Grove
stayed safe in Manitoba, never knew
of Greenwich Village's mad Baroness
or how she returned to Europe, sick Berlin,

to die in a gas-filled room, with only
one of her dogs as final company.
And yet imagine it: imagine
yourself in his place, and ask what sign
or pain or recognition will you give
as the Baroness Elsa walks down the street
and sits at your table?

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On Felix Paul Greve and Elsa, see Douglas O. Spettigue, *FPG: The European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973).

On the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, see Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: a New World Naked* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981); Andrew Field, *Djuna: the Life and Times of Djuna Barnes* (New York: Putnam, 1983); or indeed just about any account of Greenwich Village in the early 1920's.

On the identification of the two Elsa's as the same woman, and on the connection to Djuna Barnes and *Nightwood*, see Lynn DeVore, "The Backgrounds of *Nightwood*: Robin, Felix, and Nora," *Journal of Modern Literature*, X, 1 (1983), 71-90. I am indebted to Richard Cavell of York University for drawing my attention to this article.

LIKE APRIL IN PARIS

Alexandre L. Amprimoz

if oranges can't be blue

if i can't be flaubert
and saint francis
at the same time

if we can't spend september in denver
and call it winter

if words are not
rivers on another planet
and notes on yet another

then
there is no
literature

Québec City, April 24, 1984

GROVE IN SIMCOE

Margaret R. Stobie

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: *When I first visited Simcoe in the summer of 1970, Mrs. Grove invited me to stay with her in the handsome white frame house north of town that Grove had bought in 1931, and which was still her home. She was then eighty, a tall, striking woman who enjoyed her attractive clothes and costume jewellery. She lived alone, did her own laundry, and still worked in the garden. Within the house, her customary seat was in an embrasure whose window looked out on the gravel driveway alongside the house and on the road going south to town. On the wall opposite her chair and above eye-level was a portrait of Phil, so that she saw him whenever she looked up. He was still there too.*

But there was an ambivalent quality about this communication. Some years before, she had had his large desk sawn in two; the parts were now in separate rooms. Her action had shocked some of the circle of old friends, but Professor and Mrs. Collin in London were not surprised. They had known of her lingering resentment at being wage earner and handmaiden to an ambition that had faded. On one occasion she had said to them, "I wanted babies and he left me books." To me she said that in the later years he would sit all day at the desk upstairs, retyping page after page of earlier work, sometimes changing a single word on a page, sometimes only a punctuation mark. The piles of used paper accumulated. Nevertheless, she enjoyed the attention and the activity that surrounded his reputation, and she was very generous in making arrangements for me with members of the old English Club and with those who were left of the naturalists who had been Grove's particular friends. She had asked one of them, Bill Kirkwood, a semi-professional photographer, to drive over to Simcoe to meet me. He gave me two of his pictures of Grove, one of Grove kneeling on the ground listening for bird songs, and the other — a cloudy one — of one of the New Year's gatherings of the naturalists in a cabin out of town. He also took a picture of Mrs. Grove and me outside the sunroom where we had breakfasts. When I returned in the fall, Mrs. Grove had been in hospital. I stayed in town and drove out each evening to report on what I had learned that day from the files of the Simcoe Reformer.

Everything that I gathered in Simcoe, tapes of conversations, notes from the Reformer, *snapshots, even the piece of type from* A Search for America *that Mrs. Grove had given me, I deposited with the Grove Collection in the library of the University of Manitoba.*)

GROVE LIVED LONGER IN SIMCOE than he lived anywhere else in Canada, but more than that, he *chose* to live there. By the time he moved to this attractive town in southern Ontario, he had lived in a variety of places in Canada: in the sixteen years that he spent in Manitoba he lived in eight places, determined each time by teaching opportunities, but partly also by the fact that he invariably quarrelled with school boards, and either resigned or was fired (usually he beat them to it). He had lived in rolling country near the Pembina Hills in the south, on flat prairie near the western edge, in a wooded frontier immigrant settlement, and in two broad valleys, one near the "Dusky Mountains" which was his attractive name for Riding Mountain, the other Rapid City, where he did most of his writing. From these rural settings he went in search of a lucrative career to the capital city of Canada.

More than that, he had travelled over most of Canada in the years of triumphal tours, 1928-29. From the tours, he knew Ontario quite well, he had been over the prairies, he had travelled through the rolling park land of Prince Albert and the magnificence of the Peace River country, he had seen the mountains and the ocean of Vancouver and Victoria, and in the spring of 1929 he toured the maritimes, parts of which he found "very beautiful."

But in all this great sweep, he rarely — disappointingly in a novelist — mentions the country that he was passing through. It was in Ontario, around Port Hope, that he gave a bit of detail when he wrote to his wife back in Rapid City, "I love this country with its cedars and white pines and apple orchards. . . . Living is cheaper here, too, than in the west." The first mention of Simcoe was not until towards the end of his tours, in February 1929, and that was to record a kindness done him.

> I was so tired when I arrived at Simcoe yesterday that I could not finish this letter or mail it. I was billetted there with very nice people and was rude, I am afraid; for I went to bed after lunch and slept to within half an hour of the meeting. This morning they woke me at 4:30, but I turned over and fell asleep again. They let me sleep and meanwhile rustled a car which would take me to Brantford (25 m. away) where I caught this train so as to still get to Sarnia in ample time. I could sleep till 7:30. That was awfully good of them.

So the people of Simcoe had a certain quality about them, quite unlike the people of the nearby city of London, "about half the size of Winnipeg," Grove wrote, and went on, "This is a place I dislike. It's too 'swell' for me — that's the only word that fits. . . . If they dressed a little less perfectly and had a little less money and didn't put on such an air of culture — with nothing below — they'd be more my kind, though I can fence well enough with them." Besides, after his lecture there, "No more than 20 came to shake hands with me."

But apart from passing moods or chance encounters, there were with Grove certain constants, deep-seated desires, dreams of a certain kind of living.

One of them was to own some land — the longing of the European immigrant — which is a motif with Grove from the early works, *The Turn of the Year* and *A Search for America*, with the Tolstoyan figure of the natural man in organic unity with the soil. The concept weaves in and out of all of the later works, the concept of the god-knowing farmer, Grove's philosopher-king. As he wrote to Raymond Knister (5 November 1931), "as you know, [I] have long since decided that the country (not the small town, either, but the open country) is the place for me. I find that, of true intelligence, farmers have the lion's share on this continent; and the sooner they take direction of affairs into their hands, the better it will be."

Another constant in Grove's work was the "mansion," identified with "the white, range-line house," that appears in the very first thing that Grove published in Canada, *Over Prairie Trails*, where there is such a house alongside the road and the narrator says, "There hangs a story by this house. Maybe I shall one day tell it." The "mansion" is the symbol of achievement, a tribute to the spirit, the determination of the man who tilled the soil, the crown of all his efforts. In the huge sprawling manuscript of the trilogy "Latter Day Pioneers" that Grove assembled in the early twenties, the central part was titled "The White Range-Line House." It was Niels Lindstedt's "mansion," the shrine of his love for Ellen in *Settlers of the Marsh*, the book that finally came out of the trilogy. In Simcoe, or in the "open country" nearby, Grove found his white, range-line house, the mansion, on the corner lot, Lot no. 1, of concession 12. Not only was it a range-line house and white, it was also set in a grove of the cedar and spruce that had so delighted him at Port Hope. The dream of all his heroes had come into his own world of reality at Simcoe. It must surely have seemed to Grove a sign of destiny.

And so in the fall of 1931 he bought his land, forty acres, and his mansion. The Simcoe *Reformer* put it more prosaically, and didn't quite get the name right: "The corners near Old Windham have changed owners. James N. Knight has sold his house to F. P. Groves of Ottawa and moved to Victoria." Grove had already reached the high point of his acclaim across the country, and now he had the symbol to declare it. Still, a character, a role, had to go with this status, and it would not be the Tolstoyan, earth-smudged figure of the early books. The suitable tone was that of country gentry, in dress and in deportment. As one of his former Simcoe students said, he was "very tall, very spare, always beautifully dressed. He dressed almost in the English squire

clothes, the heavy tweeds, the heavy brown brogues. He was a very imposing man." And when Marcus Adeney and his wife visited the Groves "on a farm near Simcoe," they found that "practically filling the clothes closet in our room was a row of Harris tweeds — a multi-colored array of costumes suited to an exclusively country gentleman." Another symbol had emerged into reality; Grove at last could afford the clothes that were an obsession with him, harking back to the almost comical figure in *A Search for America* of the young immigrant Brandon arriving with his arms laden with coats, a sign of his affluent past.

Before the mansion could be enjoyed, however, it had to be refurbished. Mrs. Grove told me that when she arrived from Ottawa with Leonard on his first birthday, October 14, and saw what her husband had bought, she was appalled, appalled at the extent of the land, at the huge barn awaiting dairy cows, and at the condition of the house. She was particularly alarmed that the door at the end of the upstairs hall opened onto nothingness; there was no balcony, no guard rail to keep a small boy from falling to the ground below. She had come from farming folk in Manitoba, but her husband was no farmer, he knew nothing about cows, and he was certainly no do-it-yourself carpenter. A great deal of work had to be done, and it all had to be paid for. Workmen were busy there for the first month. As Grove wrote Raymond Knister in mid-November, "we have had to refloor, replaster, repaper, repaint its interior; and now we have lovely rooms, 10 of them, but there is hardly anything in them." As for the spacious barn, in the same letter Grove said, "I get a certain stimulus out of a small herd of pure-bred Jersey cows which I have bought, again rather owing than owning them. We have lots to learn from cattle, as your probably know, and I am learning it."

When within weeks he was asked to speak at Lynn Valley, he spoke with great confidence. According to the Simcoe *Reformer*, "Mr. Frederick Philip Grove, famous Canadian author, lecturer and student of world affairs, delivered a stirring and thought-provoking address on 'The True Farmer.' He displayed a deep understanding of the aspirations of the tiller of the soil and argued convincingly for a well-populated countryside with contented standards of living. . . . Mr. Grove was ably introduced by Mr. Munro Landon, president of the Norfolk County Chamber of Commerce." Grove gave the same address to various groups for the next year or so, always insisting, "One can only live the true life in the open country."

Yet while Thoreau and Grove's other idols among the naturalists held that agriculture was the ideal existence, the root and crown of civilization, and the agriculturalist its finest product, still the educated, literary agriculturalist was the one who in himself contained the high goals of mankind.

One aspect of Grove — the Rousseau part — was the teacher, the educator. And before long some of the ten rooms of the handsome, spacious, recreated

house were being fitted to receive children into a kindergarten, advertised in the newspaper as "the Froebel Kindergarten." Froebel was the nineteenth-century German educator who began the whole *kindergarten* system and who coined the word. He was prohibited in Prussia for a time because his ideas were thought to be dangerously radical: he did not believe that school or learning for children should be a matter of discipline, hours, and benches. He thought a school should be a garden for children, a kindergarten, where they learned from nature, and played games — games that led to an understanding of Nature's laws and Nature's discipline and hence to arithmetic. Nature study and arithmetic were the core of this learning but the learning must come through "education not induction," a popular slogan that Grove was fond of — learning was a drawing out, not a putting in. As Leonard Grove remembered,

> It was all a very pleasant, idyllic sort of time for me. I'd get up in the morning, and the car would bring a whole bunch of kids to play — really what it amounted to — and I was prepared for the condition that if all these kids were going to come to play with you, then you were going to have to play by sitting at a desk part of the time. It all seemed like a holiday to me.

It was indeed a Froebel kindergarten. What's more, the school made money, and there was no school board to contend with. Then in the summer of 1932, apart from the advertisements and information about the Froebel school, there was a separate notice in the *Reformer*: "Mr. F. P. Grove will open a bi-weekly class in conversational French (Wednesdays and Saturdays) on September 7 at 4 p.m., at his house on Highway 24. Children of all public school ages will be admitted. Fee $2.50 per month."

Yet there was still need of intellectual stimulus, exchange, discussion with peers. In this aspect, too, Simcoe had advantages. It was only about one hundred miles from Toronto, where Grove could visit his university friends, Dr. Alexander, head of the English department, E. J. Pratt at whose home Grove stayed once in a while, and Barker Fairley of the German department and one of the active minds behind the *Canadian Forum*. Even closer, on the western side, was Richard Crouch in London, "the librarian of the rather famous public library," as Grove put it, in the city whose people in the mass he didn't care for. But this particular obliging friend meant a ready source of books. Grove owned surprisingly few books, and most of them were Everyman Library editions. He depended on friends and on libraries for books. He invited the Crouches over only a month after arriving in Simcoe.

Still, he needed conversation close at hand, and shortly he began the English Club, so that yet another group met in the spacious room north of town. The first subject of their study was Thomas Hardy, with Grove giving a paper on *Jude the Obscure*, and Mrs. Jackson, the treasurer of the club, one on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. There were some twenty members at first, most of them

parents of the kindergarten children. By the fall of 1932, less than a year after it had started, the Club had gained such prominence that the *Reformer*, on September 22, featured the coming season's program on page one with headlines: "The Drama Will be Subject of Study This Year. Membership and Enthusiasm Increase." To the group now of 40, Grove gave the first paper, on J. M. Barrie's *Twelve-Pound Look*, Mrs. Ollerhead followed with Galsworthy's *The Fugitive*, Mr. W. P. Mackay, K.C. came next with Shaw's *Candida* (a splendid address, the *Reformer* reported). Mr. Frank Cook talked about "The Drama of the Restoration," and after Christmas they turned to Shakespeare's plays. For the next couple of years they concentrated on essayists: Macaulay, Bagehot, Arnold, Carlyle, Ruskin, Emerson, and in 1934 there was a paper on Thoreau by Munro Landon. Then the club seemed to outgrow its host — or perhaps it was too far to go on winter nights — and it moved into town and met in the Agriculture Office on Peel Street. While Grove was still often present, he was no longer in charge of it. The Club read contemporary authors: James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence (Grove gave a paper there), Aldous Huxley, and so forth. But during the winter of 1936-37, the English Club disappears from the paper, its place in the town's life taken by amateur dramatics and a travel club.

In the early thirties, however, the social life was further enhanced by the Carnegie lectures, organized by McMaster University. In that series, Arthur Lismer came to Simcoe and gave five illustrated lectures on "The Origins of the Italian Renaissance." Grove, as one of the local committee in charge of arrangements, introduced the speaker, and the *Reformer* reported, "Mr. Grove told of the origin of these lectures and of the need for a new appreciation of pictorial art in Canada. He referred in glowing terms to the work of Mr. Lismer as an education director of the Toronto Art Gallery, a member of the famous 'Group of Seven,' a creative artist and a scholar in the history of art."

Subsequently, shortly after the publication of *Fruits of the Earth*, Grove himself was appointed by McMaster as one of the Carnegie lecturers at Simcoe for 1933-34. His five lectures, the *Reformer* announced, would be on "How to Appreciate Literature"; on poetry, the drama, the short story, the novel, and finally, "The Application of Principles Discussed to Modern Literature." The lecture on poetry was largely concerned with Housman's *Shropshire Lad*, and Grove, along with others of the time, declared the poem "When I Was One and Twenty" to be "pure" poetry. There was a great debate on about what was pure poetry; it seemed that that was important to know. However, it was in the lecture on the novel that he really let himself go, and the *Reformer* reported it at length, March 15. After all, this was something that Grove was an authority on, having just received the Lorne Pierce medal two weeks earlier, when the *Reformer* had announced with pride, "Lorne Pierce Medal Comes to Citizen of Norfolk: 'Fruits of the Earth' won it. . . . The only Ontario citizen in the list of

awards made this year by the Royal Society of Canada." As for Grove on the novel, "The lecture was one of the best ever delivered in this town. . . . he stated that narrative was the *sine qua non* of the novel. Dialogue may be eliminated and indirect speech resorted to, but narrative is essential." Further headlines followed in the *Reformer*, "Lecture on Novel Greatly Appreciated. Reappointment Asked." This prophet was certainly not without honour among the people of Simcoe.

THE INTELLECTUAL *literary* life was well looked after. But Simcoe had further riches, surely unexpected, for Grove the naturalist. This was in the exceptionally fascinating wild life of the Lynn Valley, together with a very active group of conservationists (they would be called "ecologists" now). At last Grove had friends, as he had never had in the west, and quite soon after he arrived in Simcoe, he and four others — "the five naturalists," Mrs. Grove called them — were going on outings through the Lynn Valley. They were Munro Landon, director of the Canadian Jersey Cattle Association and head of the local branch of the Ontario Field Naturalists; Professor J. W. Crow, who had been professor of horticulture at the nearby Ontario College of Agriculture at Guelph; Monty Smith, a banker, neighbour of the Landons, who had land a few miles west of town; Bill Kirkwood, a Scot who had worked for Landon as an immigrant boy, who had a machine shop and garage; and Grove.

Bill Kirkwood, in talking about this time, said that Grove was "delighted with the plants that he saw here because we are in an area here on the border of the Carolinian zone. . . . We have a greater variety of plant life in this hundred-mile-wide strip along the north of the lakes, than there is in any other part of the continent." The Lynn Valley was a favourite place to go because "the railway track parallels the river quite a lot of the distance. And we used to walk down the track which was the easiest access to it." The valley was also one of the flyways for bird migration, for which they had a good tutor in Munro Landon who knew "all the songs and all the birds." One spring morning along the railroad track, Kirkwood took a photograph, "We were looking for birds, and some bird songs were coming through, so everyone stopped and I remember Grove getting down on one knee, his walking stick in his hands with his hand on top of it, and he is listening very intently to hear the birds." On another occasion,

> Grove knelt down beside a piece of ground and he scratched out a square foot on the ground and he said, 'I have come to the point where I can tell you everything that is in that square foot.' You know, he had studied the soil and the organisms and plants and so on to such a point that he was able to analyse that section. Now that is quite an achievement. — It was an interesting thing because this was one of the things that showed me the depth of Grove himself.

Munro Landon, talking of his memories of Grove, said,

> I just like to think of him. I never had a brother but — he was more or less a partial brother, a fellow companionship, a fellow-feeling. . . . We walked through his fields and I sensed that he had an intimate feeling with nature, which of course attracted me. I've always been very close to nature of any sort. I think we — he thought and I thought pretty well the same about things. — And you see, he was an admirer of Thoreau and I used to be, very much so.

Landon also talked about the area in general and about Spooky Hollow, ten miles away, which the five explored. And there were the New Year's parties:

> I remember for several years we'd have a party on New Year's Eve out in my neighbor's — Monty Smith's — cabin in his woods, and we'd each take something [Mrs. Landon sent a goose wrapped in a blanket in a big dish]. — Well, such a gathering as that would be worth while and they're very scarce through life.

Bill Kirkwood took along his camera, and there is a shadowy picture of the five men in the light of the fire at the New Year's party.

Unhappily there was a break in the group with the death of Professor Crow, of pneumonia, at age 53. Thereafter the group expanded into a Nature Club, which at Grove's suggestion was called the J. W. Crow Nature Club, whose aim was to establish a sanctuary in the valley. The aim was achieved early in 1940 when the area in the Lynn Valley was declared, "Crown Game Preserve, to be known as the J. W. Crow sanctuary." Grove paid Crow the highest compliment in his power when he likened him to Thoreau.

Grove got not only companionship from the naturalists, he also got expert advice on his cows from the president of the Jersey Cattle Club, and by 5 October 1936, the outside world came to know him in another guise: "Owned by F. P. Grove, Simcoe, Ontario, the Jersey cow, Spruce Lodge Sexta," who had "recently completed a record of 6,637 lbs. of milk, 378 lbs. of fat, with an average test of 5.70 percent at 2 years and 284 days of age, in 305 days." For a time he continued to make news among Jersey producers, and visitors to the Groves were shown to the barn where the records above each stall gave lineage, milk production, composition of fats, and so forth. Professor W. E. Collin and his wife, invited over from London, were thus entertained. Professor Collin was in the French department at the University of Western Ontario, and in 1936 had published a highly praised pioneer book about Canadian poetry, *The White Savannahs*. Grove wanted Collin to do a book about him, but the desire was not mutual. Collin was working on a book about D. H. Lawrence.

Then there was Grove, "the famous author." In the white range-line house, there was a room at the top of the stairs, looking south toward the town, in it a large desk with a supply of sharpened pencils upon it. Here he spent many hours. But the writing had not been going well. He had published only one book, *Fruits of the Earth*, in 1933, and that he had completed before he left Manitoba. He

had rewritten his ant-book by the end of 1933, but he couldn't find a publisher for it. Apart from the occasional lecture to clubs in Toronto or London, a few radio talks in Brantford, and such like, there was little coming in to support the gentleman farmer and his establishment. Even the school was falling off, though the Groves had given up the kindergarten and had shifted to regular public school grades and courses. However, after this dry time, the years 1937 and 1938 seem to have been years of great writing activity, profitable or not.

In 1937 Grove wrote *Two Generations*, another farm novel, which he called "the first of my 'pleasant' books, the first Ontario novel which I have written.... It even has a 'happy ending'." Then followed the massive, cloudy work, *The Master of the Mill*, set for the most part in northwestern Ontario, a novel of industry and its power, an attempt at something like Thomas Mann's saga of an industrial family in Germany, *Buddenbrooks*. (Mrs. Grove told me that before they left Ottawa to come to Simcoe, in the winter of 1930-31, Grove had insisted on her reading *Buddenbrooks* in German, a task that she did not relish.) Then in September 1938, with some excitement, Grove began an extension of his one big success. He wrote Richard Crouch that he had "suddenly been seized with the inspiration of working up and consolidating the sequel of *A Search for America*.... All day long I write; at night I read what I have written." But the excitement was not sustained; he didn't complete *In Search of Myself* until 1940.

The only one of these three books set in Simcoe is *Two Generations*, subtitled "A Story of Present Day Ontario," present day being 1928-29, shortly before Grove arrived there and about ten years before the actual time of writing. It's a tired novel, the language is often stilted, conversations are unnatural, most of the characters paper-thin. It's a stereotyped story of an autocratic father whose children rebel against him, they prove their abilities, he loses his money in the stock market, he is humbled, they are forgiving and generous, and all ends well — more or less. There are Grove's persistent themes: the generation gap, the supremacy of the farmer in the structure of society (though here there is occasional laughter at it), the transition from a horse-and-man-based agriculture to one of industry and machines, the shifting of society's biological basis in the brother-sister relationship ("we are mutants," the girl tells her mother), and of course the *I/not I* theme, the essence of the individual which is "the abiding substratum" and unchangeable. There are the recurring characters: the matriarch who would emerge even more strongly in *Master of the Mill*, the exotic woman, the temptress, Clara Vogel in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Sybil in *The Master of the Mill*, here a professional dancer, "an alien bird" though not evil. And the two main figures, Ralph Patterson the father and Phil his son, who is the most ardent rebel.

Ralph Patterson is curiously ambivalent: though only forty-five, an age when Grove's heroes usually start a new life, he is physically vigorous and prosperous,

yet he is the counterpart of old John Elliott in *Our Daily Bread*, his work done, no challenge left, grown querulous and exacting. He thinks of himself as Tennyson's aged Ulysses, a feeling of the futility of life upon him. Nevertheless, he is determined to thwart the ambition of Phil, nineteen, to go to university and become an astronomer, even though that occupation is a worthy one and in harmony with nature. Phil, defying his father, says, "Remember how you lifted me to the branch of a tree, as a toddler, and let me hang there by my hands?" — an incident that Phil Branden told of *his* father, and that the other Phil, Phil Grove, told of his. Ralph was the rebel at Phil's age; all are one. And of course, Grove is presenting himself in both characters: the mature man, the acclaim gone, life turned flat, and the young man striking out to make his own way. When Barker Fairley reviewed this book in the *Canadian Forum*, he remarked on the double quality, and Grove wrote him, "The child hanging on the tree; the boy accepting the cigar — is myself; and it was not without a sort of sly irony that I named him Philip. So, in a way, there, too, is autobiography."

This is not the kind of novel that Thomas Hardy wrote, in which people grow out of the place in which they live; in fact, Simcoe itself is mentioned only briefly, in a few sentences. Yet when the book came out there was quite a stir in Simcoe; people were sure that they recognized the Landon family in the fictional Pattersons: Patterson was a dairy farmer, his house was brick, and "profusely gabled and broken by porches," his farm was on the outskirts of town, his eldest son was in the nursery business, he had two families — four children now about twenty, and two very young ones — and their neighbour across the street was a banker. But then, Grove too had a farm about two miles from town, he bred cattle, and the Groves also had two families, young Leonard about the age of the Landon boy, and the daughter who would have been the age of the older Landons had she lived. And so there is a double play.

But the Pattersons, unlike either the Landons or the Groves, had two farms; the other one, belonging to Mrs. Patterson, sixteen miles south of the home farm, was in Sleepy Hollow. Sleepy Hollow is one of the main features — even a main character — of the book. Grove has a set piece to introduce it:

> Sleepy Hollow, as everybody called the place, was appropriately named. . . . an almost circular hollow surrounded on all sides by hills, some of them wooded, some cleared. Under the westering sun the whole place, sunk in the hills, had an air of breathless and uncanny quietude. . . . Since for nearly a quarter century the place had not been inhabited for any length of time, it had become a veritable sanctuary of wild life. Here one could still meet an occasional deer; and here were many rabbits, marmots, snakes, frogs, and toads; but above all there were birds, many of them of the rarer kind: catbird, red-breasted nuthatch, cardinal, brown thrasher, red-start, towhee, tanager and many others, the ruby-crowned kinglet among those that were spring and fall transients.

So speaks Grove the naturalist, and when Mrs. Grove took me there, the awesome quiet was still unbroken. But Sleepy Hollow is not just a geographical phenomenon; it is an integral part of the novel as the matriarchal refuge and sustenance. There is another passage that involves the brother-sister unit that goes beneath surface description and gives us a glimpse of what the Simcoe area meant to Grove:

> A vague longing crept into them, like an all-pervading woe; a desire to be one with the universe, to cease being separate individualities. Both, in the strange weird light of the waning day, felt forlorn, and with the sadness of life, vaguely full of the pain of things, as if *they* were the consciousness of the universe. As though rooting himself into the soil, Phil raised his arms, like the arms of a pine, and crisped his fingers. 'Hide here!' he called under his breath, 'And never come out.'

BUT THE TIMES WERE GROWING DARKER. Although friends were kind, and each summer the *Reformer* had notes about the Groves holidaying with the Collins at their cottage in Georgian Bay or with the Crouches in Rondeau Park, yet friends could not make up for income, and the publishing world was hard hit by the depression. Sales, and therefore royalties were small, and publishing a new book was a major gamble. Then, too, Grove's health began to fail. In 1939, on doctor's orders, he gave up all pretence at farming and rented his land out, except for what the house and barn stood on. He could no longer enjoy the outings with the naturalists. As Munro Landon said, "I think he was in pain quite a lot of the time. He'd sit down on the railroad tracks to rest. And then his hearing was defective. He couldn't hear the birds like the rest of us. It all helped to make him bitter." Grove grew more irascible, discipline in the school became harsh, students were few.

A much greater darkness was coming. On August 3, 1939, the *Reformer* had a banner headline, "12,000 Unemployed Invade Norfolk." A month later, September 5, another banner, "WAR ENVELOPES EUROPE." Grove was filled with self-pity in his letters to Pierce about getting books published, "Nothing worse could have happened than this cursed war." And, "I fully realize that these are abnormal times. Nobody in Canada suffers more than I do." Yet in 1939 he was given an honorary membership in the Canadian Authors' Association, and in 1941, under Pierce's sponsorship, he was elected to the Royal Society of Canada. Recognition was not lacking. Money was.

Grove made one more attempt at entering another career. In the provincial election of 1943, he made his bid for public life. The first mention of him in this contest was characteristic. Evidently Grove had written a testy letter to the editor

of the *Reformer*, for on Monday, July 26, there was a piece on the front page entitled, "A Third Candidate," and continuing,

> Our attention has been drawn to the fact that in our article on 'The Coming Election,' which appeared in our Thursday's issue, we mentioned only the candidates of the two old parties; another candidate is now in the field in the person of Mr. F. P. Grove, representing the new party of the CCF. We had no wish to slight Mr. Grove who, we believe, is also an honourable, upright man; but our article was actually written before he became a candidate.

On another page was the paid advertisement, "Forward with the CCF. Farmer-Labour Party. Vote Frederick P. Grove, Public meeting Friday, July 30." Grove hadn't given himself much time to campaign; on August 5, the *Reformer* published the election results. Grove received over 2,100 votes, but each of the other candidates polled over 7,000. Grove was elected honorary president of the local CCF club, and he shared the platform with Agnes McPhail at a meeting in January 1944, but he was not going to find an income in politics.

In March 1944, a moment of cheer came when Grove became the beneficiary, through Pelham Edgar's unflagging efforts, of the Canadian Writers' Foundation fund, and from that time until the end of the year of his death, the Groves received $100 a month — a most welcome income in those days of depression and war. In April he suffered the first of his strokes, but in December Macmillan brought out *The Master of the Mill*, the first book that Grove had published in five years. It was the beginning of a small spate of publishing under the enthusiastic championing of Ellen Elliott, who had been appointed a director of Macmillan Canada after the death of Hugh Eayrs. She published *In Search of Myself* in 1946, and *Consider Her Ways* in 1947. Before the first was published, Grove received an honorary degree from the University of Manitoba from which he had graduated in 1922. After the second, he received the Governor General's award for non-fiction, for the *Search*.

Ellen Elliott nearly lost her job because of the displeasure of the London office that she had taken on these several books, none of which was likely to have a popular sale. As she recalled Grove she said,

> Of course in a way he was an unfortunate man with his manner. He seemed — arrogant. But when I got to know him, I realised that he really wasn't like that at all. This was a defence. You see, he always had an enemy — it goes all through — not always people. The countryside, the weather, the storms. You see, those books about the prairies, he's fighting the elements. You find that thread all through his books.
>
> If the publishers in Toronto — and I'm not speaking just for Macmillans — if they hadn't had their imported lines that they carried, their educational books, authorised texts, they wouldn't have had any money to take a flutter on a Canadian author. You could never get that across to authors. I'm sure we never got it across to Grove. He thought we were holding out against him — all the publishers,

> not just one, but all of them. — Now I knew them; I knew all the people in those companies at the time. I know what we did; we did our best for Grove.

There were lighter moments. She recalled a publisher's party at the Macmillan offices during the war, when Grove arrived early:

> So I took him into Hugh Eayrs' office and I sat him down in an arm chair, and I said to the girls, Get him a bottle of wine to keep him happy. So he sat there in this chair with his drink, with the door open, and he so enjoyed it. Watching us all get ready for the party. He just sat there with a sort of benign smile on his face, you know, 'At last, I'm one of the family.' You could feel it. He was so happy, so relaxed. I don't think I ever saw him *look* more at ease. He was quite a character, he was. He was a prickly personality.

And then she recalled the times when, after his final stroke, she went down to Simcoe:

> I remember once when I went there, he was beginning to get over the stroke, he could sit in the chair, but he had to be helped to move, because it affected all one side and his speech. And you know, it was difficult talking to him because he would say something, but this paralysis — I suppose he would see a blank look on my face, that I wasn't getting what he was saying, and the tears would come in his eyes.

The days of wan hope continued for well over a year. Grove died 19 August 1948, but he was not buried in Simcoe. His body was taken by train on the long journey to Rapid City where he was buried beside Phyllis May, the daughter whom he had greatly loved. Grove had made his final choice.

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books in review

DYSTOPIA

MARGARET ATWOOD, *The Handmaid's Tale.* McClelland & Stewart, $22.95.

WOMEN WRITERS since Charlotte Perkins Gilman at the turn of the century have often chosen to express political dissent through the vehicle of utopian fiction. But seldom have feminist novelists chosen the satire and irony of the dystopia, that genre of literature which refutes the escapism of fantasy and represents confrontation with a possible reality. In a revision of Orwell and Huxley from a female persepective, Margaret Atwood in *The Handmaid's Tale* provides a new element in feminist literature and achieves her own strongest political statement to date.

Atwood defines her villain here, not as a replay of Big Brother nor merely as a personification of "patriarchy," but as a more pernicious and pervasive element, an aspect potentially present in all of humanity — a proclivity toward fanaticism. The near-future society of Gilead has poisoned itself with nuclear waste, but also with ideology, both religious and political. The lives and values of individuals are subsumed completely by an atavistic puritanical system of belief which exercises absolute power. A profoundly immoral majority has gone beserk: as in *1984*, eroticism is prohibited on pain of death; pleasure is a crime against society; books are burned; abortion and birth control are memories of some dimly-perceived pagan past; ugliness is universal; nature itself is tamed and controlled and ordered. Tulips grow in rows like soldiers, their petals dropping "one by one, like teeth." Human beings are compensated for the loss of nature and of sex, not exactly by "Hate" sessions in the Ministry of Truth, but by analogous "Prayvaganzas" and "Salvaging" ceremonies in which the congregation participates in the ritual murder by dismemberment of arbitrarily-selected scapegoats, much like the victims in nightmare visions from Euripides to Shirley Jackson. Thus, collusion is insured; the individual is truly a part of the whole and shares responsibility for every aspect of the system, including the perpetration of atrocity.

Censorship and moral dictatorship have perhaps always led to the institutionalization of perversion. The real obscenity, Atwood indicates, is the definition and limitation of sex solely as an agent of procreation. Atwood's heroine, Offred, is a slave to the re-population of her world, her body a vessel, like those of the Old Testament handmaids, between an aging husband and a sterile wife. Together they perform a grotesque ritual of insemination in which all semblance of human dignity is sacrificed by each member of the obscene threesome. The very necessity of scheduling the event, of repressing any possibility of eroticism, inevitably guarantees the failure of procreation for Atwood's frustrated and dehumanized characters. Kissing is forbidden, Atwood writes, and "this makes it bearable. One detaches oneself. One describes."

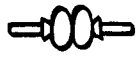
Women in this society have lost their identities and even parts of their memories. They have lost or forgotten their names as well. The handmaids call themselves by patronymics composed of the possesive preposition and a man's first name. They are dressed identically in long red gowns and peaked hats which obscure the face and represent a kind of purdah; they are the nuns of the new society. They have lost, or have surrendered, all civil rights, all ownership of property. They do not read or write

because, according to their catechism, "Pen is Envy." Offred tells her story via a tape recorder encountered in her flight from captivity. She perceives the future as uncertain; yet, like Orwell's Winston Smith or like the messenger in the Book of Job, she feels compelled to escape and to *tell,* to chronicle her time, to warn another world.

Characteristic of Atwood's fiction is the message that, while women are more often victimized than men in any real or imaginary society, women are not therefore necessarily more innocent or more noble. Man's inhumanity to man, and to women, does not absolve women from complicity. The control agency in *The Handmaid's Tale* is "the Aunts" who rule the Rachel and Leah Re-education Center with cattle prods, torture techniques, and brain-washing slogans. The nursery-rhyme indoctrination for women, attributed by the Aunts to their hero, Saint Paul, is, "From each according to *her* ability; to each according to *his* need." Surely, Atwood intends her reader to recall the "total woman" mentality, popularized in the sixties to counteract an emerging feminism. Yet, Atwood does not exonerate a radical feminist movement which she holds responsible for the original book-burnings. Offred recalls her feminist mother's participation in a kind of witch's sabbath, a midnight ceremony of destruction in the name of anti-pornography. In the light of the burning books, "their faces were happy, ecstatic almost. Fire can do that." The child, before her name was Offred, is also allowed to add to the pyre: "I threw the magazine into the flames. It riffled open in the wind of its burning; big flakes of paper came loose, sailed into the air, still on fire, parts of women's bodies, turning to black ash, in the air, before my eyes." A "women's culture," elements of which yet exist in Gilead, can be as dangerous, Atwood indicates, as any other rigidly enforced system based on ideology. The "Salvaging," for Atwood, is no more acceptable because a *man* is torn to bits by women than if the reverse had been the case.

The setting of Gilead in this novel is a departure from Atwood's more traditional settings in her five previous novels, but both style and message will be familiar to Atwood readers. Like most of Atwood's first-person narrators, Offred tells her tale in a tone of ironic understatement which serves as contrast to the horrific nature of events. And Atwood's purpose, as in all her earlier fiction and poetry, is the study of what causes such events. She is concerned with the anatomy of power, about "who can own whom, who can do what to whom and get away with it, even as far as death." But Atwood's tone is not militant; this is also a novel, she states, about "forgiveness" and thus about methods of surviving and preserving individual sanity in a schizophrenic world. Like the nameless protagonist of *Surfacing* or like Rennie in *Bodily Harm,* Offred ultimately affirms her identity and maintains a kind of integrity: "Sanity is a valuable possession," she says; "I hoard it the way people once hoarded money. I will save it so I will have enough when the time comes." Offred also surfaces, not at all perhaps in control of her world, but at least in control of herself, and certainly with the recognition that political confrontation is not a choice but a human responsibility. For Atwood, this is also the job of the writer herself: to document a revolutionary vision of women's place in a profoundly political world.

BARBARA HILL RIGNEY



OLD & NEW

MORLEY CALLAGHAN, *The Lost and Found Stories of Morley Callaghan.* Lester & Orpen Dennys/Exile Editions, $16.95.

SANDRA MARTIN, ed., *Coming Attractions: Stories by Sheila Delany, Frances Itani and Judith Pond.* Oberon, $23.95.

CONSIDER THE OLD and the new, the great and the small. That is the task the book covers invite. On one, Sinclair Lewis claims that no one can find "the remarkable in the ordinary" as well as Morley Callaghan, and *The New York Times* praises him as the greatest short story writer in the world, while the back cover of *Coming Attractions* claims that any one of the three new writers in the volume "may be the next Isabel Huggan, Barry Dempster or Joan Fern Shaw." In the Foreword, Barry Callaghan reiterates Lewis' evaluation of Morley Callaghan, whose stories tell "about the little moments that are so big in everyone's life," and quotes his father's opinion of the stories: "they're all pretty darn good," whereas Sandra Martin praises Delany, Pond, and Itani but does not make such large claims. Rather than judge Callaghan's new-found short fiction in the context of his fame or examine the third volume of *Coming Attractions* as tales of the aspiring, I want to discuss these works as if four writers, aware of their craft, have set out their fictions for us to see how they are made. The representations of Fama in *The Aeneid* and Rumour in *2 Henry IV* warn us that report, repute, and opinion have their own momentum and do not always have to do with truth.

Callaghan's work is lucid and succinct at a time when Cartesian clarity is unfashionable to some, philosophically dishonest to others. This storyteller believes there is an outside world to imitate. He does not write for intellectuals, but appeals to a wider audience that probably has not disappeared since these stories were written. If Callaghan's stories are clear and distinct, their ambiguity and relation distinguish them even more. Callaghan arranges his stories so they move from the tragic isolation of the individual in "An Enemy of the People" to the comic harmony and mystery between the narrator and Wilks in "Rendezvous."

Style and subject. The author patterns his work by representing similar concerns in his twenty-six stories. Shame, failure, storytelling, isolation and loneliness, laughter (often scorning), violence, sport, strained relations between men and women, sickness and death, initiation into adult life (relations between father and son, mother and daughter especially), money, dress, drinking, lightness and darkness, despair, hope and forgiveness, all preoccupy Callaghan. The arrangement of the stories represents a dark world of sin, separation, shame, and money moving haltingly and mysteriously toward illumination, hope, and reconciliation. How one judges Callaghan's effectiveness in representing these preoccupations depends how much one prizes Shavian clarity or Shakespearean ambiguity. Both have their functions. At the extremes of explicitness or denotation and of implicitness or connotation, language challenges the reader. Although I admire clarity, I do not think it advisable for most writers to do too much of the work for the reader. Not all clarity creates this effect. Callaghan opens "A Boy Grows Older" in quick, clear prose, *in medias res*, wasting no time getting to the point. Nonetheless, Callaghan can leave too little room for interpretation. The last paragraph of "The Thing That Happened to Uncle Adolphe" for instance, repeats points the author has made obvious in the six previous pages, especially in Albert's observation that Mr. Zimmerman was seeing Adolphe: "He could tell by the way his uncle

stood with a shoe in his hand, his face all puckered up, worrying and muttering. He never sang any more." Admittedly, the repetition might imitate a child's thought, but, as in representing boredom, it is unwise to overstate the point and bore the reader. Callaghan also intersperses connotation with denotation. After violence, characteristic of these stories, Max of "A Couple of Million Dollars," tasting blood in his mouth, ruminates about Mr. and Mrs. Myers, wondering if they used him as a catalyst, watching Myers being trapped and realizing for the first time the contempt everyone felt for him. Callaghan uses moments to focus his stories, and although sometimes too explicit, these insights resemble Aristotle's anagnorisis, James' moments of illumination and Joyce's epiphanies.

These moments are structural. Perhaps his use of insights is most successful in "Big Jules." The series of Jules' insights prove to be wrong, so that the explicitness catches the reader when he most thinks he knows the outcome of the story. Like Jules, the reader learns from Spagnola's generosity, finding hope where despair is most apparent. So Callaghan surprises. He also reverses stereotypes, making the Englishman young and innocent and the North American old and cynical in "Hello, America!"

Coming Attractions surprises with the discovery of the new. Whether, as Martin says, Delany's stories have "radical political and feminist undertones," they are well-crafted. Paul, Mr. Almond, and Guy do not treat women well, but the female narrator of "At the Pool" and Eva react to men as men react to them. Rather than finding liberty, these women find licence. If there is nothing liberating about the raw sex of "At the Pool," then the encounter between the newlyweds in "Ferragosto" is even less promising. Jealousy in Eva is as bad as jealousy in Guy. Derek, her husband, tries to intervene in the duel between Eva and Guy, but Eva does not seem to forgive him for some hidden crime. Delany is not her character but she describes Eva's feelings in a language that makes a sexual object of a man while using more innocent language to describe Eva: "and his cock floating between her thighs, and the tide moving shoreward." If this language is hardly liberating, then the words that follow are even stronger: "Her pleasure was unrelated to Derek or any specific person." Perhaps Delany is attempting to show how trapped Eva is in a world of unreason and failure. "Ferragosto" is a powerful story that describes the weakness of women amid the flaws of male promiscuity and voyeurism perhaps more than it treats mystery. Eva begins the indifference to the individuality of her husband that Claire has achieved.

Like "At the Pool" and "Ferragosto," "King of the Block" represents untouched or unsentimental feeling. It also touches on the relation beteween men and women, females discussed or used as sex objects, stories within stories, characters who are displaced. The gaudy house, raccoon, and narrator do not fit into the environment. Although Delany writes well, she sometimes needs to edit more and may overuse cliché ("treasure-chest," "repository") amid self-conscious abstractions ("irreal," devalorizes") even if she calls attention to Mr. Almond's "formulaic phrases and clichés" because the narrator is using tired language before the old man appears.

Pond, like Callaghan and Delany, attempts to represent mystery in the everyday through insight or bafflement but is not entirely successful. Like Delany, Pond writes about the meeting of academics and non-academics, stories in stories, younger and older generations, and displacement. "Isn't It Odd" begins effectively, playing on the indeterminacy

of the "It" in the title until the beginning of the third paragraph. The "It" is the barbecue. At the end, Theresa tries to discover what was memorable about the barbecue, but the "it" still baffles her. She only finds out how life, like the towel she puts on the clothesline, is untidy as it unravels its mystery. The "it" frames the story and effects closure. "Tolerance" begins with the question the narrator's mother asks, "What in the world is that smell?" and ends with the narrator's qualified statement about "that irritable, useless question." Fortunately, Pond does not overuse this almost circular narrative technique. In "Departures" she introduces the father in the third paragraph and, in the last paragraph, has him echo his daughter about repressed but unforgotten memories.

The style of these stories, showing characters facing the unknown, lost youth and family, is strong but sometimes careless. "Golden key," "long-lost," and other clichés are even difficult to use ironically. In "Departures" the habit of using two words in succession ("books, manuals") may demonstrate unnecessary imprecision or the narrator denying an idea with the first word then naming it with the second.

Itani also represents the deep, recurrent needs and desires of human thought and emotion with a sense of restraint. Her stories end powerfully, even as they show, in part, how powerless people are before emotional infidelity and death. "Scenes from a Pension" begins with Bridget, who, by the end, knows Ruby Featherby has intervened to prevent her from sleeping with her husband, "laughs because, despite the obstacles, she and Mr. Featherby will carry a current between them to their separate rooms," and considers the practicalities that await her. The opening sentence of "Songs for the Children" wastes no time connecting the narrator and her dying sister. The narrator remembers how Jessie and she used to sing or swear at adversity or death. Even though she acknowledges that her own children see death as "perfectly acceptable," she realizes her own impotence and in silence swears and sings at her sister's death. "Clayton" begins with the cries of whales that Clayton hears and ends with the effects of the death of a whale on him. The relation between Clayton and his wife, Zeta, complicates the ending. Although Itani opens and closes her stories strongly, she should be careful not to grow formulaic in overusing a changed circle in narrative.

Like Delany and Pond, Itani shows a potential for power. She describes the death of Jessie and of the whale in direct, concrete prose. Clayton soaks his jacket and spreads it on the whale like "a postage stamp on a boxcar." In "Songs," however, she may use consecutive questions too often, hectoring as much as probing. Callaghan is an easy target for envy and barbs, but he is a craftsman — with flaws, but a master nevertheless. If Delany, Pond, and Itani work on their craft, they will become, each in her own way, incomparable.

JONATHAN HART

PICKING A BONE WITH R. D.

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *What's Bred in the Bone.* Macmillan, $22.95.

ROBERTSON DAVIES's new novel presents itself as a major statement. It is long and impressive, full of the familiar Davies erudition and range. He describes techniques of embalming corpses and restoring old pictures (activities with curious aesthetic and moral similarities), lectures on astrology, alchemy, and art history, and moves comfortably and

comically from small town Ontario to Edward VII's court or villas in Bavaria. Thematically, the book focuses on trickery; its attendant spirit is the trickster god, Mercury. This is a favourite theme of Davies, going back to his interest in theatrical illusion, magic, fortune-telling, etc., and the relations between such matters and art and truth. More even than *The Rebel Angels*, the present novel, a kind of sequel with the chronology reversed, is concerned with fakery. It arose, Davies has said, from his fascination with the "fine line between the genuine and what is called the fake" (*Newsweek*, 2 December 1985, 95-96).

But there is an unacknowledged tension between Davies's interest in the fake, and his insistence, felt throughout, that the novel is telling the truth, that it is teaching us something. At an actual magician's performance, there is nothing behind the tricks but the machinery of illusion; that is precisely what we take pleasure in — it's all done with mirrors. The problem I have with this novel is that it announces itself as *more* than trickery, and yet it gives me the distinct feeling that it may be nothing else. When it seeks to convince me otherwise, it tells me so, all too insistently; but, because I don't like being bullied by novelists any more than anyone else, I resist. There creeps upon me the suspicion that Davies is so intrigued by trickery because that is what he practises. His recent novels dazzle with their inventive sleight of hand, but they lack the profundity to which they seem to lay claim.

At the thematic centre of *What's Bred in the Bone* stands a large and impressive painting, "The Marriage at Cana," executed by hero Francis Cornish in the style of a sixteenth-century German master. The painting, which is described at length near the end of the novel, represents what even an inattentive reader must recognize as an allegorical picture of Francis's own life, its various figures emerging from the imaginary canvas as emblems of influential people from Francis's past. As an allegory, it is a record of both his success and his failure — his success in that it is hailed as a newly discovered masterpiece, his failure in that it is a fake. And not only that, the wedding that it celebrates is both his own absurdly naive entanglement with his treacherous cousin, and a version of the "Chymical Wedding," i.e., the effort to unite the male and female elements of a single soul.

This last notion comes from the brazen tongue of art "restorer" Tancred Saraceni, one of the many mentor figures in this novel, and a representative of a general class rather too dear to Davies's sensibility: windy priests who prattle about the Meaning of Life. *The Rebel Angels* has at least four such types, and *What's Bred in the Bone* adds two or three more, not to mention the cameo appearance of Dunstan Ramsay as young sage and the occasional dialogue of two insufferable tutelary spirits. How absorbed by tutelage and pedagogy Davies is, how driven by the idea of influence! No wonder so many of his books detail the spiritual quest of a young man and revolve around the power of spiritual guides, all of them versions of Davies himself, who teach the hero or, like Mephistopheles, lead him astray, Saraceni, to return to the present case, explains Francis's painting to assembled art experts, interpreting it lavishly as an alchemical allegory, and linking its specifically Christian subject matter to Renaissance occultism. As Francis's tutor and master, he of course knows that Francis has painted it and delights in the ruse he has so effortlessly perpetrated.

Yet Saraceni's fake interpretation is clearly meant to be the true one. It is a prime instance of the many interpretations that the book foists upon the reader

demanding to be taken at face value. (The novel is to some extent a self-conscious guide to its own reading.) In other words, Francis's picture really *is* about the Chymical Wedding, a motif that pops up in many guises throughout the novel: Francis as a boy posing in women's clothes before a mirror, tedious explanations by his "daimon" that he is "groping for the Mystical Marriage," and most significantly his marriage to his look-alike cousin (though if she is what Davies thinks of as "the feminine" then it's time for a feminist alert). Saraceni's interpretation, despite its fraudulent character, is thus supported by novel and novelist; more than that, it declares itself a key to the interpretation of *What's Bred in the Bone*, given the obvious analogy between novel and painting. But here arises a problem. The interpretation is patently false, yet it is "true." How can it be both?

This teasing question leads us to another big painting, a real one this time, Bronzino's *Allegory of Love*, which like its fictional companion piece is described at length in the novel and given an allegorical interpretation by Saraceni, but which unlike that other one can actually be seen by the curious (at London's National Gallery). A minor figure in the painting, "Fraude," plays a major part in the novel. Another name for Fraude is Mercury who, in his role as the spirit of trickery and deceit, stands behind one half of Francis's character and fate (Saturn, of whom more later, rules the other). Not only does Francis get involved with some fairly shady art restoration engineered by the clever Saraceni, but he also spends a good part of his life as a low-level, rather ineffectual spy. The point that Davies wants to make from all this is that Fraude is tied up with achievement in life as well as in art, that truth involves a good dash of falsehood. Now this may be true as far as it

goes, but it is hardly profound, and, furthermore, what does such an idea do to the "truth" of Davies's claim for his, or Saraceni's, interpretation of Francis's painting, or, by extension, of the book as a whole?

This theme is pursued later in the book, rather confusedly I think, when Alwyn Ross, a handsome and charming young art critic, founders on the rocks of misinterpretation. Ross, who thinks the painting is genuine, announces that "The Marriage" is not an alchemical work at all, but only *uses* alchemy to cloak its true historical and political meaning. Ross publishes his article and advances his career (temporarily — his presumption leads him to a bad end), while Francis's picture, "now dated and explicated," becomes "art history." Davies is clearly having fun here with the game of interpretation he himself has set in motion. Nor does he stop there. He next provides a conversation between Ross and Francis based on a surprising quotation from Picasso, who confesses to not thinking of himself as a true artist: "I myself, since Cubism and before, have satisfied these masters and critics with all the changing oddities which passed through my head, and the less they understood me, the more they admired me." For Ross, the glib critic, such a pronouncement is not to be taken too seriously — what do artists really know about their own work? But Davies's sympathies are clearly with Francis, who thinks that the artist knows best and hence takes Pablo at his word. Francis believes, almost religiously, that "consolation and exaltation must . . . somehow be the chief care of artists." It is significant that what could be, on Ross's part, a perfectly legitimate case for the critic's contribution is deliberately undermined. This is manifestly a self-justifying tactic on Davies's part, since he has gone to such pains to distinguish true from false interpretation, to tell us the meaning of the painting and the novel, to establish the reading of the artist against that of the critic.

But he gets himself in trouble, I think, with the tricky, mercurial theme of the genuine fake. If you take away the ground for establishing "truth," if in fact you celebrate its disappearance by elevating the fake to tutelary status, how discount a particular interpretation as false? The division, Francis learns, "between art and deviousness and . . . crime was sometimes as thin as cigarette paper," a statement that Davies plays with but doesn't take as seriously as it seems to warrant. The novel is clearly meant to be read as art, not sheer deviousness, but its deployment of the tricks of interpretation leaves one in doubt. It fails to provide the grounds for the interpretation it adduces to be true. In fact there is no reason why one cannot, should not, take a step further back and say simply that the play of interpretations is wholly free, Derridean and sceptical. And yet to do so is to destroy Davies's carefully constructed project. Why indeed should we stop where Davies tells us to, just because he lays claim to the magic title, artist-priest-mentor? Why is Ross's interpretation of the painting any less "right" than Saraceni's?

The answer, for Davies, leads us back to (and this will be no surprise to Davies readers) Jungian archetypes, which he now pleases to call the "Mothers." On this topic the mentor-governess is a woman (though no more like a real woman than Hamlet to Hercules), the one true love of Francis's life. Her name is Ruth Nibsmith, deft with her pen, I suppose, but tender-hearted as well. (Does the phallic suggestion of her name mean harmony between animus and anima?) Ruth writes horoscopes, and in one of the most patently artificial scenes in the novel, she "discovers" to Francis what we already know. Here the pretense is

that she reads his past life in his stars, but I have the uncomfortable feeling that what she is really reading is the script Davies has provided. At any rate, the astrology session is a sort of airy version of the painting and its interpretation, and in the course of it, La Nibsmith tells Francis:

> Your Saturn ... [is] a giver of spiritual power, and takes you deep into the underworld, the dream world, what Goethe called the realm of the Mothers ... the creators, the matrixes of all human experience.

Saturn is thus seen as the complement to Mercury, Francis's other half. But the spiritual powers proclaimed in this and other passages seem to me more a screen for the novel's fakery than the profound gift they purport to be. Their bloodless presence in the book claims to offer a ground for true interpretation: since Francis has access to the "mothers," through his mentors, his experiences, and his "daimon," his painting can plausibly be "about" that, but not about what Ross claims. Of course Davies has loaded the dice against Ross, who rests his case on the assumption that the painting was made in 1548, not 1939. But a charge of contrived hermeneutic circularity can still, I think, be laid against the novel's self-interpretation. In fact, it seems that one theme — the genuine fake, the value of Fraude — is in serious conflict with another — the chymical wedding, the "mothers," and the meaning they confer. This inconsistency indicates that the novel's play of ideas remains abstract and intellectualized, and therefore hollow.

Furthermore, parallel to Nibsmith's astrological reading and Saraceni's alchemical one, we get regular daimonic

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intrusions into the text of "italicized chatter about character and fate" of the sort "that gets books thrown against walls," as one reviewer put it (Jack Beatty, *New Republic*, 30 December 1985, 47). These bits offer explicit interpretation to guide the helpless reader, and they drive relentlessly toward ideas about the inner vision, spiritual wholeness, Saturn, and Mercury. Thus the book loads its interpretation of itself — it tells us in innumerable ways how it wants to be read, but it rarely dramatizes its meanings in a way that would make them inescapable. We feel always the intellectual prod — yes, yes, we get the picture (so to speak), but I remain unconvinced.

Before moving away from this topic, I want to make one last point. What I have been saying may lead a reader to think that the strategies Davies uses to manipulate his readers are similar to the standard device of reflexivity so common in the twentieth-century novel (as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, for example). But they seem to me significantly different. *What's Bred in the Bone* is a self-conscious novel, but not a particularly self-reflexive one. It doesn't seek to tie up its meanings intrinsically with its form, it doesn't call attention to formal devices in order to make its meanings absolutely and inescapably *textual*; quite the opposite, it insists, perhaps naively and certainly old-fashionedly, on extrinsic meaning, i.e., meanings (archetypal, anima mundi-ish, and chymical) separated from textual embodiment.

If I have been harsh with this book, it may have something to do with being disappointed. That Davies is a gifted, brilliant, recondite, and prodigal writer goes almost without saying. It's true what the dust jacket (printed in U.S.A.!) says — he *is* "without doubt one of Canada's leading men of letters." But I can't help feeling that his "mothers" are an awful temptation for him, a kind of spiritual fraudulence of the non-mercurial variety. Surprisingly, for a book that talks so much about it, *What's Bred in the Bone* lacks soul. All that inner vision stuff tends to draw Davies away from ordinary reality, away from what I think he's best at. As I read I kept feeling: if he didn't want so badly to *teach* me about the true Meaning of Life, I'd be enjoying this so much more. Reading the novel is thus for me a frustrating experience; I understand what he's doing, I see the patterns and could delve into them more deeply if I were so inclined, but I remain stubbornly unmoved, and sometimes positively put off. When I come across a lengthy passage of delightful social comedy or ingenious and original character portrayal (more often in the early part of the book than later on), my criticisms are momentarily silenced. But, re-enter the daimons and I scribble rude words in the margins. This makes for mercurial reading in the most equivocal sense.

When Davies uses his arcane knowledge dramatically, as an essential part of character and situation, he can make the novel really sail. There is an exceptionally strong sequence involving embalmer and bootlegger, Zadok Hoyle, who knows "A funeral's a work of art, y'see, dear boy," and who practises his art while the young Francis looks on practising his — both of them arts of deceit as well as seeing. Zadok too is a mentor, but here what he teaches is beautifully inscribed in the actuality of the scene — the corpses on the slab, Zadok's professional solicitude, the slumped boy at the edge sketching like mad. These moments were almost the only ones where I felt what the book keeps insisting on: that Francis is an extraordinary fellow. Zadok, too, is a memorable figure, but even he is brought low by being dragged into the main theme. By a set of coincidences that would have made Dick-

ens blush, Zadok turns out to be the father of the "Looner," Francis's idiot brother and dark double, who's kept chained in the attic (shades of *Jane Eyre*), an ingenious cage around his genitals to keep him from fiendish masturbation. After this revelation comes an outrageous passage between the two italic daimons in which mentor Maimas tells us that these events derive *not* from coincidence but from a pattern in Nature, an influence of the "Anima Mundi," and are a source of "meaning." The Looner brings "love" to Zadok, "motherhood" to the strict Calvinist servant, and a shadow to Francis, the dark element that makes him an artist. Here Davies would have us believe that his is representing spiritual nature instead of overtly manipulating his plot to serve a dubious theme. Luckily, Zadok as a character and a presence manages to survive all that and remains impressive in himself.

The same thing is true of several other figures, all of them, significantly, denizens of Blairlogie, Ontario, where Francis begins — rather than Oxford, London, Bavaria, Rome, or Toronto where he takes up eccentric residence. In comparison, Francis himself lacks substance; we never get to know him as we do the people who surround his youth. There is Francis's shrewd and energetic grandfather, for example, who is fascinated by light and photography and contributes to Francis's developing aesthetic sense, or Victoria, the straitlaced nurse who is also a marvellous cook; then there is pious Aunt Mary Ben, who uses service and dedication as an instrument of power, and whose repressed love for the jocular but bitter town doctor, another well-etched type, is a sharply realized example of an important sub-theme — "Love Locked Out." (This theme also has a pictorial analogue in a sentimental painting that Francis retains from his childhood.)

The funniest and, I think, most successful sequences in the novel are those which document the small foibles and pretenses of social life. The story begins with a determined expedition from Blairlogie to Edwardian London as the Senator (Francis's grandfather) does his best to get his daughter presented at the modish and pleasure-loving court of the new monarch. Finely tuned comedy of manners is the mode as smart colonial gaucherie meets decayed British elegance ("The curtsy was all-important. There must be no toppling"). At school, Francis is treated to the hilarious blandishments of a certain Dr. Upper, an itinerant moralist and instructor in the mysteries of sex. Here one almost hopes Davies is parodying his own inclination to tutelage. Later in the novel, Francis is married to his cousin and we are treated to a delightful sketch of an English provincial wedding. At such moments, Davies can adopt his characteristic

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pose of superiority without loss of sympathy; his prose glints with wry and delicious irony, and the whole social scene is illuminated.

This all leads me to conclude that Davies is best as a comedian, not of the divine or demonic variety that he seems to aspire to, but simply as a master of the comedy of manners. His attempts at profundity seem to me hollow, but how well he deals with the surface, and how telling that surface can be!

ANTHONY DAWSON

FROM A BALLOON

MAVIS GALLANT, *Overhead in a Balloon: Stories of Paris.* Macmillan, $19.95.

WITH THIS COLLECTION of short stories, Mavis Gallant returns to her familiar turf: the lives of various Parisian *petit-bourgeoisie.* It is difficult to imagine lives more petty. In her previous collection, *Home Truths: Selected Canadian Stories,* there seems to have been more magnanimity as well as more space; but Gallant, like Henry James, appears to find greater challenges to her talent in the more densely-layered — sometimes almost hermetic — society of Europe.

Overhead in a Balloon is a finely ironic title for a collection of stories closely tethered to a packed metropolis, in which the characters seldom lift their gaze beyond the dead level of the diurnal round. The title, however, may also apply to the position of the author herself, "invisible, refined out of existence, paring [her] nails." These stories, beautifully written, complex and spare, are bathed in the sharp, relentless, and knowing irony of the author's Olympian gaze.

Each story has a separate action, but many are linked by common characters and themes. Most of the stories fall into three groups, exploring respectively aspects of the art world, literary politics, and marital problems. Two stories lie outside the groups. The first of these, "Luc and his Father," is about the tormented adolescence of an only son of a family with aristocratic pretentions. The boy is unintelligent and unenterprising and fails hopelessly in the highly competitive French school system. The second, "The Assembly," concludes the volume. The opening story, "Speck's Idea," is about the problems of the owner of a small art gallery who sees the solution to his economic woes in the idea of rediscovering a forgotten artist, Hubert Cruche. He finds the artist's widow, a thoroughly unpleasant woman, long ago uneasily transplanted from Saskatchewan to Paris, who possesses a large number of the artist's canvasses. Speck painstakingly cultivates her, in the hope that she will give him exclusive rights to show the canvasses in his gallery thus starting a Cruche boom. In sight of success, elaborate plans for a splendid opening and a fine catalogue all made, he is suddenly supplanted by a fast-moving Italian dealer, who, having charmed the old widow off her feet, gets prior rights to mount a travelling show. Speck's idea turns to ashes in his mouth.

Speck's assistant, Walter, is the protagonist of the title story. He tries without success to further the career of a painter who has been reduced to painting the weekend homes of Parisians — "called in to immortalize a done-up village bakery, a barn refurbished and brightened with the yellow awnings 'Dallas' had lately made so popular." Walter is persuaded to move into the large apartment shared by the various members of this painter's family and is soon reduced to frustration at the continual invasions of his privacy. Another tenant of the apartment, the painter's brother, Robert, escapes the place by going ballooning at weekends. There is no chance that Walter will ever go up in a balloon. He is

finally forced to move out by increasing pressure from the family. He leaves, taking with him the television set that they all watched.

The group of stories about literary politics is the most successful. They spring from the patronage of a wealthy American woman, Mary Margaret Pugh. Her arts foundation for a considerable time supported both a French writer named Grippes, and an English writer named Prism. After her death the foundation is dissolved, and Grippes and Prism become rivals for the residue of her estate and subsequently bitter literary rivals. In one of the stories in this group, "A Flying Start," Grippes seizes a fine opportunity to triumph over his rival by writing a waspish account of him for a projected biographical dictionary of living authors. This entry, full of subtle denigration and ridicule, forms the substance of the story. The triumph is, however, frustrated by the withdrawal of support from the venture by the cultural ministry that originally backed it. Grippes is informed that his entry "is to be published in 2010, at the very latest." The last story in this group is "Grippes and Poche," a wonderfully comic account of the relationship over many years between the writer and a tax inspector. It's at once a satire on the French bureaucracy and an ironic look at the petty dishonesties inevitably bred by the system.

The last group of stories is centred on the quixotic act of a young Frenchman who marries an older Jewish woman at the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Paris in order to save her from the death-camps. Immediately afterwards, the man escapes from France and joins the Free French in London. There he meets the woman who eventually becomes his second wife. I say eventually because his first wife refuses to divorce him. Having turned Catholic she believes that the contract is irrevocable. As a consequence the second wife feels that she cannot have children since they would be illigitimate in the eyes of the law. By the time wife number one finally agrees to a divorce, it is too late for children. So the consequences of a disinterested action live on through the years to plague and partly spoil the second marriage.

As can be seen, there are few cheerful outcomes to Mavis Gallant's stories: rivalries, jealousies, obstinacies, stupidities, selfishness, and wilfulness blight human relationships and negate good intentions. The last brief story of the book, "The Assembly," consists simply of the minutes of a meeting of the tenants of an apart-

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ment house who, in the wake of a sexual assault on one of their number, gather to discuss the possibility of installing an electronic code system for entering the building. It is a masterly summary of the irrelevancies, prejudices and petty rivalries that such a meeting inevitably produces. It concludes with nothing decided, since most present leave to watch the re-run of an early Fernandel movie on television.

This is an apt conclusion to this collection of stories which, in one way or another, have all touched on the problem of living in, or trying to find somewhere adequate to live in a chronically space-hungry city. Crowding, discomfort, and inconvenience all exacerbate the inherent potential for conflict and unpleasantness. Looming large as a consequence of such tensions is that ubiquitous anodyne and Polyphemus, television. Gallant subtly suggests that TV is both impoverishing and adulterating traditional French culture — particularly literature, art, and theatre. Hers is not a cheerful vision, but it is salutary and bracing. She seems to be saying: "Let me take you up in my balloon and show you the real Paris." It's not the one you find in the guidebooks.

PETER BUITENHUIS

REGLES DU JEU

DAVID ARNASON, *The Circus Performers' Bar*. Talonbooks, n.p.

DÉCOUVRIR DAVID Arnason à travers *The Circus Performers' Bar*, c'est pénétrer d'emblée dans l'univers verbal sophistique et "littéraire" d'un écrivain/critique/professeur fort conscient des conventions du genre et des règles du jeu auquel il s'adonne. La voix narrative invite, du même coup, à prendre un certain recul, de peur de se faire piéger par la fausse simplicité du ton, la fausse honnêteté d'un conteur qui, même lorsqu'il met en scène deux enseignants d'anglais élaborant leurs fantaisies (leurs fantasmes?) autour d'un verre de bière et d'une ancienne étudiante, annonce si explictement la couleur que le lecteur est quasi certain de ne pas trouver l'auteur là où il s'annonce: "Don . . . tells mock heroic stories about how life humiliates and defeats at every turn. It is his specialty and he even knows the Greek names and rhetorical figures he employs." Arnason ne se cache ni derrière Don, ni derrière un autre; il pratique un art du déplacement progressif et incessant: "Don . . . has discovered that an attitude of mock resignation when speaking of his deepest concerns sounds funny to his friends. He uses this." Ce déplacement transforme chacune de ces nouvelles, (dans l'ensemble assez brèves, généralement au présent qui fait coincider histoire et récit), en une performance passagère. En ce sens, le bar des artistes du cirque auquel une des nouvelles doit son titre, est à la fois ce lieu fictif dans Letayefsky Street à Saint Petersbourg, où se rencontrent les gens du spectacle et les jeunes radicaux à l'aube de la révolution prolétarienne, mais aussi ce lieu métaphorique dans lequel des artistes du verbe s'essaient à leurs sauts périlleux linguistiques ou élaborent leurs numéros. Le titre du recueil devient ainsi lieu de l'invention, de création d'une illusion artistique qui dure le temps d'une représentation, d'une lecture.

Rarement, un nouvelliste s'est montré si conscient des limites du genre, voire de l'écriture. Dans le droit fil du post-modernisme dans le Nouveau Monde la fiction semble se susciter elle-même dans des textes brefs, mais dépourvus de la tendance à l'entropie, au rétrécissement qui caractérise des Américains comme Glass ou Coover. La mise en avant des conventions désigne moins l'arbitraire de toute invention textuelle que la part ré-

duite de création qu'elles permettent. C'est donc peut-être au point de rencontre de ce qui devrait tenir lieu de sensibilité, voire de sentiment, et de ce qui s'affiche comme un exercise esthétique, voire intellectuel, que se découvre un certain malaise, une difficulté d'être au coeur de la fiction. Tant qu'il prend pour thème l'ecriture elle-même dans une auto-réflexivité joyeuse, Arnason excelle: je songe aux parodies utilisant comme tremplin les contes de Blanche Neige ou du Petit Chaperon Rouge. Je songe surtout à la nouvelle "All the Elements," brilliante réussite qui entraîne le lecteur dans l'atelier de composition romanesque: "This is a story that includes all the elements: a beautiful naked girl in the narrator's bed, a ruthless grab for power, a mysterious murder, a thrilling adventure, the accoutrement of wealth, virtue rewarded and vice punished. . . . It is written in the common style that is not without the common touch, and is quite suitable for study." En dépit d'une auto-parodie possible, tous les ingrédients de la fiction, passés au crible déconstructionniste, deviennent des départs vers une intrigue plausible mélant au mode policer ou du roman d'espionnage une amusante liaison amoureuse dans laquelle l'écrivain et ses personnages communiquent.

Mais au sommet de notre jouissance ludique, de notre appréciation intellectuelle d'un jeu bien mené, se pose insidieusement la question: et après? La vieille nostalgie revient, qui s'efforce encore de faire de la lecture une leçon, de la fiction ce quelque chose qui nous apprend de la vie davantage que le reflet ironique d'un faux miroir. La "nouvelle conscience mâle" que pourrait naître au sein d'une société remise en cause par le féminisme semble, à tout prendre, défensive, limitée, égoïste, non dépourvue de mauvaise foi. Peut-être l'auteur le désire-t-il? En tout cas ses personnages de mots manquent curieusement de chaleur et, à la limite, d'humanité. Mais peut-être ce regret n'est-il qu'un autre masque de la vieille illusion réaliste?

MICHEL FABRE

D'UN AUTRE OEIL

ESTHER ROCHON, *L'épuisement du soleil.* Le Préambule, n.p.

BERNARD NOËL, *Contes pour un autre oeil.* Le Préambule, n.p.

POUR RACONTER LES légendes des canots volants qui permettaient aux hommes de dépasser leurs limites physiques et passer à celle de la fleur qui, poussant hors de contrôle, rappelle aux gens ces anciens rêves, il n'a fallu que quelques générations d'écrivains. Le fantastique intégré à la vie quotidienne fait partie de la littérature québécoise depuis ses débuts. Si celui-ci a été modifié surtout sous l'influence de la littérature post-moderne, il ne perd en rien son envergure. La science-fiction cependant n'a eu jusqu'à nos jours qu'une très brève carrière même si elle s'est vu championner par des écrivains dynamiques comme Elizabeth Vonarburg, Daniel Sernine, et Norbert Spehner. Ce dernier dirige chez les Editions du Préambule une collection de science-fiction, Chroniques du futur, qui a publié en 1985 le roman d'Esther Rochon, *L'épuisement* du soleil.

Ce roman, comprenant quatre parties distinctes mais reliées, attire le lecteur par sa couverture éclatante figurant la citadelle de l'Archipel asven en ruine. Bien que l'histoire narrée se concentre surtout sur le voyage de Tai'm Sutherland dans l'Archipel après la destruction de l'empire asven par les forces du vide et de la lumière, certains événements se déroulant dix siècles auparavant sont significatifs. Il faut dire que le monde crée par Rochon est imaginable grâce à

carte géographique fictive fournie et que le décalage de dix siècles entre les événements de la partie "La porte du temple" et celle de "Le départ" n'est évident que grâce à la note chronologique qui précède la roman.

"Le rêveur dans la citadelle," déjà publié en 1977, introduit la puissance asvenne sous le règne de Skern Strénid, souverain brutal qui ose expérimenter avec les pouvoirs de la drogue farn afin de contrôler les vents et faire descendre sur l'Archipel une période prospère et harmonieuse. Cette prospérité n'est pas gagnée sans sacrifice; parmi les victimes nombreuses se rangent la belle Inalga de Bérilis, une des épouses de Skern, et le rêveur Shaskath. Tout empire qui dépend d'une manipulation extérieure des forces de la nature, qui crée ou profite d'un déséquilibre, cependant, se rend vulnérable. Lorsque l'océan déchaîné inonde l'Archipel, le degré de déchéance égale le dégré de puissance antérieure.

Cachée depuis des siècles, la statue du dieu Haztlén, la force de l'océan, doit être découverte afin de ramener le dynamisme au peuple asven. Engourdis, éparpillés et surtout découragés, ceux qui sont restés survivent tant bien que mal dans leurs îles, attendant "le moment où la malédiction proférée par Inalga de Bérilis quatre siècles plus tôt prendrait fin." Le manuscrit de Jouskilliant Green que Chann Iskiad donne à Sutherland avant son départ pour l'Archipel, renseigne Sutherland sur l'ancien empire mais ne le prévient pas de son état actuel. Sa mission lui est révélée grâce à ses contacts avec des sorciers qui le renseignent sur l'équilibre et l'harmonie: "Là-bas, c'est la surface; ici c'est la profondeur. Vous ne pourrez plus vivre en surface sans vous souvenir de la profondeur que vous connaissez maintenant." L'experience est libératrice à la fois pour l'Archipel et pour Sutherland.

Comme il est caractéristique des oeuvres de science-fiction, l'analogie possible entre le Québec et le monde fictif prend une signification allégorique. Les valeurs que nous caractérisons de bouddhistes et qui ramènent les îles à l'equilibre sont reconnues pour leur importance dans l'epanouïssement de l'individu. Il faut dire cependant que le monde et les personnages représentés ne vivent jamais vraiment pour le lecteur si ce n'est que le Rêveur et Inalga. Bien que Rochon présente le monde du couple plus libéral, plus ouvert, elle ne permet pas au lecteur de s'y rapprocher vraiment; on est constamment conscient de sa fiction calculée dont l'abondance et l'exactitude des descriptions créént un effet de lourdeur.

Par contre, c'est la souplesse du style surtout qui marque les courts récits de Bernard Noël publiés au Préambule dans la collection "Murmures du temps." En effet, chaque récit fait ressortir l'insolite du quotidien dans la tradition de l'écrivain argentin Julio Cortázar. Bien que la perspective varie, elle reste toujours proche de l'ici-bas: le fou, le chat botté du récit "Liminaire" énonce l'intention de Noël: "Je suis sorti *pour voir,* j'ai marché tout cela *pour voir,* et je n'ai encore réussi à regarder *qu'à moitié* . . . continuous encore. . . ." Pour la plupart, les personnages vivent leur réalité quotidienne aussi banale que la nôtre: quand l'acteur Roméo Pérusse, qui connait le succès dans les grandes villes, ne peut pas faire oublier à ceux de son village natal ses origines défavorisées, son sang inonde la région et la malédiction s'insère; ce n'est qu'après la mort de Gali Matias, hermite et scribouillard mystérieux, qu'on découvre chez lui un galimatias qui devient, comme la dépouille humaine, poussière.

Lec deux récits les mieux réussis ont une plus grande ampleur signifiante: "Charlie et ses inquiétudes" est remarquable pour la prose par laquelle Noël

décrit les habitudes de ce vieillard Charlie qui traîne ses inquiétudes avec lui dans un vieux sac de toile. La concrétisation de l'abstrait, du souvenir, est réalisée par le détail descriptif:

> cordelette qui étranglait le col de son sac de toile, plongeait sa main dedans, examinait de toile, plongeait sa main dedans, examiait la forme des inquiétudes qu'il y palpait, en choisissait une qu'il sortait du sac et qu'il tournait et retournait entre ses doigts tout en tirant régulièrement sur sa pipe dont le fourneau faisait entendre par moments un léger crépitement.

Les souvenirs qui nous ont profondément marqués voyagent avec nous comme si on les portait dans un sac et, quoiqu'on veuille, on ne peut pas s'en défaire. Lorsque l'ami de Charlie, voulant le libérer, lance le sac dans la rivière, celui-ci plonge à sa recherche et se perd (pour se retrouver).

C'est le récit "Une ville, une fleur, un jour" qui saisit l'imagination à la fois par son histoire engageante et par ses liens avec les récits oraux. Ecrit dans la tradition de Yves Thériault dans *Contes pour un homme seul*, ce récit nous rappelle "La fleur qui faisait un son" de celui-ci. On demande au narrataire ("vous") d'authentifier certaines rumeurs, dans le style des légendes. L'histoire racontée, celle d'une fleur qui bouscule et anéantit toute une ville, Norandamos, opère sur des rapports allégoriques assez évidents sans pour cela être moins engageants. Le ton sirupeux des descriptions liminaires se change en parodie avec "la poussée insolite" de la fleur qui représente selon le chanoine "l'imminence d'un danger menaçant, une manifestation ostensible des pouvoirs insidieux et déguisés du Diable!" Le côte concret de l'insolite introduit dans un milieu fermé comme le Québec d'autrefois la fleur qui continue son invasion, détruisant non seulement la ville mais la foi du chanoine qui déclare: "Dieu le Père lui-même tire un plaisir loufoque à contempler d'En Haut le paysage minable, le décor sordide de notre misère actuelle." Symbole ou allégorie d'un pays fermé, craintif, Norandamos passe ici à la légende pour être raconté afin d'enseigner non les dangers d'une invasion insidieuse mais les dangers de la refuser.

Aujourd'hui le fantastique et la science-fiction sont deux genres préférés des écrivains québécois pour jeter sur leur situation une nouvelle perspective afin de mieux comprendre et dire ce monde. Le voir d'un autre oeil c'est le percevoir pour la première fois.

ESTELLE DANSEREAU

TAKAHASHI HASH

ANN IRELAND, *A Certain Mr. Takahashi.* McClelland & Stewart, $19.95.

IT MAY BE UNCHARITABLE to subject a first novel to serious scrutiny, but the 1985 Seal First Novel Award thrusts Ann Ireland's *A Certain Mr. Takahashi* onto centre stage and into an unavoidable spotlight. The story revolves around two sisters, Colette and Jean, who worship their neighbour, a Japanese concert pianist named Yoshi Takahashi. Yoshi and the teenage girls have a sexual adventure together, and in later years Yoshi and Colette alone have several sexual encounters. Jean interprets Collette's solo involvement with their hero as a betrayal of herself, a feeling that she must resolve while she and Colette, now 22 and 23, are visiting their parents. This plot sounds promising, and suspense about the outcome of the girls' idolatry and about the Big Announcement that the parents promise to make might have held it together. But Ireland has chosen to start her book *in medias res* and jump back and forth in time. From the beginning, we know how the story ends, and we can guess the details because Ireland

telegraphs everything except the Big Announcement. When this finally comes, it has nothing to do with the girls, and, since the whole book is about their personal lives, the Announcement is detached from the story and from the characters.

The plot is so full of inconsistencies that spotting them becomes fascinating. On page fifteen, Ireland says the sisters are twelve and thirteen when Yoshi moves into their neighbourhood, and on page 165, when the three are about to have their sexual adventure, they say they have known him for five years, a believable time lapse. But on pages 155-57, Jean describes that adventure as occurring when she is sexually underdeveloped and Colette is a nubile young adolescent — that is, when they are about twelve and thirteen. Another example: on page 114, a character wades into the water up to his knees before the girls call him back to shore; on page 115, he "shakes, spraying them with water"; and on page 116, water from the shoulder of this amazingly absorbent chap "drips over her eyes."

Ireland is equally careless with words and imagery. A dog sliding down a pile of earth "upends" some dirt, and garbage cans in a disgusting alley are also neatly "upended." There is a nest of sunflowers on a woman's dress, a nest of crows in Jean's throat, and a "black-and-white nest of keyboard" into which Yoshi plunges his arms [*sic*]. In a necking scene, a boy tries to push his "signature ring" on Jean's finger. Colette looks around inquiringly, and " 'I'll tell you later,' [Jean] mouthed. 'Every detail.' " Lip-reading under duress continues into adulthood: "Amidst the jostling Jean catches a signal from Colette. 'Meet you by the Gâteaux St. Honoré.' " Some characters have unusual physical abilities, too. Jean's "eyes flattened against the glass," and she "curled her stockinged ankles around each other." A man who "is hunched on the window seat, one leg drawn up to his chin" is the same flexible fellow who simultaneously lies down asleep and perches on the edge of a conversation pit. Yoshi, suddenly a gymnast as well as a pianist, "did a handspring off the stage." Solecisms like these finally consume all of one's attention.

A Certain Mr. Takahashi could have been a character study of two sisters who are so close that they have to break with each other in order to grow up. Unfortunately, the sisters have very little character to study, individually or as a unit. Jean notes that there isn't "a dime's worth of separate thought" between her and her sister, and plot development seems to motivate their actions and personality quirks. All we know of the sisters' characters is based on their statements about themselves or on Jean's statements about Colette. Jean is sometimes the narrator, but she has no life of her own. Other characters fare no better: the parents are functionaries, and Yoshi is an object in the distance.

Symbolic material abounds in *A Certain Mr. Takahashi*, but it is neither sustained nor linked with other elements of the book. For instance, Jean mistakes the cosmetic surgery clinic near her parents' new home for a nursing home; her own occupation is teaching college courses to nursing home residents, whom she no longer fears by the end of the story. These facts probably ought to enrich the girl-grows-up theme, but they tend in different directions and can only be pulled into a pattern by the application of academic muscle. Perhaps Ireland wanted the jarringly misused words and the obvious disconnected symbolism to startle readers into enlightenment the way Margaret Atwood's poetry does. However, any poetry vanishes in the ridiculous pictures that Ireland forces on the mind's eye. It would be a pity to conclude with-

out finding any redeeming qualities in *A Certain Mr. Takahashi.* Ireland has conceived some funny scenes, and maybe next time she will eschew her thesaurus, pay attention to her plot, differentiate among her characters, and write a comical novel.

LAUREL BOONE

WALLS OF INDIA

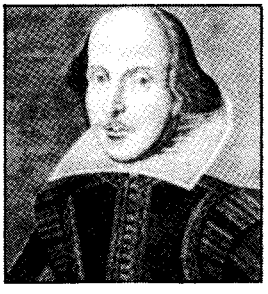
GEORGE WOODCOCK and TONI ONLEY, *The Walls of India.* Lester & Orpen Dennys, $29.95.

WHO CAN QUARREL with a good cause? And in what sense is it possible to write a critical review of a book whose *raison d'être* is primarily neither literary nor artistic, but moral and monetary — that is, a book written to raise money for a cause that the reviewer (and no doubt the whole world) finds impeccable? The answer is: by proceeding with caution and with caveats.

In 1981, in response to a request from an old friend in India, George Woodcock was instrumental in founding the Canada India Village Aid Association (CIVA), a body committed to Gandhi's ideal of village-centred development as India's path to progress. CIVA's directors focus their attention on rural areas, stressing self-help and directing their aid toward medical training, the building of hospitals, the development of crafts, the teaching of family planning, the general improvement of village life. With the express intention of producing a fundraising book (the royalties from *The Walls of India* will go to CIVA), Woodcock and the painter Toni Onley, accompanied by their wives, travelled around India in the winter of 1982-83.

The "friend in India" who set this train of events in motion was Patwant Singh, writer, magazine editor, wealthy *bon vivant,* a playboy in turban and Gucci shoes who skittered "as lightly as a skater over the tragic aspects of Asian existence." In mid-life Patwant Singh had a heart attack, and in its wake a secondary attack of social conscience. Woodcock gives this event due iconographic significance:

> Recovering from [his heart attack], he found himself considering what would have happened had he been a peasant farmer from one of the poverty-stricken villages



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> near his country house at Ghamroj in Haryana.... Almost certainly he would have died, because there was no hospital near enough to save him. The thought nagged, as thoughts do in sleepless hospital nights, and when he had recovered, Patwant went out to look at the areas around his leisure farm with a new, uneasy eye. He found the villages poorer than he had thought.... Returning from one of these pilgrimages ... Patwant had an experience that resembles any number of incidents from the legends of the Buddha's life. From his station wagon, Patwant saw a group of peasants by the roadside, obviously in distress. In their midst a young woman lay in agonized labour; she would die, it was evident, if she did not get help quickly. Patwant told the peasants to lift her into his car and had his driver go straight to the military hospital in Delhi; the woman's life and her child's were saved. The incident seemed like a sign. Patwant decided immediately to create a small hospital so that such a situation might never more arise among the peasants of Ghamroj.

This a charming bit of hagiography, and in context the mythic tinge seems quite appropriate (if not entirely accurate, since the Buddha's confrontation with suffering led to the renunciation of his wordly goods, but not their redistribution to the poor; it led to his conclusion that suffering came from attachments of any sort — even, or especially, attachment to the outcome of one's acts of good will — and to his withdrawal *from* society rather than to good works *in* it).

Nevertheless, for the cause of Patwant Singh's hospital in Kabliji, and like projects, Woodcock and Onley plotted an Indian odyssey by air and by land. Their route was determined by whim, interest, and nostalgia for places and people Woodcock had seen on earlier visits, and it led them from the desert of Rajasthan in the northwest, through lush equatorial Kerala in the south, to the great temples of Orissa in the east, the mountains of Darjeeling in the north, and finally back to Delhi. Woodcock's journal — capsule histories, descriptions, cultural observations, records of encounters — is interspersed with Onley's watercolour interpretations.

The theme for both was to be the *walls* of India, both literal ("the walls of its ancient buildings and its vast mountain ranges") and metaphorical ("the walls of caste and the walls of language, the walls created by religion which still cause bitter and bloody conflicts, and perhaps the stoutest wall of all, that between the prosperous and the poor, that vast and seemingly irreducible mass of people at the base of Indian society, generally estimated at 300 million in number"). This is a promising theme, though Onley confined himself to its literal aspect, and Woodcock remembered his self-imposed mandate only sporadically. But the book the two produced is informative and entertaining, gracefuly written, and visually pleasing.

Now for the caveats. A certain kind of daring (either insouciant or foolhardy) is required for travel writing, since the writer must of necessity depend on brief impressions and on local informants whose reliability he has no time to check. Whenever my eye has been caught in the travel sections of bookstores or newspapers by a place name or a region I know well (Brisbane, Kingston, Boston, Trivandrum) I have skimmed the book or article in question. I have always noted a few errors, sometimes silly and inconsequential, sometimes seriously misleading and embarrassing, that have given me a sceptical view of the genre.

"Kingston, Ontario," I read in no less an authority than the *New York Times*, when the Sailing Olympics were in full swing, "is situated at the point where the St. Lawrence River *flows into* Lake Ontario."

When Woodcock writes of Rajasthan and Orissa and Darjeeling, I read with

engaged interest because he has a keen eye and a wry wit, and because I do not know those areas. But when he writes of Kerala, and of Trivandrum in particular, I begin to pencil numerous question marks and exclamation points into the margin.

It is more than ordinarily hazardous to be a travel writer in India where a general principle, evolved by long study of one town, is sure to be confounded by the next town. In the village where I lived, for example, I observed with my own eyes incidents that "could not happen" according to the confident and categorical opinion of educated residents of the city of Trivandrum a mere rickshaw ride away. Sources matter, and they are usually only narrowly informed. We would hardly take seriously a *Times of India* article on our inner cities if it had been formed by chatting to people at a Canada Council cocktail party in Ottawa — though this is analogous to what seems to have been the source of most of Woodcock's information: dignitaries, academics, the affluent.

He perpetuates, for example, a romantic Nair version of Kerala as "the model region of India in terms of communal peace." Certainly the ideal exists and has beneficial influence, as ideals do. But in fact, historically, Kerala observed the harshest and most brutal of high caste strictures against low caste; an Untouchable could be struck down with a sword for coming within 50 paces of a Nair, or within a 100 paces of a Brahmin. In the 1950's, there was such bloody rioting that the state was placed under direct presidential rule from Delhi. In 1977-78, when my family was there, rioting and violence in Trivandrum were common; true, it was a tumultuous time of political struggle between Mrs. Gandhi and the Janata party; but Trivandrumites told us with a shrug that this was "normal." We continue to correspond with people who live there, and their letters refer to constant demonstrations and skirmishes.

It is very difficult indeed to gather accurate information in India, though "accurate" information is thrust upon one with confident abandon. Yet the Nairs know almost nothing about the Christian or Muslim families, who in turn know nothing of the Nairs; they are not interested in knowing anything about one another; they are, in fact, extremely puzzled by the Western mania for inquiry and fact-gathering. (Gandhi's diary of his years in London is startling in its total absence of curiosity about London. British mores impinge only in so far as they cause difficulties for Gandhi in keeping his vow of vegetarianism.) It was not long at all before I realized that I — a newcomer and a visitor — knew far more about the private lives and fears and aspirations of the servants of the Nairs than the Nairs did.

All this by way of preamble to the most exasperating of Woodcock's statements about Kerala: "Then, as now, the women enjoyed extraordinary power in a matrilineal society." Matrilineal society, yes; power, no. Not now, and not historically. If Woodcock had eaten dinner in a Nair home, he would have noted how the women were relegated to a separate room, how they never sat at a table with the men, how they waited on them silently. If he had talked to single professional Nair women in the city or in the university, he would have heard their feminist concerns. Puzzled because the lives of women were observably so much *more* circumscribed than those I had witnessed in Delhi and Madras, I asked about the matter of matriarchy. "Matriarchy," my Nair landlord explained, "means *nephew* inherits, not son." So much for female power.

A number of inaccuracies arose from a tendency to extrapolate from the mores

of the city of Cochin to the mores of the state of Kerala. The cities of Trivandrum and Cochin might as well be two separate countries — until relatively recently, they were — so different are many of their social practices. Nevertheless, they are only 200 kilometres apart, and not 2,000 — though this must surely have been simply a typographical error.

Does any of this matter? Only if the book were to be mistaken for an exhaustive and scholarly study of a country of endless contradictions. For a lively introduction to India, it is excellent — though I did wish that Woodcock had included more on-stage appearances of the quality of this delightful one (a Sikh in South India commenting on the boom in Kuwaiti tours of employment for Malayalis) :

> "It's all oil money. The chaps you see building what they think are pukka houses which everyone will envy are the Johnny-come-latelies of the boom. Chaps who went to Kuwait and made good on a failed Matric. When the bottom falls out of oil, it's going to end, and not with a bang but a whimper." He looked at me with a sly expectancy. "Old Possum, what? Took my degree in English, and haven't read a book since."

Finally, a word on Toni Onley's paintings: the inner eye of the artist sees whatever it sees, and is not required to conform to anyone's expectations, nor to defend itself. Nevertheless, I have to record my astonishment at Onley's relentless use of pastels for India, for to me the most immediate, striking, and essential difference between India (or Queensland, Australia, or any subtropical/tropical region) and Canada, is that India is loud with colour — gauche, uninhibited, *primary* colour — while Canada is bleached and leached and muted, a land of pastels, a land timid about colour. So that if I had been shown these paintings without any clue as to context, I feel reasonably certain my response would have been: this must be some Canadian painter's fantasy of the landscape of the Arabian Nights. It is as though a painter were to render downtown Toronto in the idiom of an illuminated miniature for a Book of Hours, so astounding is the incongruity. The paintings seem analogous to Gandhi's London diary — a relentless imposition of the old way of seeing on the new world — which is, after all, not inappropriate for a CIVA venture.

What the paintings *do* evoke is a mistiness and fragility in even the most massive of temple structures; Onley's walls seem to be on the borderline of an unstable equilibrium with the earth and sky around them. This struck me as an exciting and provocative insight which accords well with the Hindu concept of *samsara.* It is, in fact, this constant sense of the transitory, of the fluid exchange between perception and memory, that will entice the armchair traveller to linger in Woodcock's and Onley's India.

JANETTE TURNER HOSPITAL

TYPOGRAPHIC MAN

GEORGE PARKER, *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $39.95.

"THE PRINTING PRESS was not brought to Canada in 1751 and 1764 to enlarge the literary and philosophical horizons," George L. Parker writes in *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada,*

> or to spread the word of God, and certainly not to advance the cause of free speech and democracy, even though in time it became an important instrument for all those causes. It came as an adjunct to the military and civil authorities, to uphold law, order, and good government.

This passage suggests both the strengths and weaknesses of *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada.* The strength lies

in Parker's choice of subject — the role of print technology in the development of Canadian society and culture to 1900. (Parker intends in a subsequent volume to cover the period from 1900 to the present.) It is an important and inherently interesting subject that has received surprisingly little attention in the country that claims Marshall McLuhan as its own. The weakness of the book lies in Parker's conception of technology, for like the military and civilian authorities who first brought the printing press to Canada, Parker considers the press simply an instrument, a tool to be used. Like them, he fails to recognize that technology radically alters the way in which we conceive and live in the world; he fails to explore the implications of McLuhan's argument in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) that "technological environments are not merely passive containers of people but are active processes that reshape people and other technologies alike."

Let me make something clear at the outset: the strengths of *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* outweigh the weaknesses. Whatever one's reservations about Parker's treatment of his subject — and I have several — there is no denying the importance of the book: it should be required reading for anyone engaged in the study of Canadian culture in general and Canadian literature in particular. Unfortunately Parker's book is unlikely to be widely read by either group. There are at least two reasons for this: the first points up the strength of the book; the second, its weakness.

The first concerns our understanding of the relations between literature and bibliography, or perhaps, more accurately, the relation between literary criticism and bibliography. We separate literary criticism, the study of what we call "literature," from bibliography, the study of books, that is, the study of the print technology that makes "literature" as we know it possible. In short, we study the message in isolation from the medium. A case in point is Ken Norris' recent book, *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-80*. Norris examines the role of the little magazine in the development of modernism and post-modernism in Canadian poetry. Nowhere in his study, however, does he consider the role of technology in these developments; and yet, clearly, the little magazine was made possible, in large measure, by innovations in printing, including the invention of the mimeograph, which not only made printing very cheap but "the press" highly portable. What is more, the little magazine is virtually defined by the print technology it uses; a glossy looking, slickly designed small magazine is not, almost by definition, a little magazine. The medium is in part the message, but Norris says next to nothing about the technology involved in such magazines. Why? Presumably, because he considers technology outside his subject of study. But is it? Is the role of Coach House Press in the development of contemporary Canadian literature separable from the computer technology Stan Bevington and others have developed? Is *Swift Current*?

In his study Parker sets out to demonstrate the relation between print technology and culture but he is only partially successful and therein lies the second reason why his study is unlikely to gain a wide audience among literary critics. *The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* belongs to the growing field of historical bibliography and needs to be seen in the context of works such as Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin's *L'Apparition du Livre* (1958) — available in English under the title *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800* (1976) — and Elizabeth Z. Eisenstein's *The Printing Press as an*

Agent of Change (1979). Given his knowledge of the subject, Parker could easily have put together an encyclopedia of the early book trade in this country — something we badly need — or, building on the work of H. Pearson Gundy, he could have written a history of printing or publishing (or booksellinig); but he chose instead to consider the impact of the printing press on the development of nineteenth-century Canada. It is an ambitious and much needed study that demands of the writer a profound understanding not only of technology, but of society and culture as well. While Parker's knowledge of the nineteenth-century book trade is undeniable, his grasp of the broader issues is questionable. Consider, for example, this paragraph from the Conclusion:

> This history has dealt with some of the economic forces that shaped the ways in which Canadians obtained their literary cultures. The events related here examine the tribulations as well as the benefits that a colonial society experiences on the uncharted path towards self-determination and social well-being, while it slowly discovers its own self. This sense of identity may be found in more than one way, but certainly one that nineteenth-century Canadians used was their connection to France, Great Britain, and the United States. Canada did not develop its book trade or foster its literature in isolation.

Parker's comments raise many more questions than they answer. Does a colony, like an individual, discover "its own self?" Are not the dynamics of Canada's relation to Great Britain, France, and the United States more complex than his comment allows? Is not his final statement beside the point? (And, one may ask in passing, in his second sentence does he really mean to say that *the events* examine the tribulations?)

In short, Parker is at his strongest in this book when he details the fortunes of a particular press or bookseller or when he considers the implications of a copyright agreement; he is at his weakest when he attempts to shape those details into a narrative of the role of print technology in the development of Canadian society and culture. You will look in vain in *The Beginnings of the Book Trade* for any reference to the many studies of print technology that have appeared since the publication of *L'Apparition du Livre* and *The Gutenberg Galaxy*. It is a glaring omission in an important study and one I hope Parker will correct before the publication of the much-needed second volume.

PAUL HJARTARSON

REASSURING TEENS

PATTI STREN, *I Was a 15-Year-Old Blimp.* Irwin, n.p.

NANCY FREEMAN, *Sandy.* Borealis Press, n.p.

NAZNEEN SADIQ, *Camels Can Make You Homesick and Other Stories.* James Lorimer, $5.95.

BRENDA BELLINGHAM, *Storm Child.* James Lorimer, n.p.

"I LOST 133 POUNDS and discovered men/God/myself." The frequency with which women's magazines ring the changes on that formula testifies to its enduring appeal among female consumers. Patti Stren's latest novel, *I Was a 15-Year-Old Blimp* exploits it for teenagers in the Judy Blume manner, with a few updating flourishes. The American protagonist, Gabby Finkelstein, sad possessor of excess poundage, an incipient moustache, and an unrequitted crush, sets out to acquire bulimia and the Ex-Lax habit. She is put right by a summer camp for overweight girls, a boy who inexplicably finds this self-pitying young egoist attractive, and a girlfriend whose undescribed sojourn at the Banff School of

Fine Arts constitutes the book's Canadian content. In the end, after diet, exercise, and several orgiastic let-it-all-hang-out sessions, Gabby is a social and moral success, attractive enough to be courted by the cool set that used to despise her and finally appreciative of the boy she has used and abused. The novel is thus reassuring in its way. And reassurance is the principal shared feature in the four books I am discussing here. In styles, settings, and apparent intentions they differ widely — reflecting the variousness of contemporary Canadian (if *Blimp* can be called Canadian) fiction for the young.

In its crassness and trendiness, Stren's book stands apart from the other three. Patti Stren has won a following with slim animal fantasies for the very small, illustrated by her own Thurberish sketches: *Hug Me, Sloan and Philamina, Bo The Constrictor That Couldn't.* Her first attempt at more substantial fiction, *There's a Rainbow in My Closet*, suffered from effortful whimsy but had a certain offbeat charm. *Blimp* suggests that she has succumbed to the money-making trends popular among writers for the current U.S. market. But she can write. Gabby's mental life is narrow and usually unprepossessing, but it is conveyed entertainingly.

The eponymous heroine of Nancy Freeman's short novel *Sandy* has more on her mind than calories, teenaged 'hunks,' and social acceptance. The book chronicles the year she spends with her parents and younger sister on her paternal grandparents' farm by Lake Ontario. While her father writes a novel and her mother and sister fretfully endure their exile from Ottawa, Sandy sets out to become a sheep farmer. The story, a refreshingly uncommercial one, comes briefly to life when Sandy acquires her first ewes. Unhappily, most of the dramatized scenes lack vitality, and many are aborted by

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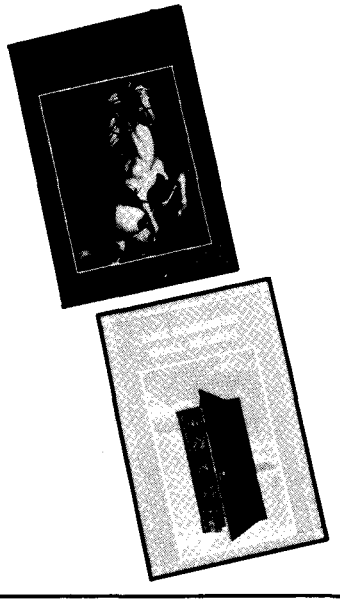

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abrupt lapses into summary. And Freeman's style can be disastrous. Tautologies and statements of the obvious abound: "both parents spoke simultaneously"; "Lifting first one leg and then the other as they climbed the steep slope. . . ." Syntax is frequently strained, as in "He seemed to be looking for the kind of mature strength in her that she wondered herself whether or not was there." There are even several misspellings. Nevertheless, the author's love of rural southern Ontario comes through, as does Sandy's satisfaction in acquiring the knowledge she needs to succeed in a vocation unusual for a young woman. *Sandy* is a book with a heart — and a crying need for thorough editing and revision.

The principal characters of Nazeen Sadiq's *Camels Make You Homesick and Other Stories* are all first-generation Canadians, the children of immigrants from South Asia. In these five gentle, unpretentious stories, Sikh, Pakistani, and Bengali arts and customs are highlighted as youngsters discover that they can feel like Canadians without renouncing or hiding their legacies from abroad. Sadiq, who came to Canada from Pakistan, based her tales on experiences of her own children and her friends' children. Evidently she intended to provide a little bibliotherapy for the Canadian offspring of immigrant parents and to promote empathy and healthy cultural curiosity among other children. Such worthy aims can ruin fiction. Here they don't, because Sadiq is a natural storyteller. The tales are a little muted but unhackneyed and engaging.

Storm Child, by Brenda Bellingham, has the merits of the other three books and virtually none of their defects. It has the freshness of *Sandy* without its stylistic ineptitudes, the liveliness of *Blimp* without its coarseness, and the emotional appeal of the *Camels* stories made particularly poignant by the drama and pathos of its story, a fictitious one smoothly written into an episode of real Canadian history. In 1831, the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Edmonton outfitted James Bird, an educated half-breed, to trade with his mother's people, the Peigans, and bring them and their pelts to the Rocky Mountain House trading-post. Bird led the Indians south to an American trading-post instead. Isobel MacPherson, Bellingham's fictitious heroine, is caught up in this betrayal when she leaves Fort Edmonton to live with her Peigan grandparents after her Scottish father's defection. Too wounded and bitter to stay in the white man's milieu, she travels with Bird's party to the camp of her grandfather, Chief Many Eagles, in the Bow Valley. But she cannot break her ties to whites and half-whites so easily. Hostilities between Indian nations and Bird's attempts to profit from competition between white traders test the allegiances and eventually threaten the lives of Isobel and her friends of assorted colours. By the book's end, she feels sufficiently experienced and mature to 'choose her own trail,' starting with school at the Red River Settlement.

Besides telling an exciting story with a spirited heroine, *Storm Child* is interesting for its portrait of Fort Edmonton in the 1830's with its semi-democratic society of Company officers, Company employees, the common-law Indian wives of both groups, and the children of those liaisons. Jamey Jock Bird, a product of that society, was educated in England but chose to return to his mother's tribe on his own terms, enjoying its freedom from monogamy and Christianity but also enjoying his special entree into white communities. In the novel he is a flamboyant, ambiguous character — handsome, dashing, histrionically funny, unreliable as an entrepreneur yet consistently good-humoured and kind in his

personal relations. He is thoroughly alive, as is most of this colourful addition to the literary re-creation of Canada's past.

FRANCES FRAZER

WORDSWORTHIAN WILDE

BARBARA SMUCKER, *White Mist*. Irwin, n.p.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE has its own defining characteristics; and as the mere existence of this journal indicates, so does Canadian literature. But these are two quite different sets of characteristics. So children's books written by Canadians — books which are both children's literature and Canadian literature — are often most interesting for the ways in which the defining characteristics of the two genres conflict or combine with each other. Barbara Smucker's *White Mist* is a case in point; while it is a seriously flawed novel that I would not particularly recommend for children, it nevertheless offers adults interested in either Canadian or children's literature much to think about.

In *White Mist*, a girl from Sarnia, Ontario travels to a resort on the shores of Lake Michigan to work for the summer, and there meets an Indian boy who is also from Sarnia. The two of them enter the past. The girl witnesses the logging operations of the eighteen thirties as they devastate the original forests; she lives with settlers, loggers, and finally, the native Indians of the area, and she discovers her own Indian heritage. At the end, she returns to the present with a new commitment to environmental salvation; her Indian great grandfather has told her, "if we destroy the earth, we destroy ourselves."

This could have been an exciting fantasy — as exciting as the many fine children's novels about trips backwards in time that it is modelled on. But Smucker weights the book with so much undigested factual information about logging and pioneer life that it sometimes sounds as if she accidentally shuffled some pages of an encyclopedia into her manuscript. And also, some pages of a Greenpeace tract, for the book sermonizes loudly about the environment. Smucker so firmly believes that modern civilization suffers in comparison with the ecologically sound and spiritually committed life of the Indians that she has a hard time thinking of reasons why it might be wrong for her young protagonists to prefer the past to the present. One of them tellingly says, "we have to live in our own time whether we like it or not."

But this retrogressive nostalgia helps to define the book as children's literature. Contemporary children's literature, which has close connections with the traditions of pastoral, is often enthusiastic about the delights of simple living close to nature — although rarely is its approval of such values so brutally unqualified as it is here. And because it is so unqualified here, readers of Canadian fiction who have read their Northrop Frye and their Margaret Atwood and their Gaile McGregor, and who expect the bush to be a savage and frightening enemy, might be surprised to find in this Canadian book passages about the wilds that sound like Wordsworth on the Lake District: "The giant brown trunks of the forest trees felt magically protective to May . . . and the shedding of their leaves and needles at her feet felt like generous gifts spread before her." Whenever the protagonist of Jan Truss's fine and more typically Canadian children's novel *Jasmin* (1982) thinks something like that, she gets pelted by hail, or sees an animal

die violently; but here, the old chief says, "I want to tell you that the wilderness, as the white man called it, was not the enemy of the Indians in the old days, but a bountiful garden to be harvested with care."

That the wilds might be a garden is an unusual idea in the context of Canadian fiction; the idea of exile, of a person separated from his true home and struggling against an alien environment, is certainly not. But the idea of exile is central to many non-Canadian children's time fantasies also; so Smucker's use of it here makes her book both typically Canadian and typically a work of children's literature. May and her friend Lee are exiles from the present in the past, and from the past in the present. The garden the chief speaks of no longer exists; in the world of the present it has become a wild — exactly the frighteningly anti-civilizing force that readers of adult Canadian fiction are familiar with — and the children must accept that fact and work with it. Exiled from paradise, they are also, as contemporary Indians, exiled both from the traditions of their heritage and from the mainstream of white society; and orphaned, May is exiled from her parents.

She shares the state of being orphaned, alienated, and exiled not just with many characters in adult Canadian fiction, but with many characters in other children's time fantasies; in such books, children experience the ultimate exile, enter a time not their own, and in the process of doing so find ways to move beyond exile in the present. May does that here, although curiously, the major purpose of her visit to the past seems to be to teach her to be alienated from the values of the present. But what fascinates me most about *White Mist* is that it duplicates the procedure of the most widely known Canadian children's time fantasy, Janet Lunn's *The Root Cellar* (1981), and sends its main characters across the American border. The past the characters in both these novels experience is *not* the Canadian past, but the American one. In British time fantasies, children enter the past of a house they know and belong to in the present: why might two Canadian children's novelists offer their young readers insights into a nostalgia for the past of another country? I don't know the answer to that question, but I intend to keep thinking about it, for I suspect that doing so will teach me much not just about writing for children in this country, but also about what defines our peculiar situation as Canadians.

PERRY NODELMAN

TRIPLE TUNING

ROBERT FINCH, *Double Tuning*. Porcupine's Quill, n.p.

MICHAEL O. NOWLAN, *So Still Houses*. Lancelot Press, n.p.

RON MILES, *These People*. Harbour Publishing, n.p.

THESE THREE POETS contrast with one another in technique and sensibility. Robert Finch is a contemporary of Earle Birney, but formed his technique on a set of earlier conventions. Finch chooses to ignore the Poundian injunction which favours composing "in the sequence of the musical phrase and not of the metronome." As Joe Rosenblatt justly observes, Finch has "an incredible ear." In the "Manifesto" to Part Two of *Double Tuning*, he declares: "I see and feel. Whatever the consequence, / My verses, good and bad, come as they come," and, "All I can call my lines, and not be coy, / Is random note and comment without art." Were it not for Finch's obvious scrupulousness and careful good manners, one might consider these comments

disingenuous. But he is being modest, for his is a careful art. The lines already quoted sufficiently indicate the finely wrought iambic pentameters which are the staple of *Double Tuning*.

Finch's classical formalism reinforces a nicely epigrammatic turn of mind. Unequivocally a poetry of statement, the verse is sometimes bland. Yet it can work well, as in "Portrait D'Inconnu(e)":

> A sudden masterpiece
> Signs its unnamed distinction with itself,
> Then disappears, as we too disappear,
> While memory, unaware, fixes a work
> Forever on the walls of dream or chance,
> More knowable because it is unknown.

On the other hand, Finch does not always escape a recurring problem with strongly-established forms, the danger of fizzling out in a weak ending (as he does in "Vichy Autumn").

Mr. Finch's strong grounding in French culture is the underlay of a cool and orderly wit. The overriding quality of *Double Tuning* is its civility (or, Tom Marshall might be impelled to say, its over-refinement). No single poem overwhelms the reader, or lodges itself in the mind, but there is much satisfaction in Finch's use of language, his sense of history, and his accomplishment in the almost forgotten skill of integral punctuation. Here, to illustrate his characteristic virtuosity, is his sonnet, "The Moment":

> At the given moment, daily a given one,
> A change comes over the tree and the tower, lost
> In one another's shadows, a double ghost;
> At the given moment their shadows come undone,
> Divided by a finger of the sun:
> The tower of shadow crowds into a tower
> Of light, on which, though it could not seem slower
> Beginning, the tree of shadow has begun
> To shine as if transplanted from a dream,
> Singeing the brightness like a silver briar
> Of thorns igniting till a golden fire
> Of towering branches sings around a stem,
> Then at the given moment's fading core
> The tree, the tower, stand apart once more.

Finch's work features a kind of formal elegance repudiated by present conventions and by the (often mindlessly) repeated injunction to "make it new." When a fine craftsman is made to seem old-fashioned, and therefore more or less irrelevant, one may deplore the loss thereby implied.

Nowlan writes in a very familiar "form" of free verse, with rare benefit of punctuation. Listen to this:

> In the days
> when my Dad
> used to sell
> an occasional beef
> at the roadside
> I would gawk
> as the prospective buyer
> would punch the animal
> below the shoulder
> feel the rump
> and pat the flank

This is what Jack Spicer used to call "just chopped-up prose." When there is sufficient force of statement the rhythm can lift it:

> I first saw death
> In the struggling of a stray dog
> My father shot years ago

On the other hand, these lines reveal another weakness of the method. Without punctuation (or, a gift available to few poets, exquisite control of breath units) it is difficult to use syntax at any level of sophistication and the verse is almost invariably confined to simple (or, worse, over-simple) declarative statements. At serious limitation, this perhaps accounts for Nowlan's narrow range, of small scale anecdote or pithy saying — like this:

> MY CLASS
> they search words
> ideas?
> inspiration?
>
> But such
> will not come
>
> their minds are fighting
> the true experience
>
> poetry

Ron Miles' poems have been published in several of the same periodicals as Michael Nowlan's; Miles' book, *These People*, is on a similar scale to Nowlan's. At first glance, the free verse techniques of the two may seem comparable; but they are not. Miles is a thoughtful poet, of the sort any literature, or literary period, does well to have as its typical craftsman. His poetry has a highly sophisticated density and allusiveness. A good example is his two-part poem, "The Father," which is actually on the teacher's role. Here Miles explores, with thoughtful irony, the ambivalent space of the contemporary teacher — at once paternalistic and anxious for identification with his "freshperson" students.

Widely published over perhaps a fifteen-year period, Miles has waited long to make a book of poems and, at that, has kept it pretty slim. This suggests a fastidiousness which is also evident poem by poem, and a very sure sense of what *makes* a poem. Take, for example, the controlled emotion and quiet, yet forceful, climaxing of "Packing to Leave." The poem begins with twenty lines detailing the minutiae of such occasions, with the farewelling speaker, father-figure, virtually marginalized by the moment, and this circumstance beautifully perceived in terms of the writer's own craft:

> And I
> have trembled at the edges
> of this scene, almost
> the author's friend
> who read the manuscript
> through several drafts ...

A classical mutability poem, it concludes touchingly, with the speaker's

> diminishing
> shape waving
> away this parking
> and the next one
> and the last.

If you collect poets, and not "reputations," Miles is one of the best kind to have. Not showy, he is traditional enough in practice to believe, with Yvor Winters say, that in an important sense a poem is a statement about a human occasion. Nor is Miles a flashy craftsman, but he is a good one. The very opening poem of *These People*, a sonnet (no less!) titled "pas de deux" is sufficient to demonstrate. This is a statement of some subtlety about feminine aging, pitched carefully somewhere between generalization and an individual portrayal. There is even play with the classical Petrarchan rhyme-scheme (plus internal rhymes) including a modern "refusal of expectation" in rhyming "current/counter" and ending the poem: "She is not fooled by changes. Nor by death / moving beside her in their black dance." For another aspect of Miles' satisfying technique see the wordplay on "lie" in his rather grim poem "My Own Bed."

So, three very different poets. Forty years ago, Robert Finch received the governor general's award for *Poems* (1946), and it is good to recognize in *Double Tuning* a career of such well-sustained accomplishment. Perhaps my judgment of Michael O. Nowlan's work is harsh, but I would like to see editors (and creative writing classes) steer away from such thin and attenuated surfaces. Ron Miles' craft is pitched somewhere between these. He has an ease and fluency Nowlan's verse might rise to at its best, plus a thoughtfulness and density not altogether unlike Robert Finch's. I look forward to reading more of his work.

MIKE DOYLE

RICHARDSON'S REVENGE

GAILE MCGREGOR, *The Wacousta Syndrome*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $45.00; pa. $18.95.

WHEN HIS CONTEMPORARIES rejected John Richardson's attempts to establish himself as their national writer he left Canada, cursing Canadians for their lack of interest in his work, and went off to make his fortune in New York. Americans, as it turned out, were not much more receptive to his novels than Canadians had been, and Richardson died there in poverty in 1852. A century later he has had his revenge on his fellow Canadians. Students in survey courses of Canadian literature suffer through the compulsory reading of *Wacousta*, one of his nine novels, and literary critics have decided that the attitudes toward wilderness in that novel represent the archetype of the Canadian literary sensibility over the last two centuries. This latter concept has now been elaborated in the 448 pages of *The Wacousta Syndrome*. Wrong-headed though the book may be, its title is certain to become part of our "litcrit" shorthand. Richardson has at last become a Canadian immortal.

Gaile McGregor variously defines the Wacousta Syndrome as "the retreat from nature" and "the recoil from otherness," both of which she considers to be distinguishing characteristics of the Canadian psyche. She traces the literary results of these national traits through certain aspects of Canadian literature and art: types of themes and protagonists, inter-personal and man-nature relations, and narrative styles. She theorizes that the nineteenth-century Canadian recoil from nature was so extreme that "nature became to a large extent demythicized, invisible." Thus a "distinctive and powerful" twentieth-century Canadian literature was able to develop, free of nineteenth-century hangups.

Some of the characteristics of this literature are that, in its symbolic structure, nature is amoral, indifferent, dangerous, and essentially masculine; society is essentially feminine; isolation is not personal, but a prior human condition; love leads to unhappiness and death; and death itself is a special, pervasive, uniquely Canadian symbol, representing a beginning rather than an end. There are three principal types of protagonists: the fool-saint (the passive innocent); the magician (the strong amoral manipulator, acting through force of wit and will); and the author surrogate (the artist as amateur, as disinterested collector of facts, as innocent, or as enigma). Fictional resolutions emphasize acceptance and compromise, and salvation is worked out in terms of the group rather than the self. In style, "Canadian literature is allegorical in the most general sense of the word," and it is also tragic/comic, rather than romantic/ironic.

There is also a subtext running through the book. McGregor states that American writing and criticism dominate the surface of Canadian literary culture. Only by going below the surface can we find what is distinctively Canadian. In every instance, she finds the product of the Canadian imagination to be both different from and superior to its American counterpart. A side-effect of this preoccupation in McGregor's own writing is that the book is full of recurring images of deceptive surfaces masking underlying reality.

All this is valid and frequently illuminating when it is applied to the twenty or so contemporary Canadian authors whose works provide her principal illustrations. It is plain nonsense when applied, no exceptions admitted, to two hundred years of Canadian art, as well as literature in two languages,

and it is both insulting and infuriating when it is taken as revealing general qualities of "the Canadian." Canadians and their art and literature are now, and always have been, too diverse to be described in terms of one set of simple characteristics, but, according to McGregor, all Canadians have a "seemingly incurable tendency . . . to get stuck at the level of language, confounding rhetoric with reality"; they "are literally fixated on *appearances*"; "fear of a disorderly universe inclines us to put a high value on any means for producing a convincing illusion of order"; we are "assiduous at displacing [our] focus from space to time"; we are "afraid of wilfulness"; and "the border between self and other — *any* border between self and other — is simply, unalterably *taboo*." In addition, our folk heroes are ordinary people transformed by some catastrophe, like the Donnellys, Louis Riel, or the "mad trapper of Rat River," and in politics "we only trust the capability of a politician to the extent that his dissociation from us is complete." Such generalizations reveal more about their author than they do about the contemporary Canadian psyche.

In addition to the logical fallacy of taking the part for the whole, defining all of Canada by means of a few works of fiction, McGregor weakens her argument further by her selection of sources. She is more likely to quote a critic about a particular work than she is to quote and analyze the work herself. This is particularly annoying with regard to nineteenth-century literature, which is always interpreted by twentieth-century critics. She reduces the whole of Canadian literature before World War II to passing mention of about ten writers in English. Her French-Canadian literary sources are limited to those contemporary works available in English translation, and her survey of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing is limited to the contents of one late-twentieth-century anthology. Similarly, she is dependent on a very few theses and articles for her information about two centuries of Canadian art, and she has generalized from the specific analyses contained in these works. For example, although one artist may have concentrated on views of Halifax, it is wrong to say that the enclosed cityscape, rather than landscape and panoramas, was the dominant form of nineteenth-century Canadian art. The nature and development of Canadian historical writing is also distributed by out-of-context quotations from Carl Berger's *The Writing of Canadian History*.

McGregor's preoccupation with the evil influence of American culture leads her to misinterpret that culture, the better to criticize it. Trends in American literature are outlined in a sentence or two of outrageously simplified generalization, in order to be contrasted with the superior Canadian parallel. For example: "the American, in addition to his naive faith in a Walt Disney version of the wilderness, also has a rather distinctive attitude toward death. In short, he refuses to believe in it"; and also "the American writer tends to underline his own presence in his work [and] he has absolute confidence in the creator's authority." The first quotation is "proven" by reference to one American critic, and the second by reference to Mailer, Pynchon, Barthelme, and Burroughs, as if these four are typical of all modern American fiction writers. Although less attention is paid to European culture and European literature, they too receive the same superficial "all are like this" treatment which serves to undermine the credibility of the argument. Canadian literature is strong enough to stand by itself. It does not need to be pumped up by comparison to works of straw.

When some work of art or literature apparently does not fit the prescribed pattern, McGregor deals with it in one of several ways. Either it only "seems" to be contrary when it "really" does fit if you look below the surface, or else the absence of the pattern is ascribed to a denial mechanism which is then taken to prove the point. A very selective choice of examples or of critical interpretations serves the purpose of characterizing the whole. It takes some ingenuity to find a withdrawal from nature in the Group of Seven, but McGregor accomplishes it by taking Lawren Harris' late abstractions as typical of the whole, and by quoting disapproving contemporary critics who complained that the group, in departing from conventional styles, were not painting "real" nature.

It is disconcerting as well to find the masculine pronoun applied throughout to "the Canadian." Certainly, constant repetition of "he or she" is annoying, but with careful writing it can be kept to a minimum and the archetypal Canadian can more comfortably be compounded of both sexes. McGregor's assumption of the masculinity of all Canadians seems to be more than a simple matter of editorial usage, since only in one instance does she separate the perceptions of female writers from those of male writers in her generalizations about male/female roles and relations. Although in several instances in these sections she has illustrated her point entirely with works written by only one sex, she does not appear to have noticed the fact or to have questioned whether authors of the other sex have produced a different interpretation.

It is a pity that McGregor has chosen to attempt so much. To explain two centuries of literature and art and to define the contemporary Canadian in terms of a "retreat from nature" and a "recoil from other" is just simply not possible. A reader whose reaction to every page is "yes, but what about ——?" will remain unconvinced. The "real" truth is that we are a complex lot and that we live in a complicated country. Our art and literature, even our varieties of nationalism, reflect this complexity. In the products of our many and varied imaginations examples can be found to support almost any theory. We can also turn our imaginations to varying interpretations of the same phenomena. Thus Richardson's supposed "retreat from nature" could well be explained by the fact that he did not excel at descriptive writing, regardless of what country he was writing about. Action, strong characters, and convoluted plots were his forte. That the natural world is absent from a lot of Canadian fiction could mean that it is something ordinary and accepted, completely integrated rather than rejected or denied. It could also be argued that the "taboo" boundary line between self and other is based on respect, rather than fear, where both man and nature are concerned.

If McGregor had not attempted to find a pedigree for her modern archetypes in the past — had not been obsessed with the continuity of experience, as she says all Canadians are — and if she had not insisted that the small number of contemporary writers and artists she mentions are representative of the Canadian psyche in an absolute form, she would have written a shorter, more relevant, book. To use one of McGregor's own archetypes: it could be said that she has assumed the role of magician, has manipulated the elements of her world by force of wit, has aroused my mistrust, and has ultimately failed.

MARY LU MACDONALD

REAL RIEL

FRANK DAVEY, *The Louis Riel Organ & Piano Co.* Turnstone, $7.95.

No Feather, No Ink. Thistledown, $15.00.

IN *The Louis Riel Organ & Piano Co.* Frank Davey is once again pushing at the limits of linguistic convention. These five poems can be thought of as cantos in a single long poem by virtue of the fact that they are all concerned with the subject of writing and the kinetic process of creation. Davey populates and illuminates his text with the deconstructed mythological figures of Wacousta, Davy Crockett, Louis Riel, and others. Some of Davey's topoi are: (a) the British/American, Anglo/Franco battle over the Canadian psyche, (b) the freedoms and limitations of language, (c) the strengths and weaknesses of academia as opposed to pop culture, (d) the role of time and experience in modifying our relationship to the past, (e) the role of the artist as nationalistic cultural guerrilla. Davey maps these fields and identifies a "middle-ground."

One site of this "middle ground" is a psychic and geographical location between naive but well-meaning nationalists and unrepentant, individualist self-seekers (e.g., U.S. cultural/economic imperialists). It is clear that the past affects the present. However, by re-writing the past we can change present views of historical and cultural figures that are integral to our national identity. A second site of the "middle ground" can be located in the centre of the author-text-reader triangle. It is a ground that is in constant upheaval because of the ways in which Davey manipulates language and our sense of it.

Davey's characters are anachronistic. Language is skewed by the use of puns ("The 'real' rebellion," hyperbole ("Wacousta's fists bathed / to the armpits in blood & brains."), litotes ("Or so littercher / says."), dysphemism ("dumb frog," "fascist running dog"), and euphemism ("He told Louis in colourful Protestant language / to go love the Blessed Virgin."). He uses a wide lexical range from formal Latin to colloquial English. Story lines are broken with numerous digressions resulting in strange contrasts, and radical juxtapositions. Wacousta brandishes the collected works of Arthur Hailey; the CBC recalls Radisson and Groseillers to active duty as border patrol guards. Mythic figures are re-written, until we get a number of increasingly absurd versions of their original stories (we are given at least four versions of Davy Crockett's death). Throughout all this, Davey is pointing at the suspect qualities of language. It can be a purveyor of propaganda, or an awkward means of communication, or a lucid vehicle for the truth. The question he seems to pose is: "How can the poet manquée become a cultural guerrilla?" The answer is by reacting against the false authority of distorted myth and suspect language. By acknowledging the suspect nature of language Davey is coming a little closer to a truthful account of his dualistic subject of myth and writing.

At the end of the first section titled, "Wacousta," the two senses of Davey's "middle ground" superimpose. We see a western vision of the hero and his father, which is "middle ground" as a Canadian literary image in spite of its western setting. It is also "middle ground" from a critical point of view which alludes to Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" and the need to "kill" or displace the cultural parent or father-image.

The second section called "Dump" deals with garbage as cultural icon, as a source of information for cultural anthropologists, phenomenologists, and artists. It illustrates ways of life that shaped present as well as past attitudes includ-

ing the attitudes of the protagonist. This garbage metaphor is linked to the ironic paradoxes of sexual psychology. All of this is a metaphor for disposal and retrieval, for memory and its role in the creative process. The dump section closes with a dream-image of a fountainhead of water, the irrational flux of creative juices running irresistably uphill, an image of inspiration rising out out of past lives. The section on "Crockett' helps to resolve the cosmopolitan/nationalist debate that began with Smith and Sutherland. While it is true that we've been ill-served by our own mythmakers, and overwhelmed by the Hollywood legend-machine we can still learn from the myths of others in order to develop our own unique cultural views.

In the section on "Riel" Canadian cultural heroes overlap in the mind of the narrator — Riel, Timothy Eaton, Mackenzie King, etc. — resulting in the creation of a kind of "super" myth. At the same time Davey humanizes Riel and de-mythologizes his historical stature forcing the reader to a re-evaluation. Further, numerous textual anachronisms point directly back to the author, redefine the role of suspension of disbelief, and draw attention to the structure of the text at the expense of plot.

The fifth section on the "Thomas Organ and Piano Co." contrasts parochial nationalist views with a sophisticated cosmopolitan perspective implicit in Canada's role in the twentieth century. This section echoes McLuhan in its observation that our domestic cultural centre has shifted from the parlour organ to the television set with its external and often American messages. The pump organ becomes a metaphor for a British and American influenced Canadian culture badly in need of salvaging. The protagonist's grandfather, an ancestral cultural figure, asks him to play the organ. Nervous at first, the new voice finds itself realized in a union with a small-town Canadian past. The result is inconclusive. The hero explains while playing, "I'm doing the best I can."

At first glance *No Feather, No Ink* seems like an important gathering of diverse materials on the events surrounding Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont during and after the North West Rebellion. The anthology includes paintings by Henry Letendre, historic photos of Riel, and Dumont, newspaper clippings from the time, original texts by Riel, Dumont, Lepine, Hourie, and other important historical figures, traditional and modern folk songs, and a spectrum of poetic texts on the subject. At second glance, the anthology apears to be a conundrum. If this book was intended not only for general readership but as some critics have already suggested, for libraries, secondary schools and possibly universities, then a variety of things could have been done to improve the presentation to make it of greater use to scholars.

Absences trouble this collection. There is no introduction, no clear indication of an editor, and a near-total absence of Francophone, Métis, and native Indian works. I was unable to find mention of sources for the historical texts by C. P. Mulvaney, Maxime Lepine, or Peter Hourie, yet these supply a fundamental historical context for the anthology. Sources of historical photos are not identified. A researcher might want to know that images of figures such as Riel and Dumont are available, and where. All of this might seem like "nit-picking." After all, it seems that a small press with the courage to publish an anthology revolving around a single central Canadian figure deserves high praise. On the other hand, if, after one hundred years, we are to do justice to Riel, then, perhaps more attention to detail is called for.

If there was such a thing as a Cana-

dian canon, then much of it must be represented here. A great number of our finest writers have written about the legendary Riel. This collection goes back to E. J. Pratt and works its way up through Ray Souster, Al Purdy, George Woodcock, John Newlove, Dave Godfrey, Andrew Suknaski, David McFadden, George Bowering, Frank Davey, and a host of others too numerous to mention, all contributing their unique visions of struggle, death, man as myth, and the relation of past to present.

Nonetheless, any collection of this kind needs some sort of clear organizing principle. Such a principle is not immediately evident except for the obvious thematic one with its problematic ramifications. Consulting Frank Davey's alternatives to thematic approaches, in *Surviving the Paraphrase,* might offer an editor some ideas. The anthology appears to be in chronological order, but cross-referencing to the acknowledgements page cannot verify this. If the anthology had been presented in strictly chronological order with dates marked at the beginning or end of each piece, then, we might note how some earlier writings seem to resonate in the works of later authors. We might gain a sense of how changing views of history, and evolving political perspectives have affected our depiction of this dark hero, or how certain approaches to the structuring of poetry have emerged and receded during the last hundred years. In fact, a good introduction to this collection could have gone far towards explaining these issues.

It might be argued that such an introduction already exists in print. It can be found in the "Riel" edition of *Prairie Fire* (6, no. 4). It was written by Kim Dales, who originally approached Thistledown Press with the idea for this book, and who with George Amabile began the task of editing *No Feather, No Ink.* Apparently, Dales and Amabile had numerous differences with Thistledown. Eventually, they decided that the book was no longer a reflection of their own editorial tastes and so asked that they not be identified as the editors in spite of their research and background work. The collection seems to have suffered as a result. bpNichol writes in his poem, "The Long Weekend of Louis Riel": "its always these damn white boys writing my story these / same stupid fuckers that put me down try to make a myth out of / me," and later, "i'm getting sick / of being dished up again & again like so many slabs of back / bacon." I think Louis would have loved these poems about him. I doubt he would have been surprised at the disagreements that seem to have attended their publication.

KARL JIRGENS

WORD GAMES

ROGER PARE, *L'Alphabet.* Les éditions La courte échelle, n.p.

LOIS SIMMIE, *Auntie's Knitting a Baby,* illus. by Anne Simmie. Western Producer Prairie Books, $8.95.

GEORGE SWEDE, *Tick Bird: Poems for Children,* illus. by Katherine Helmer. Three Trees Press, $4.95.

GEORGE SWEDE, *Time is Flies,* illus. by Darcia Labrosse. Three Trees Press, $4.95.

THE ASSUMPTION COMMON to all four four books under review is that language is a game children can and want to play. It is a game whether they are learning the alphabet, spelling, fitting together a puzzle, or deciphering the verbal and visual puns of poetry. Language is thus a game of different levels, from the first stage of *L'Alphabet* to the nonsense of *Auntie's Knitting a Baby* to the more subtle tricks of *Tick Bird* and *Time is Flies.*

The publishers of *L'Alphabet* speak of the uniqueness of their book — a com-

bination alphabet book, toy, and puzzle — yet such a book has a long tradition in English going back to the toy books of John Newbery in the eighteenth century. As an alphabet book, each page features a brightly coloured illustration for each letter and a sentence with three words explaining the nonsense illustration, for example: "Un acrobate sur un avion jongle avec des abricots." In addition, the book is accompanied by individual letters solid enough that even the youngest child is unlikely to chew his way through. These letters reverse to form two puzzles that again a young child can handle easily as they match two illustrations in the book. Thus while the publishers think that the book is suited for the three-to-eight-year-old, in reality, a younger child could enjoy parts of the game too. The virtue of *L'Alphabet* lies in its adaptability; the letters can be used to teach the alphabet, or spelling, to stimulate word games, or even storytelling, as a child is free to invent a story suggested by each illustration.

Auntie's Knitting a Baby will also appeal to a toddler with the strong rhythm of its poetry and silliness of its rhymes. The appeal here is primarily to the ear, for the illustrations are black and white and do not add anything to the child's experience. Interspersed are eleven poems on auntie and her feeble attempts to knit baby clothes during her pregnancy. The baby's birth is reported in #9 and his first words in #11: " 'Mama's a *terrible* knitter.' " There are also several poems on Mary McBickle who choked on a pickle, and many on animals including several on cruelty to snakes. In "Haunted" the ghost of the murdered snake returns to accuse the speaker:

> 'Oh why did you kill me, you nasty big brute,
> When I was so little, and helpless, and cute?
> Now I'll never feel sun and I'll never eat fruit
> Or talk to a newt, but you don't give a hoot,'

With such rhymes and rhythm, the moral lesson is secondary to the poem's playing with sounds. Usually written from the child's point of view, the poems celebrate the mild lunacy of family life, trips to the seashore, hostile feelings, arithmetic tests, pets, family fights, crazy uncles, and other family oddballs: Grandfather Gilly standing on his head; the brother who is afraid of germs; the father who turns the house upside down when he writes a poem:

> Hurry hurry find a pencil,
> Father's got a poem;
> Run fast and get some paper,
> Turn down the telephone.
>
> When a poem comes on Dad
> He's always lost the writing pad,
> And if the poem gets away
> Father mopes and sulks for days

Unlike *Auntie's Knitting a Baby*, the poetry of George Swede is definitely intended for an older, more skilled reader, whether child or adult. Swede claims that the poems in *Tick Bird* were not written specially for children. He only suspected a child audience after his own sons "memorized some of the haiku and rhymed poems." Many of his poems demand visual sophistication as in the short "M SS NG" with its one line "Thiiief!" In his title poem Swede revises the cliché time flies: "For the fat green frog / crouched on the log / time is flies" — a joke captured in the cover illustration. Many of the poems in *Tick Bird* have the abstraction and static quality of haiku, and I suspect, although this may be stereotyping, that children will prefer the more obvious visual games in *Time is Flies* as in the three poems about the canyon climber, skiing, and the ant climbing a skyscraper. Such poems alert the child reader to concepts of poetic

form in a more active way than with the shaped stillness of haiku. All children have an inborn rhythm and curiosity about language that makes them natural poetry lovers. It is unfortunate that we as adults forget that until we are surprised and educated by the responses of our own children.

ADRIENNE KERTZER

GROUND OF BEING

ANNE SZUMIGALSKI, *Instar, Poems and Stories.* Red Deer College Press, n.p.

KRISTJANA GUNNARS, *The Night Workers of Ragnarők.* Porcépic, n.p.

THESE TWO BOOKS remind us that the world of nature, constantly present as ground-of-being for the "peasant," is rarely an experienced reality for the upper middle class. "Peasants" live by necessity as part of nature. For them the sensous and intellectual details of survival are a constant essential concern. Even weather is a matter of life and death. Exhaustion, hunger, sickness are as mundane as cooking. Hard work is normal. These assumptions underlie Gunnars' verse; they form her "world." And the "peasant" tends to be culturally conservative, clinging to that which has been proved valuable. Thus "peasant" societies take their seers and sayers seriously and expect them to speak to and for them. Education may distance the poet from her roots, but it can not wholly deracinate nor con it wholly devalue the original values, the abiding sense of the necessary and the natural. Thus Gunnars, one of our best-educated poets, is one of our most traditional.

The upper middle class, however, can be distanced from the vicissitudes of living as part of nature: by money, by technology, by servants. Servants are part of the "world" of Szumigalski's poetry, but they, and the working class generally, are viewed as from a distance. Nature, for the upper middle class and in Szumigalski's poetry, becomes like weather: something that happens outdoors — a source of imagery but not something wholly lived in or by. The hardships of poverty, made unfamiliar, become exotic — a source of imagery and of social concern, but not of personal concern. And although members of the upper middle class are often politically conservative, they are not necessarily culturally conservative. The traditionalist assumptions of the "peasant" are replaced by "cultivation." So that literature, too, becomes a source of decorative imagery. (Thus the effect of Szumigalski's epigraphs from Blake — which make a decorative Art Nouveau effect out of what was in Blake politically serious, work-and-nature-conscious verse.) Poetry becomes primarily art rather than teaching, prophecy, or voice-of-the-people, and is expected to be reasonably fashionable, preferably slightly avant-garde, not oppressively serious.

Anne Szumigalski's poetry is, indeed, enlivening. She avoids "issues," characterization, drama, and introspection. Her imagery is more sketchy than sensuous, and is often mildly bizarre, after the fashion of an undisturbing dream. And she works at very low poetic intensities, preferring to deflate her *donnée* rather than intensify or expand it. In "The Swarm" a potentially nightmarish image (a swarm of bees alighting on a girl's head) is introduced to us as just a dream, is described as being experienced as a noise no more frightening than "the humming of the sea" (much as one might hear in a sea-shell), and is easily dismissed:

> *another one of those*
> the girl thinks
> another bee dream
> just that

Similarly "Burning the Stubble" brack-

ets its nightmare image — baracks of soldiers destroyed "from within," left to rot for a week, and now being burned by citizens for fear of epidemics, but from which unreasonably but dreamily pull "hot skeletons" — with soothing comparisons to the burning off of stubble in a field in fall. The poem begins:

> travelling toward the city at night
> we remark five brilliant fires
> burning in the west suburbs
>
> it's like when we were children in the country

describes a long winter that covers the rubble with snow, and concludes:

> by spring not one of us remembers
> that the foundation of every hill
>
> is a heap of charred fragments

Such forgetting would not be possible in Gunnars' world. But Szumigalski is not talking here about either farm labour or the disasters of war. She is describing the effect of fading memory that waking up has upon most dreams. Although Szumigalski shares Susan Musgrave's fondness for such surrealist images, with their possible unpleasant suggestions, and shares also Musgrave's unwillingness to explore dream imagery, Szumigalski's deflating tactics make her images less nightmarish than Musgrave's.

Gunnars is the more traditional poet, her subjects major, emotions strong, and images organic. In Gunnars' work even dreaming is closely related to waking life, to work, and to nature. Gunnars discovers for us new perceptions by juxtaposing disparate but emotionally suggestive images, whose sources are natural, social, factual. Instead of deflating her *données*, she prefers to expand them towards larger ranges of resonance and suggestion. Szumigalski's "Burning the Stubble," deflating its central metaphor, denies the reality of both the nightmare/war image and the image of agricultural labour. But Gunnars' "night workers" which is also about a fire, ends by affirming the value of human effort (and its commitment to rebuild the past — its memory) and enlarges the image to show human social virtues as natural, as one with the diurnal motion of the earth:

> the electricians and machinists
> hand to hand, before and after
> the flame of midnight they keep on
> After the fire, they say
> she'll be rowing again in three mornings
> because they stay
> gutting away the burnt insides
> and replacing day with day

Gunnars' *The Night Workers of Ragnarök* is, like her previous books, a collection of poem cycles. For Gunnars, a "cycle" is either a sequence or a carefully arranged group of poems on a central topic. Generally the first poem of any of Gunnars' "cycles" introduces the theme, the central poems vary or develop it, and the closing poem speaks some sense of completion or, often, affirmation. In the title cycle Gunnars works with technical data and curent issues, juxtaposing journalistic clarities with poetic emotion and with expressions of a sense of the wholeness of nature. Despite the inevitable awkwardness of such an approach, and such a political (environmentalist, pacifist) subject, the cycle as a whole is nical data and current issues, juxtaposing very fine, and some of the individual poems in it are exquisite. The most consistently fine cycles are MILKY WAY VEGETATION I and MILKY WAY VEGETATION II. In these Gunnars develops the theme of "near" and "far" — the "blue felwort" of the bogs and the "ellipsoidal clouds" of the galaxies. The paired metaphor grows to include the full richness and ambivalence of experienced life — freedom and boundaries, the mingled sense of wholeness and alienation — but such abstractions can not do justice to the subtleties of her writing (nor can a short review).

The penultimate poem of the second cycle has brought the metaphor of doubleness to this point:

> even while the blue and red summer nights say yes
> yes
>
> the black sands follow me
> the lowlands extend barren
> newly-poured lava flows down the gullet of hope
>
> and there is continuous no on the wings of the gulls

The solidity of the affirmation which concludes the cycle (life is a "glowing object"), and serves as conclusion for the pair of cycles, depends for its meaning on the poems that precede it, and can not be summed up or paraphrased. These cycles, as poetic experience, convince. This is the sort of poetry one likes to memorize.

M. TRAVIS LANE

BOGART'S FLQ

WAYNE TEFS, *The Cartier Street Contract.* Turnstone Press, $9.95.

WAYNE TEF'S SECOND novel labours under the legend upon which its contemporary incidents are fastened. One result is an unfortunate simplification and repetition of character, and an almost cartoon thinness of the primary action. The actual FLQ crisis of 1970 is a mere catalytic sub-text to the legendary romance of Tristan and Iseult which underlays the contemporary story. The simplification is also reflected in some unfortunate characters, behaviour, and reflections, which read as emphatically typical rather than as original, or even distinctive. The effect is that of an ABC fictional primer featuring the elements but no range of advanced study.

Tristan Patrick Coffey, raised in Dublin and Vancouver on the leadingly named Vulcan and Pandora streets, has a rough upbringing and, of course, an abusive father. He characterizes himself repeatedly as a taker, and bases his dreams of achievement in a better world on Humphrey Bogart's movies. The novel's other lead, Mark Heisler, is an artist by nature from Red Rock, Ontario, with a philistine father who, of course, gruffly accedes to his son's scholarship before the boy leaves a sentimental reconciliation by train. Such details may suggest the persistently stereotypical difficulties of *The Cartier Street Contract.*

In his travels east Tristan is rescued from Indians by an American post-hippie poet, Milton, whose work is heavily derivative of Whitman and Ginsberg. As Tristan flies from his sordid background, so Milton is fleeing the bad scene of America; he carries a picture of the eventual leading lady, Isabelle, who Tristan, true to type, falls for as "Madonna and Siren." She is an image, an important distinction in the novel, for most of its characters act for images, or perform as one — another aspect of consistent superficiality. Mark, too, as a peripheral artist in Montreal, is chasing the image of a vanished adolescent love, and Isabelle predictably becomes the new epitome of her for him.

Mark is unceasingly prone to self-pity, and identifies his artistic failure as one equally of passion. He has an articulately obsessive self-image, and seems to relish repeated masochistic self-accusation. He is once too truly called a corny romantic but, like the legend, Tristan's uncle Mark becomes Iseult's lover as well. Isabelle is apparently the sex-slave of Renald, a callous bad person who is the militant within the FLQ's local Action Cell. He is the mean ogre with his captive princess, a fairytale parallel which also indicates this novel's adherence to blatant stereotypicality. Renald epitomizes the kind of power that the ideologues resist in Que-

bec; it is he, of course, who turns out to be Captain Renaud, leader of the government forces.

It is a jargon-riddled adherent of the Cell, Jackie, who speaks of the dispossession of the Quebeçois and of the common man, who is seen as exploited by the "handmaidens of American imperialism." The novel highlights sermons by this and another character: indeed, political lectures, dialogue, and debates are part of the seductions, here rhetorical and elsewhere physical, which the plot repeats.

Tristan's persistent sense that his is in a game directed against himself is, of course, borne out. Though to himself he is the "Pandora Kid," the tough guy, he unwittingly aids the FLQ arming. That the first time he sees Isabelle she "had twisted my heart into a knot" says everything about, and may stand for, the relative sophistication of emotions in the novel. The infatuation with image is inescapable. As Tristan's workmate Serge is a magician, so the art of illusion is a firm metaphor for most of the action. Appropriately, Tristan's Bogart-inspired dream of revenge against the cruel Renald becomes frustrating melodramatic futility in practice.

Once Mark has identified the way the FLQ used his and Tristan's innocence, and after the love of a Good Woman, he turns from self-criticism to act as a self-sacrificing white knight: "They had underestimated my foolhardiness." His rescue of the maiden and the young lovers' flight is soap-operatic though apparently positive: in the end, "though he knew he sentimentalized defeat and failure, he accepted them as the field of his accomplishment and he welcomed them." Conversely, it is too metaphorically apt that in their escape West the lovers see Paladin on the television, the knight without armour in a savage land. Tristan and Isabelle enter Paradise on Vancouver Island; he affirms, "My heart is filled with joyful dominion over life" as well as "unabashed love," and their romantic eternity is assured.

Though *The Cartier Street Contract* would like to show the relationship of public and private worlds in a time of political crisis, the romantic commitment dominates, and the heart-stricken outweigh the historical actualities. The loyalties and betrayals which mean to reflect the one-time political reality appear too self-centred to mirror effectively and dramatically that larger ferment. The novel's potential is weakened by the characters' cardboard dimension and virtually unallayed repetitiveness. The familiar and the conventional, in literary terms, do not speak often or directly enough of reactionary horrors. John Mills' *The October Men*, in contrast, is a humbugging parody of the tough-guy thriller, a self-contained and facetious comment on the serious action of 1970 which does not try to bridge the real with the typical. *The Cartier Street Contract* reads like an impure, unresolved form, at this distance from its occasional documentary faithfulness to what must have been.

LOUIS K. MACKENDRICK

PROFESSOR T

TOM MARSHALL, *Glass Houses*. Oberon, $12.95.

TOM MARSHALL'S COLLECTION of interrelated short stories is a substantial improvement on his first book of fiction, the novel *Rosemary Goal*. In at least some of the stories the writing is crisper, the whimsy less pervasive, and the style more assured. A delicate urbane wit plays over the material, resulting in some wryly humorous observations and interchanges concerning the glass houses that reveal our inner selves while inhibiting any intimate contact. But these stories are

memorable more for their elegance than their insight — his brittle wit keeps the characters hidden. Most of his characters are going through assorted upheavals in their relationships, generally with those of the opposite sex, but although we occasionally catch glimpses of the terror in their inner lives, the curtain is quickly drawn again. The characters are rarely convincing; more memorable are single lines and brief interchanges, as the following between Harold Brunt and his ex-wife Rosemary from "The Revenge of Rosemary Goal":

> "I think we're just two very different people," he said, "with different needs."
>
> "Of course. But *deeper* than that."
>
> "I suppose at some deep level the human species is one," he offered.
>
> "Yes. Blake would have agreed. At the deepest level. But *shallower* than that."
>
> "That's the level I could never get a fix on," he said.

But while the economy of style is delightful, I need to remind myself that these are actually two people talking to each other.

The stories are loosely related to Marshall's novel, with his protagonist Harold Brunt from *Rosemary Goal* narrating one story and much of another. Harold has separated from Rosemary, and they are both living in Toronto. Harold is writing moderately successful novels, while his ex-wife is taking Toronto by storm with her erotic art. "The Story of T," opens the book, with T, a five-year-old delinquent child, harassing his neighbour Professor T. Besides allusions to the author himself, Mr. T also comes to mind, no doubt a role model for the aggressive boy. But Professor T, from whose point of view the story is told, is restricted by his own values from entering the life of the delinquent or his family, and his limitations become limitations of the story. This is still the most successful story in the collection; Marshall stated recently that it was originally conceived as a poem, and it is those stories which are closest to poetry in their style and economy that are most successful. The more discursive, like "Strawberry Fields: Robert and Nancy," degenerate into maudlin soap opera, with the heroine dying tragically of Hodgkins disease.

The long story (over fifty pages) which closes the book echoes the first story in its juxtaposition of contrasting characters, and brings the lives of Harold Brunt and others to something resembling a resolution. Harold visits the Toronto islands to escape the summer heat, and meets there his former student and lover Barbara Tweed. Together with an elderly neighbour Mrs. Cornice and her lover Hector, they establish a community (another Troy?) which becomes a desirable alternative to the drifting of their previous lives. At the end of the story they are temporarily joined by Brunt's ex-wife, her black lover, her daughter and her Jewish boy-friend to form a group that will "stand for multicultural Canada." These are new heights of contrivance, even for this book. While this story has moments of pleasant wit, it ends in bathos when the valiant Island residents resist the city authorities (invading Greeks?) who want to expropriate their houses. Within the space of a page Harold Brunt compares himself to King Lear, Cyclops, David, and Jack the Giant Killer. All the gratuitous quotations and mythical references serve less to dignify their efforts than to render them ridiculous by comparison. The happy comic ending, with Barbara agreeing to marry Harold as they are all trucked off to jail in a paddy wagon, rings hollow.

No doubt the final story is meant to indicate an acceptance of life's variety which was absent from the opening story, which in turn indicates progress on the part of Harold Brunt, who is in most ways another version of Professor

T. But the acceptance is unconvincing because the style is often on the verge of self-parody, still not capable of evoking the more "earthy" characters Mrs. Cornice and Hector. Marshall's prose occasionally sparkles with wit and intelligence, but generally a dour melancholy pervades the book that inhibits its emotional range. His glass houses need a few well-placed stones to explode their glittering surfaces, and perhaps get some real blood flowing.

FRANCIS MANSBRIDGE

WHALES AND CROWNS

GLORIA MONTERO, *The Summer the Whales Sang*. James Lorimer, $5.95.

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON, *Apple Staff and Silver Crown: A Fairy Tale*. Porcupine's Quill, $12.95.

THESE TWO VERY different books — both by veteran writers — have nonetheless some points in common. Gloria Montero, who is best known for her non-fiction works on immigration and the labour movement, has written an easy-reading adventure story aimed at ten- to fourteen-year-old readers. Nancy-Lou Patterson, whose writings include lyric poetry and studies of native Indian culture, has written a fantasy about castles, wizards, and princesses — rather for personal than commercial reasons. Very different in their aims and accomplishments, these books have similarities in their weaknesses.

The Summer the Whales Sang tells the story of thirteen-year-old Vivi Aguirre from London, Ontario. Her mother, a socially-astute career woman, takes Vivi with her to Labrador for the summer, while the mother helps to film the archaeological uncovery of a Basque whaling village. Vivi's father, a Basque immigrant — who has never really adjusted to life in Canada — leaves Vivi and her mother to look for work in Western Canada as the story opens. The real focus of the book is Vivi's attempts (as a fairly typical Ontario teenager) to come to terms with her Basque heritage (and, therefore, with her father). The rest of the plot is fairly simple (with similarities to a Harlequin Romance) with its remote setting, its heroine hostile to her new surroundings, and her gradual attraction to a boy whom she initially dislikes.

The author tells the story through Vivi's eyes using almost a stream-of-consciousness technique. For a book concerned with the search for roots it is impeccably contemporary in style. Emotion is conveyed through rather heavy-handed description, as when Vivi notices her mother's tear: "It looked like a raindrop on a windshield, and I wanted to see if it would stay all perfect and round like that until it got to her chin." Elsewhere, a quote from T. S. Eliot is dragged in kicking and screaming. The stream-of-consciousness approach works against very clear definition of character, and, sometimes, we catch different characters talking in the same tones. Nonetheless, the book is easy to read and well adapted to the contemporary teenager. According to Laurie Young, a student from Newfoundland, the locale and atmosphere of Labrador are well described. One's final judgment on *The Summer the Whales Sang* may depend on how convincing the reader finds life on a sixteenth-century Basque whaler. (This, incidentally, provides the opportunity for a description of traditional whaling techniques.) It is this dream which allows Vivi to come to terms with her father and his heritage. My own opinion is that the ruse works: the author is generally successful in her attempts to combine instruction with entertainment.

In sharp contrast to this contemporary context is the loving craftsmanship and personal vision of *Apple Staff and Silver Crown*. The book itself is meant to be a work of art, using Aldus type, good paper, and abundant illustrations by the author. Nancy-Lou Patterson is a liturgical artist and both her illustrations and story have some of the attractive, yet static, qualities of heraldic art. The story concerns Prince Garth (age fifteen), heir to the crown, and the scrubgirl Irmengarde (age thirteen), whose history is mysterious. The reader follows the quite separate adventures of this pair through forty-seven chapters (and several years) until all the threads of this tapestry are woven together. Each chapter presents a picture, such as a wall-hanging might show, but the plot is probably too slow and weak to attract a teenage audience. The author also uses a technical and antiquarian vocabulary (words such as "crenellations," "lampions," and "rowels"), which might discourage the younger reader. On the other hand this layering of unfamiliar words is used effectively not only to evoke the distant past, but also to conjure up a supernatural atmosphere. All the strange and mysterious figures in the book — witches, wizards, talking animals, and royalty — are carefully described and fitted into the larger picture.

Just as a stream-of-consciousness approach can result in banalty, so stressing the fantastic can promote inconsequence. In *Apple Staff and Silver Crown* the mountain labours and a mouse is born. On page 66 Irmengarde meets a unicorn who is introduced with notable pomp. On page 86 the unicorn dies, only to briefly reappear at the end of the book. On page 82 Prince Garth falls asleep on an island, and then awakes to find himself in a coracle out at sea. There is little development of plot — only a series of episodes.

At the core of this book is supernaturalism and the occult world. Generally speaking, the wizards, shamanesses, and other denizens of this fourth dimension are wise, attractive, helpful, and benevolent. But when Irmengarde dreams that she has her throat cut, her flesh is cut up piece by piece, and she is boiled in a cauldron, while her skeleton awaits the results, the witchery seems merely oppressive. At a time when every sizable community in North America has its coven of witches, its quota of psychics, its churches of Satanists and spiritualists, and its cults of the occult, not everyone will relish the atmosphere of this book. But, the care and skill in the author's use of language and in the design of this book will likely attract "fit audience — though few."

KEVIN MCCABE

MONTREAL'S FORGOTTEN

DAVID FENNARIO & DANIEL ADAMS, *Blue Mondays*. Black Rock Creations, $9.95.

PAUL-ANDRE LINTEAU, *The Promoters' City: Building the Industrial Town of Maisonneuve, 1883-1918*. Trans. Robert Chodos. James Lorimer, $14.95.

I HIGHLY RECOMMEND both these books; and what is more, I recommend the experience of reading them together. Although one is a meticulously researched history of urban development at the turn of the century and the other an impressionistic account of being down and out in 1970, they have in common Montreal as their setting and the revision of stereotyped views of Quebec culture as their intention. These books challenge the reductive notion of Montreal as a battleground between English industrialists and French workers. Linteau's history makes

a convincing case that Quebec's French bourgeoisie contained a significant and successful minority of industrialists and developers. At the other end of the ethno-economic spectrum, *Blue Mondays* is an eloquent curse from the mouths of a forgotten people, the English working class of Montreal.

The Promoters' City—which, incidentally, was awarded the Canadian Historical Association's Sir John A. Macdonald prize in 1982 for the French-language edition — studies the part played by francophone businessmen in building the small rural township of Maisonneuve into the leading industrial suburb of Montreal between 1883 and 1918. Linteau presents his story as a case history in the study of a wider process: "The kind of urbanization that Maisonneuve underwent was repeated — with some variation, of course — in many other Quebec towns. . . . The town's course was clearly determined by a handful of developers, of whom a majority were French Canadians." These developers, who were essentially speculators in "land capital," seized control of the town council and vigorously pursued what today would be called an industrial strategy. Their aim was to transform land into money by attracting industry to a rural suburb of Montreal. To that end, they developed transportation links, public utilities, and "more accommodating regulatory structures" that succeeded magnificently in luring factories — especially from the polluting industries. There was, not unexpectedly, nothing free about this exercise in free enterprise. As town councillors, the developers practised government intervention by voting cash grants and twenty-year tax holidays to themselves and their fellow businessmen. The development and the profits were paid for by the workers — directly in the form of taxes, and indirectly in terms of appalling living conditions. The workers lived in dwellings that they rented from, you guessed it, the developers: "Because so few workers were homeowners, they had little control over political life and thus over their environment."

So successful were these French-Canadian businessmen that within twenty years Maisonneuve achieved an industrial output that ranked second in Quebec and fifth in Canada. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines trumpeted Maisonneuve as "The Pittsburgh of Canada." The developers' next step — which contributed to the town's eventual bankruptcy and annexation by Montreal in 1918 — was the launching of an ambitious beautification plan, a "politique de grandeur." Huge bond issues were floated to construct grand boulevards, Maisonneuve Park, and marvellous public buildings that stand to this day (including a fire station modelled on Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple!).

For me, the most useful of the many challenging conclusions advanced by *The Promoters' City* is Linteau's assertion that "the Quebec ideological scene was far from being monolithic." The dominant clerical-nationalist thinking was opposed by a significant minority of French businesmen who embraced the liberal ideology of progress long before Pierre Trudeau. They rejected the determinism that "French Canadians had a natural predisposition for agriculture and that preserving this basic cultural trait was necessary to ensure their survival." At a time when Maria Chapdelaine was following voices that beckoned from the land, others were pursuing, quite successfully, the call of industrial progress.

Blue Mondays also gives voice to a significant minority whose history has remained largely unheard: the English working class of Montreal. This book is a collaborative effort published by the Black Rock Group — a bunch of "shit-disturbers born down there in the Point

Saint-Charles-Verdun ghetto," the prologue tells us, who base themselves "on the last hope that what's left of the Anglo community can be salvaged and made useful to itself despite itself. . . ." *Blue Mondays* consists of a journal by David Fennario that covers the period between October 1969 and March 1970; it is intercut with twenty-six poems by Daniel Adams and twelve illustrations by Sheila Salmela. The work of these three artists is strikingly complementary, though not uniformly successful. The poems I found sometimes too given to the piling up of fragmented images, and at other times too flat and thin in their direct, unadorned assertions. The best of them, however, can not only stand on their own as moving testimonies to working class life, but also capture subjective states of mind that complete the objective account of conditions recorded in Fennario's journal. The illustrations are brown washes that suggest an exhausted landscape; the faces of the people are desolate and impenetrable, drained of inner resources and hope. The illustrations are perhaps too empty on occasion: certainly they convey little of the redemptive energy of Fennario's prose or the political will of Adams' poetry. Nonetheless, they are haunting and unsentimental evocations of the desperate realities of life in the Point. Given the Black Rock Group's politics, it would have been appropriate to give Salmela equal billing on the cover.

Fennario's journal is based on writing he did during a period that pre-dates the journal he published as *Without A Parachute* in 1974. I say "based on" because it is not a diary; in fact this journal reads more like an autobiographical novel. Certainly it is more thematically focused than the collection of tales, musings, and observations that comprise his first effort in this genre. There are, indeed, passages in *Blue Mondays* that appeared previously in *Without A Parachute*. Either we have art here, or a diarist who plagiarizes himself. The former is clearly the case, for in addition to a compelling voice, *Blue Mondays* serves up life that has been shaped into affecting rhythms and concentrated into revealing patterns.

Much of the writing traces Fennario's working life in various warehouses and shipping rooms; it documents the experience that he drew on for his first play, *On the Job*. But that experience is only part of his controlling purpose: to tell the story of a generation of working class youths that, after the rock and roll revolution, in the "last dying dead period of the Flower-Power scene," was unable to resume a comfortable middle-class life at McGill. The birthright of these young people is revealed as poverty and impoverishment; they inherit a choice between unemployment and welfare, or jobs that crush the body and the spirit. Too many of Fennario's generation ended up in jail, crazy on drugs and booze, or just plain dead. It is a notable achievement of the writing that this sad tale is given a generative history. Fennario's (and Adams') attention to parents and grandparents portrays the present as the latest chapter in a story of English working class life in Montreal that stretches back to the period dealt with by Linteau in his book. In a very interesting way, then, these two books connect with and complement each other. Both *The Promoters' City* and *Blue Mondays* are valuable contributions not only to the individual discourses of history and literature, but also to the more fruitful discourse that embraces all the languages and forces of cultural history.

LARRY MCDONALD

ROMAN À KEY

ANNA PORTER, *Hidden Agenda.* Irwin, $19.95.

ANNA PORTER'S FIRST novel might well be described as a *roman à clef*, a novel where those in the know can identify settings, events, or characters and share in the author's joke. Certainly much of the action is based on Porter's intimate knowledge of the book industry which she developed in her years first with Collier Macmillan and then with McClelland and Stewart as Assistant and later Vice-President. The Toronto publishers Fitzgibbon and Harris are clearly modelled on McClelland and Stewart, and George Harris who sadly dies on the first page is tantalizingly similar to Jack McClelland (several reviewers mourned the loss of the most interesting character so early in the novel). Porter's new venture with her husband, Key Porter Books, also has supplied some material.

Modelled on fiction by such spy writers as Helen MacInnes, Porter's lively plot involves the revelation of an international conspiracy to end the confrontation with Russia and merge East and West. The *BREAD* manuscript, Better Read Than Dead, has, we come to discover quite late, been offered to three publishers: Toronto's Fitzgibbon and Harris, New York's Axel Books and London's Hamilton Thornbush. The manuscript in the company records is designated "Untitled" and the author as X. The sudden deaths of the three publishing moguls almost simultaneously, George Harris in Toronto, Max Grafstein in New York, and Eric Sandwell in London, by supposed accident, heart attack, and stroke respectively, spark the interest of the two protagonists, Judith Hayes and Marsha Hillier, and lead to their embroilment in international politics.

The early chapters develop the lives of the two women. Judith, thirty-eight, divorced and with two children, is a freelance journalist who has assessed manuscripts for Fitzgibbon and Harris and who is currently writing an article on Harris, assigned just before his death. Marsha, a school friend of Judith, is in the upper echelons of yet a fourth publishing company, also in New York. We share Judith's ruminations on her thirty-eighth birthday, her reminiscences on her ex-husband, and her discussions with Marsha both of all their lovers past and present. In this the book seems to follow the pattern of much recent fiction where the protagonists, women in middle age, seek an identity both personal and professional. This section seems realistic; its tone is light and often wryly comic. Through Marsha, Porter reveals her knowledge of the fascinating world at the top of the publishing trade. We see her dealing with writers, editors, secretaries, and advertising people, skipping back and forth among Toronto, New York, and London, all in the space of a week or so. She is a Yuppie who of course glows with health and jogs whether she is home in New York or hotelling in London.

Porter's original title "Dance of the Marionettes" appears in the novel as the title of a book Marsha is championing in the British Market, a certain best-seller which "takes no risks, exposes no new theories . . . The characters are forgettable . . . I don't recall where it takes place." It is not surprising that Irwin objected and substituted "Hidden Agenda," extracted from an obscure passage where Marsha in London and Judith in New York edit their telephone conversation for wire-tappers. One of the in-references is clearly to Aritha van Herk's *Judith*, winner of the First Seal Award, a novel which Porter published. Marsha describes one of her offerings as "a wonderful little story set on a pig-farm in Saskatchewan. It's magnificently written

though . . . An extraordinary novel, a perceptive and talented writer." The locale is moved east by one province but the rest of the commentary fits. One of the best scenes in the novel is the description of George Harris's funeral, attended by two rows of honorary pall-bearers, all authors of Fitzgibbon and Harris and sitting "the closest they had ever sat to one another," still ruminating over who was getting the most attention and "whose advertising budget had been cancelled."

Grafted onto these parallel narratives of two professional women and their private and public lives is a spy thriller. This combination leads to a certain unevenness in the novel and perhaps an ambiguity of intent. It is hard to believe that the world may be destroyed if the *BREAD* manuscript is not revealed so that politicians in the United States and Britain may make an informed choice. The machinery of the plot is ingenious but somewhat laboured. The strong forward pull of the suspense plays against what for me is the real interest of the novel, the personal and professional lives of Judith and Marsha.

The conclusion of the novel must take account of these three separate streams of narrative. The spy plot ends in a manner both original and anti-climactic. Mr. X, appearing to Marsha as "The Dealer," withdraws his offer to publish the *BREAD* manuscript through her company. The conspiracy has been released to the *New York Times* but the documentation is lost. Marsha sheds her married lover. Judith is reunited with her Detective, and finally Fitzgibbon and Harris is sold by Harris Junior to the Canadian firm of Douglas and McIntyre (shades of Macmillan and MacLean-Hunter Publications?). The novel is a good read. We look forward to Porter's next work.

CATHERINE MCLAY

AQUINIANA

JACQUES ALLARD, ed. *Éditer Hubert Aquin, Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français,* 10 (Summer-Autumn 1985). Éditions de l'Univ. d'Ottawa, $25.00.

JACINTHE MARTEL, *Bibliographie analytique d'Hubert Aquin 1947-1982, Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français,* 7 (Winter-Spring 1984). $25.00.

GORDON SHEPPARD & ANDRÉE YANACOPOULO, *Signé Hubert Aquin: Enquête sur le suicide d'un écrivain.* Éditions du Boréal Express, $18.95.

LEILA CHELLABI, *L'Infini, côté coeur.* Alain Stanké, n.p.

THE STUDY OF THE LIFE and works of Hubert Aquin has taken two lengthy steps forward recently, with the publication, on the one hand, of two volumes of methodological and bibliographical reports, providing guides to using the archives of EDAQ (Édition critique d'Hubert Aquin) by giving some sense of their content, provenance, and utility, and supplying, in two installments (1947-1982 in *RHLQCF* 7, and 1983-1984 in *RHLQCF* 10), a bibliography of both primary and secondary material likely to prove definitive. And on the other, *Signé Hubert Aquin,* an "inquest" or "inquiry" into Aquin's suicide, which, while more critically problematic, supplies, almost incidentally, the most substantial biographical account yet available to general readers, those unlikely to be able to drop in on EDAQ's well-stocked Montreal archives.

One can only marvel at the extent and thoroughness of Jacinthe Martel's bibliography of over fourteen hundred items, most of which are briefly but usefully annotated. She lists all works identified as being by Aquin, whether published or unpublished, including completed MSS., notes, sketches, and fragments of novels (ranging in length from less than a page to fifty pages), TV scripts (télédrames), film scripts and

radio dramas, mostly unpublished and some no longer locatable, in addition to interviews and much uncollected journalism. Most of these 400 items EDAQ is editing for publication or re-publication, according to Martel's progress report. The two hundred and fifty biographical items consist largely of newspaper articles covering the major pubilc events in Aquin's life and death, while reviews illuminate the strikingly variable reception of Aquin's work in Canada and its limited, almost wholly negative, reception in France.

One's impression that *Prochain épisode* — evidently because of its historical context and its (variously interpreted) political import — has had a greater (or at least a wider) impact than any of Aquin's other three novels is amply confirmed by a count of the articles: two hundred of the six hundred secondary listings concern it, while the later three novels claim only a hundred and fifty altogether. This disproportion is if anything slightly more marked in the update, even though by 1983-1984 one might expect interest to have shifted towards his less overtly political but even more problematical post-modernist novels.

In *Éditer Hubert Aquin* Jacques Allard has collected, together with the updating of the Martel bibliography, several essays and reports on the current state of EDAQ's major project, the critical edition of Aquin's works. The most substantial critical essay in this volume is Nicole Bedard's on "L'Invention de la mort," seemingly the most interesting of the *inédits*, to go by her intriguing account of its links with Aquin's later works. It is Aquin's first novel (1959); having twice rejected and neither rewritten nor subsequently re-submitted, it is the only completed but unpublished one. Its publication would, Bedard suggests, give a new shape to Aquin's whole oeuvre, making a coherent trajectory linking the Quartier Latin material of Aquin's student days with the major published works, including the final fragment, the posthumously published "Obombre," in an arc of concern with "le rapport de l'homme au sacré" or "cette question de l'homme livré à la plus grande solitude." This view of Aquin's work frames in a philosophical matrix (which he acquired in the course of his largely overlooked "formation philosophique") his more familiar highly formalist aesthetic. This essay indeed suggests that the most important revision to current views of Aquin is one requiring a careful coming to grips with the elements, oblique, ironic, inverted, to be sure (the comparison with Baudelaire is partially apt), of Aquin's religious, even mystical, beliefs and attitudes.

Martel attempts to summarize the present state of research, with suggestions for future directions, in her essay "Où en sont nos connaissances sur Hubert Aquin?"; she notes the early and continuing prevalance of criticism on Aquin and the Baroque, often in the context of Umbert Eco and "l'oeuvre ouverte," of cinematic (rather than Hamletic) elements in *Neige noire*; one could add that the frequent comparisons made in the 1970's between Aquin and Réjean Ducharme have been succeeded by, in the 1980's, virtually no comparisons of Aquin with other Quebec authors. Martel asks for more accounts of intellectual influences on Aquin, of intertextuality in the novels, of autobiographical elements, of *mise en abyme*, of the Hamlet theme.

Several items in the bibliography itself suggest starting points for the further study of Aquin's Hamlet: a few pages of Aquin's sketch for a TV production of *Hamlet*, with a "traduction" of unspecified extent, some of his notes on Hamlet and Oedipus, and a McGill thesis, unfortunately "non localisée," on "Aquin, faussaire d'Hamlet." Chantal de

Grandpré, wearing her other hat of defender of Québec literary nationalism, is unlikely to approve of this particular emphasis: she had already objected (*Liberté*, June 1985) to the translation of the title *Neige noire* as *Hamlet's Twin*, on the grounds that it smacks of the appropriation of Aquin by the Anglo-Canadian branch of the English literary tradition.

Various answers to Martel's pleas are suggested by her colleagues: Chantal de Grandpré, reporting on her work with the "Biochronologie" (largely put together from evidence found in the correspondence suggests the means by which autobiographical components in the fiction may eventually be identified. Meanwhile, work on the marginalia, leading to eventual publication of the titles in Aquin's personal library, with indications of his own annotations on them, offers the prospect of forming judgments about intellectual milieu, philosophical and literary influences, and intertextuality, although all this material is seen in the first instance as fodder for the annotations (the scope and audience for which Bernard Beugnot discusses in an interesting essay on editorial problems), which are now proceeding apace, of texts for EDAQ's critical editions. If the schedule of publication is adhered to, we should in 1988 see editions of the *nouvelles*, of which *Geneviève* and *Les Sables mouvants* sound the most intriguing, of *Trou de mémoire*, of *L'Antiphonaire*, and of some of the media works (which, by-the-by, make up a good third of all Aquin's creative output, and pose some of the most complex, and yet largely unresolved, editorial problems); a further nine volumes are projected by 1992. Not all of Aquin's letters or journals are to be published, for two rather different reasons: they lack, on the whole, literary (as opposed to editorial) interest; they raise questions of confidentiality. (Aquin's two sons by his first marriage have expressed publicly their disapproval of the collecting of Aquin's letters.)

Andrée Yanacopoulo's summary of EDAQ holdings mentions Aquin's course notes — reminding us, incidentally, of the extent of Aquin's teaching career, work which he only undertook, it seems, from grievous financial necessity. Notes exist for courses on both seventeenth- and twentieth-century Baroque, on "Erotisme" in modern literature, on Joyce and, more surprisingly, on Balzac. Further, Yanacopoulo describes the *two* editions of *Neige noire*, the second of which, revised in accordance with Aquin's annotations, is now of course the one more readily available. I hope we will not have to wait until 1992 for at least a summary account of the substantive differences and their significance.

Everything seems to be in the Martel bibliography except (perhaps) a UBC M.A. thesis of about ten years ago, and, rather more oddly and inconveniently, the extremely useful reports published in the EDAQ Bulletins themselves, of which four had been issued as of No. 10, a fifth as I write this, and probably another one or two by the time this sees print. Martel and the other contributors make frequent reference to items in the Bulletins, so that to be at all systematic about hunting up Aquiniana, one should have both *RHLQCF* volumes as well as the complete run of EDAQ Bulletins available for continual cross-reference. Providentially, the second issue of the Bulletin is itemized in the updating for 1983 of *RHLQCF*'s general bibliography of criticism on the literature of French Canada, which quite by coincidence, as far as I can tell, appears in the second half of No. 10. It lists, of course, criticism on Aquin: some fourteen items, six of which, being from EDAQ No. 2, are by definition not in Martel, while for another four (Teboul, Kroetsch, Delisle,

Arsenault) I was unable to locate the listings.

Over half of No. 10, 162 pages, is dedicated to the other concerns of *RHLQCF*, with only coincidental relevance to Aquin; No. 7 likewise devotes its first 79 pages to non-Aquinian matters. So these two wonderfully essential issues of *RHLQCF* (surely one of the most annoyingly unpronounceable acronyms in existence) both suffer from not being solely on Aquin. If these two half-volumes had been printed as one volume, the result would, in the long run, be more elegant and more consistently useful to Aquinians; in the short run, receiving the main part of EDAQ's most brilliant accomplishment to date, the Martel bibliography, somewhat earlier, has perhaps provided some tangible consolation.

There are some rather light-hearted reciprocal intrusions of art and life lurking in the bibliography: the Olympe Ghezzo-Quénum of *Trou de mémoire* clearly owes two-thirds of his name to the African writer, Olympe Bhêly-Quénum, whom Aquin interviewed for the National Film Board documentary, "A l'heure de la décolonisation" (1962). This interview, along with two others of the eight Aquin conducted, was "non utilisée" in the film, leaving one wondering if the interviews with Charles-Henri Fabrod and Octave Mannoni were "utilisées" elsewhere also. There is an early work called "L'Aquintessence" (cf. the pun on "l'Aquinat" in *L'Antiphonaire*). Conversely, the critic named 'Michael Beausang' was perhaps destined from his christening to write an article for *Canadian Literature* on music and medicine in *L'Antiphonaire*, as if the only nonexistent allegedly historical character in that book had come into existence now. But more heavy-hearted echoes come with the various renditions of Aquin's suicide, and as we turn to the principal exemplar of Aquin's life being posthumously turned into art, *Signé Hubert Aquin*, the matter becomes sombre indeed.

Almost the only major addition needed to the bibliography, to update it to the present moment, would be *Signé Hubert Aquin* itself. But proleptically, item 218, dated 17 November 1977 (eight months after Aquin's death), is Andrée Yanacopoulo's request in *Manoir-écho*, for documents relating to Aquin's suicide; one might have supposed this to be the very first ripple of intent which eventuated in this curious, rather touching, somewhat disturbing, almost too intimate volume. But of course the volume itself reveals that the intent, in one sense at least, goes back to the moment, only one week after the suicide, when Gordon Sheppard and Andrée Yanacopoulo (Aquin's widow) agreed to work together to collect material and to investigate the circumstances of Aquin's death. The request for documents, coinciding roughly with the *last* interview, in which the dating of the suicide eight months previously is referred to with conspicuous casualness, is thus an end rather than a beginning.

So the terminus *ab quo* is the suicide of Aquin on 15 March 1977. One week later Sheppard (who had been attempting to collaborate with Aquin on an elaborate scenario called, variously, "Sacrilège" or "La Reine de Pologne") began his astonishing series of interviews with Yanacopoulo which constitutes most of *Signé Hubert Aquin.* The series is interspersed with journalistic accounts of events and documents, including many by Aquin himself; the six-page text of "Obombre," for instance, is effectively placed so as to serve as a supplementary suicide note. The dating of the interviews, or even their pace or sequence within this eight-month period is (as in an Aquin novel) far from clear: considerable re-arrangement of material must

have been needed to bring out the thematic or topical ordering, although one chronological sequence, the journalistic account of the suicide itself and the events which followed, punctuates the interviews, and another, short but crucial, interrupts, with other retrospective material, the key interview, in which Andrée admits her knowledge of Aquin's affair with MM. This allows time for Sheppard to find and interview MM (offstage) and then return, to reveal slowly to Andrée how little she had really known of Aquin's affair, or of the deceit and complex infidelity it involved.

Thus in an almost Aquinian way (one reviewer has seen Sheppard as writing up these events into a kind of Aquin novel) the interview form turns in on itself to become part of the plot: an "interview-novel," not unlike the "scénario-roman" that Aquin himself composed in *Neige noire*; this reader, too, is forced to become a voyeur, as Andrée, before our eyes, discovers and is shocked and humiliated by complexities of deceit she had not known of at the time, and is gradually talked into, or persuades herself into, a growing awareness and acceptance, in the best encounter-group manner, of the degree to which *she* must accept some responsibility for the suicide. Sheppard allows himself to seem highly manipulative here; although the reviewer who described him as "Aquin's Salieri" was perhaps overstating the case, the voyeuristic reader is made distinctly uncomfortable at his enforced complicity in the manipulation. We signed up as readers, not to participate, willy-nilly, in the psycho-dramas of Aquin's survivors, but to find out something about Aquin.

And so we do. Much of the more lasting value of *Signé Hubert Aquin* lies, as I have already suggested, in its abundance of just those biographical details (the affair, Aquin's epilepsy, his blindness in one eye, etc.) which of course "everybody knew" if they moved in certain literary or academic circles in Montreal — but not otherwise, as Aquin's life has been even less readily available to the general reader than have the "lives" of other contemporary authors.

Between the death of Aquin in 1977 and the almost synchronous appearance of these two oddly contrasting yet overlapping projects (both of which tell us a good deal about the "life" as well as the "works" and vice versa), one, the sober, scholarly, methodologically oriented works from EDAQ, the other flamboyant, slightly suspect artifice-made-from-the-life, in the Aquinian manner (if not the best Aquinian manner, appeared (in 1979) Jacques Godbout's and François Ricard's widely distributed and reviewed film *Deux épisodes dans la vie d'Hubert Aquin*. In some ways the film de-mythologized Aquin, to allow room for his successors to grow out from under his shadow, but in other ways it both recapitulated the manipulative interviews (which had already taken place) and anticipated their recent publication. The film, also, largely employs the interview method, interleaving samples of Aquin's own artifice with the interrogations of all the non-geniuses of Quebec who were left battered in his wake. It must now appear to us, the reader-viewers, as a bridge between the event itself and this book about it. Whether the book is an intensified continuation of the film or a partial confrontation and refutation of it, I am not yet prepared to say. Those critics who, like Patricia Smart, commented upon the "intrusiveness" of the film are not likely to feel more warmly towards the much franker, more revelatory, book. Perhaps much of the resulting discussion could be described and assessed in words from the suicide note of another modern writer torn between politics and art, the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, who shot himself to death in

1930: "Do not blame anyone for my death and please do not gossip. The deceased terribly disliked that sort of thing."

Whether or not Aquin's suicide can be seen as having political or exemplary significance has itself become a matter for discussion. Not long after the appearance of the film, Godbout declared (in *L'Express*, December 1980), that "La suicide d'Hubert Aquin n'est pas une métaphore sur "le malheur d'écrire au Québec' "; he was replying to Yves Berger's assertion to that effect, and, as it happened, setting the scene for Chantal de Grandpré's politicized judgment upon both Anglophone and apolitical or wrongly political Quebec critics: "Laisser les Canadiens faire de [Aquin] un écrivain canadien revient à laisser son suicide servir éventuellement le cause canadienne contre celle du Québec" (*Liberté* June 1985).

Godbout's declaration, however, continues, "À moins que la mort de Romain Gary ne soit un jugement sur l'édition française," juxtaposing Aquin's name to that of yet another politically committed author, one who shot himself to death in 1980, three years after Aquin. Gary is, like Mayakovsky and Mishima and another 90 notable suicides in 'real life' or fiction, one of those to the memory of whom, "parmi tant d'autres," *Signé Hubert Aquin* is dedicated. Both Aquin and Romain Gary left their female companions to pick up the pieces of their own lives, recording the process in written memorials to the dead men and to the relationships they shared with them, accounts which inevitably stumble at the problem of defending the adequacy of the relationship, while at the same time attempting to account for the suicide of one partner to it. Leila Chellabi, whose domestic life with Romain Gary lasted a little less than two years (to Aquin's and Yanacopoulo's eleven or so), has written *L'Infini côté coeur*, a sentimental memoir about their life together, declaring its complete happiness and fulfilment, her reconciliation to Gary's decision to kill himself, and her following of a mystical path set out by a yoga scripture into a new contentment. She calls Gary 'Cyril' throughout, but as she dedicates the book to him under five of his at least six *noms de plume*, the *roman à clef* is not made too difficult of access. Gary did have some qualities in common with Aquin; although he was a much more successful man of action and a far more prolific writer, while being much less formally innovative, he did enjoy playing with masks. His curious self-impersonation as 'Emile Ajar' eventuated in a rather Aquinian suicide note called "La Vie et mort d'Emile Ajar," functionally, if not stylistically, akin to Aquin's "Obombre."

There may be some hidden message in the apparently utterly fortuitous arrival of *Signé Hubert Aquin* and *L'Infini côté coeur* on this reviewer's desk at the same moment.

PATRICIA MERIVALE

DERRIDATIVES

RAFAEL BARRETO-RIVERA, *Nimrod's Tongue*. Coach House, $8.50.

RANDA DUBNICK, *The Structure of Obscurity: Gertrude Stein, Language, and Cubism*. Univ. of Illinois Press, $19.95.

Nimrod's Tongue IS COMPOSED of four long poems. "Here It Has Rained," the first poem in Rafael Barreto-Rivera's collection, was previously published as a pamphlet in 1978 and is printed here in a slightly revised form. Some of the awkward phrases and punctuation have been changed, but no substantial alterations have been made to one of the best poems Barreto-Rivera has written. It should be impossible to discuss "Here It Has Rained" in a coherent manner, because it is written in a flood of contra-

diction, repetition, association, and agrammaticality, and to do so would be to misrepresent the text. Themes of pregnancy, a lost love, and self-reflexive writing merge into the larger context of one long, passionately charged, confusing, and heavy mood. The techniques that Barreto-Rivera uses are similar to those Gertrude Stein employed. Randa Dubnick's new book, *The Structure of Obscurity: Gertrude Stein, Language, and Cubism*, though about Stein in particular, helps elucidate the structure of much structurally obscure writing, since it is clearly written and addresses technical problems.

Dubnick identifies two distinct categories in Stein's writing: prose and poetry. Stein's prose is characterized by repeated phrases, a concentration on the verb, extended sentences replete with present participles, gerunds, and conjunctions, and a rejection of concrete or specific nouns, concentrating instead on impersonal pronouns. This type of writing is typified in *The Making of Americans*, in which Stein was trying to create the "bottom nature" of characters. Stein's poetry, as characterized by *Tender Buttons*, concentrates on the noun, often ignores verbs and sentences, and coincides with her attempt to catch the interactive moment between mind and object. Later, as in *Ida: A Novel*, Stein integrated the two styles.

The structure of "Here It Has Rained" is similar to that of Stein's integrated prose and poetry. There are concrete nouns and adjectives — "hemoglobin," "autumnal acrimonies," "ancient birdnoise," "blue metals," "lawnmowers," "rain," "pelvis," "fallopian journey," "tadpoles" — which recur throughout the poem. But most of the poem is composed of verbs and prepositional phrases. The first sentence of the text, representative in both length and content of the rest of the poem, initiates us into the process:

> like parasites clinging to a rich celestial body, choosing positions slowly, in the terror, in the hours, in the interminable terror of the hours, where we meet, where we have met, over the glassy surfaces, amid these bright corrosions of blue metals, in the haze, in the largeness, where we commingle, in the loud clamor of our autumnal acrimonies, among the last interminable exchanges, here, in the rich thick hemoglobin now transparent, unvictorious, unsurrendering, swimming subhumanly, gasping for scarce air, in this our most recent transformation, horizon looming large in these our silent seemings, where we hide, waiting, resembling acceptable structures of pitch blackness, leaving no mark upon the sunlit surfaces, song of the trees remembered like an awesome fruitless mechanism, where we hold hands now, touching feverishly, lingeringly, in fear of endless parting, conversing softly, waiting, thinking, before the blade descends, stretching out our uncomfortable departures, peering intensely into each other's eyes, as if a force much stronger than ourselves persists in pulling us apart, you and I, fat shadows, moving as we do now, as parts, parts only, in a large and fruitless mechanism not of our making.

The dominance of present participles ("clinging," "choosing") and gerunds ("unsurrendering," "moving") throughout the poem give the sense of one continuous moment. Dubnick identifies this use of tense as Stein's Cubist presentation of the present, devoid of memory. Barreto-Rivera also challenges the linear movement through the time of reading from beginning to end in this manner. The long sentences, extended with prepositional phrases ("in the haze, in the largeness") and conjunctions ("where") give the sense Dubnick describes "of the time it takes to know a person or an idea." As Barreto-Rivera says near the end of the poem, "you take shape slowly, you become you." Stein also invented the paragraphal sentence because she felt " 'Sentences are not emotional but paragraphs are . . .' " Barreto-Rivera's packed sentences certainly conjure the heavy and breathless emotion of a lost lover, a lost

pregnancy, or a lost language. Throughout the poem, such phrases as "we survive, parts, parts only," "scarce air," "suburban landscapes without women," "language of the beast," are repeated in different contexts so that the reader has the sense of rethinking the same fragment of experience. Dubnick notes that, for Stein and the Cubists, "The repetitive,... overlapping sentences come from rendering isolated spurts of perception, and from the presentation of parts rather than the whole." Stein did not believe actual repetition was possible because each time the context of a phrase changed.

Although I have been calling "Here It Has Rained" a poem, most of the items I have mentioned categorize Stein's prose: concentration on the verb and what Dubnick notes Structuralists call "the horizontal axis" of syntax or contiguity. However, "the vertical axis," which Dubnick defines as emphasis on "vocabulary and the noun while suppressing syntax," "'AGRAMMATISM'," is strongly evident in "Here It Has Rained" and categorizes Stein's poetry. Barreto-Rivera generates images through association ("swimming subhumanly, before birth, in smooth fallopian journey"), contradiction ("most solidly, most fluidly"), alliteration and assonance ("commingle, in the loud clamor of our autumnal acrimonies"), and rhyme ("remembering sweet embraces, in the ever-shifting loci of these spaces"). These processes, combined with the short-circuiting of logical syntax, places "Here It Has Rained" on "the vertical axis" of poetry.

"Derridative Poems" is a sequence of fragments that are "derivatives" of Jacques Derrida's theories on language, writing, and speaking. The fragments are tongue-in-cheek, even contain contradictions of Derrida's theories ("nonsensical to speak. / writing makes / much more sense," but they are also homage to one of the first theorists on the separation of the word and the object: "the wor(l)d." These are not terribly exciting poems, but, then, perhaps they play on Derrida's theories of the frivolous. The philosophical, logical manner in which they are formulated befits Derrida:

6.4321 in a standard, tropical weather
system,
an igloo built
with mudbricks
does not melt (assuming the
absence of volcanoes).

"Jersey Shore Album" is a series of twenty-nine love poems of fairly standard fare. "Old Hallam's Bones," however, brings Barreto-Rivera back to the experimentally creative. This series of over 108 diverse fragments is "a record of / a poet's mood variations." Here, Barreto-Rivera uses language as a flexible tool for self-expression. In the Derridian manner, he is conscious of the distance between the word and the object ("Each poem is failing / its object"). But he also desires to shorten the distance between signifier and signified, to express the object "in / perfect language." Language is not an end in itself. For example, number "6." uses a repetitive chant of Helens, beginning with the Homeric Helen running through sites of contemporary and historical wars, to point out the continuous war mongering, "the countless invasions" for "Our Misused Lady's stateliness."

Still, the poems are nothing but words. This dichotomy is expressed economically in number "19.":

Heart, observe this w0r(l)d
with festive eyes. Break
not.
Saying what I can
I sing because because

The "o" in the word/world expresses potential nihilism and despair in a language

that is separated from the object, but Barreto-Rivera moves beyond despair to create new meaning in the difference. Barreto-Rivera's native tongue is Spanish. The Spanish names he lists in number "21.," the names that "have / a place within the mnemonicracy of / my heart," emphasize this distance between English signfier, Spanish roots, and a-linguistic emotion. This distance is further stretched in the computer language of number "83.": "fruit of the tongue, byte of the longed-for / MacintoshTM." These distances are recognized at times, brought closer together when he invents his own spellings and combines parts of words to make other words ("sembabble," "Alll," "patterns"/" 'patternal,' " "obsexed"), and breeched when he moves into the non-rational emotive language of sound:

> 46. The quantum strange loops of me life,
> this infinitesimal animal
> Duncan Yo-Yo, my scottish, Scottish
> alter-ego — the Yo of the poet, the Yo of
> the pot-bellied man, the Yo of you and
> the Yo of me, the big impulsive Yo of the writer
> writing, defensively, 'reader', and hoping for
> the best. . . .

ELLEN QUIGLEY

ANGELIC VOICES

TERRY CRAWFORD, *Angels in the Rain.* Oberon Press, $12.95.

VARIOUS INCIDENTS IN life have the value of forcing a change in perspective: travel provides an obvious example; so, however, do more traumatic occasions — illness or acidents, for instance — which often include their own particular forms of travel, interior journeys perhaps or explorations of the nether regions that border conventional reality. Such is the realm that Brendan Quinlan inhabits in Terry Crawford's *Angels in the Rain.* A victim of a serious car accident that results in a gastrectomy, Brendan partially awakes in St. Joseph's Hospital in Saint John, New Brunswick, into a world that is neither reality nor dream but that seems to partake of each. Illness here has both a catalytic and a metaphorical function, triggering a change of state that, while never fully releasing Brendan's spiritual awareness from his physical condition, does free him in other ways from the constraints of time and space.

It is the spiritual plane and the communication that takes place there that form the heart of Crawford's novel. Brendan's brother Francis, described as a visonary, has a theory about terrestrial angels, beings whose physical lives have ended but who nevertheless remain in touch with both the earth and those with whom they have something in common. Such beings begin to haunt Brendan's consciousness, and much of the suspenseful action of the novel involves his search for the identity of these figures and the meaning of their appearance in his life.

In some ways Brendan, with an apparently Irish Catholic background, recalls St. Brendan, the Voyager, and his legendary journey to the Promised Land of the Saints. Here, however, the promised land is an ambiguous realm peopled by nineteenth-century figures — Robert Louis Stevenson and a host of characters associated with the Crimean War, especially Florence Nightingale and F. J. H. Somerset, Baron Raglan, the infamous commander of British forces in the war who ordered the charge of the Light Cavalry Brigade. Brendan's dislocated consciousness, after repeated encounters with these figures, roams to the town of Scutari in Turkey, where some eight thousand British soldiers died during the

war, and blends with that of a wounded war veteran.

Crawford's writing is particularly effective in conveying the intense reality and the inviolable privacy of pain, and in describing the hospitalized state of the invalid, an amorphous world, perceived as if from under water, of intravenous needles, plastic tubes, and perfunctory professional faces. Brendan's very pain generates an equally intense spiritual experience, but here Crawford is less effective. Indeed, much in the novel remains vague. Brendan is a sculptor, but we have little evidence of his work or of an artistic sensibility. Other characters, his pregnant wife Faye, his brother, as well as figures of less narrative importance, remain shadowy and one-dimensional, appropriately perhaps, given the heavily drugged and semi-conscious state the reader inhabits, but thin fare nonetheless. And at times Crawford lapses into lifeless dialogue and cumbersome explanations, of Nemesis or stigmata, for example, even explaining to his brother who his namesake, St. Francis, is — somewhat incongruous given Francis's theories and his interest in saints and mystics. Such passages suggest Crawford's lack of faith in his reader's intelligence.

While the novel seems intent on challenging familiar notions about human experience, on extending the boundaries of reality, Crawford seems to draw back himself at the edge of discovery. In the last chapter, Brendan awakes in the hospital on Christmas Day, the time suggesting a strange rebirth on a new plane of angelic consciousness, where Scutrai is as real and present as Saint John; but the narrator's explanation of Brendan's relapse on the day he was to be released from hospital and the coma which followed it has a decidedly pedestrian effect. Each of the novel's fifteen chapters begins with an epigraph, all selected from a wide range of authors and all contributing to a mysterious, supernatural atmosphere, but the epigraphs tend to work against this novel by invoking contexts richer in suggestive power. Still, *Angels in the Rain* provides for the most part an intriguing journey, and if the destination seems somewhat precipitate and mundane, the trip is still worth taking.

R. H. RAMSEY

WAGGING DOGS

JAY SCOTT, *Midnight Matinees.* Oxford Univ. Press, $9.95.

RON BASE, *Matinee Idol.* Doubleday, $19.95.

TO CITE CRITICISM as the tail wagging the dog is not necessarily to point to critical condescension or to the critic's secret desire to *make* art rather than merely review it. In the kennels of criticism and fiction (whose major premise is the metaphoric identification of "is" and "seems") the tail may indeed *actually* wag the dog! This facetious metaphor may serve to elucidate the relative merits and meretriciousness of a selection of articles and reviews by *Globe and Mail* film critic Jay Scott and a novel by *Toronto Star* movie critic Ron Base.

With the possible exception of occasional Danny Finkleman, Jay Scott is the most personable film reviewer in Canada. He is at once traditional and trendy, articulate and outspoken, erudite and down-to-earth, studied and spontaneous. All these qualities come through wonderfully in *Midnight Matinees*, comprising careful revisions of some of Scott's published journal articles on individual films and directors and some carefully-chosen reprints of his tight *Globe and Mail* film reviews. Scott's writing is dynamic in both execution and observation, his stylistically energetic approach to the impermanent film medium insistently

reminiscent of Tom Wolfe's hyperactive approach to highly changeable sociological subjects.

In substance, however, his writing is wholly his own, as is most evident in his ambitious treatment of *The Right Stuff* (film and book), "The Patriot Factory: Tom Wolfe's Washington, D.C.," where Scott examines the tortured relation of literary source and cinematic adaptation and by extension touches on the relatively pleasant relation in his own right, Scott's critical essay is as accomplished as Wolfe's investigative study and, in a sense, recovers the balance that the film adaptation of the book upsets.

The Wolfe article is part of a series of excellent articles in which Scott develops the important critical metaphor of the cinematic "factory," notably in "The Death Factory: Paul Schrader's Tokyo," "The Sadomasochism Factory: Rainer Werner Fassbinder's Germany," and "The Burnout Factory: Canada's Hollywood." Whether he considers art films or commercial movies, Scott is dedicated to exposing aesthetic, technical, monetary, and social factors at every stage of the film-making process, all of them making up the factory, or place of doers, that is the National Film Board and the Canadian Film Development Corporation as much as it is Hollywood and Cannes.

In his selection of reviews from the years 1978 to 1985, Scott is concerned more with the end product than with the process of film-making, but his judgmental and evaluative sense is as uncompromising as it is in his articles. Never is his admiration for a film without legitimate qualification, and he is repeatedly quick to point out the manifest weaknesses of such epic celebrations as *Gandhi* and *A Passage to India* and such ambitious undertakings as *Under the Volcano* and *The Wars*. His relatively unreserved respect for such films as *Places in the Heart* and *The Stunt Man* is refreshing and convincing. His reviews consistently remain close to their film subjects, but at the same time declare their independence from them, reading equally well as brief essays on the general subject of film.

Scott unintentionally demonstrates that one may well get a clearer and more memorable impression of a film in review than of the film actually viewed at the cinema. His accomplished criticism is no less than the tail wagging the dog, precisely in the sense that it is consistently the moving factor in the very films it criticizes.

In *Matinee Idol*, however, tail-wagging has overt sexual associations, the novel's focus shifting relentlessly from sex to murder and back to sex, all against a gaudy movie backdrop that makes the lascivious and grisly details of pointed sex and pointless murder seem all rather beside the point. Tom Coward, the protagonist, is as forgettable as any of these details, a Canadian Hollywood journalist who (in pursuit of his perverse craft and of his old lover, Stormy Willis, now linked with egomaniacal leading man Ash Conlon) finds himself investigating a series of violent sex-slayings. That a hackneyed journalist should inexplicably assume the caricature of a detective and proceed to extricate himself with enviable smoothness from all manner of impossible situations (discovering the real murderer only after killing the prime suspect in self-defence) fits loosely enough into the generic conventions of mystery and detective fiction. That Ron Base should handle these matters of plotting and description, theme and characterization, with inestimable awkwardness and predictability, however, falls simply within the conventions of hackwork. Even despite his penchant for four-letter words (monosyllables as well as obscenities) and for every conceivable variation on violent and lustful sexuality, his expression is so

uncontrolled as to amount to little more than premature ejaculation, proving, if nothing else, that nice guys do finish last.

Whereas Jay Scott has virtually assured himself a place in the history of film criticism, performing an unrepeatable cinematic service by producing print on film, Ron Base has merely penned a regrettable movie-murder-novel, doing a disservice to film and fiction alike by reproducing the corruption of film in print. If Scott illustrates how the critical tail can wag the cinematic dog, Base simply manages to show that even a wagging dog must come to the end of his tale, and indeed that a fictional tongue can wag a critical man.

P. MATTHEW ST. PIERRE

DESCENT OF LIGHT

ROBIN SKELTON, *The Collected Longer Poems 1947-1977*. Sono Nis, $16.95.

ROBIN SKELTON, *Distances*. Porcupine's Quill, $7.95.

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE to the poetry of Robin Skelton was twenty-five years ago when I came across a copy of *Patmos and other poems* in a second-hand bookstore. I was overwhelmed by the brilliance of the title-poem, in which man is seen as exiled upon Patmos in the Aegean, where St. John the Divine wrote Revelation, and in the compound of a refugee camp. "Patmos" was the last poem in that volume, but it appears first in Skelton's collected longer poems, albeit missing two of the sections from its first movement. With all its faults — chiefly a tendency to echo Eliot (more evident in the omitted sections, but also seen in the description of the Chinese vase 'that still / is stillness stirring") — "Patmos" is a poem in which the poet celebrates his spiritual freedom with his considerable learning, the latter being helpfully elucidated by notes in the new edition. The apocalyptic wit of "Patmos," evidenced by the skilful handling of the interior rhymes, assonance, and puns, frequently rises to heights of rare eloquence:

> and all transformed, the flowers speak with tongues,
> and children, sons of morning, clap their hands
> and hills leap like the blood, the face of God
> the face, past feature, of the risen land.

The rest of Skelton's collected longer poems are an implicit palinode in which he renounces revelation except for that supplied by his mother wit — or, as he would call it, his Muse. The mood darkens, the tone tends to become ponderous, and the style turgid:

> With force of cannon against Rome
> fought like a rat in a blind alley
> till his thighs burned; a hewn bullock,
> hunch of a torso sewn with medals,
> blunt as a bullet, between wheels,
> had children because of his eyes.

"The Dark Window," from which that stanza is taken, portrays in 25 pages the nightmare of history without any revelation.

Another aspect of Skelton's difficulty in these poems manifests itself as the search for the proper form with which to communicate his darkening vision. The form varies from the superbly organized "Patmos," with its three main movements, and prologue and epilogue mirroring each other, the whole being structured upon images of light, to the forced march of "The Dark Window," to the aphoristic simplicity of "Messages," to the still more pared-down style of "Remembering Synge" and "Timelight," with two or three ictuses per line — the mode in which Skelton now appears most comfortable. The last sequence, "Callsigns," is written in a *mélange* of styles, the penultimate section containing a moving expression of the *need* for

illumination somewhat reminiscent of "Patmos": "O, let / the light so shine / that I may find within this flesh / the radiance of / completed man!" But with the final movement we are left blindly listening for an enigmatic "message from silent drums."

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to see Robin Skelton as the Robert Graves of Canadian literature. Both poets are (were) insular exiles who took their sense of craftsmanship and tradition with them while paradoxically renouncing tradition. Both worship the Muse. Indeed, there is a poem "To Robert Graves" in Skelton's booklet *Distances*, a new collection of short poems mostly written in unrhymed couplets with two or, more rarely, three stresses to the line. The diction is fairly simple, although every now and then Skelton will slip in a word like "menhirs" or "anaconic." The pared down style well accords with the prevailingly bleak mood and minimalized themes. Although there are several dedications, the collection as a whole reflects a strong feeling for nature rather than human relations. Most of the poems appear to be set in Britain and many have a nostalgic air with their references to pubs, vicarage gardens, and the poet's childhood. The only Canadian reference I could detect is one to drinking "Irish [whiskey] / in Toronto, in / Seattle bourbon" — the latter a subtly archaic touch. Skelton may now have nothing to say, as he says in "De Nihilo," but he is getting increasingly good at saying it. The general impression is one of an old poet with few illusions left still practising his craft — perhaps the last illusion. That, and "the intent / lost desperate courage that alone / is worth prayer or defilement" ("Prayer before Birth").

WARREN STEVENSON

OVERDUE AND UNDERDONE

JEAN BRUCE, *Back the Attack!: Canadian Women During the Second World War — at Home and Abroad.* Macmillan, $29.95.

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO & MICHAEL RICHARDSON, eds., *We Stand on Guard: Poems and Songs of Canadians in Battle.* Doubleday, $19.95.

GEORGE CASSAR, *Beyond Courage: The Canadians at the Second Battle of Ypres.* Oberon, $27.95.

RICHARD S. MALONE, *A Portrait of War, 1939-1943*, and *A World in Flames, 1944-1945.* Collins, $7.95.

WAR, OF THE old-fashioned kind (if I may say so), when men and women fought bravely for causes they believed in, and when a nation could grow in stature in the world community because of its commitment to paying the human and material costs of victory, or defeat, continues to exercise a strange fascination in Canada. This quintet of books about Canadians at war is further testimony that "war books" obviously sell well enough in this country to justify their publishers' expenses. But sales are one thing, the value of the books another. All of these books under review regard war almost nostalgically, and hence cater to the fascination mentioned above. But I would also describe them as either overdue or underdone, or both at the same time.

Back the Attack! is a good example of what I mean by overdue. The contributions of Canadian women to the 1939-45 War effort were substantial and deserve tribute. Jean Bruce's attempt to provide that tribute is worthy in aim, but less than satisfactory in the result. Patterned after Broadfoot's 1974 bestseller, *Six War Years*, her book uses the same technique of oral history — anonymous voices of ordinary women recalling their experiences during the great conflict. She

collects memoirs of some 250 former servicewomen and civilian workers who stepped into jobs held by men so as to allow the latter to enlist for overseas duty as soldiers, sailors, and airmen. But whereas Broadfoot's veterans (including women) sometimes regaled us with salty humour, or assaulted our sensibilities with ominous recollections of grisly deeds, Bruce's women are made to sound extremely tame and lady-like. Dignity and *gravitas* have their place and the leadership of outstanding women such as Dorise Neilsen, M.P., and Elizabeth Smellie of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps is praised appropriately. However, it is hard to believe that the millions of mothers and daughters, the Service Jills and Rosie the Riveters, who exchanged a lonely stay-at-home existence for service in the forces, munitions plants, civilian labour, and on farms, did not lead more adventurous lives than the text suggests. Still, Bruce's commentaries and the numerous photographs, give us something of the flavour of the time and of the impact women made in changing the face of Canadian society.

We Stand on Guard is a collection of another sort, not so much overdue as underdone. Colombo and Richardson have ransacked old newspapers and magazines, regimental songbooks, and collections of sheet music, as well as more familiar anthologies, in the course of making a selection of some 150 compositions representative of Canadian war lyrics. Spanning over three centuries of conflicts, the contents run the gamut from Indian war chants to panegyrics about heroes of the ancien régime, from verses about the War of 1812, the 1837 revolts in Upper and Lower Canada, the Riel Rebellions, and the Boer War, to poems and songs about the First and Second World Wars and the Korean War. Given this scope — and the exigencies of the publisher's restrictions, no doubt — the editors have performed a remarkable task. Yet one may cavil with the "exclusions" they have made, which they discuss in their introduction. Among the types of material left out are songs which were popular on the home front (such as the memorable "I'll Never Smile Again," written by a Canadian in 1939), pious or patriotic pieces inspired by war, fugitive works which no one remembers, lyrics from French Canada (either because their paucity, or the inadvisability of presenting them in translation), and most narrative verse. Somewhat prudishly the editors "backed away" from bawdy verse, referring readers instead to Anthony Hopkins' recent collection, *Songs from the Front and Rear*. But, I would argue, the editors should have chosen some of these works anyway, and could have had they been less willing to include some of the wretched doggerel that clutters the pages of their World War I section.

Generally, however, I believe they were wise to choose contemporary works by soldier-poets, or works of high quality. No reader will be surprised or disappointed when he encounters such familiar poems as "Un Canadien Errant" and "In Flanders Fields," or songs such as "K-K-K-Katy" and "Universal Soldier." Two of the finest Canadian poems, of whatever type, are reprinted here: Magee's "High Flight" and Nowlan's "Ypres: 1915." Alongside such obvious choices parade a host of jingles, ballads, come-all-ye-s, marches, and drinking songs. They jostle for our attention beside more sober reflections on battle. The editors are probably right when they note that the poets of the First World War "described what they saw and what they believed, but not particularly what they sensed or felt," whereas, by contrast, Second World War poets "were generally an introspective group." However, poems such as George Whalley's "Normandy

1944" and Douglas Le Pan's "One of the Regiment" manage to capture the reality of the moment even as they reach beyond chaos in quest of truth.

Sadly, it is often the case that a student of military history is insensitive to the larger issues of war and peace. George Cassar's *Beyond Courage* is a case in point. The Battle of Second Ypres is so named for a crucial series of attacks and counter-attacks waged on the Western front between late April and early May 1915. It began when the Germans, employing highly toxic chlorine gas for the first time in the War, opened a huge hole in the Allied line to the left of the Canadian sector. Side-stepping to their flank, units of the First Canadian Division desperately strove to plug the hole and prevent the enemy from exploiting their advantage. The trouble with Cassar's account is that he seeks to cover too much ground for such a brief study, and thereby obscures his real subject. Switching our attention hurriedly from point to point in the fray, he fails to describe key actions and the heroism of individual soldiers fully enough. He further complicates his narrative by commentaries on personalities and events peripheral to his theme. And his claim that hindsight and the absence of "restrictions" (which hobbled earlier historians) allowed him to make more profitable use of documented sources does not finally stand up in view of his failure to write the kind of micro-history which truly illuminates human conflict. In short, the reader curious to know what really happened at Second Ypres is still advised to consult Nicholson's official history of the Canadian Expeditionary Force published in 1962.

If Cassar's book is seriously underdone, the late R. S. Malone's two-volume "Portrait of War" is very much overdone — hence an exception to the works I have been discussing. Best-known for his subsequent career as the opinionated publisher and editor-in-chief of such newspapers as the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, Malone had been trained as a professional soldier and served abroad during the Second World War in a variety of appointments in which his talents as an organizer, journalist, and especially confidant, were recognized. His memoirs of those years are fascinating; however, they are also flawed by a self-serving tendency to inflate his role and by a quite unnecessary retelling of events found in other, more reliable sources.

Malone strikes me as having been the classic courtier, the witness to history made by the great and the near-great. Despite the constant danger of merely fawning in such a position, however, "Dick" Malone always kept his journalists senses alert to the developing "story." Early in the War he had been seconded by his regiment to J. L. Ralston's staff and accompanied the Defence Minister on a mission to England to co-ordinate Canada's mobilization. Returning to army duties, he took part in the invasion of Sicily and was later appointed liaison officer with Montgomery's forces in Italy. His relationship with the brass, in both the Canadian and British armies, eventually won him appointment as the chief organizer for press arrangements for the Canadian army in the Normandy campaign. In this role he performed creditably, helping "warcos" get scoops for their papers, and establishing the enormously popular soldier's journal, *The Maple Leaf*. In the line of duty — and sometimes in spite of it, one gathers — Malone "swanned around" a good deal: from HQ to front line to the wartime delights of Paris and London. Moreover, he formed a strong admiration for Montgomery's abilities as a tactician and strategist, and his friendship with the general undoubtedly helped his wartime career. Finally, after the War ended in

Europe, Malone saw more liaison service in the Philippines and in Japan at MacArthur's headquarters.

All in all, Malone's memoirs are an interesting, if minor, contribution to a burgeoning library of Canadians at war.

ERIC THOMPSON

ROLE-MAKER

The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery. Volume I: 1889-1910. Ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston. Oxford, $24.95.

SIX YEARS AGO I found a small notebook in the Nova Scotia archives. It was a journal of a fifteen-year-old girl which covered ten days in 1879. I will forever be in her debt for the insights into social history that my reading of the entries in her diary (concerning family and romance, music lessons and schoolwork) provided. It was like finding a new friend who was willing to tell me a lot about herself in a very short time.

My recent reading of *The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery*, Vol. I, 1889-1910, recreated that experience, Reading such a journal obviously requires more effort than the brief earlier one did. By the time of her recopying the journal in 1919 L. M. Montgomery was confident that it would be read and the implications for her reader's behaviour are clear. The implied reader whom the writer creates is a mirror and analyst, a confidant for her soul and a student of social history. Through a simple narrative style, she provides insight (and shares) her complex personality, while simultaneously giving evidence of many of the social reasons for her psychological make-up.

It is a relief that the lay-out of these journals allows time to reflect on the person one is meeting. By following the writer's own instincts and "illustrating" the book with one hundred of her original 400 photographs, the editors provide time for one to contemplate the person she is and the relationships she is forming. There is also a need on the part of the reader to consult both the family tree of "Generations and Connections in Prince Edward Island" and the comprehensive Notes at the end of the volume in order to facilitate analysis of the social history she is providing.

The adolescent L. M. Montgomery struggles to gain maturity in a world bound by family and duty, which imposes upon her a rigorous standard of both behaviour and matrimonial hopes. Her innate common sense in seeking a partner is thwarted by an environment which exports intellectually compatible young men and leaves her to meet those physically attractive partners whom she considers to be unsuitable. Her journal reflects the inward tumult caused by these social pressures: "I work out all my revolutionary tendencies in this journal. If it were not for this 'went' I might fly into a thousand little pieces someday."

With her usual honesty she states her need for a journal: "It is the lonely people who keep diaries — people who are living solitary lives and have no other outlets for their moods and tenses. When I have anybody to 'talk it over with' I don't feel the need of a diary so strongly. When I haven't I must have a journal to overflow in. It is a companion — and a relief." So we, the companionable and understanding readers she anticipates, like the fourth wall of her stage setting, or like a camera's eye, accept the world she sets out for us. Always we are on the edge, on that knife point of creativity when some meaning must be made out of life: a story, an orderliness, a significance, a profound truth or emotion. By this creative writing in her journal, L. M. Montgomery secures a release from the burden of worry, of overwork, or of self-

preoccupation. The journals cannot present her life without telling us what sense she would make out of it. They become increasingly self-analytical, until, in 1910, we are reading a recapitulation of the years before and a retelling of the years during the writing of the journal in 1889 when she was fifteen. The narrative voice of Anne in the early journals gives way in the later entries to the mature and sometimes self-conscious voice of a successful writer. Consequently Montgomery makes no comment in these selections (one assumes there are none in the entries omitted) at the time of writing of *Anne of Green Gables*, whereas, after acceptance of her novel by her publisher in Boston, she describes her writing of *Anne of Avonlea* and *Kilmeny of the Orchard* and tells us something of the genesis of *Anne of Green Gables*. "It was a labor of love. Nothing I have ever written gave me so much pleasure to write. I cast 'moral' and 'Sunday School' ideals to the winds and made my 'Anne' a real human girl."

L. M. Montgomery's narrative skills in creating roles for her readers to fill, together with her change of style and voice, make the journals as readable as a novel, not because they are like her novels or because they reveal how she came to write them, but because they intrigue us with her personal development, achieved with perceptive self-analysis and anecdote, from a young and carefree, often callous, girl into a thoughtful writer.

As a reference book for those of us interested in children's literature, her comments on the need to throw away "moral" and "Sunday School" ideals bear out what we hoped was true of *Anne of Green Gables*; and the complexity of her journal reinforces her point (in *The Alpine Path*) that her first novel was not an autobiography. Instead we can get a glimpse into the process of weaving fiction from life. Her novels are woven from a strand of life here, an anecdote there, a person met in Saskatchewan (is the character of Anne partly drawn from the original subject of "The Boy with the Auburn Hair," written in 1893?), and from the threads of memory and reading. We reflect and analyze, listen to her outpourings, admire her courage in coping with the restrictions of her times, and acknowledge the significance of her observations. Reading her journals is an intriguing process for which the reader cannot but be grateful.

HILARY THOMPSON

IRISH BISHOPS

CYRIL J. BYRNE, ed., *Gentlemen-Bishops and Faction Fighters: The Letters of Bishops O Donel, Lambert, Scallan and Other Irish Missionaries*. Jesperson Press, $16.95.

THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT of the Roman Catholic Church in Newfoundland was the work of the Irish. The formative years were approximately those between the establishment of Grattan's Parliament in Dublin and Catholic Emancipation under O'Connell. The closeness of the Catholics of Ireland and those of Newfoundland is one part of the tale told by this collection of letters; the interplay of personalities in an individualistic time and place is the other.

The dynamics flowed from the personal element on the lengthy shoreline of a pioneer colony, where fewer than a dozen priests tried to serve the spiritual needs of thousands of settlers and seasonal fishermen. The character and strengths, even the foibles, of the particular clergymen were magnified in a society where the missionaries were so few and the culture so oral. The bishops wanted dependable men of good health and better personal lives. The material they had

to work with was rather otherwise: "strolling priests" who had escaped episcopal control in Ireland, men of peculiar or irascible temperament, or pious souls for whom life on any sort of a frontier was an unendurable ordeal.

The eighteenth-century gentleman O Donel had to establish control over the placement and conduct of his missionaries. He endured prejudice, the wrath of a royal prince, the unco-operative attitude of some of his clergy, while his success owed much to that breadth of view that was one of the greatest ornaments of the eighteenth century. O Donel's letter to the Congregational minister Jones evinces the spirit of sincere ecumenism and supplies the key to understanding what it was about O Donel that won him the respect and affection of his contemporaries of all denominations.

His successors, Patrick Lambert (1807-1816) and Scallen (1816-1830), likewise men whose duty to their faith was compatible with their ability to get on with others. Scallan in particular had to contend with the rise in Irish migration after the Napoleonic Wars, when thousands of destitute Irish poured into Newfoundland and almost as many left for the mainland, to places such as Halifax, Quebec, and the cities of the American east coast. Their success, like that of O Donel and the missionaries scattered about Newfoundland, owed much to the suitability of the men themselves. A pompous or fussy cleric would have been a disaster. The clergy of Newfoundland, 1784-1829, fortunately contained many practical and useful men, and only a few of the troublesome.

Dr. Byrne has collected over one hundred letters from repositories in four countries, translated many, and supplies the historical introductions, contextual notes, and biographical sketches. One appreciates the value of the collection, both for the convenience of access to information it provides, and for the effort required in compiling and editing it. One hopes to see companion works that will supply other sides of some of the more fascinating parts of the correspondence. To ask this of the present work would be to necessitate enlarging it beyond a practicable size.

The editor has done his work well, and the publisher has added to the limited literature about early church history in the Atlantic region. The typesetters could improve their accuracy in the matter of dates in particular. Possibly a peculiar concern for the living and the dead caused them to extend Father Grace's youth by 24 years (p. 359 gives his birth as 1731 rather than 1755), and to refer to the Association for the Preservation of the Dead (p. xiii) rather than Preservation of *the Memorials* of the Dead. These are minor points which will be unlikely to trouble most readers.

If Paul O'Neill's *Upon This Rock* was criticized as being uncritical, the present work cannot be similarly disparaged. Professor Byrne lets the several letter-writers have their say, whether their remarks were formal or offhand, banal or exciting, kind or petty. We gain the overall impression that men, not saints or heroes, founded and formed the Roman Catholic Church in Newfoundland. These men supply the insights, both in what they say and in what lingers just between the lines. By making the lines available, Byrne opens the door to our knowing and understanding the currents and undercurrents of one chapter of our ecclesiastical history. It is not often an editor does his work so challengingly: tells us so much, yet allows us room to use our wits.

TERRENCE M. PUNCH

ÉCRITURES TROMPEUSES

CLAIRE DE LAMIRANDE, *La Rose des temps.* Québec/Amérique, n.p.

CARMEN MAROIS, *L'Amateur d'art.* Préambule, n.p.

MANY RECENT POSTMODERNIST works are textual experiments which blur the boundary-lines between fictional elements and past reality, while commenting on the act of writing and on the concepts of narratorial and historical instability. Claire de Lamirande's tenth novel, *La Rose des temps,* is an interesting if somewhat contrived example of such work. A character in the novel, the investigator Lassonde, succinctly sums up its essential thrust: "Les pièces du dossier peuvent rarement être prises pour ce qu'elles sont. . . . Les écritures sont trompeuses. . . ."

General de Gaulle's historic visit to Montreal during Expo '67 is the backdrop to the novel's complex plot. As is explained in the prologue, both de Gaulle and Oliphant, the mayor of Montreal, were to have been assassinated during the presidential visit. The bomb, however, did not explode. During the twelve years that have elapsed sinse the "non-event," Charles Riverin, the mayor's legal counsellor, has assembled a thick file on the subject. In 1979, obsessed with his inability to explicate the neutralization of the coup, and yet convinced that the answer lies somewhere in his file, Riverin decides to take a year's sabbatical in Paris. During this time, he hopes that his old friend Lassonde will be able to extricate the elusive "truth" from the various documents in the file. The 61 short chapters that follow present a confusing mixture of these documents, Lassonde's evaluation and interpretation of them, Riverin's letters to Lassonde, and other characters' diaries, novels, and journalistic reports.

In typical postmodern fashion, and along the lines of Aquin's *Trou de memoire* or Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear,* this text insists that the reader participate in the various narrators' efforts to reconstitute past events. We learn that the police encouraged the rumour of the plot's existence — they even invented it — in order to foil other minor assassination attempts. Riverin remains convinced that an authentic plot existed: the RCMP, the CIA, and various international agencies were all extremely interested in events in Montreal in 1967. Sub-plots abound: Oliphant's secretary, Alice Brind'Amour, constantly feeds misinformation to her lover, a CIA agent, because of her protective, if unrequited, love for the mayor; a mysterious woman in yellow wanders in and out of characters' lives for reasons that remain unexplained; a man admits to murders he most assuredly did not commit and then vanishes from prison — and from the novel.

Eventually, a hero of sorts emerges from this confusing assortment of characters: Simon Clavel is an international news reporter whose adventures resemble those of James Bond in much the same way that Oliphant recalls Jean Drapeau. Clavel's particular brand of international journalism, a mixture of hard facts and philosophical musings, has brought him to the attention of "l'OEIL" — a malefic force which, unbeknownst to him, has controlled his every action to the present day. When Clavel finally encounters "l'OEIL" in the Laurentians, he realizes that this apropriately gowned and hooded being has the power to control world events. It is at this point in the novel that the detective thriller gives way to science-fiction. Clavel learns that he unknowingly saved the lives of Oliphant and de Gaulle by a retroactive intervention into the past from the standpoint of the future: "J'avais, en 1979,

réussi à détraquer la bombe de 1967." The puzzle is solved: Clavel had unwittingly created a rupture in the normal process of time. Although the novel's structure, alternating as it does between the events of 1967 and those of 1979, should have prepared the reader for this implausible turn of evnts, the ending is in fact quite anticlimactic. One asks: Is that all there is? Or rather, is that all there was?

As though aware of the effects produced by the labyrinthine plot and the "écritures trompeuses," Riverin's letter to Lassonde sends an overt message to the reader:

> Le texte n'est jamais irrécupérable.... Il faut qu'il soit récupérable d'une façon fabuleuse. Ces phrases sont en relation avec l'inconscient mondial.... [Déjà].... les touche la réinvention qu'on est en train d'en faire. Le passé n'est pas fini.

If this text is "récupérable," it is so at the level of a reflection on the act of writing as an act of re-creation and as a challenge to the very notion of one past reality. The many narrative voices use the first-person "je" in their varied and sometimes contradictory reconstitution of events. A meta-commentary is continually at work, exercising a centrifugal control over the reader's perception of the past. Brind'Amour's novel, for instance, is a fictive rendition of events described elsewhere in the text as "reality"; on the left-hand side of the page, she comments on her adaptation of the facts, inscribing "différentes lectures qu'elle avait faites de certaines phrases à différentes époques." Lassonde's reaction to Brind-Amour's text — itself, of course, part of the textual product — could be echoed by the reader: "Le dossier . . . donnait une sensation curieuse.... Une réalité, oui. Par endroits, une hyperréalité. Justement: une hyperréalité!" With practically every character writing about other characters' efforts to discover the elusive "truth," the entire text overtly flaunts the unreliability of the written word. "Truth" is an object of textual play; it is invented by the narrators as they rewrite the past. The numerous allusions to Montreal's written communications system (*La vie en rouge*, *La Nouvelle Press*) and the metafictual product thematize the precarious retional underlining of the novel as a texlationship of "truth" and "reality" to the creative transformation of the past. The numerous intertextual references to other literary works and to historical events also emphasize the impossibility of distinguishing among these elements. Their effectiveness, however, is greatly diminished by their predictability. Thus, long titles *à la* Umberto Eco (*Le Carnet où Lassonde se fait accroire des choses*) or *à la* Mitchell (*Autant en emporte Brind'Amour*) and the reputation of easily-recognizable parodic sentences such as "Il crie dans son coeur comme il crie sur la ville" seem overworked and therefore banal. The same could be said of the over-abundance of "expression[s] bien québécoise[s]."

Interestingly, the one character who strongly illustrates the artistic drive to create is not a writer of words but an artist/caricaturist: Mélusine, a woman full of the "rage d'aimer, rage de vivre, rage de peindre." Could this be a metafictional reflection on the limits of written discourse as a means of communication and as an art form? If so, this text has been caught at its own game: it tries too hard. By using every possible opportunity to comment on the act of writing and on the textual recreation of past reality, this experimental text emphasizes its "raison d'être" to the point where it loses itself in an endless elaboration of confusing details. Such complexity greatly diminishes the effectiveness of its autocommentary.

Carmen Marois's first book, *L'Amateur d'art*, contains twelve short stories which

also examine the precarious relationship between reality and time. They do not, however, reflect on the writing of fiction or the problematics of narration. These stories make for entertaining reading; as indicated on the book's back cover, they recount what happens to ordinary people living routine lives when "la réalité dérape" and regular time-frames are altered. In the story, a happily-married banker whose only hobby is collecting works of art becomes obsessed with a recently acquired painting. After several days spent looking at the scene it portrays — a welcoming woman of a past era awaiting the return of *someone* — he is absorbed into the painting, leaving his disbelieving wife contemplating the changed tableau! Several stories involve lonely older women who pass through different time-frames: Jessica Biehl, in "Nécrologie," attends her own funeral and then returns to the present where she (predictably) changes her will; Angélique, in "Le cerceau rouge," is visited by a reincarnation of herself as a young girl and invited to fulfil a past wish before peacefully dying. Each story gradually develops a surrealistic atmosphere by the use of short, tense phrases and incomplete descriptions. When reality eventually shifts to another plane, the effect is delightful. An easy read. Marois's texts, then, experiment with time-frames while remaining essentially at the level of well-crafted entertainment. Thematically, however, they refer obliquely to the ontological questionings of history, truth, and past reality found in much recent postmodern fiction and thoroughly explored in de Lamirande's latest work.

MARIE VAUTIER

SANS PRÉTENTION

JEAN DAIGLE, *Le Paradis à la fin de vos jours.* Editions du Noroît, n.p.

ROSE, UNE ENSEIGNANTE à la retraite et Yvette, une veuve, ont décidé d'ouvrir une résidence pour des personnes du troisième âge. Elles s'appretent, avec beaucomp d'enthousiasme à accueuillir leurs premiers pensionnaires. Ceux-ci arrivent. Il s'agit de M. Albert, un séduisant veuf et son ami Edmond qui vient de subir une opération est un vieux célibataire endurci et ne s'arrête pas de se plaindre. Albert s'inquiête de voir Edmond se morfondre depuis un mois et demande, en secret, aux deux femmes de la séduire en prétendant qui Edmond est sur la point de se suicider.

Comme les deux femmes n'arrivent pas à passer à l'action elles font appel à leur amie de jeunesse, Evangéline, récemment arrivée du Nouveau Brunswick, en deuil de son troisième mari, et qui se cherche un quatrième. La tentative de séduction d'Evangéline échoue mais Edmond est charmé de découvrir la franche camaderie d'Evangéline. De plus il est touché par l'harmonica que Rose lui a acheté et se laisse apprivoiser par cette dernière. Evangéline envisage d'un oeil optimiste leur double mariage (Edouard avec Rose et Evangéline avec Charley) tandis qu'Albert semble filer le parfait amour avec Yvette.

Les caractères ne sont pas fouillés et le texte semble sans prétention. Tout semble prétexte à la bonne humeur et tourne à des plaisanteries. Il est vrai que ces plaisanteries sons souvent lourdes et grivoises, voire sexistes. Mais au moins les femmes sont montrées actives et s'emploient plus utilement que ces messieurs à la retraite!

T. VUONG-RIDDICK

opinions and notes

HERBERT L. STEWART, THOMAS CARLYLE, & CANADIAN IDEALISM

IN THEIR CLASSIC HISTORY of Canadian philosophy, *The Faces of Reason*, Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott introduce the thought of Dalhousie University philosopher and historian, Herbert Leslie Stewart, by saying that

> Stewart had come to Halifax from Ireland via Oxford, a convinced realist of the turn-of-the-century sort — one of those who reacted against the central idealist claim that there is a unity of man and the world, of consciousness and object, or reason and its subject matter.[1]

Their statement is, in fact, a little misleading. Although Stewart did indeed graduate from Oxford, before moving to Canada he returned to Ireland where he held the position of Lecturer in Moral Philosophy and History of Philosophy in the Queen's University of Belfast. However, what is interesting about Stewart is that shortly after arriving in Canada in 1913 he became a professed idealist, radically changing the realist position he had adopted in his book *Questions of the Day in Philosophy and Psychology* published in 1912. Unfortunately, the only evidence Armour and Trott present to confirm that Stewart did indeed become an idealist is the claims of his former students.

> There seems little doubt (from the word of his students) that, by the twenties, Stewart was a devotee of the sort of idealism practised in England by the followers of T. H. Green.[2]

They attribute his conversion to idealism at least partially to his study *Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany* published in 1915. "The book . . . probably brought the beginnings of a change in Stewart's larger philosophical outlook if only because in that writing it forced him to reassess the power of ideas and the nature of competing claims about the nature of reality."[3] In this paper I wish to suggest that it was his growing understanding of Thomas Carlyle, rather than his study of Nietzsche, which brought about the radical change in Stewart's thought, and that in his three published papers on Carlyle, not even mentioned by Armour and Trott, there is ample written evidence, not only that he became a devotee of idealism, but also that he regarded himself as a patriotic Canadian. The three papers in question are: "Carlyle's Conception of Religion" (*The American Journal of Theology*, 1917), "Carlyle's Place in Philosophy" (*The Monist*, 1919), and "Carlyle and Canada" (*The Canadian Magazine of Politics Science Art and Literature*, 1921). In these three papers Stewart makes it quite clear that he is in sympathy with Carlyle and that he regards Carlyle as an idealist. What is of most importance, however, is Stewart's sympathy with, and restatement of, Carlyle's criticism of scientific realism:

> the methods of the sciences, and of that metaphysics which is no more than a unification of the sciences, can tell us nothing on the problems which matter most of all, problems of the ground of all being, of freedom and necessity, of good and evil, of the nature and prospects of the soul. For that with which the sciences deal is always something which I call *mine* but which I cannot call *me*. Every attempt to resolve the latter into the former may be convicted of a contradiction, for it takes as independently real those objects which can exist and contain meaning only in reference to a subject. Science is thus always a study of some species of *clothes*, and to know the limitations of science we require above all a *clothes-philosophy*.[4]

Not only did Carlyle criticize scientific empiricism, in the sense of drawing our attention to its limitations, but Stewart obviously agreed with this line of criticism. He states explicitly in his *Monist* article:

> It is to the glory of Carlyle that he maintained throughout the frenzy of English empiricism a firm hold upon the larger issues, and that he did so from no mere prejudice, social or theological, but from a clear-sighted recognition that empirical methods must quickly spend themselves, leaving the old problems just where they were.[5]

It is not difficult to read this passage as a piece of self-criticism which Stewart levies against his own former realist position. Stewart can thus be seen as part of the tradition of Canadian idealism. According to Armour and Trott one of the distinctive features of Canadian idealism, as opposed to British or German idealism, is the way it attempts to accommodate, to take seriously, the opposing view. The term "philosophical federalism" is used to describe this feature of Canadian philosophy. They explain the concept as follows:

> The single point which we would make if we could make only one point in this book would be this: Dominantly in English Canadian philosophy reason is used as a device to explore alternatives, to suggest ways of combining apparently contradictory ideas, to discover new ways of passing from one idea to another. Only rarely is it used as an intellectual substitute for force — as a device to defeat one's opponent. . . . There is, in short, a kind of philosophical federalism at work. . . .[6]

This philosophical federalism manifested itself in Canadian idealism as an acceptance of realist claims. The notion of "the other," of the "not-self," must be taken seriously. As Margaret Atwood has pointed out, the "Nature encountered by the early settlers in Canada did not live up to their expectations of a Wordsworthian romanticized English Lake District in which "Nature was a kind Mother or Nurse who would guide man if he would only listen to her."[7] As Atwood puts it "If Wordsworth was right, Canada ought to have been the Great Good Place. At first, complaining about the bogs and mosquitoes must have been like criticizing the authority of the Bible."[8] She goes on to note that:

> Nature seen as dead, or alive but indifferent, or alive and actively hostile towards man is a common image in Canadian literature. The result of a dead or indifferent Nature is an isolated or "alienated" man; the result of an actively hostile Nature is usually a dead man, and certainly a threatened one.[9]

The romanticized view of Nature common in nineteenth-century Britain and Europe is certainly compatible with a philosophical idealism which sees Nature as a manifestation of Mind. Such a view of Nature is, to say the least, very difficult to sustain in Canada. It is perhaps for this reason that Canadian idealism differs from the British or German in that it takes realist claims about the character of the "not-self," about the otherness of Nature, much more seriously. Although Armour and Trott are very much aware of the dangers of generalizing they do state:

> The idealism of Hegel and his followers . . . set out to be a synthesis of Western philosophy in the special sense that it was designed to explain the course of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Kant and to chart its course thereafter. . . . What is interesting in Canada is the way, for the most part, that it was used as the instrument of a kind of philosophical federalism. . . .[10]

Stewart's interpretation of Carlyle's idealism does seem to fit this generalization. However, what is unique and most interesting about Stewart is that unlike philosophers such as George Paxton Young (1818-1889) and John Watson (1847-1939), who were idealists before coming to Canada, and unlike idealists such as George Blewett (1873-1912) and

William Albert Crawford-Frost (1863-1936), who were born in Canada, Stewart came to Canada a realist and became an idealist only after arriving in Canada. Still, the idealism which Stewart found in Carlyle does attempt to do justice to both the moral nature of Man and the mechanical laws of Nature. It can thus aptly be described using Armour and Trott's concept of "philosophical federalism." As Stewart puts it:

> The starting-point for Carlyle's own cosmic scheme is just the contradiction between man as moral personality and the world as fixed under mechanical law within which this personality must unfold itself. It was necessary that these two aspects of the universe should somehow be thought together.[11]

Stewart was not simply reading this form of idealism into Carlyle. It was there in Carlyle to be found; and, I suggest, it was what first attracted Stewart to Carlyle. In his article on "Carlyle's Conception of Religion" Stewart states: "It is a cardinal sin of present day critics to attribute to a writer, not the opinions which he avows, but the opinions which in their judgment are legitimate inferences from something he has said, even though these inferences may be expressly contradicted by what he says elsewhere."[12]

Does the fact that Carlyle's idealism seems to satisfy Armour and Trott's criteria for Canadian idealism, i.e., philosophical federalism, tell against the whole notion of a distinctive form of Canadian philosophy? I think not. It might if, for example, Carlyle's idealism were typically German or typically British. I suggest, however, that Carlyle's idealism is typically Carlyle. Further, the concept of philosophical federalism is really intended only as a general description of some of the common features of Canadian philosophy and should not be taken as a criterion, much less the criterion, for class inclusion.

The concept of philosophical federalism manifests itself in other aspects of Stewart's work as well. As an Irish-Canadian he served as both president and official historian of The Charitable Irish Society of Halifax. He compiled and published the Annals of the C.I.S. (1786-1836) under the title *The Irish in Nova Scotia*. In this book he makes clear his admiration for the religious and political tolerance of the C.I.S. Indeed he suggests that Ireland itself could learn from such tolerance. He has no doubt that the Irish in Nova Scotia are far more tolerant than those in Ireland:

> A clause in the Constitution of the Charitable Irish Society requires that at its meetings there shall be no political or religious controversies, and all present members will agree that the limit thus imposed is never transgressed even at a time of crisis for religious or political values. It would surely be well if there were some such institution in Ireland itself, with a like self-denying ordinance for zealots to observe at five meetings each year. Thus to suspend dispute must at times have been difficult in the Halifax of the closing years of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth. But certain temperamental qualities seem to have favored the Irish here: the same which led to Nova Scotia's establishment of political equality among men of all Churches half a dozen years before it was established in Britain.[13]

Although Stewart uses the expression "we Irish" throughout his book *The Irish in Nova Scotia* nevertheless there can be no doubt that he regarded himself, first and foremost, as a Canadian. This comes out very clearly in his paper "Carlyle and Canada." In this paper he praises Carlyle for being one of the few voices in the Britain of the 1850's raised in support of continued ties with Canada in spite of the claims of Downing Street that "we are losing money on the business."

> It was the current doctrine that these dominions of the Crown had a sort of senti-

> mental charm ... but that, like the proverbial white elephant, they cost far more than they were worth, that in the end Canada, for instance, was sure to break away, and that whether the change took the form of subjection to the United States or that of setting up an independent government the mother country would gain far more than she would lose.[14]

Stewart writes as a Canadian, admittedly a Canadian who wishes to retain some ties with Britain, when he declares "there is not now a true Canadian whose pulse is not quickened and whose blood is not stirred as he turns back to Carlyle's passages of withering scorn towards those who would have acquiesced in a breach with the British commonwealth across the seas."[15] Stewart did reject Carlyle's proposed solution. "He would send out a 'real Governor of Men', one of his heaven-inspired heroes, to hold office for a prolonged period, to treat rebellion with salutory rigour. . . ."[16] Stewart prefers self-government:

> We all know, as Liberals knew even then, that such a plan would have defeated the purpose it was meant to serve.... We know among the chief roots of the Canadian loyalty in which we now exult is that system of free self-governing institutions which were once branded as the parent of revolt.[17]

Herbert Leslie Stewart should be regarded as a Canadian idealist in the tradition of Blewett, Young, Watson, and others in that period of distinctive philosophical thought in Canada. He begins his book *The Irish in Nova Scotia* with the following sentence: "The purpose of this book is twofold, local and wider than local." This statement is profound in its simplicity for it expresses perfectly what ought to be the fundamental, underlying theme of all works in Canadian literature, imaginative, historical, and philosophical.

NOTES

1 Leslie Armour and Elizabeth Trott, *The Faces of Reason: An Essay on Philosophy and Culture in English Canada 1850-1950* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1981), p. 402.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 403.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 403.
4 H. L. Stewart, "Carlyle's Place in Philosophy," *The Monist*, 29 (1919), p. 170.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 180.
6 *Faces of Reason*, p. 4.
7 Margaret Atwood, *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 50.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
10 *Faces of Reason*, pp. 30-31.
11 *Monist*, p. 171.
12 H. L. Stewart, "Carlyle's Conception of Religion," *The American Journal of Theology* (1917), p. 56.
13 H. L. Stewart, *The Irish in Nova Scotia* (Kentville, N.S.: Kentville Publishing, 1949), p. 191.
14 H. L. Stewart, "Carlyle and Canada," *The Canadian Magazine of Politics, Science, Art and Literature*, 66, No. 4 (February 1921), p. 320.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 321.
16 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 322.

J. D. RABB

GREVE'S FIRST TRANSLATION

FELIX PAUL GREVE (Frederick Philip Grove) was one of the more productive translators in Germany in the first decade of this century. Greve sold approximately forty translations, mainly of British and French works, using his own name as well as the pseudonyms F. C. Gerden, Konrad Thorer, and Eduard Thorn.

When Greve disappeared from Germany in 1909, he had published not only many translations but also the two novels *Fanny Essler* (1905) and *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906). In addition, he had

published two pamphlets on Oscar Wilde (1903), as well as two privately printed works, the poetry collection *Wanderungen* and the verse drama *Helena und Damon* (both 1902). Until recently it had appeared that Greve's career changed abruptly in the early years of the century. In 1902 he had published — at his own expense — two short volumes of neo-romantic, almost esoteric verse; from 1903 on he was primarily a translator, working for money, whose own creative works, two naturalistic novels, are distinctly subsidiary.

There is, however, a booklet that connects the two seemingly disparate careers of Felix Paul Greve. The Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, West Germany, contains a pamphlet entitled *Lehren und Sprüche für die reifere Jugend (Teachings and Sayings for Grown Youths)* by Oscar Wilde, translated into German by Felix Paul Greve.[1] This pamphlet, twelve pages long, consists of fifty-three of Oscar Wilde's aphorisms without acknowledgement of any sources. This booklet has had a very tentative place in Greve/Grove scholarship. In the chronology of his edition of Grove's letters, Desmond Pacey mentioned "*Lehren und Sprüche von Oscar Wilde* (compilation)" as published in 1902, but did not give any further information.[2] No further reference has been made to this pamphlet. The latest bibliography, John Miska's *Frederick Philip Grove: A Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Material*, makes no mention of it. This circumstance is regrettable as the *Lehren und Sprüche* marks a significant change in Felix Paul Greve's career.

The general assumption has been that Greve's first translation apeared late in 1902 when the Insel Verlag in Leipzig published his versions of books by Robert Browning and Ernest Dowson, and the JCC Bruns Verlag in Minden issued his translations of three of Oscar Wilde's works.[3] The earliest record of Greve's activity as translator of foreign works into German has been a letter to the Insel Verlag, dated 2 August 1902, in which he offered his translation of Ernest Dowson's *Dilemmas* for publication. In that letter he states that he had translated "several works of those authors who either worked with [Oscar Wilde] or were his contemporaries. [*Dilemmas*] is the first of them to hand and ready to print."[4] The translators of that time had to work under considerably different circumstances than those of today. Translations were not commissioned; translators produced them on their own initiative and hoped to sell the finished products. Greve's statement, "For the Bruns Publishing Co. in Minden I have translated the principal works of Oscar Wilde,"[5] is therefore not quite true. He had simply managed to sell his translations to Bruns. Although these translations had not yet appeared in print, Greve did not mention in his letter the *Lehren und Sprüche*, which was the only evidence of his talents as translator that he could have given. He apparently did not think very highly of the pamphlet at this time, although only three months had passed since its publication.

As the letter shows, Greve had firmly embarked on a career as translator by August 1902, and he obviously knew how to go about it. This commitment to translation is rather surprising considering what is known about Greve's ambitions during the first half of 1902. Greve spent a lot of time, energy, and money trying to become a member of the group of neo-romantic poets and scholars who had gathered around the poet Stefan George. George's school of poetry — in many respects the German equivalent to the Aesthetic movement in Britain — had come to fame in the late 1890's and formed an important part of the *Jugendstil* phase of German art.

Although George did not strive for public fame, he nevertheless gave readings of his poetry, one of them at Friedrich-Wilhelms University in Bonn where Greve was a student at the time.[6]

Greve attempted to join the George circle during 1902 when he lived in Munich, the capital of the various *Jugendstil* factions. He had made the personal acquaintanceship of Friedrich Gundolf, the best-known and most scholarly of the George disciples, during 1901,[7] and seemed to have hoped that, like Gundolf, he would be able to pursue the dual career of poet and scholar. Although he neglected his duties as a university student, Greve managed to publish critical essays on Friedrich Nietzsche and Stendhal's novel *Lucien Leuwen*.[8] And he wrote poetry.

In February 1902, Felix Paul Greve published his first book, sixty pages of poetry, collected under the title *Wanderungen*. Probably with the financial support of his "friend and companion Herman F. C. Kilian,"[9] Greve acted as though he were already a member of the circle. His poems were closely modelled on those of George whom he celebrated — together with Nietzsche, Beethoven, and the romantic painter Alfred Böcklin — as one of the "Masters." He even had the book printed by Otto von Holten in Berlin, printer of almost everything the members of the George circle published. However, a very important feature was missing. The book was not published by the Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, the publishing company owned and operated by the George circle. Instead, Greve had it printed at his own — or, more likely, Kilian's — expense and then gave it to Jakob Littauer's art store in Munich to sell on commission. In April 1902, Greve followed the same procedure with his verse drama *Helena und Damon*, which, in spite of its three-coloured print and beautiful lettering, received even less critical response than *Wanderungen*.[10]

Greve did, however, make some progress toward a personal relationship with George. On 16 May 1902, Greve visited George, at his invitation. Two weeks later he sent George a letter containing translations from the poetry collection *Der Teppich des Lebens*.[11] These were not his own translations but those of Daisy Broicher, a young American who had published the first English translations of George's poetry the year before. George had asked Greve, whose command of English he knew of, to review these translations before he decided to give Daisy Broicher the permission to publish them. This is the earliest evidence we have of Greve using his knowledge of foreign languages to translate literature, even though he was only reviewing a translation rather than producing it himself, and the translation was from and not into German. This assignment constitutes the closest Greve ever came to being accepted into the circle. He obviously thought that his breakthrough was imminent. This gave him so much self-confidence that in the letter in which he offered his translation of Dowson's *Dilemmas* to the Insel Verlag he referred to "my friend Karl Wolfskehl," phrased his proposal in a way that might have been appropriate for a very well-reputed translator, and included a not very modest demand for financial reward.

At the same time that he tried to launch his career as a translator, Greve still kept alive the option of becoming a poet within the George circle. The only reference to the *Lehren und Sprüche* which we have is a letter that the Dutch poet Albert Verwey sent to Karl Wolfskehl in late July 1902. Verwey was at that time the co-editor of the *Blätter für die Kunst*, the editorial outlet of the George movement. Although he does not

have much praise for the text which Greve translated, Verwey still has confidence in Greve's ability as a poet and "still ha[s] it in mind to present him in the magazine later on when [he has] got something more."[13]

On 27 August 1902, Greve submitted some of his own poetry to the *Blätter für die Kunst,* but George, who had the final decision in everything concerning the magazine, considered it as "too little to serve as introduction."[14] As the *Lehren und Sprüche* prove, Greve had by that time been involved in translating longer and more deeply than has been thought so far, and we can speculate that the effort he needed for his translations took away too much energy to allow him to write sufficient and good enough poetry to have it accepted by George.

The details of the *Lehren und Sprüche* invite the thought that this little pamphlet documents the turning point in Greve's career. It was printed "on order of the translator in an edition of 150 copies by J. Gotteswinter in Munich in May 1902," and was sold on commission in Jakob Littauer's art store. Greve thus combined his old outlet at Littauer with his new activity as translator. It is interesting that Greve chose a new printer. Instead of working again with von Holten, whose association with the George circle was only too clear, he chose a local printer in Munich who produced a very modest-looking booklet quite different from the exquisite *Helena und Damon.* Gotteswinter was presumably also a less expensive printer than von Holten. Apparently, what mattered to Greve at the moment was not to have as beautiful a book as possible — as he had attempted with *Helena und Damon* —but to publish a translation almost regardless of its physical appearance. This explains why Greve chose this rather unusual way of publishing a translation. The idea of the restricted audience and very small editions — rarely more than a few hundred copies — were very important for the elitist George circle. But they had used this policy for their own creations, not for translations. Greve's rationale must have been different.

An explanation may lie in Greve's economic situation in May 1902. He was trying to join the members of the George circle, most of whom were well-established scholars or independently wealthy artists. Greve tried to imitate them, in social behaviour as well as in creative work. But not having money of his own, he had to borrow considerable sums. According to Douglas Spettigue's calculations, Greve owed about $13,000 at the time of his imprisonment in May 1903, most of it to his friend Herman Kilian.[15] Although Greve lived very extravagently in the months before his arrest, he was already considerably indebted in 1902, and apparently saw himself in a situation where he had to use his talents in order to earn money rather than to establish his fame as an artist.

The idea of using his knowledge of foreign languages to solve his financial problems may easily have come from his contact with the George circle. George's poetry was beginning to gain attention outside Germany, and Greve's work on the translation of the *Teppich des Lebens* poems shows his connection to the circle. The translation of foreign poetry into German was also acceptable in George's philosophy. The *Blätter für die Kunst* featured translations regularly, among them works by Mallarmé, Verlaine, Swinburne, Dowson, and Rossetti; George himself translated Baudelaire, Dante, and Shakespeare. The translating done by the George poets was, however, quite different from the translating Greve would later be required to do. The George ideal was not fidelity to the literary original but "a repetition of the original creative process in another lan-

guage."[16] Greve's translation of Wilde's aphorisms can thus be considered within the limits of Georgean aesthetics as long as it served purely artistic purposes. But Greve wanted more than that; he wanted money.

Publishing a translation of Oscar Wilde's aphorisms appeared to Greve as a way to earn money easily and thus begin to solve his financial problems. Not having a university degree might help him. The publishers would consider him less expensive than an established scholar, and it would thus be easier for him to sell his translations once his name was known. The contents of the pamphlet were not only justifiable to his literary friends, but the booklet also came into a market in which there was an interest in Oscar Wilde and thus the possibility of profit. In this context the content of the pamphlet becomes significant, even more so as it answers questions which have been asked for a long time.

The structure of the translation is remarkably simple. The first 36 epigrams are a translation — in the original order — of "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," which Oscar Wilde had published in 1894. The only alteration is that Greve split the twelfth epigram, "Pleasure is the one thing one should live for. Nothing ages like happiness," into two separate aphorisms. The remaining seventeen aphorisms are taken from *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband.*

Although not one of his major pieces, the "Phrases and Philosophies" did nevertheless play an important role in Wilde's biography. The aphorisms were printed in the Oxford undergraduate magazine *The Chameleon* in 1894. During Wilde's first trial of April 1895, the prosecutor used the aphorisms to attack Wilde as immoral and blasphemous, interpreting them in a way that contributed directly to Wilde's ruin. Greve felt a strong sympathy, even adoration, for Wilde, and may have felt justified in publishing these aphorisms if only to demonstrate to his audience the claim, "Anything is good that stimulates thought in whatever age," with which Wilde defended the "Phrases and Philosophies" in court.[17] He would translate Wilde's sayings in the same spirit that Wilde had written them. Greve's participation in the creation would be almost as large as Wilde's was for the original. The sayings would be Greve's as much as Wilde's, and if he were attacked because of his publication, Greve might even be able to feel like a German Oscar Wilde.

The other 17 aphorisms of the pamphlet are, however, more important than the "Phrases and Philosophies" because they contain clues important for the establishment of Greve's activity during 1902. They are, as mentioned above, excerpts from *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband.* Greve's relationship to these plays is included in the *Collected Works* under the title *Bunbury* in 1906; a separate publication of this translation is not known. There has been no indication so far that Greve ever translated *An Ideal Husband.* We do, however, have circumstantial evidence that Greve was far more active as translator during 1902 than has been assumed. The only suggestion of this activity, apart from the letter to the Insel Verlag of August 1902, has been a letter from Greve to Friedrich Gundolf in which he stated that in October 1902, the Kleines Theater, Berlin, would perform four plays by Oscar Wilde which he had translated.[18] But further information may be found in the article "Oscar Wilde in Deutschland," where Max Mayerfeld states that the Kleines Theater, Berlin, had performed two Oscar Wilde plays, *Salome* and *Bunbury,* in late 1902.[19] Mayerfeld does not give any information as to who translated these plays — he

only mentions Greve as one of several translators of Wilde's fiction — but it is very unlikely that Greve would have mentioned these plays to Gundolf when the latter might have had the chance to find out that Greve had not translated them after all.

Thus several further pieces of the Greve puzzle can be put together. In May 1902, Greve appears to have translated *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband*. At the end of the year two plays were performed which Greve claimed to have translated. One of them was *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which was performed under the same title that Greve uesd for the printed translation four years later, *Bunbury*. If one takes into account that some time is needed to prepare the production of a play and that no other translations existed at the time, one can conclude that Greve did in fact translate for the Kleines Theater and that at least two of the plays were already translated in May 1902. Therefore the *Lehren und Sprüche* should not be regarded primarily as a translation of the "Phrases and Philosophies" with a few additions to make the booklet a bit longer, but rather as a byproduct of Greve's translation of the plays to which the aphorisms made a welcome complement.

The *Lehren und Sprüche* mark the critical point in Greve's career. He apparently hoped to make money while combining his fascination for Oscar Wilde and his desire to introduce his works to Germany. He did not — and could not — foresee that his aspirations as a poet were irreconcilable with his need to make a living, and that he would have to decide one way or another. It appears, however, that the decision was almost automatic, that the poet had lost as soon as the translator began his work. Mayerfeld's article suggests that Bruns published Greve's translation of Wilde's *Intentions* in 1902 rather than in 1903.[20] We can assume that by autumn, 1902, Greve had translated at least the four plays, *Intentions*, and Dowson's *Dilemmas*, and that he was working on Walter Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*.[21] This activity did not leave him enough time for his own creative work. The *Lehren und Sprüche* mark the one point at which Greve still believed himself capable of combining both careers in the same way that George, Gundolf, and Wolfskehl had managed to do. He would learn the truth soon afterward.

In his essay "Oscar Wilde und das Drama" Greve would point out several years later why Wilde had not achieved the artistic heights to which he had aspired. One cannot help but think that here Greve once again felt kinship to Wilde. "It was a strange conflict: he wanted to do better, believed he could achieve the best; he wanted fame, and he needed money."[22]

NOTES

1 Oscar Wilde, *Lehren und Sprüche für die reifere Jugend*, deutsch von Felix Paul Greve, In Commission: J. Littauer Kunsthandlung, Munich [1902], 12 pp.

2 *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey, Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976, p. xxvii.

3 In a letter to Friedrich Gundolf, Greve mentions having translated four plays by Oscar Wilde for the Kleines Theater, Berlin, in October 1902. (See Douglas O. Spettigue, *FPG: The European Years*, Ottawa: Oberon, 1973, pp. 73, 240.) This claim has not yet been substantiated; no trace of a printed version has been found yet.

4 *Letters*, p. 516.

5 *Ibid.*

6 Spettigue, p. 58.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

8 "*Lucien Leuwen*," *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Munich), Supplement No. 224 (30 September 1901), pp. 1-2. "*Nachgelassene Werke von Friedrich Nietzsche* (Band 11

und 12, herausgegeben von Ernst und August Horneffer)," *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Munich), Supplement No. 235 (12 October 1901), pp. 6-7.

[9] Dedication in Felix Paul Greve, *Wanderungen*, In Commission: J. Littauer Kunsthandlung, Munich [1902]. Greve apparently never repaid the considerable sums he owed Kilian who eventually sued him for the money (see Spettigue, pp. 93-99).

[10] Apart from Greve's self-review in *Die Zukunft* (Vol. 39, No. 4, 26 April 1902, p. 64) only one review of *Wanderungen* is known. In *Die Insel* (Vol. 3, 1901-02, pp. 195-96), Otto J. Bierbaum attacked the poems as "empty Aestheticism," the author as an "Aesthete without taste." No review of *Helena und Damon* is known.

[11] H. J. Seekamp, R. C. Ockenden, M. Keilson, *Stefan George — Leben und Werk: Eine Zeittafel*, Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1972, p. 125.

[12] *Letters*, p. 516. The poet and translator Karl Wolfskehl was one of the central figures of the George circle. He was one of the earliest and most consistent contributors of the *Blätter für die Kunst* which he co-edited for several years. His residence in Munich was the social centre of the circle (see Michael Winkler, *George-Kreis*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1972, pp. 32-39). Greve enjoyed Wolfskehl's friendship for a relatively short time in 1901-02.

[13] Quoted in Spettigue, p. 73. Spettigue identifies the Wilde aphorisms that Verway mentions as having received from Greve as the translation of Wilde's *Intentions* which did, however, not appear until late in 1902.

[14] *Stefan George — Friedrich Gundolf, Briefwechsel*, eds. Robert Boehringer and Georg Peter Landmann, Munich and Düsseldorf: Küpper, 1962, p. 120. It is not known which poems Greve submitted. All that is left is an empty envelope.

[15] Spettigue, p. 95, quotes a contemporary newspaper article on Greve's trial. The 29,000 Marks said to be his debt cannot be compared to $13,000 today. How much the 29,000 Marks actually were can be derived from the fact that even when he flooded the publishers with translations, Greve's yearly income was only between 7,000 and 8,000 Marks (Spettigue, p. 96).

[16] Winkler, p. 27.

[17] *The Epigrams of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Alvin Redman, London and Sydney: Alvin Redman Ltd., 1952, p. 227.

[18] See Spettigue, pp. 73, 240.

[19] Max Meyerfeld, "Oscar Wilde in Deutschland," *Das literarische Echo*, 5, No. 7, January 1903, Col. 459.

[20] The book itself does not give a date of publication.

[21] See his letter to Robert v. Poellnitz, 19 September 1902. *Letters*, p. 519.

[22] Felix Paul Greve, "Oscar Wilde und das Drama," *Vera oder die Nihilisten* (*Oscar Wildes Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 7), Vienna and Leipzig: Wiener Verlag, 1908, p. 58.

AXEL KNOENAGEL

QUOI DE NEUF DANS L'OUEST CANADIEN-FRANÇAIS?

A JUGER D'APRES le nombre de livres publiés au Manitoba, ces deux dernières années, par les deux maisons d'édition francophones, la création littéraire dans l'ouest canadien se porte bien. Pièces de théâtre, romans, oeuvres poétiques, livres d'enfants, livres historiques, tout s'y trouve, dans une variété à la fois capricieuse et équilibrée. Dans cette production abondante, les ouvrages littéraires ont un air de famille: leur trait commun est le désir de renouveau, à la fois dans l'inspiration et dans l'écriture.

Jusqu'à présent, nous avions pu constater le fort penchant que manifestaient les auteurs dramatiques et romanesques pour l'option réaliste, voire naturaliste, dans leurs oeuvres. Notre article "Le théâtre au Manitoba français"[1] faisait ressortir la prépondérance des tranches de vie réalistes et des drames historiques dans la production théâtrale étudiée, tandis que l'étude que nous avons intitulée: "Pour une esthétique du miroir?"[2] analysait les raisons de ce penchant dans deux romans relevant de la même esthétique.

Or les oeuvres récentes révèlent une volonté de dépassement de celle-ci. Un exemple nous en est déjà fourni par deux pièces de théâtre réunies dans le livre *Aucun motif,* publié fin 1983. L'adoption d'une nouvelle approche se confirme, à partir de 1984, dans le domaine de la poésie en particulier. *A la façon d'un charpentier* de Paul Savoie, poète déjà reconnu, en illustre le courant. Par ailleurs, une bonne partie de la nouvelle création poétique sera mise en valeur par une collection lancée par les Editions du Blé, intitulée ROUGE, et qui donne la parole à des "innovateurs" comme A. Amprimoz, Ch. Leblanc et J. R. Léveillé, lui-même représentatif de l'audace novatrice de ces autres. En quoi consistent donc ces récentes approches?

Edification d'une demeure poetique

Voici le livre[3] d'un poète qui n'a plus besoin de faire ses preuves ni au Manitoba dont il est originaire ni dans l'est canadien. *A la façon d'un charpentier,* paru en fin de 1984, sera déjà le troisième livre de Paul Savoie publié par les Editions du Blé depuis 1974. Cependant, cette dernière oeuvre paraît plus ambitieuse, plus rénovatrice que ses soeurs aînées, dans la mesure où elle tente d'intégrer dans une construction audacieuse toute la matière première de l'auteur. L'air de parenté entre *A la façon d'un charpentier* et *Aucun motif* tient avant tout à la volonté structurale qui prend le pas, dans les deux oeuvres, sur les préoccupations de contenu. Les deux auteurs semblent hantés par l'arbitraire ou la fragmentation des mondes imaginaires créés, tout en se plaisant dans le jeu de miroirs et les dédales de la création poétique ou romanesque et de la production théâtrale. Devant l'abandon total du récit linéaire et de l'homogénéïté de genre, l'intérêt se déplace vers les modes de gestation artistique et l'organisation géométrique de cette matière précieuse. Au regain de théâtralité dans les pièces de Rhéal Cenerini répond un souci de littérarité chez Paul Savoie.

Un ordre géométrique

L'attrayante couverture à suggestions géométriques du livre de Savoie ainsi que son titre, évocateur de minutie artisanale et constructrice, en disent long sur les préoccupations d'assemblage de matériaux et d'édification d'une demeure poétique. Le poème de la fin qui a fourni son titre au volume, en affirme la volonté: "Je récolterai des épaves / pour en faire une maison de souvenirs / et d'échos." La géométrie soignée du livre et la symétrie présidant à l'organisation du temps et de l'espace, en sept parties se répondant exactement, trahissent comme une obsession de la régularité et de l'arrangement, le souci de mettre à tout prix de l'ordre dans le monde désorganisé et fragmenté, de créer un assemblage fait d'instantanés et de bribes. Chacune des sept étapes (image des sept jours de la création du monde?) est morcelée en sept moments dont les titres et la disposition sont identiques d'une étape à l'autre. Ces titres relèvent à la fois de l'évocation du temps et de l'espace: "Première étape: Jalons I; Dimensions I; Paroles I; Reflets I; Journal (1964. Saint-Boniface); Instantanés I; Correspondances I." La plupart des poèmes se trouvent sous ces deux derniers titres, alors que les morceaux narratifs les plus importants figurent sous celui de "Dimensions." Les oeuvres graphiques (ou photographiques) fournies par le concours de sept artistes se trouvent insérées après "Journal." Les termes "jalons" et "dimensions" sont particulièrement révélateurs du mouvement spatio-temporel: les jalons indiquent les points de repère d'un tracé à faire, alors que les dimensions donnent à ces jalons une assise élargie dans l'espace. Une telle

armature rigide souligne une progression ordonnée par un réseau de correspondances.

Entre Icare et Dédale

Cette charpente solide semble d'autant plus nécessaire que les matériaux eux-mêmes sont des plus flous et émiettés. Une telle opposition entre "forme et fond" correspond en fait au deux pôles de l'imaginaire du poète. A la lecture des "bribes" poétiques ou narratives assemblées, on est à prime abord frappé par le côté aérien de l'inspiration. L'esprit du poète penche naturellement vers l'envol dans un ciel animé de chevauchées fantastiques, habité d'un "soleil bousculé," de nuages qui vagabondent et se transforment en gueule de dragon ... "Un jour j'écrirai un livre fait de voie lactée et d'étoiles filantees," affirme-t-il déjà dans le premier des sept "Journaux" (daté de 1964). Son état habituel est le rêve lui permettant de "voler par la force du désir" ou de flotter à la dérive, à l'abri de la pesanteur et enveloppé de silence. Dans ce "glissement de l'imaginaire," le poète est alors soumis à d'incessantes métamorphoses où une toile devient miroir, puis fenêtre, puis filet d'eau, iris ... "à la pointe extrême du rêve."

Ou alors, le mouvement se fait en forme de spirale, soit dans un sens ascendant, comme dans cet escalier où le rêve l'emprisonne, soit dans le sens de la chute, le poète tombant en arrière dans le vide "en faisant des pirouettes dans l'air." Vol ascendant vers la lumière et chute dans le vide sont captés dans l'aventure d'Icare, en début de volume, dans un texte d'une grande densité poétique. Alors que l'expérience d'être enfermé dans le mouvement et les lignes d'une spirale est traduite de façon exemplaire par le motif récurrent du dédale qui s'affirme particulièrement dans "Correspondances III." Au complexe de l'éclatement et de l'absorption par le vide répond celui de l'emprisonnement et de la perte dans le labryinthe des lignes. N'oublions pas la complémentarité de ces deux mythes: Dédale, architecte et prisonnier du labyrinthe, entraîne son fils Icare dans la fuite, par un envol audacieux et voué à l'échec. Ces deux figures forment comme les deux piliers de l'imaginaire du poète, dont ils concrétisent les tentations et les dangers auxquels celui-ci se heurte.

Comme l'illustrent ces deux cas, l'univers poétique de Savoie est hanté par l'omniprésence des lignes. Tout et tous en tracent, sous forme de dessins involontaires: le ciel, le soleil, les nuages, les mains, les regards; des "lignes qui se touchent, des lignes qui se croisent." Seulement, deux dangers contraires menacent cette génération spontanée de tracés: leur rupture et leur émiettement d'une part (comme le vit Icare), ou la formation incontrôlée de barrières, de murs et de dédales dont on n'arrive plus à se dégager. Le poète vit dans le malaise ces dangers qui le guettent, celui de la fragmentation de son élan créateur ("je me nourris de miettes") et celui d'une prison transparente constituée par les barrières de son individualité. Car chose curieuse, les murs du dédale sont faits soit de miroirs, soit de verre. Dans le premier cas, le poète vit l'expérience douloureuse de Narcisse (motif développé dans "Dimensions II"), dans le second cas, il s'éprouve comme "voyeur," barricadé derrière des murs de verre, ne comprenant pas les signes que lui font les autres: "c'est moi qui regarde de l'intérieur d'une maison transparente." D'où la sensation d'une "solitude crue," d'une distance inévitable à l'égard d'autrui, même des femmes aimées. D'où aussi cette impression malaisée de manquer d'horizon, de n'être qu'un "déplacement replié sur lui-même" (III), qu'"une mobilité dans l'attente" et de

cultiver "l'habileté de vivre en spirales sur point fixe."

Ce mouvement tronqué, condamné à rester prisonnier de sa propre impulsion, est vécu comme malédiction contre laquelle le poète se révolte. Pour échapper à ce "désespoir amorti," il cherche à "défoncer les barrières," à se "débarasser d'une ligne, d'une barrière, d'un tracé, d'une configuration" non volontaires. Savoie est fondamentalement à la recherche du "point de convergence" de ces traces fortuites, d'un "centre de gravité" personnel lui permettant alors de donner forme à ce chaos, de devenir dompteur de lignes, et donc *constructeur*. Le dernier poème trace un tel programme dans un futur prometteur: "A la façon d'un charpentier / je palperai cette clairière / pour tracer l'aire de vie . . . / Je récolterai les épaves pour en faire une maison de souvenirs / et d'échos."

Une gestation poétique

Or un tel travail de charpentier poétique sera possible à l'auteur grâce à l'écriture. Pourtant, son rapport spontané aux mots semble souffrir d'un malaise analogue à celui qu'il éprouve face à autrui, subissant une même hantise d'inachevé et d'impossible communication. Dès le première page, il préfère une "image agréable" aux mots dont il se méfie, car ils ne savent pas traduire l'expérience vécue: "Ils ne sont que reflets et moi je ne connais que ruptures." Ils semblent en outre avoir une redoutable indépendance: "Je parle mais les mots dictent eux-mêmes la portée des voyelles / et des consonnes / Je parle et personne n'écoute / Les mots coulent sur moi." D'où la préférence accordée au silence, au rêve; d'où les difficultés de rapports avec les autres dont un mur de verre sépare le poète, comme si les échanges se faisaient dans une langue étrangère.

Et pourtant, il est évident que sa voie de salut passe par les mots: il s'agit d'apprivoiser leur étrangeté et d'en faire des matériaux flexibles de construction. Nous assistons ainsi tout à travers le livre à ce corps-à-corps à la fois épuisant et exaltant avec l'écriture, qui se précise à travers ses différentes phases de gestation. D'une part, le poète nous livre ses impressions et expériences vécues dans leur pêle-mêle et leur discontinuité naturelles, avec la simple ponctuation de quelques points de repère chronologiques. Cet exercice doit lui permettre, reconnaît-il, de donner un certain ordre à ses pensées, de servir de "point de mire" sur la réalité et d'aboutir à une synthèse spatio-temporelle du vécu, si "désorganisé, fragmenté" est le monde, tel qu'il lui apparaît. Mais déjà, cette rédaction d'un "journal" débouche sur une réflexion sur l'écriture et ses problèmes-pour l'auteur, soumis à la hantise de l'émiettement: "Mon vocabulaire (. . .) se fait plutót de bribes, d'approximations. J'ai un talent naturel pour l'embrouillement, pour l'à peu près. Je ne suis jamais capable de 'raconter des histoires'. Je perds toujours le fil. . . ." Cette nostalgie du fil conducteur est en rapport avec les images du labyrinthe et du fil, toujours cassé, qui permettrait d'en sortir. . . .

Mais la réflexion sur l'écriture ne se limite point à ce constat négatif. Car dès la première des sept étapes du livre, on nous livre des morceaux rédigés, soit des poèmes, soit des textes narratifs cristallisant l'imaginaire du poète, tels que "Icare," "Narcisse," "le dédale." Ces derniers sont excellents dans leur économie narrative, ainsi que par la richesse poétique des images et l'usage personnel des mythes. D'autres poèmes comme "Je l'ai vue s'envoler," "Une femme à sa fenêtre" et surtout "A la façon d'un charpentier" font apparaître, dans un scintillement léger, la poétique de Paul Savoie: donner un nom à ce qui l'en-

toure, cultiver la tendresse du regard, accorder droit de cité au rêve et consigner le tout par petites touches fines, reliées entre elles par la magie de la métamorphose.

Pour une esthétique du masque

Par ailleurs, la deuxième partie du livre nous met en présence d'une gestation romanesque originale. Celle-ci s'annonce par une série de réflexions sur des tentatives de l'auteur en ce domaine, soumises aux mêmes critiques désabusées que celles du journal: "ce n'est que babillage, paroles sans âme, personnages sans direction. (. . .) Ils ne sont que des traces, des raptures." Cependant, plus loin, on tombe sur un plan de roman, faisant état du processus créateur et de la conception romanesque de l'auteur. Celle-ci est tout à fait remarquable, car elle jette une lumière à la fois sur les assises des autres créations, poétiques et narratives, et sur l'embryon romanesque présenté dans la septième étape. Savoie fait un rapprochement avec la théorie musicale de la composition, aspire à une "structure moléculaire," souligne l'importance du rêve et cherche à se concentrer sur les "images de disjonction." Dans la même foulée, il s'intéresse au masque qui, d'après lui, n'est pas une barrière mais un tamis: "Il est réfraction du monde extérieur." Or les pages rédigées du roman s'intitulent précisément "Les masques."

Savoie fait pour la première fois allusion à ce titre dans le journal de la sixième étape où il dit avoir repris son travail sur "Les masques," laissés de côté plusieurs années. Il nous présente les deux personnages de Catherine et Mik, qui commencent à l'habiter et même à s'imposer à l'auteur, contre son gré. Et dans la dernière étape, il nous livre seize pages de cette création romanesque, le noyau sans doute, sorte de nébuleuse, de l'oeuvre prévue. Le titre en est parlant: le masque est à la fois distance protrectrice, critique, et ouverture canalisée sur l'univers. Il marque le passage de l'individualité paralysante (vécue comme "maison de verre") à la création artistique où le regard joue comme tamis, réfractant le monde selon une ordonnance secrète. Or le motif principal de ces quelques pages denses est justement le regard, celui que chacun des deux amants porte sur l'autre regard suivi d'un cortège d'images et de perceptions. Ces regards qui "se croisent, se compénètrent" forment un appel auquel répondent les corps, comme la création artistique répond à l'appel de l'artiste. Car Mik, dans cette nébuleuse romanesque, crée devant Catherine une petite sculpture féminine en bois, imparfaite mais essentielle, à l'instar de l'auteur écrivant ces pages de roman. Une telle création, dans l'amour ou dans l'oeuvre, se traduit à son tour par un regard, celui qu'aurait un rescapé:

> Ce regard cherche à arrêter la trop grande force des choses. Tour à tour, il suspend le corps dans un très grand attachement à la vie et dans un cri désespéré, un retranchement de la vie. Ce regard: l'équilibre qui reste après la tension extrême, après le choc initial suivi d'un instant d'angoisse suivi d'une acceptation, presque un orgasme, un certain essoufflement puis l'engouffrement dans le sommeil.

Cet équilibre fragile, cette synthése d'un monde tamisé et apaisé par le regard, après une phase quasi orgastique de la conception artistique, est la marque particulière de la création littéraire de Paul Savoie. L'originalité des "Masques" est de réunir en quelques pages fondamentales l'objet de l'oeuvre entière: perception du monde et d'autrui selon des images de disjonction, souci d'une structuration du perçu par le regard tamisant, réflexion sur le processus créateur, et présentation de celui-ci en action. Cette esquisse romanesque forme comme le blason, en une "composition en abîme"

(à la manière d'un Gide) d'*A la façon d'un charpentier*: le roman dans le roman de la création de Paul Savoie, construit aussi sur le modèle d'une fugue de Bach, avec ses variantes, enchevêtrements et échos multiples.

La parenté avec une conception baroque de l'oeuvre, perçue dans *Acun motif*, est frappante. Même goût du masque permettant d'effecteur un dédoublement de l'identité par le déguisement et d'entretenir une distance critique par rapport aux réalités perçues. Même mise en évidence des processus créateurs: marques du jeu théâtral chez l'un, et composition en abîme chez l'autre. Devant cette prédilection commune pour les jeux de miroirs, le récepteur est appelé à jouer un rôle actif dans la constitution du sens de l'oeuvre. La structure ouverte de celle-ci accorde au lecteur une place de choix: on lui demande d'abandonner son jeu de consommateur passif pour exercer ses capacités créatrices à son tour, au delà du tracé discontinu et maintes fois réfracté du texte, proposé à la recréation du lecteur.

Pre-texte, texte et lecture dans

La collection ROUGE, lancée par les Editions du Blé et dirigée par J. R. Lévillé,[4] manifeste une franche volonté d'audace novatrice à laquelle ont donné libre cours les trois auteurs qui y sont entrés: Leblanc, Amprimoz et Leveillé. Le livre de ce dernier, *L'Incomparable*, est représentatif de ce courant, tout en gardant des liens de parenté marqués avec les deux oeuvres étudiées plus haut.

Le dessin originel de *L'Incomparable*, qui était conçu comme étude sur la poétesse grecque Sappho, a connu des mutations importantes, à la suite d'influences décisives subies par l'auteur. En fait, Sappho est un pur prétexte qui s'avoue comme tel. Ce point de départ représente une maigre partie du livre: quelques vers cités, quelques aperçus sur la vie et la légende de la poétesse, quelques énumérations sur les coutumes alimentaires et vestimentaires de l'époque sont là pour donner une "image de grécité." Sur les dix-sept sections titrées du livre, il n'y en a que six qui font directement référence à Sappho. Les autres la prennent, au mieux, comme point de départ d'une réflexion sur l'écriture en général et sur le livre, qui est en train de s'écrire sous nos yeux, en particulier. Le lien très lâche établi entre le prétexte et le texte, entre Sappho et cette osculation de l'écriture, est le jeu de mot entre lyre et lire ainsi qu'une recherche sur le nom de Sappho, qui était appelée Psappha en dialecte éolien, alors que "le termes hébraïque Sapha veut dire littéralement la 'lèvre' et désigne par extension, le langage." Sappho, comme incarnation de la langue, sert de tremplin pour des envolées capricieuses dans les "imaginaires du langage" où les mots, "monade(s) magique(s)," s'appellent et s'organisent par personne interposée, c'est-à-dire par l'écrivain.

Un appétit d'incorporation

Or loin de simplement se contenter de consigner cette génération spontanée des mots que lui dicte son prétexte, Léveillé fait jaillir de son propre texte d'autres discours (ceux d'écrivains ayant fécondé sa démarche associative) qui s'imbriquent dans le sien par un réseau compliqué de notes référant les unes aux autres, et inter-férant souvent. L'auteur dit à propos de "ce petit livre qui s'esquisse": "je sais que Ponge m'a donné une méthode et Baudelaire, une émotion —et Dueguy (dont il a emprunté le titre), un son de cloche." Si le prétexte est mince et le texte de l'auteur limité en étendue, le "sur-texte" par contre, celui des emprunts, est énorme. A part toutes les notes, inscrites en bleu dans le texts et tirées d'oeuvres très diverses, plusieurs sections du livre, sur les coutumes grecques en

particulier, sont transcrites presque directement d'un ouvrage anglais sur Sappho. "Ce sont notes, paraphrases et renseignements que je recueillais en faisant une recherche sur Sappho pour un livre que j'imaginais autre. Elles demeurent comme pré-texte. Elles sont incorporées au texts pour former un *fragment* totalisateur. . . ." Et le voilà qui se lance dans une apologie du plagiat avec force témoignages sur la nécessité de celui-ci, puisqu'il n'y a pas d'oeuvre individuelle et "qu'on prend son bien où on le trouve," selon une citation de Francis Ponge. Mais ce dernier avait ajouté: "Il s'agit simplement que cela soit utilisé de telle façon que le tout fasse quelque chose d'homogène." Or ce critère d'homogénéité est-il respecté par la méthode d'incorporation de fragments divers pratique dans *l'Incomparable.*

Le culte de la fragmentation

L'oeuvre de Sappho elle-même nous est parvenue fragmentée, et Léveillé en fait une vertu qui laisse à l'imagination le soin de "combler l'espace où la trace rapide du mot constitue une éclaircie." Loin d'être préjudiciable, cette présence fragmentaire nous porte vers le rêve et nous incite à une "lecture totale." Autrement dit, les trous textuels engagent le lecteur à exercer son propre pouvoir créateur. Et l'auteur semble vouloir stimuler celui-ci en nous livrant seulement quelques rares vers de la "plus que divine" poétesse! Cette parcimonie révèle en tout cas le propos de Léveillé dans *l'Incomparable*, propos auquel il désire associer le lecteur: tisser son text autour du prétexte. Peu importe au fond la poésie de Sappho, pourvu qu'elle déclenche chez l'auteur la production de son texte à lui qui incorpore à la fois ces points de départ, toutes les réflexions suscitées par eux et celles d'autres écrivains, susceptibles de gonfler le courant d'idées entraînant le poète. D'où le culte voué à sagesse infinie du texte," à sa "configuration inspirée," qui, à l'instar d'un tissu, se fait dans une composition perpétuelle, qui *nous* écrit: "c'est dire que je pourrais poursuivre ainsi sans jamais terminer le propos (pré-texte) que je suis." D'où aussi le goût du fragment dont se nourrit le text-tissu dans son travail d'incorporation d'éléments hétérogènes.

Ce travail est régi par une loi d'imbrication complexe dont la méthode est emprunté à Ponge, selon lequel l'agencement des éléments, "la façon de les mettre en rapport les uns avec les autres, comme des rouages qui se font fonctionner quand on les met ensemble . . . eh bien! c'est la mise en agencement des mots" qui se poursuit comme un "mouvement perpétuel."

Une telle "mise en orbite" d'éléments divers qui s'appellent les uns les autres est tentée par Léveillé dès la lettre liminaire de son livre où sont imbriques plusieurs discours. Après avoir cité quelques vers de Sappho, l'auteur adresse sa lettre à un "très mobile[1] ami**" dont "mobile" est commenté par la note 1 alors que "ami" est marqué par deux astérisques. Car un premier astérisque à la note 1 se référait au mot "dessin" qui, lui, était suscité par le mot "mobile" . . . A l'intérieur de ces trois annotations, Léveillé cite Valéry, *La Disparate* (le deuxième roman de l'auteur), Baudelaire et Rimbaud. Dans les cinq notes suivantes, il cite encore Ristat, Ponge et Barthes. Et dans la lettre même, il fait référence à Ponge, Baudelaire et cite un passage important de Mallarmé. Le texte même de Leveillé remplit à peine une page, alors que notes et citations en forment au moins deux.

"Un contrat tout critique"

Des proportions analogues sont établies entre "avant-textes" et texte. La lettre liminaire évoque très brièvement

l'oeuvre de Sappho, parle plus longuement de l'envoi du manuscrit, modifié à plusieurs reprises, d'un livre sur Sappho dont la version définitive sera celle que lira le récepteur. Mais la part essentielle de l'oeuvre est consacrée à la réflexion exaltée moins sur le livre que sur la formation d'un texte, en l'occurence celui que nous avons sous les yeux. Léveillé nous prévient qu'un "contrat tout critique et spécial pour la formulation de *l'Incomparable* a eu lieu," et le réseau important d'annotations, imprimé en bleu, est là pour corroborer l'intention critique et générative du livre, car toutes ces références aident à cerner le *trajet* tracé par le texte et le contrat que celui-ci établit avec le lecteur auquel l'auteur s'adresse ainsi: "remontez donc le fil d'araignée comme le fil d'Ariane pour tisser en comparaison une image de grécité."

Or la mise en rapport des éléments à tisser se fait par la comparaison, procédé artistique prédominant dans *l'Incomparable*. Le livre débute par un Eloge: "plus que la plus sublime / tu es divine"; éloge qui deviendra le motif de la douzième section, intitulée "Comparison," sorte de commentaire inspiré de l'image poétique, de sa puissance évocatrice et de son principe de rapprochements dissymétriques: "la comparaison implique un écart et un rapprochement, une différence et une interférence, une référence qui est préférence."

Ainsi, bien plus que de "grécité" et d'éloge, "c'est du *discours* dont il est question," et de l'écart, "lieu focal de la comparaison" qui est "don du texte." La majuscule X est censée signifier la dimension sexuelle de l'acte d'écrire qui est croisement de la vie et de la mort. Car selon Ponge cité par Léveillé, "il y a mort à la fois de l'auteur et mort de l'objet du désir, mettons de la chose, du pré-texte, du référent, pour que puisse naître le texte." Celui-ci est donc envisagé comme un vaste "circuit électrique" dont le lecteur seul peut établir le contact. La lecture devient ainsi un engagement important, un "acte de commutation" demandé au récepteur "qui fait le livre, lui-même, en le lisant" (Ponge, 13). Et cette activité constituante du lecteur est sollicitée en particulier, d'après l'auteur, par l'éloignement des termes confrontés, par une disparité à surmonter, par des lignes brisées, fragmentées. C'est au lecteur de faire les rapprochements, au delà des vides, de trouver le fil d'Ariane dans ce labyrinthe textuel et de faire passer le courant. Modèle exigeant du lecteur implicite!

Pour le plaisir du pastiche?

Il est clair que l'intérêt de *l'Incomparable* réside dans sa dimension critique, dans cette analyse de la naissance du discours, poétique en particulier, et des rapports engagés entre auteur- texte-lecteur. Leveillé désire explorer le lieu même de l'écriture, la frontière mobile entre le silence et la parole. Cependant, le critère d'homogénéité des éléments appelés et imbriquées reste problématique. Ponge avait à l'esprit la transformation des prémisses en matière autonome. Dans *l'Incomparable*, l'avalanche de citations de toutes sortes, de références, d'interférences, l'imbrication de discours très divers, loin de former un texte régi par ses propres lois, suscitent plutôt une impression de disparate, terme qui a d'ailleurs servi de titre au deuxième roman de l'auteur. Et pourtant, un lien entre ces discours hétérogènes serait à trouver dans le maniement (conscient?) du pastiche. Si celui-ci est l'imitation de la manière d'écrire d'autres écrivains, on pourrait voir dans le texte propre à l'auteur un amalgame de différentes écritures: Léveillé imite celle de Sappho, de Weigall, de Ponge, de Baudelaire, de Barthes . . . Si *l'Incomparable* est une sorte de carrefour multidimensionnel de styles poé-

tiques et critiques, où est alors le lieu même de l'écriture propre à Léveillé? Il nous est difficile d'en suivre la trace dans le labyrinthe des références, et mieux vaut la chercher dans son dernier roman *Plage*, publiéé également en 1984 . . .

* * *

A la façon d'un charpentier et *l'Incomparable* ont en commun de refuser une conception mimétique de la littérature et de s'intéresser avant tout à la naissance du discours: discours poétique et narratif dans le premier cas, discours poéticocritique dans le second. Pour les deux auteurs, le ou les motifs choisis sont prétexte à explorer les "imaginaires du langage" et les rouages de la création. Les motifs sont puisés dans les mythes antiques dont l'utilisation saugrenue et "moderne" permet de renouveler l'imaginaire collectif mis en relief par des procédés déconcertants. Ces procédés ont en commun de cultiver la fragmentation, la rupture de ton et de motifs, et la fusion d'éléments très divers. Le passage d'un fragment à l'autre se fait soit par le travail de la métamorphose, soit par la comparaison qui rapproche des termes en apparence éloignés. Tous deux partagent le souci d'une construction complexe où soient imbriqués des matériaux hétérogènes que l'écrivain-artisan (charpentier ou tisserand) devrait harmoniser. Leur assemblage formerait un labyrinthe où l'auteur d'abord et le lecteur à sa suite devraient trouver le fil d'Ariane leur permettant de relier les éléments structuraux et de constituer ainsi le sens caché de l'oeuvre. De simple consommateur d'une fiction se déroulant en ligne droite, le lecteur est promu au rang de collobora-teur actif dans la mise en orbite d'une création littéraire.

Or cet "acte de commutation" qu'est la lecture se complique encore par le jeu de miroirs affectionné par les deux auteurs: les murs du labyrinthe sont autant de miroirs reflétant le processus même de la création. Par une telle composition en abîme, en jeu dans les deux oeuvres, le lecteur est convié à participer à l'elaboration d'un noeud romanesque dans le "roman" de la formation artistique de Paul Savoie, et à suivre la comparaison de éloge que Léveillé fait de Sappho dont la poésie elle-même, dit-il, est une "confirmation en abîme" de l'essence de la comparaison. La création, en train de se faire, se reflète dans ce blason de l'oeuvre entière. . . . L'intérêt pour la littérarité, dans ces deux livres venus de l'ouest canadien-français, a pris la relève du souci reproduire fidèlement la réalité.

NOTES

1 "Le théâtre au Manitoba français," publié dans *La Revue d'histoire littéraire du Québec et du Canada français*, nº spécial *Le théâtre*, Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1984.

2 "Pour une esthétique du miroir?," à paraître dans la même revue, nº spécial *Frontières*, automne 1986.

3 Paul Savoie, *A la façon d'un charpentier*. Editions du Blé, 1984.

4 J. R. Léveillé, *L'Incomparable*. Editions du Blé, 1984.

INGRID JOUBERT

RAYMOND KNISTER'S HAND IN W. R. DENT'S "SHOW ME DEATH!"

READERS OF RAYMOND KNISTER'S work have long been aware of his connection to a Canadian war novel called *Show Me Death!* by Walter Redvers Dent, but the precise nature of Knister's involvement has never been investigated and ascertained. Knister's only published statement regarding the book occurs in a letter to Lorne Pierce quoted by Dorothy Livesay in her introduction to Knis-

ter's *Collected Poems.* In enumerating his qualifications for an editorial post at the Ryerson Press, Knister noted that "[o]ne of the best and most popular war novels was rewritten completely by me — on a lump sum basis unfortunately."[1] In light of this statement, Anne Burke, in her bibliography of Knister, merely states that "evidence indicating the degree of Knister's input [in the novel] is scanty."[2]

In the absence of any Dent papers, most particularly a manuscript of *Show Me Death!*, the exact nature and extent of Knister's involvement in the novel cannot be demonstrated.[3] Certain surviving letters and documents, however, enable one to form a fairly accurate picture in general terms of the publication history of the book and of how Knister came to be associated with Dent. W. R. Dent is himself an obscure figure (Grove's prediction, that Dent "has done in that book of his what he can do [. . .] I do not believe that he will ever write another book worth printing,"[4] was largely accurate); a brief biographical may therefore be helpful. Dent was born in Toronto in 1900, where he attended Humberside Collegiate. He left school at 15 or 16 to join the army, and served with the 5th Battalion of the Canadian Mounted Rifles in 1916-17, and with the Siberian Expeditionary Force in 1918-19. After the war he attended St. Chad's College in Regina, from which he received a Licentiate in Theology in 1924. After his ordination the following year he served in several parishes in Canada until the publication of *Show Me Death!* in 1930.[5] Dent himself stated that "when I wrote a book on world war one that had some nasty phrases in it, [I] thought I had better resign from the ministry and take up writing as a career, which I did and never regretted it."[6] Thereafter Dent seems to have worked as a journalist; articles and stories by him were published in *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night* among other magazines. Following the Second World War he became editor of the *British Columbia Financial Times.* Dent claimed to "have had two million or more words published" during his career.[7]

On the evidence of the surviving correspondence, Dent seems to have submitted a manuscript called "Why Smitest Thou Me" to Macmillan of Canada in late 1928 or early 1929. It had been written, according to Thomas Murtha, in Medicine Hat during an illness.[8] Dent acknowledged receipt of a contract for his novel in a letter to Macmillan dated 31 January 1929.[9] Macmillan was also Raymond Knister's publisher, and apparently Knister was hired as a free-lance editor to work on Dent's manuscript. Dent, at any rate, noted in an undated letter to Macmillan: "I have not heard from Mr. Knister yet, but hope to do so any day now."[10] Hugh Eayrs, the president of the Macmillan Company, wrote in reply to Dent's letter: "I am happy to say that the work of editing is going on nicely. No doubt Mr. Knister will be communicating with you."[11] Knister must have contacted Dent shortly thereafter; none of the three groups of Knister papers contains a carbon of any letter, but Dent's reply (dated 15 March 1929) is extant. The contents of this letter are not explicit regarding Knister's precise role in the evolution of the manuscript at this stage; but certainly it gives one a strong impression that Knister did a good deal of editorial work on it, not merely copy editing but rewriting as well. Initially Dent refers only to "criticism" and "suggestions." Further on, however, he tells Knister:

> You can change that last part from the time of his arrival home as much as you would like, the only time I was taken into the character was in that argument with the parson at the end of the book. I would consider it a great favor if you would lift it

> out bodily, and leave Thor still unreclaimed.[12]

This brief passage comprises the only concrete evidence of Knister's hand in shaping the Dent novel, but it is sufficient, I think, to prove that at least some rewriting was involved.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that a second reader became involved in the editorial process at a later date. As publishers of the book, Macmillan of Canada sought on Dent's behalf for English and American publication as well. The novel was ultimately issued in England by Constable and in the United States by Harper. In none of the extant records of these companies does there seem to exist documentation on *Show Me Death!*; but the contract between Macmillan and Harper in the Macmillan archive suggests that, while the American firm wanted to publish the book, they also felt that it required further revision. The contract indeed stipulates that acceptance of the novel hinged on this editorial work. It may be for this reason, then, that the manuscript was apparently submitted (presumably by Harper) to the American writer Grant Overton (1887-1930), who at the time was on the editorial staff of *Collier's*. Overton's comments were passed on to Dent by Macmillan, for he acknowledged receipt of a revised contract in a letter dated 26 July and expressed his willingness to "revise the M.S. according to Mr. Grant Overton."[13] By this time the title of the novel had been changed to "Cry Havoc!", a title which was later used for a well-known anti-war book by Beverley Nichols published in 1933.

But we must return for a moment to Knister. After working on the manuscript but before returning it to Macmillan, he took the time to type out an excerpt to send to Grove for publication in the *Canadian Nation*. A section comprising some 2,000 words was forwarded with his letter to Grove of 6 April, and Grove acknowledged receipt of the material on 14 April. He commented that, while "[the excerpt] is not exactly what I could wish . . . I shall see whether I can do anything with this."[14] Though Knister suggested that Grove could "probably get a better selection from Mr. Dent himself or from Mr. Eayrs,"[15] no extract was printed in the paper. In this same letter, Knister mentioned to Grove that he had met Dent some few days before, when Dent was in Toronto.

In September 1929, Hugh Eayrs was able to tell Knister that the novel "is being re-revised by the author and by another editorial advisor,"[16] the latter being presumably Grant Overton. Serial rights were supposed to have been sold to an American magazine, but I have not been able to discover any serial publication. By November the book (still entitled "Cry Havoc!") was in press with the T. H. Best Co. At some point between then and publication in February 1930, the final title *Show Me Death!* was chosen. Dent must have been revising the text until almost the last possible moment, for the production cost records include a payment to cover 25¾ hours of author's alterations to the proofs. From the type set by Best a set of plates was presumably made, as all three issues of the first (and only) edition — the Canadian, the English, and the American — were printed from the same setting by the Haddon Craftsmen in Camden, New Jersey.[17]

W. R. Dent's cousin recalled in 1983 that Dent had been moved to write *Show Me Death!* after reading Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*.[18] The book bears a greater resemblance to another Canadian war novel, Peregrine Acland's *All Else Is Folly*, published by McClelland and Stewart in 1929. Quite apart from the fact that the first part of Dent's book

may have been written before either of these novels was published (though they may have come to Dente's attention during the process of revision), in none of the extant correspondence does he mention any particular influences on his writing. *Show Me Death!* received enthusiastic reviews for the most part, though some reviewers found the book uneven. The comment in the *New York Times* that it was "written ably if not brilliantly"[19] is fairly representative of the critical response.

In sumary, there is no question that Raymond Knister was asked by Macmillan of Canada to edit *Show Me Death!* and that his work on the novel extended to at least some rewriting. To what extent exactly Knister's hand is to be seen in the final text cannot be determined, and any surmise (on stylistic grounds, for example) is complicated by the fact that at a later stage the book was further revised by Dent on advice from Grant Overton. The style of the novel differs markedly from Knister's *White Narcissus*, published the year before, as representative passages will show:

> Because he was part of the mystery he wondered at it the more. He had two months before him in which it seemed he meant to do nothing except indulge his sense of desperation and his sudden attack of listlessness — though within him the purpose still held to achieve a different finality. So he told himself, with a conscious effort to rouse himself to that purpose once more. Time, after all, was effecting changes in the one thing which had appeared changeless in his life. He would not have settled here to this dumb inaction a few years ago; he would have betaken himself to the city, anywhere away from the scene of his repulse. The thought held frightening possibilities. What was this business making of him? Unaccustomed, his mind was fascinated by the question. There must have been changes in him before this, which others had noticed, which he would begin to see as time passed. He would become after all a man essentially estranged from life, at least from the world, a romantic figure of absurd incompleteness, an unadjusted person, if successful in art, which does not demand normality[,] 'a queer stick.' All for what? 'He lost a woman,' one-time friends would say.[20]

> I lay, a sombre, sullen, snarling beast, for days after that, and though the nurse and doctors tried hard to cheer me up, it was of no avail.
>
> The days passed, and in despair the doctors booked me for an immediate transfer to Canada.
>
> They did their best to warn people not to show abhorrence when they saw me hobbling around the hospital, but I was too much for human nature, or so it seemed to my morbidly introspective mood.
>
> The world was filled with eyes staring with pity and horror at me as I passed. Even that was not so bad, but no one, not even other Canadians, could get up nerve enough to sit and face the thing that had once been a face. I was lost, out of communication with the world as completely, in fact more completely, than if I had been dead.
>
> Then I hit, in my complete perversity, upon a bright idea. I saw a soldier one night saying his prayers, so every night before getting into bed I stood beside it and carefully, religiously, cursed God, feeling as comforted afterwards as though I had said a prayer.[21]

One rather suspects that certain parts of Dent's novel must have made Knister groan. In Dent's ending, for example, the main character precipitately rises from his bed to clasp the woman whom he wrongly thought had abandoned him in his time of need, but he has forgotten that he has lost a leg in addition to his other disfiguring injuries:

> The door reopened. "Oh, thank God, Luella! Luella°" I tried to run toward her. But you see I had only one leg. I had forgotten that. I fell — fell into her arms. Her lips brushed my cheeks.
>
> "My poor, poor coward!" she whispered as tears fell on my face.[22]

NOTES

1 Raymond Knister, *Collected Poems of Raymond Knister*, ed. Dorothy Livesay (Toronto: Ryerson, 1949), p. xxxv. The origi-

nal letter (dated 15 August 1932) is now in the Raymond Knister Papers, Box 3, McMaster University Library.

[2] I have tried without success to locate any surviving papers. In attempting to trace Dent himself I was able to locate one of his first cousins, a Mr. E. B. Dent of Toronto, but he remembered only that Dent had moved to California at some point. A letter from Dent to Donald J. Adams (in the Adams Papers at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas) proves that Dent was living in Vancouver in March of 1959, but that is the latest address that I can ascertain. It was also in 1959 that Dent published a book entitled *Reason For Living* with Vantage Press in New York. My letter to the publisher requesting information on the author received no reply.

[3] Anne Burke, "Raymond Knister: An Annotated Bibliography," in Robert Lecker and Jack David, eds., *The Annotated Bibliography of Canada's Major Authors*, Vol. 3 (Downsview: ECW Press, 1981), p. 303.

[4] Frederick Philip Grove, letter of 15 November 1929 to Raymond Knister, in *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*, ed. Desmond Pacey (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 276.

[5] Ross Hamilton, ed., *Prominent Men of Canada 1931-32* (Montreal: National Publishing Co. of Canada, [n.d.]), pp. 315-16. The College of Emmanual and St. Chad, now in Saskatoon, has been unable to confirm Dent's attendance at the school.

[6] W. R. Dent to Donald J. Adams, letter of 23 March 1959 (Adams Papers, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas).

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] Thomas Murtha, "Inferno," *Saturday Night* (26 April 1930), p. 9.

[9] W. R. Dent to Macmillan of Canada, letter of 31 January 1929 (Macmillan of Canada Archive, Box 91, File 12, McMaster University Library).

[10] Though undated, this letter was received at Macmillan on 15 February 1929 (Macmillan of Canada Archive, Box 91, File 12).

[11] Hugh S. Eayrs to W. R. Dent, letter of 18 February 1929 (Macmillan of Canada Archive, Box 91, File 12).

[12] W. R. Dent to Raymond Knister, letter of 15 March 1929 (Raymond Knister Papers, Box 1). It may be this particular letter that came to Knister *via* Grove. See Grove's letter to Knister of 21 March 1929, *Letters*, p. 263.

[13] W. R. Dent to Macmillan, letter of 26 July [1929] (Macmillan of Canada Archive, Box 91, File 12).

[14] Knister's letter is in the Grove Papers at the University of Manitoba Library. The letter to Knister is in *Letters*, p. 265.

[15] Raymond Knister to Frederick Philip Grove, Letter of 21 April 1929 (Grove Papers).

[16] Hugh S. Eayrs to Raymond Knister, letter of 4 September 1929 (Knister Papers, Box 2).

[17] The production card in the Macmillan of Canada Archive does not indicate that plates were made, but in view of the fact that the book was manufactured in the United States and that the type was ordered distributed on 4 February 1930 (before publication) it seems probable that plates were in fact made.

[18] Telephone conversation with Bruce Whiteman.

[19] *New York Times Book Review*, 11 May 1930, p. 22.

[20] Raymond Knister, *White Narcissus* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1929), pp. 130-31.

[21] W. Redvers Dent, *Show Me Death!* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1930), pp. 347-48.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 375.

BRUCE WHITEMAN

TIMOTHY FINDLEY'S GNOSTIC PARABLE

TIMOTHY FINDLEY is not the first Canadian writer to make use of the myth of the ark, which is not surprising, since the benevolent side of the story, the rescue of all those animals whose wooden effigies filled the miniature arks of one's childhood, has always had a great appeal, particularly as it has mitigated the unease created by the contemplation of God's motives in destroying mankind and

the world of nature in the Flood. Jay Macpherson included in *The Boatman* an enigmatic group of ark poems that were more about personal states of mind than about anything contained in the Biblical story, and Phyllis Webb, as Findley points out in his acknowledgements, wrote a poem called "Leaning" that was the first inspiration for *Not Wanted on the Voyage*; the first three lines of it are in fact the epigraph to the book.

> And you, are you still here
> tilted in this stranded ark
> blind and seeing in the dark.

Reading the novel, one immediately associates those lines with the cat Mottyl, ancient, half-blind and the pet-confidante of Noah's wife, Mrs. Noyes. Mottyl is the most constant perceiving consciousness in the book.

The account of the ark and the flood in Genesis, when one returns to it, seems surprisingly sparse, and concerned more with God's offended vanity than with the results of the appalling edict or the nature of the world it destroyed. That some survived and the deluge was never repeated are the facts that sanctify the story in our imagination, and Findley has caught the spirit of that reaction by introducing, above the epigraph, his own brief motto: "Against Despair." For the wonder that emerges out of this book, as it does out of any realistic assessment of human history, is that we *have* survived.

Like Timothy Findley's other books, *Not Wanted on The Voyage* is a fiction on several levels. In the conventional sense of a more or less realistic study of human relationships, it is hardly a novel at all since, except for Mrs. Noyes (Noah's long-suffering wife), the characters are types rather than personalities and their relationships are allegorical rather than actual. It can probably best be described as a combination of fable and prose mock epic, which performs the same kind of bold and illuminating outrages on revealed religion as *Famous Last Words* performed on history.

We are presented with the world before the Flood, hauntingly enough like our own to give us a poignant sense of *déjà vu*, yet also different so that although we are in a realm of whimsical anachronisims where Mrs. Noyes drinks her crocks of gin and plays Edwardian popular songs on the piano, it is still a pre-mechanical world and also a world like that of the legends of primitive peoples and the fables of many literatures, in which the animals can also speak to each other and even to human beings. The law of Yahweh establishes the rule of man over the realm of nature, and to Noah it is given, as it was given to Adam, to wield that rule. The result is a record of cruelties and sacrifical slaughters which reminds one of Schopenhauer's remark that in the world of animals men are the devils; it culminates in Yahweh's own super-holocaust of the flood in which mankind, except for Noah and his family (including the archangel Lucifer who has decided to join the human race and in the guise of the woman Lucy marries Ham), shares the destruction wreaked on the animal kingdom and on all the strange magical beings, like dragons and demons and fairies and gryphons, who evolved between the Fall and the Flood and have decorated our myths and our dreams ever since.

The moment of truth for the old world comes when Yahweh, old and fragile, arrives with his entourage of angels and strange beasts to visit his old friend and one remaining loyal supporter, Noah. The Creator has been wandering through his world and finding it in full revolt against his authority; orgiastic cults are in the ascendant and men insult and assult him at every turn. It is when he arrives at the peaceful welcoming haven

of Noah's estate, a fusty, failing, senile parody of deity, that Yahweh decides on his great revenge on mankind and on the whole of his creation. He will submerge it under water, but he will allow his old friend Noah, who in the half-blind eyes of the cat Mottyl is a veritable demon of cruelty, to survive and shape the world that will emerge as the flood recedes and the earth dries out and the animals preserved in the ark go out to repopulate it. The privilege that Yahweh grants to the survivors of mankind is to be the curse of animalkind, as recorded in those cruel, unacceptable words of Genesis:

> and the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth ... into your hand are they delivered.

Having made this decision, Yahweh departs, and Mottyl the cat — alone among mortal witnesses — hears the sound of flies in his coach and knows its meaning, a meaning already discussed by the archangel Michael and Lucy/Lucifer his brother, when they meet in loving hatred.

> Lucy looked up the Hill towards the Blue Pavilion — shining, translucent in the dark. Her mood swung wide of the banter she and Michael had been trading. "Tell me how He is," she said. "He looked so old ... so ill ...
>
> "He's dying," said Michael.
>
> Lucy stared at him and then, very slowly, back at the Pavilion.
>
> "He can't die," she said, almost whispering.
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "He isn't able to die ..."
>
> "I thought that too. But He *is* God. And if God wants to die ..."
>
> "Then God is able."
>
> "Yee."

Yahweh, the evidence of his silence suggests, does indeed die, and so a modish preoccupation of recent theologians is added to the complex strands of Findley's parodic vision. But though Noah's exhortations to his old friend arouse no response, this makes little difference to the real situation. Yahweh has drowned the earth as his last act of divine malice, and the ark floats on as he intended. The primeval communication between men and animals is shown to have broken down when the choirs of sheep so well-trained by Mrs. Noyes no longer respond with hymns but answer with monotonous bleating. And the war between man and the animal world that will characterize the postdiluvian dispensation is foreshadowed when the dolphins surge around the ark, seeking to make friends with its human crew; Noah declares them to be Pirates and enemies, and Japeth slaughters them as they jump smiling on to the dock. There is no need to remark how the concerns of the contemporary ecological movement — of all our struggles to end the massacre of the intelligent mammals of the seas — are reflected in such passages of a book that is sensitive and thought-provoking on so many levels.

As we have seen, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is in some ways a recreation of the myths of primitive peoples like Pacific Coast Indians and Australian aborigines that envisage a past when all creatures could communicate with each other. Also, by virtue of its moral content, it belongs to the European fabulist tradition whose last great example was *Animal Farm*, while at times there is an element of touching and melancholy whimsicality, when Mottyl and her friends Whistler the groundhog and Bip the lemur converse, that remains one of classic children's animal stories like *The Wind in the Willows*. Findley is calling in these various ways on a great reservoir of past associations at the same time as the death-of-God theme and the anmity-to-dolphins theme remind us that this is a book to be read with the preoccupations

of our own world in mind. Using as its basic structure the great universal myth of the deluge, dramatically recorded by Greeks and Babylonians as well as by Jews, and relating the existence of antediluvian man to our own by an ingenious pattern of anachronisims, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* becomes a tract not for any single time, but for all human time, giving fictional expression to a view of the natural order and the nature of God that may not be as old as the Flood but is certainly as old as the high days of Alexandrian philosophizing, and which had its remoter roots in Achaemenian Parsia.

I am referring to Gnosticism, whose last great flowering appeared in the Catharist heresy of mediaeval Europe, which flourished during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Languedoc, where it was the religion of many of the troubadours and was finally destroyed by Simon de Montfort's fiery and bloody crusade.

Gnosticism's real origins can be found in the teachings of the sixth-century BC Iranian sage Zoroaster regarding two great conflicting powers at work in the universe, Ahura-Mazda, the Lord of Light, and Ahriman, the Lord of Darkness. This dualism passed into Mithraism and Manicheism, but with the emergence of the Gnostics in Alexandria at the beginning of the Christian era it took on a new form, doubtless because of the presence there of a considerable Judeo-Christian community. The Gnostics were never an organized or united church or community. Some remained pagan, while others professed to be Christian, though they were immediately denounced as heretics. Their most celebrated figure was the thaumaturge Simon Magus, of whom what is probably a slanderous account appeared in the Acts of the Apostles. Their most important teachers were Marcion and Valentinus.

Deriving their doctrines partly from Iranian, partly from Egyptian, and partly from Orphic-Pythagorean sources, and mingling them with their own readings of the Christian writings whose canon was then just being established, the Gnostics recognized the startling differences of tone and spirit between the New and the Old Testaments, and, while they did not deny the historicity of the Old Testament narrative, they decided that its cruel, vengeful, and tyrannical deity, Jehovah or Yahweh, could not be the true God. On the basis of their Old Testament readings they concluded that the physical world was evil, and the creation of an evil being, the Demiurge.

The Demiurge, as described by Hans Jonas, bears a remarkable resemblance to Yahweh, the "Lord Creator," of *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. Far from being the true God, the Demiurge is the product of a "Fall" due to a crisis in the divine realm.

> Early in the descending series — and marked by all the deforming defects of the Fall whose fruit he is — appears the Demiurge, the monstrous and benighted archon (lord) of the nether powers. This widespread Gnostic figure, telling symbol of the Gnostic hostility toward the world, is clearly a polemical caricature of the Old Testament God, and the identity is made explicit by frequent transference to him of well-known utterances and actions of God from the Biblical text. Pride, ignorance and malevolence of the Creator are recurring themes in Gnostic tales. . . . He is always a problematical and never a venerable figure. . . . he believes himself to be the only God and engages in creations chiefly designed to satisfy his ambition, vanity, and lust for domination.[1]

Yahweh, though he is in fact the creator of the imperfect world that rebels against his tryanny, is thus presented in both Gnostic doctrine and in Findley's book as a pseudo-divine imposter, a representative or embodiment of the forces of darkness, and hence a diabolical figure, which of course would fit in with Mottyl's

view of his minister Noah as demoniacal. But if Yahweh is to be taken as a manifestation of the Gnostic Demiurge who has made the earth the place of death and cruelty that it is, what are we to make of the "rouge" angel who — having "joined the human race" — appears in drag as Lucy and so finds her way on to the ark as the bride of Ham?

Lucy, of course, is Lucifer, the name given in Patristic writings to Satan before his rebellion against Jehovah. His origins lie back in Greek mythology when, as Phosphoros, he was the minor god who represented the morning star — the planet Venus as she appears at dawn. Taken over by the Romans, Phosphoros became Lucifer, the Lightbearer, and was represented by a male figure carrying a torch. With him, as the old saying goes, pride went before a fall; hence the other saying, "proud as Lucifer." Why the Church Fathers should have picked upon such a minor classical deity to be transformed into the great antagonist of God is something of a mystery, one of whose most interesting features is the fact that in Christian tradition Christ, and Satan as Lucifer, share some of the same epithets. Both are referred to as "the morning star" and "the son of the morning," and certainly Milton was more than a little dazzled by the light Lucifer could generate even in hell.

Here, with the appearance of Lucifer in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, we come to another Gnostic idea, that of the "eternal messenger," the emissary from the "world of Light" who, as Jonas remarks, "outwits the archons, awakens the spirit from its earthly slumbers, and imparts to it the saving knowledge from without."[2] Linked with the idea of the eternal messenger is the other widespread Gnostic legend in which, on the morrow of creation, the Demiurge exults like Yahweh with the Old Testament proclamation, "I am God and there is none other than I," and a voice echoes from on high, "Thou art mistaken! Above thee is First Man."

Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Mani, all of them human beings, were variously identified by the Gnostics as messengers from the world of light. It does not stretch the pattern very far to see among them the Creator's traditional antagonist, Lucifer, since those presented as the enemies of Yahweh, now identified as the evil Demiurge, must necessarily be regarded as good. If the identification of Lucifer as the great adversary had not taken place after the followers of Augustine had won their victory over the Gnostics, we can fairly assume that he, bearing the very name and emblem of Light, would have been included among the messengers of the gnosis.

In *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, it is true, Lucifer is identified as the son of Yahweh, but he is the son who commits the unpardonable sin of questioning, and so he is cast out. And now, just as Christ joined the human race by incarnation and became the Son of Man, so Lucifer joins it by choice and marriage, and in a supreme act of defiance does so at the very time when Yahweh, the evil Demiurge, has decided to destroy humanity and the rest of his creation. In acting thus, it is clear, he finally severs his link with the Demiurge and all the evil he has done.

And when we observe Lucy's nature, through the innocent yet experienced mental eye of Mottyl the blind cat, she appears before us as one of the compassionate beings whom the Gnostics chose as their messengers of light.

> Bip had wanted to know if Mottyl had ever known a rogue angel and Mottyl has said: "*no*." She might still have said no. Nothing she knew of Lucy made her think of violence or contentiousness. And Lucy's only fear was of wolves and dogs and foxes — and they were just as afraid of her — a stand-off. Surely, above all, it was wonder-

ful that Lucy was one of them, in the bowels of the ark — that she was opposed to Doctor Noyes — opposed to his experiments — opposed to his Edict — opposed to his methods and his tactics and his ...

Mottyl had almost thought: *evil ways.*

Why had she stopped herself, when she was so obviously right?

They were *evil* ways.

Even the fading of the powers of giving and destroying life that Lucifer had enjoyed in his original "home," the heaven of Yahweh, can be taken as a sign of his separation from the realm of the Demiurge and of his identification with the other messengers, who wielded no supernatural powers when their time of testing came — for Jesus in his crucifiction, for Mani in his martyrdom, for the Buddha when he died of eating putrid meat out of politeness. They shared the human fate, and so, it is clear, Lucifer, for all his angelic aspects, means to do so. The role he has accepted is to pose the alternative vision (hence his appearance as a woman in opposition to the paternalistic regime of Yahweh and Noah), to foster and sustain the spirit that questions and rebels, the spirit that, like Ivan Karamazov, rejects the injustices of a world where a single child suffers, and "returns God his ticket." It is the spirit of Lucifer, as a Gnostic might see him, veritable bearer of Light, that hovers over the last sentences of the book when Mrs. Noyes sits one night on the deck of the ark with Mottyl in her lap.

She laid her hand on Mottyl's head. Here was this cat, whose sight had been taken by Doctor Noyes, and down below them all was the world that had been destroyed by Doctor Noyes (with some help from his illustrious Friend), and all that remained of the world was what, to all intents and purposes, had been seen by this old blind cat and by herself, sitting long ago and rocking on their porch above the valley. And now, Noah wanted another world and more cats to blind. Well, damn them — no, she thought.

"No!" she said.

Mottyl heard her — and stirred.

Mrs. Noyes said: "I didn't mean to wake you. I'm sorry. Sorry — but not sorry. Watch me, Motty — you blind and me with eyes, beneath the moon. We're here, dear. No matter what — we're here. And — damn it all — I guess we're here to stay."

Mrs. Noyes scanned the sky.

Not one cloud.

She prayed. But not to the absent God. Never, never again to the absent God, but to the absent clouds, she prayed. And to the empty sky.

She prayed for rain.

Here is one answer to the query that rests in Lucy's mind about the "rumour" of "another world." If that new world is to be like the last or the present (for here Findley is clearly equating the antediluvian and postdiluvian worlds and directing our attention to the condition of living beings now), if it is to perpetuate the cruelties and injustices that exist between men and men, and men and animals, then we must reject it and pray for rain, which is a conclusion any good Gnostic or Catharist would have freely accepted.

And so in the great ambivalences of the conflict between our desire to live and our fear of living, the complex fabulist and parodic structure of *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, which is much more than a novel, is finally knit and knotted.

NOTES

1 "Gnosticism" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, Vol. 3, p. 338.

2 P. 340.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

ELIZABETH SMART 1913-1985

I FIRST HEARD OF Elizabeth Smart in the spring of 1975 when a British novelist came up to me at a literary conference in England to ask, "What do you think of Elizabeth Smart?" At my blank stare, she added helpfully, "the Canadian auther of *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept.*" I was forced to confess that I had heard of neither author nor book. On my return to Canada I hastened to search out a copy of this novel by a Canadian so highly regarded among writers in Britain, so unknown in her own country. At the time I was puzzled at my difficulty finding a copy. The steps taken to prevent the book entering Canada in 1945 are today well known.

By Grand Central Station was very much worth my search. It astonished and delighted me, and I resolved to try to make it available to Canadian readers. Before I had time to act, however, the Popular Library paperback edition appeared, the first edition in North America. George Woodcock praised it in the *Globe and Mail* as "one of the few successful pieces of sustained prose lyricism to be produced in our time or any time," and late that fall William French published a lengthy interview with Elizabeth Smart recorded at her Suffolk home. Thus began Canadian awareness of this remarkable novel and this remarkable woman.

The next summer, thanks to mutual friends in England, I had an opportunity to meet Elizabeth Smart. It is hard to imagine someone living up to that novel, but Elizabeth did. The author of the brilliant, lyrical, passionate novel proved to be a brilliant, lyrical, passionate woman. The setting of our meeting, Elizabeth's Suffolk cottage, combined comfort and charm. Her garden was a profusion of flowers, surrounded by trees and low hills. To Elizabeth it was reminiscent of the garden of the Gatineau cottage where she spent childhood summers, a Canadian garden adapted, as its creator, to English soil. As we strolled in the garden, we chatted about writing and contemporary Canadian writers, and about her life in England these past years. Occasionally we wandered into the kitchen, where Elizabeth poured us drinks or stirred something on the stove. The result of this casual attention to things culinary was a gourmet meal we sat down to a short time later. I remembered that she had written one cook book and co-authored another. Clearly, this woman did brilliantly whatever she put her mind to — be it cooking, gardening, or writing. The graceful, seemingly effortless style was there, the imagination and creativity. I left that day impressed not only with the wit and urbanity of her conversation, but with the warmth and sincerity of her personality, and the courage which marked her determinedly different life.

Elizabeth Smart knew from childhood that she wanted to write. Daughter of a prosperous Ottawa family, educated in private schools, from childhood she kept journals which were to become source books for her novels. Her early journals, now housed in the National Library of Canada, reveal a youthful interest in writing and writers, an early enthusiasm for Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, and D. H. Lawrence. It was her interest in writing that drew her to George Barker, the young British poet who was to be the great love of her life. The novel celebrating the beginning of their affair was completed as she awaited the birth of their first child, Georgina, born in Pender Harbour, B.C. in August 1941. Two years later, an employee of the British Army Office in Washington, D.C.

and pregnant with the second child, Elizabeth sailed for England. It was only after another two years, as the war ended, that *By Grand Central Station* was published. Despite critical praise, it received little public attention until a 1966 extensively revised reissue. In the meantime, Elizabeth had spent twenty years working to bring up her four children, sometimes holding down three jobs at once. Although she had no time for novel writing, she continued to keep her journals, and she made her living by writing: assignments for *Vogue* and *Queen*, and for advertising agencies. Eventually, she became literary editor of *Queen* magazine, for which she wrote reviews, articles, and interviews, all elegant, witty pieces in lucid, conversational prose. It was customary for her to comment along the way on a broad spectrum of writers, from Jane Austen to Evelyn Waugh, Margery Kempe to Ian Fleming, William Blake to Simone de Beauvoir. At this time she was part of the London literary scene. She did much to promote and encourage obscure, young writers, many of them women. And long before we began to give courses on women in literature, Elizabeth was writing perceptively on women writers, on topics such as the language of women and the neglect of women writers of the past.

In 1968 Elizabeth left *Queen* and moved to Suffolk. Here, in her small cottage, she wrote. Some of her poems appeared in a slim volume *A Bonus* (1977). Most of these are conversational in tone, some are reminiscent of Stevie Smith, whom she admired. In 1978 her second novel, *The Assumption of the Rogues & Rascals*, appeared. Its publication sparked further attention in Britain, in the form of television interviews and invitations to read poetry. In Canada, despite the now wide appreciation of *By Grand Central Station*, this new book has been unaccountably ignored. Written in what she described to me as "compressed prose," it is less lyrically intense than the earlier novel, passion having given way to more mundane considerations. Time, birth, children, the act of writing are the novel's concerns. Twenty years' experience are compressed into a scant hundred pages, time and event telescoped; the novel gives brief glimpses into the narrator's life — moments of reflection, doubt, insight, loneliness, unexpected joy — moments occurring as the narrator walks down a street, drinks in a neighbourhood pub, waits in a queue. The language at times recalls that of *By Grand Central Station*, as in the impressionistic account of the birth of a son: "Thus, in the twentieth century, is born a son of man, while above the agony shrill women request time off to go for a cup of tea. Slapdash he is thrown among the muddle, while harassed aprentices jostle the bloody pans." Images of garden, bird, and flower abound, juxtaposed with London streets, buses, paving stones, and pubs. The novel is ultimately a positive memorial to life, despite the overriding presence of struggle, fatigue, pain, and discomfort. "The price of life is pain," say the narrator, "since the price of comfort is death and damnation."

We Canadians are fortunate to have had Elizabeth here for two years, first as writer in residence at the University of Alberta in 1982-83, then as recipient of a Canada Council Senior Arts Grant, which gave her a year to write and to consider whether she wished to remain in Canada. During these two years she travelled from British Columbia to Newfoundland, reading, for the most part from *By Grand Central Station*, to large enthusiastic audiences of young people, whom she won by warmth of her personality as well as by the lyrical beauty of her words. Deneau, which published the first, belated Canadian edition of *By*

Grand Central Station in 1982, brought out *In the meantime* in 1984, a collection of prose pieces and poetry. It includes some poems written at the time of *By Grand Central Station* as well as those published in *Eleven Poems* (1982), and some later poems. It also includes the early, previously unpublished "Dig a Grave and Let Us Bury Our Mother," and — in my view the most important of all — an exciting prose piece, "In the meantime: Diary of a Blockage." Elizabeth always did like paradox; here she writes imaginatively of having writer's block. But this work does much more than that. It is a reworking from her recent journals, reflecting upon writing, upon growing old, and contains the same creative spark as the two novels, and like them, is stylistically daring.

In 1984 Eliabeth Smart returned to England. We in Canada were late in knowing her; we could have welcomed her more warmly. She opted for a warmer climate. Her death March 4 was a shock. "Mourned by the Rogues and Rascals" reads the heading of the London *Observer* Obituary (23 March 1986). Yes, indeed, mourned by all who knew her, however briefly; for to meet her was to be touched by her, to feel at her death a sense of personal loss. We can but treasure the gifts she left us: two superb novels, some poems, a small collection of prose pieces, and warm memories of a generous, couragous, and gifted woman.

LORRAINE MC MULLEN

HUBERT EVANS

SURVIVAL IN CANADA, as Margaret Atwood made clear, is more than a lucky accident of life; it takes on the moral dimensions of a virtue, and Hubert Evans owed much of the celebrity he gained at the end of his life to the meritorious fact that by the time he died recently at the age of 94 he was the oldest writer still at work, the "elder of the tribe" as Margaret Laurence once called him.

Evans's death roughly coincided with the apearance of the first book on him, *Hubert Evans: The First Ninety-Three Years* (Harbour Publishing, $8.95) by Alan Twigg. It is a disappointing production, an effort rather than an achievement, uncritical in its attempts to analyze the writer's books, and often trivial in its comments on his life. In the past Twigg has done some interesting counterculture journalism in publications like *Georgia Straight*, and he showed himself a shrewd interviewer in the group of conversations with authors which he put together a few years ago in *For Openers*. But if *Hubert Evans* . . . is anything to go by, he has none of the sense of literary architecture or the power of sustained argument that goes to make a book. He had obviously a great respect for Evans, but respect alone does not make a good biography; it is more likely to produce hagiography, and the present book steers perilously near, in its exaggerated claims for a good craftsman's life, to offering us the portrait of St. Hubert-among-the-Lotuseaters.

The fact is that Hubert Evans was a good but not a major writer even in the Canadian scene. Like many a tale-teller who must earn his living by the typewriter, he often wrote when inspiration was reluctant, and his career can be described topographically as a range of low hills with a couple of respectable peaks. One novel of the 1940's, *Mist on the River*, is likely to survive as a minor west coast classic for an empathy (extraordinary in its period) with the situation of the native peoples at a time of intense pressure to accept white values. And near the end of his life, writing with immense difficulty because of failing eye-

sight, Evans produced a second masterpiece of a kind, *O Time in Your Flight*, remarkable for the distant recall with which Evans evoked a childhood in Victorian Ontario; it is at once a vivid historical document and a satisfying novel about boyhood. Perhaps if Evans had had the inclination to play the same recollective light over his later career he might have produced a good reflective autobiography, lit from within, but viewed from the outside his life hardly lends itself to biography; there is too little dramatic incident, too little significant production. A good critical essay would have taken care of his real achievements; Twigg's book suffers from the loss of flavour that comes when one thins out the contents of a drinkable bottle to fill a bucket.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

GALE'S *Contemporary Literary Criticism Vol. 37* includes entries on Thomas, McLuhan, and Metcalf; vol. 38 ($88.00) on Cohen and Gallant. Peter Morris's *The Film Companion* (Irwin, n.p.), provides brief background comments on some 650+ Canadian films and filmmakers. Gale's *Something About The Author Vol 43* ($64.00) interviews James Reaney on children's books; and *New Revised Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 17 ($88.00) interviews Robertson Davies.

Of particular interest to scholars of multicultural history and literature in Canada is *Morning In His Heart* (Acadia University Library, $15.00) a biographical sketch of Watson Kirkconnell (by J. R. C. Perkin) with a primary and secondary bibliography by James B. Snelson. Kirkconnell's own poems, essays, books, and reviews total over 1,300 items, and another 400 are written about him and his work: the total gives only a hint of his important pioneering contributions to the study of Canadian literary practice in the unofficial languages.

Other recent reference books include the *Gage Atlas of the World* ($19.95), a clear, usable educational atlas with a significant portion of Canadian maps; the *Canadian Book Review Annual 1984* (Simon & Pierre, $69.95), a collection of thumbnail judgments; and an illustrated, detailed English/French dictionary/encyclopedia, *Le Qu'est-ce Que c'est / Le What's What* (Mengés, $34.98), with words in both languages for everything from clerical vestments to the parts of the bottom of a running shoe. The University of Calgary Press has also published two bibliographies — edited by Jean Tener et al., inventories of the university's archival collection of *The Hugh MacLennan Papers* ($14.00) and *The Rudy Wiebe Papers First Accession* ($21.50). The University of Waterloo Library has published a thorough guide to the separate publications and imprints of *Lucy Maud Montgomery*, ed. R. W. Russell et al. Jay Myers' *The Fitzhenry & Whiteside Book of Canadian Facts & Dates* ($19.95) is a must for every educator's shelf, a guide to Canadian events, both social and cultural, from 20 million B.C. to 1984.

Three volumes of the Smithsonian Institution's *Handbook of North American Indians*, gen. ed. William C. Sturtevant, are singularly important for acquiring up-to-date information on Indian history, language, and culture: Vol. 6 (*Subarctic*, ed. June Helm, $25.00), Vol. 5 (*Arctic*, ed. David Damas, $29.00), Vol. 15 (*Northeast*, ed. Bruce Trigger, $27.00). Each reviews the history of research, and in a series of well-documented essays surveys current knowledge about language, ethnography, pre-history, modern history, adaptations to the environment, and social trends. The *Northeast* volume deals with Beothuk, Micmac, Malisеet, and the several tribes from the Laurentians to the Ohio Valley. The *Subarctic* surveys Montagnais, Cree, and Ojibway, together with the two dozen cultures of northern B.C., the Yukon, Alaska, and the MacKenzie Valley. The *Arctic* volume deals with the Inuit of Northern Canada and with the Eskimo of Alaska and Greenland. Illustrations throughout are functional, though not as full as might be hoped for. Bibliographies are extensive.

An Oxford addition is its *Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* ($24.95). L. D. McCann's *Heartland and Hinterland* (Prentice-Hall, n.p.) is a textbook geography based on patterns of resource management and resource control. Brian Page's *A Vous La France!* ($15.50) and Alan Moys' supplementary *France Extra!* ($16.95) are the texts of a BBC radio language course, available from Academic Press. *Séguin: Tous les verbes conjugés* is a usable pattern guide for French verbs (Centre Educatif et Culturel, $8.95).

W.N.

ON THE VERGE

**** ARTHUR KROKER, *Technology and the Canadian Mind.* New World Perspectives, $8.95. A provocative analysis of the "characteristic" Canadian mindset, Kroker's study of the discourse of culture will win both admirers and debunkers. Admirers, because it brings together cogent commentary on Innis, McLuhan, Grant, and the "oppositional culture" that is Canada's, "trapped midway between economy and history"; debunkers, because the study itself embraces a dialectical ideology and therefore invites engagement. Grant appears as the "bitter" and "existential" philosopher of despair, McLuhan as his "utopian" antithesis, embracing (and in turn victimized by) the order of "technological imperatives"; Innis represents the synthesis, the "balance" which Kroker privileges between the attractive power of American pragmatism and the implications of historical familiarity with America. Kroker does not offer a resolution, despite his will to find balance; there is no resolution in an "advanced dependent society" — there is only the realization that "In the world of the silicon chip, there are no centres and no margins. Everyone is peripheralized. . . ." Perhaps that's so. But there are still seats of power, to which many Canadians still defer, in the name of sophistication and understanding and in the curious hope of finding recognition (and justification) elsewhere.

W.N.

**** JOSEPH BONENFANT et al., eds., *A l'ombre de DesRochers.* L'université de Sherbrooke, n.p. Primarily a survey of the writings and influence of the poet Alfred DesRochers (including an inventory of his library), this collection is more fundamentally a record of the emergent artistic culture in the Eastern Townships between 1925 and 1950, and a tribute to the paper *La Tribune* (on the occasion of its 75th anniversary in 1985) and to its role in encouraging literary activity. The articles range through a variety of subjects. Antoine Sirois, for example, surveys cultural growth of the Cantons de l'Est, acknowledging painting, theatre, and musical performance as well as literature. Richard Giguère examines critical receptions of *Canton* writers. Janine Boynard-Frot importantly investigates the emergence of women writers between the wars, tracing their activity to the openness of various papers (hence acknowledging the role of editors like Albert Lemieux) and also to changes in the *Code Civil* that affected the economic lives of women. This is an instructive contribution to literary history.

W.N.

**** PHILIP DAVIES, *Splendours of the Raj,* Irwin, $39.95. This is a book for those interested in how people judge by signs and outward expressions. In large part pictorial, it traces the presence of British architecture in India from 1660 to 1947, and comments on architects both military and civil: the designers of semaphore towers and grain storage "beehives." There is a narrative here, a story of presence and position — apparent in the shift in design from the first English churches to the barrack blocks, from the great monuments of the imperial presence to the lesser ones of the 1920's and 1930's — a "gaunt and forbidding" garrison church, for example, one of several "melancholy" anticipations of the end of Empire. The author's language, of course, announces his perspective. This book charts the changing aspirations apparent in structure. Architecture — "vested with immense symbolic significance" — "could be used as an instrument of policy as well as an expression of paramountcy." It's the other side of the reason that Indian independence saw so much British statuary in India locked up, knocked down, or moved away.

W.N.

**** J. L. GRANATSTEIN, *Canada 1957-1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation.* McClelland & Stewart, $39.95. Of the many projects spawned in the euphoric times of Canada's centennial celebrations almost two decades ago, the extensive history of our country known as the *Canadian Centenary Series,* 19 volumes by various hands under the general editorship of Donald Creighton and W. L. Morton, was one of the most ambitious and one of the most useful. As it has turned out, it was also one of the most tardy in its execution. Some volumes, indeed, appeared during the centennial year, but other historians, with a dilatoriness no professional writer could afford, have delayed so long that even now, when both the original editors of the series have been dead these several years and Ramsay Cook has taken their place, a long expected Volume XIX appears in the form of J. L. Granatstein's *Canada 1957-1967.* It is a fluently written book, impartially caustic in its judgments and much more political

than social in its orientation, about one of those rather formless periods in the national history which are not easy to lick into comprehensible historical shape.

1957-1967 was the decade of Diefenbaker's rocket-like rise and fall, and of Pearson's later stewardship which brought us so many benefits and left us with such enduring problems as we continue twenty years afterwards to pay the rising bills. In some ways it rather resembles, politically at least, the mid-1980's, and reminds one of the strongly recurrent pattern that seems to haunt Canadian affairs since the years of the Tory collapse in the early 1890's after Macdonald's death. The Liberals took over under Laurier and ruled long enough to develop a typical Grit arrogance and then, after 15 years, to be turned out by the Tories who angered the electorate by the measures they took to tidy up the Liberal mess, and then were turned out for another long period of the "government party" . . . and so on and so on. At the moment, writing this, it looks as though the pattern of the Diefenbaker years may be repeated, with the Tories failing to make good use of their electoral victory to retain the popularity that swept them into power, and a Liberal party, somewhat purged by defeat, standing ready to initiate yet another period of growing arrogance and alienation from the electorate. One hopes somehow the repetitiousness of the pattern, which in Granatstein's book has a look of ineluctability, will be broken, not because one has any partisan allegiances (at least this writer does not) but because it would be a sad thing if Hegel were right and if what history teaches is indeed "that people and governments never have learnt anything from history."

G.W.

**** PETER MURRAY, *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*. Sono Nis Press, $19.95. The ghost of William Duncan, the Anglican lay missionary who founded the semi-utopian Indian communities of Metlakatla and New Metlakatla on the Pacific coast and who spent most of his life feuding with the church authorities, has long been calling for a good biography. Two early biographies do indeed exist, but a critical biography placing Duncan in his time and studying his character objectively has taken a surprisingly long time to appear, considering that his life ended almost seventy years ago, in the last months of the Great War. Now, in *The Devil and Mr. Duncan*, Peter Murray has admirably filled the gap with a book that is not only a fine life but also a notable contribution to church history in the west. What Murray makes clear, by showing how Duncan placed the material welfare of his converts in a changing world about doctrinal considerations, is that here — on the coast of British Columbia — the Social Gospel found practical expression long before its teachings were enunciated elsewhere in the country by men like J. S. Woodsworth and Salem Bland. Thus, apart from being among the more interesting recent Canadian biographies (and largely unnoticed as such), *The Devil and Mr. Duncan* is a notable contribution to Canadian nineteenth-century social history.

G.W.

**** RONALD WRIGHT, *On Fiji Islands*. Penguin, $22.95. Though Canadians have a remarkable series of fine travel poets, like Birney and Purdy, Page and Layton, there have been comparatively few good writers of travel narratives, particularly about foreign countries, so that Margaret Laurence's *The Prophet's Camel Bell*, her great account of Somaliland, still stands out as a notable exception. However, in recent years and mostly unobserved by fellow Canadians, Ronald Wright has been contributing notably to the genre. His book on Peru a few years back, *Cut Stones and Crossroads*, was just the right combination of historical and linguistic erudition and quotation adventure, and much the same can be said about his new book, *On Fiji Islands*. I have travelled in Fiji and know a number of the places that Wright visited and describes; he has caught a true flavour and encountered the right people to give lives to the superficially dull towns and villages. Though there are exceptions, some of the best travel narrators are writers who go there quite specifically to conjure a book out of the unknown. Wright is one of these, superbly professional in the way he goes about finding out, observing, making his notations, and turning them into a narrative in which the author himself, ironically perceived and presented, is as interesting as the landscape in which he wanders. Wright is always there; he never obtrudes. And he writes with sustained insight on the special strength which their retention and adaptation of traditional forms has given the Fijians in an uncertain world.

G.W.

*** CHARLES LILLARD, *Seven Shillings a Year: The History of Vancouver Island*. Horsdal & Schubart, $12.95. Given the intense

local patriotisms that have always been a feature of British Columbian life, it is indeed surprising that Vancouver Island should have waited until now for its historian, in the person of the poet Charles Lillard. *Seven Shillings a Year* is only a partial history, ending in 1939, but it does deal with the most interesting part of the Island's past, first as a separate colony and later as part of British Columbia. Lillard writes with a degree of healthy partisanship, and one senses that, like Sir James Douglas, he feels mourning might have been the appropriate mood when insular autonomy ended with the union of the little colony with the mainland "sea-of-mountains" in 1866, while there is a perceptible lowering of zest from the point when British Columbia itself enters into the Dominion of Canada and the local giants like Douglas and Begbie and De Cosmos step into the shadows. Admittedly, the raw material becomes less exciting from that point onwards; the splendid aboriginal culture, the explorers and the gold rushes, the early travails of settlement, are easier to write of than the federal-provincial squabbles over the CPR and the sordid manipulations of the lumber barons, and there is a notable feeling of anti-climax as the book seems to seep away into muskeg in a final chapter on "Industrial Convulations." Still, it is a first history, on the whole well-written and soundly researched, and one can forgive a little bathos at the finish.

G.W.

*** *Geocentrism and the Notion of Originality. Provincial Essays* 1, No. 1 (1984), $6. This forum on regionalism, the first number of an intended occasional journal, begins provocatively but dwindles in effectiveness. Chris Dewdney's essay on the history of regionalism in London, Ont. elaborates Greg Curnoe's concept of the *oregional*. The term, Dewdney explains, combines regional with original, and thus ironically combines awareness of the impossibility of being totally original, and a conviction that one's own region is "intrinsically different from all other regions." This elliptical but stimulating series of reflections is followed by a conversation between Curnoe and Dennis Reid which responds to Dewdney's essay. Where idle chit chat has not been edited out, the transcription is often boring, but the exchange also contains the lucidly exaggerated assertion that casual conversation can lead to. I especially like Curnoe on the advantage of the mid-sized city: "the stuffiness and mediocrity are very, very apparent. It's something you can quite clearly be opposed to, where it may not be as clear in a large city with a lot of sophisticated people in it." Unfortunately, the promise of the opening sections of the collection is dissipated in the *ad absurdums* of David Rabinowitch praising Dewdney for meaningless nothings, and David McFadden claiming Poe as a great regionalist (his region is the heart).

L.R.

*** MICHAEL SLADE, *Headhunter*. William Morrow, $22.95. Times are changing. Once the only way for a Canadian writer to find an American publisher was to expunge (or change) any hint of Canadian setting. Now, it seems, Canada has become popularly exotic, as this crime thriller, set in a carefully mapped Vancouver, demonstrates. We are told that the novel was written by a committee of three Vancouver lawyers; if so, I speculate that the division of labour assigned one of the three the job of going through the manuscript adding intensely colossal modifiers wherever possible. Yet, after several times almost discarding the novel for its apparent appeal to the pornography of violence, I did finish all 461 pages — the first time I've read anything in this genre in over 20 years. The novel does have pretensions, best suggested by a bibliography of sources on, for example, the drug scene, the psychology of sadomasochism, the abnormal personality, and voodoo. Documentary details about RCMP methods (women officers play a central role), and the epilogue's highlighting of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* also provide reasons to ponder the attempt to reach beyond the pop thriller to contemporary social comment and scholarly detective work.

L.R.

*** JAMES LITTLETON, *Target Nation: Canada and the Western Intelligence Network*. Lester & Orpen Dennys/CBC Enterprises, $22.95. This is a book with no literary pretensions, yet it is one that should be read carefully by all those, writers and readers, who are concerned for the basic liberties of speech and writing. James Littleton's subject is the way in which Canada's sovereignty has been eroded by the participation of its security agencies in covert agreements with other secretive organizations abroad. It is evident that the Canadian agencies often act as if they were virtually autonomous, with stronger loyalties to the CIA and other American agencies than to the Canadian govern-

ment, and that Canadian ministers and high government officials are often ignorant of the actions and arrangements of the spies and spymasters under their control. If the situation represents a loss of sovereignty on a national level, it represents an endangering of freedom on an individual level, for in the strange logic of the intelligence community, criticism of the status quo is subversion and subversion is treason. *Target Nation* is really an iceberg of a book, for it is quite obvious that Littleton knows more than the secrecy of information regulations will allow him to reveal, but what he does tell is alarming enough, and there can hardly be a writer, no matter how unpolitical, who is not threatened by the present concentration of power in the hands of faceless people whose very occupation makes them reactionary, uncompassionate, deeply suspicious, and at the same time unimaginative. We have had plenty of warnings against American economic domination, but that at least is in the open. The danger our Americanophile security agencies expose us to is by definition hidden, and every attempt to show how these organizations threaten our freedom more than they protect it is to be welcomed.

G.W.

** KENNETH COATES, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories*, James Lorimer, $6.95. This is a polemical history, since Kenneth Coates sets out to present the attitude of the Canadian government to its northern territories as an essentially colonial one. On this point no-one who has visited the Northwest Territories and the Yukon with an open eye can fail to agree. Thesis apart, Coates knows the past of the region, and writes about it lucidly, so that the book is readable history as well as a good statement of the case against Ottawa.

G.W.

** *The Making of a Peacemonger: The Memoirs of George Ignatieff*. Prepared in association with Sonja Sinclair. University of Toronto Press, $19.95. Like Charles Ritchie, George Ignatieff belongs to what will eventually be canonized by patriotic historians as the Golden Age of Canadian diplomacy, the Mike Pearson era when our country was still a ranking middle power and played the assiduous role of "honest broker" in an international community where the UN's image still had some meaning. Consequently he has interesting things to say, but anyone expecting a work of literary grace like Charles Ritchie's diaries will be disappointed. Ignatieff himself seems to recognize his lack of Ritchie's kind of talent, since we are quietly told that *The Making of a Peacemaker* is "prepared in association with . . . ," which presumably means it is ghost-written. And indeed, there is a lack of real personal touch in the book that leaves one with the feeling that it is *about* rather than *by* Ignatieff, a disguised biography rather than a true autobiography sweated out in the writer's solitude. At best there are some interesting insights into events, some sharp sketches of people met, all presented with good External Affairs blandness. As raw material for historians it will have its uses, but as an autobiography it hovers too uneasily between concern and detachment.

G.W.

** DOIREANN MACDERMOTT, ed., *Autobiographical and Biographical Writing in the Commonwealth*. Editorial AUSA (Barcelona), n.p. The papers of any conference seldom cohere into a single unit: nor is that their intention. The aim of a conference is to try out ideas, share perspectives, enquire. These papers (from a 1984 conference at Sitges) offer examples of autobiographical reflection (by Chris Wallace-Crabbe), commentary on the dilemma of writing biography (by Orm Mitchell), and accounts of biographical details (Paul Tiessen on Gerard Noxon and Malcolm Lowry). Mostly, the papers look at the hints of autobiographical detail in particular literary works. Among Canadian writers considered are Kroetsch, Suknaski, Laurence, Atwood, and Livesay. Constrained by the length of a conference presentation, the essays do not have much room to develop ideas; at their best they seek less to explain texts in autobiographical terms than to explore the significance of the metaphoric strategies ("Right Hand, Left Hand," for example) in author's versions of themselves.

W.N.

** DUKE MASKELL, *Politics Needs Literature*. Brynnill Press, $3.50. This is one of a series of pamphlets issued as supplements to an English periodical called *The Gadfly*, which seems to be inspired by a kind of Swiftian Toryism. Certainly the attitude Maskell projects in *Politics Needs Literature* is Tory to the gills; an Englishman who taught briefly at McMaster, he has obviously been long enraged by the gracelessness of political language

which he associates with gracelessness of action. In Canada he found himself a couple of gurus: the probable one was — yet again — George Grant; the less likely was the late George Whalley. Whalley, it is true, wrote an excellent and eloquent prose, but I am one of those who has found George Grant often obscure and sometimes obscurantist. And is what Grant writes *really* literature? I have always regarded it as a mixture of personalized history and popularized theology and a model for no man who wants to go straight from here to there, as we should demand of the devious men who rule us. I, for one, have always been highly sceptical that literature can raise up politics; my view is that politics drags literature down to its own level. But *Politics Needs Literature* is a bright, cross-grained piece of writing, and a fine present for Grantians.

G.W.

NOW IN PAPER

RECENT REPRINTS include Munro's *The Moons of Jupiter* and Marian Engel's *The Honeyman Festival* (both Penguin, $7.95), Timothy Findley's *The Butterfly Plague* (Penguin, $8.95), and three works from Macmillan: Mavis Gallant's *From the Fifteenth District* ($4.95), Charles Ritchie's *Diplomatic Passport* ($4.95), and *Morley Callaghan's Stories* ($5.95). Newly drafted from an earlier book is G. P. V. and Helen B. Akrigg's dictionary, *British Columbia Place Names* (Sono Nis, $16.95), a labour of love that pays special attention to indigenous names. Other Macmillan reprints are Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx* ($4.95), Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* ($5.95), and John Melady's story of German prisoners-of-war in Canada during the early 1940's, *Escape from Canada!* ($4.95). Simon & Pierre has published Antonine Maillet's *La Sagouine* in paper ($11.95); William Buchan's memoir of his father, *John Buchan*, has appeared as a Macmillan paperback ($14.95); Jean Simard's *Félix* (n.p.) has been reissued from Stanké.

RECENT PAPERBACK REPRINTS include Michael Millgate's absorbing biography *Thomas Hardy* (Oxford, $14.95), and several new titles in Macmillan's Paperback series, most of them bearing the label "Classic." Among the latter are MacLennan's study of ego and abnegation, *The Watch That Ends the Night* ($5.95), J. M. S. Careless' history *Canada: A Story of Challenge* ($5.95), and Louis Hémon's perennial *Maria Chapdelaine* ($4.95), all stories of reactions to pressure. Western Producer Prairie books has reissued James H. Gray's popular social history *Red Lights on the Prairies* ($8.95).

From Commonwealth sources come parallel reprint series: Anthony Stones' *Celebration*, for example (Penguin, NZ$9.95), a selection of stories for the 1940's Penguin New Writing series, especially valuable for including Frank Sargeson's stylistically suggestive novella "That Summer." Penguin New Zealand has also published Ronald Hugh Morrieson's parodic romp *Came a Hot Friday* ($6.95); Penguin Canada has issued South African Nadine Gordimer's *Something Out There* ($6.95), a novella and stories about irrational responses to terrorism and misdirected notions of where real danger lies. From Penguin Australia come several volumes by the talented Martin Boyd, including the novels in the Langton Quartet (most notably *A Difficult Young Man* and *The Cardboard Crown*, $4.95 each) and the curious *Nuns in Jeopardy* ($6.95), a morality tale adopting the convention of ship-wreck-and-island-survival. The Langton books are mannered social comedies, as is Ethel Anderson's *At Parramatta* ($6.95), though it's more suburban. The hint of the magical and macabre in *Nuns*, however, is a motif that surfaces just as frequently in Australian writing, one which suggest that manners and mores are as thin as ti-leaf, a narrow boundary between the suburbs of cities and the suburbs of hell. Jessica Anderson's *Tirra Lirra by the River* ($5.95) follows the edge of desire as an aging woman leaves home and husband for a promise of something other. Two children's books make the edge of uncertainty more of a psychological mystery: Robin Klein's *People Might Hear You* ($3.95) resists the enclosures of cultism, and Ruth Park's *Playing Beatie Bow* ($4.95) pursues a game of thrills into its illogical, tantalizing consequences.

W.N.

LAST PAGE

THERE'S SOMETIMES a fine line between the reference book and the coffee-table book. Witness *Isak Dinesen's Africa* (Douglas & McIntyre, $40.00). At one level a publication capitalizing on Dinesen's public prominence in 1985 (through the film *Out of Africa*), it's got nothing directly to do with the film at all. It's an anthology of Dinesen quotations, magnificently accompanied by photographs of Africa — but really it's the other way round: photographs first, speech as the servant of sight. The book provides a miniversion of Karen Blixen's African story; ultimately it serves both the casual reader's interest in the author, and the more general aims of the Sierra Club, who aided publication: to respond with intelligence to the existence of wilderness.

Other reference works are more familiar in form. There is the encyclopedia; a recent example being Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper's *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (Oxford, $59.95), a specialty work for the generalist as well, a kind of Oxford Companion for the social analyst. There are general essays and mini-biographies here on subjects as diverse as McLuhan and Frazer, witch-hunt and psychopharmacology, maximization, rape, and theories of race. Readers of modern literature and criticism who are unfamiliar with the range of ideas on which it often draws will find this book a valuable quick guide to background reading. There's also a new Oxford *Dictionary of Natural History* ($49.95), spleenworts to tussock moths, unillustrated, edited by Michael Allaby.

The dictionary, of course, offers another sample form. The first volume (A-C) of Frederic Cassidy's *Dictionary of American Regional English* (Harvard, $60.00) announces a valuable new enterprise. It's not just that the history and regional distribution of words like *Andy Gump*, *belly-flouncer*, and *copacetic* are themselves interesting; it's also that they're signs of the inventiveness of speech and the vitality of the language. Cassidy's work, replete with maps and quotations, refers only to the U.S.A., though there is some overlap with Canadian usage. (There are even three pages of 'Canada' and 'Canadian' entries, mostly botanical and ornithological — a 'Canadian camp robber' turns out to be a jay. That horror beloved of American weather forecasters, however — 'Canadian air' — is noticeably absent.) A more general survey of the ongoing history of *The English Language* is by Robert Burchfield (Oxford, $19.95). With sections on "dispersed" forms, syntax, vocabulary, and dictionaries, the book illuminates a range of topics. Most notable is the author's clarity and plain common sense, as when he comments on current linguistic change:

> There is little doubt that most of the new features that are intensely disliked by linguistic conservatives will triumph in the end. But the language will not bleed to death. Nor will it seem in any way distorted once the old observances have been forgotten.

To the changes that "dispersal" has wrought, some access is possible through companions and anthologies: Meic Stephens' *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales* ($43.75) or W. H. Wilde's (et al.) *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature* ($50.00) offer examples, though the latter in particular (a valuable, thoughtful work) seems recurrently at war with its space limitations (Stephens provides a whole section on "the short story," Wilde provides none). Another way to see change-in-practice is through the historical anthology — *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* ($15.95), *The Oxford Anthology of Australian Literature* ($25.00). The first of these differs from its predessors primarily through extensions at both ends, adding Maori writers and contemporary writers (many of whom are also Maori). The Australian anthology, designed for introductory courses, provides a lot of authors (frequently "one author/one excerpt") and even in 589 pages must make a number of arbitrary choices (Randolph Stow is represented by a poem and a personal essay but not by fiction). That said, the editors (Leonie Kramer and Adrian Mitchell) do manage to represent a number of women writers not commonly anthologized. The book's purpose lies in number, in range, not in canon.

A third access to linguistic "dispersal" comes from a book like Michael King's *Kawe Korero* (NZ Journalists Training Board, n.p.), which from the outset resists some of the presumptions built into the idea of "dispersal" in the first place. The Maori, the book advises young New Zealand journalists, are not there to be "seen" or "named" or even made "comic" by "European" expectations of journalism. Or put another way: "In the Maori world the speaker speaks. Understanding is the business of the listener." This valuable pamphlet provides a line of defence against

"pakeha" ignorance in reporting Maori activities: a vocabulary in ordinary use, a guide to expectation ("ceremonial takes precedence over everything else"; do remember "that eating is regarded as one of the ways of removing the alien tapu carried by visitors"; do remember, in other words, that "strangeness" is determined by unfamiliarity, not by inferiority). Canadian publishers please note.

Which returns me to the picturebook and the analytical study. *Seeing the First Australians*, ed. Ian Donaldson and Tamsin Donaldson (Allen & Unwin, $29.95) documents the "kinds of *seeing*" Europeans brought to the Aborigines. Anthropologist, missionary, painter: all brought assumptions of superiority and power (towards "cults of primitivism and savagery") along with their desire to measure, reform, and depict. By divers hands, the essays here (substantially illustrated in black-and-white) form a discontinuous history: from a record of responses to myth, song, and image to the shaping of popular presumptions and expectations. There are clear (often specified) North American parallels. Margaret Orbell's *The Natural World of the Maori* (Collins, Auckland, $44.95), with photographs by Geoff Moon and numerous other illustrations, is less a "history" of Maori culture than a readable layman's guide to what is currently known about it. We are told what people wore and what they believed; the illustrations depict plants, animals, scenery, carvings. In some sense, words and pictures constitute independent narratives here, the one more summary than process, the other a broken sequence of images. It may, therefore, be "up to the viewer to *see*" — that is, to infer the connections beteween them, to make relevant through association the set of mind which is presented here passively, as a culture apart.

W.N.

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W.N.

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