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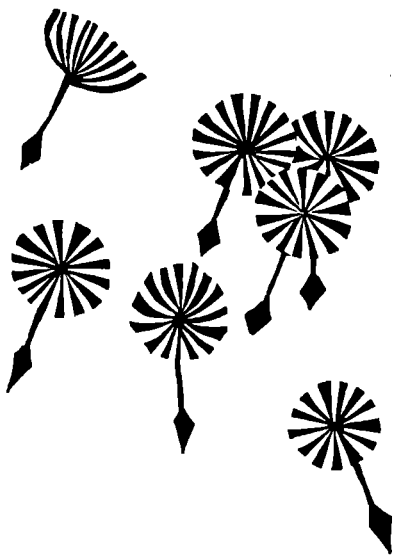

LITERATURE & THE VISUAL ARTS

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDAL FOR CANADIAN BIOGRAPHY

1986

In 1986, Canadian biography continued to range in subject. Mandarins, literary figures, sports stars: all received absorbed attention — as, especially, did the political stars of regional and urban politics. Among some of the more captivating books of the year were David Ricardo Williams' *Mayor Gerry* (a sympathetic account of Vancouver's Gerry McGeer), C. M. Johnston's *E. C. Drury* (a biographically-centred history of agrarian idealism in Ontario politics), and Debbie Brill's *Jump* (the autobiography of an athlete, written stylishly with James Lawton). Two further works merit attention, both for the quality of the writing and for the way they incorporate biographical detail into their analysis of racism and politics (Muriel Kitagawa's *This Is My Own*) and art (Doris Shadbolt's *Bill Reid*).

* * *

The 1986 Medal goes to Claude Bissell for *The Imperial Canadian*, published by the University of Toronto Press. The second volume in Bissell's account of Vincent Massey, this book probes Massey's later years, particularly those which saw him involved in the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the arts, and in the office of Governor General.

Bissell's work is a solid record of the period — of people acting in the belief that they could alter the times in which they lived — and the author uses such attitudes in order to establish a context for "reading" Massey himself. He rightly acknowledges the importance of Alice Massey in this life and career; he skillfully analyzes Massey's private life in order to illuminate the public behaviour and the public image; and he does not shrink from noting inconsistencies — the ambition as well as the talent, the private warmth and the private elitism. *The Imperial Canadian* provides illuminating sketches of many individuals, and helps explain the cultural presumptions of the Massey Commission, the deep connections between political contexts and literature, art, music, radio, language, and education that continue to exist in Canada. Above all, the book is lucid, and a pleasure to read.

W.N.

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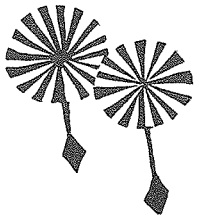

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acknowledgements

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We also extend thanks to the following, for permission to include reproductions of paintings, poems, and drawings:

For William W. Kurelek, *Subdue the Earth* (*Sudbury*), watercolour, 50.8 x 75.9 cm: The Isaacs Gallery, Toronto, and Laurentian University Museum and Arts Centre.

For J. E. Mallais, *Stella*, oil on canvas: The Manchester City Art Galleries.

For George Bowering, *The Swing*: George Bowering.

For Alexander David Colville (Canadian, b. 1920), *Horse and Train* (1954), tempera on masonite, 41.2 x 54.2 cm, Collection Art Gallery of Hamilton, Hamilton, Ontario, Gift of Dominion Foundries and Steel, Ltd., 1957: The Art Gallery of Hamilton.

For Jean-Paul Mousseau, Untitled drawing (illustration for Thérèse Renaud's *Les sables de rêve*), 1945: Jean-Paul Mousseau.

For Jean-Paul Mousseau, Untitled, 1948 (Collection: Ruby and Bruno Cormier, Montreal), from *Les herbes rouges*, No. 29 (août 1975), with permission of Jean-Paul Mousseau: photograph courtesy of the Galerie Dreadnere, Toronto, and with permission of Jean-Paul Mousseau.

For Paul-Emile Borduas, "Abstraction 20" or "Portrait of Madame B," 1942 (Private Collection, Toronto): photograph courtesy of the Galerie Dreadnere, Toronto.

For Lawren S. Harris (Canadian 1885-1970), *Lake Superior*, c. 1924, oil on canvas, 102 x 127.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Bequest of Charles S. Band, 1970: Art Gallery of Ontario and Mrs. James H. Knox.

For Lawren S. Harris (Canadian, 1885-1970), *Snow (II)*, c. 1916, oil on canvas, 118.8 x 126.4 cm; *Lighthouse, Father Point*, 1929, oil on canvas, 106.7 x 127 cm, gift of the artist, Vancouver, 1960; *Equations in Space*, c. 1936, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 121.9 cm: The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa and Mrs. James H. Knox.

For Emily Carr, sketches contained in *Poetical Works of Alfred Tennyson* (VAG 82.27): Vancouver Art Gallery (photographs: Jim Gorman).

For Paul Kane, *White Mud Portage*, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 73.66 cm; *Red River Settlement*, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 73.66 cm; *Prairie Valley*, watercolour on paper, 11.43 x 22.86 cm; *A Valley in the Plains*, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 73.66 cm; *A Prairie on Fire*, watercolour on paper, 13.97 x 22.86 cm; *A Prairie on Fire*, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 73.66 cm; *Fort Edmonton*, oil on canvas, 45.72 x 73.66 cm: Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

For Paul Kane, *White Mud Portage, Winnipeg River*, watercolour on paper, 13.33 x 23 x 23.81 cm; *Red River Settlement*, oil on board, 22.86 x 35.24 cm; *Fort Carlton from a Distance*, watercolour on paper, 13.65 x 22.54 cm; *Fort Pitt, with Bluff*, watercolour on paper, 13.65 x 22.86 cm; *Fort Edmonton, 1846*, watercolour on paper, 13.65 x 22.86 cm: Stark Museum of Art, Orange, Texas.

For Alfred Pellan, *Mascarade*, 1942, oil on canvas, 130.2 x 162.1 cm; Collection Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

For Marc-Aurèle de Foy Suzor-Coté (1869-1937), illustrations for *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916): Eugénie (Farmer) Saint-Jean.

For Clarence Gagnon (1881-1942), illustrations for *Maria Chapdelaine* (1933): Claude H. Pelletier, for La Compagnie du Trust Central (Montréal).

For poems by Roy Kiyooka: Roy Kiyooka.

For Master L.D., *La Madeleine transportée au ciel*: Musée des Beaux Arts, Paris.

For "Horse Carried by Balloon": Lithograph from Cuthbert Hodgson Collection: the Royal Aeronautical Society.

editorial

TRIPTYCH

A POEM ABOUT A PAINTING complicates the mysterious connections between language and seeing. An example which has fascinated me for fifteen years is George Bowering's "The Swing":

Renoir's people
seem to stand
on a forest floor
of blossoms.

The girl on her swing
could be fifteen, her dress
of new flowers.

She leans coyly
or thoughtfully away
from the two men
with straw hats.

They are artists
on a Sunday afternoon
warm in loose clothing,

some kind of wonder
for the child who
makes the fourth figure.

She is clasping her empty hands
in front of her, her head up,
her eyes the only ones
looking outward.

Renoir's "La Balançoire" was painted in 1876. Critical commentary has focused on the ways in which the painting defines Impressionism: the intensity of the dark shadow — thought to be bizarre in such an evidently springtime scene; the audacious associations of colours — coral, green-blue, and ivory. In their emphasis, the critics, that is, have largely followed Renoir's direction, emphasizing the way he conveys the visual elements of a scene, and the way he spurns the

tradition of narrative painting. Bowering demurs. The first thing he ignores in Renoir is the play of light and dark. Words, he implies, can't compete with the colours of Renoir's light. Bowering's subject is the people. Language, almost in spite of the poet's resistance, creates a narrative where none exists.

The concept of the ideogram — the word that is painted, the picture that makes a word — is relevant here. The ideogram has been crucial to forms of modern literature, at least since Ezra Pound, and fascinated the poets Bowering once took as guides. The method of the ideogram, as Caszlo Géfin summarizes it in *Ideogram: History of a Poetic Method* (University of Texas Press, 1982), is a

> juxtaposition of linguistic (or pictorial, spatial, tonal) particulars which the mind of the reader (onlooker, listener) will organize into a coherent whole just as he or she does with particulars in the real world. Not only are connectives relics of an outmoded transitional practice, but they are redundant, in fact, because they are not present in nature.

Nor are they present in a painting. Which may explain Bowering's approach to Renoir. Bowering juxtaposes pictorial particulars — discrete verse paragraphs for the different human figures in the painting — without conjunctions. The narrative is not imposed, or read: the gaps in the narrative are made present. There is no subordination in the poem. Bowering's prepositions signal location, time, spatial relationships, but the verbs ("seem," "could be") call into question the implied precision, creating a *verbal* impressionism.

"The Swing" makes a reader think about relationships among Renoir's characters — in the past and potential future. Bowering isolates particulars, inviting the reader to try to organize them into a coherent whole. The method is especially evident in the second half of the poem, where the one stanza which does not close with a full stop promises a syntactical clarity which remains unrealized. Given the poem's interest in absent connections, the phrase "some kind of wonder" seems to me to be the core of Bowering's reading. *Whose* "wonder"? The artists' as they watch the swinging girl? Renoir's? The child's? The girl's? Bowering's? The child "*makes* the fourth figure." Bowering again disrupts the expectation of the relative clause: the fourth figure is not necessarily the child named in the poem. The wonder may lie in Renoir's reverence for the immediacy of a child's response to the visual world.

Many other verbal-visual connections are hidden in this poem-painting. Renoir's "La Balançoire" is a visual quotation of Jean-Honoré Frangonard's "The Swing" (1766-67), a painting whose ribald comedy makes the social niceties of Renoir's grouping more voyeuristic than first appears. And, as J. Newton showed in a 1967 article, Renoir's painting in turn gave Zola a means of describing his heroine in *Une Page d'amour* (1878): "standing on the very edge of the swing and holding the ropes with her arms outstretched . . . she was wear-

ing a grey dress decorated with mauve bows." That sense of edge is intriguing, too, in the visual blocking of Bowering's poem on the page. The pattern of "swinging" lines puts the men and small girls on the left margin, as they are crowded on the left 40% of Renoir's canvas, but the two stanzas describing the girl on the swing begin by leaning away from the left margin, and then further away.

The complexities of words which are at once visual and without visual content are the concern of this number of *Canadian Literature*. The ideogrammic method is, I sense, crucial to this subject (and, to suggest another avenue of enquiry, to the recent literary archaeology of Canada's Asian dimensions). Bowering, in static words, reveals the element that is always there, but never there, in the static painting: the observer/perceiver reading the painting, turning a visual experience into words spoken. You don't want, somehow, to go through an art gallery alone. You want someone with you to word the particulars, to provoke you to make up the story. I taught Bowering's poem before I had seen the painting. When I went to the Galerie du Jeu de Paume, I kept circling back, again and again, to "La Balançoire" because I had read its blanks swinging first in words.

L.R.

* * *

Writing *The Fine Arts in Canada* in 1925, Newton MacTavish showed himself to be like a great many other people: ahead of his time in some respects, behind it in others. His survey did look at Indian art *as art*, for example (rather than consign it to some such category as "folk history"), but on the other hand he also "placed" Indian art in a European frame: the illustrations of totem poles are enclosed by formal portraits *of* Indian chieftains (by Paul Kane and James Henderson) and by studied representations (either sublime or sentimental) of Niagara Falls and other icons of nature's majesty. Perhaps there's a message here — in the signs of placement as well as in the substance of language (or vice-versa). MacTavish liked categories. Acknowledging the artistic skills of women, he nevertheless gathered them all into a single chapter: "Women Painters" (to be followed by one entitled "Others of Importance"). He gave separate chapter status to Morrice, Cullen, and Suzor-Coté, yet left out altogether Emily Carr (whose work, admittedly, had not yet been widely seen outside British Columbia). While sensitivity shaped some of his judgments, his sensitivity was in turn broadly shaped by current taste: which is to say, his work pushed a little at conventional presumptions about what could be interpreted *as art*, but it shared largely in the prevailing assumptions about what art itself intended and what art criticism might be expected to do. Implicitly, gender and region were not just attributes of person or place but rudimentary filters on recognition (and therefore accepta-

bility). Explicitly, art and criticism were both expected to serve the nation: except that, paradoxically, the conventional idea of nationhood was itself circumscribed by gender, position, and time.

Praising the Group of Seven — thus separating himself from Hector Charlesworth's dismissal of them, and allying himself with the 1920's "moderns" — MacTavish closed his book with a ringing paean to national self-expression:

> notwithstanding the hard ways set by the Seven for us to follow, it should not be difficult to convince the open mind that on the whole their work is dynamic and that the arts, especially the pictorial and plastic arts, in Canada are dignified and oftentimes masterly. Here and there, one is tempted to perceive, a national note that Lampman suggests in his line,
>
> "Yet they shall quail not."
>
> But in the general clash it is difficult to discriminate. Later on, in the clear though subdued light of the afterglow, that note and that spirit may be estimated at their true value. Meantime we can only wonder whether they may yet resound, and still resound, until they can be recognized and accepted as veritable interpretations of national characteristics.

The sentiment here is instructive not only for its patent determination but also for the terms of its justifications of value. The critic seems almost to will himself to admire what he sees on Group of Seven canvases, but in order to do so finds a conventional social reason. The justification lies not in colour, texture, medium, or line, but in a critical equation between subject and social desire. While the Group's art is "difficult" — one hears echoes of D. C. Scott's postwar reflections on modern ("wayward and discomforting") poetry — it can have merit to the degree that the difficulty parallels or epitomizes the "defiant" national spirit. Boldness, beauty, wilderness, and the clarion call for spiritual vigour: it's a familiar set of tropes — defined in criticism and subsequently marketed as a distinguishing national characteristic. What it distinguished most of all, however, was a particular 1920's fashion. In the years following the First World War, there were multiple attempts — in literature, politics, music, and art — to divide Canada from Europe, and concurrently to enumerate the physical symbols of difference. Wilderness was one of these. Roberts and Connor had previously made the wilds respectable; with the Group of Seven, the wilds also became an attribute of citizenship, enjoined to serve the cause of independence.

Criticism, clearly, does not shape art — but it sometimes establishes reputations, by codifying (as reasons for aesthetic approval) a set of social beliefs or desires. Krieghoff's paintings of habitant life, for example, were roughly equivalent in sentiment (for late nineteenth-century anglophone observers in Canada) to W. H. Drummond's pseudo-dialect verse: both reinforced anglophone stereotypes of rural Quebec, hence both were more artistically admired outside Quebec than

within. Within Quebec, they were deemed clichés. The long-pervasive Britishness of anglophone Canadian history and pedagogy, moreover, helps explain why a painting like Benjamin West's "The Death of General Wolfe" should have had so much more apparent a literary impact than Robert Harris' "A Meeting of the School Trustees." (One might add that the Irish poet Thomas Moore's "Canadian Boat Song" was, in parallel fashion, long more popular in English Canada than was Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's "Un canadien errant"; and "The Maple Leaf For Ever" was at least as familiar as "O Canada" to imperial hearts. Politics shaped the familiarity. Today, still, Gérin-Lajoie's musical critique of the government politics of 1837, evocative in Quebec, remains obscure to most anglophones, even to those who know "Un canadien errant" as a folksong.) The contemporary emergence of feminist and regional rereadings of history may well reverse such a tendency. Though Harris' painting still awaits its literary descendants, it is so resonant with the tensions of local power and gender appraisal that the wait may not be much longer. To make such a statement reiterates, of course, the general point being made here about cultural analysis: it uses art as evidence; it finds evidence in artifacts for its interpretations of the networks of social power. Art becomes sign.

That art should be a sign of cultural politics as well as a sign of a political culture should surprise no-one — even Borduas' rejection of political representation, when he and others issued *Refus Global* in 1948, was a deliberate political gesture. Political facts, moreover, are often unpleasantly plain. The Group of Seven was a Toronto group, not a national one: hence its notion of nationhood was centred in the cultural priorities of one region — Emily Carr was seen as an appendage to it, and David Milne (as long as he resided elsewhere) was ignored. Presence on the scene, access to the media, connections with the mercantile establishment, acknowledgement by the gallery: these are powerful agencies of recognition. Such power is not unknown in literary circles as well, and it continues to affect people's image of what constitutes accomplishment. Indian art, it seems, would not be recognized as art until Indians were respected as people. William Kurelek's art would be praised when multiculturalism became a politically attractive notion. Robert Bateman's art is still categorized by many as "natural history." Much women's art is still not recognized, and what does that say?

Some years ago, despite their continuing popular appeal, the Group of Seven went out of critical fashion. The continuing popularity may confirm the effectiveness of the way one image of national distinctiveness was established as well as the quality of Group paintings. The limits imposed on Bateman, however, suggest that criticism itself is still in a post-Group-of-Seven phase, resistant not so much to Bateman as to the Group equation between nature and nation. Rejecting the 1920's version of nation has meant resisting its formal codes, the icons of animals and landscape. What replaces it? Other codes — for which criticism finds

new names — abstract, magic, parodic, urban — repairing history while other changes are already happening. As gestures of analysis, such critical comments cannot escape their social context, any more than comments on literature can. Even when espousing change, asserting the aesthetic independence of line and colour (or character and word) from the controls of creed and state, they walk only slightly ahead of the times they're slightly behind.

W.N.

* * *

In their letters to France in the seventeenth century, the Jesuits requested that along with clothing, tools, and other necessities, they be sent suitable images to help them in their missionary work with the Indians. As fear was considered "the precursor of faith in these barbarian minds," most of the pictures they used stressed the eschatological theme — whose graphic details continued to haunt both native Indians and French-Canadians well into the twentieth century. (Paralysed by childhood visions of hell, Bérubé in Roch Carrier's *La Guerre, yes sir!* proposes marriage to a prostitute to redeem himself.)

Yet the Jesuits also unwittingly provided the means that were to destroy this limit on imagination and spontaneity. Always ready to adapt their methods to the requirements of a certain culture, they chose colours and shapes in keeping with the conventions current among their clientele. Thus, as François-Marc Gagnon has demonstrated in *La Conversion par l'image: un aspect de la mission des Jésuites auprès des Indiens du Canada au XVIIe siècle* (1975), Jesus was to be portrayed to the Hurons "without a beard," the characters "should not be shown in profile but we should see their entire face and their eyes should be open," "there [should] not be too much shadow on the bodies" nor too much clothing, the hair should be straight not "curly or bald," and the colours red and blue should prevail over yellow and green.

Effectively puncturing realism and ethnocentricity, these recommendations, formulated to entrench the authority of the Church, anticipate an increasingly deconstructionist dialogue between image and word. (It is probably no coincidence that a major figure in the development of the modern Québec art scene — Rodolphe Dubé, alias François Hertel — was a lapsed Jesuit.) This dialogue takes several forms. The Automatist manifesto *Refus global* draws on the hypnotic anaphoras of religious chant to postulate the creativity of the subconscious. Another member of the Automatist group, Claude Gauvreau, drew on the concept of the baroque for similar purposes. Revisionist history disputes received attitudes by challenging received images: the comic strips in Léandre Bergeron and Robert Lavail's *L'Histoire du Québec*, for example, explode the religious iconography of Benjamin West's "The Death of General Wolfe" by suggesting that the General really slipped on a banana peel and that the men propping him up in the posture

of a dying Christ are discussing the relative merits of bananas and steaks. Theatre, too, reshapes visual meanings; Marie-Josée Lanoix's stage sets for *Les Fées ont soif* framed Denise Boucher's exorcism of Marian symbolism with grotesquely enlarged religious paraphernalia, most notably a gigantic rosary.

As in the medical practice of homeopathy, cultural disease is sometimes best combatted with the poison that caused it. But sometimes familiar images and words are so freighted with unwanted connotations that an author, as Patricia Smart suggests in these pages, prefers to draw on "concepts of music and voice" to avoid them. When this happens, the conventional borders between the arts dissolve, and readers are asked to re-hear and re-see what once they thought they knew.

E.-M.K.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

Rhea Tregebov

This rectangle describes the life of Sir Henry Unton;
within it everything happens at once over and over again.
Sir Henry is everywhere within this rectangle a small
dark crude figure in a smaller ground.
Within it Sir Henry is being born
and stays being born while he flourishes
and dies, winning and losing battles,
in Italy, in France, in the same dark armour
with the same dark face, crudely drawn.
Had his widow seen saintly lives
pictured with this simultaneous disorder
or is it just that she remembered him this way,
all at once over and over?
For isn't it like this
that our lives live on in us,
born and borne and unborn.

THE AUTOMATIST MOVEMENT OF MONTREAL

Towards Non-Figuration in Painting, Dance, and Poetry

Ray Ellenwood

"... il faut sentir vraiment autre chose dans la matière verbale que de plates similitudes logiques pour pouvoir vibrer à la poésie."
— [Claude Gauvreau]

WHEN *Refus global* went on sale in Montreal on 6 August 1948, it was a pivotal moment for the group which produced it. Only a few months earlier, they had been dubbed "les automatistes" by a local journalist and the name stuck, appropriate or not. Although the lead manifesto was written by a painter, Paul-Emile Borduas, it was signed by fifteen other people who were active in various artistic pursuits and Borduas' manifesto was only one part of a substantial publication which included photographs of paintings and people, as well as eight other texts, among them three short dramatic pieces by Claude Gauvreau and an essay on dance by Françoise Sullivan.

Refus global[1] was a squaring of accounts in many ways. Borduas' major text was a broadly political statement after the European mode, calling for a revolution in sensibility, condemning a Quebec society which he found repressed and repressive. Public reaction in 1948 was almost entirely focussed on the lead manifesto and its social commentary. Not surprisingly, interest in *Refus global* as a primary document of Quebec's "quiet revolution" has continued over the years. I would like to concentrate, however, on the Automatists as a group of artists, predominantly but not exclusively painters, who sought to define themselves not only in opposition to an academic establishment but also in contrast to related branches of modernism such as Surrealism. Their sense of difference came to be based more and more clearly on what might be called (even in dance and poetry) processes and levels of non-figuration.

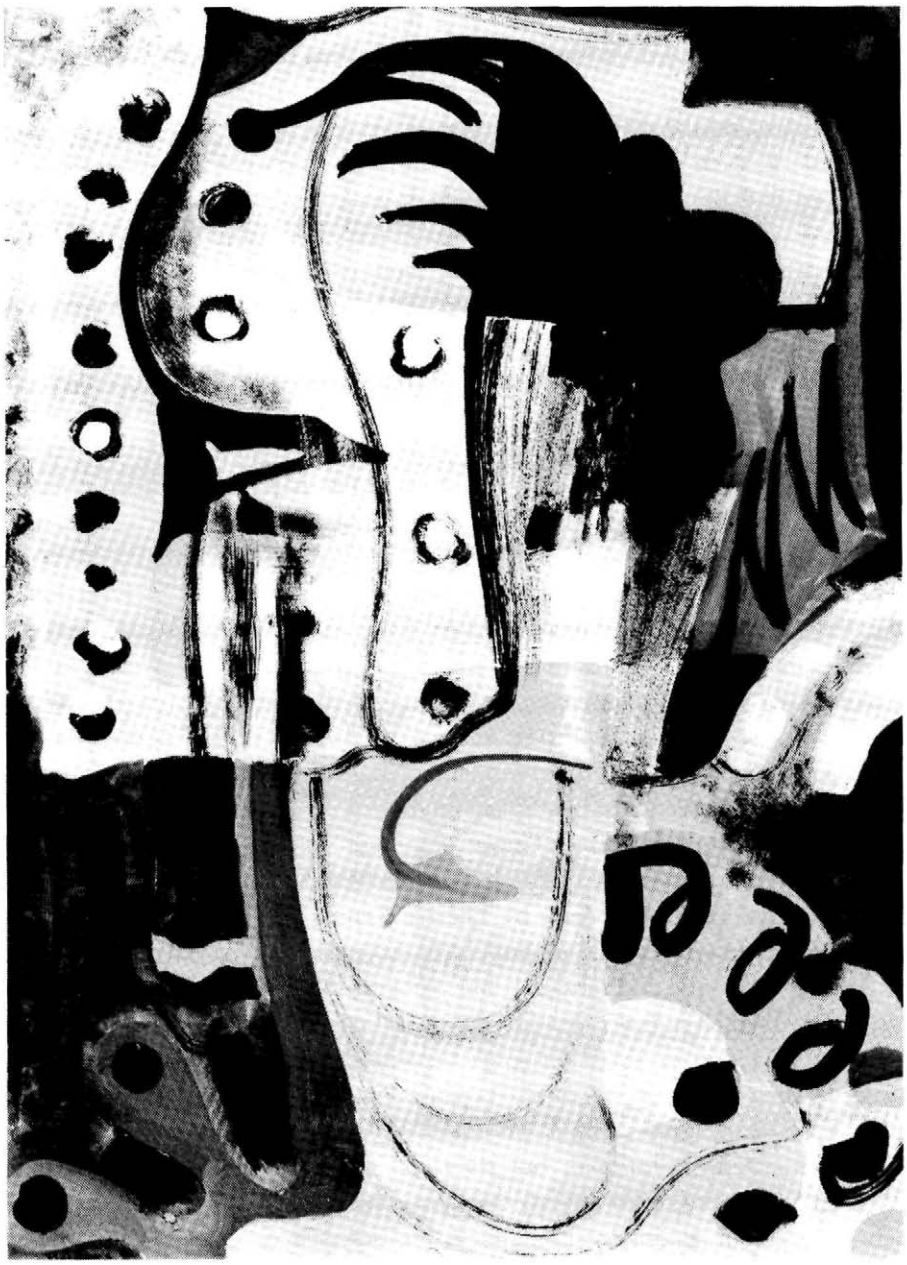
In Quebec, where most of the critical study of the Automatist movement has been done, there is quite a clear division between the historians of art and literature

studying the group. A number of monographs and exhibition catalogues have been published which talk exclusively about the painters, especially Borduas and Riopelle;[2] and when painters are being discussesd, their writings are quite naturally studied in relation to the artists' biography or to their painting. This has been the case with the texts by Borduas which appeared in the Automatist manifesto *Refus global*[3] and elsewhere, but also with the writings of other painter-theoreticians such as Fernand Leduc.[4] If the focus is on literature, attention shifts mainly to the poet Claude Gauvreau with a glance in the direction of other signatories of *Refus global* such as Thérèse Renaud, or fellow-travellers such as Rémi-Paul Forgues, Gilles Hénault, or Paul-Marie Lapointe.[5] Painting then becomes part of the general background.[6] And while going their separate ways, the historians of Automatism in painting and literature have ignored dance and performance almost entirely.[7] Yet the group which produced *Refus global* very deliberately put their energies into an inter-disciplinary publication, and I would argue that the different expressions of Automatism must be seen as related.

Visual Arts

To over-simplify a long and complicated story, the history of Automatist nonfiguration begins with a series of gouaches exhibited by Borduas in Montreal in 1942, which he called "Surrealist." He had produced about sixty of them in a short period, and each was originally entitled "Abstraction" followed by a number. In fact, as he himself later recognized, the paintings were more Cubist than Surrealist and indeed, as François-Marc Gagnon has pointed out, they are not even technically abstract.[8] Nonetheless, they were an important change from Borduas' previous work, a first step in the direction of non-representational art and recognized as such by him and by the young people who began to seek his company at this time. Here is how Borduas described the process of their creation in a conversation with the art critic Maurice Gagnon.[9]

> I begin with no preconceived idea. Faced with the white sheet, my mind free of any literary ideas, I respond to my first impulse. If I feel like placing my charcoal in the middle of the page, or to one side, I do so with no questions asked, and then go on from there. Once the first line is drawn, the page has been divided and that division starts a whole series of thoughts which proceed automatically. When I use the word "thoughts" I mean painterly thoughts: thoughts having to do with movement, rhythm, volume and light, not literary ideas. Literary ideas are only useful if they are transformed plastically. . . .
>
> It follows that the work of art must be produced in a constant state of becoming so that instinct, from which the song flows, may express itself continuously as the work is being executed. The painter's song is a vibration imprinted on matter by a human sensibility. Through it, matter is made to live. Therein lies the source of all the mystery in a work of art: that inert matter can be brought to life.



PAUL-EMILE BORDUAS, *Portrait de Mme. B.*, gouache, 1942.

There is plenty of evidence to show that this process of automatic drawing was influenced by what Borduas had read of French Surrealist theory, particularly as expressed by André Breton. But his emphasis on painterly qualities as opposed to "literary" ideas, on the sheer materality of painting as opposed to pictorial image-making, mark, even at this early date, a difference between his sense of artistic automatism and Breton's, a difference which became clearer as time went on.

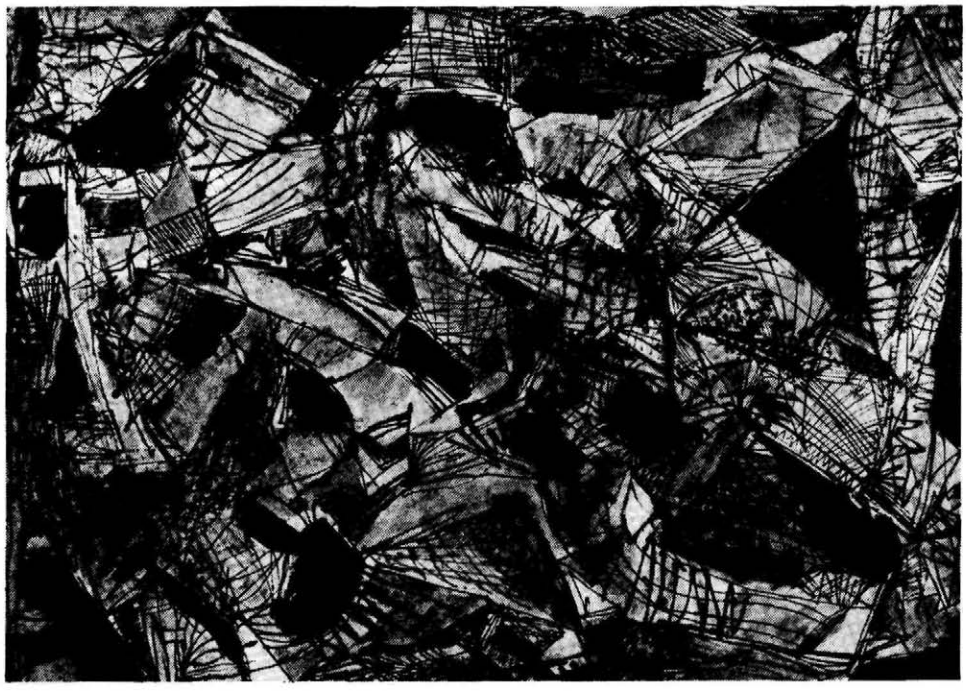
It is no accident, however, that Borduas and the group forming around him (his own students from the École du Meuble, along with others from the École des Beaux-Arts and their friends) were often called the Montreal Surrealists. Their abrasive attacks on academic realism were in keeping with the mood of French Surrealism, and their works of the early forties, especially their drawings, often present the same kind of otherworldly, yet still obviously figurative imagery that one sees in drawings by Max Ernst or Juan Miró, for example. Limited space and resources do not allow me to give many examples here, but I have chosen as illustrations three works which I consider representative of different, and changing, tendencies.

The first example is one of Borduas' gouaches of 1942, entitled "Abstraction 20" and later "Portrait de Madame B." Like all of the series, it is obviously non-representational, therefore abstract in that very general sense. However, as François-Marc Gagnon points out, even the placing of the drawing on a vertical sheet of paper leads us to "read" a portrait and we still have clear indications of a figure against a background, of outline, modelling, light, and shade, even though the figure might not be recognizable. Space relations may be ambiguous in this work, but they are still implicit, as in a Cubist painting.

In illustration number 2, a drawing by Jean-Paul Mousseau done in 1945 and used to illustrate a book of poems by Thérèse Renaud,[10] we can see an automatic drawing clearly in what would be popularly recognized as the Surrealist tradition. The figure is grotesque and fantastic, but recognizably biomorphic and set against a background which suggests receding space, light, shade, and volume. "Surrealist" imagery of this kind persisted for some time in the work of the Automatists, especially in their drawings, no doubt because line lends itself to outline, hence to depiction of shape and volume. Automatist paintings of the mid-forties were becoming less representational, but they still often retained a sense of figures against a background, even though the figures might be nothing more than large "taches" of colour against an undefined, limitless space, as in Borduas' famous *Sous le vent de l'île*.

As a contrast, note the drawing in illustration number 3, done by Mousseau in 1948. Clearly, the sense of foregrounded figure, receding perspective, outline, and volume have been eliminated. We retain a sense of various depths, mass, light, and dark, but the impression is much more of a two-dimensional, all-over design. This

JEAN-PAUL MOUSSEAU, *Untitled*, ink drawing for Thérèse Renaud's *Les sables du rêve*, 1945.



JEAN-PAUL MOUSSEAU, *Untitled*, coloured ink, 1948.

is the direction in which Automatist painting was moving at the time of *Refus global*. The group had decided that Surrealist painting was too "literary" and that they must go beyond it into a more radical non-figuration. Fernand Leduc had actually written in a letter to André Breton, a few months before the publication of *Refus global*:

> Imagination liberated by automatism and enriched by all the gifts of Surrealism can finally submit to its own transformational power in order to organize a totally new world of forms, conceived outside of any figurative, anecdotal or symbolic reminiscence. All that remains . . . is a human link with the essence of diverse elements of the cosmos. Space-time relationships are no longer found between images, but actually within the object itself, which gives rise to secrets of a new morphology.[11]

Although Leduc's statement has an almost mystical quality not necessarily in keeping with the thinking of other members of the group, his comment on the need for a new morphology was echoed throughout the *Refus global* document, particularly in the essay by Bruno Cormier, "A Pictorial Work is an Experiment and an Experience," and in the two other texts (besides the lead manifesto) by Borduas.

In a short piece entitled "About Today's Surrealism" Borduas began by acknowledging, "The Surrealists showed us the moral importance of non-preconceived

acts," but then went on to accuse them of having become too "intentional" in their work. It should be understood that, in a number of places throughout the manifesto, the word "intention" is used pejoratively to stand for everything that is non-spontaneous and self-interested. More specifically, in "Comments on Some Current Words," Borduas gave definitions of different kinds of automatism, clearly implying that his group had progressed beyond Surrealism:

> Mechanical Automatism:
>
> Produced by strictly physical means such as folding a painted surface, scratching, rubbing, dripping, smudging with smoke, gravitation, rotation, etc. Objects made in this way show universal plastic qualities (the same physical laws control the materials) but reveal little about the personality of the author. On the other hand, they make excellent paranoiac screens.
>
> Phychic Automatism:
>
> In literature: writing with no control of the thought processes. During states of particular sensitivity, has permitted the incredible prophecies of modern times: Surrealism. Has contributed greatly to a forward leap in understanding of the creative process.
>
> In painting: mainly based on memory. Dream memory: Dali: remembrance of mild hallucinations: Tanguy, Dali; remembrance of all kinds of chance events: Duchamp, etc. Because memory is involved, interest focuses more on the subject treated (idea, analogy, image, unexpected association of objects, mental connections) than on the real subject (the plastic object, appropriate to the sensual properties of the material used).
>
> Surrational Automatism:
>
> Unpremeditated writing in plastic matter. One shape calls up another until a feeling of unity is achieved, or a feeling that to go further without destruction is impossible.
>
> During the process, no attention is paid to content. This freedom is justified by the conviction that content is inevitably linked to form: Lautreamont.
>
> Complete moral independence with regard to the object produced. It is left intact, reworked in places or destroyed according to the feeling it arouses (partial reworking is almost impossible). Attempt to arrive at a conscious plastic awareness while the writing is going on (perhaps more exactly 'a state of alertness' — Robert Elie). A desire to understand the content once the object is finished.
>
> Hoped for: a sharpened awareness of the psychological content of any form, of the human universe as it is made from the universe as such.[12]

Of special note here is the distinction Borduas makes between psychic automatism, which he associates with Surrealism, and surrational automatism, which he associates with the Montreal group. That distinction is related to a second important one: between the "subject treated" and the "real subject." A Surrealist painting, however much it might undermine our usual habits of seeing, still uses its

signs to refer to something beyond itself, to a reality which may not be that of our everyday experience but is nonetheless an illusion of a world outside the bounds of the canvas. When he comes to define "Picture," Borduas has scornful words for spectators who rely on this referential quality in painting:

> The plastic reality, the only reality of the work, remains hidden under a mass of illusions: woman, chair, smile, dress, etc.; unknown, untouched, unseen either in detail or in totality. Only the illusionary side of the picture is perceived; and only because it is familiar.[13]

Paintings produced by what he calls surrational automatism offer none of this illusionary quality. They refer to nothing but themselves, like a pebble. As Claude Gauvreau put it seven years later:

> Surrational painting is the most concrete painting there is — because it does not dissumulate its reality behind abstract screens of similitude, resemblances, illusions, definable regularities. It is matter, it is nothing but matter, it is human sensibility materialized, it is the concrete par excellence.[14]

This comment was made, in fact, at the time of an acerbic dispute between Borduas and some of his ex-disciples over the kind of non-figurative painting they should espouse. Some, such as Fernand Leduc, were moving towards what has been called, in the American context, colour field or hard-edged abstraction whereas Bordaus favoured the direction of Jackson Pollock and abstract expressionism. But that's another story.

Dance

Françoise Sullivan's "Dance and Hope," published as an integral part of *Refus global*, is very much in tune with the document as a whole.[15] From her opening sentence, "More than anything else, dance is a reflex, a spontaneous expression of intense emotion," it is clear that her main concern is not going to be with "figuration" — not with the narrative or representational qualities of dance. She reminds us that dance begins in ritual and argues that academic dance, too concerned with spectacle and illusion, looses its "poetic foothold in reality."

Here, as in Borduas' comments on painting, "reality" is based in the form itself. Sullivan's notion of dance is radically concrete. It is not rationalist, since she puts a great deal of emphasis on dream and unconscious expression, but she is concerned with the way unconscious impulses work their way out through the weight and mass of the body moving in space — through the "materials" of dance.

> . . . the dancer must liberate the energies of his body through movements which are spontaneously dictated to him. He can do so by putting himself in a state of receptivity similar to that of a medium. Through the violence of the forces at work, he may even reach a trance-like state and make contact with the points of magic.
>
> Energy causes the need, need dictates the movements. Because the motor

phenomenon and the concept are inseparable, they loose none of their value and efficiency.

This is how we can penetrate the mystery of where emotion is located in the body, and we will learn how that special tension is born which can fully express an emotion.

Through automatism, the dancer rediscovers in his body these points and tensions, and as he follows his own individual impulses and dynamisms, his work goes beyond the individual towards the universal. Emotion governs everything, not only centering on determined points in the human body, but launching that body into time, space and gravity. . . .[16]

This tendency to seek immediate, concrete expression with little or no concern for a traditional, mediating "figurative" content is clearly analogous to the direction Sullivan's painter friends were taking. And if we look at the kind of works which Sullivan produced for a dance recital shared with Jeanne Renaud on 3 April 1948, we can see a variety of resulting forms. There were eight dances in all, but I will only discuss a few which I have seen re-performed.[17]

Jeanne Renaud's[18] *Déformité* is the most clearly anecdotal of this set of dances. It is an interpretive piece based on her first experience, as a young woman, of the fascination and terror of New York City.[19] In a long but quite flexible tube dress, the dancer mimes a person walking, looking, reacting until she curls on the floor in a fetal position. There is no music. This is not narrative in the same sense as "classical" ballet, and the dancer's movements are certainly not Bolshoi, but *Déformité* remains clearly referential. A slightly more ambiguous referentiality can be seen in Françoise Sullivan's *Dualité*, in which two dancers (Sullivan and Renaud in 1948, accompanied by the music of Pierre Mercure, who was associated for years with the Automatist group, though not a signatory of *Refus global*) begin back-to-back, turning across the stage, and then commence a series of movements which suggest separation and confrontation, sometimes tender, sometimes aggressive. For Sullivan, the two dancers represent two parts of one personality; for Renaud, two people interacting. What we have is a depiction of psychological states, rather than a story line, and I would suggest that this might be seen as analogous to "surrealist" automatism in painting.

As an illustration of the collaboration mentioned earlier, I should note here that one dance on this programme, with Sullivan and Renaud performing together, was based on a poem by Thérèse Renaud which was read at the same time by Claude Gauvreau.[20] The last line of the poem gives the dance its title: "Moi je suis de cette race rouge et épaisse qui frole les éruptions volcaniques et les cratères en mouvement." Insofar as the improvised movements of this dance are referential, they are a response to the disorienting "surrealist" imagery of the poem.[21]

Another collaboration, this time visual, can be seen in *Black and Tan Fantasy*, which Sullivan danced to the music of Duke Ellington in a fascinating costume by

the Automatist painter Jean-Paul Mousseau.[22] The costume, which Sullivan has preserved, is worn over a black leotard, and is made of burlap and rope, the burlap painted with coloured abstract designs. It has a cape that billows when the dancer runs, a kind of bodice and short skirt and what might be called a pantaloon on one leg. Rope netting runs down the other leg and rope is tangled over the dancer's head. The costume evokes nothing beyond itself. It does not suggest "princess" or "shepherdess" any more than the dance suggests a narrative. The dance involves very little vertical movement, virtually no leaping and spinning, but much seductive movement of the arms, neck, shoulders, and hips, erotic and comic at the same time. Twice, the dancer stands facing the audience and simply moves her eyes as extravagantly as possible. Sullivan explained that much of what they were doing at this time centred on learning to use other parts of their bodies than a classical training had taught them.

But the one piece which in my mind best illustrates Sullivan's remarks in *Refus global* is *Dédale*, which she danced alone without music. The dance begins and ends with the slow swinging of one wrist, then the arm and then the upper torso. The torso swings, turns, and spirals until the dancer is executing a series of quite violent whipping, pendulum swings of the upper body, accentuated by turning with the feet. It is very active, almost violent, vertiginous and very reminiscent of what Sullivan says in "Dance and Hope" about the need for the dancer to put herself into a kind of trance through movement. Here, of course, there is not even the seductiveness of *Black and Tan Fantasy* (which may still be seen as figurative because of that element). *Dédale* is completely non-figurative, pure movement with no "meaning" outside the parameters of dance.

Let me make clear at this point that there is no value judgment implied in my assignment of degrees of figuration to these paintings and dances. Françoise Sullivan also produced one of Canada's most ambitious and successful "figurative" ballets: her *Rose Latulipe*, based on Québécoise folk tales, which was shown on television across the country in 1953. But from the point of view of anyone interested in the modernist experiments of Automatism, it is much more interesting to know that in June 1947, on the beach at Les Escoumins in the Gaspé, Françoise Sullivan did the first of an intended series of four outdoor dances, each dedicated to a season. The summer offering at Les Escoumins was filmed by her mother, but the film has been lost. Fall and Spring were apparently not performed, but evidence of a dance in the snow, done at Saint-Hilaire just before Sullivan wrote "Dance and Hope," exists in the photographs of Maurice Perron.[23] A film of the same dance, made by Riopelle, was also apparently lost. Dance improvised out of doors is not unfamiliar any more, but as François-Marc Gagnon[24] has pointed out, it was almost twenty years before modern dance in Montreal caught up to Sullivan's experiments with performance space.

Poetry

The three dramatic objects published in *Refus global* by the young poet, Claude Gauvreau, were part of a series of twenty-three eventually published under the title *Entrailles*.[25] One of them, "Bien-être," was actually performed on 20 May 1947, with the help of four signatories of *Refus global* and friends. The public's reaction to the spectacle was certainly stunned, and Borduas later stated that, for him, it was a kind of litmus test of the authenticity of friends in the audience.

Once again, the three plays published in the manifesto may be seen as representing a gamut of non-figuration, not only in their stage qualities but in their language as well. "Bien-être" [whose title I have translated as "The Good Life"] looks superficially like some kind of domestic bourgeois drama as it presents us with a couple of newlyweds at home and apparently follows them through some years of their lives. The stage directions begin quite conventionally:

> The interior of a house, at once slightly austere and slightly weird in proportions. To the left, almost in the center, a closed door that leads to another room of the house. A man and a woman enter, both wearing wedding clothes The man wears black gloves.[26]

But from the opening lines there is a dislocation of action and speech. The lines spoken may have a metaphoric connection to what is happening on stage, but they seldom refer to it directly. Here are four lines from the beginning, and two from the end, of the man's opening speech:

> THE MAN: Hands in the abyss making leaves. That's a wedding.
> The cup running over with love like seaweed on the porch.
> A stream of clouds dives into the hearts: king-fisher.
> Wreaths in cheeks, peace sculpted in the worried profiles of existence.
> [. . . .]
> I feel the clenched repentance of solitude. Clear voices, mauve-scented soup-tureens. Ideal! Idea. Ideal: Pure Zeal.

The woman's "reply" goes as follows:

> My belly, cradle of life and consecrated urn. Spheres affiliated in the arch of aged autumn. Powder of kisses in the damp ditches of white gardens.
> Versicoloured hysteria.
> The sublime fraction of golden Armenian curls.
> Entrance and procession of children.
> Arbitrary farandole in the yellow brick paths.[27]

The action (including the mysterious death of the woman while an ominous theme is played on a piano) unfolds arbitrarily and is not advanced, prepared for or even necessarily commented on by the dialogue. It is fantastic, absurd, and disturbing in a way that would be recognized by lovers of Dali and Buñuel's film *Un chien andalou*. I would equate it with the "surrealist" drawing by Mousseau

(illustration 2). We know that what we are watching remains a figurative echo of the "real world" despite its distortions, non-sequiturs, and unexpected juxtapositions. Just as in Françoise Sullivan's *Dualité*, however much the action may deny us a conventional story line, it imitates recognizable human relations in some way.

The same kind of dislocated figuration is evident in the language of Gauvreau's play, showing all the qualities of the "Surrealist image" which, as described by André Breton in the *First Manifesto of Surrealism*, links elements together unexpectedly and irrationally to give the coveted spark. This kind of image works through conventional structures, surprising us not grammatically or phonetically, but lexically. Nothing disturbs us about "The cup running over with love" except that it is followed by "like seaweed on the porch." We have the double incongruity of love like seaweed and seaweed linked with porch, very much in keeping, for example, with images one might find in Breton's *Poisson soluble* (which was appended illustratively to the *First Manifesto*), or Paul Eluard and Benjamin Peret's *152 Proverbes mis au gout du jour*. And it is also similar in technique and effect to the poems of Thérèse Renaud's *Les sables du rêve*, published in 1946. If we examine the lines to which Jeanne Renaud and Françoise Sullivan improvised their dance, we notice once again that the structure of the sentence is conventional, and the shock comes entirely from the placing of unexpected lexical elements.

In her published reminiscences, entitled *Une mémoire déchirée*, Thérèse Renaud speaks of how she had been struck by Paul Eluard's image, "blue as an orange":

> . . . for me it was literally a bolt of lightning, a kind of release, a catalyst for a type of writing that was ready to be born. Starting with Eluard's image, I realized that it was possible to create a poetic image while expressing a counter-truth. And I started to write short poems which were made up of incoherent images but expressing a reality that was very painful for me.[28]

This sense of liberation from conventional constraints is, as we have seen, what Borduas credited the Surrealists with giving to Automatism.

But, just as the Automatist painters saw themselves as going beyond the literariness of Surrealist non-figuration, so Claude Gauvreau believed he surpassed the type of Surrealistic image we have seen in "Bien-être." The last of his three dramatic objects published in *Refus global* was entitled "The Shadow on the Hoop" and it was, as the stage direction informs us, a "Monologue of the shadow cast on a hoop by a leaping acrobat." The monologue goes on for two pages and ends with this brief paragraph, as I have translated it:

> Agroupine. Almah palm the pinch chireeps, the algaesia of the planks sings at the top of its glass under the melodious spell of the siphon.

Obviously, the "action" of this "play" has cut all ties with *mimesis* and one has nothing to grasp but the language itself, just as we have nothing to "recognize" in

some of the Automatist paintings of this period. But we are also confronted with words whose strangeness arises, not only from their juxtaposition, but from their very form. They are now lexically enigmatic, though we can usually assign them a grammatical place in the sentence and though we may guess at their possible meaning. Gauvreau moves in and out of what we might call "figurative" language in these early versions of experiments that would eventually lead to poems like "Crodziac Dzegoum Apir" which (defying translation) begins:

> Beurbal boissir
> Izzinou kauzigak — euch bratlor ozillon
> kek-nappregue
> Sostikolligui — hostie polli fili
> Mammichon — ukk kokki graggnor
> Leuzzi mottett[29]

To understand what is going on here, we will need to have recourse to theoretical statements which Claude Gauvreau made in a series of 17 letters to Jean-Claude Dussault, beginning in December 1949.[30] After some cautionary remarks about the absolute need for spontaneity on the part of both poet and reader, Gauvreau launches into his definition of the poetic image and its four subcategories (not necessarily exclusive). From the beginning, he obviously refuses to restrict his definition to semantics. A poetic image results when there is "the association, abstract words, concrete words, letters, sounds, etc." Clearly, this is not the traditional definition of a poetic image as a pure description of sensual impressions or of metaphor and metonymy based on lexical qualities and referentiality.

In discussing the first sub-category of image, the "image rythmique," Gauvreau once again locates "meaning" outside the lexical, placing great emphasis on sound, which he insists has connotation in itself, since "all sound is onomatopoeic." Seeking analogies, he turns to other arts, suggesting, "I would compare [the rythmic image] to colour in painting; I would also compare its role (perhaps not so aptly) to that of the bass in a jazz orchestra." The unstated danger is that he might equate poetry too closely with music, with pure sound, so he takes care to argue that these verbal sounds have a particular value:

> The rhythmic alterations in a succession of letters or combination of letters is in itself a power of suggestion and evocation, it is in itself a power to establish (unassisted) a climate which will refer to any one of the senses. . . .

When he makes the statement, "Words or letters do not constitute the image; they are the complex analogy of a simple reality," I take it that he means words and letters do not *convey* analogies, they *are* analogies for a purely mental "simple reality," which exists (for the poet) *before* any signs are written or spoken. When he goes on to say that "Poetry, therefore, is always working through analogy" it is an analogy "which could never be translated by a simple conventional sign,"

and it is defined as "an adequate equivalent to the original psychic ambiance." This is direct communication of a psychic ambiance, therefore, without the mediation of any conventional system of signs, without figuration, without reference to anything other than itself and the state which engendered it. The rhythmic image is distinguished from pure sound by its function as a conveyor of analogy. But this onomatopoeia is not merely "a simplistic imitation"; it occurs "every time, a bit of reality (noumenal or phenomenal), or a psychic climate, can be grasped by means of a verbal rhythm."

The second category of image, which Gauvreau calls the "image mémorante" need not detain us long because it is essentially the traditional metaphor, or, as he puts it rather scornfully, "the imagistic substance of a poetry which is content to establish relationships of comparison or metaphor between its diverse constituent elements." This is to be compared with the next category, the "image transfigurante," which is the kind found in Surrealist poetry. Here the metaphoric linkage is not self-evident or logical, but results in a combination of elements which transforms them, as sodium and chloride are transformed in becoming sodium chloride. But even though he considers this a more advanced form of image, used by himself and other Automatist poets, Gauvreau insists on de-emphasizing the figurative quality of these images. He insists on the concreteness of the words, and once again, he draws on painterly terminology:

> Syllables, words are *values, tinctures,* they are not the lackeys of some nonexistent abstract monster. . . . Paintings and poetic texts are realities in themselves — realities comprehensible through direct contact.

It is important for Gauvreau to make this point because his next and last category of image, the "image exploréenne," leaves the reader few associations to grasp. This image he sees as his personal contribution to surrational Automatism and a step beyond Surrealism.

> We are talking about an explorational image when the constituent elements of a single new element are no longer immediately discernible by an analytic process. I would add that there is an explorational image when the present state of psychoanalysis will not permit that science — unless by some laborious operation of which there has been no example to date — to discover the latent content in the poetic object.

Examples of explorational images can be seen in the poem by Gauvreau already quoted. He insists that they are not like the pure and "abstract" sound poems of the French Lettristes, who never get beyond what he calls the rhythmic image. They have, for him at least, an emotive power (their *significance?*) which he believes can be immediately appreciated by any unprejudiced mind.

Steve McCaffery sees a constant and unresolved tension in Gauvreau's explorational poems: on the one hand, there is "a *scrambling* of signifiers, a decomposition

of their letter elements and a reconstitution in extreme, unfamiliar groupings"; on the other hand, the elements of the poems, with their arrangement on the page, spacings, hyphenations, and French accents still remind us of words in conventional syntax.[31] McCaffery also points out that Gauvreau surprisingly (especially considering his interest in painting and drawing) never experimented with the graphics of the written word, as other concrete poets have. But I believe Gauvreau's methods were very deliberate.

For Borduas and Gauvreau, at least before 1955, the Automatist image in paint or words was distinct from the Surrealist by its non-figuration, but also distinct from the abstraction of someone like Mondrian because of its spontaneity and expressiveness. Borduas, in resisting the two-dimensional and colour-oriented painting of the Plasticiens, and Gauvreau, in resisting pure sound and graphics, may have been trying to retain the vertiginous energy of *Dédale* in their works.

NOTES

[1] The most accessible complete French text is in the catalogue *Borduas et les automatistes: Montreal 1942-1955*, catalogue of the Musée d'Art Contemporain (Montréal, 1972); my translation is published as *Total Refusal/ Refus global* (Toronto: Exile Editions, 1985). All translated quotations are from the latter edition.

[2] To name only a few: François-Marc Gagnon's *Paul-Emile Borduas, biographie critique et analyse de l'oeuvre* (Montréal: Fides, 1978); Guy Robert's *Riopelle* (Montréal: Editions de l'homme, 1970); *The Presence of Paul-Emile Borduas*, special number of *Artscanada*, Nos. 224-25 (December 1978-January 1979). See also *Borduas et les automatistes, Montéal 1942-1955* and another catalogue, *Françoise Sullivan, retrospective* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1981).

[3] See *Paul-Emile Borduas, Ecrits/Writings 1942-1958*, a bilingual edition edited and translated by François-Marc Gagnon with the aid of Dennis Young (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art, 1978).

[4] See "Fernand Leduc peintre et théoricien du surréalisme à Montréal" by Bernard Teyssedre, published in *Les automatistes*, a special number of *La Barre du jour*, Nos. 17-20 (January-August 1969), or see the very important collection of Fernand Leduc's writings, edited by André Beaudet, entitled *Vers les îles de lumière* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1981).

[5] See *Les automatistes* where, incidentally, Forgues, Hénault, and Lapointe are included while Thérèse Renaud is not.

[6] Thus, in Jean Fisette's *Le Texte automatiste* (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1977), *Refus global* is studied from the point of view of rhetoric with virtually no mention of painting and in the illustrations to Jacques Marchand's *Claude Gauvreau, poète et mythocrate* (Montréal: VLB Editeur, 1979), paintings are seldom shown.

[7] Exceptions are François-Marc Gagnon in his preface to the album of photographs of Françoise Sullivan's *Dance dans la neige*, and André Bourassa who, besides his study *Surréalisme et littérature québécoise* (Montréal: l'Etincelle, 1977), translated by Mark Czarnecki as *Surrealism and Quebec Literature* (Toronto: Uni-

versity of Toronto Press, 1984), which includes an important section on Automatism, has also written articles such as "Vers la modernité de la scène québécoise (II) Les contre-courants, 1901-1951," in *Pratiques théâtrales*, Nos. 14-15 (hiver-printemps 1982), 3-31.

[8] See Gagnon's *Paul-Emile Borduas, biographie critique et analyse de l'oeuvre*, especially Chapter 7.

[9] A two-page typescript dated 1 May 1942, preserved in the Borduas archives of the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montréal.

[10] *Les Sables du rêve*, published by Les Cahiers de la File Indienne in 1946 and republished by *Les Herbes Rouges* in 1975.

[11] In *Vers les îles de lumière*, p. 82.

[12] *Total Refusal*, pp. 46-47.

[13] *Total Refusal*, p. 50.

[14] "Qu'est-ce que l'automatisme?" in *L'Autorité*, 29 May 1954.

[15] Sullivan did both painting and dance at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Montréal, but was concentrating on dance at this period, having studied for a year in New York. Since 1959, her attention has returned to sculpture and painting.

[16] *Total Refusal*, pp. 113-14.

[17] The program for the original recital is in Françoise Sullivan's file at the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Montreal. These dances were performed by young dancers, coached by Sullivan and Renaud, for documentation on video by a Toronto-based group called Encore! Encore! on 4 May 1986. Incidentally, to reinforce my point about separating disciplines, these performances took place at the same time as an important exhibition of Automatist painting at the Galerie Dresdnere in Toronto, entitled *Automatism Then and Now*. The media made no connection, the public for the two events was entirely different, and Françoise Sullivan was not even included in the Dresdnere show, though she is now very active as a painter.

[18] Jeanne Renaud was the youngest of three sisters who had important roles in the history of Automatism. The eldest, Louise and Thérèse, signed *Refus global*; Jeanne did not, perhaps because she was considered too young.

[19] Many of my comments on these dances are based on remarks made by Jeanne Renaud and Françoise Sullivan at the time of their 1986 re-performance in Toronto.

[20] For the Encore! Encore! video re-performance, Sullivan played the recorded voice of Thérèse Renaud reading the poem.

[21] See *Les sables du rêve* published in *Les herbes rouges*, No. 29 (August 1975).

[22] For pictures of this costume, see my English translation of *Refus global*, p. 111, or the catalogue *Françoise Sullivan, retrospective*, p. 18.

[23] See the luxury folio of these photographs, *Dance dans la neige*, 1977.

[24] "Avant-propos," *Dance dans la neige*.

[25] Republished in the massive *Oeuvres créatrices complètes* (Montréal: Parti-Pris, 1977). For my translation and discussion of these plays, see *Entrails* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1981).

[26] *Total Refusal*, p. 69.

[27] *Total Refusal*, pp. 69-70.

[28] Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1978, pp. 199-200.

[29] From *Etal mixte* (1950-51), see *Oeuvres créatrices complètes*, p. 244.

[30] Fragments of these letters have been published in magazines, notably in *Les automatistes*, pp. 344-61 (my translations are from that publication). A critical edition is now being prepared by André Beaudet, whose conversation has been a great help in my meditations about Gauvreau's poetry.

[31] See his essay "The Elsewhere of Meaning" in his new book, *North of Intention: Critical Writings 1973-86* (Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1986).

HOW TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SOUTH AFRICA

John Baglow

(melting snow,
irregular
dark of the earth)

(indelible
ink on the
crisp linen)

(elegant
candles, their
wicks blazing)

(neighbours for tea,
nervous
small talk)

(light in its
evening
prism)

(words
on the paper
like shadows)

L'INSERTION DU VERBAL DANS LE DISCOURS VISUEL DE PELLAN

Fernande Saint-Martin

L'ÉMERGENCE AU XX^e SIÈCLE de nombreux mouvements artistiques figuratifs, abstraits ou semi-abstraits, interpelle de façon tout à fait neuve le travail d'interprétation de la critique d'art. Au sein du raffermissement de l'iconologie opéré par Panofsky et son épanouissement dans l'analyse rhétorique, la démarche de la critique d'art pouvait presque se conceivor comme une activité littéraire. Il lui appartenait, en effet, de tisser par des moyens verbaux des relations signifiantes entre les divers objets reconnus dans la représentation visuelle: montagne, lac, femme, etc., campés dans des contextes divers. Les qualités intuitives ou l'erudition culturelle du commentateur devait lui permettre de suppléer au non-dit qui subsistait et hantait ces objets visuels pour créer les liens hypothétiques entre des objets nommées par le regard. A la limite, ce discours n'est que commentaires sur un titre; que resterait-il des interprétations du tableau de Picasso, si l'on en extrayait les inférences provenant du terme "Guernica" qui en forme le titre? Ou plus paradoxalement encore, cette démarche a pu aboutir à la somptuosité d'un ouvrage, comme "La Peinture incarnée" de G. Didi-Huberman, consacré à un tableau qui jamais n'exista, le "chef-d'oeuvre inconnu" de Frenhofer.[1]

Non seulement la production d'oeuvres visuelles ne se prêtant à aucun découpage de type iconique, mais aussi le désir que le message de l'artiste visuel ne soit pas totalement recouvert par les projections, si subtiles et poétiques soient-elles du critique d'art, ont fait naître le désir d'une approche plus rigoureuse de l'oeuvre visuelle, où le sémantique serait plus solidement ancré dans les caractéristiques les plus spécifiques du langage visuel lui-même.

L'apport le plus décisif des chercheurs qui ont tenté, à partir de Greimas, de constituer une sémiotique visuelle doit sans doute être cherché du côté des méthodologies d'analyse qu'ils ont instituées.[2] Maintenant la distinction de Hjelmslev entre le plan de l'expression et le plan du contenu, dans le discours visuel autant que dans le discours verbal, ils ont posé la nécessité d'une description ou d'un réportoriage exhaustif des composants de chaque série, permettant de fonder le système des homologies entre les deux plans.

Au plan de l'expression, en particulier, ils cherchèrent à distinguer un niveau plastique et un niveau "figuratif," de décrire soigneusement les formants de l'un et l'autre, en vue d'en déceler les interrelations possibles. Ces relations étaient fort asymétriques, puisqu'en continuité avec les traditions de l'iconologie, cette sémiotique visuelle définissait le niveau figuratif comme le niveau du contenu de l'oeuvre plastique. Mais pour cette raison même, il devenait important de s'adresser dans un moment important de l'analyse à la nomenclature et la description de ces éléments dits figuratifs.

Comme la plupart des théories ne définissent pas leurs outils conceptuels fondamentaux, qui semblent avoir la force de l'évidence, nous tenterons de définir le sens que prend ici le terms de "figuratif." Selon les présupposés de la "sémiotique du monde naturel," on peut croire que le figuratif dans l'oeuvre visuelle correspond à des régions ou agglomérats où le percepteur "reconnaît" une image mimétique d'un objet de la réalité naturelle, soit "l'iconisation, visant à revêtir exhaustivement les figures de manière à produire l'illusion référentielle qui les transformerait en images du monde," selon la formule de Greimas.[3] C'est le produit du premier niveau pré-iconographique défini par Panofsky, où à partir "l'équipement" perceptuel commun, le spectateur reconnaît des formes particulières dans la représentation visuelle qu'il peut identifier par des mots.[4] Nous appellerons ces regroupements, indifféremment, des signes figuratifs, des signes iconiques, des signes ou des images mimétiques.

A côté de cette relation qui s'établit entre le signe visuel et un objet existant dans la réalité externe, une composante essentielle du signe iconique est donc qu'il peut être nommé, recevoir un nom, un vocable, un mot, qui pré-existe dans les dictionnaires ou lexiques de la langue; pour cette raison, nous appellerons ces éléments verbaux, qui sont partie constituante d'un signe figuratif: un lexème. Selon Greimas, un aggrégat visuel qu'on ne peut "nommer" n'a pas atteint sa pleine iconisation, ne constitue pas un signe figuratif au sens plein.[5] C'est pourquoi on peut supposer que l'ensemble des signes iconiques constitue un certain type de réseau verbal au sein de la représentation plastique.

Nous ne reprendrons pas les démonstrations de Umberto Eco à l'effet, qu'au plan de la relation entre un signe iconique et un objet de la réalité externe, on ne peut établir de base de similitude réelle. De fait, la ressemblance dite iconique s'institue uniquement entre des percepts actuels, construits dans le champ visuel, et des traces mnésiques de percepts anciens acquis en rapport avec des objets de la réalité externe, selon un mode de perception culturellement codé.[6] Ce niveau dynamique de l'action de la perception dans le processus de la relation à l'oeuvre visuelle exigera certes, comme l'a finalement reconnu Eco, une familiarisation plus grande de la sémiologie visuelle avec les mécanismes et les fonctions de la perception.

L'opération de nomenclature des formes iconisées ou figuratives présentes dans une oeuvre visuelle est une activité spécifique, qui ne doit pas être confondue avec les processus d'interprétation agissant par analogies ou inférences. La tradition iconologique de Panofsky le reconnaissait implicitement en excluant autant que possible toute lexicalisation comprenant des épithètes, des termes de mouvement, des effets de texture, des indications de positions, etc. pour s'en tenir à des listes de termes, souvent des substantifs, qui seraient garants de l'objectivité de la description. Mais l'absence d'une méthodologie explicite à ce niveau a souvent entraîné le discours pré-iconographique à se constituer sous une forme narrative, où les inférences sont déjà présentes au sein des nomenclatures. Ainsi du bilan perceptif célèbre de Panofsky: "un groupe de treize hommes à table," dont le dernier terme pointe plus naturellement vers la Cène qu'une expression plus constative posant: "treize hommes sont assis des trois côtés d'une table." En iconologie traditionnelle, le trajet perceptif s'achève à ce niveau et la "reconnaissance naturelle" d'objets semble représenter, comme l'a observé Rudolf Arnheim, la permission que se donnent les spectateurs de ne plus "percevoir" un champ visuel déterminé comme "connu."[7]

En instituant la nécessité de décrire distinctement un plan plastique et un plan figuratif, la sémiotique visuelle greimassienne semblait se distinguer radicalement de l'approche iconologique, dont elle demeurait cependant complètement dépendante sur le plan sémantique, puisqu'elle identifiait le "contenu" de l'oeuvre ou son sens aux notions que véhiculent les signes figuratifs, iconiques, liés à l'intertexte verbal.

Jouant de l'impact des percepts visuels anciens sur la reconnaissance perceptuelle actuelle de formes iconiques, Jean-Marie Floch s'autorise, dans son analyse du niveau figuratif de l'oeuvre "Composition IV" de Kandinsky à une forme de déduction, voulant que les formants plastiques actuels partialisés (des segments d'arc, des taches blanches, etc.), difficilement iconisables, pouvaient être dotés du sens figuratif des formes iconiques pleines déjà produites par l'artiste et où de semblables éléments avaient servi à construire un signe manifestement figuratif; ainsi par ressemblance, des segments d'arc figureront non seulement des "chevaux," mais on leur attribuera des "cavaliers," en l'absence de tout substrat concret, parce qu'ailleurs Kandinsky a parfois produit des images de cavaliers sur leur monture.[8] Non seulement, on est ici en présence d'une démarche qui dépasse à la fois la description et l'interprétation, mais on contrevient à une caractéristique fondamentale du langage plastique, soulignée par Eco, à l'effet que des formants plastiques n'ont pas de sens par eux-mêmes, mais uniquement dans le contexte où ils sont placés: ainsi le groupement de deux points surmontant un demi-cercle peut selon le cas figurer yeux et bouche, un raisin, une banane.[9] Mais il faut peut-être conserver de cette démarche la possibilité de désigner des régions plastiques comme offrant des "effets

d'iconisation" susceptibles, à côté des iconisations pleines, de contribuer à certains effets de sens dans une oeuvre.

La tentative la plus systématique, à ce jour, de description d'un niveau figuratif parallèle à la description d'un niveau plastique a été réalisée par Félix Thürlemann, dans son étude de trois peintures de Paul Klee. Deux d'entre elles peuvent être définies comme "semi-figuratives" puisqu'elles présentent des "objets reconnaissables" mais dans un espace non-naturaliste, alors que la troisème serait davantage qualifiée d' "abstraite." Cependant même si l'auteur affirme avoir pris la précaution de faire valider par un groupe d'observateurs, la nomenclature des "objets figuratifs" nommables dans l'oeuvre, les analogies et inférences y sont aussi nombreueses que les descriptions factuelles: un triangle la pointe en bas, y devient une colline, tout cercle devient un astre, un rectangle ressemblerait à un minéral, etc.

Sans reprendre l'analyse que nous avons faite de cet ouvrage,[10] soulignons certains points plus pertinents sur le plan théorique. Notons tout d'abord que pour l'oeuvre intitulée "Analyse de la plante," Thürlemann convient que l'analyse du niveau figuratif ne serait pas suffisante pour déterminer le sens ou contenu de l'oeuvre, en dépit du postulat initial à ce sujet. D'autre part, il est manifeste qu'un regroupement de signes figuratifs/verbaux reconnaissables dans une oeuvre ne peut représenter que de très lointaines analogies avec un texte verbal où sont explicitées avec les fonctions grammaticales, les relations réciproques des termes pouvant faire sens dans un énoncé.

Non seulement l'appareil linguistique verbal subit des transformations majeures lorsque la représentation de mot cherche à s'insérer dans un texte visuel, mais les éléments constitutifs des signes iconiques doivent concrètement s'intégrer dans les interrelations de variables visuelles qui n'ont jamais été pertinentes dans les contexte verbal: dimension, chromatisme, texture, orientation, etc. S'ils conservent la discontinuité propre à la chaîne verbale, ils sont devenus réversibles et non-linéaires, puisqu'on peut les "lire" de droite à gauche, de bas en haut, l'un derrière l'autre ou parfois se superposent partiellement ou totalement. Ils appartiennent maintenant à une structure spatiale, relevant d'une syntaxe géométrale dont la grammaire verbale ignore tout.

Manifestement les lexèmes iconiques ne peuvent être mis en correspondance avec les nécessaires morphèmes "vides" ou syncatégorématiques, les mots-charnières marquant la causalité, le but, la restriction, la force illocutoire, etc. sur lesquels s'appuie la logique des énoncés. En contre-partie, on pourrait rappeler l'observation d'Eco, selon laquelle un signe iconique ne peut être décrit par un seul lexème, mais bien par une suite de mots ou de phrases en apposition, si l'on veut rendre compte de l'information qu'il véhicule: ainsi l'image d'un cheval s'expliciterait par des mots indiquant son type, sa couleur, sa taille, sa position, s'il est au

repos ou s'il trotte, et dans quelle direction, etc.[11] C'est dire qu'une région visuelle doit être décrite selon l'ensemble des variables visuelles fondamentales, sans cependant que soient définies à ce moment les interrelations de l'image avec les régions visuelles qui l'entourent.

Même s'ils ne se servent pas de cet argument, il faut convenir que Floch et Thürlemann n'ont pas d'autres recours pour qualifier le mode de discours visuel qui prendrait son sens dans l'iconique/verbal que d'en faire un discours "poétique," où le verbal ne relèverait plus de la syntaxe de la prose normale. La difficulté cependant, c'est qu'il n'existe pas, à ce jour, de théorie spécifique sur la syntaxe de la poésie qui puisse rendre compte de modes de jonctions des mots et de leurs fonctions spécifiques dans le texte artistique "poétique." Dans ce contexte, l'arbitraire d'une forme d'associationnisme règne, dont la fonction est le plus souvent une réduction du sémantique, comme le signalait Lacan, à partir d' "un appauvrissement intellectualiste qu'elle impose à l'image."[12]

Par ailleurs, il est manifeste que la sémiotique visuelle greimassienne, en dépit de son souci de ne pas ignorer totalement le niveau de l'expression plastique dans l'oeuvre visuelle aboutit, à partir de ses présupposés sémantiques logocentristes, à ne tenir aucun compte de larges sections du champs visuel "innommables," comme facteurs de production du sens, un déni qui sera d'autant plus grave qu'une oeuvre visuelle sera plus largement non-figurative ou abstraite.

Pour sa part, la sémiologie topologique a cru nécessaire de formuler les bases d'une grammaire du langage visuel qui s'appliquerait à tous les types de langage visuel, quel que soit leur style ou mode de composition, à partir d'une attention plus grande portée aux mécanismes des processus de perception.[13] Dans ce contexte, les signes iconiques, même s'ils apparaissent toujours liés à des lexèmes, sont avant tout définis comme des percepts produits par certaines règles syntaxiques gestaltiennes, en particulier la pression de la bonne forme, qui tend à faire associer certaines régions du champ visuel à des percepts de formes simples, déjà connues et aisément identifiables.

Ayant déjà proposé une analyse syntaxique[14] de l'oeuvre de Alfred Pellan, intitulée "Mascarade," une huile sur toile de 1942 faisant partie de la collection du Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, nous nous proposons dans cette étude d'approfondir la nature de son réseau iconique/verbal et de son insertion dans le tissu visuel. Nous devrons faire appel aussi bien à diverses hypothèses de la linguistique verbale qu'à celles de la sémiologie psychanalytique, dans l'espoir d'apporter une contribution à l'élaboration d'une sémiologie générale, souhaitée par Saussure, pouvant éclairer l'un par l'autre les systèmes de signes verbaux et visuels et leurs modes particuliers d'interrelations.

ALFRED PELLAN, *Mascarade*, oil on canvas, 1942.
MUSEE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTREAL

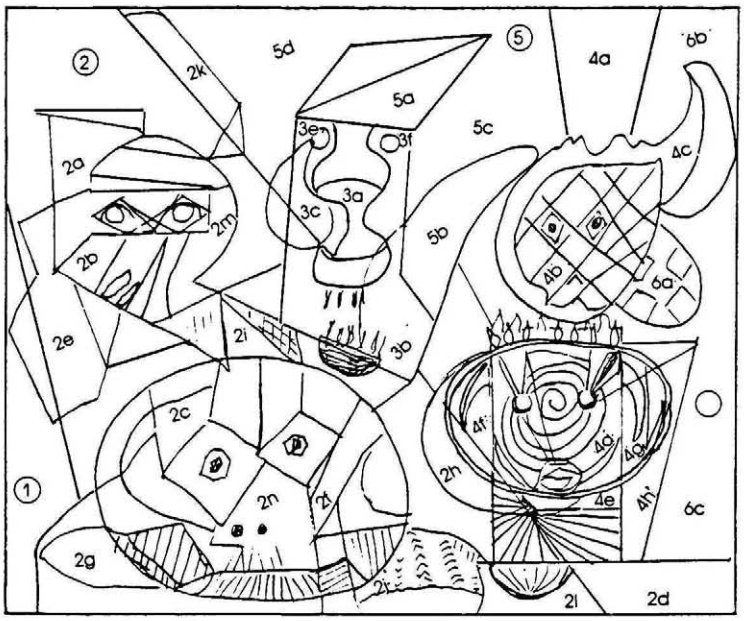


Illustration B : Différenciation des régions en sous-régions, par vision *fovéale/maculaire*.

Etablissement du réseau iconique

Dans cette étude sur l'insertion du discours verbal dans le discours visuel, nous ne nous attarderons pas au terme qui désigne le titre de l'oeuvre: "Mascarade," parce qu'associé sans doute à l'oeuvre, il n'est pas inscrit dans la matérialité du champ visuel, comme ont pu l'être certains termes dans la peinture cubiste ou post-moderniste. Non seulement titre et oeuvre visuelle appartiennent ici à des systèmes sémiotiques différents et parallèles, mais l'oeuvre ne perdrait rien de sa structure de texte visuel, si on la désignait par un autre vocable.

Afin de permettre l'identification des régions du champ visuel, l'oeuvre a été divisée en six grandes régions, numérotées de 1 à 6, lesquelles ont été divisées en sous-régions identifiées par l'ajout de lettres alphabétiques minuscules à l'identification de la région (R1, R2a, R2b . . . R3a, R3b . . . R4a, R4z . . . etc.) (cf. Illustration B).

Une enquête a été menée auprès d'une dizaine de percepteurs, à qui il était demandé de dire s'il y avait des sections de l'oeuvre qu'ils pouvaient "reconnaître" et identifier par un lexème. Ils étaient priés de s'en tenir à des dénotations/désignations, fondées sur une interprétation purement perceptuelle, et non de produire des connotations, découlant d'une interprétation culturelle et symbolique, comme "il y a là quelque chose qui me fait penser à du cosmogonique," ou "ça me rappelle l'art égyptien, ou encore un monde de bactéries, etc." En général, ces connotations rapides visent moins à l'identification iconique d'un objet qu'à une extrapolation à l'ensemble de l'oeuvres d'un effet iconique découlant, à tort ou à raison, de régions difficilement identifiables.

Même si l'oeuvre de Pellan peut être qualifiée de "semi-figurative," comme les deux premières oeuvres de Klee analysées par Thürlemann, (et peut-être à cause d'une autonomie plus grande laissée aux observateurs), il s'est avéré beaucoup plus difficile d'établir une liste des signifiants iconiques de "Mascarade," susceptibles de faire l'objet d'un consensus parmi les observateurs quant aux lexèmes qui puissent leur être fermement associés.

Par contre, le processus de découpage perceptuel de ces zones iconiques semble largement similaire. Cinq zones furent unanimement retenues: R2a, R2n, R3a, R4b et R4d. A partir des indices fournis par les "paires d'yeux et de narines," les régions R2a, R2n et R4b furent désignées comme représentant des "visages"; par contamination des mêmes indices sans doute, un observateur identifiera aussi des "visages" dans les zones R3 et R4d. D'autres percepteurs lexicaliseront plutôt les trois premières régions comme des "têtes," des "masques," mais avec des variantes objectales importantes. Pour l'un, il s'agit de "trois têtes/visages" graduées dans la dimension: une grosse (R2n), une moyenne (R4b) et une petite (R2a), par suite d'un raccourcis établi dans la distance. Mais pour l'autre, il s'agit de deux

"têtes" de dimensions relativement égales (R2a et R4b) et d'une plus grosse "tête." Pour un autre percepteur, il n'y aura que "deux têtes" (R2a et R4b), alors que la région R2n sera identifiée à "un gros oeuf embryonnaire," ou à un animal, dans lequel les indices des "yeux et narines" ne jouent qu'un rôle partiel et local, comme dans certaines images de foetus animal/humain. Ou encore, les deux têtes sont localisées en R2n et R4d, le R2a, non-visage, étant interprété comme "une table."

Ceux qui ont reconnu des "têtes" ont déterminé d'autres indices internes comme des "lunettes" ou des indices externes à la forme principale, comme des couvre-chefs avec plume et panache. Pour ceux qui n'ont "vu" que des "visages," ces indices sont moins liés par inférence et le R4c disparaît comme "panache" pour devenir "un canot" et les "effets de chevelure" parfois reconnus dans R2c seront lexicalisés comme représentant des "gratte-ciel."

Finalement les deux autres zones qui ont été visées par tous les observateurs renvoient à un très grand éventail de lexèmes, différents pour chacun. Si par sa position sous la "tête," la région R4d a parfois été désignée comme une sorte de "torse solide et rectangulaire," cet effet iconique disparaît pour d'autres qui ancrent plutôt leurs reconnaissances d'objets dans le seul ovale interne qui le traverse. On y "reconnaît" soit une "cible," peinte sur un fond blanc plane où sont ancrées deux fléchettes: d'autres y voient au contraire une "spirale" qui se gonfle ou se creuse en abîme, ou un "cadran solaire" spécifié par des triangles d'ombre, ou un "visage" (deux yeux formés par les cercles rouge/noir et la bouche située sur le rebord interne inférieur de l'ovale) ou encore des "seins et organe génital féminin" (à partir des mêmes deux cercles et de la région plus informelle inférieure), des viscères ou intestins, etc.

Quant à la région R3, si on y reconnaît un "visage" (induit par les deux paires d'yeux et de narines, similaires à ceux des "visages" adjacents, avec ou non des dents noires et rouges), d'autres y reconnaîtront plutôt un "torse," plutôt féminin (une "bonne femme," tête et poitrine confondues dans la région noire, "taille" mince et blanche, "jupe" rouge). D'autres encore y reconnaîtront plutôt un "coeur de pomme," un "animal biomoléculaire," un sablier, des haltères, etc.

Si l'on doit constituer le niveau figuratif, seul fondement de la production du sens dans la sémiotique visuelle, sur des bases iconicoverbales relativement stables et acceptables pour l'ensemble des spectateurs, (tous d'ailleurs présumés compétents dans ce contexte), il faudra concentrer sur les trois régions produisant les lexèmes de "visages" ou de "têtes," l'axe sémantique fondamental. On pourrait homogénéiser ces deux réposes dont la diversité ne résulte (mais est-ce vraiment marginal?) que d'une appréciation perceptuelle différente de la qualité volumétrique de la région qu'ils désignent, plus que d'une différenciation notable dans le rappel du percept mnésique lié à un objet existant dans le réalité externe.

L'absence de tout consensus sur la reconnaissance iconique/lexicale des deux

dernières régions nous obligerait à les exclure du réseau verbal de base. Il faut noter en outre que la reconnaissance par un percepteur de "visages" dans chacune d'elles entraîne une certaine hésitation à accepter le terme de comptabilisation "trois," en rapport avec les "têtes/visages" précédents comme formellement acquis en tant que substrat verbal. Cette hésitation permettrait de résister éventuellement à l'attracteur sémantique que peut représenter le jeu du triangle dans les narrations bourgeoises ou la triade familiale, ou la triangulation parents — combinés et enfant dans l'univers psychanalytique!

Peut-être plus important encore dans le contexte de la sémantique structurale élaborée par Greimas, la plupart des catégorisations antinomiques standards des objets, comme animé/inanimé, animal/végétal/humain, masculin/féminin, ne peuvent être appliquées sur une base de consensus dans aucune des régions iconisées. Ainsi la région R2n est dénotée aussi bien comme animale que masculine et féminine; la région R4b comme tête/visage masculin ou féminin, la région R2a comme tête/visage d'une femme, d'un homme ou d'un enfant; la région R3 est reconnue comme iconique du monde inanimé, végétal ou d'un univers féminin.

L'on sera frappé du caractère réduit et versatile de ce réseau iconico-verbal. Nous ne faisons pas état à ce niveau des lexicalisations qu'une perception plus longue et minutieuse de toutes les régions et sous-régions de l'oeuvre peut révéler, particulièrement au cours d'une analyse syntaxique attentive à toutes les jonctions/disjonctions dont sont susceptibles les variables visuelles, parce qu'elles ne résultent pas du comportement perceptuel adopté par la majorité des spectateurs devant les oeuvres visuelles. A ces sous-niveaux, l'on "parlerait" d'effets iconiques plus nombreux: un jet/rayon lumineux rouge dans R2, un "ciel" dans R5 et R6, d'une flamme ou langue dans R5b, d'une suggestion d'oiseau dans l'ensemble R2b, R2i, R3b et R5b, de demi-globes dans R2l et R3b, de pyramides dans R2i, d'une grille dans la région inférieure de R2n, d'un effet d'ombre portée dans les sous-régions R2e, R2g, R2f, R2h, etc.

Deux conclusions ressortent de cette opération d'iconisation. D'une part, il est manifeste que la lexicalisation iconisante, comme l'avait montré Rorschach, et comme l'a éprouvé plus tard la "sémiotique de l'image" de Louis Porcher,[15] lorsqu'il invitait des spectateurs à dire ce que des éléments de celle-ci "évoquaient" pour eux, diffère pour chacun selon le processus de sélection qu'il adopte parmi les indices visuels qui serviront de fondement à son processus de reconnaissance. Cette sélection semble liée à des processus cognitifs et émotifs différents chez divers spectateurs, dont les mécanismes sont suffisamment forts et permanents pour ne pas céder à de multiples suggestions contraires. Le fait de "guider" la perception d'un spectateur vers un autre type de sélection d'indices, supposément plus "réalistes," ou raisonnables ou "socialement acceptés," n'entame en rien l'assurance avec laquelle les percepteurs maintiennent les choix précédents de leur démarche spon-

tanée, qui demeurent pour eux le seul fondement valable à une interprétation ultérieure.

Cette situation nous incite à remettre en question de nombreaux présupposés de la tradition iconologique quant à une norme du comportement perceptuel des spectateurs devant une oeuvre visuelle et à nous interroger sur la légitimité d'y substituer les lexicalisations produites par un "expert-analyste" comme une base valable et suffisante de l'interprétation symbolique qui doit suivre.

Il nous apparaît tout aussi manifeste, d'autre part, que les lexicalisations que permet "Mascarade," même si on y ajoutait certaines des autres verbalisations concédées comme valables, sont loin de fournir un fondement suffisant à une analyse axée sur les systèmes d'interprétation appliqués à un texte verbal.

Il faut donc parler d'une impasse certaine dans la mise en oeuvre des méthodes de l'iconologie et de la sémiotique visuelle dans l'analyse des composantes verbales du discours visuel. Elle tient certes à une sorte de logocentrisme qui assujettit toute dimension sémantique à un lien immédiat avec le dictionnaire lexicologique, aussi bien en théorie de l'art qu'en linguistique. Sa conséquence la plus importante réside dans une occultation du rôle majeur des processus perceptuels dans la constitution et l'appréhension des représentations visuelles, à la suite d'un déni d'ailleurs des particularités perceptuelles de l'appréhension des signes concrets qui constituent le langage verbal, souvent conçu comme tout à fait transparent.

Au lieu de se buter sur une "épellation" des éléments iconiques/verbaux au niveau de surface du texte visuel, l'étude sémiologique de l'insertion du discours verbal dans le discours visuel doit plutôt faire retour à un niveau épistémologique plus profond qui puisse l'informer des fonctions majeures de la perception en relation avec les deux formes de représentations dont dispose l'organisme humain pour se représenter le monde à lui-même et communiquer avec les autres êtres humains. Il faut appliquer au langage visuel l'observation de Jean Petitot-Cocorda selon laquelle la saisie des phénomènes observables ne peut les supposer comme déjà constitués dans leur sens d'objet, mais "la modélisation des structures (doit être) la conséquence de leur constitution comme objets d'une aperception."[16] Plus particulièrement, la sémiologie visuelle ne peut se constituer que par un recours aux sciences cognitives pouvant éclairer la nature générale de la fonction linguistique dans l'économie de l'organisme humain.

Systèmes perceptuels et langages

Disposons en un premier temps du malentendu qui entoure le statut perceptuel du langage verbal, largement disséminé au cours des dernières décennies à la suite du paradoxe de Marshall McLuhan, décrivant le monde de l'imprimé comme un univers visuel à l'encontre du monde de la "parole," qui appartiendrait au sonore.

Le langage verbal est fondé sur une organisation d'éléments sonores détectables par le système perceptuel auditif. Cette structure cependant peut-être "redoublée" ou traduite dans un système d'écriture détectable par le système visuel, établissant des correspondances entre des signes visuels et des éléments sonores, qui ne deviennent "audibles" qu'à travers les traces mnésiques des percepts de son logés dans la tête. C'est-à-dire que la structure perceptuelle sonore, de type phonématique, demeure toujours fondamentale et essentielle dans le décodage du langage verbal, parlé ou écrit, scandant les morphèmes dans leur succession linéaire et irréversible, avec les pauses qui autonomisent les syntagmes formant des propositions ou énoncés. La même structure phonématique est à l'oeuvre dans la transcription diversement sonore du Morse ou tactile du braille; elle fonde encore l'organisation propositionnelle, "illustrée" par le langage graphique.

La transcription alphabétique du sonore en visuel se réalise au travers d'un système graphique d'écriture qui n'emprunte qu'un registre minime des potentialités du langage visuel, et qui s'avère en même temps particulièrement inadéquat à noter les inflexions, rythmes, timbres, hauteurs, etc. caractéristiques du mode de production du signifiant sonore dans le langage parlé. Nous avons déjà souligné le problème de cette "perte expressive" dans la pseudo-transcription visuelle qu'impose l'écriture au langage de la poésie.[17]

Par ailleurs, le langage visuel lui-même, qui ignore la discontinuité phonématique aussi bien que morphématique, sera construit tout entier par l'opération perceptuelle de jonctions/disjonctions des aggrégats de variables visuelles, à partir d'une syntaxe géométrale dynamique qui n'oppose plus état et action, substantif et verbe. C'est-à-dire quo loin de masquer ses liens avec les processus de perception, le langage visuel y puise constamment ses potentialités les plus précieuses de représentation du réel interne et externe à l'homme.

Des linguistes comme Jerry A. Fodor suggèrent avec raison que les mécanismes psychologiques qui fournissent aux systèmes centraux de l'organisme humain les informations nécessaires sur son environnement sont: "les systèmes perceptuels et *le langage* (souligné par l'auteur)."[18] Cette communauté de fonction entre le langage (ou pour mieux dire, les langages), et les systèmes perceptuels ne peut nous permettre cependant d'assimiler simplement les uns aux autres. Les divers langages ne peuvent être définis *per se* comme des mécanismes de perception, même s'ils n'existent qu'à travers la perception: qu'ils sont construits par des éléments sensibles et concrets qui exigent d'être perçus et qu'ils sont susceptibles d'influencer les processus de perception eux-mêmes. Inversement, les produits de l'activité perceptive au sein du réel ne peuvent, en aucune façon, être assimilés aux produits d'une activité langagière quelconque, comme le postule Greimas dans sa notion de "sémiologie du monde natural." Les percepts visuels construits par l'organisme humain dans la réalité ne deviennent "linguistiques" que lorsqu'ils

sont mis en relation avec les percepts "produits" par des matériaux sensibles et concrets dans une représentation visuelle, qui comme tout langage, doit se construire comme un système autonome d'agencements de ses éléments constitutifs.

La psychanalyse a aussi saisi les rapports étroits et fonctionnels existant entre langage et perception, ainsi décrits pare André Green: "le langage transforme les processus de pensée en perception."[19] Ces processus de pensée ne se résument pas à des assertions logiques, mais recouvrent les "pré-pensées" ou "pré-conceptions" ou "éléments affectifs," au sens de W. O. Bion[20] qui ne deviennent des pensées "achevées," de façon toujours transitoire d'ailleurs, qu'à la suite, soit d'une verbalisation rendue possible par l'évocation de traces mnésiques perceptuelles, soit d'un autre type de représentation (une modélisation visuelle par exemple) explicitant les interrelations dynamiques entre les mêmes traces mnésiques perceptuelles. D'autres langages, bien sûr, la musique, la danse, etc. seront plus appropriés parfois pour "représenter" les traces perceptuelles auditives, tactiles, kinesthésiques, thermiques, posturales, etc.

Cette fonction intermédiaire de la perception est d'autant plus importante qu'elle est la condition nécessaire de tout accés à la conscience pour le sujet humain, à travers le phénomène de la représentation qui aboutira ou non à une communication externe. Selon les mots de Freud "quoi que ce soit naissant de l'intérieur (sauf les sentiments) qui veut devenir conscient doit essayer de se transformer en perception externe; cela devient possible par le moyen des traces mnésiques."[21] Avant de revenir sur la restriction apportée au cas des sentiments, retenons que les perceptions internes "qui rapportent les sensations de processus qui prennent naissance dans les couches les plus différentes et certainement aussi les plus profondes de l'apareil psychique"[22] se lieront aux traces mnésiques des perceptions externes, qui sont en grande partie des perceptions de "choses" construites au sein de divers univers perceptuels par nos divers organes de perception. Même si une fraction infime de ces ensembles perceptuels sera éventuellement subsumée dans une représentation de mot, celle-ci ne peut en rien rendre compte des structures spatiales qui les interrelient.

Les acquis de la Gestaltpsychologie, prolongés par la psychologie génétique de Jean Piaget qui ne parlera toujours que de "l'activité perceptive," voient dans la perception un mécanisme dynamique qui transforme sans cesse l'organisme qui l'entreprend, en même temps que le champ perceptuel dont il modifie les structures d'organisation. C'était déjà la position de Freud, dès 1895, pour qui la perception de tout objet implique nécessairement la jonction d'une image de chose à une image motrice "de la modification interne produite par l'excitation des neurones dans le trajet de perception."[23] En d'autres mots, "la perception d'un objet correspond à l'objet nucléaire plus une image motrice." Cette image motrice correspond aussi bien aux mouvements avec lesquels l'objet serait appréhendé sur le plan

moteur que ceux dont l'on dote cet objet: "On imite soi-même les mouvements, c'est-à-dire que l'on innerve sa propre image motrice au point de reproduire le mouvement."

D'une part, la "pensée" qui ne peut émerger, selon Freud, que dans la liaison d'une excitation interne/externe avec une perception, dote la représentation verbale d'un quantum d'activité motrice, qui pour être indirecte et moins immédiatement consciente que l'activité liée à la représentation de chose, demeure une constante essentielle dans la sémantique du langage verbal.

Par son insertion dans le système de la perception, processus actif sollicitant un apport continu des systèmes sensori-moteurs, affectifs et conceptuels, la représentation de mot et de chose se présente comme "un acte," une intervention concrète qui modifie l'équilibre relationnel interne ou externe de l'organisme. Certains courants linguistiques plus récents, comme la théorie des actes le language (ou Speech Acts) de Austin et Searle ont commençé à explorer cette dimension, en la restreignant toutefois à certains types d'énonciations, alors que toute représentation linguistique constitue un acte modifant un contexte antérieur.[24]

Ainsi, l'utilisation du langage verbal comme celle du langage visuel, constitue une activité spécifique dont les buts ne peuvent être réduits au simple désir de communication d'un contenu idéationnel ou conceptuel, mais d'une communication destinée à apporter une modification dans les relations factuelles et émotives, à l'interne comme à l'externe, de l'organisme. La modification souhaitée est souvent l'équilibre affectif de l'organisme, agité entre le principe du plaisir et le principe de réalité. Selon les termes du Freud: "L'être humain trouve dans le langage un équivalent de l'acte, équivalent grâce auquel l'affect peut être abréagi de la même façon."

Cette triple fonction du langage verbal ou visuel, sur le plan du concept, de l'activité factuelle et de l'affectif, est le plus souvent concommittante, mais la fonction factuelle et affective dans le langage de la vie quotidienne, et particulièrement dans le langage artistique, littéraire ou plastique, peut parfois primer. L'interprétation doit sans cesse être en mesure de distinguer si le contenu conceptuel ou idéationnel véhiculé par un acte de langage verbal ou visuel est l'objet véritable de la communication ou s'il n'a été élaboré que comme instrument ou prétexte convenable pour véhiculer un contenu émotif ou un acte spécifique. Il va de soi que l'interprétation de tout lexème ou énoncé variera considérablement dans un cas et dans l'autre, car "l'affect verbalisé n'est pas lié au langage comme l'idée. Corollairement, la valeur de la verbalisation ne peut être identique dans les deux cas."[25]

Avant d'aborder les hypothèses permettant de reconnaître les signifiants plus particulièrement liés à ces divers niveaux de la fonction linguistique, il faut revenir à la restriction apportée plus haut par Freud, qui propose que les "sentiments"

peuvent accéder à la conscience sans le support ponctuel ni du langage, ni de la perception. En d'autres mots que les affects, émotions et sentiments n'ont pas besoin d'être mis en liaison avec des traces mnésiques perceptuelles, ni à des représentations de mot ou de chose pour être "perçus" et affleurés à la conscience. Il existerait donc des "signifiants" d'affects, d'un ordre diférent des autres signifiants, mais suffisamment différenciés pour que la conscience distingue entre la colère, la tristesse, la joie, l'envie, etc.

La question sémiologique fondamentale pour l'interprétation de tout langage, quant à son contenu émotif, sera de savoir comment certaines formes d'organisation des signifiants linguistiques peuvent, en dehors de toutes connotations lexématiques ou renvois à des choses externes, modéliser ces affects et être reconnus comme tels par le décodeur d'un objet linguistique.

A cet égard, la représentation de chose s'avère beaucoup plus apte à véhiculer de larges portions de l'expérience humaine que la représentation de mot, parce qu'elle peut susciter de façon plus directe et immédiate les traces mnésiques liées aux mécanismes et aux objets de perception. Elle aurait une fonction expressive encore plus importante, puisqu'elle est seule susceptible d'évoquer le vaste bassin des affects inconscients, inaccessibles aux représentations de mot. Rappelant l'observation de Freud à cet effet: "La représentation consciente comprend la représentation de chose — plus la représentation de mot qui lui appartient; la représentation inconsciente est la représentation de chose seule," André Green précisera en mots plus concrets: "La sphère visuelle a plus de résonnances affectives que la sphère auditive; elle est la plus proche de l'affect. Entre représentation de mot et affect, les représentations de chose forment un pont joignant l'intellect et la sensibilité."[26]

Les trois niveaux de significants

Dans ce contexte plus élargi, il est possible de reprendre l'analyse de l'insertion de signifiants verbaux dans un texte visuel, à partir de la fonction catégorielle des divers signifiants linguistiques, telle qu'elle a été définie par la sémiologie psychanalytique et que nous nous voyons contraints de résumer à grands traits.

Dès 1975, les chercheurs Maria Carmen Gear et Ernesto Liendo, psychanalystes travaillant en collaboration avec le linguiste Luis J. Prieto, ont établi la nécessité de reconnaître trois réseaux de signifiants dans tout objet linguistique: (a) le niveau verbal (ou représentation de mot); (b) le niveau factuel (ou représentation de chose); (c) le niveau de l'affect ou de l'émotion.[27]

Nous avons longuement fait état, ci-dessus, du réseau des signifiants verbaux établis dans le texte visuel par le processus de l'iconisation, qui ne se réalise que lorsque des lexèmes peuvent être appliqués à des aggrégats visuels regroupés à travers la perception.

Le niveau de la représentation factuelle est certes le plus riche et le plus diversifié du langage visuel. Il est produit par l'énergétique des variables visuelles, liées à travers les processus perceptuels en divers aggrégats selon certains types de liaisons/disjonctions qui définissent leur situation les uns par rapport aux autres. Ces relations factuelles marquent en outre les diverses positions prises par le producteur en rapport avec son champ de représentation, les "visées" différentes qu'il leur applique, en même temps que les "positions" des éléments de la représentation les uns par rapport aux autres. Ces "états de relations" sont le plus souvent insérés dans des systèmes de perspective qui règlent à la fois les modes de présentation, les dimensions, les interrelations possibles ou exclues entre les éléments. La structure factuelle est révélée par l'analyse syntaxique d'une oeuvre visuelle.

Les signifiants d'affect, qui constituent un réseau qualifiant aussi bien le niveau verbal que le niveau factuel, sont interprétables selon la structure du processus primaire, faisant de la relation dialectique de contenance (soit la relation du contenant au contenu et du contenu ou contenant) le fondement du processus symbolique. Ils se révèlent dans l'oeuvre visuelle au niveau de la spatialisation topologique, interreliant les éléments visuels dans une démarche alternante de construction du continu/discontinu, de voisinage/séparation, et d'organisation de structures d'enveloppement, d'emboîtement, de succession, etc.

A partir cependant des travaux de Mélanie Klein, W. O. Bion, et Gregory Bateson, le binarisme affectif premier, soit le plaisir/déplaisir, est décrit comme soumis à une structure d'ambivalence ou de "double-bind," résultant du fait que le Moi se situe à un même moment vis-à-vis d'instances différentes de son organisation interne (Ça, Moi et Sur-Moi), ce qui lui permet d'éprouver un plaisir comme déplaisir et inversement, de formuler en un même lieu, des propositions simultanées de plaisir et de déplaisir. En particulier, les positions différentes du Moi qualifient différemment les trois niveaux de représentation disponibles: les signifiants de mot "nomment" les relations objectales voulues par le Sur-Moi, alors que les signifiants factuels représentent les interrelations établies de fait par le Moi avec ses objets. Les signifiants d'affect possèdent une suprématie fonctionnelle sur le plan du contenu, qui entraîne une commutativité possible des signifiants verbaux et factuels. Même dotés de différences marquantes au plan de l'expression ces derniers peuvent offrir des équivalences au niveau des classes d'affects mnésiques, agréables ou désagréables, auxquelles ils renvoient.

Le "double-bind," entraînant habituellement le Moi à dire qu'il fait ou qu'on lui fait le contraire de ce qu'il fait en réalité ou de ce qu'on lui fait, a pour but une pacification du Sur-Moi par un masquage de la réalisation effective des pulsions instinctuelles sur le plan factuel. Ces fonctions performatives divergentes opposent les représentations verbales aux représentations factuelles, comme en "un miroir sémantiquement renversé," c'est-à-dire sémantiquement contradictoires.

En même temps, la représentation de mot qui doit construire un plan symbolique servant à obtenir l'agrément et la corroboration du Sur-Moi, source d'affects agréables, en niant la présence d'impulsions interdites, dégage un caractère de "satisfaction," lequel, comme l'avait observé C. Morris, entraîne une tendance à la répétition dans une même oeuvre ou d'une oeuvre à l'autre. Gear et Liendo soulignent, à maintes reprises, le caractère "monothématiste" et stéréotypé des récitants verbaux, de leur redondance et de leur valeur toujours inverse avec les représentations factuelles de situations et interrelations concrètes.[28]

Les représentations visuelles iconiques obligent donc l'analyse sémiologique de prendre en compte, non seulement les interrelations des variables visuelles en tant que telles, constituant divers espaces perceptuels, mais aussi un réseau de signes icono-verbaux qui par leur fonction spécifique acquierent une sorte d'autonomie. Mais produits et insérés dans le contexte de la représentation de chose, ces signes ne peuvent signifier que par l'ensemble des interrelations de leurs propres composantes visuelles de position, dimension, chromatisme, texture, orientation, etc. avec les régions visuelles qui les entourent. C'est-à-dire qu'en dépit de leur caractère nommable surajouté, ces figures iconiques ne prennent sens que de leurs interactions avec le niveau factuel, non-iconique, de l'oeuvre. Etant donné l'ampleur de cette analyse syntaxique, nous nous contenterons pour terminer de dégager les caractéristiques les plus générales du plan iconique de "Mascarade," considéré dans sa fonction verbalisante.

Au premier abord, l'on constate que les régions plus ou moins fermement iconisées dans cette oeuvre sont distribuées dans une structure de discontinuité, typique d'ailleurs du plan de l'expression verbale, engendrée non seulement par la distance dans les trois dimensions entre ces régions, mais aussi par les contrastes disjonctifs entre ces formes fermées.

Si on regroupe ces régions dans un ensemble formant réseau, leurs liens gestaltiens apparaissent fondés non seulement sur la similitude de leurs formants circulaires-ovoïdes, à l'horizontale et à la verticale, mais par le fait qu'elles monopolisent l'usage de ces courbes dans le champ visuel. La liaison sera particulièrement forte entre les trois "visages/têtes," offrant un schématisme similaire de la forme externe et du traitement interne par des stries lozangiques ou parallèles. Alors que les "visages" moyens, R2a et R4b se rapprochent par la similitude de l'encadrement des "yeux" et la symétrie des orientations de leurs ajouts externes (R4c et triangle au-dessus de R2a), les régions R2a et R2n se joignent et se repoussent en même temps par des amas de textures chaotiques et disparates (R2b à R2l). Les cinq régions iconisables se relient entre elles par la répétition des doubles paires de petits cercles.

De façon plus tranchée encore, ces régions se présentent dans un effet de frontalité qui contribue à leur harmonisation en dépit des variations de leurs éléments

internes. L'analyse syntaxique dissout cependant cette frontalité à partir des "visées" différentes prises par le producteur sur le champ et des disjonctions brusques dans la profondeur qu'il impose à ces régions iconiques, autant qu'à celles qui les entourent. Ces points de vue diférents sont très nombreux: d'un point en hauteur vers le bas (R2c, R3b, R4e, R2b, R2j), d'un point inférieur vers le haut (R2, R4c), d'un point en hauteur et en oblique vers le bas (R2c, R2h, R2e), visées obliques latérales de la gauche vers la droite (R5a), visées à l'horizontale et perpendiculaire (R4d, R4e, R5c), etc. De même que les perspectives divergentes qu'elles engendrent, ces visées représentent des changements de "positions" du producteur qui serait mobile et pourrait dans la simultanéité, occuper des points différents de l'espace, ou encore rendre compte de la perception de plusieurs "sujets de parole" dispersés dans l'espace. Ce phénomène qui ne peut être le produit d'une relation perceptuelle factuelle dans un espace concret, confirme et généralise l'importance de l'apport du niveau verbal dans cette représentation visuelle.

Quant aux signifiants d'affect liés aux régions iconisables, on peut établir une relation de contenance véritable que pour la région R2a à partir de la subtilité de son émergence comme figure-fond au sein des régions ambiantes. La forme d'emboîtement de R3 et de R4 dans la région 2, à travers des structures disjonctives très fortes, pointe vers en caractère problématique de leurs interrelations. Même la région R4d, supposément contenue dans le prolongement du "torse" de l'ensemble R4, se présente dans une telle distance dans la profondeur qu'il faut conclure à une disjonction plutôt qu'à une relation de contenance. Conjugué aux observations que conditionnent le niveau factuel de l'oeuvre, il faudrait conclure que le niveau iconico-verbal de l'oeuvre trahit une situation de vie particulièrement tragique et conflictuelle qu'une "mascarade" ne réussit pas à masquer véritablement.

NOTES

[1] Georges Didi-Huberman, *La peinture incarnée* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).

[2] Jean-Marie Floch, *Petites mythologies de l'oeil et de l'espirit* (Paris: Hadès-Benjamin, 1985); Félix Thürlemann, *Klee, Analyse sémiotique de trois peintures* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1982).

[3] A. J. Greimas, and P. Cortès, *Sémiotique, Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (Paris: Hachette, 1979), p. 148.

[4] Erwin Panofsky, *Essais d'inconologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 21.

[5] Greimas, p. 329.

[6] Umberto Eco, "Pour une reformulation du concept de signe iconique," *Communications*, n° 29 (1978), pp. 141-91.

[7] Rudolf Arnheim, "Image et pensée," *Signe, Image et Symbole* (Bruxelles: La Connaissance, 1965).

[8] Floch, p. 46.

[9] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 215.

[10] Fernande Saint-Martin, "Naissance d'une sémiotique visuelle," *RS/SI*, vol. 3, n° 2 (juin 1983), pp. 188-96.

[11] Eco, p. 164.

[12] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), p. 77.

[13] Fernande Saint-Martin, *Les fondements topologiques de la peinture* (Montréal: HMH-Hurtubise, 1980); *Introduction to a Semiology of Visual Language* (Toronto Semiotic Circle, Pre-Publication Series, Queen's University, 1985); *Sémiologie du langage visuel* (Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1985).

[14] Fernande Saint-Martin, "Sémiologie et syntaxe visuelle," *Protée*, 14, n° 3 (automne 1986), pp. 27-40.

[15] Louis Porcher, *Introduction à une sémiotique des images* (Paris: Didier, 1976).

[16] Jean Petitot-Cocorda, *Morphogénèse du sens* (Paris: P.U.F., 1985), p. 282.

[17] Fernande Saint-Martin, "De la parole à l'écriture," *La fiction du réel, poèmes 1953-1975* (Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1985).

[18] Jerry A. Fodor, *La modularité de l'esprit*, 1983, transl. Abel Gerschenfeld (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 63.

[19] André Green, *Le discours vivant* (Paris: P.U.F., 1973), p. 47.

[20] W. O. Bion, *L'attention et l'interprétation* (Paris: Payot, 1974).

[21] Sigmund Freud, *Le moi et le Ça*, Standard Edition, KIK, p. 20.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[23] Sigmund Freud, *Etudes sur l'hystérie*, *ibid.*, p. 364.

[24] J. L. Austin, *Quand dire, c'est faire* (1962; Paris: Seuil, 1970); John S. Searle, *Les actes de langage* (1969; Paris: Hermann, 1972), *Sens et expression* (Paris: Minuit, 1982).

[25] Green, p. 69.

[26] Green, p. 204.

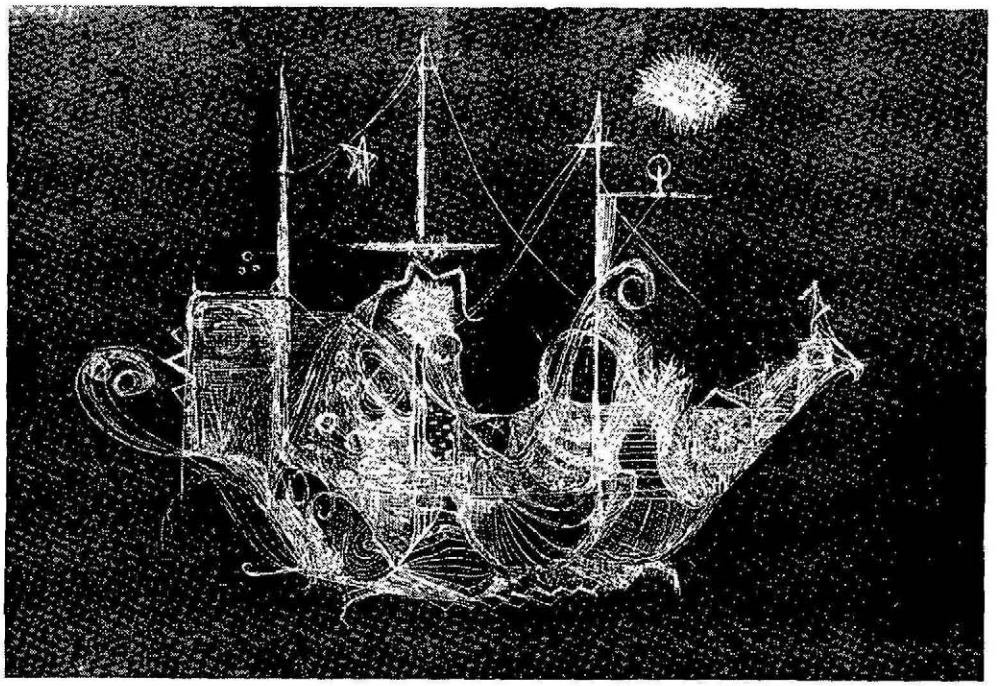
[27] M. C. Gear et E. Liendo, *Sémiologie psychanalytique* (Paris: Minuit, 1975).

[28] Gear and Liendo, p. 9.

WINTER MORNING

P. K. Page

Had Van Gogh never lived
could I have seen —
as I switched on the light —
that Van Gogh-yellow room
and beyond it his bright
delphinium blue
of the dawn on the snow?



P. K. IRWIN, *Aladdin's Ship*, etching — reverse print.
PHOTO: BOB SCHALKWIJK

ROY KIYOOKA'S "THE FONTAINEBLEAU DREAM MACHINE": A READING

Eva-Marie Kröller

COMPILING A GLOSSARY OF ART TERMS in 1851, Eugène Delacroix explored the differences between image and word: "the book is like an edifice of which the front is often a sign-board, behind which, once [the painter] is introduced there, he must again and again give equal attention to the different rooms composing the monument he is visiting, not forgetting those which he has left behind him, and not without seeking in advance, through what he knows already, to determine what his impression will be at the end of his expedition,"[1] and he goes on to speculate that, as "portions of pictures in movement,"[2] books require as much involvement from their readers who are to link these portions, as they do from their authors.

Such commitment is expected of the reader of Roy Kiyooka's *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine: 18 Frames from a Book of Rhetoric* (1977), a work which pays repeated homage to Delacroix as an artist in whose paintings operatic visions of historical splendour are sometimes paradoxically wedded to despair over "man's gifts of reflection and imagination. Fatal gifts,"[3] and over the fragility of art in a chaotic world. Anticipating twentieth-century Absurdism, Delacroix enquires, "Does not barbarism, like the Fury who watches Sisyphus rolling his stone to the top of the mountain, return almost periodically to overthrow and confound, to bring forth night after too brilliant a day?"[4] Both part of and opponent to nature, man oscillates between violating her with his intellect, and succumbing to her, as a "brute" would, "[a] machine made for living, for digesting, and for sleeping."[5]

The Fontainebleau Dream Machine shares Delacroix's vision, and, although a slender volume of about twenty pages, the book attempts no less than a wide-ranging, dialectical, and often humorous critique of history in general, and art in particular, as a grand scheme of self-delusion: " 'People / want history to resemble themselves, or at least to resemble / their dreams, happily they sometimes have great dreams.' "[6] In presenting itself as an essay in cultural critique, Kiyooka's book resembles the encyclopedic anatomies Northrop Frye describes in *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). Combining features of the confession, the Menippean satire, and the epic, encyclopedic anatomies like Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*,

Swift's *A Tale of the Tub*, and Blake's *Jerusalem* compile an enormous mass of erudition in their self-reflexive attempt to expose the follies of the intellect. Comparison with the complex interplay of word and image in Blake's work especially illuminates the eschatological spirit informing *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine*: as the reader wanders through the eighteen richly-furnished "rooms" (to use Delacroix's metaphor) which Kiyooka has prepared for him in image and verse, the carefully planned edifice of lies self-destructs, and the book closes on a vision of devastation awaiting rebirth: "Sodom/Gomorrah&/Carthage/Await/ The Sultan Sunne."

In its deconstruction of western art and its symbols, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* harks back not only to Delacroix's historical *tableaux*, but also to other artists and eras in which alleged progress starkly revealed itself as a fabrication consisting of the stolen goods of previous generations: the engravings of the Fontainebleau masters for instance are based in Italian mannerist paintings; these borrow their materials from both medieval Christian and classic art. In art history, these eras are strung out in a continuous sequence. In Kiyooka's poems, they are forced into fantastic synchronicity and contiguity in a series of verbal and visual collages, whose irreverent fragmentations and juxtapositions confront the reader with the debris of western art. Their playfulness, however, also teases him into creating new worlds from elements including Renaissance engravings, bawdy broadsheets, news photographs, and a still from John Lennon's film "Apotheosis" among the pictures, and elements from symbolist poetry, technical writing, newspaper reporting, Hollywood propaganda, and obscene language in the poems.

Collages are mainly a surrealist and dadaist technique, and a detailed analysis of *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* promises to be a contribution to exploring the surrealist and dadaist intertexts in English-Canadian literature, an area which has, unlike its Québec counterpart, remained largely unexplored so far. In his work, Kiyooka has repeatedly paid tribute to *collagistes* like Hans Arp and Kurt Schwitters,[7] but also Salvatore Dali and Luis Buñuel, whose filmic collage *Un Chien andalou* briefly appears in the second frame: "Voilà voilà the Air of the Andalusian Dog stroking his genitalia." In their images, these artists set out to destroy the elitist aura[8] of traditional art with unorthodox combinations of shapes and materials, and *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine's* manipulations of sixteenth-century engravings evoke Schwitters' "Wenzelkind," a collage involving Raphael's "The Sistine Madonna," a fashion advertisement, a bus or movie ticket, and two obscure quotations, or Marcel Duchamp's sacrilegious depiction of the "Mona Lisa" sporting moustaches and a goatee.[9]

Collages are particularly effective when the artist's interference with a famous image uncovers cultural ambiguities and tensions inherent in its original creation, but concealed beneath its aesthetic aura. Summoned by François I to Fontaine-

bleau in 1530, the Italian artists Rosso, Primatice, and Niccolo dell'Abate initiated a school of painting and sculpture marked by its preferences for pagan iconography and heroic mythology. The elongated bodies, intricate compositions, and occasionally strident colours not only pointed toward external changes in decorative taste, but also exposed "l'esprit irréaliste d'une génération qui poursuit la quête inquiète d'un palliatif ésthetique à son angoisse morale."[10] Kiyooka revives this anxiety in his collages, often by focusing on a female figure, usually besieged by or escaping from a crowd of proletarian spectators. In the fifteenth frame, for instance, Pygmalion's solitary creation of Galathea is now superimposed on Léonard Limosin's "L'Entrée à Jérusalem," notable for its gaping spectators, complete with children hanging monkey-like from the trees. Claustrophobia also informs the third frame where Kiyooka has altered the perspecitve of an engraving depicting the ascent of a balloon from the outskirts of a large city, so that the crowds now seem to be pressing directly against its walls rather than obediently surrounding the fence separating balloon and onlookers. In the foreground, two persons hurriedly carry away a writhing nude woman, as if they were paramedics saving an endangered individual from the impudence of the crowds. As the original engraving, Pierre Milan's pornographic "Femme portée vers un sartyre libidineux," makes clear, however, the nude is being precipitated into rape, a dubious salvation echoed in the mocking reinterpretation of the Ascension of Magdalene in the ninth frame. Possibly the most sardonic of the collages, the latter [see Fig. 1] brings together Master L.D.'s. "La Madeleine transportée au ciel" [see Fig. 2] and a cartoon showing a donkey astride a horse, both airborne [see Fig. 3], as were the experimental animals sent up with the first balloons. In the collage, a nude Magdalene and her entourage of angels replace the donkey, with several asinine spectators rapturously looking on from below. The scene appears decidedly uncomfortable, with the saint spreading her hands in alarm rather than in ecstasy, as well she might, for the horse's bridles are inserted directly into her bare leg, and the angels (wings wildly flapping with effort) are not so much celestial help-mates as hard-working kidnappers. Indeed, the group is so top-heavy that it appears to be suspended in midair, or "suspender'd," as the poem maliciously comments, "on the back of a hackneyed horse with dangling hooves awry." Abandon the old mare with its ludicrous load for the winged horse Pegasus, the poem suggests: " 'I would etch a Silvery Horse on the Shinking Metal of your eyes . . .' / the Dream whispered dying . . ."

In addition to the collages, the book's principal motif — the hot-air balloon — further strengthens connections between *The Fontainebleau*

FIG. 1 ROY KIYOOKA, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* (9th frame)

FIG. 2 MASTER L.D., *La Madeleine transportée au ciel*

FIG. 3 "Horse Carried by Balloon"

Dream Machine and surrealism/dadaism. Besides drawing on *L'Ecole de Fontainebleau*, a 1969 volume of engravings, Kiyooka has made ample use of Peter Haining's *The Dream Machines* (1971), a popular history of balloons, but equally important precursors are the balloons floating through the paintings of Paul Klee, Odilon Redon, James Ensor, René Magritte, Max Ernst, and Francis Picabia.[11] Symbol of exhilarating freedom and escape into a fantastic dream world, the balloon often signals the irrational unpredictability of automatism. Several of Kiyooka's collages speak of the artist as passively given over to the dream's inscriptions, as in "the Dream with its / intricate Floatation-System hovers — motionless — above / the Glacial Plain *etched* on the Shining Metal of your eyes" and " 'I would etch a Silvery Horse on the Shining Metal / of your eyes . . .' " In this context, the female figures elsewhere targeted as representatives of art's deceptions, blend into a maternal nurturing presence: "Mother mute mother / of my breath the unvoiced Cry of / the child i am 'rings' the Changes in / your granite mouth."

But the balloon may also embody a nightmarish surveillance, a sinister meaning conveyed in several paintings featuring a balloon, among them Redon's 1882 "L'oeil comme un balloon bizarre se dirige vers l'infini." The history of the balloon confirms this apparent contradiction. Often used by potentates from Napoleon I to Hitler to promote their power in festive display, balloons also featured in the 1849 Austrian Siege of Venice, the American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War,

and the Boer War. Allusions to the balloon as a means of imperialist propaganda and surveillance abound in *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine*, especially in the second and eighth frames, the latter combining Fantuzzi's "L'Eléphant fleur-delysé" with a balloon bearing Herman Goering's name (an image excerpted from a news photograph taken on Berlin's Unter den Linden in 1937), and the former containing a print from the *Illustrated London News* depicting Mr. Hampton's "Erin-Go-Bragh" balloon which, "decorated by two large medallions — one bearing the figure of Britannia with the national emblems, the other an emblematic representation of Hibernia and her wolf-dog," ascended from Batty's Royal Hippodrome in Kensington on 7 June 1851.[12]

The balloon has, however, also been a means of political resistance, and here its qualities as a vehicle of freedom and an instrument of surveillance are happily joined. In the twelfth frame, Kiyooka introduces Félix Nadar, photographer and chief organizer of the balloon flights out of Paris during the 1871 Siege.[13] Celebrated by Benjamin Franklin (whose hand appears in the seventh frame) as a symbol of democracy and equality, the balloon afforded the common man a bird's-eye view surpassing the central vantage-points previously reserved for the monarch. That such a bird's-eye view might be gained at enormous cost becomes clear in the tattered balloons drifting through some of the collages, but especially in the fourth frame, which commemorates Salomon August Andrée's fatal attempt in 1897 to cross the North Pole by balloon.[14]

The ambiguities of the balloon as an image are well captured in the cover of Kiyooka's book, a picture worth describing in some detail because it has been omitted from Michael Ondaatje's *The Long Poem Anthology*, where *The Fontainebleau Dream Machne* (the collages reduced to stamp-sized images) was reprinted in 1979. In the cover, details of Pierre Milan's "Jupiter et Calisto" and a contemporary photograph are inserted into a bawdy engraving depicting the accidental arrival of the first hot-air balloon in the small village of Gonesse, whose inhabitants, convinced that the Anti-Christ had descended on them, hacked it to pieces with their hayforks. The engraving shows peasants scrambling atop a wall in order to observe the strange apparition with a mixture of fascination and alarm. Kiyooka has, however, replaced the grey unadorned balloon in the original with a fanciful rococo version in brilliant colours, and the villagers seem to be enchanted with a whimsical object, not so much terrified by a diabolic machine. Furthermore, there are other *foci* of attention in the picture: in his eagerness to help his female companion up the wall, a man has rucked up her skirts to reveal "balloons" occupying several onlookers rather more intensely than the Montgolfier. Pierre Milan's elegant depiction of love-making among the gods appears directly below this Rabelaisian village scene, but Jupiter's lust is clearly stripped of its mythological pretensions. Disturbed in their intimate *tête-à-tête*, Callisto stares — with alarm

or desire — at the backside of a man in jeans, possibly Kiyooka himself, who, with the words "notary public" written across the back of his shirt, is seen "stoking" a fantastic contraption on wheels, which — half barrel-organ, half television screen — translates the book's title into visual image. The *putti* granted privileged admission to Jean Milan's original scene are now uncomfortably crowded into a corner, whispering to each other in anger at having lost their front-row seat, instead of commenting on Jupiter's amorous designs in suitably hushed tones.

Despite his disrespectful reinterpretations of traditional images, however, Kiyooka avoids the studied carelessness practised by some *collagistes*. Instead, his work is distinguished by the same fastidious craftsmanship evident in his acrylic "hard edge" paintings, his fibreglass sculptures, or his cedar laminates. About the latter, one critic observed that their "finish is such that one hardly dare touch or breathe on [them]: they are isolated within their own perfection"; four years later she even found the laminates "perhaps . . . too seductive."[15] George Bowering points toward the spiritual core of Kiyooka's perfectionism when he admires "a perfect rest" in his creations "which is not statement but spirit, a knowing that whatever has been moving has come to centre exactly."[16] Kiyooka's work abounds with cosmic symbols signalling the "sacred" nature of his art. Most conspicuous among these is the ellipse which frames the collages he contributed to George Bowering's *The Man in Yellow Boots* (1965) and his "hard edge" paintings like "Aleph No. 2" "Blue Bridge" (1965), and "Red Bridge" (1965). It also appears in his 1971 cedar laminates, in a "cluster of four shallow titled ellipses," and "elliptically shaped columns, coils and twists and bulbous pillars that angle out from a perfect ellipse."[17] Related to the mandorla, the almond-shaped symbol of the *hieros gamos* or wedding of heaven and earth, the ellipse anticipates Kiyooka's dream of someday building "a huge gate, one that allows the ground where the sea and the land conjoin to make a passageway to the house of the sky."[18] Ellipses enclose several of the images in *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine,* and several collages also contain gateways, most notably the "cryptoportique" in the first frame. Often literally empty ornament in the original engraving, such as the "Cartouche rectangulaire vide" incorporated into the eighteenth collage and the "Encadrement ornamental" appearing in the seventh, frames of any shape are redefined as both meaningful enclosure and entrance in Kiyooka's work.

SHARPLY CRITICAL OF RELIGIOUS DOGMA, Christian or otherwise, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* exposes the iconography related to such dogma as purely decorative. In the tenth frame, Jean Mignon's "Saint Michel combattant les anges rebelles" ("steep't-in the intricate-Gyrations of an imagined

Hell") blends into a stylized, wallpaper-like insert; in the third frame, "the billowing Cloud / Figures swirling" of an Olympian heaven even metamorphose into Mickey Rooney's tousled hair. Excerpted from their dogmatic context, the linear, undulating, and spiraling structures in the collages reconstitute a visual grammar of spiritual search sometimes manifested in serpents, eagles, and the *omphalos.*[19] In the fourth frame, an eagle, originally delegated to hail Jacques Charles' historical ascent by balloon from the Tuileries on 1 December 1783 with a banner in its beak, now sweeps across "the Portal of a Dream," reclaiming its full power as an emblematic bird which, in some cultures, signifies "the struggle between the spiritual and celestial principle and the lower world."[20] A bronze eagle, "pointing towards / a Labial Sunrise," throws its dark shadow across the thirteenth collage. The coy maidens in the seventh frame, "with one hand on their crotch," contemplate "a *navel* among flowers" abruptly inserted between them, and equally focused attention is paid to a writhing serpent in the sixteenth and several other frames. Both navel and serpent are cosmic images, as is the globe, and it is probably no coincidence that Kiyooka has chosen the severely geometrical Charlistes' balloon over the fanciful Montgolfier version in most of the images: to some the expression of a rationalist age, the Charlistes' balloons drifting through *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* are among many other things reflections of spiritual peace.

These tendencies toward visual abstraction in the collages are paralleled by an insistence on silence in the poems. Perhaps overfed on the global village chatter of modern media ("the impossible / death of Chairman Mao on late night cable vision, nuclear / fission Herr Hermann Goring & separatism"), the poet's dream horse becomes immobile and must be dragged from its lair. Simultaneously, the poet's speech begins to stutter and dissolve:

aphasia a cross the frozen stubble
aphasia of his Famine
aphasia the drifting snow-mantl'd pasture brok n
aphasia down the huge hole
aphasia Black.root *pie* in the sky
aphasia . . .

As the "most impure, the most contaminated, the most exhausted of all the materials out of which art is made,"[21] language must be made over in silence, and the poem accompanying the eighth frame, in which a man (excerpted from Master L.D.'s "Timoclée devant Alexandre") sifts through a large vat and looks over his shoulder at Fantuzzi's "L'Eléphant fleurdelysé," remembers Arthur Rimbaud who renounced literature and welcomed the less desecrated speech of silent phenomena instead:

sifting the Rune/s for

the Behemoth of Speech : the absolute truth
of those hueg white tusks curving in the moon light marsh
a million years ago . . . today. searching the Sahara
for the Algebra of Awe Rimbaud wept when he stumbled on them

After surrendering to a nightmare of stunned speechlessness and the healing silence of the "cool blue night," the poet of *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* wakes up to the wordless music of a new beginning, "on Epithalamion of Bird Songs."

Despite its insistence on silence, abstraction, and the instant as a moment of perfection, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* like most of Kiyooka's work is serial, and as such part of an open-ended organic development. Speaking about his oil painting, Kiyooka testifies how "one night [he] became aware of how each and every glob of shiny oil paint had its own veracity and completely lost in mixing/matching/placing,"[22] but he is also fascinated with the endless mutabilities of one particular object or scene. Not surprisingly, some of Kiyooka's finest work has been in photography, as in his "StoneDgloves," pictures of workers' gloves trampled underfoot on the site of the Osaka World Fair, or his photographs of a beach taken during "12 hours sitting in one place on Kits Beach with my Pentax and a 200 mm lens."[23] Organized in "frames," *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* uses photographic techniques and sometimes superimposes a camera or photographic lens on the collages. The individual images circle their subject with the same patience as do his photographic series, but are careful to point out the aesthetic and mechanical conventions shaping the photograph and limiting its spontaneity:

High Noon at the base of
the Tall (fluted) S T O N E (breath) Column
— a man with a Nikon F-2 measures
the Lattices of Sun light falling across Broken Statues.

As serial art, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* rejects a rational and systematic narrative, and proceeds in variations and reprises instead. The poems accompanying the collages frequently remind the reader that the frame presented is only one image from a pool of equally significant ones. The sense of arbitrariness is enhanced because the poems and images posture as emblems whose components (as a glance at Georgette de Montenay's *Emblemes ou Devises Chrestiennes* [1571] or any other emblem book can easily verify) were often as absurdly disparate as contemporary collages, but whose interpretation, by contrast, was never left to chance. Some of Kiyooka's poems pose as learned commentary ("the 1st frame shows / Breath (shadowing) Dream (shadowing) Air (shadowing) itself"), but more frequently they point out "hidden" matters or, like René Magritte's famous "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," establish a different vision altogether ("the 3rd frame (hides)

the Morning Star under the Cowl of Breath"). Occasionally, the collages themselves deliberately hide images, as in the eighteenth frame, where a portrait of André Garnerin, the inventor of the parachute, is almost completely obscured by the other elements in the picture. Indeed, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* is so insistent in its references to alternative meanings and images blocked out by the ones appearing on the page that the poem acquires the three-dimensionality of sculpture, comparable to Kurt Schwitters' "Merzsäule," a dadaist stalagmite luxuriantly sprouting outgrowths and secret hollows, until it eventually grew through the ceiling in Schwitters' apartment and began to occupy the next storey. *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine* too resembles a climbing plant mysteriously emerging from the dreamer's mouth, sending its tendrils through the eighteen frames of the poem, and finally "dying" in the "cave of [his] mouth" in the morning, "with all the starlings in the pear tree singing / Cantonese." The marble foliage dripping from an elaborate capital in the fifth frame suddenly ignites, "kindling / stone: Leaf:grief"; moreover, the picture "hides / the actual length of the column inside your inner ear," as does the image in the ninth frame which conceals "the unspent Heat of the Solar Belfry, the climbing plant i am."

The Fontainebleau artists surrounded many of their images with elaborate frames of fruit, vegetables, foliage, and strapwork, some of them so luxuriant that, acquiring a life of their own, they deny their function as closure. Kiyooka enhances this effect by filling each collage with dynamics and trajectories straining against the ovals, squares and circles containing them. The "cryptoportique" in the first frame draws the viewer's glance into its receding archways, as a balloon rising from behind it pushes against the upper frame; in both the second and sixth collages the balloon has actually punctured the border and seems bent on leaving the page altogether. In the sixth collage, the frame even comes alive to lament or prevent the balloon's escape, as Cleopatra, from Jean Mignon's "Cléopatra piquée par un aspic," bemoans the events and a one-legged Cupid from Pierre Milan's "Jupiter et Calisto" takes aim at the dream machine. Several of the collages draw the viewer's glance upward into the heavens of an illusionist ceiling, as do Pierre Milan's "Jupiter au milieu des Olympiens" in the third frame and Jean Mignon's "Saint Michel combattant les anges rebelles" in the tenth, but both times their demand on exclusive attention is disturbed by the balloon's flight into another direction.

The poems insistently translate the architectural and sculptural elements of the collages into physiological and psychological ones, and *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine*, besides presenting a critique of western civilization, also outlines the poet's autobiography. Kiyooka is, however, not concerned with delineating an individual's identity. Instead he postulates an "autobiology,"[24] in which the borderlines between subject and object have been dissolved, and where his lower-

case spelling of "i" signals humility, not affected mannerism. Toward the end of his dream journey, the poet experiences synaesthesia and an ecstatic union with the phenomena surrounding him:

> How? how is it i suddenly 'see' G r e e n: 'hear' B l u e:
> 'smell' B r o w n: 'touch breath of R o t u n d:
> What an Epithalamion of Bird Songs **Throng** my return to
>
> Earth **Beloved Barge Mirage Urge**
> **Port of Call.**

In 1748, Julien Offray de la Mettrie published a treatise entitled *L'Homme machine*. Although it was publicly burnt on appearance, it expressed rationalist attitudes toward the organic (earlier in the century, Descartes had drawn a similar analogy between the animal and the machine), which were to remain influential for a long time to come. As the entries in any dictionary of biography can verify, the plot of a person's life is often mechanically measured against an ideal life-story and success or failure determined accordingly. Jean Cocteau's *La Machine infernale* (1934), together with other contemporary readings of classical myths, pointed toward the continuing tyranny of literary conventions which have long since lost their religious or ethical basis. *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine*, too, aims to expose such anachronisms in the machines fashioned by history, art, and life.

NOTES

Many of the ideas in this essay were sharpened in discussion with the students of my 1985/86 Honours and 1986 graduate seminars, whose stimulating observations and questions I wish to acknowledge.

[1] *The Journal of Eugène Delacroix*. Transl. Walter Pach (New York: Crown, 1948), 545.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*, 220.

[6] Roy Kiyooka, *The Fontainebleau Dream Machine: 18 Frames from a Book of Rhetoric* (Toronto: Coach House, 1977) n.p. All references to *FDM* will be to this edition.

[7] Cf. Stephen Scobie, Douglas Barbour, "Interview with Roy Kiyooka," *White Pelican* 1, no. 1 (1971), 18-35.

[8] For a discussion of "aura," cf. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," W.B., *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1955), 219-53.

[9] Cf. Herta Wescher, *Collage* (New York: Abrams, 1968) and Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Köln: DuMont, 1967).

[10] *Dictionnaire universel de l'art et des artistes*, Robert Maillard, ed. (Paris: Hazan, 1967), 509.

[11] On the history of the hot-air balloon and its uses in painting, see *Leichter als Luft: Zur Geschichte der Ballonfahrt*, Peter Berghaus, Bernard Korzus, eds. (Münster: Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte, 1978).

[12] *Illustrated London News* (7 June 1851).

[13] Cf. Nigel Gosling, *Nadar* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1976).

[14] Cf. Martin Friedman, ed., *The Frozen Image: Scandinavian Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982).

[15] Joan Lowndes, "Tactility in the Ultimate Sense," *Vancouver Sun*, 21 May 1971; "Roy Kiyooka: The Curious Mind Incarnated," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 November 1975.

[16] George Bowering, "Roy Kiyooka's Poetry: An Appreciation," in G.B., *A Way with Words* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1982), 54.

[17] Lowndes, "Tactility."

[18] *Roy K. Kiyooka: 25 Years: An Exhibition Organized and Circulated by the Vancouver Art Gallery* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1975), n.p.

[19] I have learnt much from W. F. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978).

[20] F. E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1982), 92.

[21] Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," S.S., *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Dell, 1969), 14. For a discussion of silence in Canadian poetry, see Ann Munton's fine "The Paradox of Silence in Modern Canadian Poetry: Creativity or Sterility?" Ph.D., Dalhousie, 1981.

[22] *Roy K. Kiyooka: 25 Years.*

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] Cf. George Bowering, *Autobiology* (Vancouver: Georgia Straight Writing Supplement, 1972).

GREEN FIRE

Jack Shadbolt

We have a high board fence
of horizontal bands with slits between
to shield us from the outside world
From fence up to the road
a sloping bank extends
higher than our sunken garden
and this tangled bank behind
leaps with a wild green

The fence is all in shadow
up against the brass sun
whose steep angle
strikes into this bank's tangle
so that all along the cracks
between the horizontal boards
a green fire flickers
Flamed spring green of leaves
whickering in the micro-breeze
Flashings and little signallings
in emerald fire
between the shadowed strips
run with a fractured gleam
Spring's whole verdant glitter iridescent there

So it is behind the shadowed fence
around my heart
There at the core
the buds of me ignite
in trembling agitation
seeking the light
Little mouths of green
shout silently along the fence
Sudden golden flashes
babble of shameless things
of mad couplings and the
phallic thrusts of a demented spring
'til I am frenzied here within
by a thousand small desires
my blood boiling over green fire

Green fire
Green flame
I know the name of my desire

THE WAY IN

Jack Shadbolt

(for Max)

I see by tokens everywhere
in passing down this path
the rhythm of this clump of leaves
how they infold and they unfurl
in answering visual cadence
how from this stem of withered vine
an architecture of the grass
throws across space a spandrilled arch
to join its line extended to the trees
how the way moves in ahead around
and turns at just this juncture
with a heart-lurching leap of eye
from path to sky
I see it as I feel it in the whole
concave interactional of space
as I press in
movement answering movement from across
form calling its affinity
from side to side
and ground to branchings overhead
informing my deepest sense of harmony
that here an ordered presence has before
shaped a vacuum mould with all
its cross-connections wired for
infinite electric recognition
as I press forward
into this impress
feel these old connections flow
and the life of space
and answering space
shaped by form answering form
flows through me like
a healing fluid as I move
into the heart of the wood

HORIZON #11

bpNichol

sea
light
sky

sky
light
sea

light
sea
light

light
sky
light

light
light
light

WATER POEM #5

bpNichol

WHEELS ON FIRE

The Train of Thought in George Ryga's "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe"

Gary Boire

FROM CASEY JONES TO SIGMUND FREUD the train is an ambiguous and powerful icon. It has been used to suggest ideas and concepts as diverse (and contradictory) as freedom and mobility, imprisonment and enclosure, industrialization, mechanization, art, the fear of death, or the subconscious. Canadian artists and writers use the image in all of its varied guises; J. E. H. MacDonald's "Tracks and Traffic" (1912), for example, blends opposing extremities so that the train appears as an emblem of mixed industrial blessings: both urban-industrial energy *and* unnatural mechanical presence. Within popular literature, perhaps because of the middle-class's enjoyment of entrepreneurial triumph (and perhaps also because of Canada's pioneering colonial past), the train has remained for the most part a positive symbol of capitlaist, industrial nation building. Obvious examples include Pierre Berton's *The National Dream* and *The Last Spike*, as well as Hurtig's 1985 condensation of all things Canadian. Writing in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, James Marsh enthuses, "the development of steam-powered railways . . . revolutionized transportation in Canada and was integral to the very act of nation building."[1]

Academic study of the train (and its iconography) has been marginally more critical, exploring some of the complexities of the iron horse in Canadian history and literary expression. *Canadian Literature*, No. 77, published two brief essays on the topic, but both lapse finally into banal, simplistic classifications.[2] The more inclusive of the two, Wayne Cole's "The Railroad in Canadian Literature," gives attention, predictably and rightly enough, to Pratt's *Towards the Last Spike*, following with a description of various train images in several Canadian writers. Arguing that the railroad is not *only* "a symbol of industrial progress; it is undoubtedly the symbol of modern Canada, embodying within it the many elusive dimensions of the modern Canadian identity," the author goes on to explore the polarities of good and bad trains. On the one hand the railroad is "a romantic symbol of adventure and progress" (i.e., nation/capital building); on the other hand, it can also be "a symbol of corruption, dehumanization, and intrusion" (i.e., a kind of Frankenstein monster that turns back destructively on its creator).

What interests me most in this last survey is a curious derailment — a gap, an exclusion of one particularly iconic train which not only, in itself, calls into question Cole's binary divisions, but which also — by means of its very invisibility — suggests the ideological workings of the survey itself. And by extension, the ideological workings of the survey itself. And by extension, the ideological workings of much academic writing, thinking, and teaching that is practised in Canada and elsewhere.[3] I am referring to the train that runs through George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, perhaps one of the most scathing attacks yet written against Canadian cultural imperialism. Ryga's play was first performed in 1967 as an ironic "celebration" of Canada's centennial. Yet in both these 1978 essays Ryga's train is invisible. Like Ryga's own character, Jaimie Paul, it might well complain, "They don't know what it's like . . . to stand in line an' nobody sees you!"[4] Why this erasure, this peculiar tunnel vision?

One possible reason is that Ryga is an academic and political nuisance. When subjected to conventional thematic descriptions his works appear flat, heavy-handed, or both. His ideas run counter to an establishment insistence that this is the best of all possible worlds. In much the same manner as other Commonwealth leftist dramatists — Australia's John Romeril, New Zealand's Mervyn Thompson, South Africa's Athol Fugard, (even Italy's Dario Fo) — Ryga exposes that which has hitherto remained comfortably invisible. He continually undercuts the 1984 nightmare, the ideological process by which a state can (and has) removed from popular view the records of its own historical atrocities. And in Canada, as in so much of the old Commonwealth, these are the records of colonization, deracination, and economic oppression of pre-colonial indigenous peoples. Like his Commonwealth counterparts Ryga complains not only about colonial exploitation, but more importantly about its historical and ideological erasure. He complains about how a history of class struggle has been rendered invisible to generatons of post-colonial Canadians. And he tries dramatically to illustrate the structures of a "false consciousness," the principles of self-deception which most of use have internalized unwittingly since Day One. Like the historian, Robin Fisher, he returns the indigenous peoples to the centre of their own history; and like the dramatist, Peter Weiss, he uses the theatre to dissolve "the artificial fog behind which the world's rulers hide their manipulations."[5] To do so, Ryga uses irony, melodrama, and above all else, parody; he explodes many of our most cherished national symbols. Consider, for example, his treatment of the train that puffs its way across both the land and those narratives of Canadian nation building.

THROUGHOUT *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* Ryga uses the image of the train in a complex, ironic way. References are not especially profuse, but are

so consistently and parodically placed as to maximize their theatrical (and in Ryga's terms, political) significance. His techniques, in fact, bear out in striking detail Linda Hutcheon's recent theoretical comments on parody. In both her *A Theory of Parody* (1985) and her forthcoming chapter in volume 4 of the *Literary History of Canada*, she points out the ambiguous aspects of parodic play. Parody can posit both difference *and* distance within its similarity to the chosen target. A subversive "copy," the parodic text can fight against marginalization by incorporating within itself that which it ironically duplicates. As such, the parodic image or text operates as a kind of artistic "red mole": it can address its own culture from *within*, yet can remain *without* in its ideological allegiance.[6] Ultimately Ryga's train *is* developed into a "symbol . . . of the modern Canadian identity" — but a symbol, a Canada, and an identity decidedly different from the popular images of Van Horne chugging heroically across the true North strong and free. The odd explicit mention, lighting and sound effects, setting, the refrain of "wheels on fire," all culminate in the horrific, yet profoundly logical climax which closes the performance.[7] Given the subtlety and ambiguities which surround Ryga's train, it's worth looking at these examples in some detail.

Initially the train appears as a relatively blunt ironic commodity. The Magistrate early on groups it within a series of social benefits. Looking *down* at Rita from the heights of administerial justice, he remarks:

> Your home and well being were protected. The roads of the city are open to us. So are the galleries, libraries, the administrative and public buildings. There are buses, trains . . . going in and coming out. Nobody is a prisoner here.

The irony here is simple. The Magistrate unconsciously idealizes something which kills Jaimie and forms a grotesque, phallic background to the rape and murder of Rita herself. Moreover, his position uncannily recalls Marx's descriptions of the happy bourgeois:

> The respectable conscience refuses to see this obvious fact [that there is no individual exchange without the antagonism of classes]. So long as one is a bourgeois, one cannot but see in this relation of antagonism a relation of harmony and eternal justice, which allows no one to gain at the expense of another. For the bourgeois, individual exchange can exist without any antagonism of classes. For him, these are two quite unconnected things. Individual exchange, as the bourgeois conceives it, is far from resembling individual exchange as it actually exists in practice.[8]

More complex is the Magistrate's associating the train with institutional edifices, an associaion which develops as the train comes to embody an industrialized colonial Canadian energy. Ironically, the Magistrate uses the train as an image of mobility and openness, counterpointing the recurrent enclosures and inertia which ideologically paralyze the Indian community. As Rita — a prisoner in the dock — remarks a few moments later, "A train whistle is white, with black lines." Here we

seem to have Wayne Cole's binary division: the Magistrate values the train as "a symbol of adventure and progress"; Rita's prison-like image ironizes it into "a symbol of corruption, dehumanization and intrusion." The submerged "textuality" of that image — "white, with black lines" — implicitly corroborates, moreover, one of Ryga's many ancillary dramatic threads: the contrast of abstract white inscription with the orality of the indigenous peoples. Interestingly, virtually every ideological figurehead in the play is associated with some form of writing, while Rita, her father especially, and her people as a whole are characterized by the spoken words of song, speech, and chant.

As Rita speaks, her words begin to qualify the *direction* of that much touted notion of "dehumanization." Her comments expose that kind of colonial self-centredness which identifies dehumanization as a rebound effect, as something that happens to a creator who loses control of his or her creation. The train is definitely a monstrosity, but one which turns not *against* its creators, but *with* them in a consolidated oppression of yet another scapegoat: Rita and her people. At this point Cole's romantic assertion that "the Canadian nation was literally built on rails" begins to sour, as Ryga questions on whose bodies and on whose lands those rails were and are being laid.

This kind of parodic inversion is most evident in Ryga's portrayal of the feckless folksinger who trills throughout the performance. Terry Goldie, who concedes that "for all its superficiality, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* addresses some very real problems of racism in Canadian society," complains that she "seems like a rather unsubtle parody of Joan Baez."[9] The comment both fails to consider the complex uses to which Ryga puts his choric folksinger (and her songs), and further confuses the problem of racism with the play's larger concern, ideology, which contains this subsidiary issue. Ryga is explicit in his initial directions: *"She has all the reactions of a white liberal folklorist with a limited concern and understanding of an ethnic dilemma which she touches in the course of her research and work in compiling and writing folksongs."* An academic colonizer herself, the Singer has appropriated in her two specific train songs traditional "liberation train" ballads which memorialized the flight from Southern slavery towards strength and freedom in the North.[10] (This connection is developed in the railway station scene where the railroad is viewed ambivalently by the younger generation: hopefully, as an escape route from the reservation to the city [which ironically imprisons them]; and hopelessly, as the return route from these jails [or poorly paying jobs] back to the reservation.) Ryga places all her songs in strategic positions and appropriately the first "train song" occurs just after Jaimie's stereotypical performance as the drunken Indian:

The YOUNG INDIAN MEN and JAIMIE PAUL exit. RITA JOE follows after

JAIMIE PAUL, reaching out to touch him, but the SINGER stands in her way and drives her back, singing.

SINGER:

Oh, can't you see that train roll on,
Its hot black wheels keep comin' on?
A Kamloops Indian died today.
Train didn't hit him, he just fell.
Busy train with wheels on fire!

The Music dies. A POLICEMAN enters.

On one hand the song functions merely proleptically for the audience, building suspense, interweaving with the time shift, and adding retrospective poignancy to Rita's memories. On one level the image of "wheels on fire" is another simple irony: the wheels of progress promise only death and conflagration rather than improvement or liberation. However, the ambiguity surrounding the Singer — she is both a *"white liberal"* and *"alter ego to Rita Joe"* — leads to a further irony within an irony. The Singer assimilates and uses a traditional image of industrial progress as oppression. But as E. P. Thompson has argued, where there is oppression there is always its contained opposite: resistance.[11] In this sense the image of those "hot black wheels" can also be seen in a way that struggles heartily against the Singer's overt text. Those "hot black wheels," which later support the "silver train," contain an implicit hint at the fiery resistance embodied in Jaimie Paul whose voice, significantly, later *"becomes the sound of the train horn."* Resistance, in other words, is an intrinsic part of oppression, just as all citizens, whether repressed or repressing, share in the same ideologically formed consciousness of society.

The Singer and her songs, then, do intrude (interrupting our perceptions of Rita's memories, blocking human contact within the community, and heralding the arrival of a more humanoid embodiment of ideological values: the policeman). But the song, just as inept as the white liberal singer who affects sympathy and understanding, is also propagandistic. It lies; despite the implications of its own "sub-text," it erases the fact of struggle, that Jaimie did not "just fall," but was beaten and left to die by Murderers.

MOST INTERESTINGLY, Ryga places the train songs so that the train is gradually associated with frustrated desire; an intrusive rapacious sexuality; and death. Later in Act One, for example, the train whistle (recall Rita has said that it is "white") forms an ominous soundtrack, intruding upon Jaimie's proposals for a local co-op, an attempt to transform Indian labour from a com-

modity bought by white employers into a creative, self-determining activity. Much more powerful and explicit is the scene surrounding the Singer's second attempt at "wheels on fire." At this point we have just heard the Witness recount his rape of Rita; another "sexual" memory follows, this time a warm, pleasant one involving Rita and Jaimie:

The light dies out on the WITNESS. JAIMIE PAUL enters and crosses to RITA JOE. They lie down and embrace.

RITA:

You always came to see me, Jaimie Paul . . . The night we were in the cemetery . . . You remember, Jaimie Paul? I turned my face from yours until I saw the ground . . . an' I knew that below . . . they were like us once, and now they lie below the ground, their eyes gone, the bones showin' . . . They must've spoke and touched each other here . . . like you're touching me, Jaimie Paul . . . an' now there was nothing over them, except us . . . an' wind in the grass an' a barbwire fence creaking. An' behind that, a hundred acres of barley.

JAIMIE PAUL stands.

That's something to remember, when you're lovin', eh?

The sound of a train whistle is heard. JAIMIE PAUL goes and the lights onstage fade.

The music comes up and the SINGER sings. As JAIMIE PAUL passes her, the SINGER pursues him up the ramp, and RITA JOE runs after them.

SINGER:

Oh, can't you see that train roll on,
Gonna kill a man, before it's gone?
Jaimie Paul fell and died.
He had it comin', so it's alright.
Silver train with wheels on fire!

Initially the scene continues the presentation of the Singer (and her train songs) as intruders, as liars, and as foreshadowers of the death which will thwart all desire. (Not to mention that it illustrates the uncommitted aspects of white liberalism: "so it's alright.") The song also contains a submerged reversal of Rita's earlier imagery of a grim freedom. Rita observes that only in death do people escape hierarchy: only the dead have "nothing over them" ("except us"). Yet immediately the Singer intrudes with her "wheels on fire": an image of an object which will run *over* the dying Jaimie. The train whistle, moreover, interrupts the fragility of human contact and the audience is left to make the connection between the interrupted fragility, the memories of dead ancestors, and the emblem of a white capitalist industry. This point of contact between play and spectator is reinforced by the haunting image of their "eyes gone"; are we, like the dead, blind to what is before (and over) us? Significantly, the whistle is heard at a moment of remembering and loving — two values which the audience is invited to internalize

throughout the play. At this point, then, the train whistle (and song) tends to subvert white, middle-class memories of that romantic symbol. Here the train does not puff heroically towards the last spike, but deterministically towards the obliteration of both eroticism and the remembering of an indigenous history.

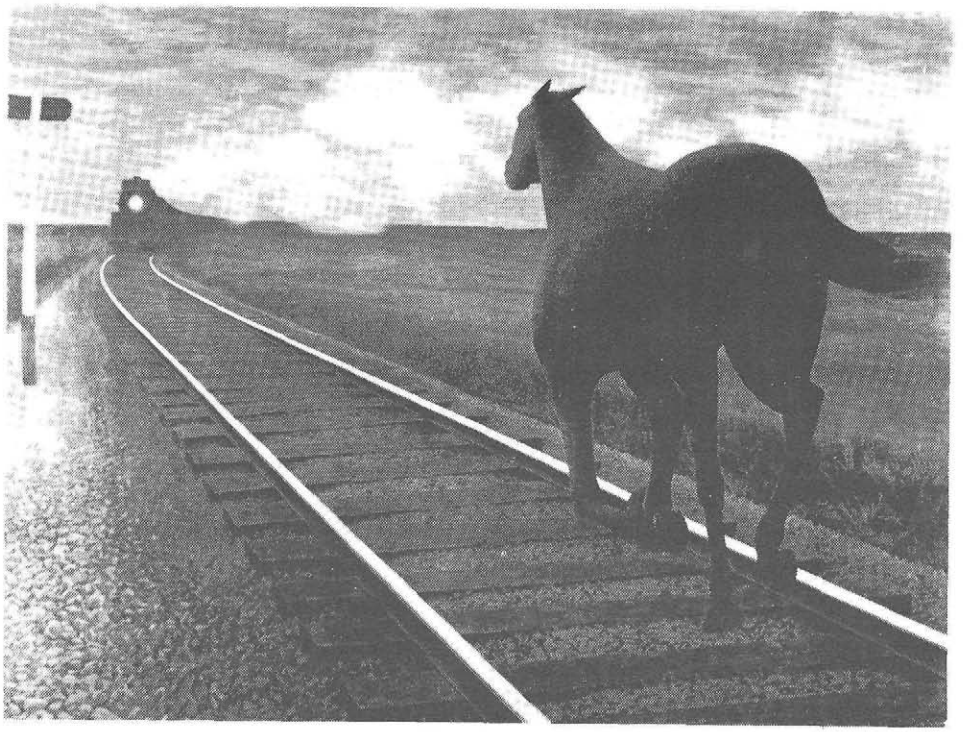
Implicit in this association of train/frustrated desire/sexuality/and remembering is a curious, quasi-Freudian phallicization of the rain. In itself the image is relatively conventional; throughout post-colonial writing — in works like Gordimer's *The Conservationist*, Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and Wendt's *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* — colonization is often presented as a phallic intrusion, a male pentration of a female space which appropriates property, injures identity, and interrupts the genetic continuation of the colonized. But in the true spirit of Freud (and Marx), the mechanical, unthinking train, whatever else it may suggest at this point, also stands for the essentially *unconscious* nature of intrusion: a colonizing, exploiting dehumanization to be sure, but one which is effected unconsciously, unmaliciously, even naively.

Ryga continues to adapt his metaphor of the train in what is the most horrifying image of dehumanization in *Rita Joe*: the climactic rape-murder of Rita and Jaimie. In one sense we have simply a build-up of atmospheric suspense. As the Murderers hover more threateningly, the train whistle is heard three times before Jaimie's death (when his voice intermingles with the train horn). The industrial machine, the "symbol ... of the modern Canadian identity," has completely assimilated the articulations, the utterance, the resistance of the indigenous man who dies in the process. Ryga's set already emphasizes this notion of an all-pervasive ideological entrapment: the ramp, at once both walkway *and* railway line, "dominates the stage by wrapping the central and forward playing area ... The MAGISTRATE's chair and representation of court desk are situated at stage right, *enclosed within the sweep of the ramp*" (my italics). The Singer is also enclosed: "*she sits* [at the foot of the desk], *turned away from the focus of the play.*" This entire drama which has been an externalization of an internal process is in turn contained *within* this ideological ramp.

But again, Ryga is interested in more than sentimentalism, and Jaimie's death is placed strategically, thereby intensifying the image and role of the train. Just prior to the appearance of the dream-like Murderers, and just after the audience has heard the first blast of the horn, Rita remarks of her imprisonment to Jaimie:

> It was different to be a woman ... Some women was wild ... and they shouted they were riding black horses into a fire I couldn't see ... There was no fire there, Jaimie.

Rita's words subtly recall the appearance of the train established by the singer — "wheels on fire" — and the resultant image is that of collision: horse and train furiously veering each towards the other. In itself this is a powerful icon of an



ALEXANDER DAVID COLVILLE, *Horse and Train*, tempera on masonite, 1954.
ART GALLERY OF HAMILTON, HAMILTON, ONTARIO,
GIFT OF DOMINION FOUNDRIES AND STEEL LTD., 1957

indigenous, "natural" community confronting a mechanical parody of itself: the iron horse of capitalist industry. But the scene also recalls indirectly, perhaps, one of Canada's most famous paintings, Alex Colville's "Horse and Train" (1954) — a painting which hangs in one of those galleries mentioned earlier by the Magistrate. Here Colville's painting of the black horse pounding towards the train's fiery nimbus blends with Ryga's text, intensifying the implicit ironies of the "ethnic dilemma" under scrutiny. As "parodic play" the allusion suggests a multivalent ironic distance and difference within similarity. By incorporating a Canadian icon (the train) which exists within yet another Canadian icon (Colville's painting) — which is, ironically, also a "subversive" comment on industrial society — the parody can speak satirically *to* its culture from *within* that culture yet remain ideologically without. Given Ryga's political concerns, it is worth recalling Linda Hutcheon's remark mentioned earlier: parody can fight against marginalization by incorporating within itself that which it ironically targets.

Rita's remarks, incidentally, do not occur in a vacuum; Ryga here echoes an earlier memory where Rita has recounted a childhood experience with horses. Significantly the memory involves a typological anticipation of Jaimie's fate: "I was riding a horse to school an' some of the boys shot a rifle an' my horse bucked an' I fell off. I fell in the bush an' got scratched . . . The boys caught the horse by the school and tried to ride him, but the horse bucked an' pinned a boy against a tree, breaking his leg in two places."

What is most difficult about Rita's former comment, however ("It's different to be a woman"), is that it directly contradicts Jaimie's earlier remark, "There's no difference between men and women" — a remark acted out when Jaimie dons a brassiere and "enticingly" offers himself to Mr. Homer. Why this confusion of gender? Why does Ryga recall now, just before Jaimie's death, this peculiar blurring?

The confusion vanishes, I think, if we watch that final scene as an elaborate *double entendre.* What we have is a double murder, certainly, but also a double rape. The death of Jaimie under this phallic train functions as a grotesque symbol which is then specified in the particular penetration of Rita herself. His murder implies the "rape of the land"; her rape contains the murder of those people on the land. Both man and woman — an androgynous combination to suggest all Indian people — have been genitally assaulted in the play. (*"knees him viciously in the groin"*; *"the Murderer hesitates in his necrophillic rape."*) The "rape of the land" which can and has been used as a fuzzy liberal catch-phrase is here particularized and humanized in a gruelling theatrical spectacle. The Murderer's final remark, "We hardly touched her," is stingingly double-edged. On one hand the comment contrasts with the need to touch, to love, and recalls piteously Jaimie's touch in the cemetery scene. But Ryga has also given us a play about the "Wilderness," the "Frontier," and most importantly he has *peopled* these geographical areas, areas rapaciously "touched" by an "untouchable" state called Canada. Rita's ecstacy is quite literal: she and her people have been put out of their senses. And unfortunately, out of the senses of most white, middle-class Canadians. Invisibility, Ryga argues, does not prove non-existence, only political blindness on the part of the audience.

CANADA MAY WELL BE "a nation . . . built on rails." But Ryga is still a nuisance. He asks disquieting questions about the nature of those rails which many Canadians (and by analogy, many Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans) rather dislike. Not to mention academics. A 1971 review of

the published script is indicative of this negative response to the play; and it's also a response that betrays a cynicism not only about "political art," but also about the basis of teaching and the communication of ideas:

> Ryga, like Brecht, believes that you can change people by talking to them; thus, like Brecht, Ryga makes his stage a pulpit for lecturing the audience. Fine. If the lecture is well-deserved, then perhaps the play will be good. However, in 1971, how many people want to sit and hear a lecture?[13]

As Ryga once remarked, "I have my problems with establishment, not unlike problems I have with God; namely — with such credentials, why are they so prone to mistakes?"[14] The questions, of course, are rhetorical; the audience is left in little doubt as to the expected answers. The point is that the quasi-Brechtian synthesis is left to us. (A synthesis which to Ryga and Brecht is yet another antithetical part of an ongoing dialectic.) This sense of an "alienation effect" which implicates the audience is evident throughout the play as Ryga emphasizes the theatricality of what we watch.

Ryga pays attention to the set and house lights: *"No curtain is used during the play. At the opening, intermissions, and conclusion of the play, the curtain remains up . . . the house lights and stage work lights remain on. Backstage, cyclorama, and maze curtains are up, revealing wall back of stage, exit doors, etc."*; the use of recorded voice overs, and so on — all distance the spectator, asserting that what we watch is NOT real. In this sense Ryga attempts to effect in the spectator a process analagous to those outlined in the play, processes which to Ryga are morally and politically imperative. While watching a play about a trial, we are implicated to the point that we are ourselves being tried. It is we who are asked to consider whether or not we ourselves, our class, our race, our nation are guilty of some horribly invisible, yet painfully obvious crime. And the crime, initially, Ryga suggests, is the continuing ideological exploitation of women, indigenous peoples, land rights, and natural justice.

But it also may be our crime; the audience who commits trespass in its failure to become alienated sufficiently by the play, its failure to provide a personal and labour-oriented synthesis of the play's central dialectic. Ryga asks each individual member of his audience to explore, to internalize the play's questions in his or her own life. So, more specifically, given the work and interests of ourselves, as academics, the questions come uncomfortably close to the bone. What are the impulses that underlie our formation of a Canadian "canon," our choices and teaching of particular examples of Canadian writing? Canadian poetry, fiction, and theatre (and historiography) contain many obvious examples of a "political *fanshen*," a turning of the political and intellectual body. Rudy Wiebe, Matt Cohen, George Bowering, Yves Thériault, Rick Salutin, Ryga himself, come immediately to mind.

But how well has literary academic writing fared? Have we tried to remember, or do we still write and read "histories" from the point of view of the colonizer? How often do we acquiesce in the image of pre-colonial Canada as a blank page in need of inscription; how often do we encounter liberal sentiments like the following: "But Cohen [in *Wooden Hunters*] goes beyond the relatively simple level of social criticism"; "Reading [*Two Solitudes*] as an historical or political document, not as a work of art"; [Callaghan's] fiction transcends the merely topical and dwells within the realm of the universal."[15] Are these invocations of the universal organic symbol, the transcendence of literature, merely one more foggy cloud by which we attempt unconsciously to cover up the rulers of this world? Why mustn't we taint the holy "realm of art" — itself an interesting image — with the grubbiness of social reality, history, or politics? As Terry Eagleton mischievously remarks of this humanistic liberalism:

> The symbol fused together motion and stillness, turbulent content and organic form, mind and world. Its material body was the medium of an absolute spiritual truth, once perceived by direct intuition rather than by any laborious process of critical analysis. In this sense the symbol brought such truths to bear upon the mind in a way which brooked no question: either you saw it or you didn't. It was the keystone of an irrationalism, a forestalling of reasoned critical enquiry, which has been rampant in literary theory ever since. It was a *unitary* thing, and to dissect it — to take it apart to see how it worked — was almost as blasphemous as seeking to analyze the Holy Trinity. All of its various parts worked spontaneously together for the common good, each in its subordinate place; and it is therefore hardly surprising to find the symbol, or the literary artefact as such, being regularly offered throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an ideal model of human society itself. If only the lower orders were to forget their grievances and pull together for the good of all, much tedious turmoil could be avoided.[16]

If we fail to listen to Ryga's directives, he complains, then we are doomed to continue to think, speak, write, and teach in the same ways as the "transcending" Singer. As sympathetic as we may be to the Haida, the Maori, the Aboriginals, or the Azanians, we will continue to perpetuate and perpetuate a process of erasure, of rendering invisible a history largely uncongenial to our own national self-opinions. Our "research and writing of folk-songs" will dwindle (or stay) within an apolitical goo of ineffective and useless liberal sentiment. And this essentially involves an elitist, dematerialized concept of what constitutes "history" and what constitutes "literature."

Chief Dan George remarks in his Preface to the play: "It is useless for people to hear if they do not listen with their hearts. Rita Joe helps them listen with their hearts — and when hearts are open, ears can hear." And when ears can hear uncomfortable things like the train of thought in *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* then, George Ryga urges, minds can think and bodies act.[17]

NOTES

[1] James Marsh, "Early Railways," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), p. 1541.

[2] See Wayne H. Cole, "The Railroad in Canadian Literature," *Canadian Literature*, No. 77 (Summer 1978), 124-30, and Elizabeth Marsland, "La Chaine Tenue: Roads and Railways in the Prairie Novel," *Canadian Literature*, No. 77 (Summer 1978), 64-72. Cf. also R. Surette, "Railways: ikons of a mystic past?" *Atlantic Insight*, 6 (July 1984), 21.

[3] In my use of "ideology" I accept Terry Eagleton's definition as a "lived system of values." See his *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1976), pp. 16-17: "Ideology is not in the first place a set of doctrines; it signifies the way men live out their roles in class-society, the values, ideas and images which tie them to their social function and so prevent them from a true knowledge of society as a whole." Cf. also Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1983), pp. 194-217; Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 57-71.

[4] George Ryga, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1970), p. 106. Quotations in my text are taken from this edition.

[5] See Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1977), especially his introduction: "In Canada the relationship between the native Indians and the immigrant Europeans has not, until recently, been a major concern of historians . . . the aboriginal people have been seen as a peripheral rather than a central concern in the study of Canada's past . . . the Indian provides a 'background' for Canadian history" (p. xi). And: Peter Weiss, "The Material and the Models. Notes toward a Definition of Documentary Theatre," trans. Heinz Bernard, *Theatre Quarterly*, 1 (January-March), 41.

[6] Linda Hutcheon, "The Novel [in Canada, 1972-1984]," unpublished typescript. I wish to thank Professor Hutcheon for her generosity in allowing me to read and paraphrase from this forthcoming section of the *Literary History of Canada*, vol. iv. Cf. also her *A Theory of Parody* (New York and London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 32-373.

[7] I disagree with Lawrence Russell's superficial review in *Canadian Literature*, No. 50 (Autumn 1971), 82: "I find it a weak play for several reasons. Technically, it is pre-historic. It is set in a court-room (turn on your television any night of the week and what do you see?) and indulges in a series of meanderings through time and space. . . . On stage this is accomplished by a gruesome split-focus technique of shifting spotlights and playing areas; the clumsiness of this method is particularly acute at the climax of the play where an awkward flux of melodramatics . . . develops. [Ryga's] romanticism has driven him into outright sentimentality." As I hope to show, Russell's remarks fail to recognize Ryga's parodic use of the melodrama, as well as the deliberate "alienation" effect of stylized presentation.

[8] Karl Marx, "The Poverty of Philosophy," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 198.

[9] Terry Goldie, "Theatre in English Canada since 1967," *New Literature Review*, No. 13 [not dated], 39.

[10] Examples of traditional train ballads would fill a book in themselves. An indicative example is Rosetta Tharpe's "This Train (is bound for glory)," recorded by Big

Bill Broonzy (amongst others). I am grateful to my colleagues, Michael Neill and Michael Wright at the University of Auckland, for pointing out similarities here to yet another famous liberal folklorist: Bob Dylan. The Singer's "Wheels on Fire" echoes Dylan's "Wheel on Fire" which was recorded during the mid-sixties and was available then on various bootleg tapes. Dylan's refrain is "Wheel on fire, rollin' down the road / Notify my next of kin, this wheel shall explode."

[11] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), *passim.*, but see especially pp. 781-915.

[12] Yet another irony can be identified: Helen J. Dow points out that Colville was directly inspired by two lines written by the South African poet, Roy Campbell: "Against a regiment I oppose a brain / And a dark horse against an armoured train." See Dow, *The Art of Alex Colville* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 41. Cf. also Rita's dream of her dead grandfather where horses are again associated with death and remembering: "just for a moment . . . an' before I got used to the night . . . I saw animals, moving across the sky . . . two white horses . . . A man was takin' them by the halters, and I knew the man was my grandfather. . . ."

[13] Russell, *op. cit.*, 83.

[14] George Ryga, "The Village of Melons," *Canadian Literature*, No. 95 (Winter 1982), 108.

[15] Respectively: Herbert Rosengarten, "Violation of the Burial Places," rev. Matt Cohen, *Wooden Hunters*, *Canadian Literature*, No. 67 (Winter 1976), 90; Elspeth Cameron, *Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 188; Gary Boire, "The Parable and the Priest," *Canadian Literature*, No. 81 (Summer 1979), 154. Cf. also Josef Skvorecky, "Are Canadians Politically Naive?" *Canadian Literature*, No. 100 (Spring 1984), 287-97.

[16] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 22.

[17] This discussion grew out of the interesting experience of teaching Canadian Literature to Australasian students at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The course, 18.422: "Literature of the Old and New Commonwealth," was team-taught by myself, Sebastian Black, and Michael Neill. We attempted to explore the proposition that geographical peripheries were now the "centre," and that issues raised in all post-colonial writing had special relevance to citizens of New Zealand in 1985. In addition to reading works from Nigeria, Kenya, Trinidad, South Africa, and Canada, we also explored the political implications of methodologies used in our reading. I wish to thank the students of that class for their stimulating and challenging responses to Canadian literature in general, and to *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* in particular: Paul Brewer, Rochelle Dewdney, Lynn Hall, Terry Lane, Judith Laube, Heather McCaskill, Cushla Parekowhai, Chris Price, Cathy Spencer, and Roberta Whelan.

SETTING THE HOOK

Linda Rogers

Angels who love danger
park in stalled airplanes
wearing treble hooks in their ears.

Their lures are sharp.
They borrow light from stars
dazzling women
swimming out of their element
looking for the entrance to heaven.

ULTRASOUND

Laurence Hutchman

Sitting in the waiting room
I scan the puzzles of paintings thinking of child
and gaze at the shifting perspectives of Escher,
Chagall's childhood horses and chickens
swirling through a turbulence of colour.

Now scanning the screen I try to get a perspective
on it. And the doctor divines the form of the fetus,
and there you make your appearance on black & white T.V.
as you float between the pelvic fissures of the earth,
float beyond our machines, your body swimming
protozoan-like through the rivers of mother-world.

Like alien space explorers we probe dark depths
where star child you move
glimmering within the grey possibilities of mother;
there your heart pumps luminously in underwater breathing.
Amphibian you are as you paddle through the underworld
and I see you for the first time, phantom child.

And the day you were born
  the most beautiful yellow bird
    sang from our plum tree.

L'ILLUSTRATION DE "MARIA CHAPDELAINE"

Les lectures de Suzor-Côté et Clarence Gagnon

Silvie Bernier

L'OPINION COURANTE veut qu'une oeuvre littéraire soit considérée comme texte sans qu'intervienne dans sa signification le support matériel qui lui permet d'exister en tant qu'objet. Tout ce qui relève de cette matérialité semble occulté ou sinon jugé accessoire à la vérité de l'oeuvre. Qu'un livre paraisse en grand format ou en livre de poche ne peut à première vue avoir d'influence sur la lecture que l'on en fait.

Dans ce cas, on peut se demander pourquoi les différents éditeurs accordent une telle importance au choix d'éléments tels que la maquette de couverture, la typographie, le type de papier, le format et l'épaisseur du livre. Pourquoi les éditeurs de best-sellers misent sur une couverture illustrée voyante tandis que les maisons "lettrées" recherchent une couverture sobre? N'est-ce pas la première façon de signifier au consommateur de quel type de livre il s'agit et d'en orienter sa lecture? La couverture blanche de Gallimard ou des éditions de Minuit connote une image de pureté qui rejoint les prétentions de ces deux maisons: celles d'une littérature "pure" en dehors des considérations économiques et des facilités littéraires.[1] Il en est de même du format et de l'épaisseur du livre qui va des petites plaquettes de poésie jugées pour leur qualité et non pour leur quantité jusqu'aux best-sellers de 400 pages qui doivent en donner pour leur argent au grand public consommateur.

On pourrait multiplier les signes: bande publicitaire, jaquette, pelliculage, typographie, photos, papier, etc. . . . C'est l'ensemble de ces composantes chargées de signification qui constituent "l'objet-livre"[2] et qui orientent de façon plus ou moins inconsciente la lecture de l'oeuvre. L'illustration, à l'intérieur du livre ou en couverture, a elle-aussi un rôle déterminant dans le traitement idéologique du texte. En donnant à l'histoire une représentation seconde, elle guide discrètement le lecteur dans l'interprétation qu'il en fait. Par le choix des scènes représentées, le travail d'illustration pointe les moments les plus importants en même temps qu'il en propose une traduction plastique. Il est donc nécessaire de prendre ses distances par rapport à une interprétation purement décorative ou esthétique des illustrations et de toucher à leur fonction idéologique.

En 1964, Roland Barthes, dans un texte sur l'image publicitaire, émettait l'hypothèse d'un accroissement de l'information obtenu par l'ajout d'une image à un texte.

> Dès l'apparation du livre, la liaison du texte et de l'image est fréquente; cette liaison semble avoir été peu étudiée d'un point de vue structural; quelle est la structure signifiante de l'illustration? L'image double-t-elle certaines informations du texte par un phénomène de redondance, ou le texte ajoute-t-il une information inédite à l'image?[3]

L'interrogation de Barthes nous invite à dépasser la fonction analogique de l'image qui, dans l'illustration figurative, s'impose au spectateur comme code perceptif dominant. De même que tout langage organisé, l'image dispose d'un système de représentation propre qui s'actualise dans chaque illustration en une structure signifiante dont le sens diffère de celui de la figure. Alain-Marie Bassy,[4] inspiré des thèses de Jean-Louis Scheffer,[5] isole d'une part la figure de représentation ou sujet de l'image qui mime le sujet du texte et d'autre part, le système de représentation, porteur d'un sens différent, parfois radicalement autre, qui modifie le sens premier de la figure et du texte. C'est là, dans la structure formelle, que se joue implicitement la dimension idéologique de l'image. Son action est d'autant plus effective qu'elle demeure cachée et ce n'est que par un travail d'analyse qu'elle peut accéder à l'explicite.

Maria Chapdelaine

S'il est une oeuvre qui a connu des illustrateurs nombreux, c'est bien *Maria Chapdelaine* de Louis Hémon. De sa parution en 1916 à aujourd'hui, une vingtaine de peintres et de graveurs québécois ont choisi de l'illustrer, chaque fois de façon fort différente les uns des autres.[6] Déjà la première édition québécoise de 1916 se présentait avec des illustrations d'un artiste important, Suzor-Côté.[7] Le prestige du roman explique en partie l'intérêt des éditeurs d'en produire des versions illustrées. On peut supposer aussi que, du moins pour les éditions d'avant la guerre, les illustrations aient été utilisées afin d'orienter la lecture d'un texte qui devait servir de modèle littéraire pour les écrivains et de catéchisme national pour la population. Plus que tout autre roman, *Maria Chapdelaine* s'est accolé à l'idéologie de conservation et à la série du terroir qui dura jusqu'au deuxième conflit mondial. C'est précisément l'importance du rôle quasi politique que l'on a voulu donner à ce texte qui rend l'étude de ses illustrations exemplaire et qui pousse à s'interroger sur l'adéquation entre le discours premier de l'oeuvre et le savoir implicité dans les diverses versions illustrées.

Pour la période d'avant la guerre, les deux illustrateurs québécois les plus connus — qu'on a par la suite réédités — sont Suzor-Côté et Clarence Gagnon. À près de

vingt ans de distance, ces deux artistes réputés du terroir donnent de *Maria Chapdelaine* des versions fort différentes. Tant par l'iconographie choisie que par les procédés formels, leurs illustrations proposent une lecture de l'oeuvre qui témoigne de leur position sociale divergente ainsi que de l'évolution du contexte québécois.

Politique Éditoriale

La version illustrée par Suzor-Côté et celle illustrée par Clarence Gagnon[8] relèvent de deux sphères de production différentes. La première, publiée chez J.-A. Lefebvre, vise un public strictement local, recruté parmi la population lisante, c'est-à-dire les intellectuels et la classe bourgeoise scolarisée. Imprimé sur du papier de petit format (8.0 x 14.3 cm) et de qualité moyenne (ce qui suppose des coûts de production et de vente peu élevés), l'ouvrage respectait les normes des publications les plus courantes. Même chose pour les illustrations en noir et blanc (des dessins au fusain), procédé mois coûteux que la couleur, grossièrement reproduites par photo-impression.

Il en va tout autrement de la version française éditée à Paris par la maison Mornay, qui s'adresse au public français mais aussi québécois par le biais de l'exportation. Illustrée par Clarence Gagnon, celle-ci se range facilement dans la catégorie des ouvrages de luxe avec une couverture cartonnée, du papier de qualité (papier blanc de rives et papier blanc nacré du Japon)[9] et de grand format (12.1 x 16.8 cm). La typographie est soignée et constituée de gros caractères. Les illustrations en couleurs et de bonnes dimensions, retouchées à la main par l'artiste, respectent parfaitement le cadrage de la page. Tous ces éléments indiquent l'importance accordée par l'éditeur à la présentation matérielle et visuelle de l'ouvrage. Dans la page de garde, l'éditeur souligne le travail accompli par le peintre et par l'imprimeur pour la composition et l'impression des illustrations.

> La présente édition de *Maria Chapdelaine* a été finie d'imprimer pour les illustrations, sous la direction de M. Grenier, des ateliers Godde et Chevassu à Paris, le 8 juin mil neuf cent trente trois, le tirage typographique ayant été fait, au préalable par l'Imprimerie Couloruma à Argenteuil (H. Barthélémy, directeur), en juillet mil neuf cent vingt-neuf. La composition et l'impression des cinquante-quatre illustrations qui ornent le volume sont une explication du temps considérable dépassant cependant nos prévisions qu'a nécessité la présente édition. Clarence Gagnon, l'illustrateur, y a consacré plus de trois années *d'un travail ininterrompu.*[10]

Ainsi, l'édition de 1933 tirée à 2,000 exemplaires rejoint un public limité de connaisseurs, autant sinon plus amateurs d'art que de littérature. Un autre indice vient renforcer cette constatation: la mention du nom de l'artiste qui apparaît en page titre en un caractère de même dimension que le nom de l'auteur avec en plus la présence, en plein centre, d'une première illustration de Gagnon. Rien de tel dans la version originale qui présente le nom de l'illustrateur en minuscules et non

en majuscules comme pour Louis Hémon et dans un caractère beaucoup plus petit.

Il faut mentionner également la présence de deux préfaces dans la version de 1916, préfaces qui ne seront pas reproduites dans la version illustrée par Gagnon. De ces deux préfaces, la plus importante est, sans aucun doute, celle de Louvigny de Montigny (l'autre étant d'Émile Boutroux de l'Académie française). Longue de 16 pages, elle tient lieu de première lecture de l'oeuvre et semble avoir eu une influence sur le travail de Suzor-Côté qui, plastiquement, rejoint l'interprétation de Louvigny de Montigny et s'alimente aux mêmes principes. Les thèses principales du préfacier sont les suivantes:

1. *Maria Chapdelaine* est un roman de la colonisation.
2. Les colons-défricheurs ne constituent qu'une partie de la population québécoise.
3. *Maria Chapdelaine* est une oeuvre vraie, réaliste.
4. Elle est une série de portraits de personnages.
5. Elle met l'accent sur les détails pittoresques caractéristiques du Québec: objets, coutumes, langage.
6. L'oeuvre est comparable à un tableau, une peinture.
7. Le style est "sans fignolage, sans maniérisme."

Nous verrons plus loin comment Suzor-Côté a respecté dans ses dessins l'esprit de la préface canadienne. Quant à la préface française, elle insiste elle aussi sur l'aspect réaliste du roman et fait ressortir le rapport d'identification entre l'auteur, les personnages et le lecteur. Elle adopte cependant une attitude plus ambiguë sur le sens global de l'oeuvre. Si dans l'optique de Louvigny de Montigny, *Maria Chapdelaine* valorise la vie des colons-défricheurs, pour Émile Boutroux, le roman de Louis Hémon pose le problème du choix entre trois modes de vie: "la lutte et les aventures du pionnier, la jouissance du progrès dans le confort des villes, l'attachement à la terre natale et à ses traditions" (p. XIX). Ainsi, non pas une solution mais une interrogation non résolue. Suzor-Côté, tout en optant dans sa représentation pour le premier choix, ne négligera cependant pas de marquer la présence des deux autres formes d'organisation sociale.

L'édition de luxe de 1933 n'a pas de préface. On peut croire que Gagnon avait ainsi une plus grande liberté dans l'interprétation du roman. Ici, ce sont plutôt les illustrations de Suzor-Côté qui ont servi de guide à Gagnon, jouant le rôle de modèle tantôt positif, tantôt négatif. Gagnon reprend fréquemment les mêmes scènes que son prédécesseur mais les réinterprète dans une composition et un traitement formel qui en change radicalement la signification.

Iconographie

On peut donc identifier un certain nombre de scènes qui se retrouvent dans chacune des deux versions: la sortie de la messe, le traîneau sur la rivière, la maison des Chapdelaine, le village des vieilles paroisses, François Paradis dans la forêt, le

défrichage, l'acceptation de la demande en mariage, la mort de la mère Chapdelaine (la seule comparaison de l'illustration de cette scène par Suzor-Côté et par Clarence Gagnon montre que celui-ci connaissait bien les dessins de la version originale). Mais non seulement ces scènes sont traitées de façon différentes par les deux artistes, Gagnon élimine en plus certains sujets choisis par Suzor-Côté et en propose de nouxeaux. C'est ainsi que vont se dessiner deux visions uniques de l'univers chapdelainien, basées sur deux systèmes de valeurs opposées.

COLONISATION/AGRICULTURE

Dans sa préface, Louvigny de Montigny précisait que *Maria Chapdelaine* n'était pas un roman paysan mais bien une oeuvre sur la colonisation et le défrichage des nouvelles terres. Suzor-Côté, fidèle à cette interprétation, nous donne des portraits de colons et non de paysans. Ainsi, l'artiste ne représente jamais de personnages occupés aux travaux des champs, ni des vues de terres cultivées. Seul un portrait de Maria Chapdelaine (p. 182) la montre un rateau à la main, près d'une clôture dans ce qui semble être un jardin. Il s'agit là peut-être de la version la plus civilisée de l'univers chapdelainien tel que conçu par l'artiste. Les dessins de Suzor-Côté mettent l'accent sur la vie rude et austère des colons-défricheurs. Les vêtements des personnages sont modestes, choisis pour leurs qualités pratiques et non esthétiques. Les scènes d'intérieur montrent une maison simple, toute en bois, dont les seules décorations sont des crucifix ou des illustrations religieuses sur les murs. Il se dégage de l'ensemble une atmosphère d'austérité, de désolation et de solitude. Même les animaux (le chien, le cheval) et les objets familiers (le four, la pompe à eau) sont représentés isolément, coupés de tout rapport. On ne voit que rarement des marques de civilisation, telles des représentations de village, ou d'une quelconque vie communautaire. Au contraire, les personnages apparaissent le plus souvent seuls dans un décor désert.

L'univers de Gagnon est tout autre. Malgré le sujet du roman, la colonisation, la représentation qu'en fait le peintre correspond beaucoup plus à la vie rurale dans les campagnes. On le voit par l'importance accordée aux travaux de la ferme: les foins, les labours, la boucherie. Au lieu des grands paysages désolés ou des forêts sauvages de Suzor-Côté, Gagnon nous offre l'image d'une nature humanisée, symbolisée par des clôtures, des arbres en fleurs, des cours d'eau, des éléments qui laissent tous deviner la marque de la civilisation. Les vues de village sont plus nombreuses et les personnages apparaissent rarement seuls. Gagnon préfère les scènes de groupe aux portraits individuels, ce qui donne à ses illustrations une impression de vie et d'animation. On peut comparer la scène du défrichage de Suzor-Côté et celle de Clarence Gagnon pour voir comment les deux artistes divergent dans leur mode de représentation. Chez le premier, l'image se compose d'un seul personnage, Edwidge Légaré, en train d'essoucher un tronc d'arbre avec la forêt comme unique

fond. La vision de Gagnon, au contraire, est celle d'un monde animé par la présence de cinq personnages en action, accompagnés d'un cheval, occupés soit à essoucher, soit à brûler les troncs d'arbres arrachés. Le feu, la rivière, l'activité des personnages, tout concourt à donner une image de vie.

La prospérité remplace l'austérité. Les intérieurs demeurent sobres mais coquets; les planchers sont recouverts de tapis colorés, des pots de fleurs garnissent les fenêtres, des gravures décorent les murs. D'autres indices viennent renforcer l'ambiance de prospérité heureuse, entre autres, la présence quasi constante de la lumière et du soleil aussi bien dans les scènes d'intérieur que d'extérieur et qui contribue largement à donner au spectateur une sensation de chaleur et de bien-être. Même les scènes d'hiver sont égayées et réchauffées par l'effet du soleil et du feu. C'est le cas de l'illustration de François Paradis en expédition que Gagnon imagine près d'un feu de bois entouré de ses chiens, adoucissant de la sorte la représentation de l'excursion en forêt. Les vues de village sont elles-aussi sous le signe de la prospérité, de l'abondance. Les églises sont grandes, cossues, toutes de pierre avec de beaux clochers, les maisons semblent confortables, réchauffées par des cheminées fumantes.

SOCIÉTÉ STRATIFIÉE/MONDE UNIFIÉ

La représentation des personnages par des portraits met l'accent sur les individus, leur psychologie et favorise le rapport d'identification chez le lecteur. Mais Suzor-Côté dépasse l'aspect psychologique et vise une dimension sociale. Ses portraits ne sont pas que la figuration d'individus, ils représentent également les diverses couches sociales de la population. L'univers de Suzor-Côté est donc celui d'une société stratifiée et hiérarchisée qui distingue les gens les uns des autres. Les dessins du curé et du médecin attestent l'existence de l'élite traditionnelle. L'illustration de Napoléon Laliberté montre un deuxième aspect du pouvoir, celui des affaires, revendiqué par l'élite montante. Par les vêtements cossus du personnage, le peintre nous informe de sa fortune. Suit le portrait d'Hormidas, le cultivateur-trafiquant, qui cherche à s'accaparer lui aussi le pouvoir de l'argent. Mais Suzor-Côté ne semble pas apprécier cette volonté d'ascension sociale et il représente son personnage de façon caricaturale avec des traits grossiers et une expression déplaisante. A côté des représentants de l'élite officielle, on a l'image d'un pouvoir parallèle, symbole d'une culture populaire: Ti-Sèbe, le remmancheur. Personnage modeste, il semble jouir de la sympathie du peintre. Mais Suzor-Côté accorde une priorité à la population laborieuse: les bucherons personnifiés par François Paradis et les colons représentés par la famille Chapdelaine, le voisin, Eutrope Gagnon et l'employé, Edwidge Légaré, figure type du défricheur (son importance en tant que personnage-modèle se vérifie par l'octroi de deux illustrations pour lui seul).

Respectant les propos du préfacier Émile Boutroux, Suzor-Côté donne une

image des trois modes de vie concurrents: le défrichage des terres neuves, la culture dans les campagnes et l'industrie des villes. C'est surtout par les vues de village que l'artiste accorde une place, assez mince toutefois, à la campagne, tandis que la ville sert de décor au portrait de Lorenzo Surprenant, l'exilé québécois aux États-Unis.

Encore une fois, Clarence Gagnon diffère dans son propos. Son univers serein ne semble pas comporter de divisions sociales, encore moins de conflits. Les individus sont tous similaires, indifférenciés. Aucune trace d'une quelconque stratification. Les personnages s'intègrent harmonieusement à la nature dans une vision unifiée. Chez Gagnon, la distinction entre les trois modes de vie disparaît. Il n'existe plus qu'un seul univers: celui de la campagne florissante. Même lorsque le peintre tente une représentation de la ville cherchant à reproduire l'image que s'en fait Maria Chapdelaine suite aux discours de Lorenzo Surprenant, il ne peut que donner encore une fois l'illustration d'une scène de campagne particulièrement idéalisée (voir illustration p. 150). Avec Gagnon, s'effacent toutes les contradictions pour ne laisser subsister qu'un monde harmonieux, uniforme.

IMAGE ET TEXTE: FIDÉLITÉ/LIBERTÉ

Une différence notable entre l'oeuvre des deux artistes réside dans l'imbrication du texte et des images. Fidèle au récit dans le cas de Suzor-Côté, l'illustration acquiert une certaine indépendance dans la version de Gagnon. Un des premiers indices de ce rapport est le titre des tableaux. Totalement absents de l'édition de 1933, ils accompagnent chacune des images de l'édition originale, souvent suivis d'une légende qui vient attester que les illustrations sont bien une représentation/traduction d'un passage du texte. Les personnages des portraits sont toujours nommés afin qu'il n'y ait pas de doute sur leur identité. Chez Gagnon, l'absence de titres laisse le spectateur dans l'incertitude quant à l'identité des personnages représentés. On voit bien que pour Gagnon, l'individu n'est pas abordé en lui-même mais plutôt intégré à une totalité, ce qui se confirme dans sa préférence pour les paysages et non les portraits.

Suzor-Côté demeure le plus possible fidèle au texte de Hémon et travaille principalement à partir des énoncés descriptifs du narrateur Ainsi, l'illustration de François Paradis dont la légende mentionne qu'il est parti seul, à raquette, avec ses couvertures et des provisions sur une petite traîne," montre le héros marchant dans la forêt, raquettes aux pieds, un sac sur les épaules et tirant une petite traîne. Même chose pour le portrait de Napoléon Laliberté que Suzor-Côté prend soin d'habiller des mêmes vêtements décrits par le romancier: la toque de fourrure, le grand manteau de loup-cervier. En même temps, il respecte la volonté de Louvigny de Montigny d'insister sur la "couleur locale" et prend la peine d'ajouter à son personnage une ceinture fléchée et un foulard de laine rayé. Beaucoup moins soumis

à l'aspect descriptif du texte, Gagnon cherche à recréer une ambiance plus qu'à reproduire les moindres détails. De son François Paradis, on ne voit ni traîneau, ni raquettes, ni provisions. Seule est maintenue l'idée du héros pris dans une tempête de neige en pleine forêt.

L'indépendance de Gagnon vis-à-vis le texte de Hémon l'amène à illustrer des scènes absentes du roman. Ainsi, ce qui semble être une procession de communiantes dans un village (p. 23) apparaît comme une pure invention de l'illustrateur, ou encore l'image de la saignée d'un cochon (p. 95) qui n'est que rapidement mentionnée dans le texte comme le temps de la boucherie.

Les légendes du Suzor-Côté ont également pour fonction de mettre en valeur les expressions typiques québécoises comme le souhaite le préfacier. Elles sont généralement la reprise des paroles d'un personnage. Sous le portrait d'Hormidas, on peut lire ces mots: "Qui veut acheter un cochon de ma *grand'race*?" (p. 6), tandis qu'Eutrope Gagnon est présenté par les propos de la mère Chapdelaine: "Un *veilleux*. C'est Eutrope Gagnon qui vient nous voir" (p. 31). Edwidge Légaré, en train d'essoucher lance un: "*Blasphème*, je te feral bien *grouiller* moué . . ." (p. 62) qui insiste fortement sur le parler régional du colon (11). Cette mise en valeur d'expressions pittoresques a comme seconde fonction d'ajouter au traitement réaliste de l'illustration selon les canons du naturalisme, tels qu'énoncés par Louvigny de Montigny.

Image et texte: fidélité/liberté

On qualifie facilement le travail de Suzor-Côté pour le roman *Maria Chapdelaine* de réaliste. Le peintre reproduit les formules chères à ce courant pictural: le souci du détail, la prédilection pour les sujets simples et les personnages modestes, l'importance accordée à l'individu, à sa physionomie avec une représentation non-idéaliste qui met l'accent sur les défauts, les irrégularités. Prenons à titre d'exemple le portrait de Ti-Sèbe le remmancheur. Son visage qui domine le tableau arbore un regard triste, fortement expressif. La modestie de sa personne apparaît dans ses vêtements peu sophistiqués de paysan. Suzor-Côté n'a pas négligé non plus de souligner la calvitie, les rides et le nez busqué de son modèle. Tous ces éléments cherchent à donner un rendu "vrai" aux dessins. La technique du fusain facilite la précision des détails en même temps qu'elle permet un travail élaboré des effets de clair-obscur. L'utilisation d'un médium peu coûteux va de pair avec le choix de sujets modestes, de même que la limitation des couleurs au noir et blanc renforce l'impression générale d'austérité.

Le travail de Clarence Gagnon vise plutôt une stylisation de la réalité. Les exigences internes de la composition priment sur le souci de conformité aux scènes représentées. Ici aussi, s'exprime l'autonomie du peintre vis-à-vis son sujet. Contrairement à Suzor-Côté qui privilégie les personnages et la vérité de leurs physio-

Maria Chapdelaine par SUZOR–COTE, ed. J. A. Lefebvre, p. 233.

Maria Chapdelaine par CLARENCE GAGNON,
ed. Mornay, p. 182.

Maria Chapdelaine par CLARENCE GAGNON,
ed. Mornay, p. 28.

Maria Chapdelaine par SUZOR–COTE,
ed. J. A. Lefebvre.

nomies, Gagnon ne peint jamais de portraits et esquisse à peine les traits de ses figurants. Ceux-ci sont souvent vus de dos, de telle sorte que Gagnon évite de travailler sur l'expressivité des visages. Ses compositions respectent peu les lois de la perspective classique, ce qui donne à certaines de ses illustrations un air de peinture naïve[13] (voir illustration p. 89). Il préfère plutôt les constructions en étages inspirées des estampes japonaises qui, pour un spectateur occidental, constituent une vision inhabituelle de la réalité. Participant des esthétiques de l'art nouveau, l'oeuvre de Gagnon recherche les effets décoratifs tant dans le graphisme que dans les associations de couleurs. L'illustration de Maria dans son jardin (p. 150) avec son abondance de fleurs roses donne un bon exemple de l'aspect décoratif de ses compositions. Ce sont surtout les couleurs, généralement très vives, qui produisent le plus l'effet esthétisant, agréable à voir, de la majorité de ses gouaches. Les maisons jaunes, vertes, roses, orangers servent bien plus à égayer le tableau qu'à donner une image fidèle de l'architecture québécoise. Sans qu'il y ait de très grandes audaces dans le choix de ses coloris, Gagnon évite de reproduire la couleur locale et met plutôt en application les leçons tirées de l'impressionisme et du fauvisme: ombres colorées, oppositions de couleurs complémentaires, importance accordée à la ligne propre au cloisonnisme. L'artiste n'hésitera pas à peindre des montagnes violettes, des arbres fushias, une rivière rouge et des arbustes roses. Ici aussi, s'exprime la liberté de l'artiste face à la réalité. Bien sûr, la vivacité des couleurs contribue grandement à donner aux illustrations de Gagnon un air de fraîcheur et d'allégresse. L'utilisation de la gouache en couleurs signifie de la part de l'artiste le choix d'un médium plus coûteux que le fusain et surtout beaucoup plus difficile à reproduire comme le prouvent les trois années de travail de Clarence Gagnon.

CENTREMENT/DÉCENTREMENT

Les différences de perspectives chez les deux peintres entrainent inévitablement des différences de composition. Puisque Suzor-Côté respecte les lois de la perspective classique, il construit ses tableaux autour d'un point de fuite central qui dirige immédiatement l'oeil du spectateur vers le milieu du tableau. Dans les portraits, soit la majorité des illustrations de Suzor-Côté, c'est le visage ou la personne entière qui vient se loger au centre de la composition. Si le portrait s'arrête au biste, le fond reste blanc ou, au plus, hachuré de quelques coups de crayon. Ainsi, rien ne vient distraire le regard ou l'orienter vers les extrémités du tableau. Les portraits debout intègrent parfois à la composition des éléments de décor: Maria dans son jardin, François Paradis dans la forêt. Malgré cela, l'espace du tableau est rarement totalement recouvert et conserve un espace blanc dans les contours. Les paysages, qu'ils soient avec ou sans personnage, respectent eux aussi la loi du centrement du sujet. Dans *Le chemin des Chapdelaine*, le point central de l'image coïncide avec le point

de jonction entre la route et la ligne d'horizon. La direction de la route, le dégradé régulier des arbres, tout fait converger la construction du tableau vers son centre.

Cette façon de centrer le sujet et de négliger les parties latérales de l'image, du moins dans les portraits, a comme conséquence de laisser les personnages sans contexte. C'est le cas de l'illustration d'Eutrope Gagnon qui n'a d'autre ancrage dans la réalité que la projection derrière lui d'une courte ombre portée. Cette absence de contexte porte inévitablement atteinte à l'effet réaliste. Chez Suzor-Côté, les blancs, le vide sont des éléments prédominants du tableau, que ce soient les arrière-plans laissés vierges des portraits ou les grandes surfaces de neige et de glace. Comment ne pas rapprocher cette intégration du vide de la représentation de Suzor-Côté d'un univers de solitude, d'austérité, de division?

La perspective en étages utilisée par Gagnon provoque un décentrement du sujet qui attire l'oeil du spectateur, non pas vers le milieu du tableau, mais l'invite plutôt à promener son regard sur toute la surface. Sa représentation du chemin des Chapdelaine contraste fortement avec celle de Suzor-Côté. Grâce à une construction en hauteur et non horizontale, le peintre nous fait remonter des traîneaux en avant-plan aux maisons derrière, pour arriver finalement à l'extrémité supérieure du tableau, là où se dessine la ligne d'horizon. C'est donc une montée graduelle qui suit la direction de la route en lacets. Cette composition en diagonale est assez typique des paysages de Gagnon; on la retrouve dans *Les foins* (p. 79), *Le défrichage* (p. 55), et *La sortie de la messe* (p. 8).

Une autre forme de composition décentrée est l'organisation des éléments en périphérie du tableau. Ce procédé a ses origines dans l'art baroque qui privilégiait les constructions en ellipse autour d'un centre vide. La mort de la mère Chapdelaine fournit un bon exemple de ce type de composition, d'autant plus que, s'inspirant du dessin de Suzor-Côté, Clarence Gagnon, par un déplacement discret des personnages et des objets, transforme radicalement la construction d'ensemble originale. Le sujet similaire chez les deux artistes représente la mère Chapdelaine allongée dans son lit, une lampe de chevêt allumée à côté d'elle avec, à sa gauche, la famille Chapdelaine rassemblée près du lit. Dans l'illustration de Suzor-Côté, le point central est dominé par une zone de forte lumière générée par la lampe et qui se propage en étoile vers les extrémités du tableau. Dans cette même zone centrale apparaît le visage de la mère entièrement illuminé, cherchant ainsi à reproduire plastiquement le texte de la légende qui voit dans la mort de la mère l'accession à un état proche de la sainteté. Autour de ce centre, les autres personnages se dégagent légèrement de l'ombre tandis que les extrémités du tableau sont laissées dans le noir.

Chez Clarence Gagnon, la scène vue de plus près, ce qui a pour effet de resserrer le cadrage. Le lit de la mère est déplacé vers la gauche tandis que les personnages se rapprochent de l'extrémité droite (l'un d'eux n'apparaît même que par-

tiellement, coupé par le côté droit du tableau). Le visage de la malade et la lampe de chevêt se laissent à peine deviner, cachés persque totalement par l'image du curé, debout près du lit. Au lieu d'une source lumineuse comme chez Suzor-Côté, le centre du tableau est occupé par une zone d'ombre qui ne met l'accent sur aucun élément important et qui fait déplacer le regard vers les contours. Sans que cela ait un rapport avec la structure de décentrement, on peut tenter une interprétation de cette mort cachée comme un refus de la part de Clarence Gagnon d'intégrer un signe de négativité dans la composition de ses images de façon à ne pas porter atteinte à l'optimisme général de son oeuvre. Au contraire, chez Suzor-Côté toute l'attention est portée sur la mourante par un jeu habile de clair-obscur qui réussit à accentuer le caractère tragique de la scène. Aux blancs des dessins de Suzor-Côté s'oppose le foisonnement des gouaches de Gagnon, foisonnement des formes et aussi des couleurs. Les surfaces entièrement peintes ne laissent pas de place au vide, au trou, au manque. Pas d'espace qui ne soit laissé vacant par le pinceau du peintre dans une euphorie de la plénitude.

STATISME/ACTION

Même en action, les personnages de Suzor-Côté semblent figés. On n'a qu'à regarder la Maria Chapdelaine au jardin pour s'en convaincre. Présentée debout, un rateau à la main, elle donne l'impression de poser pour une photographie plus que de ratisser véritablement le sol. C'est l'effet que produisent la majorité des illustrations de Suzor-Côté, spécialement les portraits dont les modèles, le regard dirigé vers le spectateur, semblent attendre patiemment la fin de la séance. Napoléon Laliberté n'est pas présenté en train de crier les nouvelles de la paroisse mais bien arrêté les mains dans les poches de son manteau. La composition centrée vient accentuer le statisme des personnages en fixant l'oeil du spectateur au milieu du tableau. Cette organisation formelle exprime sur un autre mode la thèse principale du roman de Louis Hémon: "Au pays de Québec, rien ne doit mourir, et rien ne doit changer . . ." (p. 213). C'est la représentation plastique d'un univers qui vise à se maintenir, à se conserver.

Chez Clarence Gagnon, le mouvement est constant. Les personnages sont généralement représentés en pleine activité: les illustrations de travaux des champs en sont un bon exemple. Le portrait d'Eutrope Gagnon réalisé par Suzor-Côté montrait le personnage debout face au spectateur en position d'arrêt. Clarence Gagnon en donne une représentation tout autre. Au lieu du portrait sans arrière-fond de son prédécesseur, il imagine son personnage dans un décor d'extérieur, vu de dos et se dirigeant vers une maison que l'on suppose être celle des Chapdelaine. Ce n'est donc plus un Eutrope Gagnon qui existe par ses attributs descriptifs, ses vêtements, sa pipe, sa physionomie (son essence) mais plutôt un individu qui se définit dans son action, celle d'aller veiller chez ses voisins (son existence).

La composition décentrée joue elle-aussi un rôle dynamisant. Soit qu'elle entraîne le regard du spectateur de bas en haut du tableau, soit qu'elle crée un mouvement d'expansion par la construction en périphérie vers l'extérieur du tableau, laissant supposer que l'oeuvre se poursuit en dehors de son cadre, que la réalité n'est jamais finie, arrêtée, mais en perpétuelle transformation. D'autres éléments viennent renforcer l'impression de mouvement, entre autres l'utilisation fréquente de la diagonale, procédé classique pour créer une structure dynamique. L'originalité chez Gagnon de l'emploi de la diagonale tient au fait qu'il la suggère souvent par un effet de lumière qui divise son tableau en deux parties, l'une ensoleillée et l'autre plongée dans l'ombre (voir illustration p. 23). Ainsi, si la composition profonde de l'oeuvre de Suzor-Côté donne l'image d'une société figée qui cherche à préserver l'état des choses, celle de Clarence Gagnon repose au contraire sur un système de valeurs qui fait du changement, de l'évolution, un principe dominant.

Inspirés d'un même sujet, les illustrations de *Maria Chapdelaine* par Suzor-Côté et Clarence Gagnon produisent deux livres n'ayant que peu de rapport entre eux. Leur oeuvre respective se structure autour de valeurs divergentes qui mettent l'accent sur des réseaux sémiques opposés. Dans les deux cas, on propose un mode de vie idéal, apte à rendre heureux. Mais le bonheur est perçu bien différemment par l'un et l'autre artiste. Chez Suzor-Côté, il ne s'atteint que dans la privation, la souffrance et une sorte d'ascèse physique et spirituelle qui privilégie le labeur et le devoir. C'est le propre de la vie des colons faite de solitude, d'austérité, de rupture et de manque. Clarence Gagnon, au contraire, se situe dans une pure positivité. Chez lui, le bonheur résulte de l'aisance et du confort qu'il se plaît à représenter par la vie des cultivateurs dans les campagnes. Son imagerie est entièrement construite autour des sèmes de prospérité, d'abondance, d'harmonie et de plénitude. C'est la représentation euphorique d'un univers parfaitement comblé. Mais ceci n'entraîne pas une vision statique de la société et la composition des oeuvres de Gagnon, qui mise sur le dynamisme et le mouvement, laisse percevoir un goût pour le changement et les mutations. Il se distingue ainsi de Suzor-Côté qui lui, respecte les lois d'une composition statique connotant le souci de conserver un certain ordre social.

Selon la logique de l'histoire de l'art, on serait porté à présenter Clarence Gagnon comme étant plus moderne que son prédécesseur, Suzor-Côté. Il est vrai que d'un certain point de vue, Gagnon représente une étape plus avancée de l'évolution du champ artistique. D'autre part, le parti pris qui se dégage de son oeuvre, pour la représentation d'un univers axé sur la transformation sociale, le rapproche des forces progressistes de son temps, en dépit du fait que son iconographie emprunte à des thèmes traditionnels, dont le terroir. Par contre, son oeuvre n'échappe pas à l'idéalisme et présente une image mythique de la société d'où s'estompent toutes les différences de classes et de milieux. Suzor-Côté, même s'il

propose un maintien du système en place et du mode de vie traditionnel ne cherche pas à dissimuler ce que cela suppose de division sociale et de hiérarchie, à la limite, de déchirement et de souffrance. Ce qui tient lieu de l'Autre (la ville, par exemple) n'est pas éliminé malgré la condamnation que l'on peut en faire. En ce sens, on peut dire que l'oeuvre de Suzor-côté est moins fortement idéologique, au sens de masque de la réalité.

NOTES

[1] Yves Reuter, "l'Objet livre," *Pratiques*, no 32 (décembre 1981), p. 105-13.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Roland Barthes, "Rhétorique de l'image," *Communications*, no 3 (1964), p. 41.

[4] Alain-Marie Bassy, "Du texte à l'illustration; pour une sémiologie des étapes," *Sémiotica*, vol. 11, no 2 (1974), p. 297-334.

[5] Jean-Louis Scheffer, *Scénographie d'un tableau* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 206 p.

[6] Anonyme, *Maria Chapdelaine, évolution de l'édition, 1913-1980* (Montréal: ministère des Affaires culturelles de Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1980), 80 p.

[7] Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine récit du Canada français*, illustrations originales de Suzor-Côté (Montréal: J.-A. Lefebvre, 1916), XIX, 244 p.

[8] Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, illustrations de Clarence Gagnon (Paris: Editions Mornay, 1933), 205 p.

[9] Anonyme, *Maria Chapdelaine, évolution de lédition, 1916-1980*, p. 37.

[10] C'est nous qui soulignons.

[11] C'est nous qui soulignons les expressions citées.

[12] Hughes de Jouvancourt, *Suzor-Côté* (Montréal: La Frégate, 1967).

[13] Jean-René Ostiguy, *les Esthétiques modernes au Québec de 1916 à 1946* (Ottawa: Galerie nationale, 1982), p. 144.

EXHIBITION

Ralph Gustafson

Exhausted talk
Fulfils the painted
Landscapes with rhetoric.

The window outside
Toward the river quietly
Changing itself,
Is full of sunshine.

Glasses tilt.
Hyperbole
Invigorates the portraits.

The meadow was recently rained on.
Green in the sun,
The sloping grass
Runs to fistfuls of flowers.

ARGUING WITH SCIENCE

Dave Margoshes

VANCOUVER — The legend of vampires and werewolves may have been inspired by ordinary people who suffered from a rare genetic condition that affects oxygen transport in the bloodstream, says a chemist at the University of British Columbia.

Research being conducted at the university indicates a set of blood disorders known as porphyias can disfigure the human body so that it resembles the hairy monsters and blood-sucking vampires of legend.

— NEWS ITEM

Bela, it was all a mistake,
we were sick, that's all,
common people with little more
than runny noses, *acne*,
not the gods we thought we were
but patients awaiting cure,
victims of chemistry, not curses.

It isn't true, Lon,
I don't care what they say,
our blood wasn't pale with disease,
it was vibrant with difference,
rich. Yours, perhaps, but my blood
was *nectar*, a river running
through time, littered
with my ancestors' debris.

Oh, no, my hunger was no trick
of the juices, but deliberate,
part of the divine plan.

You're mad, Bela, just as ever.
There's the proof,
in the eating, as they say.
That fist which closed upon me,
that burning, the itching
across my chest where the brand
should go, the dried blood
on my body afterwards, thick as hair,
all *symptoms*, not cause, after all.
There's no arguing with science.

But that's just the point,
Lon, don't you see?
I was mad, but you were the fool,
a romantic, eyes filled with gypsy moons,
someone merely bitten, afflicted.
I was ageless, ordained, an heir,
carrying on god's own work
according to a logic even he had forgotten.
Science is a way of explaining
what cannot be understood.
I was never the victim,
I was the disease, waiting to be caught.

A. J. M. SMITH

W. J. Keith

Take a landscape keen and cold;
put your easel firmly down;
tighten canvas; choose a bold
palette (let the fogey's frown!);

paint your lines with classic grace;
render abstract all you see;
set within the foreground space
bottle and anthology.

LES CONNIVENCES IMPLICITES ENTRE LE TEXTE ET L'IMAGE

Le cas "Maria Chapdelaine"

Gabrielle Gourdeau

L'ILLUSTRATION ANNEXÉE AU TEXTE ROMANESQUE est le signe d'un signe, une image double; d'une part elle tire une certaine autonomie des contingences socio-spatio-temporelles entourant l'illustrateur, de ses idiosyncrasies d'artiste du visuel (ses préférences pour le médium utilisé, pour la couleur ou le noir et blanc, son style, son "idée"[1] de l'objet auquel il se réfère[2]); d'autre part, l'illustration s'accroche au texte par/pour lequel elle a été conçue: il s'établit alors entre le texte fondateur et son iconographie satellite un rapport de nécessité dont les caractéristiques qualifiables et quantifiables feront ici l'objet de mon propos. Non pas que l'aspect contingent de la question présente un intérêt moindre. Il est évident que l'époque, le lieu, la société où ont évolué les illustrateurs, que leurs goûts, leurs styles, leurs fantasmes ont influencé le produit iconographique final. L'étude de telles variantes concerne sourtout la socio-critique, et c'est aux spécialistes de ce domaine qu'il appartiendra d'évaluer leur poids dans le contexte d'une telle recherche. Comme on le verra plus loin, l'illustration romanesque se compose de signes unis les uns aux autres par une relation hypotaxique — en termes de liberté — et ce n'est pas au niveau des signes parfaitement libres, soit des contingences dont j'ai parlé plus haut, que se joue la connivence qui m'intéresse entre texte et image dans *Maria Chapdelaine*.

Le cas Maria Chapdelaine représente un intérêt certain, ne fût-ce que pour la profusion de la production iconographique à laquelle le roman a donné lieu.[3] Fragments de discours, figure anthropomorphe, acteur, représentation synecdochique du peuple québécois, ce personnage hémonien assume une fonction mimétique indiscutable en retenant de son modèle référentiel des traits humanoïdes tant au niveau de l'être qu'à celui du faire. Seule la somme de son être et de son faire peut définir le personnage de mots. Autrement dit, c'est à partir du "comment est" Maria Chapdelaine que l'illustrateur peut concevoir sa mise en image. Le texte fournit une information attenant à l'être et au faire visibles du personnage au niveau de la composante discursive; en même temps, il renseigne sur son être et son faire cachés au niveau de la composante narrative; tandis que le paratexte[4]

iconographique s'organise selon une hiérarchie de signes dont la dépendance au texte fondateur varie de zéro à un maximum relatif.

Pour cerner la liberté des signes iconographiques, il a fallu décomposer l'image en unités. La classification dont je me sers ici s'inspire des travaux d'Umberto Eco dont je ne retiens pour le moment que les notions d'"unités différentielles démunies de signifié autonome."[5]

Le texte fondateur choisi est celui que Ghislaine Legendre a "rétabli"[6] d'après le manuscrit original de l'auteur.

En consultant le schéma qui suit, l'on s'apercevra que de la forme de la bouche à l'âge, on se déplace de la dénotation (sèmes génériques spécifiques, puis applicatifs) vers la connotation (sèmes virtuels).[7] Il est à noter que les traits "âge, attitude,

UNITÉS DIFFÉRENTIELLES					
	CONNOTATIF	PARAÎTRE	âge	22j. 2inf. 2m. 1ind.	
			attitude	21n. 5e. 1d.	
			expr. fac.	11n. 9d. 5e. 2ind.	
			regard	11b. 11v. 4e. 1ind.	
	DÉNOTATIF	FAIRE	geste		
			action		
			mobilité	20imm. 5m. 2 n.a.	
		ÊTRE	posture	12 ass. 12d. 1accr. 2 n.a.	
			place		
			couleur	cheveux	9f. 3p. 15 n.a.
				yeux	5f. 2p. 5ind. 15 n.a.
			taille	corps	18 m/m 6 f/r 3 ind.
				bouche	20m. 5g. 2ind.
				nez	20m/p 4g. 3ind.
				cheveux	151. 1c. 11ind.
				yeux	16m. 6g. 3p. 2ind.
			texture	cheveux	18 r. 1fr. 4o. 4ind.
			forme	yeux	6am.5bi. 7r. 2p.1. 2 a.c. 5ind.
				cheveux	10ch. 2tr. 1russ. 2b. 11c.1crt.
				nez	20d. 1é. 1b. 2r.c. 3ind.
				bouche	14d. 4 c.d.b. 5 c.d.h.

(Voir la liste des abréviations fournie en appendice)

expression faciale, regard," plus difficilement qualifiables, contiennent une certaine dose d'interprétation. Ces signes iconiques "reproduisent quelques conditions de la perception commune sur la base des codes perceptifs normaux et . . . peuvent permettre de construire une structure perceptive qui possède — par rapport aux codes de l'expérience acquise — la même signification que l'expérience réelle dénotée par le signe iconique."[8] Ici, je tiendrai pour acquis que mon lecteur appartient à un univers de perception régi par des codes de reconnaissance et d'expérience sensorielle identiques à ceux qui régissent mon univers de perception.

La description du personnage visuel (formes, couleurs, tailles, textures), de sa posture, de sa mobilité et de son âge sont des constantes pouvant répondre à la question "comment est Maria Chapdelaine?" car par rapport à l'ensemble des 220 illustrations trouvées, et à l'intérieur de la production individuelle de chaque illustrateur, ce, quelle que soit la situation où est campée Maria Chapdelaine, ces données se répètent assez fidèlement pour que l'on puisse se fier à la représentativité des vingt-sept Maria sélectionnées ici.

Voici maintenant l'inventaire des énoncés d'état et des énoncés du faire de Maria Chapdelaine tels qu'ils apparaissent dans le texte hémonien (l'ordre est chronologique) :

ÊTRE

"Une belle grosse fille" (p. 6)

"Une belle grosse fille" (p. 6)

"belle fille" (p. 7)

"votre fille . . . elle a changé" (p. 8)

"Sa jeunesse forte et saine, ses beaux cheveux drus, son cou brun de paysanne, la simplicité honnête de ses yeux et de ses gestes francs" (p. 33)

"elle n'avait vraiment pas changé" (p. 34)

"Qu'elle était donc plaisante à contempler! . . . sa poitrine profonde, son beau visage honnête et patient, la simplicité franche de ses gestes rares et de ses attitudes" (p. 69)

"Une fille comme toi, plaisante à voir" (p. 126)

"il . . . ne voyait d'elle que son profil penché, à l'expression patiente et tranquille, entre son bonnet de laine et le long gilet de laine qui moulait ses formes héroïques" (p. 142)

"une jeune fille aux hanches larges et à la poitrine profonde" (p. 151)

"beauté de son corps" (p. 151)

FAIRE

"détourna modestement les yeux" (p. 9)

"Maria Chapdelaine ajusta sa pelisse autour d'elle, cacha ses mains sous la grande robe de carriole en chèvre grise, et ferma à demi les yeux" (p. 15)

"Maria baissa les yeux vers le chien . . . et elle le caressa" (p. 20)

"Maria regarda autour d'elle, cherchant quelque changement à vrai dire improbable qui se fût fait pendant son absence" (p. 21)

"Maria regardait parfois à la dérobée Eutrope Gagnon, et puis détournait aussitôt les yeux très vite" (p. 28)

"Maria souriait, un peu gênée, et puis après un temps elle releva bravement les yeux et se mit à le regarder aussi (p. 34)

"tint obstinément les yeux baissés" (p. 38)

"Maria resta là quelques instants, regardant le labeur des hommes et le résultat de ce labeur, puis elle reprit le chemin de la maison balançant le seau vide" (p. 51)

"les mains ouvertes de chaque côté de la bouche pour envoyer plus loin le son, elle annonçait de dîner par un grand cri chantant" (p. 52)

"Maria se leva aussi, émue, lissant ses cheveux sans y penser" (p. 58)

ÊTRE + FAIRE

"Maria répondit: 'Oui, très doucement, et bénit l'ombre qui cachait son visage' " (p. 32)

"une belle fille simple qui regardait à terre" (p. 66)

"venait s'asseoir sur le seuil, le menton dans les mains" (p. 78)

"Maria le regardait, une rougeur aux joues ... elle restait immobile près de la table et attendait, sans ennui, mais pensant à cet autre baiser qu'elle aurait aimé recevoir" (p. 108)

"Elle resta là quelques instants, immobile, les bras pendants, dans une attitude d'abandon pathétique ... elle ouvrit la porte et sortit" (p. 116)

"Maria, revêtue déjà de sa grande pelisse d'hiver, serrait avec soin dans son porte-monnaie" (p. 122)

"Maria, assise près de la petite fenêtre, regarda quelque temps sans y penser le ciel" (p. 192)

"Maria resta immobile, les mains croisées dans son giron, patiente et sans amertume" (p. 199)

"Elle fit: 'Non' de la tête, les yeux à terre" (p. 201)

FAIRE

"sourit faiblement et baissa les yeux gênée" (p. 63)

"Maria s'asseyait à la table, maniait les cartes, puis retournait à quelque siège vide près de la porte ouverte sans presque jamais regarder autour d'elle" (p. 65)

"Maria se redressa ... et alla rejoindre François Paradis" (p. 68)

"Maria se trouve parfaitement heureuse de rester assise sur le seuil et de guetter la raie de lumière rouge" (p. 80)

"Par la petite fenêtre, elle regardait le ciel gris" (p. 94)

"Les regards de Maria se promenaient sur le long museau blanc ... pendant que ses lèvres murmuraient sans fin les paroles sacrées" (p. 95)

"par une sorte de pudeur Maria se détourna et cacha son chapelet sous les couvertures tout en continuant à prier ... elle put s'asseoir près de la fenêtre" (p. 96)

"elle put retourner à sa chaise près de la fenêtre" (p. 97)

"elle fermait les yeux, soupirait" (p. 97)

"Maria regardait par la fenêtre les champs blancs que cerclait le bois" (p. 102)

"elle l'éteignit de suite ... et revint s'asseoir près de la fenêtre" (p. 102)

"Mais elle ne dit rien ni ne bougea, les yeux fixés sur la vitre de la petite fenêtre que le gel rendait pourtant opaque comme un mur" (p. 114)

"Elle se leva et alla s'agenouiller avec les autres pour la prière" (p. 116)

"Maria se détourna de suite et retourna près de la fenêtre ... les larmes avaient commencé à monter en elle et l'aveuglaient" (p. 116)

"elle se serre contre le grand poêle de fonte" (p. 119)

"Elle le regarda avec humilité" (p. 124)

"Elle s'assit, un peu comme une écolière qu'on réprimande" (p. 125)

"Maria sortit du traîneau en frissonnant et n'accorda qu'une attention distraite aux jappements de Chien ... Elle rentra dans la maison très vite sans regarder autour d'elle" (pp. 127-28)

"Maria, qui avait laborieusement détourné les yeux devant les siens, s'assit près de la fenêtre et regarda la nuit ... en songeant à son grand ennui" (p. 145)

"Maria s'était arrêtée sur le perron, hési-

FAIRE

tante, une main sur le loquet, faisant mine de rentrer" (p. 148)
"Maria restait appuyée à la porte, une main sur le loquet, détournant les yeux" (p. 149)
"Maria regardait l'unique construction de planches" (p. 151)
"Maria baissa les yeux, reprit son ouvrage" (p. 154)
"Maria se leva deux ou trois fois, émue par des plaintes plus fortes" (p. 162)
"Maria prêta l'oreille aux bruits du départ" (p. 163)

FAIRE

"Maria regarda le jour pâle" (p. 163)
"Maria se leva et alla s'asseoir près d'elle" (p. 164)
"Maria se mit à pleurer doucement" (p, 173)
"Maria tourna les yeux vers la fenêtre et soupira" (p. 175)
"Maria fit 'oui' de la tête, serrant les lèvres" (p. 184)
"Maria soupira et se passa les mains sur la figure" (p. 190)
"Maria regardait son père" (p. 196)

Le texte de Hémon, avare de descriptions quant à l'être visible de Maria Chapdelaine, semble tout de même pencher vers le "robuste/fort" pour ce qui est du corps, alors que sur vingt-quatre corps observables dans le paratexte iconographique, dix-huit présentent une taille "fine/moyenne" et six seulement correspondent aux désignations "hanches larges," "formes héroïques," "poitrine profonde"; encore faut-il que cette dernière caractéristique disparaisse dans trois cas sous châles, pelisses ou autre vêtement qui ne laisse que deviner telle générosité. Pierre Degournay, créateur de l'une des deux bandes dessinées faisant partie de la production iconographique de *Maria Chapdelaine*, va même jusqu'à prêter à sa Maria une de ces poitrines balonnées "sexy," comme en arborent les héroïnes de la b.d. française moderne. En vérité, seuls Clarence Gagnon et Thoreau MacDonald retiennent cette particularité du texte.

Les cheveux de Maria Chapdelaine sont décrits par l'énoncé "beau cheveux drus"; dans l'image, dix-huit Maria sur vingt-trois observables ont des cheveux que l'on peut qualifier de "raides." Il en est de même pour l'âge de l'héroïne; le texte fait allusion à sa "jeunesse," tandis que l'image, dans une large proportion corrobore l'énoncé: vingt-deux Maria sur vingt-sept peuvent être qualifiées de "jeunes," alors que deux seulement sont d'un âge infantile, deux autres d'un âge mûr.

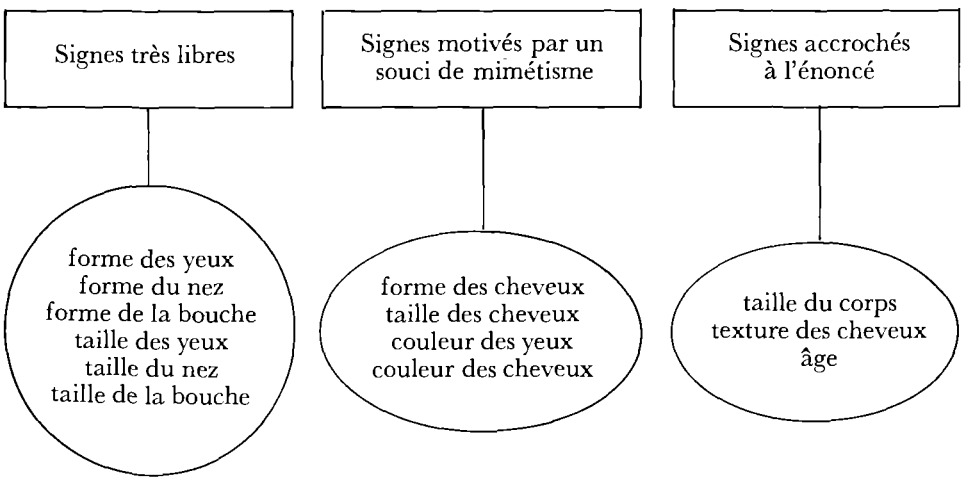
Cependant, les énoncés susceptibles de qualifier la forme des yeux, du nez, des cheveux (coiffure), la taille des yeux, des cheveux, du nez, de la bouche, la couleur des yeux, des cheveux, sont totalement absents du texte. En iconographiant ces signes absents, que l'on suppose existants puisque, nous l'avons dit, Maria Chapdelaine est une figure anthropomorphe, l'illustrateur jouit d'une liberté quasi totale. Je dis "quasi" car les connaissances du contexte dans lequel évolue le personnage limitent malgré eux le choix des traits qui entreront dans la composition du personnage illustré. Ainsi, Maria Chapdelaine, de par son appartenance à tel groupe

ethnique, "devrait" avoir les cheveux foncés, les yeux foncés; du moins cela explique que sur douze illustrations-couleur où la couleur des cheveux soit discernable, neuf présentent une Maria aux cheveux foncés; que sur sept paires d'yeux dont la couleur est visible, cinq soient de couleur foncée.

Au chapitre des grandeurs, remarquons que 20/25 Maria ont une bouche de grandeur moyenne, 20/24 un nez moyen/petit, 16/25 des yeux de grandeur moyenne, 15/16 des cheveux longs, dont dix en chignon. L'on doit sans aucun doute les données iconographiques de la coiffure à un souci de mimétisme apparenté à celui qui motivait la couleur des cheveux et des yeux de Maria Chapdelaine. Selon la réalité socio-culturelle de l'époque, selon le corsetage spatio-temporel "Péribonka-début-de-siècle" dans lequel est bien pris le roman de Hémon, Maria Chapdelaine "devrait" en effet se coiffer d'un chignon.

Il semble que l'ensemble des illustrateurs de Maria Chapdelaine ne soient venus à aucun consensus quant à la forme des yeux: 6/22 Maria ont des yeux en amandes, 5/22 des yeux de biche, 7/22 des yeux ronds, 2/22 des paupières lourdes et 2/22 des yeux en "accent circonflexe." En outre, 20/24 ont le nez droit, 14/23 la bouche droite, 4/23 une bouche dont les coins sont dirigés vers le-bas, 5/23 dont les coins vont vers le haut.

Déjà une hiérarchie se dessine au niveau des unités différentielles dénotatives de l'être. Des signes iconographiques dont la liberté, relative à la couche superficielle du texte, varie de très grande à très petite, se lient dans un premier rapport hypotaxique qui, nous le verrons plus loin, n'est peut-être pas "vrai." Le schéma qui suit rend compte de cette hiérarchie superficielle:



Dans la catégorie "signes très libres," nous devrions observer des divergences au niveau de l'image; de même, les "signes accrochés à l'énoncé" devraient faire l'objet de convergences. Or, il n'en est pas ainsi, comme nous le montre le tableau suivant:

	FORME		TAILLE		
	droit(e)	autre	petit(e)	moyen(ne)	grand(e)
NEZ	20/24	4/24	10/24	10/24	4/24
BOUCHE	14/23	9/23	1/25	20/25	4/25
YEUX			3/25	16/25	6/25
CORPS			18/24		6/24

Les caractéristiques de forme et de taille des yeux, du nez et de la bouche étant absentes du texte, et rien, dans le contexte "Péribonka-début-de-siècle" n'obligeant à pencher pour l'une ou pour l'autre des qualifications et quantifications apparaissant dans le tableau précédent, nous aurions dû obtenir, comme à la rubrique "forme des yeux," une divergence associable à des signes tout à fait libres. Or, nous assistons à une convergence du paratexte iconographique vers le "droit/petit-moyen," à une banalisation de la bouche et du nez, à une contradiction de l'énoncé textuel en ce qui concerne la taille du corps. Ces signes iconographiques libres devraient relever de l'étude autonome, de l'invention; or, ils semblent vouloir répondre à une logique organisationnelle, créer un effet de sens.

En poussant plus loin notre analyse du corps iconographique, on s'aperçoit que des vingt-cinq Maria dont la posture est visible, douze sont debout, douze assises et une accroupie; que sur ces vingt-cinq Maria quatorze ont une posture qualifiable de "dysphorique" (voutée, affaissée, courbée, figée); que vingt sont immobiles, que vingt et une affichent une attitude "neutre,"[9] que onze ont une expression faciale neutre, neuf une expression faciale dysphorique,[10] que onze regardent vers le sol, onze ont un regard "vide," ce qui donne:

	DYSPHORIQUE	NEUTRE	EUPHORIQUE
POSTURE	14/25	10/25	1/25
MOBILITÉ		20/25	
ATTITUDE	1/25	21/25	3/25
EXPR. FAC.	9/25	11/25	5/25
REGARD	11/25	11/25	3/25

Remarquons ici une convergence du bloc-image vers les caractéristiques dysphorique/neutre.

Au niveau de la composante discursive du texte, le regard, facteur important de l'expression faciale et de l'attitude générale, est souvent désigné par les termes de la fermeture ["détourna les yeux" (quatre fois), "baissa les yeux" (sept fois), "sans regarder autour d'elle" (deux fois)] ou d'une quête de l'ailleurs qui se situe au-delà de la fameuse fenêtre ["regarda par la fenêtre" (six fois)].

Autrement, les descriptions de l'expression faciale de Maria Chapdelaine sont aussi rares celles de ses traits dans le texte hémonien. Il y est question de rougeurs (deux fois), d'un sourire gêné (deux fois), de son visage "honnête" (une fois), de larmes (une fois), de son "expression patiente et tranquille" (une fois), de signes de tête (deux fois). Les descriptions de son attitude apparaissent dans le texte avec encore plus de parcimonie. L'auteur parle de la franchise de ses gestes (deux fois), de sa simplicité (deux fois), des ses rares émotions (quatre fois), de son "abandon pathétique" (une fois), de sa soumission (une fois), de son ennui (trois fois).

Le faire visible de Maria Chapdelaine se limite à des gestes: se lever, s'asseoir, prier, baisser les yeux, fermer les yeux, regarder, sourire timidement, s'agenouiller, caresser Chien, pleurer doucement, soupirer.

Au-delà du faire visible, il y a le faire "existentiel" du personnage, puis celui, plus "narratif" de l'acteur, c'est-à-dire la contribution de Maria Chapdelaine à la composante narrative du texte, contribution dont les données ont tout probablement orienté l'illustrateur lors de sa mise en image du personnage hémonien.
Que se passe-t-il entre Maria Chapdelaine et Maria Gagnon?

Le texte de Hémon, nous le verrons, repose sur un jeu de modalisations bien plus que sur un jeu du faire. L'analyse sémiotique dont je dessine ici grossièrement les contours servira à dégager les forces manipulatrices et les objets-valeur mis en circulation, car *Maria Chapdelaine* est beaucoup plus un roman du faire faire qu'un roman du faire.

Dès son entrée dans le texte Maria entre en contact avec Paradis, qu'elle ne cessera de convoiter jusqu'à la mort de ce dernier. Nous assistons à une première quête du sujet Maria, dirigée vers Paradis qui alors devint pour elle un objet-valeur (ou "mariage avec Paradis") duquel Maria est privée par la mort. La formule de cette quête et de son échec peut prendre la forme suivante:

$$F(S) \Rightarrow [(S\ V\ O) \rightarrow (S\ V\ O)]$$

où F est le faire total du sujet d'état S (Maria) qui, de la relation de disjonction V qu'il entretient avec l'objet-valeur O, demeure en disjonction avec ce même objet-valeur. ($\Rightarrow$ indique l'énoncé du faire)

Dans cette formule peut tenir un premier programme narratif si l'on considère le sujet d'état Maria qui, caractérisé par le vouloir-faire, le pouvoir-faire et le ne pas devoir faire, voit sa performance annulée par le destinateur-manipulateur "mort"; le contrat "mariage avec Paradis" échoue et la transformation qui a lieu dans ce premier programme narratif (PN^1) se déroule au niveau de la compétence du sujet opérateur virtuel (Maria + vouloir faire + pouvoir faire) dont le pouvoir faire passe au ne pas pouvoir faire. Le PN^1 peut se représenter de cette façon:

$$F(S^1) \Rightarrow [(S\ \Lambda\ Om) \rightarrow (S\ V\ Om)]$$

où S^1 est le destinateur-manipulateur "mort," S le sujet d'état "Maria" et Om l'objet modal "pouvoir-faire"; Λ est la relation de conjonction que le sujet entretient avec l'objet modal.

La sanction s'énonce par le sujet "curé" (destinateur de la sanction) qui évalue l'échec du contrat "mariage avec Paradis" ("vous n'étiez pas fiancés . . . ce garçon ne t'était rien"[11]) et à la fois incite le sujet "Maria" à s'orienter vers un nouveau but pouvant s'identifier à "se marier et fonder une famille chrétienne." Ce contrat demeurera jusqu'à la fin du récit celui vers lequel toutes les compétences/performances des sujets impliqués tendront.

Le sujet "Maria," en état de disjonction avec le nouvel objet-valeur "mariage/famille chrétienne," est maintenant caractérisé par la compétence: pouvoir faire + ne pas vouloir faire + ne pas devoir faire + ne pas savoir ne pas faire car bientôt, le contrat "mariage/famille chrétienne" se résorbera en "mariage avec Gagnon." A ce moment du récit cependant, le sujet "Maria" est caractérisé par le ne pas devoir faire car les "voix," cumulation d'une influence manipulatrice (père + curé) n'ont pas encore agi. Quant au ne pas vouloir faire, il intervient dès la

rencontre Maria-Paradis, après laquelle l'objet-valeur "Gagnon" est exclu du désir du sujet "Maria" ("en revenant au foyer elle y rapportait une impression confuse que commençait une étape de sa vie à elle où il [Gagnon] n'aurait point de part"[12]).

Entre la mise en place de la quête "Paradis" et de son échec sont survenus deux objets-valeur virtuels, soit "Gagnon" (objet valeur pour le tandem père/curé) et "Surprenant." Le programme narratif lancé après le faire interprétatif du curé (PN^2) bifurque vers un troisième programme narratif (PN^3) impliquant le nouveau contrat "mariage avec Surprenant." Mais là encore, le destinateur-manipulateur "mort" intervient: la mère Chapdelaine meurt, et ce sont les conséquences de cette mort (influence du père via une idéalisation de la mère + efficacité rétroactive de l'enseignement du curé) qui agiront sur le sujet "Maria," maintenant sujet opérateur virtuel d'un programme narratif double. Après la mort de Laura Chapdelaine, PN^3 se solde par un échec tel que:

$$F\ (S^1) \Rightarrow [(S\ V\ O) \rightarrow (S\ V\ O)]$$

où S^1 est l'influence père + curé (provoquée par la mort de la mère), S est "Maria" et O, "mariage avec Surprenant." Ici, le sujet "Maria" est caractérisé par: ne pas vouloir ne pas faire + ne pas devoir ne pas faire + pouvoir faire + ne pas savoir faire. En même temps que les voix, influence rétroactive de Gagnon + père + curé, mettent en échec le $PN,^3$ elles dirigent le sujet "Maria" vers l'objet-valeur "Gagnon" et le contrat "Mariage avec Gagnon" aboutit au succès du PN^2 lancé par le curé, tel que:

$$F\ (S^1) \Rightarrow [(S\ V\ O) \rightarrow (S\ \Lambda\ O)]$$

où S^1 est la somme des destinateurs-manipulateurs "Gagnon" + "père" + "curé," S est le sujet "Maria," maintenant caractérisé par: ne pas vouloir ne pas faire + devoir faire + pouvoir faire + ne pas savoir ne pas faire, et O est "mariage avec Gagnon."

L'acte final ("décision" à épouser Gagnon) est le produit d'un devoir faire engendré par insémination artificielle, conjugé avec une incapacité de ne pas faire imputable à un ne pas savoir ne pas faire. Quant au vouloir, le sujet "Maria," depuis l'échec du PN^1, n'en a plus eu: elle s'est laissé vouloir.

AINSI, L'ACTEUR "Maria Chapdelaine," caractérisé par la passivité, l'impuissance, voire l'inconscience[13] (le choix ultime lui est dicté par des "voix"), déchiré entre l'appel de l'ailleurs et celui de l'ici, rivé à une fenêtre-

transition par un immobilisme imposé de l'extérieur, est représenté par une somme picturale qui, si elle ne colle pas toujours à l'énoncé du texte, rejoint celui-ci dans ses structures intermédiaires par une récurrence de traits banalisés (bouche et nez), neutralisés (attitude, regard, expression faciale, mouvement) ou carrément dysphoriques (posture, regard). Par ailleurs, la façon dont est traitée la forme des yeux dans le paratexte iconographique (aucun consensus) n'est-elle pas elle aussi une forme de neutralité? N'arrivant pas à se décider sur la forme d'un trait si étroitement lié au tempérament, les illustrateurs de Maria Chapdelaine, tombés d'accord pour banaliser bouche et nez, refusent d'en faire autant lorsqu'il s'agit des yeux. Dépassés par l'insaisissabilité de ce trait, ils en soulignent cependant l'importance par leur refus de la banalisation.

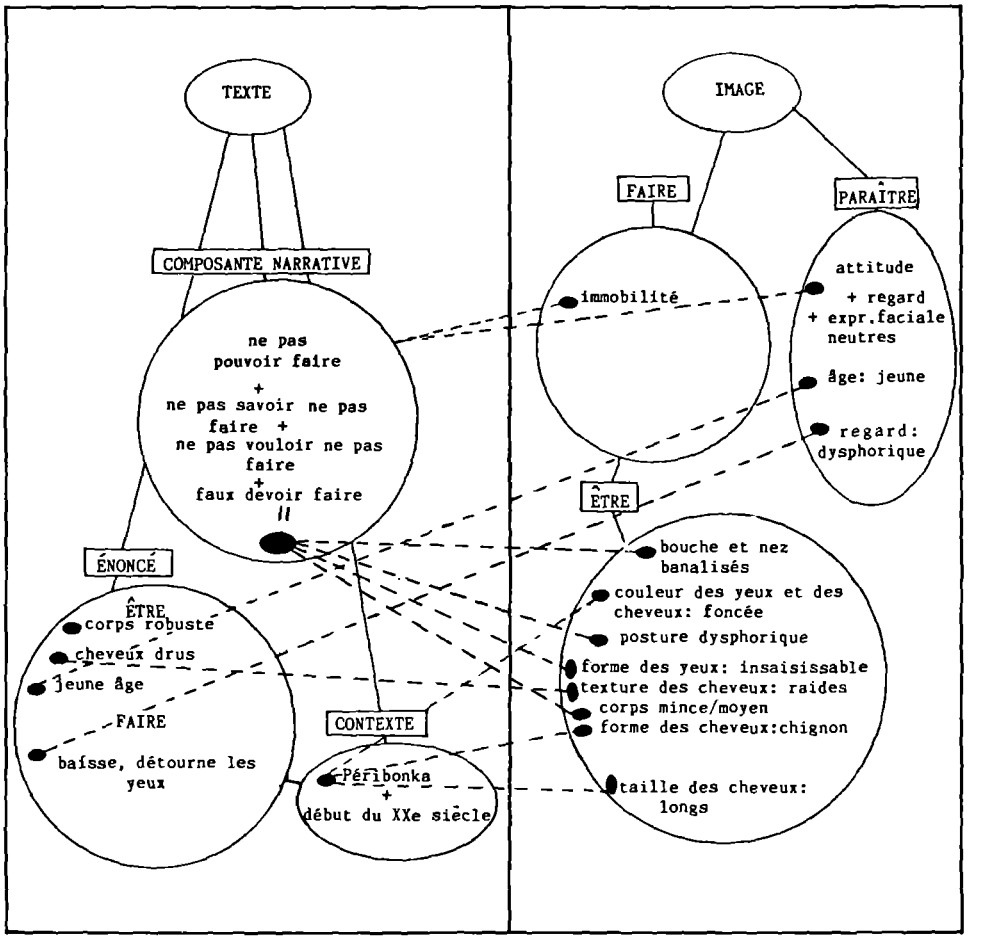
D'autre part, comment expliquer que 75% des illustrateurs de Maria Chapdelaine prêtent à celle-ci un corps plutôt mince alors que texte insiste sur la robustesse, la générosité des formes de l'héroïne?

Je suggère que face à un personnage si démuni de force (Maria Chapdelaine *attend* Paradis, *laisse* père et curé tracer son destin, *subit* Gagnon), et par une entente tacite, les illustrateurs de *Maria Chapdelaine* aient voulu rectifier une incompatibilité évidente entre la jeune paysanne aux formes héroïques de l'énoncé textuel et ce personnage invalidé par une débilité existentielle que découvre la composante narrative du même texte.

Et si les yeux de Maria Chapdelaine demeurent insaisissables dans leur forme, c'est peut-être que, motivés collectivement par le même entendement d'un personnage caractérisé par l'absence de tempérament, les illustrateurs du roman hémonien ont simplement opéré le remplissage d'un vide laissé par l'énoncé textuel, vide qu'ils ont comblé par une divergence qui se pourrait lire ainsi: pas de tempérament, donc pluralité de formes qui s'annulent les unes les autres au niveau des yeux. Cela présuppose l'existence d'un code socio-culturel qui relie tempérament et yeux, d'un code de type "les yeux sont le miroir de l'être."

Par ailleurs, l'énoncé textuel et l'illustration se rejoignent; si, en effet, le texte ne parle pas du regard, il est explicite sur la délimitation de l'especae visé par celui-ci. En de nombreuses occasions, l'énoncé du faire visible de Maria Chapdelaine insiste sur le fait que celle-ci regarde à terre ou baisse les yeux; dans le corpus iconographique, onze Maria sur vingt-six regardent le sol.

Si, donc, il s'établit un rapport de nécessité entre la composante discursive du texte fondateur et certains signes du paratexte iconographique, il s'organise entre la composante narrative et d'autres signes iconographiques convergents et/ou divergents, un système de forces régulatrices du sens, système qui assujettit l'image au texte. Le réseau de correspondances qui relie texte et image pourrait se schématiser ainsi:



Somme toute, le sens qui se dégage de la production iconographique globale attaché à *Maria Chapdelaine* semble coller aux couches souterraines du texte plus qu'à son écorce; le sens du bloc Maria-image tend, en effet, à faire écho au sens qui circule dans le texte, d'où une connivence plutôt "implicite" qu'explicite. Il n'appartient pas à ce travail de déterminer si les illustrateurs de Maria Chapdelaine ont fidèlement répété ce qu'en disait Louis Hémon. Une chose demeure cependant certaine: ce groupe de lecteurs semble avoir reçu du roman hémonien un sens qui, de toute évidence, ne s'est pas rendu jusqu'aux faiseurs de mythes.

APPENDICE

Liste des abréviations pour le tableau de la page 3

âge

inf. infantile
j. jeune (15-25)
m. mûr (25-40)
ind. indiscernable

attitude

e. euphorique (joviale, confiante, sereine, amoureuse, gaie)
d. dysphorique (ennuyée, blasée, attristée, fatiguée)
n. neutre (pensive, songeuse, indifférente, simple, distraite)

expression faciale

e. euphorique (gaîté, calme, avidité)
d. dysphorique (lassitude, tristesse, écoeurement, désespoir, ennui, accablement)
n. neutre (résignation, viduité, indifférence, timidité, absence)
ind. indiscernable

regard

b. yeux baissés
v. vide
e. euphorique (gaîté, confiance, amour, séduction)

couleur des cheveux

f. foncés (bruns/noirs)
p. pâles (blonds, châtains)
n.a. non-applicable

mobilité

m. mobile
imm. immobile
n.a. non-applicable

couleur des yeux

f. foncés (bruns/noirs)
p. pâles (bleus)
ind. indiscernable
n.a. non-applicable

posture

ass. assise
d. debout
accr. accroupie
n.a. non-applicable

taille du corps

m/m mince/moyen
f/r fort/robuste
ind. indiscernable

taille des yeux, de la bouche, du nez et/ou des cheveux

p. petit(s)
g. grand(s)
m. moyen(s)
l. long(s) ou large(s)
c. courts
ind. indiscernable

texture des cheveux

r. raides
fr. frisés
o. ondulés
ind. indiscernable

forme des yeux

am. en amandes
bi. de biche
r. ronds
p.l. paupières lourdes
a.c. forme "accent circonflexe"
ind. indiscernable

forme du nez

d. droit
é. épaté
b. bosselé
r.c. retroussé combé
ind. indiscernable

forme de la bouche

d. droite
c.v.b. coins vers le bas
c.v.h. coins vers le haut
ind. indiscernable

forme des cheveux (coiffure)

ch. chignon
tr. tresses
russ. tresses enroulées autour des oreilles
b. bouclés
c. cachés

NOTES

[1] "Idée" est pris ici dans le sens que lui donne Gottlob Frege: "If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions . . . There result, as a matter of course, a variety of differences in the ideas associated with the same sense" *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, 1960), 59.

[2] Selon une définition que donne Pierce des icônes, les signes iconographiques devraient avoir "une certaine ressemblance native avec l'objet auquel ils se réfèrent"; l'illustration romanesque a pour référent un texte de mots et il demeure évident que l'image de Maria Chapdelaine, telle que la concevront ses illustrateurs, n'aura aucun lien de ressemblance avec les écores graphiques qui composent le texte fondateur, mais plutôt avec le signifié auquel renvoient ses graphèmes.

[3] Vingt-sept illustrateurs (au moins) ont travaillé sur le roman, donnant une production iconographique de quelque six cents illustrations. Ce sont: Jean Lébédeff, Clarence Gagnon, Jean-Paul Lemieux, Michel Gagnon, Cristina Crinteanu, G. de Beney, Daniel Sinclare, Virginia Byers, A. Alexeieff, G. Cochet, Eugène Corneau, Gracia, Suzor-Côté, Derambure, Henri Faivre, Thoreau MacDonald, Michel Ciry, Clermont Duval, Jean Droit, J. Routier, Pierre Degournay, Timar, Wilfred Jones, Sylvain Hairy, Nicole Baron et deux illustrateurs anonymes. L'exhaustion est en soi à peu près impossible, mais tout a été mis en oeuvre pour y arriver.

[4] J'emprunte ce terme à Gérard Genette (*Palimpsestes*, Paris: Seuil, 1982).

[5] Umberto Eco, "Sémiologie des messages visuels," *Communications* 15 (1970), p. 29. Dans ce vaste corpus iconographique, un triage s'imposait. Puisque l'objet de cette étude se limite au personnage-titre, j'ai donc non seulement isolé les illustrations où apparaissait Maria Chapdelaine (220 spécimens) mais je n'ai retenu de cette première sélection qu'un échantillon de vingt-sept Maria, chaucune représentant le modèle le plus "discernable" de chaque illustrateur ayant participé à la production iconographique globale. Cette sélection, motivée par un souci de discernabilité, rend donc arbitraires et inutilisables pour cette analyse les catégories d'"images reconnaissables" de la place, du geste et de l'action, catégories pouvant devenir signifiantes au niveau de l'ensemble des illustrations de Maria Chapdelaine, mais qui perdent leur pertinence à l'intérieur d'un corpus établi arbitrairement. Ainsi, il se peut qu'aucune des vingt-sept Maria choisies ici ne se tienne à la fenêtre — place très signifiante et dans le texte, et dans sa répondante iconographique — et qu'au niveau de cette répondante globale, l'image de Maria assise à la fenêtre soit l'objet d'une récurrence forte.

[6] Je dis "rétabli" par rapport à toutes les transformations que lui avaient fait subir certains éditeurs (v. la préface de *Maria Chapdelaine*, Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983).

[7] Classification suggérée par Bernard Pottier dans *Linguistique générale* (Paris: Klincksiek, 1974).

[8] Eco 14.

[9] "Neutre," c'est-à-dire ni dysphorique ni euphorique; dans cette catégorie (où "attitude" = posture + mouvement + expression faciale + regard) j'inclus les termes: songeuse, figée, gênée, pensive, indifférente, recueillie, distraite, hypnotisée, contemplative, blasée, absente.

[10] L'expression faciale est la somme: regard + forme de la bouche. Je tiens pour acquis qu'une bouche dont les coins sont dirigés vers le bas a une expression dysphorique, qu'une bouche dont les coins sont relevés présente une expression euphorique, qu'une bouche dite "droit" s'associe à une expression "neutre."

[11] Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983), p. 125-26.

[12] *Maria Chapdelaine*, p. 29.

[13] Dans une optique sartrienne, Maria Chapdelaine, à aucun moment de son histoire, n'"agit," puisque "la condition indispensable et fondamentale de toute action c'est la liberté de l'être agissant," que "la liberté, c'est précisément le néant qui "est été" au coeur de l'homme et qui contraint la réalité-humaine à "se faire," au lieu "d'être," et que l'héroïne de Hémon, nous l'avons vu, ne dépasse jamais sa condition de sujet manipulé, c'est-à-dire, tout compte fait, d'objet — donc privé de conscience — que ce soit "par choix" ou non.

Une étude plus poussée de la psychologie de Maria Chapdelaine parviendrait peut-être à cerner les limites — qualitatives et quantitatives — de l'inconscience de celle-ci; entre l'être authentique et le parfait "salaud" se situe un personnage qui de toutes façons laisse agir les autres pour lui, se contente d'être.

(Citations tirées de: Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, Paris: Gallimard, 1943, 490, 495.)

STONE POEM

Susan Glickman

"The real seer is the one who, analysing the
psychology of love, is able to see in the heart
of the stone the dance of the fire-idols of Azar!"

— GHALIB

The big boulders that squat in your path,
those territorial hunchbacks daring you
to plough on, grinning under dark brows
when you break your hoe — they have authority.
Imagine what they're sitting on!
A lifetime of silence, the biographer's grave.
No one pushes them around.

And crystals
are intriguing. Their secretive accretions.
Their hoarding of multiple selves. The way they work
in the dark.
They don't take holidays, always busy
on the next deal. Nature's calculators
they keep adding one to one to one.

But that fire is another story.

It chastens the hearts of the geodes, those shy
imploded stars
who just lie there humming
some day my prince will come
into the long night of the fields.
It is their voices that nudge you awake
at 3:00 a.m.
luring you outside to brood
about the psychology of love.

AT THE ART THERAPIST'S

Heather Spears

"Draw black, then." But to any black
I draw there is an edge, my arm
slides easily under it: it is false.
The paper tears along the chalk line.
And the lines are false, they translate
what's not yet mapped, into sacred territories,
rivers.
I have seen no rivers. My left hand
reaches for my skill, but my right
withdraws, fastidious, all five fingers
tense and shaking. I am no good at this.
I'm stumped, amputated, my heart
closes its ventricles over and over,
like a mouth closing over the same word.

FIVE DRAWINGS

At the World Poetry Festival, Toronto, May 1986

Heather Spears

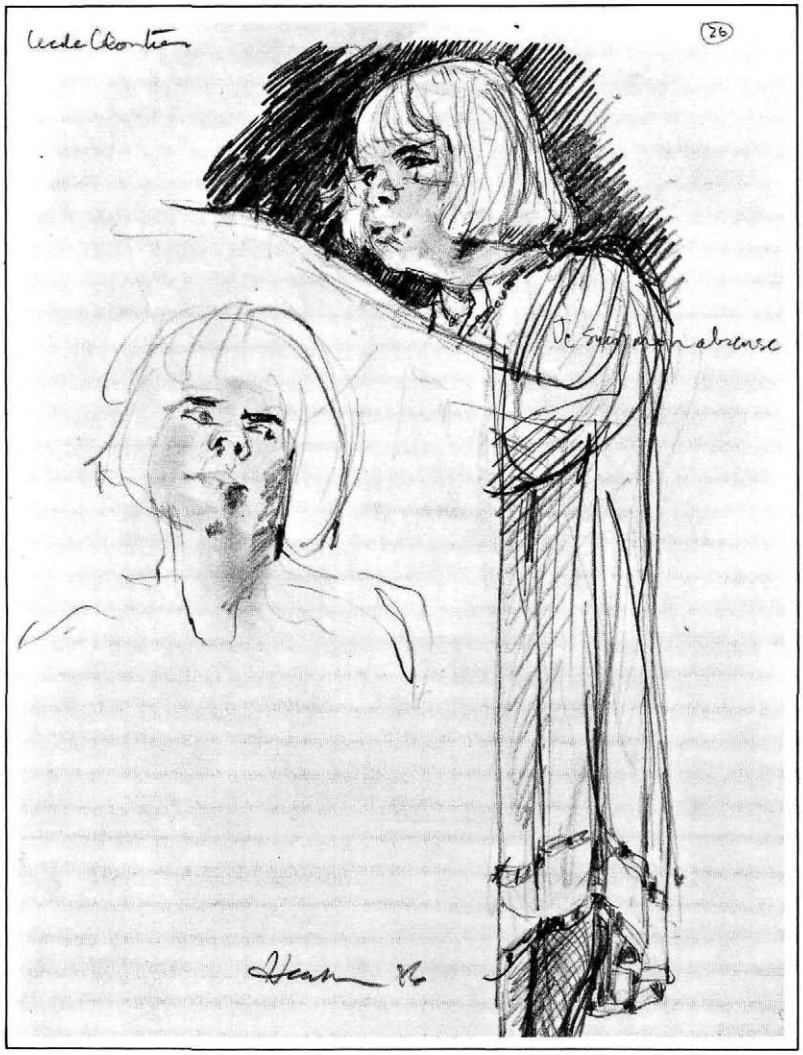


FIG. 1 Cécile Cloutier

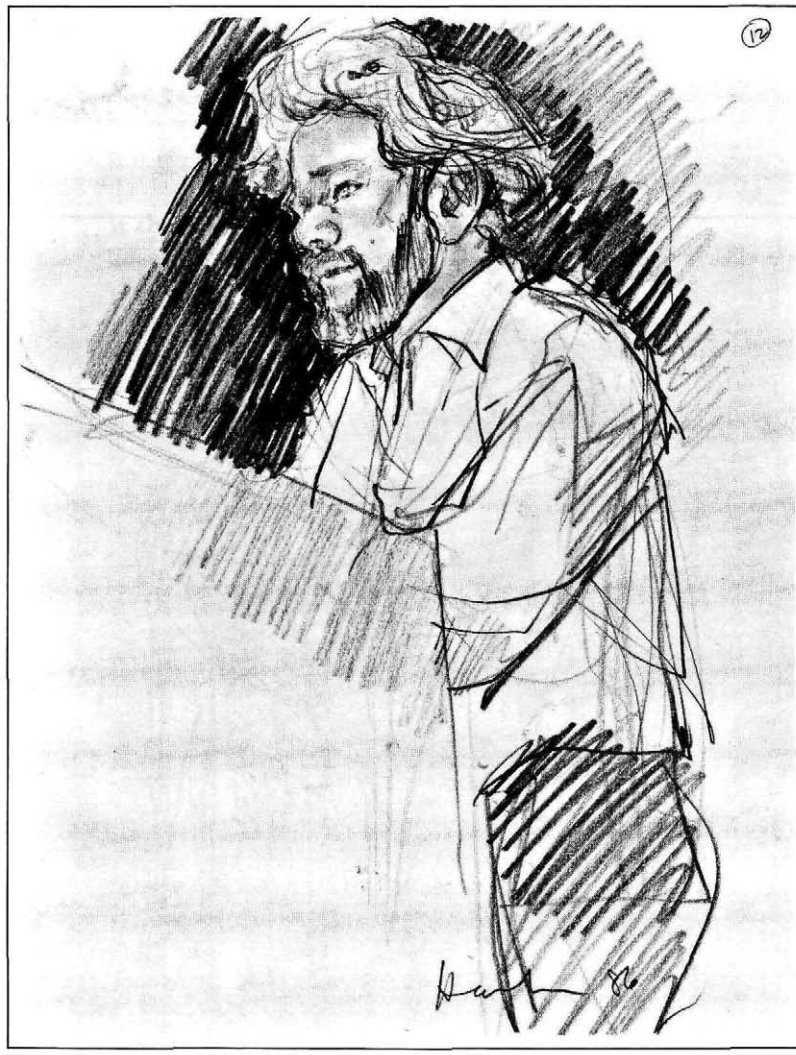


FIG. 2 Michael Ondaatje

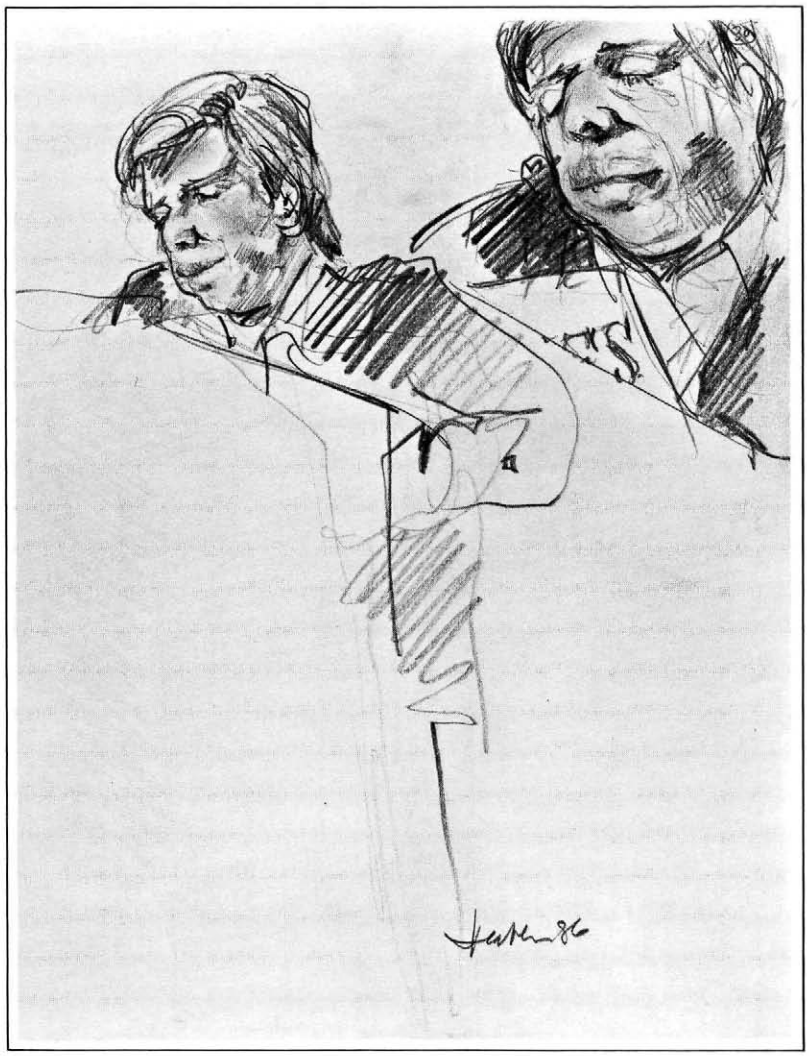


FIG. 3 Herménégilde Chiasson

FIG. 4 Gwendolyn MacEwen

FIG. 5 Louky Bersianik

EMILY CARR'S TENNYSON

Janet Warner

EMILY CARR'S COPY OF THE POEMS of Tennyson is a small dark blue linen-bound volume, much underlined and occasionally annotated. On the recto of the front end paper Carr has signed her name: M. Emily Carr, Jan. 1905, and underneath are sketched three heads, two of older women, and one of a man with a moustache (Fig. 1). On the other end papers of both the front and back of the book are amusing social sketches (Figs. 2-5). Inside the volume, where she dated her reading of some of the poems (and occasionally doodled human profiles), Carr's underlinings give us vivid insight into her feelings and concerns during 1905, her 34th year.[1] They also cast light on the way literary images can fruitfully work on a painter's sensibilities.

January of 1905 had seen Emily just back in Victoria after a disappointing sojourn in England, which included fifteen months of harsh treatment for "hysteria" at the East Anglia Sanatorium in Suffolk.[2] To her family, she appeared "a fat, fast, vulgar woman"[3] having taken up smoking while she was away. She was also not afraid to swear or ride astride. Very soon after her return, she landed a job as cartoonist in Victoria for the newspaper *The Week*, which she held till November 1905. However, from her underlinings of Tennyson dated during this year, it is possible to conclude her confident behaviour in part hid a sensitive nature smarting from emotional experiences, clinging to religious mysticism, yet bordering on despair. Tennyson suited her moods well.

A page of *The Palace of Art* is revealing. Emily has bracketed with double lines the stanza:

> And death and life she hated equally,
> And nothing saw, for her despair,
> But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
> No comfort anywhere.

Yet if these lines reflected her own dark mood, a few lines previously her artistic eye had been caught by the lines:

> The plunging seas draw backward from the land
> Their moon-led waters white.

Next to these lines she wrote "Dallas Road,"[4] indicating that they reminded her of one of her favourite walks along the Dallas Road cliffs in Victoria. These under-

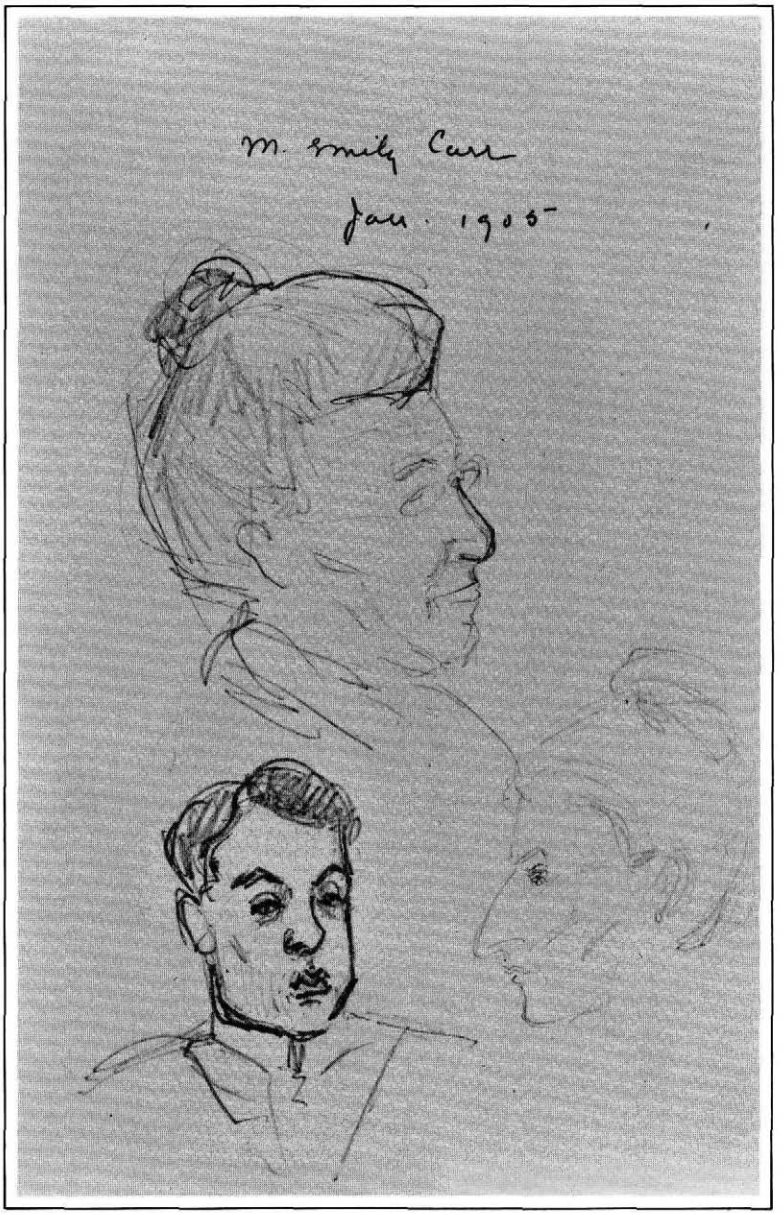


FIG. 1 Under Emily Carr's signature are sketched three heads. I believe the head at lower right is Emily's sister Alice, because of its similarity to a painting of Alice (reproduced in Tippett, p. 82). The man seems to be the same person sketched at the dancing party (Fig. 3). The woman with glasses seems to be the same woman as in Fig. 6, possibly Emily's oldest sister, Edith.

COLLECTION: VANCOUVER ART GALLERY; PHOTOGRAPHER: JIM GORMAN

linings are typical of the kind of poetry that caught her attention throughout the volume. She marks passages of landscape that communicate colour or light; she marks passages of love poetry; and she marks lines expressing religious feeling, and sometimes despair.[5] Tennyson's *Palace of Art* and the *Lady of Shalott* are poems which deal with the isolation of the artist from society and the consequences of re-entering society. ("I am half-sick of shadows" and "She left the web . . ." are underlined in *The Lady.*) Emily may have identified these poems with her return from England and resumption of a normal life after her months of seclusion in the sanatorium. In *Growing Pains* she wrote of this year:

> And so I came back to British Columbia not with "know-it-all" fanfare, not a successful student prepared to carry on art in the New World, just a broken-in-health girl that had taken rather a hard whipping, and was disgruntled with the world.[6]

In Tennyson's *Maud* she had marked with double lines:

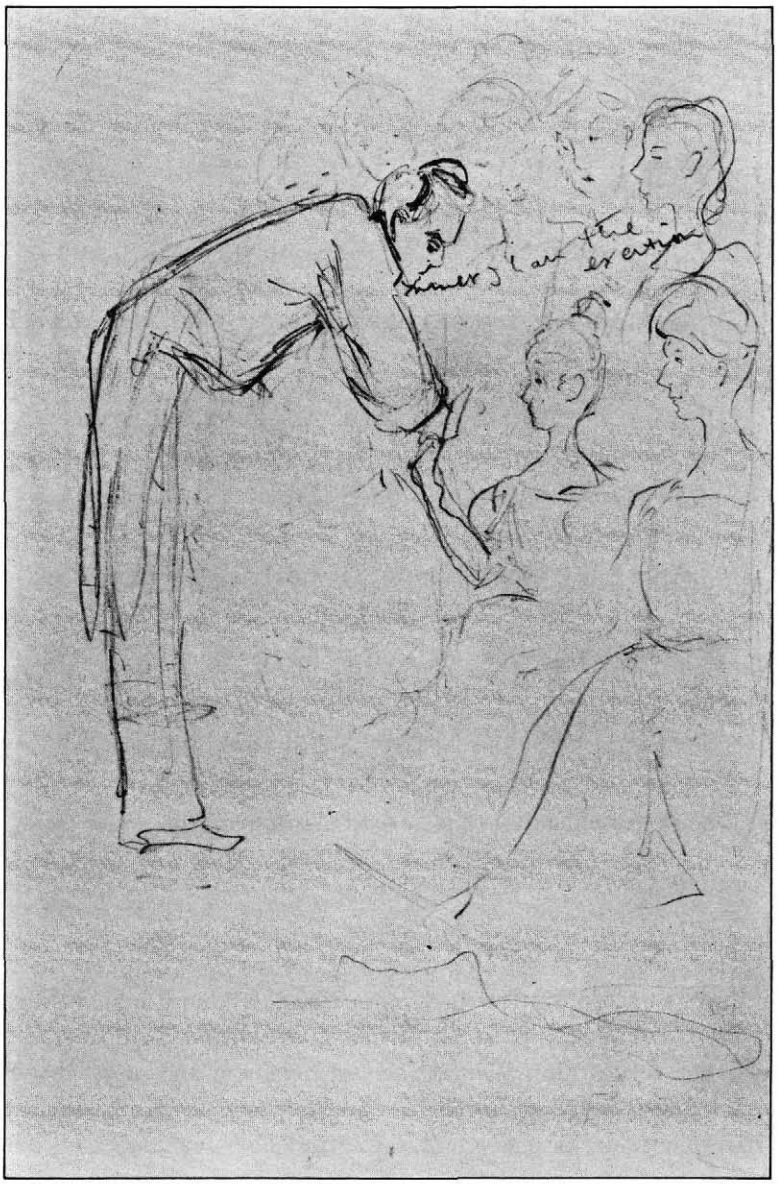
> Ah what shall I be at fifty
> Should nature keep me alive
> If I find the world so bitter
> When I am but twenty-five?

And again, marked in *The Two Voices*:

> A still small voice spake unto me,
> 'Thou art so full of misery
> Were it not better not to be?'

Although Emily in retrospect calls herself a "girl," and identifies with an age of twenty-five, in reality she was a woman of thirty-four at the time of her underlinings. This knowledge on our part makes very poignant her reactions to *Maud*, a poem in which she seemed to identify with the narrator's intense experience of love, marking:

> O let the solid ground
> Not fail beneath my feet
> Before my life has found
> What some have found so sweet;
> Then let come what come may,
> What matter if I go mad,
> I shall have had my day.
>
> Let the sweet heavens endure,
> Not close and darken above me
> Before I am quite sure
> That there is one to love me;
> Then let come what come may
> To a life that has been so sad,
> I shall have had my day.



FIGS. 2 AND 3 These informal little sketches from the front inside cover of the volume could be ideas Emily was trying out for cartoons. They are humorous commentaries on the dancing party behaviour of bored men. "Must I have the exertion" one says in Fig. 2. In Fig. 3, the woman is solicitous in the top sketch ("Don't you feel well, sweetie?" she asks; in the bottom sketch, the young woman exclaims "Horrid Brute" at her partner's behaviour.)

COLLECTION: VANCOUVER ART GALLERY; PHOTOGRAPHER: JIM GORMAN

Sometimes perhaps she identifies herself with Maud, for a refrain is marked by both a bracket and a cross (x) each time it appears:

> Rosy is the West
> Rosy is the South
> Rosy are her cheeks
> And a rose her mouth.

EMILY HAD A SERIOUS SUITOR IN ENGLAND, Mayo Padden, who visited her from Canada, intent on making her his wife. In the end, she refused him; he suffered a broken heart, she guilt. To me, her Tennyson underlinings do not echo that kind of experience, but rather the emotions of a shared romantic encounter, ending, however, in loss or rejection. She marks with a double line, for example:

> O that twere possible
> After long grief and pain
> To find the arms of my true love
> Round me once again!

Another such entry occurs in *Enoch Arden* opposite lines describing the despair of Enoch's rival, Philip, when he realizes Annie loves Enoch and he:

> . . . slipt aside, and like a wounded life
> Crept down into the hollows of the wood;
> There, while the rest were loud in merry-making
> Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and past
> Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

Next to these lines, Emily has written, "bravery."

Maria Tippett suggests in her biography of Carr that such an experience could have been Emily's relationship with Sammy Blake, a young man Emily met in England, who in 1900 went to South Africa and married a nurse there. Emily romanticized her relationship with Blake, whereas she was upset by Paddon, because she felt guilt at not wanting to marry him. She could idealize Blake because she never had to consider him as a real husband. (Tippett makes a plausible case that Emily was probably frightened by sex and unable to respond.)

Emily's *In Memoriam* underlinings emphasize a sympathy with Tennyson's sense of loss. Like Tennyson, she seemed to feel the inadequacy of words, bracketing the four lines:

> I sometimes hold it half a sin
> To put in words the grief I feel;
> For words, like Nature, half reveal
> And half conceal the Soul within. (*IM* v)

When Tennyson finds places "emptied of delight" which he once visited with Hallam, Emily sympathizes, and underlines, in the same stanzas *For all is dark where thou art not* (*IM* VIII). She also marked on both sides the famous two lines of *IM* LXXXV, " 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

Emily is moved by the religious dilemma of *In Memoriam*. She has written the word "fearful" in the right margin of the page opposite the stanzas beginning:

> Oh yet we trust that somehow good
> Will be the final goal of ill,
> To pangs of nature, sins of will
> Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;
>
> That nothing walks with aimless feet . . .
>
> * * *
>
> So runs my dream: but what am I?
> An infant crying in the night:
> An infant crying for the light:
> And with no language but a cry. (*IM* LIV)

She bracketed the entire next stanza (LV), and the last lines of LVI:

> O life as futile, then as frail
> O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
> What hope of answer or redress?
> Behind the veil, behind the veil.

These, Tennyson's darkest moments in *In Memoriam*, struck a responsive chord in Emily Carr in 1905.

Yet Emily obviously was comforted by Tennyson's concluding stanzas, each marked in its entirety, "Love is and was my Lord and King" (CXXVI); "Dear friend, far off, my lost desire" (CXXIX) and "Thy voice is on the rolling air" (CXXX) which concludes:

> Far off thou art, but ever high;
> I have thee still, and I rejoice:
> I prosper, circled with thy voice;
> I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

At the end of *In Memoriam* is written a date, "Feb 14," which either marks the day she concluded the poem, or the day she began to read *The Princess* which follows on the page. The only other dated poems in the book are "Oct 5, 1905," marking the beginning of *Enoch Arden*, the annotation "finished November 27, 1905" at the end of *The Passing of Arthur* and "Dec. 8, 1905" beginning *Queen Mary*. These datings seem to indicate Emily was occasionally using the volume as a kind of emotional diary.

Emily was saved from too much melancholy by her sense of humour. It was

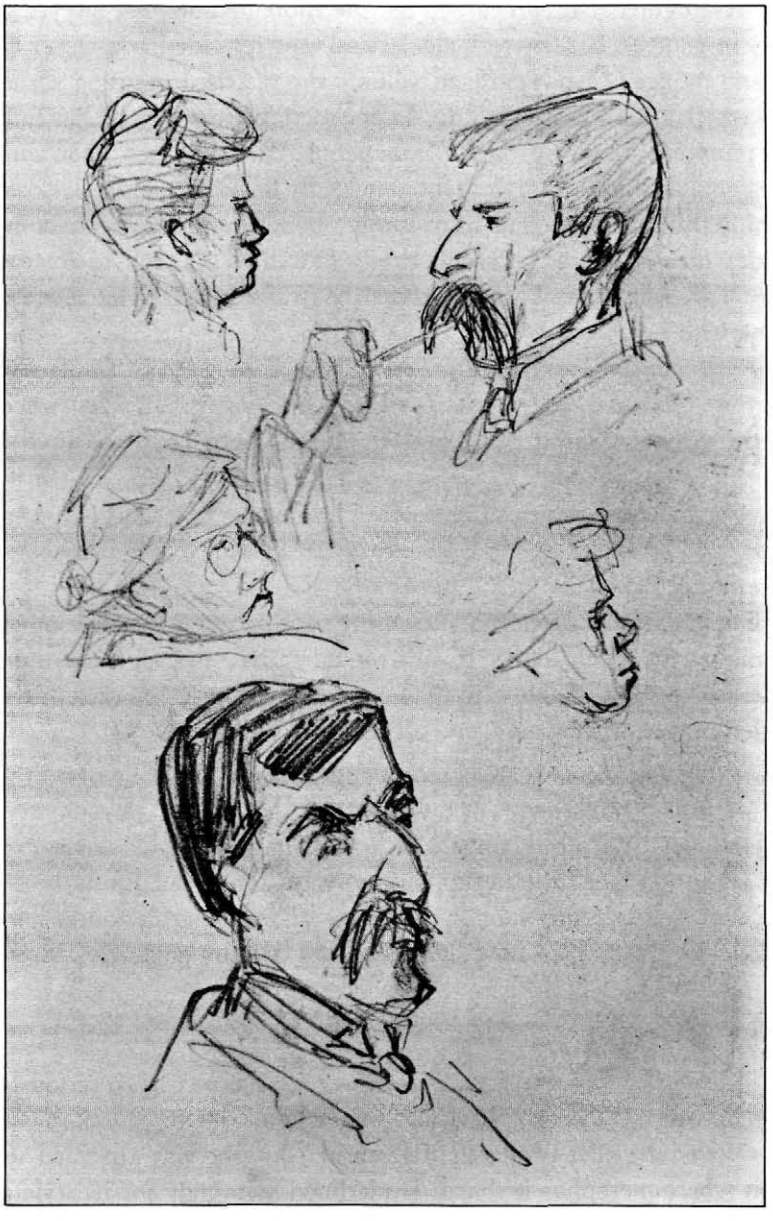


FIG. 4 These sketches from the back end papers appear to be of people who are also in the sketch at the dining room door (Fig. 5). The man with the moustache is at the top right of Fig. 5. These sketches are very free and informal, rather unlike Emily's usual controlled style at this time.

COLLECTION: VANCOUVER ART GALLERY; PHOTOGRAPHER: JIM GORMAN

capacity for laughter that had earned her the Indian name "Klee Wyck" (Laughing One) in 1898 on her trip to Ucluelet and now it made her a clever cartoonist. On the end papers of her Tennyson volume she sketched amusing scenes from a dance in which a man in evening dress appears to be so bored he has fallen asleep (Fig. 3); another shows a group of irate people knocking on a door and banging a dinner gong. A plump woman (probably Emily herself) holds a clock set at 1:20 p.m. I think this may be a scene from Emily's boarding house in Vancouver, when the midday meal was late (Fig. 5). Emily moved to Vancouver to teach art in January 1906, where she lived in several boarding houses. Her Tennyson must have gone with her.

After *In Memoriam*, poems from *Idylls of the King* affected Emily most deeply (i.e., they are most marked). Emily participated as she read, so that when she had finished the story of "Gareth and Lynette," in answer to Tennyson's remark

> "and he that told the tale in older times
> Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
> But he, that told it later, says Lynette,"

she wrote "I say Lynette."

Long lines are drawn down the sides of the page on many passages of *Guinevere*. Here Emily seems much involved with the narrative, and with the moral issues, sometimes expressed as maxims, in the poetry. For example, marked in three ways, with underlining, a vertical line, and an X, are the lines:

> For manners are not idle but the fruit
> Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.

Emily also liked "We needs must love the highest when we see it," and "For mockery is the fume of little hearts." What most impressed Emily in *Guinevere*, however, was Arthur's long rebuke to Guinevere recalling his youth, her adultery and his love, for she marked both sides of almost two full pages.

WHEN EMILY CARR IN LATER LIFE turned seriously to writing, her style was vividly metaphorical: "Black pine-covered mountains jagged up on both sides of the inlet like teeth."[7] Even in 1905 she was attracted to parts of Tennyson where metaphor is sharp. Underlined seemingly for its style alone are lines from *Queen Mary*: "My Lord / I have the jewel of a loyal heart," or from *In Memoriam* (XCV) ". . . the trees / Laid their dark arms about the field." On the relationship between words and painting, Emily wrote years later, "I visualized my words and worded my 'seeings' and seemed to get a fuller understanding a deeper inlook." Tennyson's ability to word his seeings interested Emily from the start.

FIG. 5 This sketch is on the inside of the back cover of the book. Emily drew herself on the right, holding a clock, while other members of the group are banging on a door. I conjecture that this is a scene from Emily's boarding house in Vancouver, where she moved in 1906 to teach art.

COLLECTION: VANCOUVER ART GALLERY; PHOTOGRAPHER: JIM GORMAN

Perhaps the most significant underlinings to anyone interested in Carr's development as an artist are those which appear to be related to her aesthetic responses. Many of Emily's markings of Tennyson concern landscape. Sometimes Tennyson's words reminded Carr of a real landscape, such as the "Dallas Road" entry previously noted in *The Palace Art*. Another passage occurs in *Enoch Arden*, where opposite the words "halfway up / The narrow street that clambered toward the hill," she wrote "St Ives." Emily had spent eight months taking art lessons in St. Ives in 1901. She described the experience memorably many years later in *Growing Pains* (1946), remarking that the glare of the sea and white sand gave her headache.[8] In 1905, it took only a slight poetic image to call up the place for her.

In *Enoch Arden* two lines are marked which appealed to her artist's eye: "Faint as a figure seen in early dawn / Down at the far end of an avenue." Similarly, many briefly marked passages are like little snapshots, as these from *The Passing of Arthur*:

> And in a sudden, lo! The level lake,
> And the long glories of the winter moon.
>
> * * *
>
> . . . a dark strait of barren land:
> On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
> Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Or, from *Gareth and Lynette*, her sense of colour prompted a line against:

> The damp hill-slopes were quickened into green
> And the live green had kindled into flowers,
> For it was past the time of Easter day.

Carr also responded to Tennyson's frequent metaphors and similies about painting. A heavy line marks this passage in *Lancelot and Elaine*:

> As when a painter, poring on a face,
> Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
> Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
> The shape and color of a mind and life,
> Lives for his children, ever at its best
> And fullest; so the face before her lived . . .

More frequently marked than straightforward landscape or painterly passages, however, are passages in the poetry concerning the quality of light, and the connection often made in Tennyson's metaphor between light and God. Carr is consistently drawn to such passages, and in view of the mystical nature of light in her imagination and Tennyson's verbal images. *In Memoriam* is full of the lexis of late art, it is here that we see perhaps the closest connection between her visual

FIG. 6 This page is opposite the last page of printed poetry in the volume, and seems to be a sketch of the same woman as on the signature page. A figure bending with hands on knees is in rough outline on upper right.

COLLECTION: VANCOUVER ART GALLERY; PHOTOGRAPHER: JIM GORMAN

light. Carr marked the whole of XXX, and then drew a second line along the left margin of the conclusion.

> Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn
> Drawn forth the cheerful day from night:
> O Father, touch the east, and light
> The light that shone when Hope was born

She marked with a double squiggle the stanza (XLVII) ending, "Farewell! We lose ourselves in light." She drew a line around three sides of the last lines of XCV, which again associates light with life and death. From the variety and frequency of the underlinings of *In Memoriam* we sense Carr's sympathy with all of Tennyson's deep emotions and ultimate mystical sense of God expressed "visually" in light and landscape.

Although it took her many more years to work out in her own medium the triumphant union of light and landscape, it may be that the poetic images of Tennyson remained for her a seminal influence. This small volume with its variety of moods and sentiments so freely marked, its reflection of its reader's pain and pleasure, is a unique record of the emotions of one year in the life of one of Canada's great artists.

NOTES

[1] Carr's edition was *The Poetical Works of Alfred Tennyson,* Hurst and Company, New York. The volume measures 11 cm by 17.4 cm. The name of the author and publisher are printed on the spine in gold. A photograph of Tennyson appears opposite the title page. All Carr's markings in the volume are in pencil. The volume is in the collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery. My thanks to Helle Viirlaid, Registrar, for her unfailing consideration and assistance, and to Glendon College, York University for research support.

[2] Maria Tippett, *Emily Carr, A Biography* (Toronto: Penguin, 1982; first published Oxford Univ. Press, 1979). Unless otherwise indicated, this excellent book is the source of all biographical information in this article. Emily was in England, 1899-1904. Her "treatment" at the sanatorium included electric shock, an extremely harsh and experimental practice in 1903 (p. 60).

[3] Tippett, p. 63.

[4] She also wrote a few other words which I have not been able to make out.

[5] In this article I attempt to give some idea of the range of concerns and emtoions that Carr responded to. I can only give the one or two examples in each case which appear to me to be most significant, but the volume is full of briefly marked passages and crosses marking the titles.

[6] *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1966; first published 1946), p. 203.

[7] She took a correspondence course in short story writing in 1926 when she was 55. Her first book, *Klee Wyck* was published in 1941. This example is from the story "D'Sonoqua."

[8] *Growing Pains,* p. 167.

FIVE HAIKU

Rod Willmot

empty pews:
the janitor's Dalmatian
sleeps in the stained glass light

almost sunset:
on a sidestreet
a child runs out of the shadows

taken by surprise:
I and Thou
in the soft-core porn

tongue-twitch of unbegun prayer:
the roof-ice heavily
lets go

the last square of sod
fits in; bits of grass
in the gardener's beard

FALLACIES ABOUT ART

Lawren Harris

The Literary Lawren Harris

"Painters are a bore because most of them would have you believe they are philosophers more than painters," Charlie Chaplin said in his *Autobiography*. There's an element of truth in his assertion: painters try to make sense out of life, as do philosophers. Some even write philosophic treatises, in Canada, for example, Paul-Emile Borduas, Alex Colville — and Lawren Harris.

Harris's manuscript draft of his "Fallacies About Art" is in the Public Archives of Canada in a file containing rough notes, quotations from his reading of critics such as Stephen Spender and Susanne Langer, and jottings on his own creative process and that of others. At the end of the file is his good copy — twenty-six neatly handwritten pages on foolscap, although the last section was still in draft form. The pages appear to have been extracted from a notebook. Harris wrote his treatise to deal with the public's inability to comprehend abstract art. His draft conjures up the artistic problems of his day with uncanny immediacy — the adverse criticism, the niggling comments, even of friends, in what Merrill Denison in 1934 called the "great Canadian art war." "Fallacies About Art" is a plea for understanding.

Probably the manuscript dates from the 1940's or early 1950's. The paper on which he drafted one section of the "Fallacies" is similar to that used in a manuscript dated 1943 ("Creative Life . . . An Interplay of Opposites"), and he used a similar, though different coloured, notebook in 1954. Internal evidence in the manuscript, particularly the reference to the Nazis, suggests a similar dating. Harris may have begun the manuscript in 1943 and completed the good copy in 1954, just as he was preparing his *A Disquisition on Abstract Painting* (1954). But similar ideas to the "Fallacies" had already appeared in a 1949 article he wrote in *Canadian Art*, "An Essay on Abstract Painting," so this dating remains a hypothesis.

Harris's attitude toward art was action-oriented. Even the kind of questions he asked show him ready to involve himself, whether as artist or art-lover. (In his rough notes for the "Fallacies," we find one fallacy is "that we can understand or respond to art without making any particular effort.") Putting one's shoulder to the wheel was involved, especially when Harris was revealing truths about abstract art. The way he set up his essay to answer falsehoods is unusual — and perhaps related to his upbringing (his forebears had been preachers, as he said). First he raises the public (and even the artists') point of view, then he shows where error lies. Mistakes and misconceptions were grist to the mill of his dialectic.

In his "Fallacies," Harris accurately and defensively evokes an era when abstract art is just gaining acceptance. He attempts to convey a rational critic's answer to the banal comments which reach him, and thus raise the artistic consciousness of the country. He gives art a broad basis in daily life: it is "as essential to our well-being as

the efficient handling of our practical affairs." "Fallacies About Art" falters when Harris deals with art criticism. He was himself a critic, but his many articles were more explanatory than critical. He called one article on Modern Art and Aesthetic Reactions in the May 1927 *Canadian Forum*, "An Appreciation"; he titled his 1954 essay on Abstract Painting "A Disquisition". He never came to terms with judgmental criticism, either to accept its constructive potential or to refute its validity. He may have felt that his dialectical presentation of this problem in the "Fallacies" was simply didactic, not based on reasoned argument. He incorporated many of his thoughts in other writings, but never finished the "Fallacies."

In a way, Harris in his "Fallacies About Art" was justifying himself to himself. He was instructing himself on how to handle criticism. An artist is "supremely himself" in his painting, as Harris quoted the English critic Eric Newton. Being supremely himself placed an artist — Harris — beyond the reach of criticism. Only sympathy and understanding would illuminate the work of art — and beyond that, we deduce, the artist. Harris's "Fallacies About Art" is a moving defence of abstraction, of artistic innovation, and of art itself.

JOAN MURRAY

MANY PEOPLE TODAY HOLD the opinion that the new expressions in the arts are out of touch with public response.[1] This is in part true. It is true that many people cling to the old and established expressions and do not respond to the new. But it is also true that a large and increasing number of people do respond to the new expressions. The division between those who do not respond and those who do is accentuated today because we are in the midst of one of the world's great transition periods.

This is the first of a series of comments on this situation. They are all of them written with the hope that the presentation of the creative artist's point of view will aid those interested to a better understanding of the creative process and its demands on the artist and thus to an appreciation of and participation in the art expressions of our day.[2]

FALLACY I *The fallacy that art is separate from life*

If we reduce the significance of life to the practical affairs of the world, its material pursuits, then art can be no more than a decoration of life. But if our conception of life includes all emotion and thought, all speculation and meditation, the total realm of the mind and heart, then the arts, because of their contribution to the enrichment of our understanding and the development of our sensibility, are as essential to our well being as the efficient handling of our practical affairs. Indeed

if we view as a part of the totality the practical affairs of the world from an all inclusive conception of life we would dedicate them to the service of the mind and heart even though they must first serve our bodily needs.

Maxwell Anderson, the American playwright, recently wrote that "the arts of a democracy are its life. Business, law, politics, government, science — these are outward signs of what men are thinking, but the arts are the thoughts themselves." Which is to say that the significant life of man is the life of the mind and heart, and when we speak of the mind and heart we do not refer to the brain and physical heart. We refer to the receptive and creative consciousness which uses the bodily organs, senses, and faculties toward ends that transcend the body's needs, and this movement of the consciousness toward higher ends is not only embodied in the arts in every age and country that has any life above the physical, but is the means by which we create a life of greater and more satisfying [inclusive] meaning.

This projection of the creative consciousness toward fuller meaning, because it greatly enlarges the experience of the mind and heart, creates an area of life that can in part replace the predominance of the acquisitive and possessive instinct and thus offers a way out of the destructive power maze. Let us see how this works.

We are in one of the great transition periods in history. This means that we are participants in a struggle of great and opposing forces. It means also that we are in the midst of a dynamic creative adventure in every pursuit: in science, education and world politics; in economics and in the arts. Every individual is thereby faced with or involved in a process of readjustment. Those who oppose the readjustment can be destructive of creative values. Those who accept the process of readjustment become participants and in some degree creative agents in giving this world wide adventure direction toward new constructions in the hearts and minds of men. For as Edmund Taylor wrote in *Riches by Asia*, "we are all actors in the great drama of our day, the drama of the integration or disintegration of man." But we can be more than the products of our time and environment. For there is an element in the creative consciousness that transcends whatever environment just as there is a quality in all great works of art that transcends their historical period.

The very fact that the best works in the arts transcend the time in which they were created means that they were separate from the routine [practical] affairs of their day. They were and are created and function [operate] in another realm. They do, however, affect the practical affairs of the world indirectly. They do this by changes brought about through their agency in our awareness of and sensibility to other values in life. As Roger Fry, the English artist and writer, wrote, "All art depends upon cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit." The arts thus serve mankind best because they are separate from business, law,

LAWREN HARRIS, *Snow* II, 1916.
ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO, TORONTO

politics, and science. But they can have a marked effect on the minds and hearts of those who administer and work in these fields.

If we are to give a deeper meaning to all professions and occupations than inheres in them and make the best use of the great discoveries of science we must have and apply a standard which lies outside and beyond all of these and the only standard we can apply if we are to serve the highest ends is the one of the spirit.

We are all aware that the principles of the spirit function in that part of our consciousness which is beyond physical concerns and responses; that part which has an affinity for higher values. These have to do with a sense of justice in life, and its equivalent fine proportions in art and the appropriateness of these to the motif or theme; with integrity in life and art; and with individuality responsibility in thought and deed and its equivalent creative inevitability in art. Above all we are aware in our moments of keenest insight that spirit is one however varied and limitless its expressions, and life and art therefore interdependent in all their phases.

The principles of the spirit may be a reflection in us of universal harmony, of a dynamic equilibrium at the very heart of universal life. They constitute "the moral order of the universe" as E. M. Forster wrote. They are the only guide we have in making anything on earth fine, just, harmonious and meaningful and they are the

motivating impulse, the very basis, meaning and value of art. That is the reason that the life of the spirit finds its actions in spiritual heroes and its fullest expression in the arts, and this is also the reason that when we truly experience a great work of art we feel it justifies man's existence.

The history of the arts is the story of man's sensibility of the finest values and his awareness of the glory of life beyond the acquisitive and the "practical." We can learn more about man's resources, his potentialities, through his creative life and its works than we can in any other way. That is the reason that mankind in its better moments has revered the arts as a great life-giving force [power agency]; and that is also the reason that the greatest works in the arts have endured, have become part of the heritage of the mind and heart of man. They belong to his potential spiritual maturity.

One of the reasons for this is that the arts cultivate the life of the spirit directly. They do this above the restrictions of any class, creed, dogma, sect, or ideology. They thus leave us free to experience the informing spirit of life each one in his own way.

We know that the best works of art cannot be created without an awakened and keen awareness of the highest values. We know that without freedom the expression of spiritual values will be thwarted. "The Nazi could not experiment in art — communism has looked upon art solely as an instrument of propaganda. Art and spirit are in danger of becoming bond servants to ideologies; they are forbidden to fulfill their natural role as the bootstraps by which humanity helps to lift itself." We know that when sensibility is thwarted and awareness blinded by dogmatism, bigotry, sectarianism, class distinctions, or any ideology, a part of mankind suffers, as witness the Spanish inquisition, the witch hunts in puritan New England and the debasing and dishonest technique of the smear and the dreadful repressions and cruelties of fascism and communism. In that direction there lies no shred of hope for mankind.

If hope lies anywhere it is in the direction of a developing sensibility and an increasing awareness of the highest values. Indeed the real success of any civilization depends on the wide-ranging awareness of its people as much as on its knowledge. It is therefore essential that the arts are creatively alive and functioning as an organic part of the life of the people.

Heraclitus, the early Greek philosopher, wrote that "man is a portion of cosmic fire imprisoned in a body of earth and water," which is to say that the real man is compounded of thought, vision and sensibility and cultivates the powers of the mind and heart as basic to the good life, and leaves not only a living account of his spiritual culture in the arts, but the creative spirit in the arts.

Another meaning implied in Heraclitus's statement is that mankind is a spiritual solidarity, that is, that all mankind is akin in the spirit, which transcends his sense

perceptions, his emotional reactions and his mental processes but can inform, relate and use these to higher ends. This last is the art of the spirit in man, of which every creative artist is in some degree the agent and the awakened public the participants.

The arts are the ageless aspects of Society. Because at their best they rise above the topical, the local and the taste of the day, they are thought to be separate from the life of that day, whereas they belong to the greater life which, being greater, transcends the immediate concerns [practical] of whatever period.

FALLACY II *The fallacy that one art is superior to [better than] another*

I have known a number of writers for whom literature is the greatest of the arts because it is a living record of man's intuition and thought and embodies some of his most marvellous emotional and mental structures. I once knew a theatre director who considered the theatre, the drama, to be supreme because it used all of the other arts in integrated, living performances. I have known some great musicians for whom music alone offers the fullest life. Jean Cocteau says that "the language of poetry is the highest form of expression given to man." [Stated poetry is "the most finely-poised manner of thought known to man."] Frank Lloyd Wright once told me that "painting was the lowest of the arts, only a handmaiden to architecture."

It is of course right that the creative worker, in whatever art, considers his art the best. In one part of his being he must and should feel that the art which is the vehicle of his life's concentration and devotion is the greatest of the arts. Indeed, for the creative worker one art must be the art above all other arts. At the time his whole nature is engaged therein. Nothing else can exist for him within the pace of his creative momentum. It is the only way in which great works are created. But that does not say that any one art is lower or higher [better] than any other. It may say, however, that creative life in the arts is the highest experience man can have this side of complete sainthood.

Indeed any person who finds a great expression of his life in the arts, an elevation of the spirit over material concerns, an increase of consciousness beyond his normal response, will find the experience of each art to be similar. The same experience will be alomst the same with great works in every art, and all such experiences [will be] equally rewarding, and this even if he should feel when experiencing one master work that it contains [embodies] the greatest and most moving experience.

If we experience a Beethoven Symphony, Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Mozart's [*The*] *Magic Flute*, a Rembrandt, Titian, El Greco or David portrait, the best paintings of Van Gogh, or Cézanne, the dramas of Euripides or Shakespeare; the best in poetry, in architecture the St. Chapelle in Paris, the Alhambra in Granada, the French cathedrals, the sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska. For these and many more

are magical works; all of them on the same elevation; no one of them handmaiden to another; no one of them translatable into another art — proving each art to be autonomous, alive and self-contained within its own medium, the highest expression of the human spirit — and each one inducing the feeling that they justify man's life on earth.

Just as the best [great] compositions in music do not serve any other art, the best paintings do not serve any other art. They are quite separate organisms. They each have a complete, self-enclosed life of their own. Yet at the same time all of the arts evoke much the same transcendent response, however much their vehicles differ, and despite the fact that the channels of their communications are the senses. They do so because they are all the product of the creative spirit in man.

The service rendered by one art to another is of a different order, creates another autonomy, evokes a different concatenation of response but the response is still to living work of the creative spirit as creative [motivating] power is the same in all ages and places.

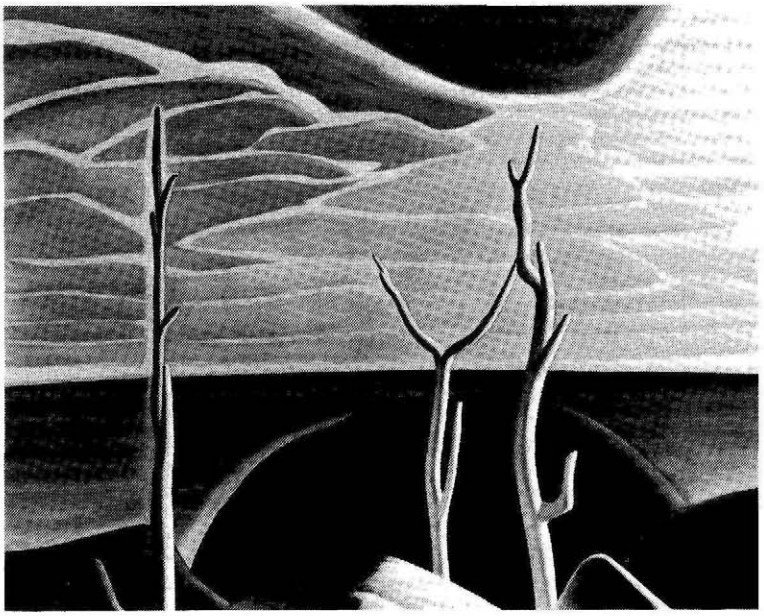
One work of art may have a greater variety of related themes than another, a more complex organization, a larger size, but that does not make it greater in terms of the informing spirit.

In one sense also duration in a work of art signifies little. A poem such as "Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas may be experienced in a few minutes, a Beethoven symphony in less than an hour, a painting by El Greco or Cézanne in a short time, a play by Shakespeare or Shaw in a few hours. If one were never to read the poem again, hear the symphony, witness the play, live surrounded by the architecture, the experiences according to their intensity and depth and because they are great "moments" in one's life, become embedded in the innermost consciousness as part of the accumulating heritage of a man, just as great works in all the arts are the objective heritage of mankind.

Only decorative painting and sculpture subserve architecture, just as incidental music serves the drama or the movies. Yet, on a higher level, music unites with the drama and dance to create opera and the ballet, just as the painting of the Sistine Chapel is inseparable from its architecture and thus transcends the decorative, and just as the sculpture of the façade of Amiens cathedral not only enhances it but is part of its very organization. Even commercial art at its best has a quality that transcends its use. So every art, while it is dependent on its vehicle and one with its medium, transcends its technique, its medium and means, and is alive in a realm that transcends beliefs, rules, dogma, observances, and subjects.

FALLACY III *The fallacy that artists should paint what the public wants*

What we term "the public" is made up of many parts, each one of them with somewhat different perceptions and degrees of awareness. There is not just one un-



LAWREN HARRIS, *Lake Superior*, *c.* 1924.
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA

differentiated public. If we were to ask an artist to paint "what the public wants" he would therefore be bewildered. He could not decide what part of it he should try to satisfy. Should it be businessmen or housewives, country folk or city people, seamen or landsmen, young people or old folks, the ignorant or the wise, saints or sinners, politicians or simple people? Should he paint a literal or an imaginative work, a profound or a light-hearted one, a sentimental or an austere one? The creative artist does not think in this way and cannot paint in those terms.

George Russell, the Irish poet, painter, and editor known as "A.E.," wrote: "I am certain that nothing first class came when the artist's mind was fixed on his public rather than on his subject."

The reason for this is simple. If an artist is concentrated on his work every other consideration, such as public appreciation and acclaim, is far from his mind. If in his working periods he should think of anything other than the work in hand, then his mind and soul and heart are not creatively concentrated and nothing of significance will be accomplished.

Moreover, in every creative venture the artist begins with a subject, an idea or intimation which is not clearly formed in his mind. Once he starts the creative process of clarification toward unity of expression and the painting begins to "live,"

it then takes hold and will lead him into ways that he did not foresee. These ways he must follow in utter disregard of whether the result will please or displease a public.

When the French Impressionists first painted their pictures their minds were concentrated on the creative endeavour to embody in paint on canvas a new vision of nature. It would have been impossible for them to do this had they given any consideration to what the public wanted. For there was then no public who could want such paintings, seeing they were unknown.

We know definitely that Cézanne never painted to please any part of the public. He painted as he said "to realize," meaning thereby to embody in paint on canvas his vision of a new fullness and form in the expressive quality of paint on canvas. We know from Van Gogh's letters that he never had a public in mind when he painted. It was the expression of his all-consuming devotion that he sought and which dictated the rhythms of his brush strokes and the radiant living colour of the paint.

If those Canadian artists who were the first to paint the Canadian landscape with new vision, that is in its own terms, had painted it as most Canadians then thought it should be painted, that is through the eyes of the circumspect English and tidy Dutch painters of the day, there would have been no beginning of an art expressive of this country.

If Emily Carr had painted the kind of pictures the people in Victoria once wanted, the result would have been a series of maidenly and innocuous water-colours. These would have had no relation whatever to the bold paintings of the full rhythms, depth and mystery of the west coast forest and Indian totems she did paint and which were ignored or rejected by the popular taste of her day.

The best in art in any country never originates in terms of "what the public wants." No creative artist paints to please the public though he may be very gratified when his work finds favour with some part of the public. While at work the creative artist no more thinks of a public than a surgeon does while performing an operation or a scientist when engaged in the process of research. As an enthusiastic amateur artist said, "Painting uses the whole of your head, there is no room for thought or feeling of other than the picture."

If an artist is to clarify and bring to life what he paints it demands undeviating concentration on the work in hand. If the work comes alive and it becomes clear and meaningful to him then it is bound eventually to become clear and meaningful to a perceptive onlooker, in the degree of his awareness. There is no other way.

Yet the vision of the artist in one part derives from his people, his time and place, and thus the response of the people inheres in it in some degree. This is one source of the stimulus to the artist's creative faculties. The other source is indi-

vidual to the artist; it is his particular bent and verve. It is the dynamic interplay of these two sources which constitutes the creative act.

FALLACY IV *Art Criticism: First Part*

There are two different points of view from which art criticism is written. The first one is to introduce and explain the artist and his work to the public; to try to bridge the gap between artist and public by bringing the public to understand the artist's purpose and the means he uses to achieve it and whether the means are adequate to his aim or not. It is founded on sufficient humility and humility's companion, open-mindedness, to lead the critic to enter into and understand what the artist is aiming at with real sympathy and convey this to the public. This can be a social task of real value.

The second point of view is concerned to uphold the established styles in art and hence rejects and condemns new creative ventures and seeks to defend the public against them. It considers that *avant garde* paintings are not works of art at all but the work of disordered or perverse minds or notoriety seekers. In the last hundred years this kind of criticism has been directed at every new movement in art and at every genuine creative artist. This can only mean that the writers lack any understanding of the creative process. Because of this obtuseness their writings are frequently arrogant and infallible. This comes from an inflated ego and thus, in the degree of the inflation, inhibits the critics from seeing that creative life in art has always been the same in all ages and places and is only kept alive by the creation of new ventures, movements, idioms, and styles and that these in turn become established and defended by the same type of mind.

There are two effects which result from the writing of art critics. One is the effect of criticism on the artist and his work; the other the effect on the public. This article deals with the effect on the artist.

Criticism affects only [can only affect] the work of the academic artist and that of the painter who imitates the work of others. They are both vulnerable because they work in established grooves. The more their work conforms to accepted ways, idioms and styles, whether old or new, the less creative it is and the more it lends itself to critical appraisal. But the new in art, the untoward and unpigeonholed offers most critics nothing to grasp hold of. It is beyond their criterion, which is founded on the already accomplished and standardized. Even such a modest change in style and emphasis, dictated by the Canadian scene itself as the paintings of the Group of Seven caused the critics at the time of the Group's existence to ridicule, vilify, and condemn the paintings.

We read and hear it said that what the art of this country needs is a few first-class critics. We hear it said that the artist lacks the means of relating his work with the best in present-day painting unless a few good critics come to his aid, that

the artist will remain unconscious of the undeveloped areas of his talent unless the critic draws his attention to them and that the artist is so constituted that he doesn't know when he paints a good or poor picture.

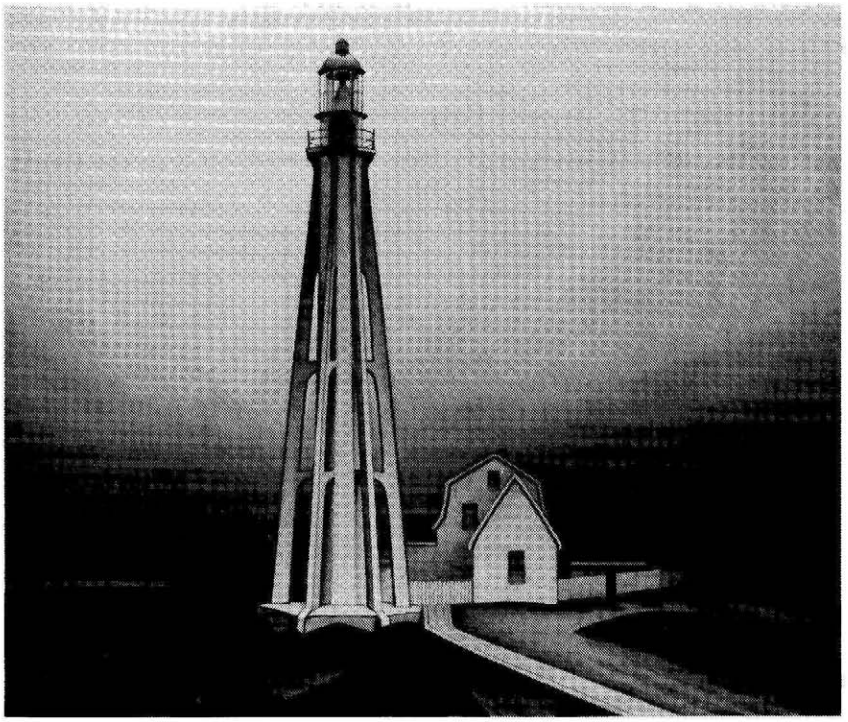
There is no doubt that a few critics of wide-ranging sensibility, sympathy and understanding would be most valuable in raising the quality and standard of the public's appreciation and thus indirectly benefit the creative artist. But even if the critic happened to have a wide acquaintance with the best of modern art and a generous outlook on all creative endeavour it is not only very doubtful if he can be of any direct benefit to the work of the creative artist, that is work in the process of being accomplished, but by the very nature of the case it is not quite possible.

The creative artist moves on a self-generated momentum. This momentum by the concentration essential to its pace, clarity, and creative power prevents any impingement from outside at the time the creative process is taking place. At other times it may aggravate the artist to read criticism that points out the failings or limitations of his work or please him if the comments are favourable. But once the creative process is moving again the self-enclosed interplay between perception and response and all the other creative complementaries take hold and lead and control and direct the artist, this momentum is such that no outside opinion, suggestion, or judgment can enter. That is the reason that the academic, doctrinaire, institutionalized, or critical mind, whatever value they may have in the realm of education, have no value in the creative realm of the artist.

I have never known of a case where the writings of a critic helped the work of a real creative artist, nor can I imagine such a case. It is just as unthinkable that the work of Tom Thomson, Emily Carr, or A. Y. Jackson was affected in the least by what any critic wrote as it was for the work of Van Gogh, Cézanne, Paul Klee, or Renoir. Has any one heard of a professional critic whose writings helped the painting of Blake, Courbet, Constable, Manet, Monet, Whistler, Gauguin, Braque, Picasso, or any creative artist?

The artist is constantly aware that there is an almost unbridgeable gap between the attitude [outlook] of the creative artist and the critic. That gap can only be bridged by understanding and sympathy on the part of the critic. When that occurs to a meaningful degree we no longer have a critic but a lover. And it has always been the intelligent lover of the great in art that first discovered it and has since kept it alive.

That gap also exists between the work of art and most of those who explain, administer, and depend on art and art institutions for a living. This has led creative workers in the arts to make such statements as "Art is what is left when the explanations are over." Rainer Maria Rilke, the German poet, once wrote, "Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing so little reached as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and fairly judge them." And E. E. Cummings, the



LAWREN HARRIS, *Lighthouse, Father Point*, 1929.
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA

American poet and painter, made this comment on Rilke's statement: "In my proud and humble opinion, those two sentences are worth all the soi-disant criticism of the arts which has ever existed or will ever exist." The English author E. M. Forster wrote this a few years ago "If we apply even the best aesthetic theory to art and apply it with its measuring rods and pliers and forceps . . . it doesn't work, the two universes have never collided." On the other hand "if criticism strays from her central aesthetic quest to influences and psychological and historical considerations . . . contact is established. But no longer with a work of art."

Eric Newton, one of England's best writers on art, asks this question "Has the critic no obligation to tell the artist where he has failed, how he could have done better?" and goes on to say, "My definite answer to that is 'No.' One does not tell another human being that his nose ought to be longer, his voice more melodious, since it is his particular length of nose or quality of voice that gives him his unique personality. To alter a personality is to turn it into a different personality and since every artist is precious only because he is supremely himself . . ."

That last syllable "because he is supremely himself" tells the whole story. Only

when the artist is "supremely himself" can he really employ all his creative faculties and when he does so he is at the time beyond the reach of criticism.

FALLACY IV *Art Criticism: Second Part*

It would seem that the right approach of the critic to a work of art has been stated by the most enlightened critics

1. What art criticism can accomplish. The Record. Part of
2. The wrong way to go about it. reason for
3. The right way. failure.

The effects of art criticism on the public depend upon whether the critic understands that man is a creative being — that the creative process is a continuing process in all ages and places that are creatively alive and thus finds its own way inevitably — moves into new expressions — that no work of art replaces another — that each age creates it own art — that in Wordsworth's word "acts as a go-between." No finality on-going. Then his writing will be illuminating. The effect of this order of criticism on the public can do immense good. By its conviction create a favourable climate for present day painting.

The effect of the writings of critics who hold the opposite point of view — that their duty is to defend the public against new works instead of explaining paintings that project themselves into the formation of new idioms, outlook and style — have always two effects —

the outgoing, yea saying, & positive — liberal
the in nay saying, negative — conserve

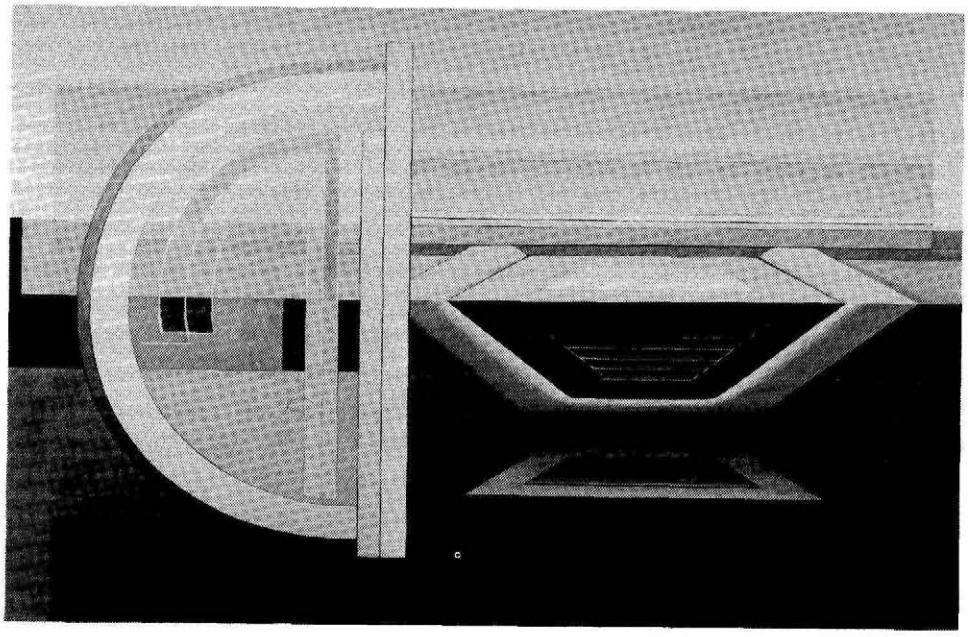
finds values because it looks for such whatever the kind of painting the other everything is bad that is beyond their understanding.

The interplay of these two approaches to art criticism, like all the dynamic friction of the opposites, denotes that new life is stirring — the way of the negative and positive. Perhaps as in electricity both are necessary for illumination.

The record — which is a sorry one — shows the % of aware, perceptive, creative critics is small.

Since the days when the paintings of Courbet were condemned every artist and art movement has been belittled or condemned by the critics; Ruskin maligned the paintings of Whistler throwing a pot of paint in the public face, called his style "Blotesque"; the French Impressionists' paintings were dubbed "unfinished and adolescent," the Group of Seven was named the "hot mush school" "artistic perverts."

The record shows that name-calling on the part of the critics is a sure sign that they do not understand the works they condemn. From the day Ruskin dubbed



LAWREN HARRIS, *Equations in Space*, *c.* 1936.
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA

Whistler's paintings "Blottesque" to the day the critics called the paintings of Manet, Monet, and Picasso "vulgar and incompetent," to the time Canadian writers called the Group of Seven "the hot mush school," down to today's such epithets "my child could paint that," "screaming monstrosities," "the drip and dribble school" etc., we find the same thing taking place.

The great Post-Impressionist painters were neglected — Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne were never even noticed. The number of critics who have discovered the best contemporary painting in any period has been [is so] small that we are quite safe in concluding that every original artist and each new movement that has made a real contribution to the art of painting and thus to man's heritage of great art works has either been neglected by the critics, belittled or condemned.

It seems that every movement in art, every creative contribution has to pass through the purgatory of neglect, vilification, condemnation, and rejection by professional and amateur critics alike before it is accepted and takes its place in the hierarchy of enduring works.

For this and other reasons Eric Newton, the noted English art critic, says that he once contemplated giving up being an art critic and wrote an article entitled "Concerning the impossibility of art criticism." He further wrote that the difficulty "accounts for the miserable inadequacy of nine-tenths of art criticism." D. W.

Harding said that "before we can make a discriminating assessment of their work we have to get beyond the simple hostility or derision that springs from having our preconceptions disappointed." Herbert Read, the English poet and critic, once wrote, "I would say that a blindness to contemporary modes of expression in any of the arts is generally due to some psychological inhibtion in the spectator."

Indeed critics who have failed not only to recognize the best in contemporary art when it was first shown but condemned it — and societies formed to work for what its members call "Sanity in art" and the many people who consider it a virtue to think new movements in art to be communistic and Hitler who condemned modern art and the rulers of Russia who layed down rules for conformity to a rigid, moribund formula are, in so far as art is concerned, all in the same.

They all assume their criterion is to be final, and therefore whereas the entire history of art and its changes in technique, its difficulties in vision, its transitions in outlook from one period to another, its shifting emphasis in impact, its varied styles and idioms and technical devices and discoveries, all prove that there is no finality in art, that the dynamic and beneficent creative power in mankind is limitless, that the ultimate in art will never be reached.

We can be quite sure that "spectators" and critics alike who have failed to recognize the best in contemporary art and societies that are formed to work for what its members call "Sanity in Art," and the many people who consider it a virtue to think the new movements in art to be communistic and Hitler, who condemned modern painting, and the moribund rulers of Russia who laid down rules for conformity to a pattern in art that is "sane" and completely innocuous; all, have no notion what the creative in art, nature [life] and mankind signifies because of some "psychological inhibition."

These are the nay-sayers; those who are so conditioned by the past and its works that they cannot believe that the future can possibly produce works that equal those of the past. They therefore [believe] that anything painted today should repeat that past achievements, conform to past styles, and acknowledge and if asked how any style in the past was created, how El Greco, Giotto, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Constable, the Florentine and Venetian painters each painted in a way that was new in their day and thus made their contribution to the world? They have no answer. Such is their blindness, their inhibition. "O," but they say, "that is different."

They have a perfect right to their opinions of course, but they should not be critics, as it is bad both for themselves and the public. The more they write and the more a part of the public acclaim their opinions and prejudices, the more convinced they become that their opinions are absolute and final and that they are on the side of the angels. And so they join the detractors of the ages, that band of "infallibles" who harm themselves, the artists and the public.

But let us turn to the cheerful side of art criticism and consider the statements of the intelligent, perceptive, and beneficent critics.

James Johnson Sweeney says that "the only genuine constructive criticism that exists in the plastic arts is a creative act which provokes or follows upon another creative act." He states also that "neither the plastic arts in their essential nature nor our response to them are explainable." The key words in the last statement is "in their essential nature." The constructive critic can talk intelligently and rewardingly about all the factors that are both necessary to "their essential nature" and that surround it, but he cannot explain a painting in its essential nature. He can, however, create a piece of writing that parallels the painting and by reflection illuminates it. That is precisely what André Malraux does. "Inspired by the love of truth . . . can rise to the greatest heights of thought and eloquence and . . . become in itself another art." Herbert Read, the English poet and critic, says, "There can be no true interpretation (of a work of art) without complete sympathy and understanding."

Let us consider an episode that illustrates another trait of the intelligent and responsible critic. In the first interval of a performance of Alban Berg's opera "Wozzeck" in London, the music critic, Stephen Williams was asked, "Are you enjoying it?" "No," he replied, "of course I'm not enjoying it. I'm enduring it, I'm grappling with it, I'm meeting its challenge." This is the opposite attitude to the critic who condemns a work of art because he doesn't understand it. He does not challenge the work of art. It challenges him, which is the creative, productive, rewarding way for both the critic and the public. As Eric Newton wrote, "I submit myself to the picture"; and Philip Carr, another English writer, states "Sympathetic appreciation. They interpret and analyse, and they express interest and pleasure and enthusiasm — not contemplate anger or disgust."

Good paintings that last have a quality and significance beyond the taste of the day in which they were painted. They then survive the chastisement of the critic and take their place in the long, rich and rewarding series of works which constitute the ever-enlarging heritage of man's.

NOTES

[1] *Fallacies About Art* is found in the Public Archives of Canada, Lawren Harris Paper M630, D208. It was written between 1943 and 1954. I have edited the manuscript conservatively for clarity. Asterisks * indicate words unclear in the original; square brackets indicate where Harris has not decided between two possible words or phrasing. JM

[2] This opening appears at the end of "Fallacy III" in the original order.

[3] In the manuscript this passage reads: "What is the record — is a sorry one — the record shows the the % of aware, perception, creative critics in outlook critics has been rare."

TOM THOMSON

W. J. Keith

They say that you drowned near Canoe Lake —
that you jumped, or fell (with your flies open), or
was pushed. I don't believe that. You paddled
into the art that was your life, melted
into a landscape you had made your own:
ear bleeding into one of your fall
sunsets (or vice-versa); body brown as
log-jam or timber-chute; your flesh bruised
like the purple hues of your hills and waters
or a gathering thunderstorm in Algonquin Park.
But one picture was left unpainted: you alone
could have sketched that upturned canoe, drifting
empty at dusk, awesomely menacing,
under not God's but a Tom Thomson sky.

SAN FRANCISCO SONNET

Kevin Roberts

On Golden Gate Bridge I come to perspective, trompe l'oeil
the swung harmony like a huge harp, disappears into fog
as we stand on the lookout, Japanese tourists click Nikons
for the forever wall pose, driven to bridge time, record it
the eye itself a camera without film, roving, random
candid and dispassionate, careless of whether the bridge
exists at all beyond the fog, and I forced to rely
on two other eyes, one that builds inside the fog hid
footings and spans, walks in fog by memory,
a mad projectionist, flashing slides flaked from a vast
clutterbox of time, the other bland and capricious
reaches two precious arms to bridge the voltage gap
between the first two eyes and run the thrill
of wild sight into the electric and savage word

PHOTOGRAPHY "IN CAMERA"

Peter Sims

click 3. phon. . . . These sounds vary in number in the different languages that employ them, and are distinguished as dental, palatal, lateral, and cerebral, according to the place of articulation of the tongue in pronouncing them. Seven clicks have been distinguished, some of them resembling familiar sounds, as the sound represented by tut, a kind of smacking kiss, and the cluck often used to urge on a horse. These sounds (clicks) were probably originally food sounds — at first sounds accompanying the taking of food, asking for food, etc.

5. wrestling: A chip or trick by which the antagonist is suddenly tripped up.

Webster's New World Dictionary

THE OPENING SECTION OF *The Diviners* concludes with the words: "I keep the snapshots not for what they show but for what is hidden in them."[1] What, among other things, is hidden in them is the unborn Morag:

> Morag Gunn is in this picture, concealed behind the ugliness of Louisa's cheap housedress, concealed in her mother's flesh, invisible. Morag is still buried alive, the first burial, still a little fish, connected unthinkingly with life, held to existence by a single thread. (p. 7)

There are other layers of enclosure. The photos are hidden in a legal envelope, which smells of garbage and has been retrieved from the nuisance grounds by Christie and presented to Morag as a gift. This gift has been less often noticed than the one it complements — Lazarus Tonnerre's knife, also obtained from Christie. The knife may be used for slitting open, the envelope for enclosing. It is a symbol of the power of language to define, to plead a case, to enclose and transform memory, to bury alive. Beyond the nuisance grounds there is that further level of writing. The photographs and memorybank movies are enclosed by this writing. So we keep the writing for what is hidden in it, returning to find what we have missed. We look at the sentence beginning "Morag is still buried alive," and try to read it. Possibly we think only of that other burial, the final burial, the disconnecting gesture of death. But what if there are many such living burials — in

writing, in song, in photographs, in action and suffering? What if what matters is the connections and reconnections we make unthinkingly, thinkingly with life? Like the young Morag, we prepare through reading and writing a place beneath the spruces, laying out the chairs, the tables, the dishes "for the invisible creatures who inhabited the place with her," and with us (p. 11). We see in this way that there is more than one vanishing point in a photograph, or a novel. And we come again to search for what has been buried alive, maybe even to give birth to it. That is the occasional miracle Morag mentions (p. 5) : The discovery of what is buried in a name or an image.

This essay is about the enclosure of photography in writing. I will be discussing novels written by Canadians and published between 1970 and 1980. This is not intended as a reading of those novels, but as a response to writing about photography in them. My main point is this: photography is eaten by this writing, absorbed into a process which both destroys and redeems it. The digestion of these images reconnects them with life, and especially reconnects them with sensation. The passages I examine may be read, obliquely, as lessons in learning how to look at and handle photographic images.

Writers often complain about being cannibalized themselves — by critics. In the late 1960's, a second front emerged with McLuhan's announcement that writing was being "displaced" (a polite word for eaten) by mechanical and electronic images. What we examine here may be seen as a reaction to that prediction. Writers, of course, are some of the most efficient cannibals going. If they worry about being eaten, it is only because they think others may follow their golden rule. Perhaps the best anyone can hope for is to be eaten with style, and to mind his own table manners.

The title of the essay refers to the condition of photography in novels. We say "in camera" because these photos are put out of sight by writing, put in a chamber. The etymology carries the specific sense of in the judge's chamber. No doubt this would be a book-lined chamber. However, I would like to stress that although photography is before the judge, it is not in the place of judgment, not in open court, not on trial. Fiction is not open court: the rules of evidence are different; we needn't arrive at a verdict; there is less formality; we cannot incriminate ourselves. In law, "in camera" signals a search for reconciliation.

Having registered the reality of concealment, let us adopt the rhetoric of display. The strategy of the essay is analectic. There are seven sections arranged to resemble a slide show in which different images of these "in camera" sessions are projected on to the same ground. One ought to imagine an empty space in the writing between each section — waiting for the next image to be brought forward on the carousel. This space is signalled by the onomatopoeic click. Click is both the sound of the shutter and the projector.

click

This sound could be a lock closing, opening. The narrator of Blaise's *A North American Education* is looking at three family photos. The first is of his grandfather:

> I have seen one picture of my grandfather, taken on a ferry between Quebec and Levis in 1895. He looks strangely like Sigmund Freud: bearded, straw-hatted, buttoned against the river breezes. It must have been a cold day — the vapor from the nearby horses steams in the background. As a young man he must have been, briefly, extraordinary. I think of him as a face in a Gold Rush shot, the one face that seems both incidental and immortal guarding a claim or watering a horse, the face that seems lifted from the crowd, from history, the face that could be dynastic.[2]

This man is born "eleven years after the death of Napoleon," seven years after the birth of photography, a time roughly coincidental with the birth of Canadian literature. These are the roots of a North American education, an education which will not, like Flaubert's, be sentimental — precisely not an education of the feelings. But the possibility of nobility, of a line of hereditary rulers, of men who lay claims is still there. In the next photo the steaming horses, reminiscent of Steiglitz's famous photograph, are replaced by an old canvas chaise. We are given a snapshot, more relaxed, of the narrator's father:

> He is lounging in an old canvas chaise under a maple tree, long before aluminum furniture, long before I was born. A scene north of Montreal, just after they were married. It is an impressive picture, but for the legs, which barely reach the grass. Later he would grow into his shortness, would learn the vanities of the short and never again stretch out casually, like the tall. (p. 164)

Note how the narrator associates himself with aluminum lawn furniture, also the slight dislocation introduced by the legs which barely reach the ground, and the sense of shrinking scale, of the world shrinking beneath the camera's eye. The legs are exposed, he is not bundled "bearded, straw-hatted, buttoned" against the probing eye that captures him. Next comes the narrator:

> My mother must have taken the shot — I can tell, for I occupy the center — and it is one of those embarrassing shots parents often take. I am in my wet transparent underpants and I've just been swimming at Daytona Beach ... in the picture my face is worried, my cupped hands are reaching down to cover myself, but I was late or the picture early — it seems instead that I am pointing to it, a fleshy little spot on my transparent pants. On the back of the picture my father had written:
>
> Thibidault and fils
> Daytona, avr/46
>
> (pp. 164-65)

What the camera now captures is a gesture of avoidance transformed by its operation into a gesture of display. The descendants of Freud have become hostile to

their children, acting out one version of the Oedipal drama. The eye of the other, of the voyeur, is here wielded by the mother against the son; the father, not described, apparently provides no protection but writes their names on the back, so that the moment can be identified. The boy has good reason to look worried: his fleshy little *spot* is threatened. We understand that he has or has almost been castrated. Of the photo, the narrator says, "I am already the man I was destined to be."

But there is a small gift of writing from the father. His caption is picked up by the narrator. In combination with the fishing trips, it becomes the refrain or the rest of the story. The narrator uses this phrase like a talisman or chant in an effort to recover his modesty. Writing and fishing work against the camera's exposure. When we go fishing, we don't know what we'll hook.

We may apply to these three quotations the comments of Walter Benjamin on the evolution of photography during this period:

> It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult of value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value. To have pinpointed this new stage constitutes the incomparable significance of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets. It has been quite justly said of him that he photographed them like scenes of crime. The scene of a crime, too, is deserted; it is photographed for the purpose of establishing evidence. With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance.[3]

To this we need only add that the scene of a crime is not deserted if the crime is the photograph itself. The hidden political significance is written into the open by Blaise. It demonstrates a further stage in the camera's transformations, capturing not the scene of the crime but the crime. The victims at the moment that they become victims. Strangely, the narrator's "explanation" of what is hidden actually helps to restore a sense of decorum and modesty. Modesty is another word for inaccuracy.

The same effort to escape the image as exhibition is found in *The Diviners*:

> She is now five, or thereabouts. She squints a little, against the painful sun, trying to keep her eyes open so the picture of her will be nice, but she finds it difficult. Her head is bent slightly, and she grins not in happiness but in embarrassment, like Colin Gunn in the first picture. Only the lower boughs of the spruce trees can be seen, clearly, darkly. (p. 11)

And now the narrator shifts voice, approaching the mannerisms of Christie when

he tells his tales. The writing carries us into the background, towards the dark angels of sensation hidden by the camera:

> Now those spruce trees, there, they were really and actually as tall as angels, dark angels perhaps, their boughs and sharp hard needles nearly black except in the spring when the new needles sprouted soft and mid-green. (p. 11)

The passage goes on to describe Morag's playhouse built there and populated by the invisible creatures I have already mentioned. We encounter here the remaking of ritual and the cult of remembrance, mending tears in a fabric shredded by the camera. Initially the snapshot replaces recollection in tranquility, makes memory superfluous. But under the author's gaze, it becomes itself the object of recollection in tranquility. In this way, it is made to assert not the new mechanical means of seeing by glimpses, but the old Wordsworthian one:

> The days gone by
> Come back upon me from the dawn almost
> Of life: the hiding-places of my power
> Seem open; I approach, and then they close;
> I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
> May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
> While yet we may, as far as words can give,
> A substance and a life to what I feel. . . .[4]

Blaise and Laurence search for a sentimental re-education, strive to unlock the photographic window and journey, not quite blind, towards the vital spaces beyond.

click

This word means a hook. In Scottish dialect, it is called a cleek. We have left Thibidault Jr. in difficult circumstances. He is less confident than Morag, less sure that there is a way out. Let us look at another effort he makes to escape. Part of a North American education is learning to look at women. Just looking. A process for which photographs are an invaluable aid. The narrator, babysitting, finds some:

> I found piles of home-made snaps of the young wife when she'd been slim and high school young, sitting naked in the sun, in a woods somewhere. She'd been posed in dozens of ways legs wide apart, fingers on her public hair, tongue curled between her teeth. (p. 181)

Blaise writes "she'd been posed" not she had posed, suggesting that control is coming from the other side of the camera, the women offering themselves as images to the husbands, assuming poses that are the never exhausted cliches of pornography. The camera's spotlight is once again turned on the genitals, but there is no effort to retreat from its glare. The narrator now recalls his struggle to connect these images with the women he sees each day on the street. He succeeds momentarily,

but then moves immediately to something else — the exposure of the "hidden political message."

> There were no answers for the questions I asked, holding those snapshots, looking again (by daylight) at the wife (in ragged shorts and elastic halter) who had consented to the pictures. They were like murder victims, the photos were like police shots in the scandal magazines, the women looked like mistresses of bandits. There was no place in the world for the life I wanted, for the pure woman I would someday, somehow, marry. (p. 182)

Further crimes, crimes in which the narrator is deeply implicated, but from which he is now seeking to escape. The movement at the end of the passage towards a barely surviving idyllic possibility ("someday, somehow") is echoed in the earlier scene at the tent. Thibidault and son are on another fishing expedition, and the young boy will hook an orgasm. But this will not be a culmination, he has hooked the wrong fish, his orgasm becomes a symptom of sickness, evidence of a loss of control which immediately brings the gaze of the crowd, and the father's disapproval bearing down upon him. He becomes a part of the spectacle, a participant, and this is exactly what he is being educated not to do. Having failed to stay on the "right" side of the camera, he once again endures the threat of castration. He thinks the farm boy who "comes" just before him has "managed to pull his penis off" (p. 171). With his orgasm, the implacable and objectifying gaze of the other is brought to bear on him, represented here by the crowd, elsewhere by the camera. His father's plan was to "show" so that his son would "know" "what it's like, about women, I mean" (p. 172). In this way, the son can learn what poses to try when taking pictures of his wife. But in the narrator's recollection of this event, an idyllic, though lost, option appears:

> My father should have taken me to a cocotte, to his own mistress perhaps, for the initiation, la deniasement. And I, in my own lovemaking, would have forever honored him. . . . Sex, despite my dreams of something better, something nobler, still smells of the circus tent, of something raw and murderous. (p. 173)

This is perhaps a good point to mention an extended evocation of just such an idyllic initiation, although one enjoyed with less enthusiastic support from the father — *Memoirs of Montparnasse*. Towards the end of that work, the narrator agrees to pose for some pornographic pictures. Sensing the danger of over-exposure, the possibility of embarrassment, he insists on wearing a mask. He has to vigorously defend his decision with the producer "Monsieur Jules" who thinks it will look too amateurish. The photographer, however, supports him:

> 'I know my business. Monsieur's disguise will be highly piquant. It adds salt to the dish, don't you see?' 'Merde,' said Monsieur Jules. 'It looks too amateur.' Kirilenko threw up his hands. 'My friend, go and sit down over there, I implore you. Monsieur has an artistic temperament and this is only making it worse.'[5]

The problem with most photographs is that they reveal too much. A person of artistic temperament will leave or create spaces in any text. He will resist all efforts to fix his image for this is a species of castration. Without hidden spaces, there is nothing into which desire can flow. Piquant is an important word for Glassco: in the preface to *Harriet Marwood, Governess,* he defines it as combining freedom of action with modesty of treatment. An example of this piquancy is seen in Buffy's later use of his erotic souvenir:

> I was glad to have them as souvenirs. Also, by a curious imaginative projection, I was even able to summon up a feeling of pleasurable envy for this masked young man who was enjoying himself with such carefree abandon. (p. 210)

The mask stimulates the imagination by preventing recognition. Into the space created by this missing information, the narrator thrusts his recovered Eden. The young man "enjoying himself with such carefree abandon" becomes, in effect, an alternate version of the photograph. The anxieties about privacy and payment pass into the background, a potent comment on the novel's own tactics of reconstruction. We see that Buffy's situation is not all that different from Thibidault's. *Memoirs of Montparnasse* are Glassco's "dreams of something better": the "curious imaginative projection," like the writing itself, a mixture of envy and yearning for what never was. Depending on your viewpoint, this can be used to dismantle Glassco's idyll, or supplement Blaise's horror story with an undercurrent of solace. My own preference is for the latter. In the final scene of Blaise's story, father and son sit watching the gathering hurricane. Instead of looking in, they are at last looking outward, and into the face of a natural rather than man-made disaster. The earth's power lines go up as the man-made ones come down. Maybe there are times when, in the face of destruction, we can hook something better. It was, the narrator says, "the best days fishing we'd ever had" (p. 184).

click

This is the sound of a gun being cocked. Mordecai Richler takes a dimmer view of a European education than either Glassco or Blaise. *St. Urbain's Horseman* offers as one product of this education — Mr. Harry Stein. Stein is one of those unsettling, occasionally embarrassing, characters whom Richler specializes in. The kind of character the reader wants to put on trial. There is a line in Jean Genet's play *The Balcony*: the judge tells the accused "You have to be a delinquent . . . if you are not a delinquent, I cannot be a judge." Richler himself appears to have attained something approaching this degree of complementarity with his critics — articles about him bristle with judgments. Also, his characters lack the kind of literary ambience we have come to expect from Canadian novelists. For example, we could say that Harry Stein is a coyote figure, a coyote with a vengeance, but it

sounds absurd to do this. We imagine we hear snickering in the background. Possibly this is proof of Richler's effectiveness as a satirist.

The job of the satirist, according to B. W. Powe, is to "violate sacred sanctums with his words."[6] One such sacred sanctum is the place of masturbation, a place in which photographs have become important icons. The attraction of masturbation, as Rousseau noted, is that one isn't constrained by any need to accommodate to another person. One has a certain freedom to do as one likes. All of this is changed by photography which demands that the viewer fit himself into a pre-arranged scenario. By demanding its own accommodations, photography replaces the partner in a way that imagination never could. Moreover, these accommodations are so easy that they become addictive.

Above all else, pornography avoids ambiguity. This is what distinguishes it from eroticism and from life. Under the eye of the photograph, masturbation is no longer a private act. The grand inquisitor relieving us of both freedom and modesty is always present, holding out the bread of the pre-arranged:

> Sprawled on his bed, unzipped, Harry reached for *Mayfair*, "a wedding night tussle for Susan Strasberg and film husband Massimo Girotti." In the photograph, she lies nude on the sheets, head arched back tensely, the hairy dago sucking her nipple.[7]

The reader is then presented with a piece of writing which Harry is reading. We read along with him and, to the extent that we too are aroused, we are implicated in the result:

> Afterwards, Harry dipped his fingers in his seed and smeared Susan Strasberg's mouth and breasts with it, then he tore Mayfair to shreds, dressed hastily, and started up Haverstock Hill, toward the pub. (p. 69)

On his way to the pub, Harry uses a knife to put scratches on a Rolls parked nearby. As a gloss to this sequence, we can quote Blaise: "She was the woman, I now realize, that Dostoyevski and Kanzantzakis and even Faulkner knew; a Grushenka or the young village widow, a dormant body that kindled violence" (p. 176). And what body could be more dormant than the body of a naked woman in a photo? A dormancy from which there is no awakening, a violence which is secretive and cunning. The smearing of the semen, like the scratching of the car, looks like a futile attempt at writing, an effort to forcibly enter the worlds of wealth and sex from which he has been excluded. But Harry's efforts to leave a mark fail (*Mayfair* is ripped up, the insurance will cover the scratches) because he stays at the level of a consumer of products. Richler is giving us a lesson in what not to do. Harry wants a pornographic success, a picture-perfect one that avoids ambiguities and demands nothing. He thinks Jake possesses this. He cannot see, except in the way the grand inquisitors have taught him to see.

As the trapped consumer of images, Harry seeks only to rise in status by becom-

ing, like Jake, a producer of them. He scorns the elite but pathetically adopts the title "Associate Fellow of the Graphic Arts Society" in imitation of them. The relationship between the use of photography we have been examining and bondage is made explicit at one of the Society's sessions:

> "Would you be a dear and hold this cane? Ta. Now threaten me with it."
> Click
> "And again."
> Click
> "And once more. Bless you."
> . . .
> Harry's turn at last.
> "Last two chaps didn't have any film in their cameras."
> Which earned a knowing giggle from Angela, who then extended her hands for Harry to slip on the cuffs, and shook her blue negligee off her shoulders, letting it float to the floor.
> "Shall I look scared, luv?"
> "Absolutely terrified, because," and Harry leaned forward to whisper in her ear, demonstrating just one of his special privileges, "it's bleeding Neville Heath coming after you. It's Ian Brady come calling."
> "Oooo," she sang out, shuddering. (p. 291)

The passage, from threatening to being threatened, underscores the complicity of all involved. Here the camera functions as a prop in a scenario that is the result of its own rhetoric. The men's eyes have become a camera lens. They are not persons here and are not seeing a person. We can compare this scene of the body in bondage with the appearance of the Golem in the corresponding chapter of part four of the novel. Here the Body, emerging from the site of its destruction, is released into the world, moving freely, "turning up whenever a defender is needed" (p. 377). Jake believes in this archetype of the body's wisdom. At the end of the novel, we find reference to another Golem as Jake awakes from his dream to exclaim "I've come." The same phrase occurs at the climax of Don Giovanni as the commendantore appears to proclaim "E son Venuto." Against these Golems are arrayed the novel's Grand Inquisitors: Mengele, Uncle Abe (the scene after Jake's father's funeral bears a striking resemblance to Dostoyevski's story, with a punch substituted for the final kiss), the man from Internal Revenue (actually called the Grand Inquisitor twice — p. 350), the newspapers, and, of course, the camera. These forces offer to meet the needs of the body, to release men from the bondage of freedom. They are abstractions — representatives rather than persons. As in *The Brothers Karamazov*, only another abstraction can face them directly. But their products, their "bread," is littered throughout the novel like the rubble of a bombed-out culture, which Jake is attempting somehow to pick his way through.

The ending of the novel shows him, tentatively, coming through. I read it as follows. We begin with a warning — "When a Jew gets on a horse, he stops being a Jew." Jake then registers Joey's death in his journal. At the time he doesn't realize that to write "Joey is dead" is to imply "long live Joey." He finds Joey's gun and begins auditioning for the part of Golem. This would represent his suicide as a person. Fortunately, the gun is an actor's gun, and the objects of his hatred, the photographs of the Nazis, have been removed by the police. So he fires a blank into an empty space. The photographs nurture his need for vengeance; in this sense they really are evidence against him. The empty space on the wall, the empty space in the pistol's chamber symbolizes the need for a movement towards forgetting and forgiveness. He makes love with his wife, which brings this movement into action. However, his mind is still "riding with the horseman." In his nightmare, he becomes the Golem, searching for Mengele, the representative of justice or vengeance. (As we have seen in the trial, the two are often impossible to distinguish.) "I've come" now becomes the evening's second orgasm — wet dreams as night terrors, what Kroetsch calls "fucking-death." Jake rejects this role by re-introducing uncertainty through writing. He writes "presumed dead" in the journal over the crossed-out entry of "died July 20, 1967 . . ." (p. 467). In so doing, he becomes a post-modernist creating his palimpsest, letting in the possibilities and not killing the gods. Now he is auditioning for the part of Leporello (in *Don Giovanni*) or, as he puts it, Aaron. He rejects the archetype of the body, and returns to his own body. In so doing, he regains once again the power to touch — snuggling instead of shuddering: "Then he returned to bed, and fell into a deep sleep, holding Nancy to him." The reader returns to the epigraph with Jake becoming an "ironic point of light," not a grim abstraction but a human being, free to practise in Eugene Montale's words "the high teaching of daily decency (the most difficult of the virtues)."

click

This is the click of echo-location. The sonograph at the beginning of *Coming Through Slaughter* is described as "pictures of dolphin sounds made by a machine that is more sensitive than the human ear."[8] In other words, it is a symbol of writing. It is used to complement the other picture, the photograph of Bolden and his band which precedes it, a picture of soundmakers but not of sounds. The sonograph is made up of three communication processes. Squawks — common emotional expressions; whistles — personal signatures; echo-location clicks — orientation devices, like geography. The final sentence of the gloss to the sonograph states: "no one knows how a dolphin makes both whistles and echo-location clicks simultaneously," a hint that our efforts to discover where we are may occasionally be the means by which we express who we are. This could be used as one definition of art.

From this vantage point, my entire essay can be read as a series of echo-location clicks, attempts to find the co-ordinates of photography drifting in the medium of the novel. In the case of Ondaatje, these co-ordinates are of a special kind because he presents us with an actual photograph, or at least a reproduction of it. The picture of Bolden's band is a kind of anti-apology substituted for the usual disclaimer — "all the characters in this book are fictitious and any similarity . . . and so on." In other writers, we "see" the photograph through the writing: here we see the photograph and then we see the writing. We therefore have the opportunity to compare them.

Like holography, echo-location consists of a reference beam or sound and a dispersion beam. The photo may be compared to the reference beam and the novel to the dispersion beam. As a third party, the reader compares the reference beam with the dispersion beam, and retrieves an image of the forces from which the text is emanating. The text, like the photograph, becomes the trace of vanished wildlife. If the reader now chooses to write of his response, then this writing becomes a dispersion beam, to which the novel stands in the relation of reference beam. Of course, the same goes in the opposite direction. The photograph is *used* as a reference beam, but not privileged in any lasting way by this usage.[9] Anything may become a reference beam; in Keat's phrase, it is simply "something to be intense upon." It follows from this that there are two kinds of madness in the novel — mystic silence and mirror image, or emptiness and narcissism. Mystic silence means "no alphabet of noise, no reflections, no world, no self, the number one, life before the big bang." Bolden gets close to this at the end of the book. His habit of touching things perhaps a final remnant of echo-location. Mirror image means no information: we send out a reference beam and we get back the reference beam, the image reversed but otherwise unaltered. Mirrors in *Coming Through Slaughter* are instruments of torture. They whet the urge for violent and suicidal defacements (p. 74, 133). Thus, the presentation of the photo through words (p. 66) becomes a part of its dispersion throughout the text, and an act of kindness on the part of the author who, in this way, is protecting his readers from the sources of madness that threaten his characters. This presentation of the photo is followed by a description of its imprecisions:

> As a photograph, it is not good or precise, partly because the print was found after the fire. The picture, waterlogged by climbing hoses, stayed in the possession of Will Cornish for several years. (p. 66)

This is another example of the writer restoring to the picture its ritual value. It is because it is not good or precise that Ondaatje is drawn to it. Into the white spaces, where it is damaged, he pours the story of its water damage and the story of the photographer's suicide. But Ondaatje shouldn't be seen as recommending "going into the white," otherwise why continue to fill up blank sheets of paper with

writing. On the other hand, he wants to take account of that place, and of the possibilities for hiding that it presents:

> He made one more print of the group and shelved it and then one of just Bolden this time, taking him out of the company. Then he dropped the negative into the acid tray and watched it bleach out to grey. Goodbye. Hope he don't find you. (p. 53)

The margins in Ondaatje's work are always predatory, ready to invade a photo, a text, or a life. That, I assume, is why the window at the end of the novel has teeth in it — writing makes a dangerous womb, we run the risk of being immolated consenting, like Bellocq. Bellocq tries to enter his photographs but he can't; he can only end up defiling the beauty he has forced in his subjects: "the making and destroying coming from the same source, same lust, same surgery his brain was capable of" (p. 55). Lust, as Shakespeare said of youth, is "consumed by that which it was nurtured by."

As a reader, I find some attraction in attempting to generate my reading from the margins of this book — photograph, sonograph, white spaces. It is a painful and maybe a dangerous text to enter. Bellocq is described as the window through which Bolden travels on his journey into madness. I want to keep an eye on that toothy window. Curiously, while writing about Bellocq, I found myself repeatedly thinking of two photographs of Picasso having lunch with some friends (they are in the book *Goodbye Picasso*). In the background there are some dumpy hills. On the table a large half-empty bottle of wine, the end of a loaf of bread, a little pile of olive pits, crumbs. The men are smiling at each other. Picasso has painted over their clothes, white paint making Roman togas. He has painted their arms a pearly grey, and crowned them with green olive wreaths. They look at once innocent, gay, foolish, and noble.

I realize this memory, arriving while I write, is an effort to escape the implications of what Ondaatje is showing me. It both resembles and strongly opposes what Bellocq does with his photos. It seems to me that there is enough of the phobic in Ondaatje that he ought to applaud it in his readers. Who is to say whether my digression is a defence or a response? Perhaps it is part of the author's intention to produce such reactions. If you include a photo in the margins of your novel, you may also be willing to make room for other things.

There isn't much in *Coming Through Slaughter* that resembles Picasso's photographs. There is a little:

> They had gone through the country that Audubon drew. Twenty miles from the green marshes where he waited for birds to fly onto and bend the branch right in front of his eyes. Mr. Audubon drew until lunchtime, sitting with his assistant who frequently travelled with him. The meal was consumed around a hamper, a bottle of wine was opened with as little noise as possible in order not to scare the wildlife away. (p. 155)

This scene opposes the lust of creating and destroying with something else. The hand is back in the picture here, recording extinctions but at least recording. There is a little noise, "as little as possible," but enough to get the cork out, the hamper opened. Looking a little formal, a little foolish perhaps, we try to stay close to the wildlife. Possibly we can supplement the novel's ending — there are some prizes but we can't keep them. They are not photographs, drawings, or novels.

click

This is a sound accompanying the taking of food. Another way of highlighting our theme of enclosure and re-enclosure, eating and being eaten, is through the relation of figure and ground. E. H. Gombrich writes:

> Surely we do not read the shape of a jug and a glass into the Dutch still life; we simply recognize it. Of course we do, but where is the borderline here between reading into and reading? We are all familiar with the clouds, rocks or ink blots, into which the fanciful can read pictures of monsters or masks. Some vague similarity to a face or body engages our attention, and we proceed, are far as we can, to transform the remaining shapes into an appropriate continuation ... We tend to regard the enclosed and articulated shape as the figure and to ignore the background against which it stands. But this interpretation itself is based upon an assumption which the artist may choose to knock away. It is then that we discover that there really is something logically prior to the identification of the jug or the urn and so implied by it — the decision on our part which to regard as figure and which as ground.[10]

Reflections such as this have a special relevance in Alice Munro's fiction where the writer performs an intricate dance in which interpretations are continuously built up and then knocked away, ground becoming figure, becoming ground and so on. Munro likes to work her readers up to a secular eucharist, or celebration which in oral (aural) terms involves the consuming of the host, and in sexual (textual) terms involves the orgasmic release and emptying of accumulated desire. In writing, the release is specifically from the accumulated desire for detail:

> And no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing, every layer of speech and thought, stroke of light on bark or walls, every smell, pothole, pain, crack, delusion, held still and held together — radiant, everlasting.[11]

Del auditioning for the role of photographer, the bringer of every last detail. It's a trap of course: the photographic in Munro is like a pregnant storm cloud requiring human response to break it open and release some rain on the parched imagination. Imagination is the ground required to make it live: lightning travels upwards in these stories. The story of the photographer in *Lives of Girls and Women* can be read as a cautionary tale, a tale with the moral of "there but for the grace of God go I." The photographer wielding "the big eye," possessed with a "wicked fluid

energy," a "bright unpitying smile" looks impressive, has what appears to be a visionary power. But naturally it is an illusion, making people look thirty years older isn't visionary — it's simply banal. Caroline becomes another version of that woman in whom photographers seem to specialize: "she was a sacrifice, spread for sex on moldy uncomfortable tombstones . . . supporting the killing weight of men" (p. 205). She is like the young wives in *A North American Education*, Susan Strasberg and Angela in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, the whores in *Coming Through Slaughter*. In the photographer, Marion Sheriff's fictional replacement meets another abstraction, a force as powerful as her's. They destroy one another. We note the sinister sense of accumulation in that hypnotic phrase "Like a hard yellow gourd in her belly," and are not surprised to find that the photographer's car is found "overturned beside a bridge, overturned in a ditch beside a dry creek," or that Caroline barely finds enough water to drown herself — "how then was there going to be enough water in the Wawanash river?" The characters end like Uncle Craig's history sacrificed to a little run-off, a flood in the basement.

While Del is considering these possibilities, Bobby is giving her some good advice. He tells her to watch her diet, make sure she's getting nourishment for the brain, not to study too hard because the brain needs replenishment. Earlier she has wondered if "he would spit through a crack in the floorboard and say 'I'm sending rain over the Gobi Desert'?" "Was that the sort of thing they (madmen) did?" The answer is that they don't say it, they do it — Bobby *is* sending rain over the Gobi Desert. In the meantime, Del is dutifully eating her cake and drinking down her lemonade. The spectre of converting everything into figure which Del has been entertaining is lightened and raised by Bobby's final gesture. Joking with his body, the "plump Ballerina" offers "a letter, or a whole word, in an alphabet I did not know" (p. 211). L. M. Eldridge sees this gesture as devoid of content:

> This gesture, this statement in code, characterizes the entire story we have just read. And yet, like all gestures except the conventional ones, it is devoid of content: pure, studied, elegant, graceful, it remains a gesture, something written in an alphabet we do not know.[12]

But, I wonder. Perhaps Del has missed an opportunity here. Maybe she is not paying enough attention. Her final "yes," instead of a "thank you," represents a failure to acknowledge the secret gift of madness, the plump ballerina giving her back the ground in which to set her figures. The reader *may* know something of that language: it would be the language of laughter, forgetting, celebration, and imagination. The photographic mind set in the context of a more inclusive mode of writing.

We are chauffeured up to a similar point at the end of *Who Do You Think You Are*:

> All around the walls were photographs, with names lettered by hand and taped to the frames. Rose got up to have a look at them. The Hundred and Sixth, just before embarkation, 1915. Various heroes of the war, whose names were carried on by sons and nephews, but whose existence had not been known to her before.[13]

Here the photos provide the figure, with the subordinate clause carrying the ground of language. One could make a lot of that hand lettering. We could note that photography removed the hand from image making, that about forty years later Neitzsche removed the hand from the world by killing God, that in the 1960's McLuhan was busy removing the hand from writing. All this would be in support of Benjamin's observation of the loss of ritual values in the age of mechanical reproduction, McLuhan notwithstanding. Inside the photographs there is a repetition of the same dichotomy. The heroes of the Hundred and Sixth "embark" towards their deaths — soldiers, like photographs, are mechanically reproduced. Meanwhile, their "names" are "carried on" back into life and the bodies of their sons. Yet another repetition of this movement occurs in the room itself:

> She wondered if it had been a disruptive thing to do, getting up to look at the pictures. Probably nobody ever looked at them; they were not for looking at; they were just there, like the plywood on the walls. Visitors, outsiders, are always looking at things, always taking an interest, asking who was this, when was that, trying to liven up the conversation. They put too much in; they want too much out. Also, it could have looked as if she was parading around the room, asking for attention. (pp. 202-03)

It is, of course, the job of the alien, the artist, to disrupt the paralysis of nobody ever looking that imprisons the past, to set up figures, to read into until a point is reached where reading becomes possible. But with exquisite irony, Munro also shows how the artist now becomes the victim of her own operation, a spectacle that others observe, a figure embarking towards her own death while her hand lettered words are carried on into the body of language.

We know that the figure is not the ground, that the map is not the territory, the name not the thing named, the dancer not the dance; yet we cannot tell them apart. The effort to make that translation, as Ondaatje shows, is dangerous. Munro, like Yeats before her, chooses the second best:

> Perhaps they could only be acted on in translation; not speaking of them and not acting on them is the right course to take because translation is dubious. Dangerous, as well. (p. 206)

Like Ondaatje's Audubon, the task at the end is to stay close, to say what you can and shut up:

> What could she say about herself and Ralph Gillespie, except that she felt his life, close, closer than the lives of men she'd loved, one slot over from her own. (p. 206)

click

This is a sound used to urge on a horse. I notice this essay is tending to focus on the conclusion of the novels. The reason, I think, is that this is the moment when the text is most likely to resemble the photograph, when it is most in danger of being fixed within a frame, impaled on an exhibition pin. What I find fascinating is that in every one of these works, there is a rebellion against this closure, an assertion that there are things that the writer and reader may never find. *The Wars* is no exception.

Eva-Marie Kröller's essay on photography in *The Wars* gets off to a bad start by misquoting the text twice. I mention this not to disparage the essay, which in some respects is very fine, but because such slips may have an origin that begins in the critic's response to the text. They may tell us something about the kinds of anxieties a book creates in its readers. In my view, *The Wars* ends with a direct challenge to the reader; most of us, I include myself here, have trouble facing up to that challenge. Ms. Kröller's paper appears to avoid a good deal of it.

This is how Kröller quotes Findley's narrator quoting "the Irish essayist and critic Nicholas Fagan:"

> The spaces between the perceiver and the thing perceived can . . . be closed with a shot. Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it.[14]

The actual words are:

> 'The spaces between the peceiver and the thing perceived can . . . be closed with a shout of recognition. One form of a shout is a shot. Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it.'[15]

There is nothing here to imply that the shouts of recognition which "close" spaces are the same as, or even overlap with, the shout as shot which kills to verify — closing lives. They might be the same, they might overlap, or they might be entirely different. The reader must make (or avoid making) a choice. Suppose we choose to see them as entirely different species of shout. We then have the quotation turning against itself, saying two things instead of one. In terms of what I have been arguing in this essay, we have the shout as recognition, the effort to get close to life, enclosed or at least threatened with enclosure by the shout as shot, of which photography and war are two examples. The parallels between photography and war are strongly suggested in a comment by Roland Barthes:

> It's true that a photograph is a witness, but a witness of something that is no more. Even if the person in the picture is still alive, it's a moment of this subject's existence that was photographed, and this moment is gone. This is an enormous trauma for humanity, a trauma endlessly renewed. Each reading of a photo, and there are billions worldwide in a day, each perception and reading of a photo is implicitly, in a repressed manner, a contact with what has ceased to exist, a contact with death.

> I think this is the way to approach the photographic enigma, at least that is how I experience photography: as a fascinating and funereal enigma.[16]

So we have two enormous traumas. And how are we to respond to this, what can we bring to resist the deadly enclosure of war and snapshots? The answer, surely, is a shout of recognition. This is the job of the writer and reader.[17] Only they can make the bones dance, the photographs live, and close the spaces between the perceiver and the thing perceived. We move in closer not to bury, but to find what has been buried alive. As in all of our previous examples, if we are not strong enough to transform the photo, we will become its infantry, fitting in instead of reading in.

Having said this, we are in a position to understand Robert's flaw. Just before his run with coyote, we are told of him "that there was nothing to be won but distance" (p. 29). But the coyote offers him the gift of a drink and we are not told if he accepts that drink. The only effective escape is by getting bigger, expanding one's edges, and trying to stay close to the heart of the matter. This is the strategy of the narrator who is not attempting to explode the frames (explosions are symptoms of Hell in the book), but rather to keep developing within and around this frame. Like a white blood cell, the narrator seeks to surround and dissolve the foreign material in the body.

Kröller also misquotes the novel's ending:

> "Robert and Rowena with Meg: Rowena seated astride the pony — Robert holding her in place. On the back is written: 'Look you can see our breath!' And so you can" (p. 191). The final sentence — "And so you can." — matches in ambiguity that of another highly regarded Canadian novel, Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*, in which Mrs. Bentley completes her diary with the entry, "That's right, Philip. I want it so," leaving her reader to decide whether her tone of voice is decisive or wishful. "And so you can" has a consoling quality about it. . . . (p. 68)

The actual final words are "And you can." — no "so" in sight. This changes everything placing a strong emphasis on *you*, meaning you and me — the readers.[18] The book ends with a challenge. Kröller's misquotation makes the lines whimper a little, restores a kind of linearity (in the "so") which the novel repudiates, and suggests closure by linking it with Ross's novel where the "I" speaking from within the fiction *completes* her diary. This amounts to closing a door in the reader's face. If we're looking for an "I" (eye) to end with, it ought to be the reader's. *Ulysses* or *The Waves* make better candidates for comparisons of the novel's ending.[19] Kröller goes on to say that the final snapshot may "reverse the tragedy depicted, thereby providing the spectator with a psychologically comforting frame." I disagree. I don't believe Findley or his narrator see frames as comforting. Other people may have that relation to contexts but, as I have tried to show, writers tend to experience them as terrifying and necessary — a form of lust, perhaps. The ending of the novel is confrontation — direct and simple. Findley hurls in our

face the breath which survives in being, and only there. Novels give us only a place to look. That is all, and sometimes enough:

> Of course, photographs too have been a great help to me in writing. Photographs are mysterious to me. I know it's childish, but then you have to be a child, in a way, you have to retain something of a child, in order to see at all. I still sit with a photograph and I think, if I could only get in there with you. I could walk in there, and one never, never, never dies.[20]

The mystery Findley finds "in" photographs is the mystery of the world as language, the mystery of his powerful imagination. In his acknowledgements at the beginning of *The Wars*, he writes: "Lastly, I want to thank M. for the midnight 'phone calls and the letters from which the photographs fell." As in our previous writers, photographs fall out of the enclosures of writing and speech. It may appear that the author is entering the world of the photograph, but his very act of entry will invoke the language that will enclose these images. The writing on the back of that final photo, or the earlier photo "striving to say 'dead men are serious' " (p. 49), all are part of the "mighty sum of things forever speaking." The world "in camera."

click

This is the throw "by which the antagonist is suddenly tripped up." Kroetsch, in *Badlands* and elsewhere, likes to go for muscular effects. He writes in big letters, slaps the reader on the back, occasionally twists his arm. In *Badlands*, Michael Sinnott, the photographer, makes a typically dramatic appearance with his camera and portable print factory (car) "at a standstill in the middle of the river" (p. 112). Dawe immediately looks away and sees a "drowned cow" floating in the river — the billboards have gone up. With Kroetsch, we have the feeling of watching someone who is about to become too obvious, pretentious, or literary. Yet it never quite happens. There is a feeling of physical energy fueling Kroetsch's comic vision that rarely lets up, carrying the reader along, like the men on their raft. We forgive him the occasional bits of junk and effluvia, waiting for a look at some sturgeon or other fish rolling over just beneath the surface of the writing. Submerged life remains our theme. Thus, it is especially interesting that the first bones the men discover are those of Anna, lying in a shallow grave in an Indian or Metis burial ground. Like Del, they miss the point of this gift and go off on their search for the "real" bones, the dead bones.

Sinnott's relation to the expedition is a complementary one. Dawe collects the bones — Sinnott produces them:

> Dawe raised a finger to silence the boy. "There is nothing that does not leave its effect. We study the accumulated remains."
>
> "Because of me," Sinnott said.[21]

Since everything is vanishing, everything must be photographed. And this, too, is a descent into the land of the dead: "they were fascinated, transfixed, as he hauled them through the vanished world of his, of their, creation, the emporium of their sought descent" (p. 125). Sinnott's constant cry of "hold it" alerts us to the primary condition of photography — the pose. It follows that when everything is photographed, everything will have become a pose. We will then all have become poseurs or, as the novel repeatedly tells us, charlatans:

> "We are two of a kind, Mr. Dawe, you and I. Birds of a feather. You with your bones that are sometimes only the mineral replacements of what the living bones were. Me, rescuing positive prints out of the smell of the darkroom."
>
> "I recover the past," Dawe said. Unsmiling. Adjusting his grip on the sweep. "You reduce it."
>
> "I know," Sinnott said. "And yet we are both peddlers."
>
> "You make the world stand still," Dawe said. "I try to make it live again."
>
> "Then let me save you from your inevitable failure," Sinnott said. "Tell me where you might possibly be reached and I'll send you the consolation of my masterpiece: The Charlatan Being Himself." (p. 128)

As I have tried to show, a positive relation to photography in all of these novels is based on notions of hiding and disguise. The photo is approached as a problem, or mystery. And before anything can be found, there must be an experience of disillusionment, an emptying of the photo's rhetoric. Then a fresh, as opposed to a stereotyped, projection can be made. Sinnott's captions function in the opposite way; they are directions for how to look at the photos — a means of shutting out instead of letting in. Of course, the fact that Kroetsch uses similar captions to open each of the chapters of *Badlands* passes an ironic comment on his own activity as a writer. Writing and photography share the problem of accumulation, and Sinnott (sin not) can be read as the figure of the author in the book. We might then notice that although Sinnott's captions are deadly, his spoken language is not and crackles with energy and enthusiasm. His arrival on the raft without shoes, his incessant pitchman's jargon, all point in another direction from the grimness of Dawe's enterprise. As a charlatan, he at least recognizes the fact. He refuses to enter other's graveyards, and has the good sense to charge admission to his own. He might have saved Tune, and entices Anna away with the spurious attractions of his magic when the expedition is returning. It's to his credit that the one photo he misses is of the snake being killed (p. 250). His final precept opposes all his previous "hold its." As the men come ashore, he yells out "just be natural." This is the photograph he fails to get.

But the book goes on trying to perform that trick or click of being natural. By now, the problem to be escaped is obvious. But even escape can be a pose, as we learn when Dawe has his picture taken:

> He had not once, ever, handled the stern sweep. Now he tried a posture of weary and yet accurate surveillance that must indicate a long journey, a desperate and calculated casting into the unknown. (p. 128)

We get a picture here of something that has only happened so that a picture can be taken of it. And what is the bait used to produce this occasion? The temptation of the one, the only, the unique event. That is when we notice that there is an anticipation of the novel's final words here — "not once, ever." This is the chant Kroetsch will use to throw the antagonist: nothing happens once and once only; it all happens over and over. So when the two women have unloaded their weights of patriarchal accumulation at the end of the novel, they sing a song, a repetitious song, an "awful song about rolling over in the clover," a song in favour of desire, against death, against history, against anything but the "living and defeated bones" of the journeyers making their genuine progress into the unknown.

Two things happen at the end of this novel that can be used to send back feelers along the path we have travelled. The first is contained in Anna Dawe's comment at the source of the river — "Thank God for small mercies." The mercy of not finding her father's body in the lake, and of throwing the photographs ("like so many vultures") and the field book into the lake. These things also will not be found because the waters are the source of forgetting, and a writer knows, or should know, that forgetting is always bigger than remembering. Thinking back, we recall how often water appears near the end of the stories, holding out this solace. Thibidault and son watching the big rollers as the hurricane moves in; Morag asking "How far could anyone see into the river?"; Bobby Sheriff sending rain over the Gobi Desert; Uncle Craig's history lost to a flood; water damage to Bolden's photo, and his refusing to go swimming on the trip to the asylum; the condensed moisture of breath you can see at the end of *The Wars*. If God no longer sends a deluge to blot out history, it shouldn't prevent us from building arks, and searching for water deep enough to carry them. Without that ground, our figures stay in dry dock.

The second feeler is the return to the wisdom of the body: "we walked out of there hand in hand, arm in arm, holding each other" (p. 270). This, especially, is what we can't get from books or photographs. The final click uses the reader's momentum to hurl him out of the book, against accumulations, towards the life in and around him. So we have Jake, "holding Nancy next to him"; and Robert Ross holding Rowena on the horse; and Rose "feeling his life close, closer than the lives of men she'd loved"; and Thibidault and son leaving the beach "hand in hand for the last time." In Kroetsch, the movement is ecstatic, in others tentative, reserved, sometimes denied. We may be left in a hospital room awaiting an operation, or an empty room that holds no prizes. Even at best, as an act of grace, touch is momentary, ambiguous, vanishing. But this holding, at least, is different than

hold *it* or hold *on*. It gives us back a little ground, a place to set our figures. It moves us past the endless cat and mouse of closures and enclosures towards a "dream of something better" — bracing and embracing.

While reading background material for this essay, I came across the following anecdote which I would like to conclude with. It is about a man who gained vision for the first time at the age of fifty-two:

> When he was just out of the hospital, and his depression was but occasional, he would sometimes prefer to use touch alone, when identifying objects. We showed him a simple lathe (a tool he had wished he could use) and he was very excited. We showed it to him first in a glass case, at the Science Museum in London, and then we opened the case. With the case closed, he was quite unable to say anything about it, except that the nearest part might be a handle (which it was — the transverse feed handle), but when he was allowed to touch it, he closed his eyes and placed his hand on it and he immediately said, with assurance, that it was a handle. He ran his hands eagerly over the rest of the lathe, with his eyes tight shut for a minute or so; then he stood back a little, and opening his eyes and staring at it, he said: 'Now that I've felt it, I can see.'[22]

NOTES

[1] Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), p. 6.

[2] Clark Blaise, *A North American Education* (Toronto: General Publishing), p. 164.

[3] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), p. 228.

[4] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) Book XI, ll. 334-41.

[5] John Glassco, *Memoirs of Montparnasse* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 208.

[6] B. W. Powe, "A Conversation on the Philip Roth of the North" in *A Climate Charged* (Oakville: Mosaic, 1984), p. 170.

[7] Mordecai Richler, *St. Urbain's Horseman* (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 1971), p. 68.

[8] Michael Ondaatje, *Coming Through Slaughter* (Toronto: Anansi, 1976), p. 6.

[9] It seems odd but many writers on photography, writers who spend a good deal of time examining the rhetoric of these images, do privilege photography as being in some way closer to the "real" than images produced in other ways. Thus, McLuhan writes that the photograph allowed people to make images "without syntax" (*Understanding Media*, p. 171), and Sontag states that a photograph is "a material vestige of its subject in a way that no painting can be" (*On Photography*, p. 154). Even Roland Barthes can be found making such statements: "the photograph is literally an emanation of the referent" (*Camera Lucida*, p. 80). Elsewhere he comments that photography is not a language because it "contains no discontinuous element that could be called a sign." In my view, such statements are based on a common misconception about the nature of vision. Seeing is itself a language: as E. H. Gombrich has often pointed out, we have to learn how to do it, and in different cultures we are taught different ways of doing it. All images possess syntax, but it is a syntax that has dropped below the threshold of perception. What we see is the

result of decisions. Furthermore, photography is radically discontinuous with our normal habits of vision (single point of view, no parallax, no movement parallax, different texture gradients) and, as such, constitutes a language, a way of looking. The photograph rather than representing an object directly, can be seen as a representation of the retinal image appearing on the back of a single eye. It is this cyclopean singleness that makes us so stubbornly suspicious of the photographic image. The photograph becomes a detached fragment of what is normally a continuous process, a representation of one stage in the complex flow of perception. With this viewpoint, we are free to see novelists as placing (symbolically) photographs into a process of writing that is itself a symbol of the process of perception. The necessity of learning to see, and the fact that seeing is determined by our intentions towards what we are looking at, is discussed by R. L. Gregory in *Eye and Brain* (Toronto: World University Library, 1966); also see Max Black's "How do Pictures Represent" in *Art, Perception and Reality* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970). Language is always ahead of reality.

[10] E. H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse* (London: Phaidon, 1963), p. 153-54.

[11] Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women* (New York: New American Library, 1971), p. 210.

[12] L. M. Eldridge, "A Sense of an Ending in Lives of Girls and Women" in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984, p. 115.

[13] Alice Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978), p. 202.

[14] Eva-Marie Kröller, "The Exploding Frame: Uses of Photography in Timothy Findley's 'The Wars' " in *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3 and 4, 1981, p. 68.

[15] Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 191.

[16] Roland Barthes, "On Photography" in *The Grain of the Voice* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 353. It may be that some photos do not elicit this response, even in a repressed manner. For example, the advertisement or pornographic picture. This lack of response might indicate the advanced state of dehumanization certain images have achieved.

[17] I don't wish to be understood as saying that photographers cannot "redeem" their own work. Naturally, they can and often do overcome the limitations of their method. Such occurrences are rare, however, when we consider the numbers of images that are being produced. They are not part of the subject of this essay.

[18] See Timothy Findley's own comment on this, "Long Live the Dead: An Interview with Timothy Findley" in the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, No. 33, p. 84, "he rides on his horse at you, down this avenue of billboards and the book keeps talking about you, and in a sense, you isn't me, you is you, the reader. . . ."

[19] Bloom's soap, in *Ulysses* the protector and cleanser of the "languid flower" — his penis, is explicitly connected with Robert's gun, p. 36. Also, we are told twice that Robert is "missing in action" on June 16th — Bloomsday. Are we to conclude that soap is the more effective talisman?

[20] Timothy Findley, "Long Live the Dead: An Interview with Timothy Findley," p. 83.

[21] Robert Kroetsch, *Badlands* (Toronto: General Publishing, 1975), p. 118.

[22] R. L. Gregory, *Eye and Brain* (Toronto: World University Library, 1966), p. 197-98.

THIS IS MY MOTHER'S CAMERA

Roger Nash

Which I am given since plants in her garden
knew the least significant of our names
when we walked there together, and made us feel
we had a place among the look of things.
A window informs me there's a film inside
already, with five shots taken.
Your mistress's eyes have laid you down
at last, slid slowly away
from the five sights, as yet unknown to me,
stored in the clever chemistry of your dark;
the film, like any life, left
surprisingly unfinished. Your spooling memory
awaits nineteen more snapshots
from her life, screwed face lined
up to the apparatus with the enormity of the task,
and days taking on a shutter speed
her legs could not keep up with.
Should I finish the film? And whose album
will I paste my life into? I point the camera
aimlessly, and the lens of this poem's language
suddenly adjusts, revealing you,
crouched in the boat, as you did on your visit
two years ago, still waiting
for that perfect shot of a heron. I try
to whisper through the lens that it's there, to the right,
posing magnificently. But I can't communicate
with you in your last nineteen shots. I can only
hold the camera steady, so that the lake
and trees won't rock or spill a single
drop. You turn your head and look
right through me, snapping furiously. You have got
the shots you were waiting for, and leave me with something
blue and flying upwards in my life.

WOMAN AS OBJECT, WOMEN AS SUBJECTS, & THE CONSEQUENCES FOR NARRATIVE

Hubert Aquin's "Neige noire" and the impasse of post-modernism

Patricia Smart

NEAR THE END OF HUBERT AQUIN'S final novel *Neige noire*,[1] which is written as a film scenario, appears the following description:

> ... the body of Sylvie Lewandowski slides slowly and falls into the void. Nicolas moves away, but he is seized by vertigo. High angle shot of him backing towards the precipice in terror, as though he can't stop and as though the precipice were exerting an irresistible attraction over him. He staggers, falls backward; his head is very close to the precipice. Fade to black. (*Nn*, 240; *HT*, 196)

With his uncanny ability for producing images of our contemporary cultural malaise, Aquin here places in conjunction the spectacle of a woman's body, the abyss to which she has been consigned by male violence, and a man's head: the male character riveted by the fascination and terror of the abyss into which he has thrown the corpse of the woman he loves. Fade to black.

Unlike a real filmic image, this one is described in words and therefore, paradoxically, it exists on the page framed by silence: the equivalent of a slow-motion shot in which meaning is crystallized. It is not accidental, I think, that the male protagonist in this shot is *backing* towards the precipice, as Aquin himself, in a series of novels that extended his range of exploration further and further into the Western cultural past, seemed to be backing closer and closer with each novel to a point of no return. In this final work, written three years before the author's suicide, the intertext is Shakespeare's *Hamlet*; and in it Ophelia's lament becomes an obsessive refrain — "Malheur à moi d'avoir vu, de voir, ce que j'ai vu, ce que je vois!" ("Woe is me / To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!") Behind this tragedy of vision, one detects as well the shadow of Oedipus — that drama of Everyman which ends in an apotheosis of knowledge as intolerable sight.

Post-modernism and feminism: the interface

What did the hyperconscious Aquin see when he looked into the gap in history that separates Shakespeare's enigmatic work from his own? And why did he privilege *vision* in this novel, to the point of writing it as "the scenario of an unproducable film"? The cultural configuration of woman's body, the abyss and man's head as it appears in Aquin's novel provides an entry-point into some questions about the intersection, or lack of it, between post-modernism and feminism: questions that have been raised by feminists like Teresa de Lauretis[2] in the area of semiotics and film theory and Alice Jardine[3] in the area of French literary and psychoanalytic theory, but which have not yet been fully integrated into our analysis of literary texts.

If there is a polemical tone, even a sense of urgency, to some of the following remarks, they spring from a malaise I have felt with many discussions of post-modernism — a tendency in such discussions to assume that the hall of mirrors, the infinite play of truth and illusion, the irony, distance and often sado-masochistic games between writer and reader of the typical post-modernist text are necessarily progressive and even "revolutionary"; a seeming unconsciousness of or indifference to the fact that the list of post-modernist writers is exclusively male; or, alternatively, a tendency to indiscriminately add to the list feminist writers like Nicole Brossard or France Théoret with no attention paid to the very different modalities of their textual strategies. One danger of this blurring of boundaries between feminism and post-modernism is that once again we fall into the assumption that cultural forms are to be defined by their male manifestations; especially ironic given the post-modernist interest in deconstructing the codes of "authority" and "mastery," and integrating "the feminine" into its discourse.

The experience of reading Aquin's *Neige noire* was compared by one male critic to the sensation of reading "the last book of all time."[4] Aquin himself told an interviewer of the feeling during the novel's elaboration of being "close to death," and in fact his inability to continue writing after *Neige noire* was certainly an important factor in his suicide in 1977. Always extraordinarily lucid about the implications of his writing, he was undoubtedly aware that in *Neige noire* he had pushed the narrative function to its imaginable limits. The novel's basic structure is one of incest: the artist as Oedipus, whose quest for the impossible narrative culminates in a scene of intolerable violence perpetrated against the woman he loves. The film scenario within the novel, which is being written as the narrative advances, is encased in an authorial commentary on art, time, love and the sacred — or what a post-modernist would describe somewhat less poetically as representation, desire, and the unrepresentable. In the final scene of the film scenario (towards which the author leads the reader in a process described as "rape" in

the text), Sylvie is ritually murdered, her body dismembered and devoured by her husband Nicolas — and this on a honeymoon trip to the North Pole that is presented as an image of the cultural and epistemological journey to the mythical "Ultima Thule" that has haunted the Western imagination.

What I think Aquin's novel is telling us is that integrating the feminine into patriarchal discourse is no simple matter — that to lucidly see and confront the implications of the emergence of woman as subject is to confront the impasse of the male subject, the end of his narrative. One is reminded of Luce Irigaray's ironic observation about contemporary psychoanalysis, which might also serve as a comment on post-modernism:

> Subjectivity denied to woman [she writes] provides the . . . backing for every irreducible constitution as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire . . . The male subject can sustain himself only by bouncing back off some objectiveness, some objective. . . . And her possession by a "subject," a subject's desire to appropriate her, is yet another of his vertiginous failures. For where he projects a something to absorb, to take, to see, to possess . . . , a mirror to catch his reflection, he is already faced by another specularization. . . . The quest for the "object" becomes a game of Chinese boxes. Infinitely receding. . . .[5]

And Irigaray continues: "But what if the object started to speak? . . . What disagregation of the subject would that entail?"[6]

"A game of Chinese boxes. Infinitely receding. . . ." After twenty years of circulating in the "narcissistic narratives"[7] of post-modernism, perhaps we should be breaking their mirrors and looking for new ways of making contact with the real and with history. It is in feminist narratives, often articulated around concepts of music and voice rather than image, that these questions are being addressed. But the significance of Aquin's novel is that it leads precisely to the conjuncture of patriarchy with feminism. His gaze into the post-modernist mirror is lucid enough to make it shatter; and what emerges from the shards is a plea for women's voices to carry the culture out of its impasse.

Who is Sylvia?

Who then is this woman in fragments, this Sylvie Lewandowski thrown into the void while Aquin's narrative, which contains within it a dream integrating all the narratives of history, attempts to continue on its course? My suggestion is that she is the symbolic Woman who has been the support of patriarchal discourse, that Woman with a capital W who as Nicole Brossard has pointed out must be killed in order for real women to exist as acting subjects within history. In the novel Sylvie is presented as "the Alpha and the Omega," the ultimate beauty defined in terms of vision, painting, and the sacred:

> Her gaze, constantly shifting, is what most connects her to the invisible. But how to give a precise idea of her body? Invoking Titian or Tiepolo is a reference to fixed images. And yet these points of reference are not completely ineffectual, for a halo of splendour suffuses Tiepolo's airborne women. . . . Sylvie is the ultimate woman, the mirror of love, the hollow vessel of Snaebjørn, the work of works. From the beginning — and for some time yet to come — Sylvie is the carrying structure of the film: everything refers to her, is grafted to her skin, everything is measured in terms of her. She is the origin and the end of all successions, and the allusive symbol of duration. (*Nn*, 45-46; *HT* 36-37)

Despite this idealization, or rather as an essential part of its meaning, the camera lingers over Sylvie's body in sleep ("her right hand . . . at the top of her thigh, at the most vulnerable place on her body, as though to veil the invisible," *Nn*, 8; *HT*, 5), focuses on the area between her breasts as if in a desire to penetrate her mystery, emphasizes the Medusa-like quality of her magnificent blonde hair. Aquin's choice of a filmic form exacerbates through its visual imagery the play of desire and the unconscious that is present in all narrative; as many feminists have pointed out, and as he seems to be discovering in this novel, patriarchal culture finds its privileged expression in the specular, visual possession and destruction of the desired object — the representation that kills.

Neige noire is not a film, however, but a novel, and it is the conjunction of word and image that makes the reader conscious of the symbolic and real significance of what he/she is experiencing through the image. The novel's opening lines, apparently narrated by a traditional omniscient narrator, are an example of the ambiguity of the narrative gaze throughout the novel:

> The city is sweltering, as it has been all summer. Montreal is like a vast open furnace: apartment windows are wide open, offering solitary voyeurs countless low-angle views. Bare shoulders, backs exposed to the sun, thighs spread open, faces coated with sun-tan lotion, white stomachs: so many components of dizzying allusive images! (*Nn*, 7; *HT*, 5)

With no explicit mention of either men or women, the above passage compounds the ambiguity of the apparently genderless voice in which it is narrated: for the typical reader in our culture, whether male or female, will very probably imagine the solitary voyeur as male and the shoulders, backs, thighs, faces and stomachs as female. Unease increases as the reader gradually becomes aware that the action s/he has the illusion of seeing directly is in reality being mediated through the gaze of a hidden and voyeuristic observer: the camera? the author? or the reader himself who of necessity espouses the vision of this observer?

Killing this Woman-Symbol in a feminist text, as Nicole Brossard does in *L'Amèr*,[8] is one thing; killing her violently at the hands of a male protagonist in a novel written by a man is decidedly another. On one level, Aquin's novel is a complex, modern version of the all-too-familiar pornographic esthetic. Like Baude-

laire's famous liminary poem in *Les Fleurs du mal* it justifies its violence by accusing the reader of complicity: "Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère!" As the novel's suspense intensifies, the author intervenes in the filmic narrative to point out to the reader that he/she is being raped, violated, pushed to the edge of the abyss as Sylvie herself is being pushed, and that like Sylvie, s/he is complicitous in what is being done to her. What saves the novel from being simply pornography and manipulation, is, I think, the despairing awareness on the part of the author himself that this violence has its origin in gender-based concepts of identity and knowing, and that it is a seemingly inextricable part of the narrative process. The desire for mystical fusion which gives the novel its lyric intensity is conceived in terms of penetration and possession, and therefore of impossibility; hence an infinite sadness:

> Love, no matter how deliberately intrusive it is, is reduced to a velar approximation of the other, to a desperate cruise on the roof of a sea that can never be pierced . . . It's not time that flies, it is being which eludes us . . . The cantata in a mirror has just shattered under the devastating action of the *Cogito cogitatem*, only the shards of an unreflecting mirror remain. No one knows anything, decidedly . . . If there is no way to convey the sorrow contained in this last assertion, if the bumpy travelling shots don't acutely render the pain of being on the impenetrable shell of the real, then the image is worth nothing. (*Nn*, 186-87; *HT*, 152)

Narrative as HIStory

Nicolas, the protagonist, who is constantly checking his image uneasily in the mirror, is clearly an image of the male subject and artist. An actor playing the part of Fortinbras in a televised version of *Hamlet*, he announces to Sylvie that this will be his final role, and that he is beginning work on an autobiographical film scenario which will coincide with their honeymoon trip to the North Pole. Corresponding to this sense of possibility in the plot, the reader is encouraged to seek meanings not in a closed one-on-one correspondence with *Hamlet*, but in the defocalized gap between image and referent: "Where is this sight? Where is this sight? Where is this sight?" (*Nn*, 15; *HT*, 11) says Nicolas, practising his lines from *Hamlet*; but "the two images are never in focus at the same time, as if they were seeking each other, but in vain" (*Nn*, 18-19; *HT*, 14-15).

Aquin is suggesting however that openness in narrative is not as simple a matter as some post-modernist critics would have us think. Whether we like it or not, we are made up of our past experience; and narrative, like life and like history, can reach a "threshold of irreversibility" where the accumulated weight of its past dramatically reduces its possibilities. Interspersed with flashback shots which suggest a menacing past hanging over their story (scenes of Nicolas binding and gagging another woman, Linda Noble, the actress who plays Ophelia in the TV

Hamlet, a scene of Sylvie in a rage attacking Nicolas' penis with her sharp-edged pendant necklace, a scene of her in bed with an unidentified man), the camera follows Nicolas and Sylvie on their honeymoon to a deserted spot on the island of Spitzbergen, then cuts abruptly to a distraught Nicolas explaining to Norwegian rescuers that his wife has had a fatal accident. The murder of Sylvie takes place in a blank space in the narrative, and not until the end of the novel is the reader confronted with the horror of what took place by the precipice. Following that ellipsis or blank space, Nicholas' life appears to go on normally, and in fact he immediately enters into a relationship with another woman, Eva Vos, who will eventually emerge as Sylvie's positive double. But he carries with him a suitcase which is "Sylvie's symbolic coffin . . . the weight of the body drags him along, determines how he will walk and what his destiny will be" (*Nn*, 120; *HT*, 97). Although Nicolas continues work on his film scenario, it will be invaded by reality, thrown off its original course by the accumulated violence of its history. In *Hamlet*, the play within a play is a trap to "catch the conscience of the King." In *Neige noire*, the film scenario is a trap for the characters and for the reader, who together are caught in its suspense and accelerating violence. But in turn it is trapped by an intersection with reality which transforms it into something beyond the author's control.

If Nicolas, the film-maker, is gradually walking into a trap constructed by his own past, Aquin, the author, has other resources than image and other escape routes to explore for his narrative. Following the ellipsis in the narrative, the story seems to begin again, in apparent symmetry, only now music emerges as an alternative to the closure of the image. On Nicolas' return to Oslo after the "accident," he is met at the airport by Eva Vos, a friend of Sylvie who gradually seems to assume the same role as Sylvie had played in his life. But while Sylvie was associated with the image, Eva is music:

> When we see Eva on the Lille Grensen, the film's musical theme is introduced . . . Generally . . . the music in a film is subdued, but here, when it bursts out it becomes supreme . . . Eva . . . makes the Orphic hymn which is dedicated to her extend onto Lille Grensen. The way she moves, her graceful walk, the beauty of her motions refer the viewer to the invisible stretto underlying all these visual insertions . . . It is important in this passage to let the image flow, not compose it too much, leave it partly undetermined, so that the weight of the music is not contested by any detail of the visual treatment . . . (*Nn*, 139; *HT*, 113)

As music "extends" into reality without "capturing" it, Aquin is seeking a new mode of narrative co-extensive with music rather than film, one which would play on repetition and variation and allow the reader to create his/her own meanings outside the text. The word "stretto" in the above passage is a clue to the fact that *Neige noire* is not only a film built on suspense and closure, but a fugue, with

Sylvie as subject or main theme and Eva as counter-subject — the woman-centred woman whose presence will transform the whole structure of the work. But significantly, Aquin is unable to let Eva/music emerge without making his male character disappear and ending his narrative. Like Sylvie, Eva is in love with Nicolas, but unlike her she refuses to be complicitous in his games of dominance. As she becomes fully aware of the violence in his film scenario and his life, she kisses her own image in the mirror, signifying a break from the role Sylvie had played as reflector of the male gaze. Irigaray's "object" has started to speak, and indeed her emergence as subject coincides with the end of the male narrative. The disappearance of Nicolas from the story is not however portrayed as the "fault" of Eva; for this new Eve carries none of the symbolic associations with evil attached to her Biblical counterpart. Rather, the fall of this post-modern Adam follows from the impasse of his own narrative as it unfolds to its inevitable intersection with reality. And in that impasse lies the beginning of my conclusion.

Aquin, Oedipus and Hamlet: or how to make Oedipus political

It has become almost a commonplace in modern critical discourse to refer to the Oedipal nature of narrative. From Barthes' statement that the pleasure of the text is "an Oedipal pleasure — to denude, to know, to learn the origin and the end"[9] on through the proliferation of analogies between the text and the female body, the analysis of the psychoanalytic underpinnings of literary language has uncovered the same male story — the journey of Oedipus from the exile and anonymity of childhood through confrontation with the father to replacement of him as possessor of the forbidden site of *jouissance*: the mother's body.

More political and more despairing than the traditional Oedipus myth, Aquin's version is also consistent with the story of the male quest for identity as it has existed within Quebec culture. All of his writing is traversed by the nostalgia for a mystical fusion with an unattainable Other, a female presence from whom the narrator is separated by an all-powerful father figure. In his first novel *Prochain épisode*, this structure of desire is inscribed in an eloquent allegory of Quebec's quest for independence, where the female object of desire is an image of the beloved Woman-Country, and the father figure has associations with the colonizer who blocks him in his quest. Aquin's later novels, in which he gradually abandons the theme of Quebec independence, become increasingly black and increasingly dominated by themes of male impotence and violence to women. It is only in *Neige noire* that the structure underlying this violence is revealed, and that Aquin sees to his dismay the power of the Father over all of our narratives.

The major player in Aquin's version of *Hamlet* is not Hamlet, as one might think on a first reading, or even Fortinbras, the successful "un-tragic" prince who

Nicolas strives throughout the narrative to become. Nor is it Ophelia, although she is reflected in both Linda Noble, the character who plays her in the TV version, and in the tragic Sylvie. The villain of the piece and its principal actant is a Polonius to whom Aquin, in one of his inelegant jokes, gives the Polish name of Michel Lewandowski: a Father-figure who remains off-stage and hidden throughout most of the story, but who manipulates the strings in which all the other characters will entangle themselves. The final *tour de force* in the novel's suspense, the point at which Nicolas' film scenario "accidentally encompasses the truth" in "a new combination of the truth-fiction motif" (*Nn*, 220; *HT*, 180), is when, seeking some backup Montreal footage for his film, he stumbles on Michel Lewandowski's house, the very house in which his own and Sylvie's fate has been sealed as if by an anterior decree. It is only at this point that the reader realizes the significance of Sylvie's utterances throughout the novel about the sacredness and the secrecy of names. For the character who was introduced to us as Sylvie Dubuque, and who changed her name to Sylvie Vanesse when she married Nicolas, is in reality Sylvie Lewandowski. Michel Lewandowski is of course her father, and he is also the unidentified man with whom the camera showed her in bed in several earlier scenes of the novel:

> Until this moment, the viewer has decoded everything. Suddenly what he was keeping at a certain distance . . . penetrates him violently; suddenly he understands . . . that at the end of this enigma there is only one Sylvie, . . . lover and daughter of Michel Lewandowski . . . The sudden revelation cannot allow the viewer to get back on his feet in a few seconds, or even to understand how this is really possible . . . His brain has just been bombarded by solar particles charged with electricity and . . . the walls of his skull are suddenly being swept by blank images. (*Nn*, 215; *HT*, 175-76)

It is here, in the discovery that "there is only one Sylvie, . . . lover and daughter of Michel Lewandowski," that Aquin's own narrative and all of his previous narratives "encompass the truth" — not accidentally, like Nicolas' film scenario, but because of the unerring logic of their creator. In the confrontation of the unitary Law of the Father that presides over its unfolding, the infinite reflections and illusions of openness of the post-modern narrative reveal themselves as the escape tactics of an impotent son.

On the mythical level, the surprise to the reader lies in a sudden and unpredicted shift in emphasis. Aquin's exploration of "the pornographic eye/I"[10] at the centre of Western culture's symbol systems and representational apparatus has led him back not only to Oedipus but to Electra, the daughter who continues to love her father Agamemnon and to believe in *his* love even after he has killed her sister Iphigénie. It is the Law of the Father that holds both the sons and the daughters in thrall, producing the violence of the sons against women and the complicity of the

daughters in their own subjection. One of Electra's daughters is of course Shakespeare's Ophelia, who is not only a victim, as feminists have tended to see her, but whose loyalty to her own father's manpulative charm is an essential element in the foundering of *her* love story.

"The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite / That ever I was born to set it right!" It is not Nicolas who could speak these words from *Hamlet*, for, like the postmodern artist always ready to try out a new version of his narrative without coming to terms with its impasse, he escapes unscathed to the appropriately-named spot of Repulse Bay in the Canadian Arctic to search for a new group of actors to play in his film. As Eva says to Linda Noble, "He *will* end up finishing his film. And because he's alive, he'll seem innocent" (*Nn*, 247; *HT*, 202). It is Aquin himself who ceased writing after *Neige noire*, except for a few short essays like the mystical "The text and the silence of the margins,"[11] which appeared a few months before his death. In it, the dissolving borders between the ego and the infinite are imaged by "the text and the marginal silence which presses in on it, corners it and will soon devour it"; and Aquin adds: "The price of individuation can never be sufficiently denounced."[12] Less than three months later, he took a pistol inherited from his father, placed it to his brain and ended his life. I recount these details not for their sensational effect, but because the gestures in Aquin's life and death were carefully chosen; and the analogy with Nicolas' head and the precipice seems not entirely fortuitous.

Epilogue

If Aquin is about any one thing, however, it is contradiction; and *Neige noire* is not, finally, a tragedy. The novel ends with a strange epilogue, a mystical lesbian love scene between Eva Vos and Linda Noble, the sole protagonists who remain after Nicolas' departure and after Michel Lewandowski has hurled himself to his death from the window of his twelfth-floor office. Its inflated rhetoric makes no pretense at realism and is shot through with a Christian symbolism which builds on and attempts to transform the images of the Christian communion ritual present in the scene of Sylvie's murder. "A particle of what has fled and what will follow" (*Nn*, 250; *HT*, 205), Sylvie has become part of the embrace of Eva and Linda, a parthenogenesis in which body and spirit merge as the two lovers "walk along the illuminative way" (*Nn*, 250; *HT*, 205):

> Eva: God is within me and I am entering God. I feel I am inhabiting him. When your tongue darts into me you lift the veil that separated me from the milky way, and now I am almost touching the great silence where life is born and dies and is born again on the cosmic scale, filling the void with a murmur of joy. (*Nn*, 252; *HT*, 206)

A writer of transition, educated in the pre-Quiet Revolution period of the *collèges classiques*, religious absolutism and federalist politics, Aquin expressed with passion and lucidity the necessity of a break with the past and the creation of a new cultural order; but was unable to make the break himself with the internalized values of the past. *Neige noire* is finally a vision of a new fusion of the sacred and the temporal emerging as history moves towards what one of Aquin's favourite philosophers, Teilhard de Chardin, called the "omega point"; but it is a vision in which he seems incapable of imagining a male presence, particularly his own. Although the juxtaposition of Christian imagery and lesbian eroticism as imagined by a male makes this epilogue a jarring read, it is meant, the author tells us, as a final "kiss" which he gives to the reader. Unlike a film, which as *Neige noire* demonstrated controls both the viewer's response and the reality it represents, this novel has been a journey in words and beyond them towards the exchange of infinite love, a "mutually fertilizing pleasure whose course overlaps the eternal Communion" (*Nn*, 253-54; *HT*, 207). It will be the feminist writers who follow who will develop modes of representation that "extend" into the real, "approach" it without penetrating or capturing it, and allow the sacred to emerge in new non-patriarchal forms of fusion between self and other. But Aquin at least has rendered for his readers the full implications of what he has seen in our history. The final lines of his novel, in which he intervenes for the first time in the narrative in the first person singular, situate him without question within a history his writing desires, absolutely, to transform: "Time devours me, but from its mouth I draw my stories, from its mysterious sedimentation I draw my seed of eternity" (*Nn*, 254; *HT*, 208).

NOTES

[1] Montreal: Editions La Presse, 1974. English translation by Sheila Fischman (*Hamlet's Twin*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977). Quotes from the text are from the Fischman translation, with a certain number of modifications where I found her version was unfaithful to the original, or at times where I simply preferred another wording. Page references are given throughout to both the original (*Nn*) and the Fischman translation (*HT*).

[2] *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1984.

[3] *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity*. Ithaca & London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985.

[4] Joseph Bonenfant, "*Neige noire*," *Livres et auteurs québécois 1974*, Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1975, p. 22.

[5] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (trans. Gillian C. Gill), Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985, pp. 133-34.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[7] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1980.

[8] *L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité*. Montréal: Quinze, 1977.

[9] *The Pleasure of the Text* (trans. Richard Miller). New York: Hill & Wang, 1975, p. 10.

[10] Geraldine Finn, "Patriarchy and Pleasure: the Pornographic Eye/I," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 9, no. 1-2, (Winter 1985), pp. 81-95.

[11] "Le texte ou le silence marginal?", *Blocs erratiques*, Montréal: Quinze, 1977, p. 269 (my translation).

[12] *Loc. cit.*

BEETHOVEN AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE UNCONDITIONAL

Ralph Gustafson

The absolutes are out of favour:
Beethoven who couldn't hear a vocable
Though his successive trumpets grew
In size, kazoo to bamboozle,
Heaven-heard, the questions asked him
Written down, the notebooks blank
Of answers whose music is the answer.
Plug. Plug. Rock against Easter.
What is to the heart and ear
And touchings true, closed off,
The given natural out of favour,
The apostrophic round and fateful
Summation, blown: flat.

NOTES TOWARDS A RECONSIDERATION OF PAUL KANE'S ART AND PROSE*

I. S. MacLaren

In Memoriam: Charles R. Steele, 1944-1987

THE ILLUSTRATED TRAVEL NARRATIVE represents one of pre-Confederation Canada's most frequently practised literary genres. Subscription to its conventions yielded faithfully Euro-centric imperialist notions of the world beyond the meccas of civilization: The traveller took with him/her an eye prepared to testify to the differences that remote regions and their denizens offered to the European reading public's understanding of the human species on earth. Whether dramatized with the persona of the romantic enthusiast upon whose spirit strange new impressions registered, or documented with the steadfast resolve of the dispassionate naturalist, such narratives focussed especially upon the uncommon, the foreign, encountered either on a daily basis or as a general effect of wilderness travel and exploration. However, while their subject matter may have shared common foci, the scientist and the sentimental and impressionistic traveller adopted different styles of representing their encounters with the unknown and little known. While the scientist/traveller, who had looked *at* nature, believed that a plain style

* To the extent that this essay adds to the understanding of Kane studies, it owes much to a number of people who provided a great variety of assistance or who generously lent their expertise to a series of what seemed to me only problems. The essay was made possible by the generous assistance of Nelda C. Stark, Chairman, Nelda C. and H. J. Lutcher Stark Foundation, who provided convenient access to the necessary materials; Laura Bowler and Anna Jean Caffey, Registrar, of the Stark Museum of Art; Kenneth Lister, Curatorial Assistant, and Helen Kilgour, Departmental Assistant, of the Department of Ethnology, Royal Ontario Museum. I should also wish to acknowledge with gratitude the help of Robert Stacey, exhibition curator and editor; Alan D. Ridge, Alberta Provincial Archivist (ret.); John Foster, Department of History, The University of Alberta; Warren Baker; Katherine Pettipaw, Department of Ethnology, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature; Patricia McCormack, Provincial Museum of Alberta; Virginia Murray, Archivist, John Murray Publishers, London; and Michael Bott, Keeper of Archives and Manuscripts, University of Reading.

could actually present (not just represent) phenomena unaltered by human perception, the sentimental traveller, who had perhaps only looked *over* nature, investigated with a much greater measure of narrativity the impression on him/her of the experience of it.

Much more should be and has been said about the different narrative personalities of scientific and sentimental illustrated travel narratives,[1] but only the primary distinctions need be recalled for an examination of the *oeuvre* of Paul Kane, whose diverse purposes for travel left him wandering as both a scientist and a sentimental traveller, on the one hand a dispassionate documenter of Amerindians and their territories, and on the other hand a personally engaged individual telling a tale of adventure with an almost Wordsworthian fervour for retrieving an innocent past:

> The subject was one in which I felt a deep interest in my boyhood. I had been accustomed to see hundreds of Indians about my native village, then Little York, muddy and dirty, just struggling into existence, now the City of Toronto, bursting forth in all its energy and commercial strength. But the face of the red man is now no longer seen. All traces of his footsteps are fast being obliterated from his once favourite haunts, and those who would see the aborigines of this country in their original state, or seek to study their native manners and customs, must travel far through the pathless forest to find them. To me the wild woods were not altogether unknown, and the Indians but recalled old friends with whom I had associated in my childhood. . . .[2]

Not hitherto remarked of this oft-quoted passage from Kane's *Wanderings of an Artist* (1859) are several oddities. Besides the fact that, as Kane well knew, the forest was anything but pathless — the development of inland communication had reached an advanced state by 1859, and Kane himself had started his 1849 trip to Fort Garry by steamer — one wonders how Kane meant scientifically to "study" his sentimentally remembered "old friends." From the outset of the published narrative, two purposes for it work against one another, creating a disturbing sense of the persona as both prominent actor in and objective chronicler of the narrative. That Amerindians receive such contradictory epithets as "red man" and "aborigines" within the space of a few lines also throws into question Kane's understanding of his purpose and anticipates later difficulties for the narrative when the apparent author records with revulsion numerous habits of the brethren of his "old friends." Clearly, the barbarian, the Noble Savage, and the anthropological/ethnographical curiosity all run into one another backstage of this preface.

This disturbing discontinuity in the narrative may be regarded, though for different reasons that will be examined later in this essay, as analagous to the well documented discrepancy in the artistic purposes of Kane's field watercolours and sketches, and his studio oil paintings. In fact, this essay will suggest the consideration of the inversion of the current state of Kane studies. At the moment, a marked

discrepancy is faithfully noted between the field work and studio productions in Kane's painting, but no discrepancy between the same two stages in his prose. Less of a discrepancy will be argued for in representative pairs of pictures, while the widest possible discrepancy will be examined in the prose.

SINCE 1971, WHEN RUSSELL HARPER, in his exhaustive study of Kane, remarked the variance between the field and studio works, criticism of the art has faithfully followed him. Thus, Ann Davis emphasizes, indeed polarizes, the two, finding the watercolours and sketches " 'accurate,' spontaneous, and bright" productions of a "scientist," and regarding the studio oils as " 'aesthetic,' composed, mannered" works of an "artist."[3] Harper had cited a number of factors, especially the great difference between the two colour keys used by Kane,[4] and to them has since been emphatically and helpfully added another important one: in her thesis about corporate conditioning of artistic representations of the West, Susan Jane Hopkins Stewart argues for the pervasive influence on Kane's studio work of Sir George Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Company's inland governor, by whose generosity Kane was able to make his trip to the Pacific Ocean and back, by whose company's routes and conveyances he travelled, and by whose commission he prepared his first canvases upon returning to Toronto.[5] Just as, half a century later, the Canadian Pacific Railway, by its policy of distributing free passes to artists, conditioned what of the West was seen and even which landscapes were frequently painted, and painted on canvases of which dimensions,[6] so the Hudson's Bay Company provided a set route, and strongly suggested to an indebted Kane what he ought to paint and how it ought to be represented. Davis has furthered Stewart's work in this regard by arguing that as a representative Victorian tycoon, Simpson wanted documentary art only if it conformed to propriety and convention,[7] if only because corporate demand for art has rarely condoned anything in its collections but the status quo. Hardly would Simpson have countenanced a room in his house full of "raw savages," "unadorned heathens," or what have you. As important perhaps (given the low regard in which the media of sketch and watercolour laboured until well into the twentieth century in Canada), only properly framed — even paired — oil portraits and landscapes could hope to find a corporate or legislative home.

Did Kane not know all this *before* he left on his trip? Much has been made of the ostensible influence made on him by Catlin's London exhibition; given his presumed witness of it and his implicit prefatorial avowal to generate something similar, how can the student of the entire pictorial *oeuvre* countenance the notion that Kane entirely changed his purpose and perspective from "scientist" to "artist"

upon his return to Toronto in October 1848? Indeed, he knew of Simpson's possible interest in acquiring pictures before he departed in June of 1846. From this viewpoint, at least as far as the seldom considered landscapes are concerned, Kane's field practices seem not at all necessarily scientific or accurate, if brighter, than the studio oils worked up later. Indeed, the notion that a series of pictures wherever executed could be executed outside the conventions of their day seems as innocent as the eighteenth-century idea that the plain style, itself after all a style or convention, is free from conventionalized representation. Especially on the frontier, where travellers have brought their perceptual baggage as a means of recognizing and responding to difference from civilization and culture, the chances of a painter or writer stepping outside all prevailing conventions of the time seem, at best, remote.

"To represent the scenery of an almost unknown country" (lxiii) amounts to no more than Kane's tertiary artistic purpose in his travels, perhaps because, unlike the portrayal of western Amerindians in British territory, landscapes were not unique: Henry James Warre, whom Kane appears not to have met when the two passed through Fort Garry in the summer of 1846, had, even before Kane's return to Toronto, published pictures of a number of events and sites that receive treatment by Kane, including the Rockies, Forts Garry and Vancouver, the falls on the Pelouse River, the Willamette River valley, Kakabeka Falls, a prairie buffalo hunt, and a prairie fire.[8] As well, perhaps Kane relegates landscapes to a minor status because of the proof in Catlin's exhibition that public interest (and potential income for Kane) lay most in the Indian portrait. However, of paramount consideration is the simple reason that Kane, both in Mobile and after in Europe, made portraiture his chief study. Nevertheless, a check of the "Landscape and Portrait log" kept by him on the 1846-1848 journey (see below) shows that written entries about landscapes, as he designates them, outnumber entries regarding the portraits. His concern with their preparation and correct identification bespeaks more than a tertiary interest in their execution.

Basic conventions of picturesque landscape depiction govern the field watercolours as much as they do the studio oils. The first pair here presented for consideration is "White Mud Portage, Winnipeg River" (fig. 1a) and *White Mud Portage* (fig. 1b); the former was not necessarily painted in 1846, as its classification gives it, but perhaps, as Harper suggests (280), when Kane camped at the portage on 4 August 1848; the latter is used as an illustration in *Wanderings* (315). One recognizes, for example, as much similarity as difference in structure: the central clump of trees halves the picture in each case, and Kane deploys in the watercolour and maintains in the oil the picturesque landscapist's habit of adopting, however artificially, a prospect point *above* the scene depicted. Even the watercolour's problems persist: the difficulty that Kane so often encountered in

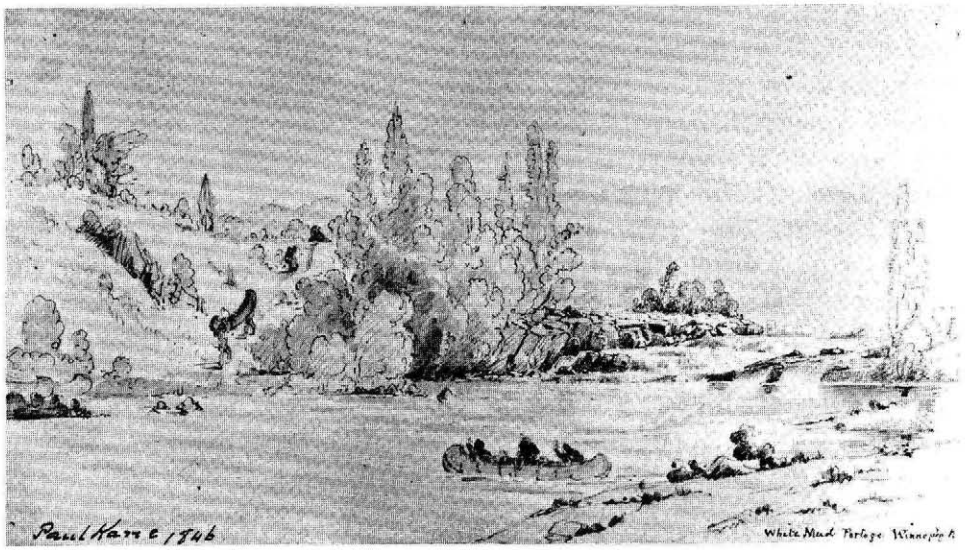


FIG. 1a PAUL KANE, *White Mud Portage, Winnipeg River*, watercolour on paper, 5¼″ x 9⅜″ (13.33 x 23.81 cm) Harper IV-19 and Pl. XIII.
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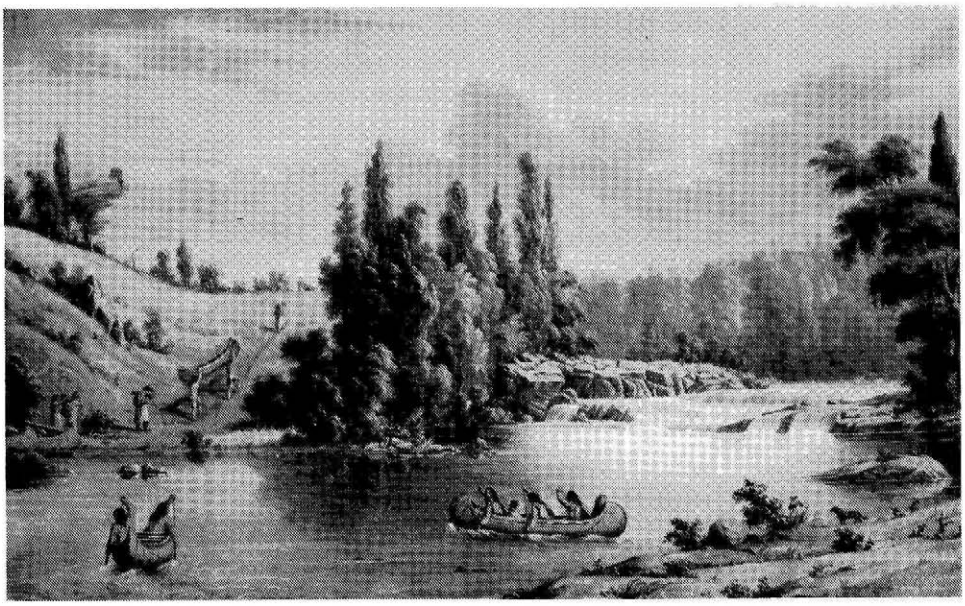

FIG. 1b PAUL KANE, *White Mud Portage*, oil on canvas, 1′6″ x 2′5″ (45.72 x 73.66 cm) Harper IV-20.
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, TORONTO

placing figures of proper proportion relative to the scenery appears as prominently in the "artistic" studio work as it does in the apparently "scientific" watercolour. Supplying the oil with one "dog" and five more Indians, especially those in the additional canoe that sits disconcertingly atop the water, only exacerbates the problem, with the result that the foreground scale simply does not accord with that of the left-hand middle ground.

Without doubt, Kane's studio penchants for cloud banks and for shade generally supply the more mannered aspects of the oils that Harper noted; moreover, the right-hand poplar has metamorphosed into a frondy Claudian deciduous type (though not one environmentally uncharacteristic of the Winnipeg River valley: several British travellers before Kane had noted with joy the reappearance of oak and elm upon their arrival from either the prairies or the conifer-laden swamps near the height of land in modern northern Ontario[9]). In no sense, however, can the field work accurately be deemed free of stylization. If anything, its style may seem inapt for a rendition of landscape on this portion of the trip: the bright, transparent atmosphere and light green washes do not suggest as well as the oil painting does the valley's occasionally subterranean character, or its rich and varied August foliage.

Just the opposite effects are achieved by the field and studio renditions of the Red River settlement. In the former (fig. 2a), one of the relatively few oil paintings executed in the field, the darkness of the piece works at odds with the brightness that is expected of a prairie scene and that, by contrast at least, is achieved in the latter (fig. 2b). More important for this discussion, however, must be the recognition in both works of the picturesque habits of elevated prospect, central dividing tree (even if, one suspects, Kane searched the river bank for the right tree to break his horizon line, searching as long perhaps as Samuel Hearne must have searched to find a tree to perform the same function for his picture of Great Slave Lake[10]), and a rough symmetry, the two banks of the river, the two cultures, echoing one another. The oil does introduce, if only just, another picturesque convention, the animated foreground, by providing a stabled horse's rump and, awkwardly, by inserting a disproportionately-scaled rafter in the near middle ground, but the picture's rough symmetry needs no such added artifice to qualify already as quite conventional.[11]

A symmetrical ordering of nature similarly distinguishes two other prairie watercolours, "Prairie Valley" (fig. 3a) and "A Prairie on Fire" (fig. 4a), the first a picturesque, the second a tamely sublime, landscape. Such symmetry is only accentuated by shading in the more mannered studio renditions of each picture, *A Valley in the Plains* (fig. 3b) and *A Prairie on Fire* (fig. 4b). In each of these, the prairie appears groomed and cultured — tame — but the watercolours may not claim to lie outside conventional response: in both of these, the echoing ortho-

FIG. 2a PAUL KANE, *Red River Settlement*, oil on board, 9″ x 13⅞″ (22.86 x 35.24 cm) Harper IV-36 and Fig. 56.
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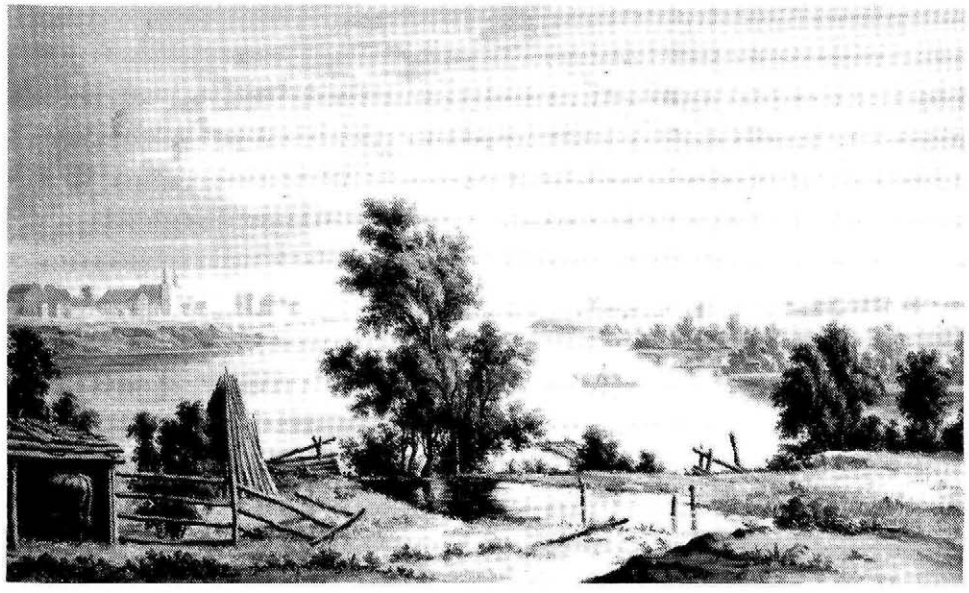

FIG. 2b PAUL KANE, *Red River Settlement*, oil on canvas, 1′6″ x 2′5″ (45.72 x 73.66 cm) Harper IV-37.
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FIG. 3a PAUL KANE, *Prairie Valley*, watercolour on paper, 4½″ x 9″ (11.43 x 22.86 cm) Harper IV-120, where titled "The Golden Valley."
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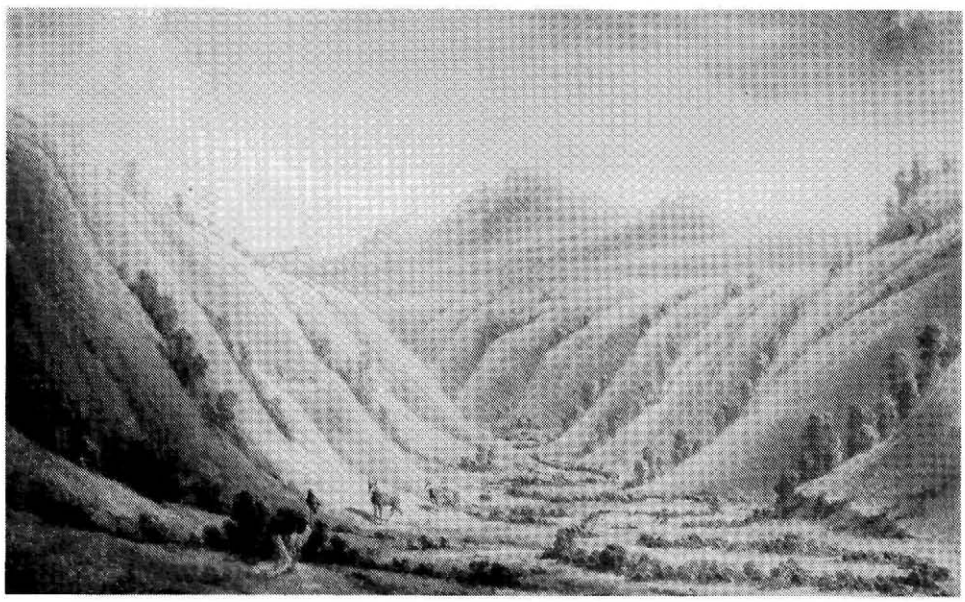

FIG. 3b PAUL KANE, *A Valley in the Plains*, oil on canvas, 1′6″ x 2′5″ (45.72 x 73.66 cm) Harper IV-121.
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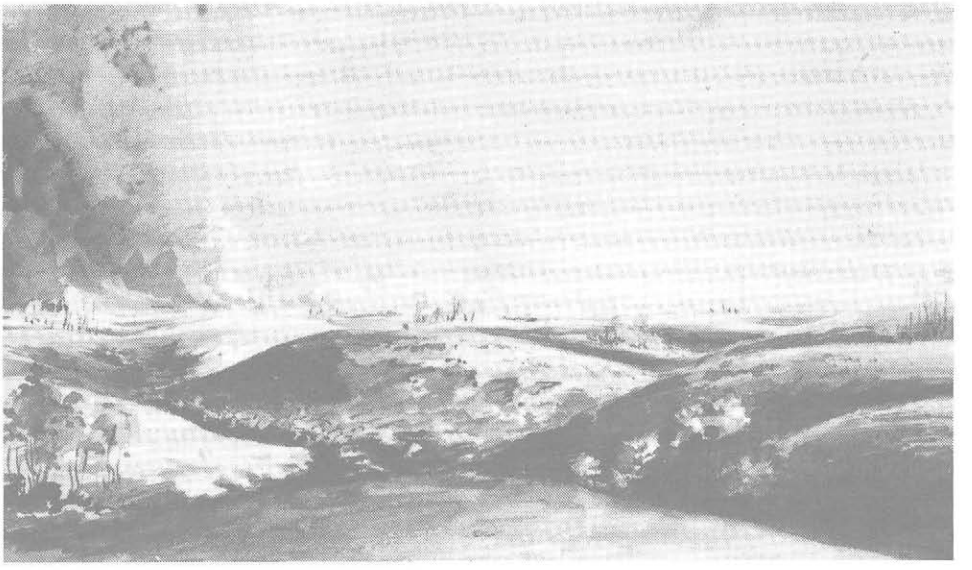

FIG. 4a PAUL KANE, *A Prairie on Fire*, watercolour on paper, 5½″ x 9″ (13.97 x 22.86 cm) Harper IV-186.
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, TORONTO

FIG. 4b PAUL KANE, *A Prairie on Fire*, oil on canvas, 1′6″ x 2′5″ (45.72 x 73.66 cm) Harper IV-187 and Fig. 99.
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, TORONTO

gonals almost severely define and order the landscapes at reciprocal angles; landmarks, the highest background hill in "Prairie Valley" and a deep middle ground clump of trees in "A Prairie on Fire," are symmetrically positioned to divide the pictures even more into paired halves; and the elevated prospect guarantees a sunken middle ground into which the eye is led in a most orderly and deterministic way. Both oil paintings complete the picturesque conventions by exhibiting humanized/animated foregrounds. In *A Prairie on Fire* the effect is, however, rather sublime than picturesque, since the chiaroscuro of the impending conflagration appears now more threatening, directed as it is at the human staffage. Still, the fire, occupying so little of the canvas back at the horizon, seems rather to kindle decorously than rage alarmingly. Neither the watercolour nor the oil endangers the foreground.

Like most nineteenth-century travellers on the fur-trade route across the Prairies, Kane found himself enthralled by the picturesque properties of the parkland in the North Saskatchewan River valley at Forts Carlton (fig. 5) and Pitt (fig. 6). In both these watercolours, the eye descends from a variably elevated prospect into the middle ground by way of the curving river and the echoing lines of the banks. Points on the river interrupt and deflect the eye while clumps of foliage break up the terrain in ways that provide variety without confusion, the sort of *concordia discors* sought so fervently by William Gilpin, the doyen of English picturesque travellers. Moreover, the background river banks under which the fort in each picture nestles securely enclose and contain the ordered scene; no vastness threatens to impinge upon it. The points of the river and, in "Fort Pitt, with Bluff," the right-hand trees act as the *coulisses* accentuating the desired picturesque effect of contained variety that keeps the eye entertainedly active but not confused.

Most travellers found the contained river valley scenes more perceptibly digestible than those of the open prairie. Some, like the Scottish aristocrat Frederick Ulric Graham, who in 1847 reached Fort Carlton by the overland route on horse rather than by the Saskatchewan River in a boat, seemed disposed to over-respond aesthetically to the valley after too many days in the disorienting openness of the grasslands:

> Some of the views of the noble river, with its steep wooded bluffs, and long reaches through the forest vistas, very, very bonnie! While every now and then we look down from a high bluff upon a large 'holme' [a grass meadow river bank] by the water side, studded with clumps of fine timber and single trees, like an English park. In one of these . . . the remains of two old forts of the rival [fur trade] companies were situated in a lovely spot, which would have made a Belvoir or a Chatsworth had it been in England. . . .[12]

Clearly, the valley would not have sponsored such specifically English or Scottish associations in the mind of the Canadian Kane, but the watercolours of these two

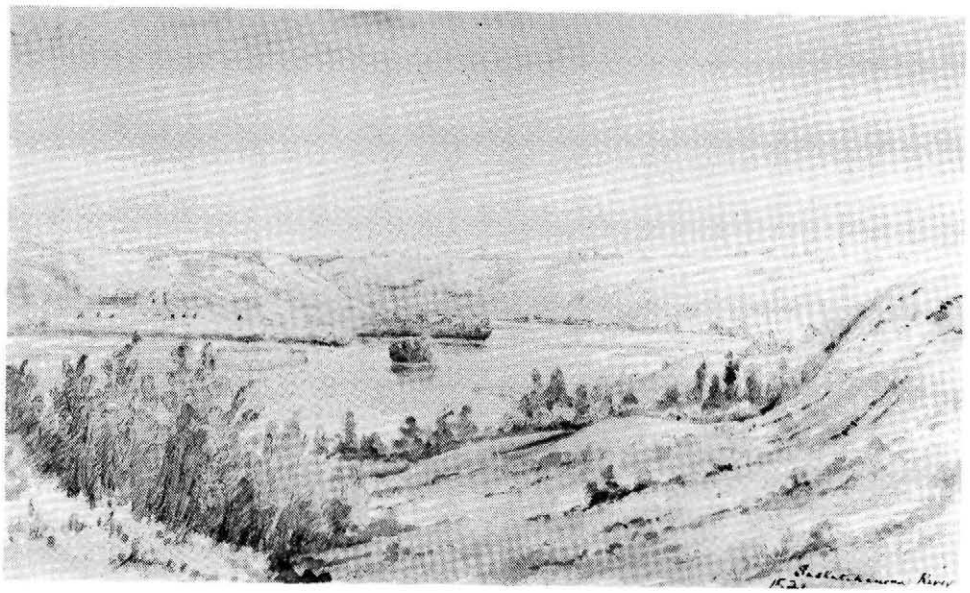

FIG. 5 PAUL KANE, *Fort Carlton from a Distance*, watercolour on paper, 5⅜″ x 8⅞″ (13.65 x 22.54 cm) Harper IV-96 and Fig. 75.
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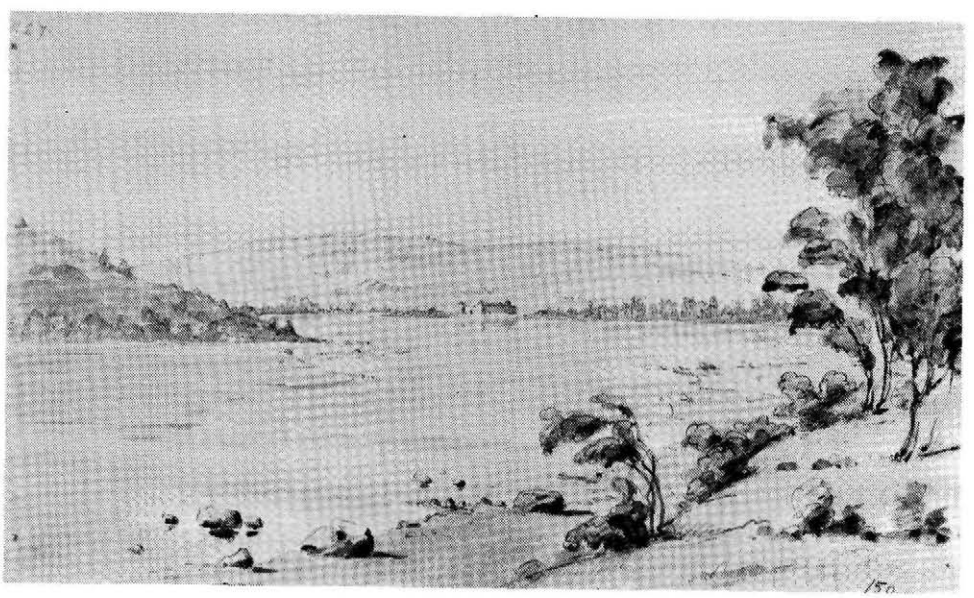

FIG. 6 PAUL KANE, *Fort Pitt, with Bluff*, watercolour on paper, 5⅜″ x 9″ (13.65 x 22.86 cm) Harper IV-122 and Fig. 83.
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forts, neither of which received treatment in oil, might without difficulty have served to illustrate Graham's celebration of the prairies' apotheosis of the picturesque landscape, or what John Warkentin has called the "well-watered and well-treed . . . avenue across the plains."[13] To this extent, then, the conventionality of Kane's field work looms quite obviously.

Remarkable for its point of view, which seems to straddle two subjects — the river valley and the fort atop the bluff where now reposes the Alberta Legislature — is "Fort Edmonton, 1846" (fig. 7a). A reduced sense of picturesque containment prevails in this picture since the fort's situation draws the eye up and out of the valley rather than, as with the previous two watercolours, into and directly across the valley from the eye's prospect.[14] In the studio painting, *Fort Edmonton* (fig. 7b), the foreground becomes animated by four figures and by a horse towing a travois. The road, the forerunner of 97th Avenue, winds more than in the watercolour, echoing the river's serpentine flow more closely, which is just as well since its vector in the watercolour tends to tyrannize the eye. Most different in the oil painting is the sky, which not only occupies more of the canvas than it did of the paper, but receives the "Dutch marine" treatment that Harper identifies as a disappointment in so many of the studio prairie landscapes. It may be argued that in mimicking the river's course the cloud pattern invokes a sort of spatial closure that the less conventionally picturesque watercolour lacks in this instance.

In summary of the landscapes, while Kane's technique in the field *may* attest to the spontaneous documentations of a "scientist," allowance must be made for the conventional and controlled structural representation of terrain. Far more easily aligned with picturesque painters before him — George Heriot, Sir George Back, and Warre, all of whom were also much more than topographical landscapists — than with C. W. Jefferys, the first painter to bring a post-picturesque, Ruskinian aesthetic to the painting of the West,[15] Kane displays a conventionality in his studio oils that develops out of rather than departs from his field watercolours. As preparations for the canvases that would grace the homes of Sir George Simpson, George Allan, and other barons of British North American business and politics, the watercolours provide conventional landscapes whose structures required little alteration in order to produce proper, marketable art.

IF THE DISCREPANCY WITHIN the pictorial *oeuvre* proves less polarized than has been thought, the dichotomy in Kane's written record does not. The "author's preface," not likely penned by Kane after all, certainly claims for *Wanderings* the authority of on-the-spot observation: "The following pages are the notes of my daily journey, with little alteration from the original wording, as I

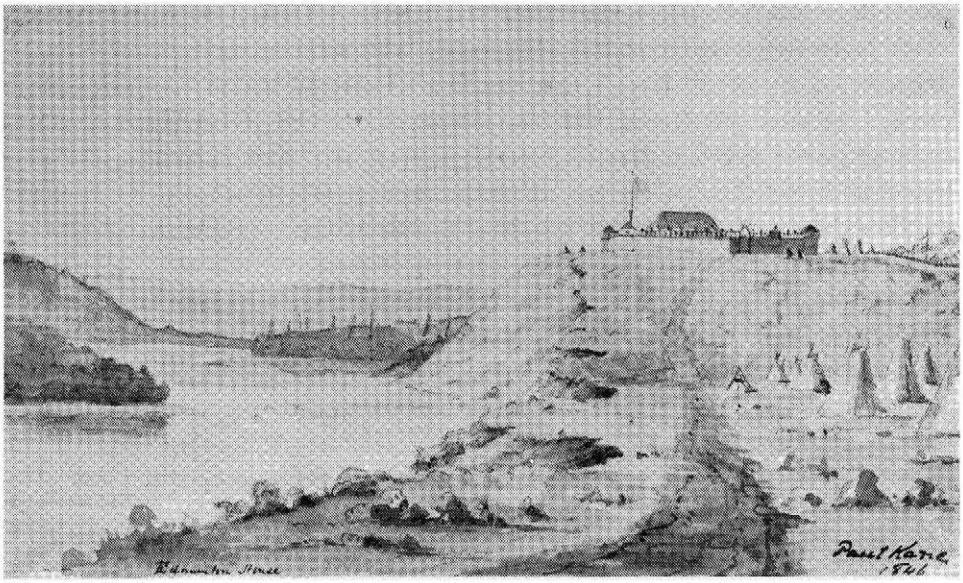

FIG. 7a PAUL KANE, *Fort Edmonton, 1846*, watercolour on paper, 5⅜″ x 9″ (13.65 x 22.86 cm) Harper IV-188 and Pl. XXV.
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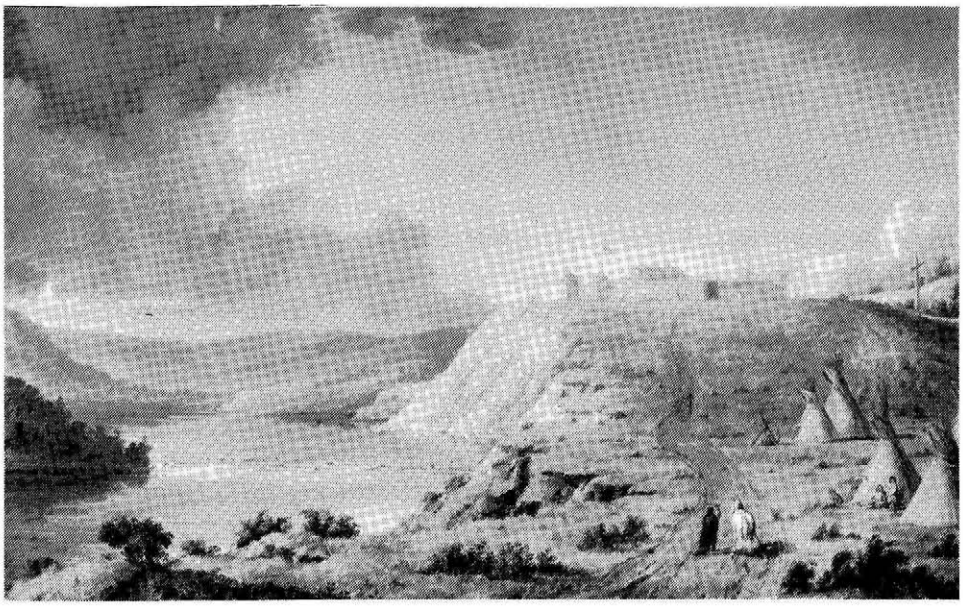

FIG. 7b PAUL KANE, *Fort Edmonton*, oil on canvas, 1′6″ x 2′5″ (45.72 x 73.66 cm) Harper IV-189.
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM, TORONTO

jotted them down in pencil at the time" (lxiii). Such a claim appeared regularly in the preface of travel narratives; frequently, as it did in Alexander Mackenzie's narrative, as it does in Kane's, it precedes a disclaimer about the lowly artistic merit of the subsequent prose, which, not even for a moment, intends to make "any claim to public approbation as a literary production." This formulaic statement served to deflect the reader's aesthetic expectation, while it aroused his/her curiosity for the unvarnished truth. A sort of precious-little-but-mine-own posturing, it continued well into the nineteenth century's travel literature to reinforce the illusion that the plain style, *sans* literary intention and attended by the august authority vested in it by Sprat's Royal Society edict of 1667, accurately reported peoples encountered, places visited, and events witnessed. To this extent the book's contemporary or its present-day reader would perhaps be more surprised by the absence than by the presence of the disclaimer, whether or not the narrative proceeded to exhibit any significant literary character. Of course, it did not often follow, even with such a disclaimer, that an unedited journal of travel saw the light of day: the British publishing houses retained in a highly competitive travel literature market very acute senses of the timbre and tone necessary to sell a book of travels; no lesss than the art world did the book world understand marketability.

The excessive passage of time between Kane's travels and the publication of *Wanderings* alerts one to the need to discriminate between what he jotted *en route* and what he took with him to London eleven years later in search of a publisher. As it turns out, these jottings bear only a distant literary relation to *Wanderings*: the journals record most of the events that appear in the book, but the book's narrative style, the character of its first-person persona as a sentimental traveller condescendingly reporting events and ethnographic details, and especially that persona's judgments of Amerindian tribes all develop as part of the narrative only after Kane's return to Toronto in October 1848. Because the production of Kane's narrative has long been thought as straightforward as the generation of the oil paintings (although careful readers have suspected something more complicated), a simple account of the publication and its manuscripts may be as needful as an analysis of them.

On 17 March 1859 a copy of Kane's *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America* . . . was registered by the publisher, Longman, at Stationer's Hall. Fifteen days before, six copies had been sent to the "author," and on the same day a notable number, eighteen, had been sent to the "editors," perhaps as many as three of them. The production of 1,020 copies had cost Longman £343, including fees paid to the mapmaker and engraver (Weller, £12), to the woodcutter (Branston, £34.11.00), to the compositor (Spottiswoode, £37.16.03), and to the drawer of the plates on stone (V. Brooks, £53). As well, £52 had been spent on advertising by June 1859. By the end of that month 747 copies had sold,

fifty of them to the Toronto bookseller, J. Bain, and 36 had been variously "presented." Also, at that time Longman, who had agreed to divide equally with Kane all proceeds from the sales, paid him the princely sum of £84. Thus was *Wanderings* launched more than a decade after the travels it records.[16]

As Harper points out, "The final version of [Kane's] manuscript was retained by the publishers, only to be burned during the London blitz of 1940. An early version was kept in Toronto and it is this version which is now held by the Stark Foundation" (40). How widely that final manuscript differed from the book will never be known but it is safe to say that because the readying of it into marketable form required the labours of more than a single editor (not only does the word appear in the plural in the Longman ledger, but the number of books assigned, 18, might suggest as many as three editors, if each editor, like the author, received a standard six-copies allotment), the manuscript cannot have been identical to the narrative of *Wanderings*. Due attention must be paid, however, to the fact that long before the manuscript reached the point at which Kane is said to have taken it to London several writers and, necessarily, their interpretations and shapings of events had participated in its gestation.

At the Stark Museum in Orange, Texas, there are a variety of manuscripts to which Harper referred in his "Note on the Text" ([48]). Three of these, perhaps what Harper calls "(2) a version of the *Wanderings*, in his wife's hand," cover the narrative of the book without its chapter or paragraph divisions. Three hardback notebooks (pen on paper, 8¼" x 6¾" [20.95 x 17.14 cm]) comprise this manuscript as follows. (Numbers refer to the Stark Museum's accessions.)

11.85/2 (A) — 119 unnumbered pages (numbered 1-88, and then 78-107) plus twenty loose pages. The contents correspond roughly to *Wanderings*, chapters I-VII; the preface is represented only by the following, which leads in to the first sentence of chapter I in *Wanderings* (1):

> Having long felt a restless anxiety to learn something from personal observation and experience of the manners & customs of the wild tribes of the far west & northern regions of this Continent and to perpetuate on canvas some remembrances of a remarkable race now fast dwindling away and likely perhaps ere the lapse of many years to become extinct or so far amalgamated with the white man as to lose the chief traits of their nationality I left Toronto on the 17th of June 1845. . . .

Where the page numbering changes sequence (88 is followed by 78) so does the handwriting. At this point of change, the narratives overlap: the first page that is numbered 88 ends in the middle of the word "surprise" (i.e., *Wanderings* 58, bottom line), while the second page numbered 78 begins with a description of the Red River settlement (i.e., *Wanderings* 49, last paragraph) and continues on in the same new hand until the end of the manuscript

(i.e., *Wanderings* 66). As well, pages 77-88 in the initial sequence are crossed out.

11.85/2 (B) — 93 unnumbered pages. The contents correspond to *Wanderings*, chapters III-X, and the first pages of chapter XI. Because this narrative partly overlaps with the passage written in both the hands that appear in 11.85/2 (A), a further comparison of hands may be readily made; it points up that clearly the hand that took over in the earlier manuscript wrote this one. Comparison is most easily made, for example, at 11.85/2 (A) at the first page numbered 86 vs. page 91 vs. 11.85/2 (B) 36th right-hand page.

11.85/2 (C) — 171 unnumbered pages. The contents continue the narrative of (B) in mid-sentence and correspond to *Wanderings*, chapters XI-XXV. However, the narrative ends with an entry for 12 September 1848 (i.e., *Wanderings* 321-22), and does not contain any material beyond this date. As well, the appendix in the 1859 edition does not appear in manuscript form. (C) is written throughout in the hand that wrote (B) and the second portion of (A).

Apart from this manuscript version, there is another which supplements it, as it were; that is to say, while 11.85/2 (A), (B), and (C) cover the events of *Wanderings*, many portions of the book are missed out; most of these appear in another hardback notebook (pen on paper, 8⅛″ x 6¾″ [20.63 x 17.14 cm]).

11.85/3 — Two parts. The first has 18 unnumbered pages whose contents correspond to *Wanderings*, chapters I-II. Its somewhat different preface reads into the first chapter's first sentence as follows:

> Having long felt a restless anxiety to learn something from personal experience of the manners & customs of the wild tribes of the west and to preserve a remembrance on canvas of the peculiarities of a remarkable people now fast disappearing and likely ere long to be extinct or to become so far amalgamated with the white man as to lose all traits of their nationality I left Toronto on the 17th of June 1845. . . .

The second part has 130 pages, numbered 1-137 (no pages numbered 114-20), whose contents amount to verbal portraits, anecdotes, and notices of chiefs and (beginning at page 121) of landscapes painted. In both parts of the manuscript the handwriting matches the first hand used to write 11.85/2 (A). It is a run-of-the-mill nineteenth-century hand, the product of the "Copperplate" school of handwriting (rounded letters, some control of flourishes, not in any sense ornate but artistically satisfying) that was more widely taught than any other and which was required in most business houses.

The existence of this manuscript suggests that at one point Kane, or an advisor, had in mind a two-part narrative — perhaps even a second publication — one part containing an account of his travels, another part containing ethnological/anec-

dotal and landscape information as annotations to a volume of his paintings, a sort of Catlinian *Letters and Notes*. Harper suggests a similar possibility (42); however, he would appear to err in concluding that the manuscript 11.85/3 is "simply a duplication of what had already been published in *Wanderings*." But its second part does *not* duplicate the material that appears in 11.85/2 (A), (B), and (C): for example, nearly the whole of the published chapter XII appears only in 11.85/3, not in 11.85/2 (C). Comparisons of this portion of the manuscript with the versions that appeared as articles about the "Chinook Indians" in the *Daily Colonist* (August 1855) and twice in *The Canadian Journal* (July 1855 and January 1857) — themselves different from one another and from the text of the book — suggest that as late as 1855 and 1857 a two-part publication or separate publications were still being countenanced.

What *is* clear is that all of the above identified manuscripts constitute no more or less than a draft of *Wanderings*. "Journal" is a misnomer for these manuscripts if what is meant by the term is writing done while one journeys. None of this writing was done during Kane's journeys: all of 11.85/2 (A), (B), and (C) and 11.85/3 contain retrospective remarks that preclude the possibility of their daily or weekly composition. While the illusion of daily journal entries may occur more strongly — "a large party of them came to the establishment this morning" (11.85/2 [B]) — than it does in *Wanderings* — "came to the establishment in the morning" (42) — it is just that, an illusion. For example, the retrospective comment about "Wabassemmung" that appears in *Wanderings* — "We passed to-day a Catholic missionary station called 'Wabassemmung' (or White Dog), which, on my return, two years and a half afterwards I found deserted" (44) — appears identically but for punctuation in 11.85/2 (A, 69), and as "which I found deserted on my return" in 11.85/2 (B).[17] Such a remark obviously could not appear in a "perambulating" narrative; moreover, this entry in the manuscripts necessarily sponsors the conclusion that all the rest of the manuscript dates from a period after the completion of the travels, or, at the very least, after Kane's return visit to White Dog in August 1848.

Without doubt, considerably more study remains necessary of the distinctions among the manuscripts, published essays, and the book. Of more immediate concern, however, is the reconsideration of what Harper also correctly identified as "(1) a journal, in Kane's hand, which he kept from 1846 to 1848 and on which a part of the published text was based" ([48]). Harper describes this journal at length in a note that bears repeating:

> [The journal] commences with an entry dated May 9, 1846, and ends on September 12, 1848. He evidently intended that it should be a daily diary, but there are gaps, some of them for weeks at a time, for instance when he was staying at Fort

Vancouver in the winter of 1846-47. This journal contains much of what is now in *Wanderings*, with variations in minor details; . . . (39)

Harper here refers to the following manuscript at the Stark Museum, a transcribed typescript of which was begun in 1978 by Laura Bowler, and completed in 1982 by Sarah E. Boehme, of the museum staff. It is a brown hardback, breast-pocket notebook (pencil on paper, 5⅞″ x 3½″ [14.92 x 8.89 cm]).

11.85/5 — approximately 129 unnumbered pages. This journal must have been written by Kane: it provides a near daily record of the trip that Kane alone is known to have made in the years in which he made it, and its writing and unique orthography differ decidedly from those of either of the hands involved in the manuscript drafts discussed above. The handwriting is distinctive, not the product of any school of handwriting. It may match the only other known handwriting of Kane's,[18] the signatures reproduced in *Wanderings* ([iv, v]), but signatures, because they so often differ so widely from a person's other handwriting, do not offer very reliable bases for comparison, thus rendering any identification tenuous at best. It may be noted however that the hand demonstrates a predilection for the serif —a lighter line projecting from the main line or stroke of a letter — and in this it is different from either hand in the manuscript draft.

When Harper writes of "variations in minor details," he refers, as the evidence of his notes pertaining to "KJ" (Kane's Journal) makes plain, to discrepancies in numbers, facts, and dates, or to omissions. His unintentionally misleading phrase does not address the vast discrepancy between the narrative style of the journal and the styles of the manuscript drafts.

The handwriting of 11.85/5 matches that in the second, "sketchbook," log, which contains notes on pictures and their subjects. A transcribed typescript of this sketchbook (pencil on paper leaf, 4⅝″ x 2⅞″ [11.74 x 7.3 cm]) was made in 1982, also by Sarah E. Boehme.

11.85/4 — Sketches (not reproduced in Harper) on the first twenty-eight pages, including those from Kane's 1845 trip (i.e., Harper's *Catalogue Raisonné*, section III). Thereafter appears what has been titled in the 1982 typescript transcription "Landscape and Portrait Log, kept on his 1846-48 journey," 83 unnumbered pages. Within these, the first fifty-four pages contain identifications and ethnographical/anecdotal information about ninety-seven Indians sketched, thus representing Kane's on-the-spot journal of what becomes, in another hand, the manuscript draft 11.85/3; pages (unnumbered) 55 through 58 contain the earliest version of *Wanderings*, chapters I-II, which records the 1845 trip, the manuscript draft of which appears in 11.85/3 as well; finally, pages 59 through 83 include the landscape log, entries for one hundred and eighteen landscapes, some of whose numbers correspond to those that appear in the upper corners of the watercolours (as in figures 3a, 4a, 5, 6, and 7a

above). This log then provides the first text for pages 121-37 of the manuscript draft 11.85/3.

If Paul Kane wrote 11.85/4 and 11.85/5, and it appears almost incontestable that he did, then he most certainly did not write any of the surviving manuscript drafts: the handwriting, sense of narrative shape and flow, and orthography differ too widely. It remains then to determine, if briefly here, the character and extent of the discrepancy between Kane's own writings and the text of *Wanderings* which made his name known on two continents.

THE FIRST QUALITY OF KANE'S OWN JOURNALS that one notices is not their similarity to but their difference in narrative competency from *Wanderings*. One quickens at the radically different personae encountered in, for example, these two passages that record Kane's visit to the falls of the Pelouse River, 14-17 July 1847:

> Found some Indians, who ferried ourselves and baggage in a canoe over the Nezperees River, which is here about 250 yards wide. We swam our horses at the mouth of the Pelouse River, where it empties itself into the Nezperees. The Chief of this place is named Slo-ce-ac-cum. He wore his hair divided in long masses, stuck together with grease. The tribe do not number more than seventy or eighty warriors, and are called Upputuppets. He told me that there was a fall up the Pelouse that no white man had ever seen, and that he would conduct me up the bed of the river, as it was sufficiently shallow for our horses. I accepted his proposal, and rode eight or ten miles through a wild and savage gorge, composed of dark basaltic rocks, heaped in confusion one upon another to the height of 1,000 and 1,500 feet, sometimes taking the appearance of immense ruins in the distance. At one place the strata assumed the circular form, and somewhat the appearance, of the Colosseum at Rome. Our path, at the bottom of this gorge, was very difficult, as it lay through masses of tangled brush and fallen rocks. (*Wanderings* 191)

> 14th left at 5 this morning for the river Nepersey and arived at 12 a distance of 30 m. no water all day. a good plase for a persion with the Hidrfoba this. found sum Indians who carried our bagage across the river in a canew and swam our horses, the chief of this plase tould me that thare was a fall up the paluse River and he would gide me to it after haveing got about 8 or 10 miles up the hed of the river over rocks and bruch allmoast inacsesable he st-oped at a foard and would go no further unless I would gave him a blanket he though he had me in his and could not find the way I plunged into the river and tould my man to fo-llow I had not got mor-e the a mile when he came after and gided us to the plase through 1 of the moast strang-e looking plases I have ever seen we campt here for the night . . . such a picteresk cuntrey. . . . (11.85/5 typescript, second numbering, 5-6)

Only in factual comparison could these two passages point up no more than varia-

tions in minor details:[19] the full force of the artifice of literary convention strikes the reader; his sense of the persona cannot help but alter, especially in view of the contrived wording of the published preface: "The following pages are the notes of my daily journal, with little alteration from the original wording, as I jotted them down in pencil at the time." Typical of the authoritative stature which *Wanderings* has always been accorded by its reviewers and readers, is Kenneth Kidd's remark, itself dependent on the preface: "The diary which the artist kept, and which, with but slight emendations, formed the substance of his 'Wanderings,' records with unusual care the route of his travels."[20] Maude Allan Cassels presumably could not decide quite how to interpret the original journals, which she evidently read: "With less than 'a little alteration' they might have gone with more of a swing, though something, I suppose had to be done about the original spelling, as Kane in a hurry spelt like a child, or an 18th century gentleman."[21]

These responses to the narrative are instructive for they attest to the benefit of the doubt that Kane's prose has always enjoyed. One would not wish to imply that poor spelling made him any less accurate an observer: Samuel Black, a notorious and eloquent fur trade factor, produced a narrative that exemplifies how even a fine classical education in Scotland did not guarantee perfect spelling.[22] Still, however much Kane deserves Harper's opinion of him as a "giant among North American artists of his period" (ix), one must in evaluating him as a writer hearken at least momentarily to the germ of truth in Mary Lile Benham's depiction of Kane as a youngster: "Paul, who was about ten when his family moved to York, attended York District Grammar School as infrequently as he could. He learned little more than how to spell phonetically, and escaped whenever he could to roam the streets and countryside."[23]

There is little sense of narrative flow in the passage quoted from Kane's journal, or indeed in much of the journal or log book; while the writing demonstrates some prepossession in occasional descriptions — "it is a delitfull situation the prareys surrounding it is beautiful," Kane writes of the upriver trip from Lower to Upper Fort Garry[24] — it produces a decidedly different narrative, possessed of a far lower measure of narrativity. Now, as Hayden White has argued, even a chronicle listing no more than dates inherently contains in its ordering of them a narrative shape;[25] Kane's notes possess some shape, but continuity they lack. Even the notion of as basic a unit as the sentence appears only occasionally to be clear in his mind. And yet, an aesthetic response to nature appears in this account of the Pelouse River; indeed, it is augmented in the landscape log by Kane's own denominations of "the amphithater nere the lowr fall" and "the Coliseeam nere the lowr fall" (11.85/4, typescript, second numbering, 32), associations which Kane's studies in Italy would seem naturally to have sponsored. Moreover, further refinements that one expects to find only in a more mature prose exhibit themselves at regular intervals.

One is a sense of humour that rarely appears in the published persona. Harper, after correcting the spelling, cites the comment about "Hidrfoba" (115, note 2) from the journal, as well as the droll remark about the Committee Punch Bowl, the small lake in the Athabasca pass that spans the great divide, and that Kane passed and then repassed during a cold, snow-filled, snap: "2nd [November 1847] ... passed the Punch Bowl (rather coald Punch at present) though sun is shining very bright" (11.85/5, typescript, second numbering, 15; Harper 130, note 11).[26] Another drollery occurs at the conclusion of an anecdote about "Chee-a-clack," or the Chea-clack of *Wanderings* (156), which appears to have survived in the book and is not mentioned in Harper's notes:

> The inogun ation [inauguration] of this chief. he went out in to the mountains for 30 days whare he is suposed not to eate for that time and on his return is so hungry that he picks up a dod [dog] and comenced eating it a live hoalding it in his arms and takeing a bite now and then the Indans gether around and comence a song while he gows up to those he has the gratest regard for and bits a pece out of thare arm an leg which is considered a grate co-mpliment and if he eats it it is considered a still grater after this seramoney the agurn to a feast the dog which is eat is a small one and howls most dredfully not considering it an onher. (11.85/4, typescript, second numbering, 12-13)

Dare one presume to venture a comment on this wonder?

The shaping of the published work not only elided Kane's sense of humour, corrected his spelling, and amalgamated the journal with the portrait and landscape notes; it also added a foreign point of view. Rarely in either the journal or the portrait and landscape log does Kane pass judgment on those he paints or whose customs he records. That is to say, and clearly this will require some re-evaluation of Kane's narrative as a source of ethnographical study, Kane is much more the scientist in this respect than in any other. To retrieve a point from the earlier discussion of the landscape paintings, by no means can the fallacy be entertained that a traveller leaves at home all his perceptual conditioning, and sees the world and its people with entirely impartial, objective eyes; however, even the reader who assents to this will find that the journal kept by Kane while he travelled constitutes a notable absence of moral, cultural, or racial judgment. As in the narrative sketch of "Chee-a-clack," who ferried Kane from Fort Victoria to various tribes in the insular and mainland vicinity and to whom Kane was indebted, the prose stops short of both condemnation and sentimental impressionism. Where the published book's persona deplores many customs, even if it prefatorily fosters the notion of a noble savage — thereby creating a most perplexing, contradictory, and confused persona in the narrator named Kane — the only writing known certainly to be Kane's remains consistently *relatively* objective. The gestation of the publication by others, not the original account, is responsible for creating such a persona. The

litany of epithets — "filthy," "horrible," "degrading" — the crucial report of the murder of the Whitmans, the disappointment registered when "only" an Indian is encountered on the route, that mark and define the persona of *Wanderings*, are looked for in vain.[27]

In the light, however briefly it is shed here, of the wide discrepancy between field narrative and publication, one sees that *Wanderings* seems now to require at least three examinations: of Kane's own writing; of the manuscript draft, and, differing from it in important ways, the five articles published in Toronto during 1855, 1856, and 1857; and of the English book publication in March 1859. Too little scrutiny of the narrative has occurred thus far: as Heather Dawkins has commented recently, "The paintings and sketches have been the privileged objects of art historical attention, but this valorising of the visual fails to recognize the written text of which these were an integral part, and in which his work had its widest circulation.[28] Dawkins' article, whose Foucauldian reading of *Wanderings* identifies an "imperialist discourse" in the book, provides some salutary ways to examine the publication. However, the author, who appears to know "the original travelogue," errs in levelling the charge of racism at Kane himself, precisely because of the absences noted above. She bases this charge on a passage of the book (128-29) descriptive of the "Chinook" Indians' permanent residences. That this passage, although it did appear in a different form in three of the five Toronto articles, has no corresponding version in Kane's own journal precludes a direct textual rebuttal of the charge, but not of Dawkins' claims that the passage's narrative style, by minimalizing a "human presence" through the employment of passive verbs, strips the information "of its context of production, the wandering artist is scarcely visible; the language of information is self-effacing."[29] While this characterization of the narrative certainly proves instructive — any examination of the literature seems welcome at this point — the quality of the prose isolated here must be regarded as characteristic only of the published narrative.

Further study of all the versions of this narrative must be undertaken before any final conclusion can be reached, but it may be said tentatively here that the veneer of imperialism that *Wanderings* takes on by virtue of its persona's condescension, repulsion (at times), pejorative distancing (at times), and increased stylistic sophistication appears almost as strongly in the manuscript draft (11.85/2 [A], [B], and [C]) as in the book. This collective draft matches the content of the Toronto articles sufficiently, while they distinguish themselves from the book sufficiently, to permit the conclusion here that they are the product of eastern North Americans, rather than of either Kane or the English editors. Thus, the "imperialist discourse"

that *Wanderings* in some ways becomes has its impetus more in Toronto than in England. This surmise may be significant for if followed it points the connection with the eastern British North American influences on Kane's art.

Harper is doubtless correct in identifying Kane's wife's hand in the writing of the manuscript draft, but which of the two is it? In fact, the two hands, divested as they are of any sustained delicacy or regular use of serifs (both features commonly considered in the mid nineteenth century as desirable in a female hand) appear to be male. Although Harriet Kane (née Clench) had probably known the painter since 1834, when Kane, as Harper notes, moved to Coburg where her father made furniture, and where Harriet may have been taught the standard "Copperplate" handwriting style in order to perform secretarial and accounting work for her father's business, did she assist with the composition of the narrative before becoming Mrs. Kane in 1853? If not, and if Harper, who must have seen other examples of her handwriting, is right, at least part of the manuscript draft may be dated from that time forward. Other candidates for the authorship of the "imperialist discourse" are George Allan, Kane's patron, who read at least one of the articles to the Canadian Institute, on 14 March 1855, after it was "communicated" to him by Kane.[30] As well, there is Daniel Wilson, whose interest in seeing Kane's work as scientific observation has been well documented by Harper, and Henry Youle Hind. The name of the latter recalls the expansionist mood of Toronto in the 1850's, when the British colonies in the east were wondering whether they could themselves undertake a programme of imperial destiny.[31] Hind was a leading spokesman of the campaign, but even more important, his editorship of *The Canadian Journal* necessarily brought him in touch with "Kane's" narrative when excerpts of it appeared as four of the five articles. As well, Hind would himself author an "imperialistic discourse" about the near West in the 1850's.[32] He followed Kane to Longman with its publication in 1860 as *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858.*

The identity of the manuscript draft may well remain a mystery if the steady clerical hands in it prove too generically typical of the penmanship required of any office clerk of the day. At any rate, a final speculation on their possible authors must include Sir George Simpson. With the Hudson's Bay Company bracing itself in 1857 and 1858 for the hearings of the British Parliamentary committee into the company's application for the renewal of its exclusive license to trade on western lands, Simpson might well have taken a keen interest, as he did in the paintings, in Kane's "proper" representation of his narrative; after all, many more people would see it than would see the paintings, and it was an important document by virtue of the fact that it was the first publication about the entire North-West not "authored" by an employee of a fur-trade company. Indeed, if Kane had listened to

and incorporated Simpson's recommendations concerning his art, would he not have been as willing to do the same respecting his book? And would it not have aligned with the interests of Simpson, who remained devoted to keeping the North-West in his company's sole monopolistic preserve, to have the published narrative maintain an "imperialistic discourse" regarding the land and its people?

Yet, even countenancing this possibility, one must note the unlikelihood that Simpson himself composed the manuscript draft: he may have assisted with recommendations, even with the accurate naming of portages and lakes, which the manuscript draft rather suddenly evinces. However, having himself decided with his own book, the carefully worded company prospectus *Narrative of a Journey round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842* (1847; and quoted in *Wanderings* 265-66), to retain the services of two ghost-writers — A. Barclay, the Hudson's Bay company's secretary, and Adam Thom, the editor of the *Montreal Herald* who had assisted Lord Durham with the preparation of his *Report*[33] — he might well have recommended the same practice, if not the same writers, to a grateful and apparently amenable painter.

The authorship of the manuscript draft and the articles may well prove significant, but finally attention must be paid as well to the spirit of the times in eastern British North America. Mention has already been made of Ann Davis' point that Kane's studio works took shape under various Victorian/imperial notions of science and beauty;[34] so too did the Toronto manuscript draft. Onward from 1850, when two important Indian Acts were passed in Upper and Lower Canada, and just when Kane's journal, portrait and landscape log, sketches, and watercolours were being generated, to various degrees, into something different, "officials and legislators," writes Boyce Richardson,

> had no further doubts that they knew what was best for Indians.... The bureaucrats of the time were anxious that the Indians embrace European values, and worried at the slow progress, so in 1856 a commission of inquiry investigated the failure of assimilation efforts. "There is no inherent defect in the organization of the Indians which disqualifies them from being reclaimed from their savage state," reported the commissioners generously.... "With sorrow, however, we must confess that any hopes of raising the Indians as a body to the social or political level of their white neighbours is yet but a glimmer and a distant spark."[35]

At these institutional views, not at Kane, should Dawkins' charge be levelled, but how in the face of these views did Kane's romantic boyhood notions, which the preface of *Wanderings* ascribes to him, fare? Did his travels produce an anxiety out of a dualistic response to the "aborigine" and the "red man"? Does his willingness to drop all his commissions at a moment's notice when the opportunity arose in 1849 to go west again point a propensity in Kane to "go native," a propensity that the unpejorative quality of his own writing suggests? Is *Wanderings* a sort of F. P.

Grove creation masking a true nature, or does it distantly resemble the problem of D. C. Scott, out of whose bureaucratic and artistic writings an essentially disjunctive and irresolvable duality arises? If Kane's art no longer raises so many questions, it would seem that his prose and the book published under his name are just beginning to do so.

NOTES

[1] See Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1984); and Charles L. Batten Jr., *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1978).

[2] Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America from Canada to Vancouver's Island and Oregon Through The Hudson's Bay Company's Territory and Back Again* (1859), rev. ed. by John W. Garvin, introd. by Lawrence W. Burpee (Toronto: Radisson Society of Canada, 1925); facs. rpt., introd. by J. G. MacGregor (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1968), lxii. All references to *Wanderings* will depend upon the facsimile reprint of the revised edition and will appear in parentheses in the text.

[3] Ann Davis, *A Distant Harmony: Comparisons in the Painting of Canada and the United States of America* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1982), pp. 53, 54. This attitude is popularly perpetuated in a note by Ramsay Cook, "Raising Kane," *Canadian Art*, vol. 2 no. 3 (Fall 1985), pp. 60-63.

[4] *Paul Kane's Frontier Including "Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America,"* ed. and with a biog. introd. and a *cat. raisonné* by J. Russell Harper (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, for the Amon Carter Museum and the National Gallery of Canada, 1971), p. 36. All further references to Harper's book will appear in parentheses in the text.

[5] Susan Jane Hopkins Stewart, "The Hudson's Bay Company's Contribution to the Work of Three Important Artists in Their Territory, 1821-1860," M.A. Thesis, (University of British Columbia, 1979), chpt. IV.

[6] See Diana Chown, "Painting in the Canadian Rockies between 1845 and 1923: An Overview," M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1986), chpt. III.

[7] Davis, *A Distant Harmony*, p. 59.

[8] See the 18 lithographed plates in *Sketches in North America and the Oregon Territory, by Captain H. Warre, A.D.C. to the late Commander of the Forces* (London: Dickinson and Co., 1848).

[9] See, for example, "Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822-1835. A Detailed Narrative of his Travels in the Northwest Territories of British North America in 1821," ed. by Francis N. A. Garry and Sir John Bourinot, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 2d. ser., vol. VI, sec. ii (1900), pp. 130-31.

[10] See, "Samuel Hearne and the Landscapes of Discovery," *Canadian Literature*, no. 103 (Winter 1984), pp. 36-37.

[11] The pronounced development of field landscape into a studio oil occurs by means of

animated foreground also in the pair of works, "Fort Victoria with Indian Village" (Harper IV-535) and *The Return of a War Party* (Harper IV-537).

[12] Frederick Ulric Graham, *Notes of a Sporting Expedition in the Far West of Canada 1847*, notes by Jane Hermione Graham (London: pr. for priv. circ., 1898), pp. 77-78. Both Graham's and the nineteenth-century's use of the picturesque in the West and North are treated in "The Limits of the Picturesque in British North America," *Journal of Garden History*, vol. 5 no. 1 (January-March 1985), pp. 97-111.

[13] John Warkentin, "The Desert Goes North," in *Images of the Plains: the Role of Human Nature in Settlement*, ed. by Brian Blouet and Merlin P. Lawson (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 151.

[14] Kane had adopted the elevated prospect in a pencil sketch of the fort from the high ground of the prairie on the south bank (Harper IV-190) but it did not show the river, and, with the horizon, unbroken by the walls of the fort, extending across the page at less than half its height, it produced an even less picturesque, if more original, landscape.

[15] See Gerald Finley, *George Heriot: Postmaster Painter of the Canadas* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1983); *Overland to Oregon in 1845: Impressions of a Journey across North Amreica by H. J. Warre*, ed. and introd. by Madeleine Major-Frégeau (Ottawa: P.A.C., 1976); Robert Stacey, *Western Sunlight: C. W. Jeffereys* (Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1986) and *C. W. Jeffreys*, Canadian Artists Series no. 10, gen. ed. Dennis Reid (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1985); and "The Grandest Tour: The Aesthetics of Landscape in Sir George Back's Explorations of the Eastern Arctic 1833-1837," *English Studies in Canada*, 10 (1984), 436-56.

[16] Divide Ledgers D7 (p. 193) and D5 (p. 689); Miscellaneous Publication Expenses Ledger A3 (p. 172); and Impression Book 13 (p. 129), Longman Archive, University of Reading.

[17] Another instance of retrospection occurs in 11.85/2 (A 75), 11.85/2 (B) and *Wanderings* (948): "I wrote this part of my journal by the light of a blazing fire."

[18] Letters no. 8 and 13, which Harper reproduces, but not in facsimile form, at the end of his edition (328, 330) as yet have not been located. Their fluid and orthographically conventional style suggest the possibility that Kane had them written; alternatively, given Harper's fastidious practice of correcting the spelling when he quotes Kane's journal (see below), these letters may appear in edited form.

[19] The "plot" of the journal (11.85/5), even if integrated with the anecdotes that appear in 11.85/4, does not include all events narrated in *Wanderings*. The most obvious significant omissions include the stay at Fort Vancouver, the trip up the Willamette River valley, mention of the Whitman massacre, although notes on the portrait of "Ta-mach-hus" provide the ominous remark, "he has give Dr W a grate dele trubble" (11.85/4, typescript, second numbering, 18), and a continuation of the narrative past 12 September 1848. As well, while the return trip from Fort Vancouver to Vancouver Island receives brief notice in the journal (11.85/5), most of that dealing with the "Cowichan" medicine man's toothsome remedy for disease (*Wanderings* 156-57), it is treated at length in the portrait log by notices of thirty-eight (nos. 35-72 inclusive) Indians met on that trip, and in the landscape log by entries concerning twenty-nine (nos. 63-91 inclusive) landscapes and their denizens that Kane encountered during the period 25 March to 20 June 1847.

[20] Kenneth Kidd, "The Wanderings of Kane," *The Beaver* (December 1946), p. 4.

[21] Maude Allan Cassels, "Paul Kane," unpub. typescript, dated March 1932; Department of Ethnology, Royal Ontario Museum.

[22] See Samuel Black, *A Journal of a Voyage From Rocky Mountain Portage in Peace River to the Sources of Finlays Branch and North West Ward in Summer 1824*, ed. by E. E. Rich and A. M. Johnson, introd. by R. M. Patterson, Publications of the Hudson's Bay Record Society, vol. XVIII (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955). This factor is the same Mr. Black referred to in *Wanderings* (122).

[23] Mary Lile Benham, *Paul Kane* (Don Mills, Ont.: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1977), p. 4.

[24] Neither Kane's journal nor either of the parts of the manuscript draft that cover this portion of the narrative show the negative that appears in this sentence in *Wanderings*: "The country here is not very beautiful . . ." (49).

[25] See Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," in his *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 121-34.

[26] See Bruce Haig, *Paul Kane: Artist*, Following Historic Trails ser. (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, for the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, 1984), p. 35, for a photo and commentary on the Committee Punch Bowl.

[27] The disappointment is registered, for example, in *Wanderings* (235) but not in the journal: "16th [October 1847] on my arival here I found my ould fraind Cappow Blang-h the Shewshoupp Chief" (11.85/5, typescript, second numbering, 14).

[28] Heather Dawkins, "Paul Kane and the Eye of Power: Racism in Canadian Art History," *Vanguard*, vol. 15 no. 4 (September 1986), p. 27.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

[30] "Proceedings of the Canadian Institute — Session 1854-55," *The Canadian Journal: A Repertory of Industry, Science, and Art; and a Record of the Proceedings of the Canadian Institute*, vol. III no. 10 (May 1855), 243. References to all the Toronto articles known to date are provided in Harper's bibliography (341).

[31] See Doug Owram. *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West 1856-1900* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1981).

[32] See "Aesthetic Mappings of the West by the Palliser and Hind Survey Expeditions 1857-1859," *Studies in Canadian Literature*, 10 (1985), 39-40.

[33] See Arthur S. Morton, *Sir George Simpson, Overseas Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company: A Pen Picture of a Man of Action* (Toronto and Vancouver: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1944), pp. 233-34. See also "Touring at High Speed: Fur-Trade Landscapes in the Writings of Frances and George Simpson," *Musk-Ox*, 34 (1986), pp. 78-87.

[34] Davis, *A Distant Harmony*, p. 59.

[35] Boyce Richardson, "Kind Hearts or Forked Tongues? The Indian Ordeal: A Century of Decline," *The Beaver*, vol. 67 no. 1 (February/March 1987), pp. 30-31.

WHERE IS HERE?

Kevin Roberts

What do we plot, graph overlaid on bones
turbulent mountains, valleys dip, skin prairie dry

word leaches all this land, erodes to silt, at lips
Listen, the stream disappears, inside, into silence
What do we map? hinterland turns base, and back
hawk circles at the moment of its call to voice

Turn from the land, jackrolled for towers, avenues, lanes
spiked for iron, copper molt, rumbled into wheat

On what do we have designs? After image dissolves
rots slow as buffalo bones, the breast alone
about the pioneer lantern throws veins of desire
longs for the song of arms, original dance of execution

harvested, we cannot eat, break bread, wine, here
unless the rival birth sings easily at our lips

101 SOUTH S.F.

Kevin Roberts

This position, blind, nose to tail, 55 and fixed
in the middle lane, becomes an act of faith
not belief, leaderless, mobbed by speed in 5 lanes
but immobile as cars like trout flash their red tails
zip sideways and up to hold in the unseen current.
everybody is going someplace special, destinations
multifoliate hang in the rush of wheels no one can stop
except hot rod death in his 66 Chev, a mile ahead, dice
dangling from the mirror, waits to swing wild, left
and right, sideswipe us into the relentless chained
smash and scream, 100 lives junked in steel and spinning tyres

Like a mob of sheep I brought in once out of Port Lincoln
the kelpies working them too fast, and one Biblical
idiot, a ram, leaped to lead, swerved left into a fence
We pulled eight dead sheep, necks broken, from under the living.

books in review

ON BOTH HANDS

PHILIP STRATFORD, *All the Polarities: Comparative Studies in Contemporary Novels in French and English*. ECW Press, $15.00/$25.00.

COMPARATIVE CANADIAN LITERATURE, young as it is, is beginning its second generation. The admirable pioneering studies of Sutherland and Moisan have been criticized lately for "implicit federalism," in that their stressing of similarities seems to assimilate and subsume the literature of Québec under "Canadian," i.e., Anglo-Canadian, literature. More recently E. D. Blodgett's *Configuration* (1982) has chosen to emphasize, on the contrary, the separateness determined by two languages and histories, and further illustrates it by refusing to privilege the Québec/Anglo-Canadian comparison among his comparisons of these two Canadian literatures, other Canadian literatures, and Canadian and other literatures. Then Patricia Smart, in a trenchant and incisive essay, "Our Two Cultures" (1984; also published in a fuller version in French), looking the fact of Québec's relative indifference to Anglo-Canadian literature and culture squarely in the face, yet sees a chance for rapprochement in, among other hopeful signs, the new voices of the women of Québec and of English Canada, writers who are finding shared common interests in a political concern that transcends the linguistic gulf.

Philip Stratford's contribution to this ongoing debate has been long awaited and is very welcome. Unlike Sutherland, he sets great store by clarifying distinctions as well as similarities. Unlike Blodgett he sees the comparison of Québecois and Anglo-Canadian literature as central. Unlike Smart, with whose literary judgments he is very often in agreement, he views cultural and political history as a springboard to an entirely literary inquiry, whereas she analyzes literary texts seeking clues to the shifts in the cultural and political relationship. He surveys the geometrical images used hitherto to describe the relationships of the two literatures — the mainstream, parallel lines, ellipses, the double helix — but opts finally for the subtlest of them, the great double stairway at Chambord, which two climbers can ascend separately, invisible to each other, yet interdependent, only to meet at the top: the image is taken from Falardeau, but is further developed and much more optimistically interpreted by Stratford. It leads him to accept the difficulty and inherent paradox of the comparative Canadianist's task, for the "enjoyment of the experience" and for its value to us in "our binary bind . . . [where] swayed by politics and history, [we] must strive neither to unify nor divide . . . [but to] respect all the polarities"; the title formula, borrowed from Leonard Cohen, recurs mantra-like throughout the book.

I have considerable sympathy with Stratford's sense of paradox and difficulty, and with the caution and modesty with which he approaches his task. There is blunt common sense in his claim for the obvious necessity of attempting comparison: "one should never underestimate the importance of two centuries of shared history, government, climate, and geography." The stance of his introductory manifesto, with its sensible compromises, median positions, and recognition of the political and historical passions which must be taken into account, understood, but not yielded to in their extreme forms, is an attractive and useful one, and his initial aims and procedures far from contentious: he first seeks the-

matic and formal similarities, in order to delineate "against the background of similarity, varieties of difference." Let us now look at the practice built upon these principles.

While Stratford's twelve exemplary "contemporary" Canadian novels, six in each language, range in date over thirty-three years, from 1941 to 1974, eight of the twelve appeared within the ten-year period from 1965 to 1974. Whether "contemporary" can really bear such chronological spinning-out, or even be pushed half a generation back from where we are now, are not questions to which Stratford addresses himself. Indeed it is surprising to find such a solidly "traditional" critic so immune to considerations of literary history that, although impeccably dating every text mentioned, and summarizing the career of each author, he seems indifferent to chronological ordering and to the historical relationships of books to each other. There are some astonishing symmetries of structure in his own book, but the most striking *chronological* division is the sharp, broad gulf of time between his first two pairs of one-on-one comparisons and his last four pairs: three books from the 1940's and one from the 1950's (*Two Solitudes* and *Bonheur d'occasion*, both 1945, and *As For Me and My House* [1941] and *Poussière sur la ville* [1953]); these are divided by a gap of twelve years from the next French texts (*Prochain épisode* and *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, both 1965) and of twenty-four years from the next English text (*The Studhorse Man*, 1969). This is a fine and familiar list of classic books in each language, but I'm not certain that "contemporary" is quite the right word for it. To be sure, his eight authors of the 1960's and 1970's, Aquin, Laurence, Kroetsch, Atwood, Carrier, Blais, Hébert, Munro, are all contemporary novelists, in that they have all (with the sad exception of Aquin) continued publishing well into the present decade, and the empty twelve or twenty-four years can of course be filled in by books that Stratford, in his conclusion, mentions as not quite fitting the patterns he has set up (e.g., *The Double Hook* [1959] or *Beautiful Losers* [1966]).

Indeed my main point in playing this numbers game is to suggest that calling his first two pairs "modern" and his last four pairs "contemporary" would make those terms, which tend to be used overlappingly ("modern," used infrequently, is, for instance, used of Roy [1945], while "contemporary" is used of Langevin [1953]), more exact and useful, and would allow consideration of large-scale changes in literary modes in a way that his chronologically jumbled pairings (arranged, by his account, in order of increasing complexity) from over three decades do not.

Another question which his arrangement invites but does not raise is that of gender: he neatly, but perhaps inadvertently, opens with a male-female comparison (Roy and MacLennan); then two men (Ross and Langevin); two women (Laurence and Hébert); two women again (Munro and Blais); two men (Kroetsch and Carrier); he then frames the sequence by ending with another mixed pair (Aquin and Atwood). It is hard to believe that so tidy an arrangement serves no deliberate critical purpose, yet none is alluded to, and no mention of authorial gender *per se* arises (apart from a brief suggestion, parenthetical and undeveloped, that Roy's "intense interiorizing vision" may be a feminine perspective). Not only Stratford's arrangement but his selection, of, as is happens, an equal number of male and female authors in each language, does indeed open up, by the very soundness of his judgment in picking the most solidly, unequivocally "major" authors in

each group, that fascinating question of literary sociology, never yet satisfactorily answered in my hearing, of why it is that both French and English Canada, unlike any other sizeable nation, modern or ancient, have at the very least as many distinguished female as male writers.

Stratford's rigidly one-to-one comparisons seem to me to work better the closer the books in question are to conventional "realism." The contrast of the more "documentary" and "didactic" MacLennan with the more "dramatic" Roy, in the context of two startlingly similar literary careers, surprising parallels of theme and situation, and many shared literary intentions, is useful and enlightening, even though, in a sort of gallant inverse chauvinism, the case sometimes seems loaded in favour of the French text.

The close comparison of the two "domestic dramas" of Ross and Langevin also works well, as least to the extent to which that term can describe *As For Me and My House*. Stratford again draws the distinction, to be reiterated throughout the book, between the exactly specified, but relatively larger scope of "space" and "time," in the English novel, vis-à-vis the vaguer but more intense and compact scope and the greater selectivity of descriptive detail, in the French one. He analyzes well the psychological patterns of adultery, as an evasion of possessive love on the part of the delinquent partner and as a source of complaisance touched with sorrowful self-righteousness for the wronged partner. In what we will see as a recurrent seeking out of a chiasmic minor key, the existential mode prominent in Langevin becomes a possible subtext for Ross, while Ross's alleged social accuracy conversely becomes a real though subordinate element in Langevin. That contemporary critics are more and more coming to see Ross in formal terms, as a writer of complex ironies and ambiguities, whose "textuality" is remarkable in English-Canadian novels at any time, and remarkable in Canada at all in 1941, does not square with either the Ross of domestic psychological realism, given here for the sake of the comparison, or, given for the sake of the contrast, the Ross of Anglophonically wide spaces and freedom of movement. An argument which plays down the utter claustrophobia of the book (made all the more claustrophobic by the vast spaces surrounding the confines of Horizon) by arguing (and repeating the point in his conclusion) that at least the Bentleys could move from town to town, and that the towns available to them are much more clearly delineated than in Langevin's vaguer topography, seems to me to show some of the strain of needing to demonstrate the generalized characteristics of the two kinds of fiction in every pair chosen for comparison. This kind of strain will grow, by the end of the book, to break apart a pair (Aquin and Atwood) far less inherently "comparable" than Ross and Langevin.

Stratford makes a transition from each chapter to the next by some fairly arbitrary link back to the previous chapter; here "two small towns," etc., lead from Ross and Langevin to the "Territorial Prerogatives" of Laurence and Hébert. Again, many sound and interesting points make the linking of the two worthwhile; on the whole these two authors obligingly stand still for their categorization as "English" and "French" respectively. (Indeed Laurence seems paradigmatic for the English side: Smart comments that a Québecois acquaintance saw her novels as altogether *too* "real.") Again the contradictory point is Stratford's most penetrating one: he gets considerable mileage out of noting a subversively Kamouraskan current in *The Diviners* (1974), as the topic of the

Métis brings in the dark subjective shadows of injustice and uncertainty that form the warp and woof of the Québecois Gothicities of *Kamouraska* (1970), while, conversely, Hébert looks over into the clearer, calmer world which escape with George Nelson might offer Elisabeth: in a neat chiasmus, each author, in a minor key, touches upon "the territory of the other."

This argument proceeds without strain, but the discussion of "Portraits of the Artist" in Munro's *Lives of Girls and Woman* (1971) and Blais' *Une Saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, involves a one-to-one comparison which satisfies neither author nor reader. Just as we begin to think that Blais' Pauline Archange trilogy would provide a clearer comparison with Munro, Stratford (halfway through the chapter) does so too. Emmanuel is pushed to one side as an artist figure, while the argument proceeds largely in terms of Blais' other text. Indeed an extensive quotation from *Manuscrits de Pauline Archange* is juxtaposed with one from a *second* text by Munro (*Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You*); a perfectly proper procedure, of course, were it not that it necessitates a sort of awkward nonchalance about going against the grain of his established pattern. These quotations, incidentally, have to do with Mothers; the Munrovian tone on this subject is remarkably like the Atwoodian, as found in *Lady Oracle*. Munro's "faith in the ordinariness of things" seems to invite comparison with Laurence's "confidence in the commonplace" mentioned in the previous chapter, but instead it leads into a contrast between the "centripetal" procedure by which the Québecois artist-figures "seek to give concrete form to their haunted vision of reality," and the "centrifugal," by which the Anglophone artist seeks to show "the revealed poignancy of the particular" by checking her internal responses against what is concretely "out there." This is nicely stated, and it fits well with the chiasmic point of this chapter, that much Gothicity is to be found under the cool surfaces of Munro's fiction, while Blais by no means neglects the social realities.

In the next chapter, on Carrier and Kroetsch as comic writers, despite many incidentally felicitous observations (such as the distinction between Carrier's "burlesque morality play" and Kroetsch's picaresque epic in prose), the mode of comedy — even of Black Comedy — doesn't prove adequate to holding together works quite as different in form and style as are *The Studhorse Man* and *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* (1968). The price paid is a necessarily idiosyncratic approach to English Canada's first major post-modernist, author of one of the most charmingly self-reflexive of Anglo-Canadian novels, one as yet unequalled in all the partially post-modernist years that have followed. "Magic Realism" is another term that might have been useful in discussing these two works, but one wonders how Stratford could avoid both the concept and the word "carnivalesque" as a link between Kroetsch and Carrier.

A "Québec contract" between writer and audience to which Stratford alludes may indeed impose upon Carrier the obligation to eschew "tricky narrative frames," but it clearly imposed no such obligation upon Aquin, and whether Kroetsch's "elaborate narartive frame" vis-à-vis Carrier's "plunge into the heart of the action" usefully corresponds to the set of distinctions recapitulated at this point between (for instance) Laurence's Memorybank Movies and Hébert's "chaotic dreams of the past" I find dubious. That Carrier's reader may be seen as "participant rather than confidant" is a fascinating point that cries out for further development. "We find [Hazard's

death] hard to believe," for reasons connected with his character rather than with Demeter's fabulation. In the next chapter Stratford similarly makes the narrator of *Prochain épisode* into a referential being who can be known and thought about independent of the words which make him; here the "realism" postulated of Kroetsch facilitates an inherently tricky comparison between the most avant-garde of the English books under discussion and Carrier's fairly traditional Québec text.

The final pairing, of Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972) and Aquin's *Prochain épisode,* suffers from a more radical mismatch. Each is made quite implausibly like the other, by, for instance, following a long quote from Patricia Smart on Aquin with the sheer brute force of the assertion that her statement "could be applied with little alteration to Margaret Atwood's fiction." Well, perhaps it could, but it probably shouldn't be; Stratford seems reluctant to consider postmodernism on its own terms. The chiasmic method, which has served him rather well hitherto, here involves him in finding Québecish traits in Atwood and non-Québec traits in Aquin, linking the two by such measures as describing both books as "confessional," and then disposing of these concepts just in time to get Aquin and Atwood back into their respective Québec and Anglophone slots by noting (very perceptively) that Atwood's heroine is able to move forward, to see a way out of her quandary of introspection, to "make moral progress," while Aquin's hero cannot move from the stasis of his own nature — thus confirming the categories again. Not much in what Stratford actually says of Atwood makes her sound as different from Munro and Laurence, also writers of female identity quests, as she needs to be if she is to look Aquin in the eye at the top of the Chambord spiral staircase.

Had Stratford chosen a more openly self-reflexive text by Atwood — *Lady Oracle* for instance — the comparison might have been more fruitful. Simply switching around his last two pairs to consider Kroetsch and Aquin together is another possibility. Arnold and Cathy Davidson, for instance, have recently very successfully compared Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* and Aquin's *L'Antiphonaire* in terms of their postmodernism, from which firm stylistic and formal basis all sorts of fascinating analogies of theme, motif, and yes, even character, followed. Nevertheless, it is valuable to be forced to think about Aquin in a way that the overwhelming majority of his critics have forbidden to us: Stratford's unashamed refusal of the trendy, asking us to think of an Aquinian personage as a "character," for once, is perhaps salutary. If Kroetsch and Aquin were paired off, could Atwood and Carrier be? The notion of dealing with Atwood as a *comic* writer, and particularly as the playfully self-reflexively comic writer of *Lady Oracle* is rather appealing. It might even get us closer to Carrier, whose comedy is based, like much of Atwood's, on popular and folkloric forms.

I have laid stress, up to this point, on the comparisons, with their great intrinsic interest of providing insights into major Canadian novels. But of course Stratford's aim goes well beyond that: he hopes, rashly but honourably, to formulate some useful generalizations about the English-Canadian novel as distinct from the Québecois novel, over the thirty-three years at hand, with perhaps some prognostications for the next little while. It seems an inevitable part of such an aim to operate at a very high level of generalization — one that, when turned back upon other texts than those used to formulate it, does not operate very revealingly upon them, except insofar as the astuteness of the individual critic

(our only safeguard in any case) protects us. But Stratford's conclusions are worth pondering, are worth testing against other texts, are worth using as starting points and as discussion topics, in seminars on Comparative Canadian novels. I myself would want to move beyond them to more stylistically or structurally oriented close readings, where formalism (the game of one or two books at a time) and literary history (the game of arranging all the books one can find in meaningful relationships to each other) play a larger role than in Stratford's inquiry, which is still largely a thematic one, despite his concern with point of view, memory, time and space as elements of narrative structure. His analyses seem to become less reliable as he reaches — not of course the present, for if we play with chronology, chronology plays with us — his two most emphatically postmodern texts, Aquin's and Kroetsch's; they are in fact the *earliest* of Stratford's eight "contemporary" texts, as if Canada had been moving *away* from postmodernism, instead of, as we more commonly suppose, cautiously and with mixed feelings *towards* it.

Stratford's neatness and caution do honour to his intellectual meticulousness and honesty, yet at times they deprive both him and us of the pleasures of his critical imagination at its more relaxed and adventurous. There are books and topics on offer in his conclusion about which one would like to hear, in his terms, even though, or perhaps because, they would bulge or even explode his patterns. The comparisons that really work to illuminate two or more of his texts sometimes do so for odd and eccentric reasons unconnected with his general (and thus necessarily compendiously baggy, although probably true) propositions. And it is the close comparisons rather than the generalizations that yield the richest rewards of meeting one's opposite number at the top of Stratford's favourite geometric image, the double spiral of the Chambord tower. Fancy meeting you here! Hébert might say to Kogawa, or Robertson Davies to Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, or Margaret Atwood, a notable portrayer of "dismemberment, vomiting and violent highway death," as Stratford points out, to Gilbert La Rocque, all-time Canadian champion in the dismemberment, vomiting and highway death category. Perhaps Canadian novels belong among other Canadian texts, or indeed among the other books of the world after all! Comparing the Canadian literatures is only a special case of comparing literature: keep limber, keep options open, be as surprising as possible!

PATRICIA MERIVALE

WHALERS

W. GILLIES ROSS, *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas.* Irwin, $34.95.

W. GILLIES ROSS's *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas* is one of those welcome books that transcends strict disciplinary boundaries without sacrificing precision or depth. Profusely and attractively illustrated, the volume will be at home on anyone's coffee table. But its beauty extends far below the surface, assuring it of a much-deserved place in the specialist's library after it has completed its tabletop tour of duty.

Like many good books about northern Canada, *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas* appeals to numerous disciplines in the social sciences, notably history, anthropology, and geography. It introduces considerable new information about and insight into Canada's Arctic, putting it in context with current knowledge.

Yet despite the ready appeal and value of the many excellent photographs and illustrations and despite the richness of

information, my enthusiasm for this book stems from another source. It rises directly out of the narrative accounts that are the book's core. Ross's book comprises excerpts from fifteen narratives of whaling in the Davis Strait While Fishery during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are arranged chronologically so that while the reader enjoys the diverse accounts from the perspectives of captain, surgeon, deserter, or passenger, he comes to better understand the geography of the eastern Arctic, the evolving economy of the whaling industry, the men who devoted their lives to it, and the baleen whales and Inuit people who were so affected by it.

Six of the fifteen narratives are written by ship's surgeons, often medical students seeking to finance a further year of study. (Interestingly, Arthur Conan Doyle, at the time a third-year medical student, sailed as surgeon aboard the whaler *Hope* in 1880 in the east Greenland fishery.) Ross convincingly explains the disproportionate representation of surgeons' accounts: the surgeon was often on his first voyage to the Arctic, making him responsive to features that seemed unworthy of comment by hardbitten whalers; his profession attracted inquisitive minds and encouraged careful observation, especially of natural phenomena; his level of education guaranteed his ability to articulate those observations in writing; and in the daily routine aboard ship, the surgeon had great leisure to explore his new environment and to record his thoughts about it. The responses of these surgeons, as one might expect, are diverse, some attending to the flora and fauna, some describing in great detail the process of catching and flensing whales, others enjoying the many opportunities to shoot fowl and game, some carefully depicting the scenery, the ice conditions, and the Inuit they meet.

A full chorus of other voices is heard as well. Accounts come from two captains, a boat steerer, a mate, two seamen (one who deserted), a manager of a Cumberland Sound whaling station, and two passengers, one who sailed in quest of sport and adventure, another in quest of his brother who had disappeared with John Franklin four years previously.

But the true appeal of these narratives emerges from their remarkable dramatic impact, rather than from the variety of voice in Ross's collection. Except for two of the narratives, these are all firsthand accounts — that is, first-person narrations related by someone present at the events described. In fact, the majority are transcribed from manuscript journals, and consequently, they share the simplicity and immediacy characteristic of a genre where afterthought, hindsight, and audience count for little. In cases where both manuscript journal and published narrative are extant, Ross prints the prototype. It is instructive to observe the degree to which this quality of compelling urgency declines as one moves away from the manuscript journal and toward a heavily revised draft of the same account.

A comparison of two chapters in *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas* demonstrates something of this relationship. In Chapter Five — "The Grim Tyrant" — the journal of William Elder tells of a winter caught in drifting pack ice in Baffin Bay. Elder, an officer aboard the *Viewforth* during the winter of 1835-36, records enduring a suspenseful winter, where the dangers of starvation, scurvy, exposure, and collision with icebergs were constantly near to hand. Such a scenario provides obvious dramatic possibilities, but the substantial dramatic impact of this chapter cannot be attributed simply to the events of what we would call the "plot" in a more consciously literary work. Instead, the wholly unedited and

unadorned point of view of Elder's journal narration is largely responsible for the chapter's electrifying tension.

Compare, if you will, Elder's account to one of the whaler *Dee*, beset the following year in a similar polar drift (Chapter Six — "Each Day the Frost More Bitter"). The dramatic potential here is much the same as it had been for Elder's account, but this narrative remains decidedly flat. At best, it transforms personal history into melodrama. Significantly, this record of the *Dee*'s imprisonment is not a journal, nor even a firsthand account. Rather, the narrative — based on some notes kept by a seaman aboard the *Dee* — is written by an anonymous editor. In place of urgency and a powerful sense of being involved in the events described, the reader gets sentiment ("Now, the husband had no smiling partner to comfort him in the intricacies of life, to soothe him in his sorrows, to enliven his solitude with the balm of conversation . . . ; and now, too, he had no little ones prattling at his knee, lisping their affectionate attachment . . .") or purple attempts to soar with Pegasus ("The death-monster scurvy now began to harass the greater part of the men"). The anonymous editor constantly intrudes between the reader and the experience described. An unnecessary middleman whose presence weakens the innate drama of the event, the editor is more concerned with writing than with surviving a winter aboard a whaling vessel caught in the polar drift. And that distance from the event is readily felt by the reader.

If immediacy can be totally destroyed by editorial middlemen, it can be seriously weakened by the passage of time. The account of George Tyson, whaling captain, is a case in point. Tyson recounts his adventures in his own voice, but the excerpted account comes from Tyson's published memoirs, and the haze of intervening years has dissipated much of the power of Tyson's experience.

While the social scientist will find a wealth of information and insight in *Arctic Whalers, Icy Seas*, Ross's collection of whaling journals and accounts lays open some rich and uncultivated ground for the attentive literary mind.

RICHARD C. DAVIS

SOLECKI'S ONDAATJE

SAM SOLECKI, ed., *Spider Blues: Essays on Michael Ondaatje*. Véhicule Press, $13.45.

SPIDER BLUES is overwhelmingly Sam Solecki's book and Solecki is a thorough and sensitive reader of Ondaatje's writing. He effectively uses a variety of historical, philosophical, and theoretical sources to illuminate Ondaatje's work, without resorting to jargon.

Solecki's contributions to the book are many and various. The reprinting of his 1974 interview with Ondaatje goes some way towards filling the acknowledged gap in the book on Ondaatje as filmmaker because the interview elicited much valuable information on Ondaatje's interest in film and other visual arts. The second interview (1984) is likewise rewarding, being chock full of nuggets that future critics of Ondaatje will want to mine: "I wanted to call my new book of poems, *Secular Love*, 'a novel.' I structured it like one." And how long will it be before we have an article on the architecture of an Ondaatje work, an examination, to quote Ondaatje, of "where the narrator stands or sits" given Ondaatje's encouragement to explore its significance? Solecki's concluding essay, "Michael Ondaatje: A Paper Promiscuous and Out of Forme with Several Inlargements and Untutored narrative," shows he has mastered Ondaatje's scrip-

tible style sufficiently to imitate or parody it. The quotations cited in the article indicate a rich part of the intertext Solecki has established for his reading of Ondaatje but he refuses to conclude or even to develop in the conventional fashion the connections between the various parts of the essay. Thus if Solecki has made something of a critical industry of Ondaatje, he has earned the profits.

Nevertheless in *Spider Blues* Solecki has not given us either what would no doubt be a very satisfying and instructive book-length study of Michael Ondaatje's work by Sam Solecki, nor as well balanced and carefully edited a collection of essays and reviews of that work by various hands as one could wish. Of the twenty-nine pieces in the book, eight (counting the introduction and the interviews) are by Solecki. He reprints most if not all his major Ondaatje criticism, largely if not completely unedited.

There are two negative aspects to this decision to do so, despite the quality of response to Ondaatje's work these essays embody: first, because of the unedited quality, one lacks the sense of Solecki's being engaged in a critical dialogue with other commentators on Ondaatje (cf. Stephen Scobie's decision to allow his ground-breaking article on *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, "Two Authors in Search of a Character: bp Nichol and Michael Ondaatje," to be reprinted unchanged, but to respond to other views of the book in a postscript). Even the most suggestive sorts of detail shared by other writers and relevant to Solecki's approach are overlooked. For example, though Scobie mentions that one of Ondaatje's favourite films is John Boorman's *Point Blank* which "uses a fragmented time-scheme, with the same repeated, slow-motion, dreamlike exposures of violence as in Ondaatje's book" and though Solecki calls his article on *the man with seven toes* "Point Blank: Narrative in *the man with seven toes*" and describes the book's form as "made up of brief self-contained, often cinematic, lyrics each of which explodes upon the reader with a single startling revelation," Solecki never utilizes the information Scobie provides.

More detrimental to the book, however, is the repetition that results from Solecki's reprinting so much of his own criticism. Because each successive article is concerned to show how earlier works anticipated later ones, Solecki covers the same ground repeatedly. The section of "Making and Destroying: *Coming Through Slaughter* and Extremist Art" that deals with the earlier poetry makes the inclusion of "Nets and Chaos: The Poetry of Michael Ondaatje" seem a somewhat egotistical decision, given that Solecki could in a note easily have directed readers to the full argument in the original article, which is in a widely circulated journal. One grows weary of the same critical insights being repeated and the same texts quoted to validate the insights.

The care with which Solecki typically reads Ondaatje very occasionally falters — he repeatedly remarks that the natives in *the man with seven toes* tear apart a fox, though Ondaatje's poem reads "Then up to cook a fox *or whatever, or goats / goats eating goats* heaving the bodies / open like purple cunts under ribs . . ." (my emphasis). Solecki thus overlooks the force of the woman simultaneously perceiving her assailants as the embodiment of one European archetype of lechery and as devouring their own kind. There may be times as well when Solecki's better judgment is obscured by his admiration for Ondaatje and his conviction that the key to Ondaatje's vision and one thing that makes him a major writer is his "astonishing ability to enact two often powerfully contradictory attitudes or two aspects of a

single thematic structure within one lyric. . . ." Thus he can read Ondaatje's encoding of the woman's confusion in *the man with seven toes* in "her simultaneously positive and negative responses to her rape" without ever troubling to address the question of psychological credibility in Ondaatje's account. Has any woman ever perceived any aspect of rape positively?

The care with which the book is put together is similarly subject to slippage — the notes of "Nets and Chaos," for example, fail to match the superscript numbers after note four — and the decision to place the reviews of individual Ondaatje volumes after article-length discussions of them seems to me a mistake. The reviews make pretty thin reading after the rich light of extended critical discourse has been turned on the same texts. The delay in publication of *Spider Blues* occasioned by some commissioned contributions failing to materialize resulted in the publication of the complete Judith Brady bibliography in the ECW Major Authors series before the abbreviated version appeared in the present book, making this part of it redundant. To have a bio-bibliographical chronology instead of or in addition to it would have been a welcome addition.

All the foregoing comments are simply ways of suggesting how *Spider Blues* might have been a better book, but as it stands it is still a very useful one, collecting much, though not all, of the most significant commentary on Ondaatje to date. In his introduction Solecki wisely and appropriately reminds readers that the essays and reviews in the volume "should be seen as a first and very tentative attempt to describe, interpret, evaluate and situate a writer very much in mid-career. . . ." What *Spider Blues* does is give a fair selection of the responses of the present generation of writers, both academic and non-academic, to the work Ondaatje has produced so far.

The overwhelming weight of that response accords with Solecki's view that Ondaatje is indeed a major writer, though dissenting voices, such as that of Arun Mukherjee, who compares Ondaatje unfavourably with the Guyanese-born Canadian poet Cyril Dabydeen, are either excluded or muted. Tom Marshall does state the opinion that Ondaatje's writing is more limited in social, historical, and metaphysical scope than the best of Al Purdy or Margaret Avison; only Bert Almon, however, presses the question about the morality of Ondaatje's depiction of violence to any extent, though others recognize it as an issue. Almon deplores Ondaatje's hypocritical violence in the ending of "Heron Rex," objecting, "as if real outrages aren't enough." Many critics have called attention to the startling force of Ondaatje's image of Billy the Kid's violent history, "blood a necklace on me all my life" and Don Gutteridge has even quoted it in his Riel poem, but no one, to my knowledge, has yet asked the question if Ondaatje hasn't been seduced by his own image-making power. Is seeing blood as an ornament really consistent with the sense of Billy's attitude to violence Ondaatje gives readers in the rest of the poem? When the violent becomes aesthetic is reader outrage not the proper response? The criticism Solecki had to choose from has not yet addressed such questions adequately.

Spider Blues does, however, make clear this generation's sense both that *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* is his most important book so far and what the indispensible Ondaatje shorter poems are. "Letters and Other Worlds" attracts uniform critical acclaim, Stephen Scobie calling it "the greatest single poem in Canadian literature." "Peter," "We're at the Graveyard," "Spider Blues," "The

Diverse Causes," "White Dwarfs," "Burning Hills," "Light," and "Farre Offe" are also cited with great frequency. (No one made the claim for my personal favourite, "The Cinnamon Peeler," which if not the greatest poem in Canadian literature is surely the most erotic.) Consensus emerges too about the appropriate vocabulary to describe Ondaatje's writing: violent, exotic, humorous, ironic, cool, detached, romantic, elliptical, and deliberately ambiguous. Ondaatje's creation of authorial alter-egos is almost universally acknowledged and his characteristic language and images recorded. Solecki himself provides a partial list of the typical vocabulary: "Chaos, murder, bellow, nightmares, raw, kill, crucify, mad, and suicide." Blood and brain could easily be added here, or included in a list of the recurrent images: dark/light, fixing/breaking, spider, star, mirror, parade, desert, machine, net, and fly. And though few readers would have been creative/crazy enough to encode the simultaneity of opposing realms in Ondaatje's cosmology in the earth/world terms of Dennis Lee, nonetheless, such simultaneity is recognized in a profusion of contrarieties. J. E. Chamberlin begins his article with the assertion that Ondaatje "is a poet of contradictions" and then speaks of his moving "to a new point of balance between mirroring and making." In exploring the affinity between Ondaatje and the naive artist Henri Rousseau, Scobie appropriates the artist's symbols of jungle and sofa to signify the "mutual transfusion" between the violent and the domestic in Ondaatje, commenting also on the equilibrium between clarity and blur, fixation and movement. Marshall sees these contending forces leading to a dominant metaphor of layering and adds the reminder that a highly developed sense of humour acts as a counterweight to violent melodrama, while Douglas Barbour remarks that rather than domesticating mythology, Ondaatje mythologizes domesticity. Susan Glickman notes his curious combination of engagement and detachment imaged in what she calls "the island of self" and "the marine chaos of community" that results from his "simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from the world outside the self." Dennis Cooley perceives Ondaatje's Billy as a modernist in a postmodernist world and Scobie discovers two strands of narrative in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* — the conflict between Billy and Pat Garrett, and its opposite, the scenes of peace and companionship. Linda Hutcheon in turn sees in the historiographic referent "Michael Ondaatje" in *Running in the Family* a Bakhtinian "dialogic entity . . . partaking of two ontological realities." Perhaps then the positive and negative responses *Spider Blues* elicits from me are in keeping with the conflicting weathers of the Ondaatje climate.

SUSAN GINGELL

ZENDMARK

ROBERT ZEND, *Oab One*. Exile Editions, n.p.; *Oab Two*. Exile Editions, n.p.

ROBERT ZEND'S DUAL books *Oab One* and *Oab Two* were a long time in the making. A portion of *Oab* appeared in *Exile* magazine in the mid-1970's and *Oab* was finally released in its entirety shortly after the writer died in the summer of 1985. These books transcend the written word. They are a phantasmagoria of image and text featuring the lives of the characters Oab and Irdu, characters who not only question their own existence, but the existence of their creator Zend. Northrop Frye referred to the metafictional quality of the characters Oab and Irdu in his memorial

speech to Zend during the posthumous launch of *Oab* at Toronto's Harbourfront in 1985: "Apparently they'd been made out of nothing and had only a purely subjective existence. But that never really happens. Whatever is created takes on an autonomous life of its own, and becomes objective as well as subjective."

Zend's approach is lateral as opposed to linear. It abounds in associative leaps, visual as well as written puns, and intuitive conclusions that challenge traditional logic. It strikes from the right lobe, and it questions the essence of the creative act. Surely Zend's past experience as a film-editor and radio producer helped him evolve his unique style. He created over 120 radio programs featuring talents such as Northrop Frye, Marcel Marceau, Marshall McLuhan, A. Y. Jackson, Immanuel Velikovskey, Jorge Luis Borges, and the Dalai Lama. We are heirs to a witty chronicle of mime-like gestures translated onto the printed page, of Escher-like optical illusions, of explorations in concrete poetry. The text is populated by Borges-like split personalities all questioning creation, myth, reality, and our inability to truly understand any of these.

The characters in the book spiral out from each other; Zend creates the character Oab who creates Irdu who creates Ardo who creates Zend's autobiographical protagonist, who wrote *Oab*. Zend goes far beyond mere textual manipulation or exploration of notation systems. He invents new worlds. The character Ardo in *Oab Two* tries to explain that not only are there four dimensions, there are five, six, seven, and more. When asked if he could explain further about these unsensed dimensions, he replies: "I can't, for you live only in three." In the same way, Zend offers us bright insights, glimpses into worlds that exist only in the mind, hints of dimensions outside of the realm of human experience, beyond all known science or logic. He attempts to illustrate his points by interpolating language with unusual topographies. These include the moebius strip, and the klein bottle, structures which at first appear to be two-dimensional but which in fact are one-dimensional. Within these dimensions Zend has created a new universe with worlds shaped by puns, visual puns, illusions, vicious circles, dreams within dreams, paradoxes and infinite regressions. We are faced with koan-like hypotheses. During this act of creation, Zend has re-written the book of Genesis. In order to communicate the characteristics and events of this universe he has invented his own vocabulary.

Book two includes a number of pages outlining the process by which *Oab* was finally published, thus taking the technique of self-reflection further than Zend's contemporaries have ever considered. Zend's own visuals are supplemented by the expert work of illustrator Eydi Caines-Floyd. The layering of images and ideas one upon the other takes us through a kind of Odyssey, a search for identity that leads to the death of the creator and the birth of the books and its characters. It is a quest that takes the reader through a wide-ranging deconstruction of Western culture including the evolution in our understanding of Language, Geography, History, Literature, Art, Science, and Religion. At the core of all this is a theory of transubstantiation linked directly to the creative processes of Zend himself and metaphorically to creation by God. Zend the artist will live on in a spiritual and mystic sense through the texts he has created. Thought dies with the death of the creator, but it can be reborn in the mind of the reader. To read these books is to experience a kind of secular eucharist. To define them is next to impossible.

Zend himself spends time at the end of book two trying to name this ineffable creation, calling it variously "A myth. A saga. — A concrete epic. A profound comic strip. A literary jigsaw-puzzle. An animated movie-script. — A cosmic doodle. A miniature world. A creation-story. — [a] Godzend, — The story of an oabsession, — an autoabiography." The books do have a self-indulgent quality, but this is by necessity. Zend has tried to explore as many techniques of self-reflection as are imaginable. Through this action he has challenged and surpassed the limits of literary convention and moved on to a hybrid creation. These books are important in their pioneering of structure. While they form a unique departure from tradition, they also revel in the joys of language.

KARL JIRGENS

INTERCONNECTIONS

Horizons: Contemporary Canadian Landscapes. Selected by Marci & Louise Lipman. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $19.95.

MAIA-MARI SUTNIK, *Gutmann.* Art Gallery of Ontario, $20.00.

ANDREW GRUFT, *A Measure of Consensus: Canadian Architecture in Transition.* Univ. of British Columbia Fine Arts Gallery, n.p.

JOYCE ZIEMANS, *Christopher Pratt: A Retrospective.* Vancouver Art Gallery, n.p.

BECAUSE I AM A literary critic, I may not in many respects be properly qualified to comment upon these books. I have been asked to do so, however, since in this issue devoted to the relation between literature and other (mainly visual) arts, it seemed appropriate to introduce some sort of cross-fertilization into the commentary, even within the book-review section. Other journals will consider these volumes individually from the viewpoints of experts in their respective disciplines. The present occasion provides a convenient opportunity to offer some remarks about interconnections not only between the arts but within commentaries about the arts.

Connections between literature and painting are, of course, numerous. Novelists have frequently attempted to explore the psychology of the artist by using painters as their subjects; Hugh Hood's *White Figure, White Ground* is perhaps the most extended Canadian example, though Robertson Davies has taken up the subject in his most recent novel, *What's Bred in the Bone.* Similarly, poets sometimes write poems about painters (Florence McNeill's *Emily*, for example) or about paintings (Irving Layton's "Metzinger: Girl with a Bird," Michael Ondaatje's "Henri Rousseau and Friends"). And some poets, like P. K. Page, are themselves painters. Moreover, both poets and novelists often produce verbal landscapes that can be compared with equivalent canvases; A. J. M. Smith, we may remember, originally subtitled "The Lonely Land" "Group of Seven." A. M. Klein could even write a "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape."

By the same token, visual artists, working within a tradition that flourished in the nineteenth century (D. G. Rossetti for Tennyson, "Phiz" for Dickens, Thackeray for himself), sometimes illustrate literary works. For Canadian instances, see Clarence Gagnon and Thoreau MacDonald on *Maria Chapdelaine* or Charles Pachter's illustrated edition of Margaret Atwood's *Journals of Susanna Moodie* — or, for that matter, Atwood's own collages for the original edition. Paintings can also be applied to literature retrospectively, as it were, a procedure employed by General Publishing on the covers of their New Press Canadian Classics series. Christopher Pratt, as well as being the grand-nephew of a major poet, has himself written verse. Moreover,

Pratt's work, to extend our artistic concern, has a distinct architectural emphasis (the longest chapter in the catalogue to his paintings is entitled "Architecture: The Notion of Place"); some of his paintings, indeed, seem to a layman as exact as architects' drawings. Again, architecture itself can provide structures to contain other works of art — churches, museums, galleries, libraries. The list could (obviously) continue.

The catalogue to the exhibition of John Gutmann's photographs reminds us too of the creative interrelations between literature and photography in recent years. I am thinking not merely of the numerous books in which the two arts have combined to produce a "mixed media" work (Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston*, Al Purdy's *In Search of Owen Roblin*) but of the crucial appearances of photographs and photographers within recent fiction (Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, Robert Kroetsch's *Badlands*, Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, etc.). Moreover, Gutmann's photographs also serve to remind us within this context that, in considering art and architecture by way of books, we are dependent upon photographic reproduction. The Pratt catalogue, admirable as it is, cannot indicate the three-dimensional effect of his triptychs, for example. The colouring seems in the main faithful, but one prominent exception is *Whaling Station*, where the original — as the commentary testifies — reveals an astonishing impression of blood-stains beneath the scrubbed surface quite beyond the capacity of the camera to reproduce. Architecture, moreover, has often to be examined at *two* removes; much of the evidence in *A Measure of Consensus* consists of photographs of artists' drawings. The buildings themselves (some of them not built) evade us.

Furthermore, as I study the visual images in these books, and read their accompanying texts (if such exist), I am struck by similarities of approach between literary and artistic criticism — or, to be more accurate, by the prospect of both kinds of commentator facing similar conceptual problems. Thus the writers in *Gutmann* and *Christopher Pratt* are relatively old-fashioned in their approach (and let me say at once that this in no way implies criticism — quite the contrary, in fact). They assume that an artist's vision is strongly influenced by the circumstances of his life and the environment in which he spends his most impressionable years. These critiques are therefore biographical as well as interpretative: we sense the individual behind the art. By contrast, the writers who provide the text in *A Measure of Consensus* (with the exception of the co-ordinator, they appear as initials only) take a rigidly objective stance. We are told the names, date of birth, and degrees of the architects, but nothing more. Similarly, the accounts of buildings are, for the most part, austerely descriptive. Influences are acknowledged in economical, almost short-hand references; the prose tends to be assertive, assuming a "scientific" objectivity. But I am not convinced. As an unabashed advocate of the personal argument and the "yes, but . . ." (we are all fallible), I confess to being uneasy with this kind of approach; it smacks too much — especially in this instance — of criticism by committee. Perhaps obstinately, I find myself doubting the "consensus" they want me to recognize in a display where, for myself, I am more conscious of diversity.

It is possible, of course, that all this merely reveals a crippling visual insensitivity on my part. However that may be, we are faced once again with the age-old problem of what emanates from the eye of the beholder, what the individual spectator brings to the art object. Be-

cause I am untrained in the current vocabulary and attitudes of these disciplines, I may fail to detect what is obvious to the initiated eye; on the other hand, I may be able to see certain trees unnoticed by the *cognoscenti* with their eyes fixed firmly on the predominant wood. My own training in another discipline may predispose me to notice certain qualities (and interconnections) instead of others; but this may be liberating in allowing me a fresh viewpoint unobscured by fashionable commentary. All I can say (displaying my "personal" cards) is that I have attempted to look at what I see honestly and report it accurately.

In *Horizons* Marci and Louise Lipman select twenty modern landscapes ("contemporary" is a misnomer since the earliest dates back to 1937), and present them without comment in attractive reproductions that are, in the words of the back-cover, "suitable for framing." The Lipmans interpret the term "landscape" quite loosely. Christopher Pratt's *Bay,* a triptych of sea and sky, contains no land; Luke Angahadluq and Margaret Amarook's *Old Caribou Hunters* is confined to figures of hunters and animals unless one sees the white space of the paper as representative of a country under snow. And if, as in A. J. Hughes' *The South End of Bamberton Beach*, the centre of interest is logs, driftwood, and a luxuriant foliage, with bathers and their cottages providing mere background, in Ken Danby's *The Swimmers* boy and dog dominate a natural world that takes decidedly second place.

What the Lipmans' selections seem to indicate is that there is no dominating tradition of landscape painting in contemporary Canada. Styles can vary from Joseph Norris's neo-primitivism in *Snug Harbour*, through Barbara Ballachey's neo-impressionism in *West View above Sheep Creek,* to the selective minimalism of Tim Zuck's *Bird and Memorial.* This suggests to me a healthy variety not unlike the situation that Canadian writing has enjoyed in the last two decades, when poetry by Atwood, Kroetsch, and Christopher Dewdney can appear simultaneously, and novelists can include as diverse a bunch as Rudy Wiebe, Jack Hodgins, and Carol Shields.

One striking feature, however, is a shared sense of emptiness. There are exceptions, of course, but in the main these landscapes — even the two cityscapes — are devoid of people. The old quip about the Group of Seven painting the world on the fifth day of creation still seems applicable. As a result, the sense of land as land (or concrete as concrete) is strong. But this does not mean that the human is ignored or dismissed as insignificant. These landscapes (and this is a point overlooked by those who accept Northrop Frye's "terror in Nature" generalization too easily) have already been humanized by the form-imposing eyes of the painter. George Agnew Reid's *Evening, Lake Temagami* is an excellent example: lake, woods, and hills are pristine but *not* desolate, since the self-imposed limitation of a predominantly blue palette communicate a human interpretation and so, in a sense, a human control. What ultimately impresses me in all these paintings (despite trendy ideas of modern meaninglessness) is the painters' exuberant discovery and exploitation of design.

If the exhibition of John Gutmann's photographs had not been organized, and its catalogue published, by the Art Gallery of Ontario, there would be no particular reason for considering it here. Gutmann was born in Germany, left for the United States as the Nazis rose to power, and on the evidence of this book shows no sign of ever having set foot in Canada. But the Canadian interest in his work may be significant. As W. J. With-

row notes in his preface, Gutmann "has worked outside the mainstream of twentieth-century American photography, taking no part in the prevailing conventions and aesthetic debates in photographic practice." An extraordinary variety — sometimes bewildering but more often invigorating — characterizes his work, and thus makes generalization all but impossible. Some photographs are obviously — even ostentatiously — posed (the nudes, for example); others are equally obvious action shots (*Towards the Pool*, *Out of the Pool*, *Portrait of Count Basie*). And some exist in a curious limbo between the two. One of my favourites, *Rolls Royce with Charred Garbage*, at first gives the impression of being a "found" photo (analogies with the phenomenon of the found poem are often, I think, in order), but closer inspection qualifies this reaction. The front of the Rolls is crucially positioned in the top left-hand corner to provide an essentially studied contrast to the abstract design formed by the strewn litter. Again, in *Guns for Sale*, Gutmann focuses on a sidewalk gun-rack (which he finds a fascinating but deeply disturbing object), but he also discovers a vibrant contrast in the shabby, somewhat sinister passers-by and the sense of movement and clatter represented by the train on the elevated railroad.

One feature of his work that naturally appeals to the literary critic is the element of narrative behind many of his photographs. This is most obvious in *Portrait of a Marriage*, where the positioning and lighting of the heads of wife and husband communicate a disturbing message. (The accompanying text tells us that Gutmann did not learn the full story behind the relationship until years after the photograph had been taken.) More enigmatic is *The Beautiful Clown*, where the woman's eyes fixed upon the expressionless clown are uncomfortably eloquent. A created disturbance and discomfort appears to be a prominent and calculated part of Gutmann's art. In my opinion, it fails in only one instance. *The Victims*, with its image of piled bodies after a Mexican catastrophe, seems to me disturbing in an *in*artistic way since there is something unpleasant about the invitation to view a raw human tragedy as an aesthetic design. As up-to-the-minute newspaper record it could be justified; as permanent work of art it jars.

Historically, these photographs interpret an age without obviously judging it. In *National Guard Patrolling Waterfront*, for instance, the product of a San Francisco strike, the emphasis on pattern and form detracts from what might otherwise result in somewhat shrill political comment. *Nurses of the All-Black Flint-Goodridge Hospital* points up their youthful beauty rather than the fact of racial segregation. As Michael Mitchell comments, "when political content appeared in his photographs, it was usually in the form of an ironic aside on America's naïveté in international affairs." This viewpoint is not all that far removed, perhaps, from a Canadian detachment. At all events, these pictures remain fresh in their impact whereas too much of the work of Gutmann's more politically committed contemporaries appears dated. Once again, parallels can readily be made with literature of the 1930's, Canadian and otherwise.

A Measure of Consensus takes its origin from an interesting thesis. "Over the last few years," Andrew Gruft writes, "a body of work has emerged that suggests itself as a new Canadian architecture." This development "represents a significant, perhaps fundamental, shift in architectural concerns." One of the signs of this shift in architectural ideas, Gruft believes, is "a renewed interest in polychrome and ornament, favoured over the purist stripped-down aesthetic that has

dominated the work of the last quarter century." At the end of the book he concludes that the projects examined constitute "transitional work, still finding its way out of the conceptual debris of late Modernism and its confusing aftermath. What was chaos is slowly becoming order."

Perhaps, though what I see once again is a variety of ideas and experiments jostling for attention. Gruft has chosen nineteen recent architectural projects, described them, illustrated them, and tried to identify related general features. But the subjects themselves are extraordinarily diverse: two bars (by the same architect, counting as one project), two schools, two city halls, six housing developments, two commercial buildings, a professional centre, a museum, a firehall, a YMCA, a set of three fountains (also one project), and the Expo 86 Tower! Gruft attempts to prove his point by compiling a "matrix" intended to facilitate an understanding of interconnecting principles. Here common elements ("historical typologies," "the city as organic idea," etc.) are conveniently cross-referenced. To be frank, I do not altogether understand this, partly because the language seems vague; but I am also troubled by the admission that a few projects were rejected and others added at a late stage in the process. Can it be that some fitted readily into a preconceived pattern while others did not? The methods of selection are not, I think, sufficiently explained.

And I am even more troubled by the style in which the projects are written up. Here, more or less at random, are two sentences about one of the schools:

> The building is expressed through evocative rooflines and the predominant use of mass. A consistent banded masonry base unifies the scheme even though the school is highly articulated according to programmatic divisions.

Or, Mississauga City Hall being in question:

> In any case, rejecting a unitary expression in favour of a richer, more complex reading, Mississauga pays tribute to the dispersed farmstead image of its region while reaching for a more urban character in its carefully articulated buildings and bounded outdoor spaces.

The literary vocabulary ("expressed," "articulated," "reading") both intrigues and confuses me. But I have to insist that this is bad prose, jargon-cluttered. My impressions receive no sharp definition, no clear assurance of considered meaning. Can it be that architecture has not evolved an adequate vocabulary for its needs? To use words about words is one thing; to use them about textures, surfaces, elevations, is quite another.

Nonetheless, *A Measure of Consensus* is decidedly thought-provoking, and the passage of time may well justify Gruft's assessment. Not least among his stimulating assertions is the declaration that current work "seems intent on the self-conscious affirmation of architecture not as applied art or as a vehicle for reconstruction, but as an autonomous discipline — an architecture about Architecture." This is in line, of course, with current insistences that poetry is essentially about itself, with emphases on the self-reflexive in fiction, with arguments about the autonomy of criticism. Personally, I find such theories too inbred for comfort; they can lead, I think, to a lowering of sights, a narrowing of focus — ultimately a fragmentation (there can be no genuine interconnection when each discipline considers only itself). If Gruft is right, however, Canadian architecture may well be in the process of adapting itself to dominant general trends. Whether this can be achieved while retaining a Canadian distinctiveness remains to be seen.

According to Joyce Ziemans, Chris-

topher Pratt has a similar aim: "Pratt wanted to make art that was about the act of painting, about the flat surface, the shape of the support and the properties of pigment." At the same time, he "did not want to give up recognizable imagery." The result, in my view, is major art. Eschewing the abstract, Pratt nonetheless emphasizes the existence of geometrical proportion and a generalizing design behind the specificity of material objects. This is beautifully illustrated on the catalogue's cover, which looks like a pure design à la Mondrian but is in fact a study of Newfoundland sails. It is typical of Pratt, however, that his sails are never disturbed by wind. His seas, though apparently rippled, seem frozen. In *Institution* the hint of moving smoke accentuates rather than detracts from the sense of utter stillness, just as the few protruding weeds in *Shop on Sunday* draw attention to the straight lines of the human structure, itself echoing (in a typical Pratt touch) the clean horizon line that appears in the majority of his paintings. I get the feeling that Pratt's houses exist in a cold pastoral like the little town "emptied of its folk" on Keats' Grecian urn. Even the garments in *Clothesline* are caught in a pattern that suggests stillness rather than movement.

Many of Pratt's paintings contain an enigmatic narrative element similar to that found in Gutmann's photographs. The empty interiors imply a story to elucidate them. The lonely figures, often nudes, resemble spectres haunting deserted rooms. In the case of *Young Girl with Sea Shells* a series of preliminary sketches shows how Pratt has pared down the ideas behind the picture to their minimum ingredients while allowing a richness of imaginative interpretation on the part of the viewer. Most mysterious of all, *Me and Bride* shows the artist himself painting a nude model with darkness between them, the whole conception communicating a sinister but intriguing relationship.

"I see the universe," Pratt has observed, "as being a geophysical unity in which the biological is rare, perhaps to the point of accidental." This not only explains his fascination with man-made yet abandoned objects but also creates its own interconnection with the more general qualities of Canadian landscape that I discussed while considering *Horizons*. Pratt's Newfoundland experience is central here; one thinks of his grand-uncle's poems with their dominating imagery of sea and sky, with life as a harsh struggle for survival. Unlike E. J. Pratt, however, Christopher transforms the vigorous natural world of Newfoundland into an eerie stasis. And here, perhaps, I may mention an interconnection unnoticed, so far as I know, by Christopher Pratt's commentators. Surely his studies of boats suspended out of water revealing their fang-like keels (*New Boat, Yacht Wintering*) partake of the sinister, threatening quality of E. J. Pratt's "Shark" — "his fin, / Like a piece of sheet-iron, / Three-cornered, / And with knife-edge . . ." To me, at least, the connection is both palpable and appropriate. The images of both poet and painter reveal themselves as powerful, evocative, haunting products of related sensibilities.

Joyce Ziemans' commentary is clear and authoritative, genuinely helpful in distinguishing Pratt from superficially similar painters like Alex Colville, placing him firmly and convincingly in a painterly tradition without doing injustice to his unique vision, offering him as a combination of universalist and regionalist that suggests a number of Canadian literary analogues. This is an admirable example of criticism that makes no claims to autonomy but quietly and effectively establishes the importance of

a distinguished but hitherto evasive painter.

I cannot end without alluding to the final page of *A Measure of Consensus.* Wittily, memorably, but *in vacuo,* Gruft quotes without comment a passage from Deirdre Bair's *Samuel Beckett: A Biography*:

> "We needed strong swear words, and so I wrote them down," Blin recalls. "We came up with *ordure* (fertilizer), *fumier* (shit), *curé* (priest) — they were all good, but the one which worked best to make Vladimir shut up was *architecte.* It seemed to us the worst insult that one could ever say."

It is a disarming ending, and refers to a sequence in *Waiting for Godot* that was ultimately omitted from the French production. However, as a literary commentator discussing with some tentativeness these volumes of painting, photography, and architecture, I cannot forbear pointing out that the passage survived in the English version but that the ultimate silencing expletive became "Crritic!" I cannot make up my mind whether that is an interconnection or something else.

W. J. KEITH

MOVIES FOR TEN

SETH FELDMAN, ed., *Take Two: A Tribute to Film in Canada.* Irwin Publishing in conjunction with the Festival of Festivals, $14.95.

THE QUEBECOIS DIRECTOR Claude Jutra is quoted in Feldman's anthology as explaining, "Nowadays I don't even talk about the movie projects I dream of doing. That way it saves everyone a lot of heartbreak." Statements like these probably occur all too frequently within the more or less chronically beleaguered Canadian feature film "industry," and, therefore, one can approach any new collection of Canadian film criticism only with a sense of grateful surprise — surprise that someone has had the dedication and determination to try to rescue a largely invisible cinema from complete depression. In this case, Seth Feldman has collected and introduced twenty-seven articles on Canadian film, as evidence, he writes, "of a cinema culture that has learned from its struggles and that may, finally, free itself from the shuttle between centre stage and oblivion." But although Feldman presents some very fine work, the anthology as a whole fails to support his thesis. The majority of the films described here do not suggest a healthy cinema culture, and there is little indication of how our filmmakers will escape the treadmill Feldman describes so eloquently.

A major problem is that few of the writers acknowledge that film is both an art form *and* escapist entertainment, reflecting a high culture bias resulting in a characteristic tone of earnestness and rectitude, accompanied by a naïve disbelief that films by such directors as Jean Pierre Lefebvre, Derek May, and Martin Duckworth are not better known to the general public. These critics who do escape this bias are Marshall Delaney (Robert Fulford), Martin Knelman, and Jay Scott, all "movie reviewers" who are necessarily aware of the exigencies of the box office. All three are able to discuss Canadian cinema much more sensibly than the other writers generally manage, placing it in the context not only of the art gallery, but also of the marketplace. Delaney, for example, is the only writer in this volume to question our filmmakers' typically rigid adherence to documentary techniques and strategies. "Fidelity or distortion is not the question," he comments, "what matters is that history be turned into stories with meaning and resonance." At the same time, there are other critics here who satisfy the requirements implied by this anthology's subtitle, but without making extravagant

claims for their subjects. Feldman, David Clandfield, Brenda Longfellow, and Peter Morris, in particular, have all contributed excellent articles, with Clandfield's analysis of the NFB documentaries made by the French Unit perhaps being this volume's high point.

Unfortunately, many of the other articles provide striking evidence in support of Geoff Pevere's claim (in *Canadian Literature*, No. 108) that "identity-stalking has practically become a defining condition of cultural criticism in Canada." In fact, there could be no more extreme example of such criticism than Piers Handling's article on David Cronenberg. Handling wants to persuade the reader that although Cronenberg's violent horror films have been large commercial successes, they should nevertheless be taken seriously by Canadian critics, just as they are by critics in other countries. This he attempts to do, not by arguing that Cronenberg makes *good* films, but that Cronenberg makes *Canadian* films, with Margaret Atwood's *Survival* — the most frequently cited text in this anthology — being used to explain what is "archetypically Canadian." Cronenberg's films are in fact Canadian, Handling concludes, because they emphasize "fragmentation and disintegration," the "emasculated Canadian male," "a surprising lack, or failure, of rebellion," "a grim overtone of fatalism," and "endings without resolution." And if all this is not enough to convince our negligent critics, well then, "everyone is a victim of one sort or another in the Cronenberg world"!

As dreary as Cronenberg's films are, they have still attracted a large following, mainly because they fall into the familiar Hollywood genre of the horror film, with its instantly recognizable codes and conventions. Thus, people who know nothing and care nothing about the elusive Canadian identity flock to these films to see exploding heads, penis-like growths in armpits, and vaginal slits in stomachs, always hoping to witness some ultimate outrage. When, however, Cronenberg's obsession with futility, fatalism, and failure is stripped of its horror comic overtones, and presented in the documentary-like narratives of "serious" Canadian filmmakers, audiences have been much less enthusiastic, resulting in the near total commercial failure of highbrow Canadian cinema.

Rather than locate the reasons for this failure in the films themselves, several of the writers in this volume look elsewhere, often with bizarre results. Feldman, for example, believes that Paul Almond's "Fantastic Trilogy" was ignored in Canada when it first appeared, because "Canada was not quite ready to tolerate a native Bergman, Kurosawa or Renoir." James Leach, on the other hand, subscribes to a Conspiracy Theory: "the virtual suppression of the Canadian cinema can be seen as an example of the power of conservative elements in our culture to encourage and exploit a fear of the unknown and a resistance to change." Peter Harcourt is less sensational, but equally unconvincing, in his attempt to explain the lack of response, even in Quebec and France, to Lefebvre's *Le vieux pays ou Rimbaud est mort*: "That this film has not done well either in Quebec or France is more a comment on the myopic policies of the two exhibition systems than on the film itself." It seems to me, however, that any myopia involved is present in the critics, rather than in the audiences or the distributors. The linking of Almond with Bergman, Kurosawa, and Renoir is really quite grotesque; "conservative elements" would support, and not suppress, a cinema emphasizing the futility of rebellion; distributors willing to exhibit the quirky, often subversive films of such directors as Resnais, Godard, and Truffaut would

be quick to recognize any merits in a film by Lefebvre. Indeed, Lefebvre himself offers a much more likely reason for his film's failure to find an audience even in the societies most culturally inclined to accept it. Relating the necessity of working with very small budgets on films made for a tiny, elite audience, Lefebvre remarks, "You can make movies for ten people. But if you make movies for ten people, they better cost ten bucks."

As one reads through *Take Two*'s analysis of the themes and forms of Canadian cinema, one can't help but think of Lefebvre's comments and wonder what potential audience exists for the kind of films being described. For example, Piers Handling observes, "Those who have worked against the dominant practise [of documentary realism] have suffered the ignominy of total rejection. It seems that fantasy and dream, often with a strong desire for change attached to these visions, has no place in our films." Comparing the cinemas of English Canada and Quebec, James Leach concludes, "While the Quebec context gives the theme of impotence a clearly political dimension, essentially the same vision of home as misery and escape as fantasy dominates both the Québécois and English Canadian cinemas." Finally, sadly, and perhaps, most revealingly, Lianne McLarty's article on Bruce Elder suggests that even our experimental filmmakers are not immune to the pervasive sense of despair revealed by our mainstream cinema:

> In *The Art of Worldly Wisdom* Elder is never shown as a truly public figure who interacts with others. In the sequence with Elder teaching, he and the students are never shown in the same frame; it is as if even in his public persona, as a spokesman for his art, he speaks to no one. This sense of isolation is clearly illustrated in shots of Elder masturbating, for masturbation is a paradigm of an isolated act.

Elder's film provides a telling metaphor for the current state of Canadian cinema. Moreover, it seems likely that even if there *were* a secure distribution system in Canada for Canadian films, very few theatres could regularly show the kind of films described above and survive, at least not without frequent government subsidies.

During the last decade Australian filmmakers have revealed that it is possible to reject the mindless optimism fundamental to Hollywood ideology, and yet still make extremely popular films that give specifically Australian concerns implications far beyond the national. Neither slavishly imitating Hollywood fantasies of success, nor obsessively fabricating colonial fantasies of failure, the Australians have immortalized their unique mythologies in a cinema that is the envy of the world. Until Canadian filmmakers learn to do likewise, they will never escape "the shuttle between centre stage and oblivion," but will remain, like Pete and Joey in the archetypal *Goin' Down the Road*, goin' nowhere.

PETER KLOVAN

FRAMES

RALPH GREENHILL, *Engineer's Witness: A Photographic Panorama of Nineteenth Century Engineering Triumphs*. Coach House, n.p.

PETER & CATHARINE WHYTE FOUNDATION, *Great Days in the Rockies: The Photographs of Byron Harmon 1906-1934*. Altitude Publications, n.p.

DOROTHY HAEGERT, *Children of the First People*. Tillacum, n.p.

LILLY KOLTUN, ed., *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada 1839-1940*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, n.p.

FROM ITS BEGINNING, photography has been alternately praised for its scientific accuracy and its vulgar realism. One of the juries associated with the 1851 Great Exhibition lauded the new medium as

"the most remarkable discovery of modern times," emphasizing its ability to document the world with "truthful delineation." John Ruskin, by contrast, initially dismissed photography as a mechanical recorder of images, much as he contemplated with disgust the Great Exhibition's philistine fascination with technology. And photographers, aware of the slight artistic prestige granted their medium, doctored their work with "painterly" composition and texture to make it more respectable.

To a new nation like Canada, the very ambiguity of photography seemed a godsend: concerned with the scientifically accurate documentation of the land and its increasingly impressive achievements, Canadian representatives also wanted to avoid a purely utilitarian image unsoftened by the "sweetness and light" of intellectual and poetic inspiration. Such a combination of realism and idealism was not only necessary to help create a positive national self-image, but also to attract prospective immigrants and investors from the educated middle classes. At its most determinedly genteel, this attitude was responsible for William Notman's composite pictures of fancy-dress skating carnivals and elegant curling parties in Canada's cold, but vigorously active cities; at its most deceptive, this attitude also generated poster-collages luring the less sophisticated to Canada with images of flourishing agriculture framed by home-like pastoral settings.

Ralph Greenhill's *Engineer's Witness* seemingly presents the camera at its most objective. Most of the pictures are of American constructions (the building of the Capitol, the blast furnaces of the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company, the Kentucky River Bridge, the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, to mention only a few), but there are also daguerrotypes, stereographs, and tintypes of the *Queen of the West*, "one of a number of large side-wheelers built in the early 1850s for passenger service on Lake Erie," the Parliament Buildings under construction in 1863 Ottawa, the cable-laying machinery on board the *Great Eastern*, and the interior of a snowshed on the Canadian Pacific Railway. Most of these pictures were taken to give information about appearance and operation. Still, they are also endowed with the pathos of nation-building; the construction of Victoria Bridge, for instance, considered one of the great engineering feats of its era and recorded by William Notman in countless photographs during and after completion, linked Montreal with its winter-harbour Portland, thus tying the city firmly into the vast communications network of the British Empire, an accomplishment celebrated by the Prince of Wales during his 1860 visit to North America as ranking with the finest successes of ancient Rome. The best (from an aesthetic point of view) of Notman's photographs of Victoria Bridge such as "Bottom of Centre Tube, Victoria Bridge, 1859" (not reproduced in Greenhill's book) force the viewer to abandon the comfortable distances and proportions of traditional landscape painting, in order to encompass the almost futurist boldness of the image depicted.

While Barbara Novack has observed a similar phenomenon in Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs of the American West, for which there is no equivalent in the landscape painting of the time, Byron Harmon's photographs of the Canadian Rockies, produced between 1906 and 1934, were prepared for an increasingly lucrative tourist market in Banff (Bart Robinson's biographical sketch also offers valuable information on tourism as an important aspect of Canada's cultural history). Although many of Harmon's images are stunningly composed and always expertly finished

(Jon Whyte's "Appreciation" correctly points out the superb "Waterfall. Lake of the Hanging Glaciers Expedition, 1920 or 1922" and "Lobby of the Banff Springs Hotel, c. 1914"), these qualities seem their very limitation: possessed of the hard gloss of professional picture postcards, they are admirable, even sensational, but rarely unsettling. Although Harmon preferred mountains to people, there are climbers, hunters, and workmen in most of the pictures reproduced in *Great Days in the Rockies*, and one suspects that the CPR imported not only European guides to serve enthusiastic Canadian alpinists, but also visual conventions developed by the Swiss and Austrian tourist industry. Harmon's most interesting images abandon such predictable frames, producing the almost abstract black and white composition of "Workmen clearing an avalanche on the railroad line near Rogers Pass, 1980," although such an effect also opens the perennial question (particularly important since the inception of modern art) of how compatible — or not — aesthetics and ethics really are.

A similar discomfort overcomes me when looking at Dorothy Haegert's photographs of native children in *Children of the First People*. While many of the images are very beautiful indeed, they are so determinedly nostalgic that they seem to float as much in a vacuum as do many of the machines depicted in Greenhill's book. The workers operating CPR rotary snowplows or holly pumping engines are often merely an extension of their machinery; Haegert's children by contrast are depicted in untrammelled movement and granted the individuality of close-ups, but their spontaneity is almost crushed by an implied, unconditionally Romantic, stereotype, which is also present in the elders' reminiscences assembled in this volume. Haegert declares that text and pictures are "a testament to remind us what these people, and all of us, are in danger of losing, as the handsome children may give us hope for what endures and what is to come." Yet *Children of the First People* is too accommodating to give me more than momentary pleasure in the beauty of very lovely children.

Professional photography, because dependent on a paying clientele, is more subject to agreeable convention than is amateur photography, the latter often no more than a snap-shot record of private lives. But it would be incorrect to separate these two branches of photography too sharply: Canadian amateur photographers, especially after the invention of the much simplified Kodak camera in 1888, banded together in clubs where they profited from experts' lectures on almost any imaginable aspect of their art. Conversely, professionals' work was sometimes rejuvenated by an amateur's unorthodox choice of subject-matter or composition. Some of the images reproduced in *Private Realms of Light: Amateur Photography in Canada 1839-1940* are indistinguishable from professional products, especially so since the editors decided to include photographs by professionals taken "for the love of it" and not for commercial gain. Thus, Alexander Henderson, one of the CPR's most accomplished photographers, also produced such quietist images as "The Trout Brook 1860-65" and "Spring Inundation. Bank of St. Lawrence River 1865," which, although carefully composed, avoid "the grander aspects of Canadian scenery" preferred by most consumers. The truly memorable photographs in this very fine volume are, however, those granting a glimpse into the "private realms" of past lives, images which make one understand all of a sudden Victorians' fascination with this "mirror with a memory" possessed of the magic power to bring back the dead.

Almost palpable life suffuses the blurred Albumen print of "Bobbie, Ada, Walter, Louie & Alice DeBlois, Charlottetown 1861," A. M. Ross' enchanting "Gertrude H. Ross bathing Ian and Eugenia Ross, Que. c. 1898," Mattie Gunderman's funny "Mattie on Stove, with Rose and Ann Williams, Nettie-L Mine, B.C. 1902," or I. May Ballantyne's delightful "Lillie Ballantyne and Joe O'Gara, Ottawa East, Ont. 1891." Often humorous, these photographs of intimately domestic scenes form an important counterpoint to the official emblems of nationalist propaganda, much as revisionist history strives to complement political leaders' testimony with that of the average citizen. Accompanied by informative essays written by members of the National Photography Collection of the Public Archives of Canada, *Private Realms of Light* is an exemplary book and compulsory reading for any student of Canadian culture.

E.-M. KROLLER

INDIAN ART

EDWIN L. WADE, ed., *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution*. Hudson Hills Press/Philbrook Art Center, $70.00.

SIX YEARS AGO, the Philbrook Art Center, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, launched "an intensive four year exploration of the humanistic foundations of aesthetic endeavour." The project involved a comprehensive study of Oklahoma's Indian masterworks, an exhibition on Indian art, and a symposium entitled "The International Convocation on Native American Art." This 1982 symposium was the source of the text for *The Arts of the North American Indian*. The central question in the book, "What is Native American Art?", is examined from seven related perspectives (meaning, tradition, aesthetics, quality, individuality, controversy, and the future), with two presentations per topic. Although there occasionally is an annoying anticipation of the extinction of Indian societies, the book ably demonstrates that aboriginal North American traditions, even if they sometimes incorporate pick-up trucks, are not only alive, but are developing in extremely creative ways.

The book should be read as an anthropological exercise with aesthetics. Yet there is a tension that vitalizes the book and that is never relaxed, between the connoisseur's sensitivity searching for aesthetic values in artistic endeavours and the anthropologist's sensitivity searching to explicate the cross-cultural context of Indian arts. As a result, the book is also a connoisseur's guide to Indian art.

The first eight articles explain ways to appreciate aboriginal art. William Sturtevant's lead paper sets the tone of the book, with the first call for viewers of art to suspend ethnocentric evaluations. Arguing that meaning is to be found through interpretations of context and semantics that use the ethnological approach, he reviews the history of aboriginal art styles. Sturtevant's article illustrates how diverse aboriginal art can be. In the study that follows, Gloria Young interprets the nineteenth-century Plains style of muslin painting (ledger art). She gives meaning to Silverhorn's painting *The Exploits of Sun Boy* by "reading" it as a socio-historical document, as well as a triumph in the development of the art form.

The book does not embed art forms in their cultural traditions without critically examining those traditions. J. King discusses the influence of Euro-American culture and commercialization to demonstrate that the compartmentalization

of art as traditional or non-traditional is a semantic booby trap that simplifies and idealizes aboriginal art. Aboriginal traditions are not static. Norman Feder's study of Plains art and tradition brings into sharp focus the impact of external changes, especially those influenced by the Euro-American presence. Wolfgang Haberland asks if aesthetics are universal. Arguing for the possible co-existence of several aesthetic systems, he warns against using Eurocentric aesthetic standards that rigidly define "fine art" and that reject other art forms as less valuable. Bill Holm's delightful appreciation of Northwest Coast dancing headdress frontlets traces the nexus of Bella Coola artistic values, as he shows how various elements of that aesthetic system are fused in the headdresses.

Chapters on quality by Evan Maurer and Christian Feest develop complex cross-cultural criteria for judging excellence. These criteria differentiate between various artistic media and techniques, and interpret art as a communication between the artist and the beholder. Maurer assesses technical and aesthetic qualities in textiles, basketry, and ceramics. Feest surveys the sculptural arts of the Southwest, the East, the North, and the Northwest. The remainder of the book concentrates more completely on individual artists and their art forms. John Warner, faithful to the social and historical bent of the book, presents a contextual study of the problems faced by the artist in society, of the role of the individual artist within aboriginal society, and of the function of the art. Jamake Highwater documents the controversies faced by individual artists as they struggle not only with their art but also with their personal and cultural identities, with their cultural images, and with modernism. Two case studies deal with the commercialization of aboriginal art. Marvin Cohodas interprets the acculturated art of five Washoe basket makers, and also captures glimpses of their lives as artists and of the feudal conditions of patronage under which they worked. Similarly, Wade's discussion of the controversies surrounding the commercialization of sacred objects, spotlights individual masters of Pueblo pottery, and demonstrates the dynamics of the interaction between their art, their families, and their societies. Finally, Gerhard Hoffman and Rennard Strickland attempt to provide frames of reference for the future of aboriginal art. Hoffman, in his essay on the relationship of social reality and aesthetic forms, examines traditional art, tourist art, and modernist art. Strickland ends the book with a serious, yet tongue-in-cheek, script for a dramatic encounter between crafts trader, art dealer, artists, art critic, and anthropologist. The lively debate of his characters leaves no doubt as to the creative future aboriginal art has.

A startling combination of opinions can be found in *The Arts*. There are some genuine insights into Indian art, but also some naïve assumptions that border on racism; there are some extremely well-written articles, but also some weak efforts to dress up museum catalogue sheets in theoretical clothing. The diversity of views includes a wide range of opinion on aboriginal art. At one extreme are the assimilationist views that aboriginal art is being totally redefined by the commercial market. At the other end of the range are nationalistic views asserting the creativity of aboriginal culture. The heterogeneity of the contributors may account for some of this curious mix. Taken together, the articles provide readers with basic tools for the construction of their own appreciation of aboriginal art in North America.

JAMES A. MACDONALD

VICTORIAN CONTEXT

NANCY Z. TAUSKY, LYNNE D. DISTEFANO, *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario, Symbols of Aspiration.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $34.95.

IN THE LATE 1960's, the University of Western Ontario was given the Murphy-Moore collection which "contains hundreds of architectural drawings as well as specifications, daybooks and numerous other records . . ." (p. vii) from the early period of Robinson, Durand, and Moore, an architectural firm in London, Ontario, begun by William Robinson in 1857. This collection has resulted in at least three projects of significance to local architectural history. In 1978 the London Historical Museum had an exhibition of architecture by Durand. Eleven years later, in May 1986, the London Regional Art Gallery mounted a circulating exhibition, *Symbols of Aspiration,* which concentrated on the work from the whole firm. The book, *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario, Symbols of Aspiration,* was in preparation concurrently with the exhibition.

Rather as a catalogue might do, the book documents thoroughly, with both archival and contemporary illustrations and photographs, buildings designed by the firm from 1861 to 1913. The citation for each building includes its status: designed but not built, designed and completed, demolished, or present location. There is no map on which the surviving buildings are indicated. There is no clear reason for the particular selection of buildings. The work of the firm is presented as three periods — the Robinson, Durand, and Moore eras with a chapter for each. Each chapter begins with a perceptive social and professional biography of each principal and then follows the selected corpus of his work. Here the approach is that of a social historian. Pertinent details of the architecture for each building are usually limited to exterior features and their precedents. Minimum attention is given to the nature of architectural space and whether or not the firm's conception of it changed significantly with each principal.

The exhibition was also the occasion for the authors to examine the wider context of architecture in Victorian English Canada. Chapter 1 begins rhetorically by introducing us to the first major public building in London — "the somewhat Gothic courthouse" (p. 13). (A member of the firm was responsible for a fitting addition in 1877-78.) Then the chapter becomes a rather idiosyncratic and uneven treatment of the social history for the London region. The eccentric Colonel Talbot who laid out London and was one of the five commissioners appointed by the legislature of Upper Canada to choose a site for the courthouse and the architect is the central figure in this narrative. There is no adequate map of the region to orient the reader geographically. Before the architecture of the courthouse is explained, there is an intriguing but sometimes trivial history of architecture. The intention of this section is no doubt to provide the architectural context for Victorian ideas about built form and their influence upon the firm. Instead the reader is baffled by the richness of material and its relevance to architectural production of the period. The architectural treatment of the courthouse itself, however, is thorough and clear about historical precedents.

The second chapter brings together in a quite readable form much diverse information about the history of the architectural profession in English Canada as well as the building materials and levels of technology available to those in practice. The connection of this excellent account to the firm which is central to the book is rather tenuous and unde-

veloped. This chapter is followed by the three on the different eras of Robinson, Durand, and Moore. For that reason Chapter 2 could well have included some explanation of the relationship of the firm to other architectural offices in London at the time and whether or not they were regarded as the firm contributing the finest examples of Victorian architecture to the urban fabric of London.

The research undertaken for this handsomely designed volume was considerable. The authors have mined several archive collections. The footnotes are thorough. However, there is no bibliography: a fault familiar to those who study Victorian books of scholarship.

The small corpus of books about the history of architecture in Canada varies considerably in approach and academic merit. The occasion of this work may have been an exhibition. Yet the authors have adopted an approach which recognizes architecture as a signifying system. They appreciate the contexts which are appropriate to an understanding of the meaning of Victorian architecture in Canada. Particularly good is the material on the professionalization of architecture in nineteenth-century English Canada. They are also sensitive to the social milieu of the principals. Yet the history of architectural ideas lacks critical selection. The impact of Victorian ideas upon the members of the firm is not well documented or discussed.

In the preface the authors suggest that their book may also have a methodological intent. "Our own aspirations will be fulfilled if the book helps future preservationists appreciate the integrity of Canada's Victorian heritage" (p. viii). The real merit of the work is that it demonstrates, though not altogether satisfactorily, the potential of the contextual approach to architectural signification.

SHELAGH LINDSEY

FORCÉMENT DE L'AMOUR

HUGUES CORRIVEAU, *Forcément dans la tête.* Montréal: Les Herbes Rouges, n.p.

LOUISE COITEUX et DANIELLE FOURNIER, *De ce nom de l'amour.* Montréal: Triptyque/Ponctuation, $8.00.

AVANT DE SE LANCER dans la lecture de *Forcemént dans la tête* de Hughes Corriveau, le lecteur est frappé par la maquette de couverture. Jean-Marc Côté s'est servi d'une illustration de John Cage, *Concerto pour piano et orchestre, 1960* et a surposé sur fond gris des figures géométriques et des notes de musique, esquissées d'un "trait bleu du crayon pour organiser l'espace" nous dira le poète. Barthes, dans un article sur Michel Butor, avait déjà relevé la signification de la maquette: "une structure qui se cherche à partir de morceaux d'événements, morceaux que l'on essaye de rapprocher, d'éloigner, d'agencer, sans altérer leur figure matérielle . . ." ("Littérature et discontinu," *Critique*, No. 185, octobre 1962).

C'est ainsi que Corriveau procède à l'élaboration d'une poésie de bricolage, avec comme matière première des "activités brisées dans le quotidien, quand la déroute probable se décompose en images capturées sur le vif, dans le défilé lacinant des vitres." L'omniprésence du "vitre" nous rappelle que nous n'avons affaire qu'à des "représentations" d'un "réel" hypothétique. La vitesse à laquelle ces perceptions se succèdent en imagination est rendue textuellement par l'enjambement des lambeaux de phrases purement déscriptives. Celles-ci sont souvent dépourvues de verbe, et se contentent de juxtaposer un substantif et un complément, excitant des idées visuelles ressemblant aux "tableaux lisses des Musées" ou aux "dessins plats de l'architecture." Le temps et l'espace sont ainsi ré-

duits à des effets de surface et nous sommes invités à participer à une écriture "épidermique," à découvrir du palpable à travers "la marque corporelle dans l'inscription."

C'est à ce niveau-ci que la polysémie de certains mots, la synesthésie, les jeux d'association et surtout la métaphore tissent des liens entre des images qui sont déjà d'une telle précision et d'une telle intensité que le choc produit par leur rapprochement risque de tout faire voler en éclats. Cependant, le désir et la tendresse contrebalancent la violence et créent un équilibre provisoire. Je dis "provisoire" parce que le poète finit par nous confier que le texte n'est qu'un "suaire," un tissu de mensonges "en porte-à-faux sur le vide qui réclame tout." Peut-être, mais en attendant que l'édifice s'écroule, admirons la force et le dépouillement classique de ces vers qui ne mentent que par excès de clarté.

D'une retenue non moins impressionnante est l'ouvrage de Louise Coiteux intitulé *De ce nom de l'amour: une sorte d'écho et de vertige*. Ce petit montage de textes en bloc qui raconte par bribes une (des) histoire(s) d'amour tragique(s) se divise en une introduction et cinq pseudo-chapitres, chacun accompagné d'une photographie par Daniel Beauregard. La photo se fait chaque fois l'écho d'un aspect de la représentation scripturale exploitée dans le chapitre en question — surimpression, emboîtement et ainsi de suite. Car le livre est avant tout une mise en cause de l'illusion référentielle, réalisée grâce à un agencement de reflets internes.

La voix narrative du début nous présente un personnage nommé Violette qui aime aller au cinéma voir des films qu'elle décrit par la suite dans un cahier. Mais Violette est aussi une rêveuse qui s'amuse à inventer des histoires et à contempler les images sur des photos et des cartes postales. Toutes ces formes de représentation se confondront et se contrediront à mesure que "se déroule le récit," surtout quand Violette prend la parole. Car les objets, les événements et les personnes/personnages représentés se refuseront à tout encadrement, se glissant d'un espace textuel à un autre, établissant de nouveaux rapports entre eux. Le lecteur voit tous ses projets de conceptualisation contrariés l'un après l'autre car reconstruire une chronologie et une géographie précises s'avère impossible, vu les contradictions qui restent irrésolues à la fin du texte. De toute façon, un épilogue nous informe que "rien de cela n'existe." Peu importe. L'illusion est captivante!

Le "récit" de Coiteux ne constitue, pourtant, que la première partie du livre *De ce nom l'amour*. Si l'on retourne celui-ci, la couverture annonce un texte de Danielle Fournier sous-titré *Le détournement de l'initiale*. La division en chapitres reproduit celle dans le texte Coiteux et les cinq photos ont toujours pour fonction de démystifier la représentation. Nous avons encore affaire, semble-t-il, à une histoire d'amour avortée qui apparaît en filigrane dans le texte. Celui-ci consiste en un collage d'extraits de lettres dans lesquelles une personne nommée Léonie Ander s'adresse passionnément à un "vous" dont l'identité reste incertaine. Ces extraits de "discours amoureux" sont constamment interrompus, commentés et même usurpés par une instance narrative anonyme dont la voix se confond peu à peu avec celle de Léonie. Le "vous" destinataire subit lui aussi un redoublement et la voix narrative nous confie que "Léonie dit depuis toujours 'vous' à celui à qui elle écrit quand l'amour est en jeu." En fait, le pronom "vous" signifie poud Léonie: "femme, homme, enfant, livre, écriture, maîtresse, amant." Ce n'est, après tout, qu'on mot, d'une signification moins étendue que celle du

"nous" où la dimension spéculaire des rapports sexuels/textuels permet une complicité et un rapprochement des contraires dans l'acceptation de l'altérité et de la différance. Car si l'amour est "en" jeu, il est aussi "un" jeu qui met en présence les pronoms "je" et "vous" à l'intérieur d'un réseau de signifiants. Celui-ci détermine et l'identité des joueurs et les rapports qu'ils entretiennent l'un avec l'autre. La tragédie de l'amour non partagé, fil conducteur de ce texte, n'est qu'un dérivé de "l'etrange raison des paroles mises en faillite," et en tant qu'allégorie des rapports entre l'écrivain et le lecteur, évoque l'illisibilité qui en résulte lorsque le lecteur refuse la complicité. C'est "une question de foi."

De ce nom de l'amour contient donc deux histoires d'amour qui se déroulent au niveau du signifiant, et qui sont ainsi vouées à l'échec, car susceptibles à tout moment d'être oblitérées par un changement de perspective ou un glissement de sens. Néanmoins, en tant que lecteurs avertis, nous sommes conviés à suivre l'exemple de Léonie Ander: "Elle accorde préséance aux histoires qui ne se tiennent pas: celles-là seules peuvent encore se jouer."

Le texte Danielle Fournier est plus poétique qui celui de Coiteux, qui abandonne les figures de rhétorique pour imiter un style journalistique. Mais, si l'on ne regrette jamais l'absence de fioritures dans *Une sorte d'écho et de vertige*, dans *Le détournement de l'initiale* un discours trop orné d'images et de cris de désolation devient agaçant à la longue, et le lecteur en a assez "de ce nom de l'amour."

DELORIS WILLIAMS

RELATIONS & FAMILIES

JOHN NIHMEY & STUART FOXMAN, *Time of Their Lives.* Niva/Macmillan, $19.95.

PETER GAY, *The Tender Passion.* Oxford Univ. Press, $34.95.

ANITA SCHORSCH, *Images of Childhood.* Main Street Press/Methuen, $21.95.

WITOLD RYBCZYNSKI, *Home: A Short History of an Idea.* Penguin, $19.95.

"ALL HAPPY FAMILIES resemble each other; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." So Leo Tolstoy began that powerful tale of the splendours and miseries of married life, *Anna Karenina*, and the sentence seems a suitable epigraph for this group of books. One of them, indeed, concerns one of the most dramatic instances in real life of a family "unhappy in its own way." *Time of Their Lives* offers a new version of the scandalous tale of the Dionne quintuplets. The other three books form a triptych discussing the basic elements that go into a family: married love (in Peter Gay's *The Tender Passion*), the home (in Witold Rybczynski's *Home: A Short History of an Idea*), and children (in Anita Schorsch's *Images of Childhood: an Illustrated Social History*). Only the second of these three is by a Canadian; the other two are by American scholars. But the fact of the three books that so admirably complement each other appearing at roughly the same time was so striking that the editor of *Canadian Literature* evidently considered it a suitable opportunity to proclaim an awareness that no cultural or literary tradition is sealed hermetically; it is in that spirit that I am dealing with them.

One can legitimately wonder whether Pierre Berton left anything — either tragic or pathetic — for later writers to wring out of the history of the unfortunate quints when he wrote *The Dionne Years: A Thirties Melodrama* in 1977. In *Time of Their Lives* John Nihmey

and Stuart Foxman try to give a new angle to the story by turning it into wooden fiction, the excuse presumably being that this enables them to simulate eavesdropping on the thoughts and conversations of the people involved, and to present imagined scenes meant to illuminate the motives of the principal actors in this wretched affair: the Dionne parents and their neighbours and relatives; the vain little martinet, Dr. Dafoe, reaping celebrity and profit from the children he tried to keep from their parents in a special hospital; the calculating politician Mitchell Hepburn, premier of Ontario, who treated the quintuplets as a political asset and built the hospital where Dafoe reigned. Since the writers do not have enough imagination to turn the story into a real novel, the invented scenes are unconvincing and melodramatic. We are left basically with a repitition of the sad and familiar story of how Oliva Dionne fought a nine-year battle to get his daughters home, and found them so spoiled by their experience that the reunion of the family did not succeed, and everybody involved was unhappy ever after.

What lingers most in one's mind is the heartless exploitation of the Dionnes for mercenary motives, an exploitation whose effects parental love could never reverse; hardly less appalling is the extraordinary obsession with novelty in the dark days of the Depression which led three million people all the way to a North Ontario backwoods village to gape at five little girls at play. Perhaps the most disturbing part of the story may be that most of the three million must have thought they were looking at a happy family, and in this way may have felt a relief from the personal anxieties of that age of economic and social crisis. Lines to get bread were replaced by lines to see symbols of fertility and hope.

The Dionne incident is perhaps most striking because in so many ways it ran counter to the wisdom that had been accumulated during the years when the nuclear family as we know it emerged, when the idea grew up of the home as a private domain in which children could develop, sheltered from the world, in the loving care of parents. The claims of home and family, and the whole concept of parental love as a necessary shaping influence, were cavalierly disregarded when the government of Ontario legislated the placing of the children under a board of guardians and their segregation from the parents and siblings among whom they would normally have grown up. It seemed like a regression to the middle ages, as evoked by Rybczynski in *Home: A Short History of an Idea* and by Schorsch in *Images of Childhood,* when the concept of the house as dwelling had not evolved into the concept of the house as home, and when the family was still so loosely organized that it was customary for children to be sent out at an early age to live and work or to take their education away from home. Such an attitude lingered among the British ruling class in the phenomenon of preparatory and public schools, where children boarded for long periods away from home, but it was certainly alien to the democratic and evangelical traditions that had been established in Canada for a good century by the time of the Dionne affair.

Perhaps the strangest thing about the case was the slowness with which the press and the public grasped the moral issues involved. Were the three million visitors consciously defying the lessons about the sacredness of the family bond that parents and teachers and preachers had drilled into them for generations? Or were they merely the mass victims of the kind of saturnalian sensationalism which emerged, especially in North America, as a reaction against Victorian

rectitude and which the politicians and the publicists were not slow to exploit?

Time of Their Lives is devoted to an extreme instance of the perils that threaten families and make the unhappy ones, as Tolstoy suggested, unique in their particular miseries. The message of the other three books — part of the revisionism current that in recent decades has challenged the Stracheyan rejection of all things Victorian — is almost encapsulated in a letter which Peter Gay quotes in *The Tender Passion*. Eliza Wilson writes to the Walter Bagehot she will soon marry and, looking ahead, talks of "well-assorted unions. . . . I think about these things now and am delighted to find how many I know. Happy marriages are not uncommon."

The Tender Passion is the second of the six volumes of Peter Gay's massive social and cultural history of the English and American middle classes from 1820 to the beginning of the Great War. It complements the first volume, *The Education of the Senses*, which dealt mainly with nineteenth-century manifestations of sexuality, by studying love in the sense of tenderness and affection between men and women, and, particularly, love within marriage, though it does not wholly ignore the wilder shores, for the social role of adultery gets its fair place and so do homosexual affections. An impressively, almost obsessively researched book, it is concerned mainly with what happened in the most prosperous, progressive and therefore significant countries of the age: Britain and Germany, France and the United States, and — by virtue mainly of Freud whose hand lies heavy over the book — Austria. Other European cultures, like those of Italy, Spain, and Russia, are considered in so far as they offer supporting, mostly literary evidence. The emergent cultures of the dominions, like those of the Balkan countries, are ignored; the sole Canadian association is a quotation from Anne Jameson, but even that was from a work written before she set foot in Upper Canada, characteristically — one feels — titled *Memoirs of an Ennuyé*. There are not even such tenuous associations with Australia, New Zealand, white South Africa, which are all presumably regarded as likely merely to reproduce the patterns of the mother countries.

Nevertheless, Gay has turned to an astonishing number and variety of sources. He brings in the passionate philosophers, like Nietzsche and Schopenhauer; the self-appointed pundits of love like Stendhal (*De l'Amour* and his splendid theory of "crystallization") and Balzac (*Physiologie du mariage*); and dozens of novelists from Dickens and Thackeray and James to Pio Baroja and Marcel Proust, the inimitable chronicler of love as misery. He has dipped into many diaries and perused a legion of letters housed in public and family archives. From such material he reconstructs the courtships and married lives of nineteenth-century couples, some of them famous, like the Webbs and the Bagehots, and others obscure but socially secure like the Benekes (he was a Hamburg archivist) and the Roes (he was an American Presbyterian minister). He even dips — though there are fewer personal records to be found here — into the lives of the poor, and discovers what anyone brought up in an English working class environment will have known from childhood — how alike in their preferences and prejudices so many of them were to the middle class:

> Uniform as the poor might look from the distances of wealth and station, they were no less finely calibrated than their more fortunate contemporaries. Drifters, migratory labourers, the unskilled, and the unlucky were, in their sexual conduct as in much else, a far remove from sober artisans and farmers. The 'deserving poor,' whether serious chapel goers or no less serious so-

> cialists, were as intent on respectability as the most proper bourgeois.

And probably, one might add, more single-minded in attaining it. All in all, *The Tender Passion* is a valuable, readable, and in many ways fascinating book, with just that touch of zestful and slightly scandalous interest in its subject that lifts it out of the academic ruck and puts it in the same category of inspired history as the books of Philippe Ariès on changing social attitudes.

Images of Childhood and *Home: A Short History of an Idea* share an insight which Anita Schorsch summarizes early in her book:

> The Middle Ages had been a period in time in which either the community survived or no one survived; when the lord, the laborer, and the church depended on harmony between classes and between ages. But by the 17th century, each man, woman and child was no longer responsible for the well-being of his neighbour, or for his neighbour's bad behaviour or his neighbour's child. In the 17th century, man — for good or ill — exchanged communal responsibility for privacy and freedom. As a result the value of the individual rose and the corresponding interest in childhood as an isolated event, a particular age and a worthy study was born.

The growing interest in the child was indeed part of the development that, stressing the importance of the family as well as the value of privacy, turned the house — in the argument Rybczynski uses — into the home and so led to the notion of comfort and its application less by architects than by enterprising women.

Images of Childhood, in comparison with *The Tender Passion*, is a brief book, little more than an extended essay, tracing the variations in our attitudes towards children over the centuries since the end of the middle ages and down to the Victorian age; it avoids the modern age and its permissive attitudes, though it finds room for the nineteenth-century sentimentalists and for the moralists with their ideas of goodness and badness in children. Unlike *The Tender Passion*, *Images of Childhood* presents a simple though, it is evident, a well-researched narrative, and depends for its examples not on the kind of written sources that Peter Gay so copiously uses, but on a rich visual documentation, a series of 130 reproductions of paintings and prints of children, some academic, some naïf, and many popular; since they come from periods when it was commonly held that "every picture tells a story," they almost all have descriptive or didactic qualities, showing the way children were dressed (boys and girls for a long period alike until the "age of reason" — seven years old), their changing modes of play, the behaviour expected of them, and inveterately emphasizing moral lessons. Though those showing the working child, that prime victim of nineteenth-century circumstances, tend to soften the harshness of his or her lot, there are few paintings that are content to see the child as a person, beautiful or interesting for his or her own sake, and neither teaching nor learning a lesson.

Witold Rybczynski begins his *Home* with the remark that in his six years in a Canadian school of architecture he heard the word "comfort" used only once and then by a heating engineer. Yet comfort is the attribute most people look for in a home. The two ideas, comfort and home, are indissolubly linked in our minds; comfort is what makes a house a home, and in his book Rybczynski sets about the double task of discovering when the idea of household comfort appeared and why it has been so singularly neglected over the centuries by architects and even interior decorators. Comfort is a word whose meaning changed from the seventeenth century, when it meant spiritual consolation ("Comfort ye, my people"), to the nineteenth when it meant

a chair shaped and upholstered to ease the body. Into the change went a whole long process of transforming the house from a place of combined work and living through which people passed almost at will on business or other errands, to a private living space where a family could be reared and ease after work could be enjoyed. Rybczynski sees the beginnings of this process in the Dutch seventeenth-century house, with its emphasis on cleanliness and light and on the conveniently arranged spaces so often represented in the clear, bright paintings of Vermeer and his lesser rivals. He has no doubt who was responsible for this innovation:

> Ever since the seventeenth century, when privacy was introduced into the home, the role of women in defining comfort has been paramount. The Dutch interior, the Rococo salon, the servantless household — all were the result of women's invention.

Rybczynski convincingly illuminates the role of women, and shows how architects, concerned with the abstractions of space and volume and design, consistently neglected the element of comfort in the shaping of a house and even, in the modernist era initiated by Le Corbusier, militantly worked against it in their effort to turn the home into a lifeless "living machine."

A curious fact about *Home* is that, while Rybczynski learned his original lesson about architects' indifference to comfort in Canada, since then has taught in Montreal, and did most of the research for his book at McGill, the only reference to this country tells us that "hand-powered washing machines were used in rural Canada as late as the 1950's." I can confirm this from my own experience, but I still ask myself — can this be the only role we have played in developing comfort and convenience in the home? After all, Canada did contribute the telephone, that homely convenience and comfort to the lonely.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

SEEING VOICES

DORIS HILLIS, *Voices & Visions: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers.* Coteau, $11.95.

DONALD SMITH, *Voices of Deliverance: Interviews with Quebec and Acadian Writers.* Tr. Larry Shouldice. Anansi, $14.95. (Trans. of *L'Ecrivain devant son oeuvre.* Québec/Amérique.)

BOTH BOOKS ATTEMPT to increase our knowledge and appreciation of contemporary writers, and they do so by closely analogous means. Not only are the titles parallel, but also the types of questions. Both interviewers ask how childhood experiences, education, topographical surroundings, and reading have influenced the writer. Both interviewers are careful critics, and bring up specific points about symbolism or intention. Both provide photographs of all the interviewees (Hillis 13, Smith 14), and finish with one of the interviewer.

With the similarities, Smith and Hillis show some differences in approach. Smith published his interviews in journals (all but one in *Lettres québécoises*) before gathering them in *L'Ecrivain devant son oeuvre*; the writers interviewed had already replied to or expanded some points before that gathering, and had still further opportunities for comment between it and the translation, though the main influence on the last alterations was Larry Shouldice (the notes added by Anne Hébert, Jacques Ferron, and Gérard Bessette are the same in the French and English versions, and no new notes by writers appear in *Voices*). Furthermore, for Smith, "the most revealing question . . . is . . . : 'What does the act of writing represent for you?'" His title, his "Introduction," and his interviews are

shaped by the various answers to that question. Hillis does not give her rationale in a separate foreword; she has a guest Introduction by Eli Mandel. She asks, "Have you always wanted to write? . . . Have you found poetry (fiction, drama) a means of self-discovery?" and as a result of such leading questions has difficulties with some interviews. Gertrude Story, in particular, becomes somewhat annoyed by the style of the questions, and insists that her books "are beginning to give me personal difficulty because people will not see the essential truths therein but keep on trying to discover any autobiographical bits they can. . . ." Lorna Crozier, too, found questions about the influence of family "hard," and could not "remember any encouraging teachers." There may be a limit to the possibility or utility of tracing "influence": after all, the influences cannot explain or define the works which they have influenced.

Nonetheless, I was fascinated to find out what books the writers would mention as influential. Some of the writers resisted prodding: Anne Hébert, for example, spoke of Claudel and Proust only after Smith had put their names in specific questions, and did not name any other individual authors; Gertrude Story does not "read much contemporary literature" because she "must be protected from the minds of others until the series [of stories about Alvena Schroeder] . . . is finished." Most of the writers interviewed, however, spoke with pleasure and enthusiasm of reading, and collectively compiled large lists, consisting overwhelmingly of literature. As the only exceptions, Patrick Lane mentioned *The Golden Bough* and *The White Goddess*; Gérard Bessette, Freud, and Bergson. Not only do these writers read a lot of books, but their choices are individual. In Saskatchewan, Sinclair Ross was mentioned most frequently — but only four times in all. Eliot, Auden, Frost, Sexton, Munro, Nowlan, and Lane were cited in three interviews, Shakespeare, Neruda, Plath, Layton, Newlove, Purdy, and Atwood in two, and all the rest once only. "The rest" included authors from Malory and Donne to Roo Borson and Mary di Michele, with a number of international writers such as Ahkmatova, Seferis, Wang Wei, and Cervantes. Although South American writers turn up in three interviews, and Russians in two, only Ted Heath mentions any French-Canadian authors, choosing "Ferdinand Ouellette and Nicole Brassard [sic]." There is clearly room for more communication between the two solitudes!

Among the French-Canadian authors interviewed by Smith, the reading lists have some similarities with those elicited by Hillis. Again, there is a tremendous spread of interests, with relatively few authors mentioned more than once. Top of this poll are Proust and Balzac, with four fans each, Rimbaud, Dostoevsky, and Gabrielle Roy with three each. Anne Hébert and Paul-Marie Lapointe, at two each, are the only Canadian writers besides Roy to be mentioned more than once; there are no English-Canadian names. Whereas the largest group for the Saskatchewan writers is taken from Canadian books, followed by American, for the Quebec and Acadian writers the largest group is taken from French books, followed by French-Canadian, and then by American. Another difference is in the Classical presence: Félix-Antoine Savard mentions three Classical writers (Aeschylus, Virgil, Tacitus), Jean Barbeau mentions Plato, and Michel Tremblay mentions "Greek plays" in general, as well as Aristophanes in particular (he has adapted *Lysistrata*). The Saskatchewan writers ignore Classical books. Again, the Quebec and Acadian writers read a great many nineteenth-century books, including Dickens, George Eliot, Zola, Mal-

larmé, and Goethe, none of whom is mentioned by the Saskatchewan writers, although Whitman appears on both lists, and Edna Alford mentions "the Russians" — who probably include Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

Despite the recent founding of such writers' groups (praised in several interviews) as the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild, the Moose Jaw Movement, and the Bush League, or l'Union des écrivains québécois, writers must still work in solitude. In speaking about books, several made a distinction between pleasure reading and books directly relevant to their own writing; in either case, they read alone, just as they write alone. A sensitive reader, such as Smith or Hillis, can give a writer the pleasurable shock of feeling the communication completed. Often, however, the questions of the interviewer seem unimportant to the writers, who, after all, make the important statements in their writings, which must be grasped whole in order to yield complete answers.

Who reads books of interviews? The back cover of the Hillis book describes it as "a fine new resource for students, teachers and librarians." Certainly, these collections will be helpful for any person wishing to prepare a project/lecture/display of "Saskatchewan Writers" or "Quebec and Acadian Writers." The bibliographies prepared by Hillis, which include anthologies, will be particularly useful to such people. Smith has a wider ambition; he hopes that the writers' comments about the transformation of real life into literature, "will help provide a glimpse into the marvellous world of symbols" and "reinforce the idea of literature as a way of life, an act of liberation." He asserts: "The act of writing is a vital necessity for the writer. However, in a way it is also a vital necessity for everyone, because without 'deliverance' through the word . . . life itself runs the risk of being dull, banal and overly predictable." He includes plot summaries to aid readers unfamiliar with the books, but clearly hopes that his interviews will lead such readers to the "deliverance" of those books. He offers no bibliographies, partly because some of his writers are far more prolific than any of the Saskatchewan writers, but he does give an index. Although the index has considerable gaps, as I found when rechecking the reading lists (it omits Balzac, and the Proust references by Anne Hébert and Marie-Claire Blais, although including those by Adrien Thério and Gilbert LaRocque), it offers selected works of the authors interviewed, listing those works discussed in the interviews or in the overviews: 28 titles by Michel Tremblay, and over 20 each by Marie-Claire Blais, Yves Thériault, and Jean Barbeau. Both Smith and Hillis can lead the student to the writers, as they try to bridge the gap between the written and the spoken word, to see the voices.

PATRICIA KÖSTER

KINETIC SPACE

ROO BORSON & KIM MALTMAN, *The Transparence of November / Snow*. Quarry, $8.95.

MONTY REID, *The Alternate Guide*. RDC Press, $7.95.

JIM TALLOSI, *Talking Water, Talking Fire*. Queenston House, n.p.

THESE VOLUMES BRING HOME to the reader the need to renew the way he imagines space. Since spatial images are overwhelming unless we deal creatively with them, we might expect poets to orient us in the world. Of course, they cannot do this without displacing our assumptions about reality and examining space dialectically. If, however, they concentrate upon natural to the exclusion of urban setting, they risk oversimplifying anxieties and hardening complacencies

about space. While poets have always presented internal maps to thwart facile assumptions, discovering the relation between external and internal space must not be a nostalgic process. If it is, the reader will find poetic conceptions of space limited and unhelpful.

Borson and Maltman concentrate on rural scenery from an unusual viewpoint; their settings are not static or daylight pictures. Unmoving things, such as buildings, are given kinetic force. Nature is viewed less through the poets' eyes than through a sense of rhythm: musical tropes convey nature's motility. Emphasizing kinetic and auditory aspects of scenery allows them to displace picturesquely seasonal images and to explore identification with the natural world. The kinetic power things possess entails a form of consciousness which makes them better stand as symbols and allows people, when identifying with things, to suspend humanity more creatively. The nighttime beauty of a dreaming swan on soon-to-be-frozen water, for example, lets a girl, in moments of creative perception, distance herself from the humanity she despises and the future she fears. Borson and Maltman avoid meditative discourse in order to see natural things in terms of one another: displacing poetic conversation, they endow things with symbolic language. Since animals and things commune and correspond with one another, their difference and, hence, symbolic value are realized. Alienated from nature, the poets, in recognizing its systematic communication, overcome their alienation. They celebrate a dialectic of remoteness and involvement. Still, there are problems. Of necessity, they avoid logical and narrative structures, preferring syntactic vagueness and irony, but sometimes, for rhetorical effect, their method becomes dualistic, too easily opposing natural and human behaviour.

As their volume unfolds, both poets identify with natural objects in order to invert conventional descriptions rather than to sustain a poetic method. When sympathizing with owls and foxes, they emphasize visual rather than ecological images. Cattle drinking at a pool in starlight move like loose and broken wagon wheels, but the metaphors seem inconsequential. In writing about the harsh routine of farm life and the mechanical aspects of city living, they make images of space and motion increasingly pictorial: the images undermine easy assumptions by remaining discontinuous, but alternatives are unclear. The poets describe the aimlessness of human thought without making their poetry work against itself. Motion ascribed to the urban masses and to commerce is also inconsequential. The poets attack concepts of ownership by presenting urban life as feeding off the countryside. But, instead of working out poetic terms for urban life, they uphold the conventional split between city and country for ideological reasons. If in the earlier parts of the volume, the poets' imagery tends to block a concern for issues, in the later sections, when the poems become angry about social and ecological conditions, issues dominate and poetic strategy declines. The final poems celebrate the decline of orthodoxy in religion and reason from a nostalgia for the 1960's rather than from a belief in poetry.

One interesting aspect of Reid's poetic concern with space is that he displaces scientific concepts while relying on scientific metaphors. Titles of his poems are simply cartographical designations plus dates of composition, signifying his relation of space to time and personality. Far from describing geographical areas, he explores dualities of material and anatomical space and of physical and emotional distance. Material symmetries are opposed to those

of the human body so that the order given to nature by science is unmade by the body's intrusion into the landscape. Yet, a dialectic sometimes underlies Reid's dualisms: since bones and organs become fossils, the body informs as well as opposes material reality. The way Reid operates his dualisms and dialectic works against easy visual analogies between the landscape and lyrical and sexual feelings. If he pictures symmetries between physical and personal space, he tends to point out the falsity of pictorial symmetry. Like Borson and Maltman, Reid values sound for understanding space: if scientific terminology makes things static, mythical names invented by the Indians over a long historical span give geography life. But, more often than not, Reid emphasizes the human meaning of space by appropriating images from anatomy, geometry, and physics. The paradox of material solidity and impermanence is highlighted by the ways in which the curvilinear body displaces rectilinear geometry, houses can be seen as human bodies, and images of the landscape are a function of light and gravity. Reid achieves some remarkable effects when he stresses that light is physical and material: he demonstrates nicely how little vision contributes to our understanding of the intricate relation between action, will, and environment. Still, his poetry relies a little too much on abstract dualisms: although he shows that opposing things share space, that things are seen as much because they are absent as present, and that contexts and humans interchange attributes, there is a repetitive, static quality to his volume. There is not much topical development, nor is there a sense that his concept of space helps to deal with ecological and social issues. While many of his poems are attractively uninsistent, many seem slight and merely whimsical.

Tallosi's volume suffers largely from the problems manifested to a small degree by the previous volumes because he pictorializes space in simplistic terms. He is concerned more with the distinctness of phenomena than with their complications. He recreates scenes from a fixed past-tense narrative perspective, making them static visual images. This static quality is reinforced by the engravings which accompany the poems. His attempts to involve man and nature are impeded by his disavowal of syntactical ambiguities and plural viewpoints. Often his reaction to setting is merely personal, befitting a log-book more than poems. When he adopts native mythological images, he does so in an unsustained way. He does not link his way of looking at the elements and animals through Indian images to social commentary. Nor does he integrate it into the realist manner with which he exploits the indifference of nature to question collective human conduct. He celebrates recreating the native way of life unselfconsciously: the factual and visual aspects of his narrative prevent him from showing the liveliness of native mythology. Like the previous poets, Tallosi focusses on the way in which man and nature are reciprocal. He also questions assumptions about differences between the seasons and struggles towards concepts of spatial and temporal continuity. On the other hand, his concern with visual images blocks his sense of paradox and ambiguity. Moreover, his pictorial awareness prevents him from developing a sense of audience. He and his poems aim for perfect poses. This is true of his urban poems which, as a result, are bland and mythless. His keenness for reportage and nostalgic images prevents him from uncovering fresh possibilities for poetry in urban spaces.

ROBERT JAMES MERRETT

CARTOGRAPHIES

Etudes françaises, 21/2. Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, $7.00.

IN THE SHORT SPACE OF 119 pages, Bernard Beugnot, the editor of this well-conceived and handsome issue of *Etudes françaises* devoted to maps, has included six important studies by contributors from North America and Europe, not to mention his own introduction and a short bibliography, as well as nine illustrations. The volume is a very model of the best in editing a special issue of an on-going periodical; intellectual historians, geographers, and that mythic but also very real creature, the general reader, have here before them a sumptuous feast for the eye and the mind.

Beugnot situates the vast subject in his excellent introduction, "De rives en rêves." Maps are not just representations of the earth on which we live; first and foremost, they invite us to (day) dream and to remember, as much as to travel. A map is a "discours sur le réel," un "foyer privilégié de représentations visuelles, intellectuelles, spirituelles multiples." Early maps had no scale and hence they did not allow the viewer to calculate distances. (One wonders if the gas station road map is not a kind of aberration, and if the fantastical cartography to be found on the backs of cereal boxes is not, in fact, the "truest" map we have today.) The original maps of the Ancients were at best only partly authentic in their symbolization of the world, for their appeal was to the viewer's imagination, his sense of the marvellous. According to Christian Jacob, maps have never been "just" maps; rather they are stories whose power is directly related to their capacity to *seduce* the viewer.

In the sixteenth century, the skills of theoreticians and sailors began to converge as explorers' discoveries gave the lie to the improbably symmetrical constructions of earlier cartographers, maps whose artificiality Herodius had mocked. Not that the imaginary impact disappeared. Christian Morissonneau and Normand Dorion both treat the effects of cartography in seventeenth-century North America. For the French, the New World was in essence a promised land which after 1763 was transformed into an uncanny "lost continent." The result was that the North acquired the status of a kind of French-Canadian "West," that immense, virgin land, "pure, promise." "Le Nord est le lieu de la réaction optimiste, milieu de vie, de régénération, là où le Destin se révèle, l'anti-Sud" (Morissonneau). Thus the North became a mythic space, a limited and smaller version of North America when the latter was but a province and parish of Québec City in the "good old days."

The space so linearly represented by the maps of the seventeenth century was not new or uninhabitated, of course. But the Indians' worldview which it replaced could not have been more different. For their world was in continuous movement and whether alive or dead the Indian soul was ever roaming. One cannot even speak of a decentring here since their world was without a centre: the notion of a fixed, legal domicile — the X we mark on the city map that inscribes our place, our spot, in the urban grid — was totally foreign to unconverted Amerindians. "Le monde sauvage bouge, ne possède pas de limites que pourrait copier la carte. Ni de centre ni de fin" (Doiron). The map, whose purpose it was to contain, to enclose and eventually to imprison, just like the (de) limiting gesture of the dictionary, was in the end the death sentence of the Indian worldview. Place names and directions, words and syntax.

In this story of opposing camps, the moderns were destined to triumph over

the ancients, the travellers over the theoretical mapmakers who never left Europe, and the white men over the Indians. The writing was on the wall — in the form of a map — and the emphasis was less and less on ornamentation and fantasy and more and more on the rational, "realistic" representations of space that could be traversed from point A to point B. The journey was conceived of only as a return to the point of departure. For the Cartesian mind was (is) incapable of thinking of the origin as always already in movement. No doubt Michel Butor's *Mobile* would have had more to say to the Hurons than the catechism of fixed names and places which was served up to them by the Jesuits.

At the same time, just as map-making was becoming scientific, the fanciful side of the process took refuge in the domain of the psychological. Related to the theory of characters and humours, the moral mapmaker sought to describe the various types whom the life-traveller would sooner or later meet in his journey. Like the printer's fonts, the characters allowed the traveller (*viator*) to *read* a human countryside populated by common places. Especially thought provoking is Louis Van Delft's analysis of John Bunyan's "Mapp shewing the Order & Causes of Salvation & Damnation" (c. 1664). Cartography became purely textual, i.e., metaphorical, with Lafayette and Lafontaine. The *terra incognita* of the "Carte de Tendre" was the inner one of the human psyche. Hidden waters whose depths remained to be plumbed until Freud came. . . . In fact, one is left dreaming — to come back to Beugnot's evocative title — of a series of "cartographer" couples over the centuries who have extended various and different maps beyond the limits of earlier geographical and mental confines: Cartier and Rabelais, Champlain and La Rochefoucauld, Bougainville and Diderot, de Tocqueville and Flaubert, not to mention Cousteau and Proust. Cartographers all, they have provided us with the "maps" which allow one to dream of new shores and new worlds. "Cartographies" has explored an area rich for research, hardly yet known or touched upon.

RALPH SARKONAK

THE SPACE OF IMAGES

BRUCE HUNTER, *The Beekeeper's Daughter*. Thistledown, $20.00; pa. $8.95.

JOHN SMITH, *Midnight Found You Dancing*. Ragweed, $9.95.

LESLEY CHOYCE, *The Top of the Heart*. Thistledown, $20.00; pa. $8.95.

BRUCE HUNTER EXPLORES nearly undefinable spaces. The graveyard poems making up the first half of his *The Beekeeper's Daughter* examine the dividing space between life and death as it is felt by the men who work in the cemetery:

> And the gravediggers dream of being
> gardeners
> having filled too many holes with the dead.
> The reminder always too much,
> their eyes like plumb bobs
> on the surface of this life,
> plummet with every shovelful
> into the stinking water of the swimmers
> in the lake under our feet.

They are "on the surface of this life," but are yanked horribly and abruptly through a threshold to glimpse the other side. The undefinable space of that threshold is expressed in a number of these poems in terms of water imagery. Hunter does not contain his imagery spatially. We see in the above example the distance as one travelled vertically, while in some of the other poems the movement across the threshold is horizontal, as across a canal.

Elsewhere in this book, the space is as thin and as difficult to pass through as

one's skin. In "The Roses" much is made of how we are held within our skins. "Our skins do not release us / like the plum holds its pulp," and we are behind the "petalled doors / of our skins." An orange is peeled as part of a sexual ritual ("My knife hooks under the skin / of the damp speckled orange") and the orange peel becomes equated with the human skin. Escaping from it (or peeling it) spells sexual release. At the same time, release from life is suggested by the association made with death after the climax when "The orange peel lies / against the dying grass of summer." A similar association is made in the last poem of the graveyard section, a poem about cancer and how it devours you "until your skin no longer contains you."

The first poem of the next section is "The Beekeeper's Daughter." Unfortunately, it opens with a line from the realm of steamy pulp fiction: 'Her thighs command the brute roan," which is followed by a description, in the tradition of British 'S and M' pornography, of the woman equipped with a whip and "high boots / gleaming." Fortunately, in the third stanza the description becomes meaningful and it is here that we find a link with the graveyard poems:

> We stole down on her with binoculars,
> our crotches ground into the stubble.
> When she passed with a boy, we cursed;
> imagined her possessed, peeled clean
> damp as a willow stripling.

Notice how in the boys' fantasized sexual context she is imagined as "possessed" and "peeled clean." "[P]ossessed has here both sexual and demonic connotations. Having been ravished or "peeled" like the "damp" orange in "The Roses," she eventually, in the boys' eyes, becomes demonic, a "Witch." The space separating her from the rest of the community can be measured "across the gate" which she remains behind while the boys, now grown, refuse to or cannot, even see her there because they keep "their eyes fixed on the fields."

In this book in which the poems can largely be characterized by their visual appeal and concreteness of imagery, all sorts of spaces are dealt with. For example, there are the spaces in time and the spaces between the social classes. Probably the most difficult space to define would be the one crossed in physical and symbolic separation from life, and this seems to be the one that concerns Hunter the most.

Perhaps the crossing of nearly undefinable spaces is also what John Smith is talking about in *Midnight Found You Dancing*. In the poem from which this title is taken, Smith writes of those "gaps" through which "imagination / enters the calculus, and, once there, itself becomes evidence / of lack or loss and of an urge to complete the pleroma."

Exploring the space between consciousness and unconsciousness seems to be a concern in this book. In the poem "The seminal" Smith writes:

> As you go down into the dark there is a
> brief
> lightening of the landscape where ancient
> worship
> has worn the threshold smooth. These
> images,
> followed by the unavoidable romance of
> tourism.

Another concern is the problem of decoding recorded reality. We are introduced to the problem by the epigraph to the book, part of which reads: "As we dug deeper into the memory files, we came upon a cluster of interrelated circuits, some of which we were able partly to decode." The "interrelated circuits" are the poems of this collection.

In Smith's book, we encounter the most mathematically logical and precise descriptions of phenomena ("*x is not not-x*"), and the most impressionistic: "and the headsman gently lifts aside the

queen's hair / before the axe falls. The sea edge shifts." The sometimes abrupt transition between these contrasting ways of recording reality, especially within the individual poems (which are mostly sonnets), is a technique that characterizes Smith's book. Faced with these poems, which are also densely "interrelated," the reader plays the role of an archaeologist who must piece together and interpret disparate records of a reality while being challenged by the knowledge that "there will be a gap in the classification to be filled / by speculation only."

A more familiar and generally simpler sort of poetry can be found in Lesley Choyce's *The Top of the Heart*. The familiarity is in the echoes of the Beat tradition resonating throughout the book. Some lines from the first poem are reminiscent of Allen Ginsberg:

> You can learn to serve up your life
> like a megaton soufflé ready to feed five
> when preheated
> beneath the microwave dawn.

Several of the poems unabashedly convey the "On the Road" theme. One even mentions Kerouac himself.

However, not all of Choyce's poems are expressly in a Beat style. Many of his best moments are in simple accounts of the mundane. In "A Woman With Good Intentions" the narrator, "Pulling out of Canadian Tire," spots a dazed sparrow on the road. He rescues it but is advised, by a woman who has come out of a Dairy Queen, that it would be cruel to let the injured bird live. He does not take her advice:

> I refuse to give in to her banana breath,
> her charming insanity swaddled in kindness
> while the victim, still sporting one red,
> bulging eye
> returns to the harness of his wings, takes
> flight,
> soars above the Pizza Delight, circles the
> Esso station
> and springs free from the grip
> of reason.

Unlike John Smith's *Midnight Found You Dancing*, which is marked by a kind of intellectual detachment and abstruseness, Choyce's *The Top of the Heart* and Bruce Hunter's *The Beekeeper's Daughter* are more down-to-earth. Hunter is particularly adept at creating evocative images. Although he does lapse occasionally into hackneyed expressions, generally his descriptions are characterized by their clarity and concreteness. Consider this illustration:

> The heart when dropped from a great
> height
> has no wings.
> A dumb bloody bag
> that beats of its own accord.

Such a succinct statement strikes a balance between the obliquity of Smith and the sometimes just slightly too broad gesture of Lesley Choyce.

LAVINIA INBAR

DIAMOND PANES

P. K. PAGE, *The Glass Air: Selected Poems*. Oxford, $11.95.

The Glass Air IS ONE of the most important books of Canadian poetry published in 1985. Punctuated by the drawings inspired by her years abroad and rounded out by two essays on her aesthetics, P. K. Page's selections from her best-known poems and from recent work (some unpublished) trace the evolution of a rich and complex imagination. As Page writes in "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," one of the two essays reprinted here, poetry and painting are a journey to "my absolute centre . . . that luminous circle, that locus which is at the same time a focusing glass, the surface of a drum." The role of the creative artist, she explains there, is to weld the senses into one "supra-sense," to

forge visions from the scenery of everyday life. It is this quality — an uncanny marriage between sensuous fact and pure vision — that is the most distinctive feature of her work.

Corresponding roughly to the pattern established by her early years in Canada; the subsequent years abroad in Australia, Brazil, and Mexico with her diplomat husband; and the years since her return to Canada, the volume's three sections are dated 1944-1954, 1955-1967, and 1968-1985. The poems of the first section of the volume document Page's concerns as a beginning poet and establish the leitmotifs of the volume. Page's career began in Montreal during the war years. It was a heady time of high political excitement, and a number of her poems from this early period reflect the conviction she shared with other members of the *Preview* group: that art should serve the function of social criticism. Poems like 'The Stenographers" capture the characteristic idiom of the group, a hybrid of the social satire of Auden and the wild display of language and heavy symbolism characteristic of Dylan Thomas:

> After the brief bivouac of Sunday,
> their eyes, in the forced march of Monday
> to Saturday,
> hoist the white flag, flutter in the
> snow-storm of paper,
> haul it down and crack in the mid-sun
> of temper.

But even this early period offers evidence that Page's landscape is finally a psychological one. As "Personal Landscape," the opening poem, asserts, "Land is / love, round with it, where the hand is." As in symbolist poetry, in Page's work imagination has the power to take the perceiver down, down into a netherworld of dream just below the surface of things "where the wave breaks, where it rises green / turns into gelatin, becomes a glass / simply for seeing stones through" ("Portrait of Marina"). Still, Page resists what she terms in the other essay in the book "the tyranny of subjectivity" ("Questions and Images"). Though memory and desire may colour the landscape, the poetry ultimately searches for a point of entry into "the area behind the eyes / where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies" ("Stories of Snow").

The second section of the book is the most scant of the three. It was during this middle period, the period abroad, that the writing "stopped" and the drawing "started" ("Questions and Images"). Appropriately, this relatively short section of poems is framed by the delicate, fanciful drawings that made P. K. Irwin (her name as visual artist) an artist worth noting. As in the poetry, the drawings capture that moment when the vision of the "inner eye" fuses with the view of the real world registered by the retina ("The Yellow People in Metamorphosis"). These works portray a vegetal world which is joyously fecund, but still overlaid by intricate pattern. "Night Garden," "The Dance," and "Labyrinth" — these and other drawings evidence an imagination so intense and a vision so microscopic that it can discover a world within a world.

The stimulation of the new landscapes can be felt in the poetry too. Here fresh perceptions are heightened by the simpler, more natural voice which emerges as Page moves out of the 'image-clotted' writing of her early phase. She writes of "Cook's Mountains": "they form / in diamond panes behind the tree ferns of / the dark imagination, / burn and shake / the lovely light of Queensland like a bell." In other poems like "Brazilian Fazenda," the poet is almost overwhelmed by the richness of the new world: "Oh let me come back on a day / when nothing extraordinary happens." The doors of perception may even open into a world of nightmare, as in the brilliant

"Arras." But still the poet remains committed to the vision: "... keep my heart a size / larger than seeing, unseduced by each / bright glimpse of beauty striking like a bell, / so that the whole may toll ... ("After Rain").

Thus far the book seems to have covered Page's career up until *Cry Ararat!*; if so, it is difficult to understand why the poem of that title (published in 1967) is used to open a section dated 1968. A similar confusion in chronology appears in the second section, which includes "Images of Angels," a 1954 poem. But perhaps there is a deeper pattern in the arrangement, for each section seems to enclose a psychic movement of which each poem is an integral part. As the opening poem of the final section, therefore, "Cry Ararat!" announces the concerns of Page's most recent work.

There are signs of a new direction in this section. For example, poems like "The First Part" evidence that impulse common to mature poets who, prompted by "death's heavy breath," feel a "Great desire to write it all"; others, like "Suffering," deal in that typically post-modernist coinage: the direct, prosaic statement. But for the most part, Page's concern with the visionary imagination persists, gaining in depth and intensity as a result of her recent interest in mystical philosophies like Sufism. The poet still seeks "the dream of the mountain," but she is now more aware than ever that to scale the pinnacle of vision "requires the focus of the total I" and that the one and the many inevitably fuse in the moment of vision: "A single leaf can block a mountainside; / all Ararat be conjured by a leaf."

Consequently, in this final section the images proceeding from the "luminous centre" become more powerful and haunting, as in "Evening Dance of the Grey Flies" where the delicate strokes of the pen conjure vivid pictures: "Grey flies, fragile, slender-winged and slender-legged / scribble a pencilled script across the sunlit lawn." But in the balance of images and questions which make up Page's work, it is the questions that predominate here. "'Who or what is the Dreamer within us,'" Page queries in "Questions and Images" and "'What do I sing and what does my lute sing?'" In "Another Space," which is both treatise and rhapsody, an answer is given:

> And something in me melts.
> It is as if a glass partition melts —
> or something I had always thought was glass —
> some pane that halved my heart
> is proved, in its melting, ice.

Consistency and complexity of vision and a constant evolution of styles of expression — these make Page at the very least a poet worthy of serious consideration. But the quality of her vision and her voice make her much more than that. Page is clearly one of our finest and most accomplished poets, as well as an interesting and original artist. *The Glass Air* is an important book precisely because by summing up her work, it makes plain Page's stature as poet. As an introduction to Page's work, this book is and will long be a valuable asset to both neophyte and scholar.

SANDRA HUTCHISON

FLOATING SIGNS

YVES BEAUCHEMIN, *The Alley Cat*. McClelland & Stewart, $14.95.

IN THE FIRST SENTENCE of *The Alley Cat*, the English translation of Yves Beauchemin's best-selling novel *Le Matou*, a passer-by is struck on the skull by a falling quotation-mark. The quotation-mark in question is a bronze one from the top of a Montreal postal station, where, prior to its descent, it formed

part of the inscription identifying the building. Neither the passer-by, who dies on the spot, nor the building has any further explicit function in the text, but this death from a floating signifier may be seen as setting the tone for what follows. Similarly, the building's identity, as part of a communications network, may raise expectations of a Pynchonesque narrative about entropic fall-out in information theory terms.

Subsequently, there is comparatively little that particularly encourages such a reading. While the problematics of signification remain very much to the fore in the opening chapter with the protagonist, Florent Boissoneault, being required to decode an anagram as the first stage of the new state of existence into which he has been plunged as a result of having acted compassionately towards the dead passer-by, what follows is for the most part a rattling good, old-fashioned story. Indeed, it is one which actually foregrounds its debt to masters of nineteenth-century fiction through allusions to writers such as Balzac, Gogol, and Zola.

Yet it would be a mistake simply to view *The Alley Cat* as a latter-day manifestation of the traditions of European realism and naturalism. Its enigmatic opening *does* provide a clue to the text's use of narrative conventions, and floating signification *is* at the heart of its method. If its compelling narrative and detailed construction of a social world suggest affinities with classic realist works, its accretion of a series of episodes in which partial resolutions are blended with fresh complications can equally well be viewed as a self-conscious employment of the conventions of suspense-fiction. Throughout the reader is kept guessing and even at the end, when the beneficent Providence that one feels has been underlying the narrative is allowed to assert itself to the extent of bestowing a qualified happy ending, there are a number of ambiguities and loose ends, which smack more of contemporary post-modernist fiction than classic realism.

At one point Florent asks the question, "Have you ever met a Frenchman that doesn't take himself for a character in a detective novel at least one hour every day?" He is referring specifically to his French-born friend, Aurélien Picquot, but the rhetorical question could equally well be directed at the novel's Québécois characters and has resonance with regard to *The Alley Cat* itself. For the novel's deft use of suspense makes it on one level a detective novel, in which protagonist and reader attempt to decipher the various clues that together comprise the enigma of the plot. In this sense, it engages in a skilful manipulation of what Roland Barthes has called the hermeneutic code and may be viewed as every bit as much in line with such modern French thinking about narrative discourse, as it is to the nineteenth-century tradition.

The particular mystery around which the action is centred concerns the identity and moral nature of a shadowy elderly man, Egon Ratablavasky, who comes to exercise a major influence on Florent's life. Taken at his own estimate, Ratablavasky is a fairy godfather, who engineers Florent's movement from salesman with a record distribution company to owner of a restaurant specializing in Québécois cuisine, a transition which seems to represent emancipation from wage slavery in the consumer society. But it is not long before events begin to go seriously wrong in Florent's life, to a point where he becomes convinced that Ratablavasky is more a Mephistopheles than a fairy godfather. The latter stages of the narrative tend to confirm this view, but an air of ambiguity is sustained to the very end. And Florent's feeling that Ratablavasky

is less an individual than a providential force is reinforced by the novel as a whole, for his motivation, name, and origins remain a matter of speculation to the last. Again, *The Alley Cat* seems to bridge different modes by combining the satisfaction of an ending where the villain gets his come-uppance with an open-endedness that leaves crucial questions unanswered.

The novel may be read as an allegory about an attempt at individual self-liberation within the consumer society: Florent's restaurant, a period spent dealing in antiques, and his desire to start marketing his own personal brand of cosmetics all represent a struggle to break free of the system, even if they show an ongoing commitment to the capitalist ethic. Similarly, his chef Picquot's devotion to the highest standards of French and Québécois cuisine in the face of pressures to compromise brought on by the infiltration of American eating habits may be seen as another instance of the fight for individualism.

Possibly the depiction of this struggle has been responsible for part of the novel's enormous popularity. But it is not difficult to find other explanations for this: the compulsive and fast-paced narrative and the skilful blend of the bizarre and the quotidian in a fable which interlaces fairy tale elements with X-rated material all make this one of the finest pieces of Canadian storytelling to have appeared in recent years. Last but not least, the wry and often whimsical humour mine a rich vein of irony. A particular source of enjoyment are the playful and irreverential literary allusions, such as this passage where a dog named Virtue reacts to a photograph of Proust placed inside the doghouse in which it is travelling from Miami to Montreal by a bookish priest:

> Virtue, trembling all over, huddled in one corner of her doghouse, stunned by the roaring of the plane. In the half light she looked miserably at the photograph Father Jeunehomme had pinned on the wall. The face of the frail sickly man in the picture seemed to be shuddering as he sat in the blazing sun; at any moment he would throw his cane in the air and howl in terror.

Similar to this engaging vision of Proust in the jet age is the portrait of a "Monsieur Emile" to make Rousseau turn in his grave, come back to life, and then perhaps give up the ghost again in despair! This Emile is the epitome of urban civilization: a six-year-old alcoholic who displays a precocious talent for destruction and mischief-making. He is nonetheless a highly sympathetic character and his death in the dénouement does more than a little to undermine the essentially happy ending that follows. It points to the novel's recurrent suggestion that there is a thin dividing-line between survival and annihilation in the "alley cat" society of which he is the ultimate product and this too helps to make for the text's alternation between different narrative modes.

JOHN THIEME

REPRINTS

Paperback reprints include Penguin's Davies Collection: *What's Bred in the Bone* ($5.95) and the "King Penguin" Salterton and Deptford trilogies boxed together ($25.00 for the sextet). From Totem Press come Paul Quarrington's *The Life of Hope* ($8.95), *The Lost and Found Stories of Morley Callaghan* ($7.95), and two autobiographies: Layton's *Waiting for the Messiah* ($9.95) and Lovat Dickson's *The Ante-Room* ($8.95).

Among other recent republications are (in new format) Benoît Lacroix's *Trilogie en Bellechasse* (Editions du Noroît), and the third edition of the *Petite Anthologie du Noroît*.

Of more importance as a literary event is the appearance of four volumes in the *Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde*, from Les Presses de l'Université Laval. These volumes not only

reproduce the texts of major works, but also come with extensive (monograph-length) critical surveys of genesis, reception, and publishing history, with bibliographic apparatus, and with editorial annotations on textual variants. Albert Laberge's *La Scouine* (PUM, $38.00, ed. Paul Wyczynski) and Claude-Henri Grignon's *Un homme et son péché* (PUM, $34.00, ed. Antoine Sirois and Yvette Francoli) both caused a stir when they first appeared (respectively in 1918 and 1933), and were both subsequently praised for their social perspicacity. Laberge's critique of social hypocrisy offended church and lay audience alike; Grignon's exposé of public and private greed contributed to the Quebec novel's 'realistic' focus on social ritual and social change, and to the localisation of fictional speech. (The edition of Laberge, further, comes equipped with a glossary of local terms.) Arthur Buies' *Chroniques I* (PUM, $60.00, ed. Francis Parmentier) and Jacques Cartier's *Relations* (PUM, $48.00, ed. Michel Bideaux) — the latter raising many questions about text and authority — complete the first set of books from this valuable series.

From Guernica come volumes of selected poems in translation, again these are works which push at the edges of convention. Jacques Brault's *Within the Mystery* (translation by Gertrude Sanderson of a 1975 original), probes the puzzles of spiritual meditation; André Roy's *The Passions of Mister Desire* (a variety of poems from several volumes, translated by Daniel Sloate, with accompanying essays) meditates on the character of homoerotic desire and the linguistic "body" incorporated by passion.

W.N.

* DAVID MULHALL, *Will to Power: The Missionary Career of Father Morice*. Univ. of British Columbia Press, $29.95. After the Victorian age of laudatory and uncritical biography, of vast, complacent and boring Lives and Times, Lytton Strachey invented the debunking biography, which sought out the weakness of those previously regarded as only virtuous, the lesser motives that underlay proclaimed ideals in shaping lives. At the time such a task was necessary for the preservation of the art of biography, and Strachey did it with wit and sufficient obliquity. He was never one for the overt moral judgment. Unfortunately not every debunker is so urbane or so effective. David Mulhall, in his new biography of Father Morice, *Will to Power*, is one of those who whacks with a bludgeon where Strachey probed with a stiletto. On the very first page he lets his intent be known, when he tells us that "Morice was an extraordinarily vain and egotistical man, obsessed with gaining power and recognition as a missionary, explorer and Indian expert." The rest of his book is devoted to presenting a man, to whom we owe much for his activities as a great amateur geographer, linguist, and ethnographer, in the worst possible light. Morice is shown not only as lusting for power, but also as an "anarchist individualist," a contradiction in terms which shows how anxious Mulhall is to use every means of showing his subject to a disadvantage. It is true that in doing so he uncovers a great deal about Morice that has not appeared before, and offers us a broad though eccentrically highlighted view of Morice's life. It is the interpretation he gives with which one can find fault. There is no possibility of questioning the originality and value of Morice's enquiries and the contribution he made to the history and geography of British Columbia and our understanding of its native peoples. Such achievements might lead us to forgive a certain remissness in missionary duties. But here Mulhall delivers a more serious attack on Morice as not merely negligent but tyrannical, a would-be priest-king among the Carriers. In fact the Oblate order in Morice's time was noted for the strictness and harshness with which it tried to instil Christian virtues into its native converts, and Mulhall produces little evidence to show that in this respect Morice was much worse than his colleagues. He does show, however unwillingly, that Morice took the side of the Indians against white men who tried to prey on them, and one's conclusion must be that as a missionary Morice was at least moderately effective. As a scholar his contribution is unassailable, and so are the dedication and disregard for personal discomfort with which he made his discoveries. One day, one hopes, a biographer will judge him for his merits as much as for his faults.

G.W.

opinions and notes

OLD PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE DOCUMENTARY IMPERATIVE

WHEN THE EDITORS OF *Canadian Literature* asked if I would write an "impressionistic piece" about photographs-and-poetry (old photos, fresh poems) in response to some recently published collections of the former, my initial instinct was to reply in the negative. After all my own historic forays into family photography (Kodak-disc at the ready) have not exactly been prize-winning ventures. For years I left my autograph in the form of a thumbprint at the bottom-right corner of each snapshot; my human subjects invariably moved half-an-inch faster than the shutter speed could tolerate; I was, I am now certain, the fool that contemporary hi-tech cameras are being proofed against. Further, on the appreciation side — the response to design, shading, soft-focus, and the myriad other curlicues of the craft — I am apparently just as inept. Several former friends have hinted that I suffer from a sort of tone-deafness of the eye. They could be right.

Nonetheless I said yes. Even before I received the aforementioned books for 'review,' or indeed even knew their titles. What had occurred to me, as I thought about the task, was that I had, not long ago, published a book of poems heavily encumbered by photographs (*God's Geography*, 1982). It would be assumed that the author had both an interest in, and some understanding of, just how photographs and poems could be made artistically harmonious. Moreover, I decided that enough time had elapsed since the compilation of *God's Geography* — between 1976 and 1979 — that I could, and should, return there and think about my own motives and procedures. So, I said yes; and while I waited for the books to arrive, I set about reflecting on the lengthy journey that had brought me through the creation of five volumes of poetry to the radical (for me) collage effects of *God's Geography*.

Photographs, of course, are artifacts. Photographs from our past — those lovingly spliced in family albums, artfully arranged in archival collections, or randomly encountered while leafing through old newspapers and magazines — are artifacts from that past. They are as substantive as the rusty plough in the county museum or the tea-set in the model kitchen of a pioneer village. But they don't tell the same kind of story. Like the print that stares yellowly out at us from a front-page news item accidentally uncovered at the bottom of Aunt Fanny's trousseau-trunk, old photographs are more than images of ancient objects and frozen gestures. Each of them, front-page or album photo, has a voice, waiting to be heard. We can glance at the photograph or skim the newsprint, and toss them aside with the same nostalgic sigh we might give to a great-grandmother's lace doily. We might engage in an orgy of free association, letting any of these artifacts-as-objects prompt in us that bittersweet meandering through the times and places of our personal memory. But if we *read* the news item, let its smothered voice unravel and catch hold, we enter into a remarkably different arrangement with our past and our own connection to it. We are allowing the artifact to speak *at us*, to retell, at least in part, its own story. We may add much to it; our memory and our associations do not disappear, but they are focused in special ways. The news stories, head-

lines, and letters-to-the-editor that I selected for inclusion in my first book, *Riel: a Poem for Voices*, brought with them their own powerful, unalterable meanings. I merely took advantage of them, releasing them to new possibilities. What I had not realized back then (1968) was that old photographs had the same potential. I had been a closet collagist all along, despite the unauthorized labelling of my major work (*Riel*, *Coppermine*, *Borderlands*, and *Tecumseh*) as narrative. We are all, it seems, misunderstood.

In retrospect, it is clear that my use of excerpts retrieved from the archives of the period I was exploring was compulsive: hang-him-high letters to the *Globe* about Riel, selections from Samuel Hearne's own journal (subsequently deleted from the published version, but nonetheless vital to the way *Coppermine* got itself written), descriptions and accounts from the explorers of the Northwest Coast in *Borderlands*, and, among other contemporary items, excerpts from Tecumseh's own speeches faithfully recorded and translated for us by an earlier but no-less-paranoid version of the CIA. By the time I got around to writing about my own region and family in *A True History of Lambton County*, I had exorcised an obsession with 'national' consciousness and larger-than-life protagonists and with the narrative mode of arrangement, but not it turned out with the use of print-document to be set alongside of or (a new tactic) integrated into individual poems. Indeed, the line between poem and document itself becomes blurred. One 'poem' — "The Lambton Gavotte" — is composed entirely of excerpts from local archival materials. So far though, 'document' is still limited to selections from print sources; no photographs yet.

But two things emerge as I review or re-see these artful and chance events. One: in whatever particular fashion I used a document from book to book, I was always concerned to let the item, at least initially, tell its own story. I did not think of a news feature, a letter, a journal entry, an advertisement, or a speech as a 'found poem' in any conventional sense. It was intended always to resonate — thematically, rhetorically, symbolically — with the invented narratives (my poems). None of this, I believe, was done very much at a conscious level (very little is). But after scanning microfilm for three hours and having a passage from a newspaper 'jump out' at you, I realized that some part of my poet's instinct was invariably operating despite eyestrain and lumbago. Surely part of such a gestalt experience is that the story was making some point of its own, beyond its mere appropriateness as a counterpoint in the poem I was developing. Many such obvious links, to themes or events or symbols already established, appeared every half hour or so during my searching; and were routinely rejected. But I never failed to *know* when I would pull out a *bona fide* artifact and find some use for it in the evolving collage of the whole work. More often than not, a document so blessed resulted in a fresh poem or on occasion a shift in the direction of the book's overall story. Documents were so selected *during* the writing of all five of my so-called narrative collections, never *before* or *after* the 'real' poems had been conceived. While it is not for me to explicate the precise role or meanings of particular archival selections (I've faked it nicely on occasion), in general I feel now that several of the following aspects of such artifacts contributed to their existential power: appropriateness (as above and never the sole criterion of selection); density and closure (some cogent revelation expressed succinctly and somehow completed even though it usually was, in the original, part of a longer flow of thought); dis-

closure (where the form, rhetoric, or ideolect unwittingly revealed, from our/my perspective much more than the speaker wished to tell); and documentary typicality and authenticity.

This latter quality of the print excerpts I've used needs separate explanation, because it represents in effect the second major point about my obsession with them through the years. Not only must the documents be thematically appropriate and have an intrinsic story-of-their-own, they must also be typical and true — aspects that can, of course, be imbedded in the other qualities. Put another way, the excerpts must *document* for me some *typical* point (motive, prejudice, rationalization, quirk of speech, quality of character) of the historical moment it simultaneously emerges from and keeps frozen for future use. For me, it had to be authentic, to have been written at the time I represented it to be when I utilized it in my own work. My role was to discover it, excise it from the obstreperous flow of its contemporary distractions, choose its voice, let it speak from its own free-standing dais and invite it to collide, as it wished, with the poems and other documents I set it amongst. Only rarely did I edit, and, I trust (no affidavits on this issue), in the first instance only to release the existential tale itself. That is I tried not to edit it to fit some immediate requirement of the larger work. (In *Riel*, I could not find an archival letter from one of the Canadian troops during the First Rebellion, despite a long search, and so regretfully resorted to inventing one, a manoeuvre not unnoticed by reviewers. Such exceptions prove the rule that governed my intentions during these years.) Nor was I interested in realigning or otherwise tidying up the originals to make them look like found poems. Letters stayed letters, diaries remained diaries.

Why? What did it matter? How many readers would check the authenticity of a letter if the poetic uses of it were artistically pleasing? Especially in light of the fact that in the invented stories of my accompanying poems I appeared to have little qualm in altering actual events under the traditional dispensation called poetic licence? (For example, in *Riel*, Thomas Scott is represented as a blasphemous buffalo-hunter; he was blasphemous but no bison-killer.) No one seriously disputes an author's right to make his own artifacts out of history's. It's always been *caveat lector*. The answer to the question is simply that I still do not know why in reconstructing history-as-art I have such a passion not for the accuracy of historical interpretation or even for a strict fidelity to sequence and event, but rather for the authenticity and ontological status of any documents that I choose to incorporate in the wider artistic statement. Moreover, while my long poems (narrative, collages, who knows?) are freely interpretive and may indeed have more meaning as present-tense allegories than as 'readings' of history, I need to confess at last that whatever the purpose or result of my compositions, my methods and touchstones for validity were irredeemably documentary. For years I pursued historical figures relentlessly among the flotsam of our recorded history. I always preferred, even in the imagined sequences, to *base* the account on an actual one, or have it at least prompted by a fact from the archival remains (Tecumseh's having read *Hamlet* is mentioned in one of the contemporary chronicles, and though it's disputed by learned historians, I am comfortable in writing a poem from that 'fact' because it *was* documented, somebody believed it and wrote it down, and therefore it *is* authentic). In sum, both in my specific handling of actual documents and more generally in my treat-

ment of the history itself, I had (and still have) an inexplicable reverence for document and historical event. And this, paradoxically, in face of the fact that I may not be in any common sense of the term an historical poet, a poet like Pratt, say, who writes documentary narratives. (A further paradox exists in my prose-fiction work where few of these constraints apply, and none with the same cogency of obligation.) Indeed, my book-length poem-collages are not documentaries. But they are imbued, in their method of composition and in their use of archival materials, with a documentary spirit, a belief that documents retrieved 'whole' from that part of the past which is still continuous with our genealogy and our dream-memory are to be treated with the respect we normally reserve for sacred texts. They are neither to be forgotten nor may they be deployed by subsequent generations as they would. They bind us all, like beliefs that both liberate and enslave.

So, at long last when I was prompted, for no reason known to reason, to expand yet again the range of documents in composing my first genuine collage-poem, *God's Geography*, I added the spoken word. Beside the poems I would place, as documents, excerpts from tape-recorded interviews with elder residents from the region under study — the village of Point Edward. I used the same criterion as for the printed material — 'scanning' hours of free-fall talk for two-minute gems, to be transcribed as faithfully as possible and intercalated. The newspaper excerpts were, for the first time, created as single-page collages of news items, where type-face and shape and arrangement were to be part of the constituent meaning (that is, each was a free-standing 'statement') as well as setting up associative resonance with the other documents and poems.

These other documents now included photographs. I set out to find old album-photos of past life in the village. More than half of the photographs in *God's Geography* are genuine archival documents; they selected themselves in ways no different in kind from those I had been implicitly using for over ten years to select print materials. What changed, with the taped excerpts and the photographs, was not my customary search for appropriate and authentic items but merely the shift in the formal elements native to the new media: quality of 'voice' in the recorded interviews and the pictorial power of the photographs (not their artistic strengths, of course, but their capacity to project complete and typical stories). I have some doubts that my ability to appreciate the art of photography has improved over the years (it may have), but no question remains as to why, after years of circumspection, I was able to discover *photographic* documents with the same enthusiasm and certainty of their appropriateness: I was bringing to them not only the layman's love of old photos — with their capacity for memory-jogging, for inducing synesthetic side-trips of feeling and association — but the Canadian writer's long and mysterious passion for the documentary icon, whatever transformation it appears in.

To me, even now, our national obsession with document cannot be easily explained away as a childish grasp for the literal; a deep fear of the spiritual and the numinous; a clinging to the local, regional, and immediate; a century-long quest for some elusive identity; a beaverish sort of collective imagination; a resistance to the future itself. Any or all of these may be involved. But they are not sufficient. As writers as diverse as Findley and Atwood or Laurence and Kroetsch have shown us recently, we have already made much of our history and its legacy

of document. And we are apt to make much more of them.

The books arrive, four of them. They are a banquet for those eyes the memory enlists for its daylight ramblings. I deploy the whole range of conventional responses in reading and savouring them. The two archival collections coincide with the historical periods I have just been writing about, 1880-1920. In *Canada: the Missing Years* and *An Atlantic Album* I find a rich lode of information, telling detail, association, and reverberation. Although each book is arranged by theme or topic, the effect is still one of the family photo-album. The delights are random; the surprises often unintentional; artful composition resides next to amateurish eagerness, and the former does not always win the day. I am invited to indulge in an idiosyncracy: I look for the anomaly, the unsalient detail that runs cross-grain, and am rewarded. In a photograph of a visiting Chinese dignitary, with all eyes and all feet aimed worshipfully in one direction, a mongrel (uninvited by the booster cameraman) is loping the other way. "The Siwash Madonna" (there are many shots of Indians and Eskimos), a woman of great dignity, sports a raffish pipe clamped at a most unreligious angle between her teeth. In these two collections, as well as the two professional anthologies by individual photographers, I find pictures that exude a great beauty and power-of-feeling, some because of the conscious artistry (maybe I'm no longer a visual dyslexic: I even respond to the vegetable abstractions of *My Father's Garden*) and some without its assistance. In *Canada: the Missing Years* (p. 66) one photograph in particular haunts me. It is an 'artful' shot of a bride on her wedding day: alone, awash in sunshine, lace, foaming flowers, a pleasingly arranged play of light and nurturing shadow. As a deliberate statement it is both subtle and iconic. But even without such evident artifice the look upon the girl's face, the way her hand cradles the bridal bouquet, the absolute sense of repose and hopefulness she portrays to the viewer — all, we are certain, were there in her and her being before the lens composed its objects, and would remain long after its click.

It is this ability of human subjects to stare past the camera that is such a wonder: the capacity to look right at us out of the momentariness of their time, as if they knew we would be waiting for them, acknowledging as they must the hegemony of the camera, yet surrendering nothing to it except the superficial accoutrements of that time and circumstance, holding their being intact and simultaneously transmitting its essence to the unknown viewer, to the idea of the future itself. How can I feel such an aching sense of loss while at the same time experiencing a profound exhilaration — not only because this photograph as artifice has captured both the scene and the girl-in-it but because she has also somehow transcended it as art. By some sleight-of-hand, she has permitted the serene joy of her wedding day to be frozen-in-time while reminding us that its quality-of-being exists ontologically outside the graphic moment, and can still exist outside of time in the mind of the perceptive viewer. This beautiful young woman was there that day in all her beauty, the photograph assures me of it; but she herself is telling me more, inviting me to listen to the whole story, and to let that story live and thrive, both then and now. After many hours of browsing and staring, I return to half-a-dozen photographs, out of the many hundreds, that have this power to mesmerize and project something we can feel but not explain: the cover photo of *Canada: the Missing Years*; "The Taylor Family" (p. 52), "St. Michael's Orphanage" (p.

60) and "Una Gibson" (p. 130) in *An Atlantic Album*; and "The Dandelion" in *The Mind's Eye*. These are the very kind of photographs I would retrieve for use in one of my longer, ongoing works. They live in their own right as document and icon. They are begging us to rediscover, to disclose, to use them once again not merely to re-remember but rather to begin preparing ourselves to be worthy of our future.

At the moment I happen not to be working on a sequence of poems. On the other hand . . .

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DON GUTTERIDGE

GROVE'S "STELLA"

IN *The Master of the Mill*, Grove repeatedly draws the reader's attention to John Everett Millais' painting of Swift's Stella or, more specifically, to the "brilliantly executed copy"[1] commissioned by Edmund Clark for his wife. The life-size picture hangs in the centre of Clark House, above the fireplace of the open sitting-room that is recessed from the upstairs gallery and separates the suites of Sir Edmund and Lady Clark. "Stella" replaces the portrait of Maud Carter, the deceased wife of Edmund's father, Samuel. The picture's position in the house and, by extension, in the novel is important because of Stella's "uncanny resemblace" (31) to Lady Clark who, after the deaths of her husband and her father-in-law, becomes the last master of the mill. The following reading of the novel will try to clarify the main reasons for Grove's attraction to "Stella."

Grove sees Millais' painting as "representing Stella . . . at the moment of receiving the letter which seemed to prove the Dean's unfaithfulness" (31). It is safe to conclude that Grove knew the painting either from the Manchester City Art Gallery, which he mentions (31) and where the original belongs,[2] or from a copy such as may be found in a book. Michael Rossetti's description of "Stella" helps the reader to see Grove's "Stella" as an interpretive response to Millais' painting:

> A single figure, three-quarter length, and perhaps the very best Mr. Millais has done of its class. The name Stella naturally suggests Swift's Stella; and Swift's Stella holding a letter, with a countenance of subdued long-suffering, suggests her receipt of the letter from Vanessa inquiring whether she and Swift were in fact married. If this is the incident really intended, the sympathizing spectator may be startled at being reminded that Stella was at that time about forty years of age. But Mr. Millais is not the man to mind much whether he does or does not represent a particular incident, or whether or not any such representation is endurably correct. He has painted delightfully a very loveable woman, and that will probably suffice him and us. The tint of flesh in the arm appears hardly so pure as the rest of the colouring.[3]

Like Millais' Stella, Grove's is a beautiful woman. (Given Grove's familiarity with Swift,[4] one may even consider Lady Clark's "tall and full-figured" (141) presence and serenity in the light of Swift's praise of Esther Johnson, his Stella: "beautiful, graceful, . . . only a little too fat . . . and every feature of her face in perfection."[5]) Comparable to

J. E. MILLAIS, *Stella*

Millais' Stella holding a letter, Grove's, toward the end of the novel, is holding the manuscript of a life-history of the Clarks which, in part at least, reveals their tendency to be either unfaithful to or without much faith in their wives and womanhood in general. Furthermore, Lady Clark is seen holding the manuscript "in the sitting-room adjoining her suite" where she "absently fastened her eyes on the Millais picture of Stella" (282).

Apart from an occasional *tint of flesh* (in Rossetti's sense), Grove's *colouring* in this novel, as in most of his works, is predominantly intellectual. His speculative *projections* (in Swift's sense) first lead to a man-made mill with at least some of its utopian foundation not far from Swift's Academy of Lagado. It is the ensuing transition from the man-made to the woman-directed mill that is behind the importance of Grove's "Stella," and a trinity of Mauds was necessary to bring about the change: Maud Carter, Maud Dolittle (Samuel's long-time secretary and companion as well as Edmund's mistress), and Maud Fanshawe (Lady Clark). The three can be regarded as a "trinity of mind, heart and spirit" to Samuel "in [whose] life they tended to fuse into a composite image."[6] The purpose of that image is mediated by Maud Fanshawe's likeness to Stella. This Maud, in other words, is the *star* to guide the reader through Grove's philosophical charting of the future of humankind.

It is not only the name of Stella that matters here but also those of Samuel or

Heard-by-God and Maud or *Mighty-Battle*.[7] After three mighty battles (three Mauds; knowledge, flesh, and spirit), the man heard by God will perhaps be able to follow Maud turned into Stella, his guiding star or woman. Indeed, the Stella that inspired Grove's novel was, he states pertinently, "the famous Dean's *life-long friend*" (31, emphasis added); and he stresses the connection to Samuel Clark by referring to Swift not by name but by clerical title which, etymologically speaking, complements the meaning of Samuel Clark as a heard-by-God cleric or clerk. (In his own battles for a better civilization, Swift was of course under the influence of two *stars*, that is, *Esther* Johnson, his Stella, and *Esther* Vanhomrigh, his Vanessa.)

The linguistic aspect of Samuel's ultimately woman-guided confrontation with the mill of civilization may at first appear somewhat juggled, yet it is a significant part of Grove's dramatization of the literal and figurative power of Woman (Stella, Venus, Aphrodite) over Man and his increasingly unenlightened materialism. First there is the recombination of male and female forces when the dying Samuel, "with decisive clarity" (327) of thought, sees the mill "as a composite of all mills; for its essence was hermaphroditic" (328). This idea makes sense if the mill is considered the off-spring of Samuel who, as Heard-by/of-God, is a Hermes figure and of Maud who, as Stella, assumes the role of Aphrodite. Samuel's review of the history of the mill and thereby also of the future of civilization does, however, culminate in this unuttered word: "Soundlessly his lips formed a word and [Lady Clark] read it; it was 'Maud'; and there was the abortive attempt at a smile" (326). Lady Clark rightly interprets his "Maud" as "a composite figure" (326) of the three Mauds that formed his "Stella."

In its unuttered form, though, Samuel's final word seems to contain a hermetic message of the ascendancy of women as much more than Clark-like "pygmy helpers" (328) in the mastery of the mills of industry and of civilization in general. Still, the extent of the possible ascendancy of Woman in Grove's view is far from unequivocal, for the novel ends with three childless women — Odette Charlebois (Samuel's housekeeper), Maud Dolittle, and Maud Fanshawe — speculating on the future of the mill and on Dolittle's ideas about the cyclical nature of civilization.

At this point in particular, Grove's choice of last names needs scrutiny as well. Odette Charlebois, with "a senile laugh" (332), tries to grasp the notion of civilization as a sort of rotating wheel. Not surprisingly, her last name is suggestively satiric: *char-le bois*, a wooden cart, chariot or, possibly, wooden tank. Her first name underlines the satire, for Odette is a diminutive of Ottilia which means something like of *the fatherland*.[8] Thus, as Samuel's housekeeper, Charlebois further complements the deceased Maud Carter even linguistically. In short, instead of a female *carter* to drive the *cart* (chariot, tank) in *mighty battle*, a female *clerk* (Lady Clark) and a female *do-little* now hold the reins. While Lady Clark fancies some forward movement of the wheel (mill-stone?) of civilization, Maud Dolittle laughingly rebukes her companion's seriousness and raises the possibility of unforeseeable events: "I have come to place a great confidence in the capacity of the collective human mind" (332).

These are the final words of the novel. Yet Maud's laughter, her figurative name (Mighty-Battle Do-Little), and the figures "1930-1944" following her words like an epitaph take the reader back to Samuel's "abortive attempt at a smile" when he tried to utter "Maud." The years allude less to the likely "time-span

of the actual writing"[9] of *The Master of the Mill* than to the spectacular rise of the collective mind through fascism and totalitarianism. In other words, Grove's reflections on Millais' "Stella" also end in an abortive attempt at a smile. He does not give the reader the Pearl that followed Hawthorne's reflections on his Hester (Esther, Star) in connection with the possible ascendency of feminine forces through Art (the central meaning of the famous "A"). Still, in addition to the Clarks' collections of paintings, books, or books-in-the-raw point toward Grove's faith in the liberal arts as underlying any new combination rather than recycling of male and female forces through the mill of civilization. There are the manuscript of Captain Stevens (Samuel's long-time associate), the diary of Odette Charlebois, the mill novel of Arbuthnot (Edmund's spy among the mill workers), and the reminiscences of Samuel, Maud Dolittle, and Lady Clark. Finally, there is Grove's novel itself.

It should come as no surprise that Grove put himself into this book as he did into all his others. One gradually senses him in that virtual grove or bluff made up of the proliferation of proper nouns bearing some reference to wood, such as Lang*holm* (holm oak; island would be an alternative meaning), *Arb*ala, Rosen*baum*, Char*lebois*, *Birkinshaw*, Fan*shawe*, and others. Moreover, the quasi-philosopher Dolittle, the "stunted" (299) novelist Arbuthnot whose name alludes to Swift's friend from the Scriblerus Club, and the would-be metaphysician of the industrial revolution, Samuel Clark, whose name echoes the work of clerks and scribblers of an earlier era, they are all strongly reminiscent of Grove's self-projections in his autobiographical narratives.[10] Such projections converge in Maud Fanshawe whose last name means *dweller in the grove by the fen or marsh*.[11] She takes the reader straight to Grove's imaginative home in Canada: the literal as much as figural bluffs of his Big Marsh district. While Maud Fanshawe's role as Stella accentuates Grove's literary struggle in his Big Marsh world, her role as Lady Clark underscores the danger of sterility that emanates from this imaginative territory. It is as if attempted mastery of the creative life is likely to result in a quixotic victory of mere clerking or scribbling. This would explain Samuel's anticlimactic final thought: "Why worry about the *Clarks*?" (328, emphasis added).

In the light of such disillusionment, Millais' "Stella" proved to be sufficiently meaningful, so it seems, for Grove to avoid risking either to succumb to despair in his futuristic vision or, as he says elsewhere, "like Swift, to get the swelled head."[12] "Stella" provided him a glimpse of beauty amid distress, allowing him to soften the Swiftean undertones of his attack on the folly of human progress and to make bearable even Dolittle's advice to Lady Clark on how to run the mill: "As I said . . . do nothing" (330).

The reader of *The Master of the Mill*, of course, ought to do something, and this critical response has shown how attention to "Stella" is a useful start. Millais' painting leads the way toward the novel's energy which has its veiled core in Grove's composite self-portrait as a somewhat quixotic projector of figurative kinds of woodlore, millwork, and star-gazing, and of an equivocal ascendancy of Woman.[13]

NOTES

[1] Frederick Philip Grove, *The Master of the Mill* (Toronto: New Canadian Library, 1961), p. 31; further references will be given in the text.

[2] Arthur Fish, *John Everett Millais* (London: Cassell, 1923), p. 75.

[3] Michael Rossetti and Algernon C. Swinburne, *Notes on the Royal Academy Ex-*

hibition, 1868 (London: Hotten, 1868), Part I by Rossetti, pp. 8-9.

4 Douglas O. Spettigue, *F.P.G.: the European Years* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1973), p. 240.

5 Jonathan Swift, "On the Death of Mrs. Johnson, (Stella)," in *Miscellaneous and Autobiographical Pieces, Fragments and Marginalia,* ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), p. 227.

6 R. E. Watters, "Introduction," *The Master of the Mill,* p. xi.

7 E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) and George R. Stewart, *American Given Names* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press).

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10 K. P. Stich, "Extravagant Expression of Travel and Growth: Grove's Quest for America," *Studies in Canadian Literature,* 6 (1981), 155-69.

11 E. C. Smith, *New Dictionary of American Family Names* (New York: Harper Row, 1973).

12 Desmond Pacey, ed., *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 113.

13 Cf. Lorraine McMullen, "Women in Grove's Novels," *The Grove Symposium,* ed. John Nause (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1974), pp. 67-76.

K. P. STICH

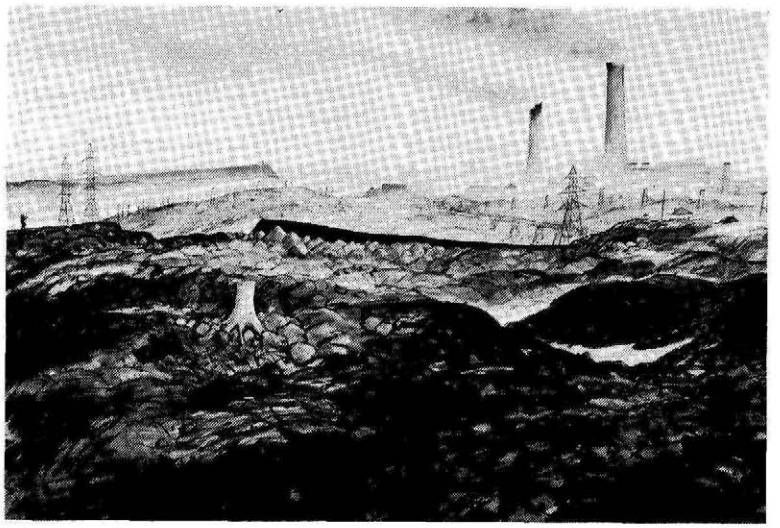
KURELEK'S SUDBURY DIARIES

WILLIAM KURELEK, the Manitoba artist who became known as a prairie painter and a religious prophet, liked to describe his own paintings in brief texts that were often posted beside them in exhibitions. From his late teens, he put considerable time into writing, and time was precious. Thousands of letters and journal entries, and fourteen books, contain his attempts to understand himself and his world and to ensure that viewers would understand the intention in his paintings.

In his best-known works for children, such as *Prairie Boy's Winter, Prairie Boy's Summer,* and *Lumberjack,* the texts are clear enough: factual, descriptive, often amusing. The books which poured from his brush and his pen in his last years have been translated into roughly a dozen languages and have delighted millions. Many of his journals, which doubled as long letters home to his wife while Kurelek was away on painting trips, exhibit the same charm and simplicity. The artist's self-image, from the 1960's on, included Writer as well as Painter. His chief publisher, May Cutler of Montreal's Tundra Books, remarked to me that "in 1972, Bill wanted a book so much he would have let me do it without any royalty payments" (Cutler, 22 November 1982).

In other texts, often those involving his religious faith or his troubled relationship with his father, Kurelek's words create mysteries rather than solve them. What, for example, are we to make of a painting honouring his father whose text observes that the parent is doomed to eternal damnation unless he repents: "Christ, whom he has ignored all his life, and maybe even helped crucify with his sins, is like a 'skeleton' in his closet. Its [*sic*] an unpleasant scene, that he may try to keep off his property, but its still there nevertheless." The painting in question, *In the Autumn of Life* (1964), combines an aerial view of his parents' farmhouse with a distant mushroom cloud from a nuclear explosion and a Christ-figure crucified on a dead tree. Wild dogs lick the blood that drips from Christ's feet.[1]

Paradoxes generated by his writing and painting can be partly understood in terms of a phrase coined by a Toronto critic faced with one of Kurelek's earliest exhibitions. Janice Tyrwhitt wrote:



WILLIAM KURELEK, *Subdue the Earth (Sudbury)*, watercolour, 50.8 x 75.9 cm, 1964.
LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AND ARTS CENTRE

"The tension in Kurelek's pictures springs from the imposition of a literal mind on a burning imagination."[2] As I immersed myself in Kurelek's writings and paintings from 1980 to 1986, that phrase began to strike me with increasing force.

Born in 1927 to Ukrainian-Canadian pioneers near Whitford, Alberta, Kurelek grew up strongly influenced by the landscape, the farm routines, and the rural culture. These fed the artist's imagination in innumerable ways. The first seven years of Kurelek's childhood were spent near Whitford, and the next dozen in Stonewall, just north of Winnipeg. The flat, black farmland of Manitoba and the life of its immigrant settlers became the subject of many of his paintings and one of the deepest emotional attachments of his life.

Two periods were crucial. One was the Stonewall years of youth and adolescence, when a lack of athletic and mechanical aptitudes and a hyper-sensitive personality made him a target for sniping from bullies at school and a disappointed father at home. Yet the Stonewall years were also rich in joys. The joy would be recalled — and painted — later, after the pain had been cauterized and the healing begun.

The other was his time in Britain, seven years when the bitter legacy from Stonewall erupted like an angry boil. Old hurts threatened to overwhelm Kurelek, to drown him in a sea of hate and guilt. He might well have gone under had it not been for the religious faith which he found at this time. The years spent in two British psychiatric hospitals in the early 1950's strengthened the habit, formed earlier, of writing to explain his feelings and his paintings. The text to a nightmarish ink drawing done in the Maudsley Hospital, like that for a better-known painting, *The Maze*, methodically lists the roll call of horrors depicted and systematically interprets the symbols used.

Writing, like painting, was probably therapeutic for Kurelek during the hospital period. In his teens he had begun to prefer writing to speaking. His intro-

version, which was never fully overcome, was partly a defence against criticism and quarrels, a means of avoiding confrontations. As he notes in a manuscript which seems to have been intended for a Winnipeg physician in 1947, silence was dignified; it was less likely to be misconstrued than badly chosen words. Henceforth he would write, as he observed, even to communicate with people seen daily or frequently: "I have always written: when I made a proposal of marriage, when I finally complained to my father about his treatment of me, when I have differences with my dealer or boss, even with my wife" (letter, 22 May 1977). As travel became an important part of his lifestyle in the sixties, the writings multiplied.

The literal quality of his mind is more prominent in his writing than in his painting, although there are also times when his writing rises above this delimiting factor. The beauty of nature affected Kurelek strongly, yet the destruction of the Sudbury area by mining pollution could be rationalized by the literal interpretation of a verse from the Old Testament. The Sudbury of the sixties was dear to Kurelek because the bleakness caused by sulphur fumes reminded him of the Judean wilderness where Christ fasted for forty days. *Subdue the Earth* was painted on the artist's first trip to Sudbury, around 1964, and described by him years later. Part of his explanation for the painting follows:

> I heard that some International Nickel executive was hurt because he jumped to the conclusion that the theme of the painting was that his company pollutes the atmosphere. Actually this is not at all what I was saying. As a believing Christian I see mans exploitation of the minerals in the earth as perfectly legitimate and a fulfillment of Gods first commandment when he made the first human pair and told them to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth and make it theirs. Therefore mining insofar as it provides employment for family men who raise up more children and the metals that are shipped round the world to be made into earth subduing machines is a desirable occupation. Ecology should of course be taken into account but if not profitable or possible then mining takes first place. (Letter, 21 June 1975)

On the same trip Kurelek painted a strange work in gouache entitled *The Unclean Spirit Outside Sudbury*. A desolate landscape just west of Sudbury, with blackened rocks and dead tree stumps beneath a grey sky, includes a tiny stick-figure in red, walking with hands clasped behind his back. This philosophic devil appears to be out for a Sunday stroll. Careful examination reveals several faces concealed in rocks near the painting's centre. One clearly resembles Hitler, by means of a black moustache and a cowlick across the forehead. Another hidden visage is a Boschean grotesque. Remnants of snow suggest that the season is early spring, but nothing speaks of rebirth in this area or this society.

In June of 1966, a second trip to Sudbury put the artist in a relatively happy mood. This Sudbury Diary is addressed, as usual, to his wife. While searching for a ghost town, Kurelek came across an old cemetery which was equally paintable and which reminded him, as did so many things, of divine judgment:

> I went and knelt before a huge cross out of telephone posts dominating the plot and prayed for the souls of the dead and you and me. I thought a good deal about these simple people who were there buried not so much like Greys Elegy in a country churchyard but how though poor and unknown they go before God to be judged just as much as those under the most elaborate stones and mausoleums. I took artists licence and put such a message on a tombstone — "You who pass by – etc." This is sometimes done by "eccentric" people requesting it within their will. *This is what I would like on my tombstone. I smiled to myself when I thought of my critics possible remarks — "Cant resist preaching — even when hes dead."* (Kurelek's emphasis)

Camping in his Volkswagen overnight prompted a comparison with the depression years. Kurelek calls himself "a happy hobo," one lucky to be able to work and sell his paintings. He is also reminded of his days as a lumberjack:

> These kind of paintings [*sic*] are somewhat like cords of wood in that I produce 2¼ a day like I produced 2¼ cords a day in good timber stands. I am aware they are potboilers and I cannot make them openly religious as I would like because then they wouldnt be saleable. I cant complain too much though because I must remember that millions of people work in incompatible jobs. . . . And Im much more fortunate than a great many people today because God has given me the faith and I can see fairly clearly that even when I cannot openly testify for Christ I can at least give God glory obliquely by representing Nature which He created and continues to hold in existence minute by minute by His omnipotence. Even when man in his partnership of creativity with Him fumbles in his share of the work His goes on regardless even turning evil to good. These are some of the thoughts I had yesterday while working on the Conistan rock landscape.

With secular subjects, so-called, Kurelek rationalized his love of painting nature and his need to paint such scenes as the need to earn a living for his family. Since he often wrote that *only* financial need made him paint non-religious topics, it was fortunate for artist and public alike that financial need remained a constant.

His letters often reveal minute details of his painting technique. The Sudbury Diary (1966) continues:

> I had quite a bit of trouble rendering fog because I forgot to bring my atomizer. Another thing I forgot to bring is sandpaper for sharpening my razor blades for scratching out highlights and rendering grassy areas. I'm finally making out a list of things to take on my painting trips just as you have going on visits together with baby. A short while later it began to rain so with a rag I smeared the hill together with the sky pale blue grey and it did turn out rather effectively like a curtain of watery deluge. The foreground I then painted in with more detail. It has many round boulders of various tints that make them look somewhat like jelly bean candies. I took artists licence to heighten the colors a bit. . . . If I wanted to be fanatically precise I could spend a whole day working on a piece of that rock no bigger than what I could hold in my hand. I understand Cezanne was supposed to have been brilliant at analyzing rock faces — thats where cubism began isn't it? Anyway I kept plugging at it and with the added cheerfulness of the little tent heater I finally got the swing of it. It seems that I have to learn to get away more from the tyranny of the subject before me.

As an artist Kurelek found intricate details such as rock formations difficult to resist. In the 1950's, his still life in a *trompe l'oeil* technique had allowed him the fullest indulgence in this direction. As a family man, time was a commodity that had to be exchanged for a living. His religious faith also made him doubt the value of time and talent expended on "mere" nature. As the Sudbury Diary and many of his paintings reveal, he found a curious way to reconcile nature and faith by means of secret additions. The terrain in question was rough, and Kurelek had risked getting stuck with his tiny car:

> But it was worth it because I recorded detail such as that there are two spikes per tie on the inside and one on the outside which no railway men would have overlooked in my picture in later years. I tried figuring out why more hold is necessary on the inside than the outside of a rail and finally it figured. One thing I find in my painting is that there is a reason for everything in Nature and in most of mans works too. This is where my practical experience on the farm of handling objects and repairing them (ordeal as it was because I was so inept in my father's eyes) really comes in handy. I am really unhappy about not being able to put more meaning into my pictures. I think I'll try slipping in religious symbols into them so that a prospective buyer is not bothered by them. Maybe he might not even notice them before he has bought the painting. For instance in the case of the railway track the railway spikes suggested the spikes that

were driven into our Savior's hands and feet. The Sudbury rock brings to mind the barrenness of the Holy Land.

There was an unconsciously comical side to this strategy. Kurelek's penchant for concealing a crucifix or a crucified Christ within a painting did not sit well with Jewish customers. Some of them asked him to remove the figures when time and close examination had brought them to light. The artist's glee in incorporating them reveals one side of his nature. On another day on the same trip he writes that he has added "little secret messages" to several just-completed works: "I guess my paintings will perforce turn into those kind of puzzles we used to get as children in the weekly papers which said 'Find the big bad wolf and win a prize.'" Kurelek's vision of future generations of railwaymen peering critically at his ties suggests still another view of art which is unusual, to say the least, in our time.

Critics who do not share Kurelek's faith, and even some who do, may consider such "puzzles" a trivialization of his art. Many of his landscapes are breathtakingly beautiful. The effect, for example, of the light-filled grey-blue sky in a large canvas entitled *Return of the Crows* (4′ x 8′, private collection) is truly awesome. Numinous. It is unfortunate that Kurelek's theological training had stressed the transcendence of the divine rather than God's immanence in creation. After his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1957, Kurelek's deep-seated love of natural beauty became curiously ambivalent.

The anxieties fostered in youth by parental criticism were never stilled. One wonders if the judgmental quality in Kurelek, the Old Testament cast of his faith, stems from these roots. Comfort was suspect. The Sudbury Diary concludes with a reference to an overnight stay with some acquaintances whose cottage appeared to the artist to have every modern convenience: "Life is good for them — in fact although they are good people I wondered sometime whether a bit of mortification mightent be called for. But its not for me to judge I guess." The journals and letters catch all the diversity of the man: his intelligence and his obtuseness, his poetic sensibility, his genuine humanity, along with a harshness which runs like a steel cable through sensitive terrain.

The first of Kurelek's writings to be published and the book that was closest to his heart was his autobiography, *Someone With Me*.[3] The artist always referred to it as his "conversion story." The 1973 edition of five hundred and twenty-three pages, now rare, was published without editing by means of photographing the artist's typescript. It shows the strengths and weaknesses of Kurelek's writing style. These include a keen eye for detail, emotional depth, pragmatism and humour and, above all, the ability to tell a good story and to make events dramatic. The story is broken (some would say interrupted) by didactic digressions which Kurelek called "the proofs for the existence of God." Numerous editors, including W. O. Mitchell and Barry Callaghan, begged the artist to edit and revise this work. Kurelek adamantly refused. Without his faith, he argued, there would be no art. By this he meant that he would have committed suicide in a British hospital in 1954. He always suspected editors of having a single-minded goal, the removal of his religious message. Mitchell perceived an element of suspicion in his basic approach to people in general, and many of the writings bear this out.

Kurelek's spelling is original and his syntax unsound, but a storyteller's gift and the intensity noted by his dealer give life to his words as to his art. Mitchell found Kurelek remarkably ignorant of the craft of writing, while Av Isaacs

called him "a gifted writer." The truth lies somewhere in between.[4]

Kurelek cared nothing for words, save as a medium to convey meaning. He spoke as he wrote and wrote as he talked, in a colloquial idiom that reflects his rural background and the haste with which his words were set down. His diction is often unique, while his writing may induce laughter, irritation, admiration, even anger. A favourite verbal construction involved the use of "-wise" as a suffix: "correspondence-wise," "religiouswise," "prosperitywise," "a bargain square-inch wise." His words were peppered with rural expressions ("a spitten likeness") and the occasional neologism: a poplar bush is called "scrumpy"; a historical fiction, *Sons of the Soil*, is "too ramantsy" to consider illustrating. He was cavalier with regard to the facts of his own life, being unwilling to spend the time to check. Time was a jealously guarded commodity assigned to his art. Thus dates and other facts in his autobiographical writings are often inaccurate. Some of the elegant simplicity in his published texts is due to professional editing.

Kurelek lived intensely and very fully a relatively short life span of fifty years. Occasionally his writings and talks are marred by self-pity or self-congratulation. But of the intensity of his suffering there can be no doubt. His difficulties in defining himself to himself and his father had many roots, but ethnicity remained a central strand. Had the circumstances of his home and the ambitions of his hard-pressed immigrant father been different, his life might have been infinitely easier. A less sensitive individual, a different individual, might have suffered less in very similar circumstances — but had that life been easier, the art might have been poorer. His writings and psychiatric drawings record the hell he endured for many years. He experienced his own passion, and could thus understand Christ's; having known both hatred and love, he could understand love the better. Part of his maturation involved the exploration of his roots, and the celebration of them.

The work was prodigious, the time very short. It was a heroic life, one filled with struggle and achievement, with loneliness and private modes of joy. The loneliness lay hidden, in the last twenty years, beneath a mask of sociability and family life. He repeatedly observed in letters that very few people were interested in his projects or his experiences while executing them. The companionship sought in marriage had failed to meet his unrealistically high expectations. He told his publisher that only God understood him.

Why did he do three paintings a day, and glory in the tally? Why did he work seventeen-hour shifts? Kurelek himself called his work habits fanatical, obsessive. The motivation behind this punishing schedule is complex, rooted in a troubled childhood, an adult faith, and a continuing loneliness. After a painting trip, eager for comments, he would proudly display his new series in the living room of a friend, or in his own basement. His paintings, saying eloquently what his lips could not, were his chief means of communication with other humans. Paintings were also a means of communication with God and Nature; they reflected his gratitude and awe in ways that were beyond words. Obviously he painted for money, and he painted to preach. He painted to define himself to himself as well as to the world at large. And for self-justification. Perhaps he painted to keep sane. Or to impress his father. His seventeen-hour stints may well have included an element of flagellation, especially when we remember that he lived and worked with frequent pain in his back and knees. These long work sessions gave him tremendous pride and satisfac-

tion. *He could do it.* The power flowed from his brush and shouted his being aloud.

In 1968, in the context of an explanation as to why he was building a bomb shelter, Kurelek considered the kind of death he would choose to die in peacetime. He wrote that he would prefer to die of cancer. Ironically, fumes from his paintings may have induced tumours. In 1977, cancer claimed him.

NOTES

1 See William Kurelek and Joan Murray, *Kurelek's Vision of Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1983), p. 31.

2 Janice Tyrwhitt, "William Kurelek: The Power of Obsession," *Saturday Night* (26 May 1962), p. 31.

3 *Someone With Me. The Autobiography of William Kurelek* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973). See also *Someone With Me* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980), 176 pp. [abridged].

4 See Patricia Morley, *Kurelek: A Biography* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1986), p. 7 and *passim.*

PATRICIA MORLEY

A certain quirky imagination is necessary to enjoy Kevin Reeves' *Artoons: The Hystery of Art* (Sound & Vision, n.p.), but if you have it, the book is a surfeit of knowing giggles. Famous paintings all acquire an extra edge of quiet hysteria with the intrusion of cartoon format. Munch's "The Scream" is made a response to potato-chip eaters' noisy eating. Rodin's "The Thinker" is trying to decide between Coke and Pepsi. Colville's "Horse" is rushing to save a damsel-horse from the tracks before the "Train" arrives. The cartoons aren't consistent. Some readers may even be horrified at their aesthetic heresies. But aficionados of Reeves' Toronto *Star* offerings will be pleased.

W.N.

L'ART PICTURAL DANS LES DERNIERS ROMANS DE MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS

ON CONNAIT L'IMPORTANCE de la thématique de l'art dans l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais. Déjà dans *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* l'art, sous forme d'écriture, transcende la misère du quotidien en étant pour le protagoniste Jean Le Maigre, le plus sur garant de survie, voire d'immortalité. Cette importance accordée à l'art ne se limite pas au seul domaine de l'écriture; les romans ultérieurs de cette écrivaine débordent de références tirées notamment des domaines de la musique, de la peinture et de l'architecture. Ces renvois constituent selon E. Cliche "une vaste circulation des arts" dans l'oeuvre de Marie-Claire Blais. Ils auraient comme fonction "de décloisonner un texte qui pourrait apparaître centré ou fermé sur lui-même."[1] Nous nous proposons d'évaluer la présence de l'oeuvre d'art, plus précisément de l'oeuvre picturale dans les derniers romans de Marie-Claire Blais soit notamment *Le sourd dans la ville* (1979) et les *Visions d'Anna* (1982) et ce faisant, d'explorer la diversité des moyens mis en oeuvre pour les intégrer à la matière romanesque.[2]

Les allusions au monde de la peinture abondent dans *Le sourd dans la ville.* Ainsi, y retrouve-t-on les noms de peintres tels Toulouse-Lautrec, Grosz et Degas, des références à la peinture chinoise, à l'art égyptien, au tableau expressionniste d'Otto Dix représentant une mère et son enfant. Cependant, l'oeuvre picturale qui domine dans ce roman est sans contredit celle du peintre norvégien Edward Munch (1863-1944) dont Marie-Claire Blais semble privilégier les tableaux: *Portrait de sa soeur malade, Madonna, Les trois jeunes filles sur le*

pont, l'Enfant malade et surtout *Le Cri* qui joue un rôle déterminant dans l'économie du roman *Le sourd dans la ville.*

La peinture d'Edward Munch relève selon Marcel Brion, de l'art fantastique en ce qu'elle rend compte de visions et de rêves "de solitudes infinies des paysages mornes ou l'horreur indéfinissable, sans objet surgissant soudain devient un appel silencieux lancé à travers l'espace, un cri."[3] De fait, le fantastique de Much a toujours été tenu comme celui de l'inexplicable, de l'ambigu. D'ailleurs, sous la lithographie du *Cri* (1895) Munch n'avait-il pas lui-même écrit "J'ai senti la grande clameur à travers la nature"[4] nous laissant stipuler sur l'origine de cette clameur. N'est-ce pas ce mystère qui donne au *Cri* toute la force et l'impression de terreur qui s'en dégage? Or, il semble qu'on puisse imputer à Marie-Claire Blais le dessein de dire, dans *Le sourd dans la ville*, l'inexprimable qui avait hanté le peintre norvégien; ce qu'elle effectue en faisant chevaucher fantastique et réalité pour aboutir à un univers cauchemardesque où la nature se déforme jusqu'à la caricature sous la poussée d'une recherche de participation à la misère humaine.

Le Cri se dresse dès les premières lignes du roman: un personnage, femme ou adolescent, les mains collées contre la tête, le visage émacié, convulsé par la terreur ou par l'angoisse, les yeux écarquillés, le menton creux, le crâne se dessinant sous la chair étique se heurte au vide, véritable néant palpable qu'il essaie de fuir.[5] Cette figuration de la Douleur agit dans le roman à la fois comme déclencheur du texte et figure archétypale dont découleront plusieurs personnages.

Dans un premier temps, Marie-Claire Blais pose une équivalence entre la figure du tableau et son personnage Mike; comme elle, il pose "l'interrogation de ses prunelles agrandies par l'inquiétude quand on eût dit que de sa bouche entrouverte et tremblante un long cri allait s'échapper" (SV p. 9). Chez lui aussi il y a ce visage hâve aux yeux creux, dévoré par la maladie, préfigurant la mort. Un peu plus loin c'est Florence, perçue comme "un informe être humain captif des forces mauvaises de la vie" (SV p. 34), dont les cris se figent dans l'air glacé, qui est à son tour assimilée à la figure de Munch. Enfin, cette dernière réapparaît sous les traits du jeune fugitif brûlé qui "languissait, languissait, criait dans un lit de flammes . . . [et] ce chant funèbre était enseveli dans le silence des vivants et des survivants" (SV p. 106). De fait les gestes posés par les personnages, leurs pensées, leurs hantises, tout ce qui les entoure nous ramène sans cesse vers ce cri muet dans lequel ils sont inéluctablement mûrés. De même, les lignes des bandes sinueuses qui constituent l'arrière-plan du tableau convergent-elles vers la bouche ouverte, le cri silencieux.

Mais dans *Le sourd dans la ville* le tableau de Munch est plus qu'un signifié/signifiant où se réfléchissent divers personnages du roman. Le tableau est aussi texte en ce qu'ici la technique d'écriture de Marie-Claire Blais reprend à son compte les sinousités même du fond du tableau *Le Cri.* Dans ce roman, composé d'ailleurs d'un seul paragraphe, les temps des verbes oscillent constamment entre l'imparfait de la narration i.e. le temps de l'inachevé et l'imparfait de l'indirect libre celui de l'introspection ou plutôt celui des introspections puisque nous avons accès à plusieurs consciences à la fois. Ces changements d'énonciations s'accomplissent sans heurt, dans un même continuum narratif, marqués tout au plus par des virgules et l'emploi de verbes comme "pensait," "songeait," "rêvait," "se souvenait" qui donnent à la phrase la souplesse voulue pour saisir les nuances d'états d'âmes aux confins de la conscience. A ce continuum narratif viennent

s'ajouter les répétitions de mots ou de groupes de mots souvent reliées entre elles par la conjonction "et" prise comme conjonction de coordination forcée et emphatique ou encore le "oui" d'insistance. La phrase se fait alors méandre nous ramenant inlassablement dans ses circonvolutions au cri muet de Mike, de Florence, du jeune fugitif brûlé, de la figure angoissée du *Cri*.

Dans le roman *Visions d'Anna*, la situation est quelque peu différente, les références au monde de la peinture y étant beaucoup moins nombreuses. Néanmoins, un tableau ou plutôt une reproduction d'un tableau de Boudin retient l'attention puisque Marie-Claire Blais y revient avec insistance (VA pp. 30, 41, 66, 115, 160, 168). De fait, le tableau se présente comme un véritable fil d'Ariane du labyrinthe que peut sembler à prime abord les *Visions d'Anna*. On sait que Boudin est ce peintre français du XIX[e] siècle qui empruntait de préférence ses sujets aux loisirs de la bourgeoisie.[6] Maître de Monet, l'attitude de Boudin devant la nature, sa palette claire aux tons vibrants et fluides qui traduisait la lumière, les reflets dans l'eau et les personnages en quelques touches rapides l'ont en quelque sorte consacré comme précurseur direct des impressionnistes.

Par ailleurs, l'oeuvre d'art dans ce roman est d'abord et avant tout objet d'art, qualité renforcée par son anonymat. A ce titre, elle relève à la fois de la sociologie puisque l'objet suppose un texte social mêlé au texte de fiction et de l'esthétique en demeurant un signifié du roman.[7] L'objet d'art est investi dans les *Visions d'Anna* de trois statuts distincts mais intimement liés entre eux, soit celui d'information, celui du signe, et celui de valeur.

A titre d'information, la reproduction du tableau nous renseigne sur "la société de la matière romanesque."[8] Cette socialité se présente sous deux aspects complémentaires et contradictoires. Tout d'abord "ce par quoi le roman s'affirme lui-même comme société et produit lui-même ses conditions de lisibilité sociale."[9] C'est la société de Raymonde et ses invités/collègues qui ouvre le roman, celle de Guislaine et de Paul, celle aussi de Peter le père débauché. Il s'agit d'une société qui peut et qui de fait s'approprie l'oeuvre d'art comme objet de décoration, ce qui permet de supposer chez elle un certain bagage de connaissances, démontré par les études de Raymonde, la carrière de Guislaine et celle de son mari, de même qu'une solide culture, confirmée par des références au monde musical telles Wagner, Bach, Beethoven, Vivaldi et au monde littéraire comme Dostoïevski, Sartre, Camus, Pouchkine et autres. Bref, il s'agit là d'une société autarcique dotée d'idéologies, de valeurs explicites et implicites, de normes de conduite, de niveaux de vie et d'un quotidien détaillé. Aux Raymonde, Guislaine, Paul et Peter de cette société ordonnée viennent s'opposer Anna et ses amis, Michelle, la jeune droguée en quête de perfection, Liliane, sa soeur, la lesbienne aux préoccupations écologiques, Philippe, le narcomane et les *drifters* "carnassiers" que sont Tommy et Manon. Ils constituent une anti-société à la fois victime et dénonciatrice de l'héritage légué par la "bourgeoisie sereine" du tableau de Boudin. La reproduction du tableau de Boudin nous renvoie aussi à une société hors texte, à sa pratique sociale, son ancrage dans l'expérience réelle ou imaginaire que le lecteur peut avoir d'elle,[10] bref, à la bourgeoisie possédante, fondement de notre civilisation capitaliste.

Signe, le tableau profile pour le lecteur une idéologie ou une vision du monde, celle de la bourgeoisie, caractérisée par le goût de l'ordre et du confort, le respect des conventions et une certaine suffisance comme le suggère

cette réflexion d'Alexandre, l'écrivain: "C'était l'idée chrétienne du bonheur sur la terre . . . d'énoncer que chacun devait trouver ici-bas un lieu ou poser son corps à la dérive, un toit, un lit pour la détente de ses membres" (VA p. 23). Cette idéologie/vision du monde est d'ailleurs renforcée par le sujet même du tableau qui illustre "le bonheur de vivre sur les plages de Honfleur, des baigneurs de fin de siècle . . . le contentement d'une bourgeoisie sereine, immuable dans l'attente de ses plaisirs" (VA p. 30). Ce "chaste paysage marin" se constitue en paradis perdu auquel on ne pouvait reprocher que de représenter "ce que nous n'étions plus, ce que nous n'allions plus jamais être (VA p. 31) sauf dans les tableaux, nous dit Anna (VA p. 168). Effectivement les *Visions d'Anna* vont s'appliquer à dévoiler systématiquement à l'aide de représentations multiples, l'enfer qu'est devenu le XX^{e} siècle. Ainsi en est-il des nombreuses scènes de plage du roman, que ce soit celle où Anna, Raymonde et Peter affamés essaient de se réchauffer autour d'un feu sur la plage (VA p. 39), ou celle qui raconte l'avilissement de Tommy (VA p. 60), ou encore celle qui décrit l'exil et le désespoir de la femme d'Abestos et de ses enfants (VA p. 139). Ces scènes par leur aura cauchemardesque s'insurgent à leur tour contre la tranquille sérénité de la plage d'Honfleur évoquée par le tableau de Boudin. De même, à l'espace ouvert et ensoleillé de la plage du tableau répond la claustration d'Anna isolée dans sa chambre, comparée d'ailleurs à une île de naufrage (VA p. 51), cette chambre même qui abrite la reproduction du tableau de Boudin.

Enfin, comme valeur, le tableau-objet d'art atteint "la plénitude de son statut esthétique" en basculant dans l'espace romanesque.[11] Dans un premier temps et sur un mode mineur, le tableau est l'objet qui relie Raymonde à Anna, puisque c'est elle qui a installé la reproduction sur le mur rose de la chambre de sa fille et cela pour lui plaire (VA pp. 30, 67) et, on peut le supposer aussi, dans le but inavoué et inavouable de faire l'apologie d'un mode de vie, dont elle refuse d'accepter la destruction (VA p. 31). C'est aussi par un renvoi au tableau de Boudin que nous est signifié la tristesse et l'isolement de Raymonde face à l'indifférence d'Anna (VA pp. 41, 115). Sur le mode majeur, la reproduction du tableau de Boudin constitue le déclencheur des visions d'Anna i.e., de la matière romanesque. Effectivement, c'est à partir d'un regard posé sur le tableau que l'adolescente laissera flotter ses pensées, se laissera envahir par le rêve (VA p. 32). Sous le regard transperçant d'Anna, le tableau "où l'eau, la lumière, se répandaient en toute innocence" (VA p. 31) devient le "théâtre d'événements si lugubres que l'eau, l'air, la lumière, lui semblaient distillés, avec ce brouillard de teintes qui formaient les taches du tableau, dans cette poudre de sang qui annonçait l'extinction de sa vie (VA pp. 31-32). A la fin du roman, les visions d'horreur s'affadissent pour faire place à la nostalgie d'un paradis perdu, paradis dont les baigneurs de Honfleur seraient les derniers survivants, nostalgie mais aussi ouverture vers une catastrophe prochaine qu'Anna devra assumer. "Toute cette eau . . . toute cette lumière dans un tableau, pensait-elle, seront nos convalescentes visions d'une autre vie, d'un autre siècle, quand demain nous chercherons la guérison de tous nos maux sous les empreintes de notre agonie sociale, collective" (VA p. 168).

Ainsi, tandis que l'oeuvre d'art dans *Le sourd dans la ville* se voit investie d'un statut de signifié/signifiant *i.e.*, elle est à la fois la représentation d'une figure archétypale de la peur, de l'angoisse, de même que le signifiant sur lequel vient se modeler l'écriture du roman, l'oeuvre

d'art dans *Visions d'Anna* tout en étant elle aussi signifié/signifiant est de plus *objet* d'art. A ce titre, l'oeuvre non seulement nous renseigne sur une société hors texte mais sert aussi de point de départ et d'ancrage à toute une rêverie complexe où les visions de la protagoniste viennent s'insurger contre le signifié même du tableau. Ces deux façons d'aborder l'oeuvre d'art, soit *Le Cri* dans *Le Sourd das la ville* et la reproduction du tableau de Boudin dans *Visions d'Anna,* témoignent de la richesse de l'écriture de Marie-Claire Blais et vient confirmer ses propres paroles: "Mon travail c'est une recherche . . . c'est une aventure, et dans le style, dans la forme, et dans la recherche humaine, je veux aller le plus loin possible."[12]

Enfin, la thématique de l'art et plus spécifiquement celle de l'art pictural est à peu près éliminé de *Pierre La guerre du printemps 81*. Comme dans *Visions d'Anna* la peinture est étroitement identifiée dans ce dernier roman à la bourgeoisie possédante et corrompue plutôt que perçue comme le gage d'immortalité, voire de rédemption comme elle l'avait été dans les romans antérieurs de Marie-Claire Blais.

L'art spécialement l'art des générations antérieures nous est présenté comme un "art insipide" (P p. 46), un art qui doit céder le pas aux "oeuvres vivantes" aux "sculptures cruelles et fauves" (P p. 47) que sont les punks, libérés de la "grotesque technologie de notre époque" (P p. 47). Même les quelques rares références à des peintres tels Gauguin (P p. 46) ou Marie Cassatt (P p. 75) renvoient à des anti-idéologies de liberté, d'insoumission à la dictature sociale (P p. 75) pour appeler la fin de notre civilisation.

Peut-on à la lumière de ces derniers romans de Marie-Claire Blais établir chez elle une courbe de la thématique de l'art pour conclure à l'évacuation totale de notre héritage artistique de son univers romanesque. Il est beaucoup trop tôt pour le dire. Par ailleurs, il importe de reconnaître dans ces romans le déplacement opéré par l'oeuvre picturale qui passe du rang d'archétype à celui d'objet (investi il est vrai du triple statut d'information, de signe et de valeur) pour aboutir à son refus pur et simple. Reste à voir dans les romans à venir le sort que réservera Marie-Claire Blais au monde de l'art.

NOTES

1 Elaine Cliche, "Un rituel de l'avidité," *Voix et Images,* 8, no. 2 (Hiver 1983), p. 239.

2 Marie-Claire Blais, *Le sourd dans la ville* (Montréal: Stanké, 1979); *Visions d'Anna* (Montréal: Stanké, 1982); *Pierre La guerre du printemps 81* (Montréal: Primeur, 1984). Toute référence ultérieure à ces romans sera incluse dans le texte accompagnée des sigles suivants: SV pour *Le sourd dans la ville,* VA pour *Visions d'Anna* et P pour *Pierre La guerre du printemps 81.*

3 Marcel Brion, *L'art fantastique* (Verviers, Belgique: Gerard, Coll. Marabout Université, 1968), p. 149.

4 Brion, p. 152.

5 E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1978), p. 448; Brion, p. 149.

6 Pierre Schneider, et al., *Manet et son temps* (Ed. Time-Life (Nederland) B.V., 1972), p. 54.

7 Claude Duchet, "Romans et objets," *Europe,* Nos. 485-87 (1969), p. 173.

8 Claude Duchet, "Une écritude de la socialité," Poétique 16 (1973), p. 449.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 Duchet, *Europe,* p. 181.

12 Marie-Claire, Blais, "Entrevue avec Gilles Marcotte," *Voix et Images,* 8, no. 2 (Hiver, 1983), p. 205.

MARIE COUILLARD

BARKER FAIRLEY 1887-1986

WHEN I MET BARKER FAIRLEY in 1975 he was already 88 years old. We met at the opening of a small exhibition of his paintings. I had gone to see them largely because, as the art reviewer for the *Toronto Star* at that time, I was anxious to find out if the paintings of the man I knew to be an internationally renowned scholar of German literature had anything to offer beyond the doubtless informed but probably hobbyist daubings born of a university teacher's Sunday afternoons. What I found was a gathering of landscapes and portraits so lucid and powerful a decade of subsequent study served only to heighten and enrich for me the joyous mystery of their making.

His painting came late in his career. After earning a Ph.D. at Jena, he came to Canada in 1910 to teach at the newly established University of Alberta. Five years later, he accepted the post of Professor of German literature at the University of Toronto. "When I came to Toronto in 1915 it was a dreary, unimaginative city," Barker told me. "And yet my intellectual life really began here. It was in Toronto that I came to intellectual maturity." It was not long after his arrival in Toronto that he met J. E. H. ("Jimmie") MacDonald, A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, Fred Varley, and the other painters who would become, in 1920, the Group of Seven. Barker was an early and enthusiastic (though by no means undemanding) critic of their work, often writing about them in the pages of *The Canadian Forum* which, also in 1920, he helped to transform from a student newspaper to a national journal. Barker wrote about the Group, talked them up, helped to secure them commissions, even went on canoe trips with them. He did not, however, paint with them. "My friends in the Group never said 'Why don't you paint instead of talking about it?'" Barker once pointed out. "One of them *should* have said that, but nobody did. Fred Varley was examining a rather suicidal-looking head of a woman I made after I had started to paint and said to me, 'You can't *do* that!' That's all he said to me. 'You can't *do* that!'"

But Barker could — and did. His paintings, which he began to make when he was forty-four, were utterly unlike those of the Group. His portraits were sinewy, abstracted, heavily outlined, and roughly brushed into stark, sometimes rather cubist constructions which, if they were not always likenesses, were always powerfully iconic readings of what he used to call "the human meaning" within us. His landscapes were virtuoso passages of painterly compression: a horizontal swipe of blue that would suddenly spread into a convincing lake, a muscular writhing of the brush that would twist into a tree. There, in a dozen lines and two or three colours, would inevitably be the essence of what Barker always referred to as "the primary Canadian fact — our geography."

In 1920, however, his painting lay ahead of him — as did the books that would make his academic reputation. In 1922 he wrote 58 poems, all of which came to him unbidden; he copied them straight out, as if he were taking dictation (the Penumbra Press published an edition of them in 1984). When the poems stopped coming of their own accord, Barker stopped being a poet. In 1926, upon hearing of the death of Charles Doughty, whose work Barker admired deeply, he set to work on a critical study of Doughty, writing at a white heat, a chapter a week for ten weeks (Jonathan Cape published the book in 1927). In 1932, he wrote *Goethe As Revealed in*

His Poetry and in 1947 his now classic *A Study of Goethe* (Thomas Mann told Barker it was too bad it had taken an Englishman finally to lay bare the heart of Germany's greatest poet). There were studies of Heine, and of the German novelist Wilhelm Raabe. In 1972, when he was 85, he published an excellent prose translation of *Faust*.

It was the Barker Fairley who wrote these books — who had retired from the University of Toronto in 1956 as Professor Emeritus of German — whose pictures I went to see twelve years ago. And although, when we became friends, we used to sit together and talk about literature and writing, and although many of my happiest moments in his company were filled with his thundering declamations (from memory) of long rhetorically rich passages from Doughty or Edward Thomas or Heine or Goethe, it was as a painter that I came to know him best and it is as a painter that I will remember him. It was in his painting that Barker's directness and eloquent methodological ease came through most gracefully, most fiercely, most exuberantly. It was his painting that most tellingly embodied the grandeur of his innocence, the strength of what he used to think of, with pleasure, as his status as an *amateur*. He died in October 1986, at the age of 99.

GARY MICHAEL DAULT

REFERENCE

RECENT NEW GUIDES to the nonliterary arts include *The Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford, $48.75), but it's the old 10th edition (1970) still, desperate for an update. "The Canadian Boat Song" gets a half-column entry, but "Canada" gets only a cross-reference to "Broadcasting" and "Dictionaries" (and the latter entry lists one 1952 dictionary only). Readers are better served by the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. There is also a variety of other works to consult, though they're not always designed as reference books: publications that run from the *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* (the March 1985 issue is a mail order catalogue of available records, books, and cassettes on Canadian folk music) to the drawings of Rivka Golani, *Birds of Another Feather . . . My Musical Colleagues* (Mosaic, $15.95). A famed viola recitalist, Golani here designs musical soloists, ensembles, and orchestras as cartoon birds, as spectacular in performance as in flight. Robin Ray's *Words on Music* (Methuen, $18.95) is a commonplace book about music ("if noboby wants to go to your concert," says Isaac Stern, "nothing will stop them"), a sampler for those who like their browsing composed. Judy Martin's *Longman Dictionary of Art* (Longman, £9.95) is more down to earth (terracotta to *terre verte*), a plain guide to some 1,500 terms commonly used to describe art, art materials, techniques, and the mechanics of production.

W.N.

The Oxford Companion to American Literature (5th ed. $63.95) makes for less interesting browsing than its Canadian counterpart. Charles G. D. Roberts is said to be "best known for his historical fiction." Very truncated entries identify Carman, Stegner, Ostenso, and Seton, but I found no Henry Alline, Elizabeth Smart or Daryl Hine; by a nice irony of pseudonyms, the "Ralph Connor" directs one to "Gordon, C. W." but no entry under Gordon exists. *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* ($35.00) is, similarly, a reference work in the most limited sense: titles follow dates follow titles, but with little of the zest and enchantment which might be thought to go with the subject. A slim article on Canada emphasizes that the country is notable for a dearth of good children's fiction (contrast Australia). The entry on Catharine Parr Traill's *Canadian Crusoes* is informative, but the description of *Anne of Green Gables*, although nicely touched by Anne's own language, includes no list of the filmings, stagings, and translations. By contrast, the *Children's Literature Review*, Volume 9 (Gale, $78.00) contains almost 20 pages (mainly excerpted reviews) on Monica Hughes, a compilation which provokes intriguing questions on the connection between writing about the mysteries approached through Indian religion, and those which might be approached through science fiction. A thoroughly probing examina-

tion of the first part of this subject would have to begin with *Books in Native Languages in the Rare Book Collections of the National Library of Canada* (National Library, $12.50), a revision of an earlier checklist arranged by language group, with appropriate indexes. Indigenous relationships with the land are, of course, at the emotional and intellectual centre of recent attention to what has been called, rather ambiguously, literary ecology. The subject is given a different label in the handbook *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources* (MLA, $14.50), a book which many Canadian students of regionalism and related topics will find helpful for its sense of intellectual contexts, and its bibliography, if not for its specific attention to classroom methods.

Contemporary Literary Criticism (Gale, $88.00) continues to provide convenient digests of critical reactions to Canadian writers, including those somewhat neglected by the academic community. Volume 36 includes Marian Engel and Ralph Gustafson, and Volume 29 extends the exchange on Josef Skvorecky which *Canadian Literature* published in No. 110. Skvorecky's rising prominence reminds us of how Canadian literature seems suddenly to have become a speaking in many tongues, and many translations: a surprising example is the Winter 1985 issue of *De Tweede Ronde*, published in Amsterdam, which devotes itself to an anthology of short fiction, essays and poetry by English-Canadians translated into Dutch, with source texts photographically reproduced in the margins.

L.R.

POUR ENFANTS

Several recent picturebooks are aimed at beginner readers. From Editions La Courte Echelle come a series of delightfully illustrated works, mostly about dreams and desires. Monsters figure largely in them, but they take different forms: in Christine L'Heureux's *Les déguisements d'Amélie*, n.p., a girl discovers through Hallowe'en the desire to be an actress; in Bertrand Gauthier's *Zunik dans le championnat*, n.p., a boy discovers in the hockey rink the consequences of late-night television; in Ginette Anfousse's *La petite soeur* and *Je boude*, n.p., a boy finds his dreams in conflict with the monstrous realities of neighbourhood acquaintances, or sometimes just in competition. Moral lesson is not on the page, but is not far off it. For the girls who occupy centre stage in three books by Michel Aubin — *Le code secret, Mon petit frère Bertrand, Trottinette et crème glacée* (Boréal jeunesse, n.p.) — the neighbourhood is another kind of stimulus of imaginative adventure. François Benoît and Rémy Simard's *Le cloître de New York* (Ovale, $10.95) — aimed at a more mature reader — is a punning cartoon adventure that ranges from the city to the North Pole. But best of all, in some ways, is a delightful boxed book-and-game designed for the very young: Danielle Marcotte and Philippe Béha's *Les nuits d'Arthur* (Ovale, n.p.). The book tells of nighttime fears that turn marvellous, taking Arthur, the piglet, on an adventure to the 'palais de Noir.' An accompanying set of cards (complete with one which says Draw-your-own) displays a variety of Arthur-ian nightmares, with happier dreams on the reverse side. They're intended to alleviate fear; they do turn imagination into play.

W.N.

Awareness II, A Quest for World Peace, ed. Brian MacKinnon, is a publication designed at R. B. Russell Vocational High School in Winnipeg. It's a collection of writings by students there, and by students at Chief Peguis Junior High School. Primarily it contains poems about dreams and uncertainty — about the possibility of war, the reality of boredom, the pressures of home and school, rock, hockey, being wrong, being loved, and the plain truths of pregnancy and jail. "if I had a / father, maybe / I would / fight him," writes one student; "Being alone again / isn't easy anymore," writes another. There is a lot of searching here, and very little sheer joy — perhaps not so much a symptom of social malaise as a recognition of how difficult it is to write of happiness without sounding cloying or naïve. The book is cast as an anti-war plea. Complete with letters from Robert Kroetsch and others, it is also a tribute to the kind of teaching that goes on all across the country, the kind that quietly encourages a lifelong love of books.

W.N.

*** DAVID BERCUSON, J. L. GRANATSTEIN, W. R. YOUNG, *Sacred Trust? Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party in Power*. Doubleday, $22.95. Since it became the fashion to equate the American with the Roman Empire, myths of decline and fall have come back into vogue, and while Gibbon wrote in long hindsight, our contemporary declinologists write prophetically, from the heart of the culture whose downfall they chronicle as the walls totter and the barbarians mass for the assault. To those directly involved, the decline of minor political orders become as fascinating as those of empires, and in Canada, certainly from the time when the Trudeau regime began to smell high of rot, analyses of decaying administrations have been among the most popular of Canadian books. Their popularity is doubtless related to that revulsion for politics and politicians which a recent Decima poll (conducted for *Maclean's* at the end of 1986) revealed to be one of the most striking shifts in Canadian public opinion as we move on towards the millenium. *Sacred Trust?* is one of the best of these books, a model of instant political history, analyzing brilliantly how in half a term of office the Tories appear to have squandered a vast popularity and to have pushed Canadians back into the arms of a Liberal Party that so short a time ago one seemed justified in dismissing as a lost and discredited party. Perhaps most striking is the implicit message of the book, for one is led not so much into the condemnation of ineptitude as into the recognition that their victory pushed the Tories into an impasse from which only some genius in politics could have extricated them. Burdened with the vast deficit their predecessors had accumulated and with popular expectations for social services that could not be denied, they were left with little room for imaginative action, and that little was limited further by the need to come to terms with an unaccommodating America and even more by the deficiencies of a party which a growing popular distaste for the politician's role had left deprived — like the other parties — of imagination and talent. Such circumstances make inevitable a long period of political instability, so that neither the Liberals nor the New Democrats can gain much comfort from reading this book. We are witnessing the Götterdämmerung of high politics.

G.W.

*** PETER BRIMELOW, *The Patriot Game*. Key Porter, $24.95. Toryism — "true" conservatism — may seem a lost cause in Canada (though that is debatable), but lost causes often provide excellent critical standpoints, for they are not impeded by the pragmatism and compromised perceptions of day-to-day partisan commitments. Peter Brimelow writes from a Tory standpoint, and provides one of the most interesting analyses of Canada's plight I have read for a long time. As happens so often these days, radical social critics will find themselves agreeing with many — if not all — of the Tory perceptions of liberal failings. Tories like Brimelow demand we cut our coats according to the cloth we have left when we have paid for guns. Liberals want guns and more coats because they have illusions about the capacities of systems whose limitations Tories and radicals both in their own ways recognize. A liberal critique of Brimelow would be difficult; a good radical reply could and should be made. Certainly everyone with political interests should read *The Patriot Game* for its hard and honest realism and its often brilliant polemical writing in the tradition of Goldwin Smith.

G.W.

** GEOFFREY PARKER, ed., *The World: An Illustrated History*. Harper & Row, $25.00. One would like to praise this book more, for it is handsomely illustrated, and worth looking at for the pictures: which perhaps indicates its source — it is a companion book for a South Carolina television series, broadcast by PBS. But in the text one runs up against presumption and blindness to presumption everywhere. This is an American history of the world, self-focused, the degree of which can be gauged by a little Canadian self-focusing. "Canada" merits four mentions in 477 pages: two times referring to the "Canada" of the seventeenth century, once in the chronology for 1867, and once on a map that's intended to explain the growth of the U.S.A. By way of extension, New Zealand gets three mentions, and Australia gets two mentions and four pictures. The history does focus more than most do on Asian and Latin American and African cultures, but there is surprisingly little on North American indigenous societies. All in all, the book is evidence of the way people shape the priorities of history by what they already know — and what they therefore deem to be relevant to themselves.

W.N.

** JOAN MURRAY, *The Best of Tom Thomson*. Hurtig, $22.95. This is a modest book in its pretensions and good within its self-imposed limitations. Joan Murray begins with a brief biography of Thomson, illustrated by some 30 photographs that visually chronicle the substance of his short life. She follows with a discussion of his work centred on more than 50 rather well-executed colour reproductions of what she considers Thomson's most-interesting paintings. The selection shows not only Thomson's originality but also his derivativeness, and makes it clear to anyone with a knowledge of what painters were doing in France and in Scandinavia at the time how specious, at least in a formal sense, are the claims that have been made for Thomson, and for his associates who later formed the Group of Seven, as the prophets of cultural nationalism. Their goals were essentially painterly, and so were their successes, as the best of Thomson's paintings here reproduced splendidly show; the landscape of northern Ontario offered them the shapes and the light through which these goals might be fulfilled. It was to the land rather than to the nation that their links were strong.

G.W.

LAST PAGE

In preparing for this issue, we have paid more attention than usual to what is being written about the visual and plastic arts in Canada. The basic academic journal, *The Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'Histoire de l'Art Canadien* (semi-annual; $14.00 copy) has offered recent explorations of the margins between art forms; for example, Alexandra Carter reveals the extent to which the picturesque principles of landscape gardening began to shape Canadian painting in an essay on Halifax watercolourist William H. Eagar (7:2, 1984). This number is especially useful because it lists all "articles, short notes, sources, documents, book reviews and publication notices published since volume 1:1." According to this list, particularly lively areas of investigation in the field include the history of surrealism in Québec, the Victorian Revival, and nineteenth-century French-Canadian/French artistic interrelationships. Of particular interest *à propos* our theme is Victoria Evans' "Bertram Brooker's Theory of Art" (9:1, 1986), which examines carefully many interactions between poetry and painting, such as "Brooker's urge to paint verb-'movement' (capable of propelling him toward heaven) rather than noun-'objects' (that can only ground him in the nominative context of earth)."

As readers of Timothy Findley's *The Telling of Lies* will be able to confirm, literature and concepts of gardening continue to elucidate each other. The September/October/November 1986 issue of *Parachute: Art Contemporain/Contemporary Art* (published in Montreal) is devoted to gardens, more specifically "postmodern gardens," which acknowledge "a relationship to the site, to the materials used and to the spectator." Contributions like Jennifer Dickson's "Lechery in the Garden" and John Roberts' "The Greening of Capitalism" challenge the traditional "aura" of baroque gardens and British pastoral scenes with refreshingly subversive readings that remind one of John Berger's by now classic BBC serial "Ways of Seeing." Readers of Philip Fry's "Chronicle of a New Landscape Garden," with its painstaking exploration of the garden as "site" (that is, "the object of artistic intervention") of gardening as "system" (that is, "process rather than product') and of the gardener as "a collaborative element in the process," may be able to draw parallels to the concept of *locus* in postmodernist serial poetry. Quoting Jean-François Lyotard and Gaile McGregor in the editorial, *Parachute* emphasizes the role of the garden as cultural text, for "the manner in which gardens are conceived and implanted is always a good way to interpret and understand an era."

Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry (London: Taylor and Francis) will be a major source for anyone interested in textual/visual interrelationships. The editorial in the first issue acknowledges the role of "developments in linguistics, anthropology, structuralism, and semiotics" in reorienting the humanities, and grants a special place to the "encounters, cooperations, and antagonisms" between the verbal/visual languages in this process. Special issues on Renaissance and Enlightenment theory and practice, on "Painting or Sign" and "Advertising" have already appeared; among the topics for future issues are poems on paintings, children's art and writing, and iconicity in literature. Although none of the already published articles deals specifically with a Canadian subject, they are interesting to a Canadianist for methodological and other

reasons: Robert Casillo's results in "Dirty Gondola: The Image of Italy in American Advertisements," for instance, could be usefully applied to Canadian ethnic stereotyping. The subject of word and image is addressed less directly in the collages of Willard Botin's *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914-1928* (Cambridge University Press $37.50), a valuable book for anyone wishing to situate a study of what was once called concrete poetry into its historical contexts, especially those of Futurism and Abstractionism.

A sampling of recent issues of *History of Photography: An International Quarterly* (London: Taylor and Francis, $60.00) indicates that this periodical, which lists Lily Koltun of the National Photography Collection in Ottawa among the members of its International Advisory Board, is an indispensible source for researchers of Canadian photography and cultural history in general. Apart from reviewing research tools like Christopher Siegfried's *Guide to Canadian Photographic Archives* (1984) and albums like Edward Carrell's *Sometimes a Great Nation: A Photo Album of Canada* (1984), there is an essay on nineteenth-century advertising practices, "The 'Little Wanzer,'" by Joan Schwartz, and Brian Carey's "An Imperial Gift," chronicling the history of a daguerrotype offered by a Montreal citizen to the Empress Eugénie in 1885 to celebrate Captain Belveze's visit in Canada, an event generally considered the first diplomatic contact between France and Canada after 1759. The picture, depicting an allegory of friendship between the two countries, was returned to Canada in 1984.

Indexes are always good to know about, and such compilations as Hardy George's *The Concordia University Art Index to Nineteenth Century Canadian Periodicals* (1981) or W. McAllister Johnson/Andrea Retfalvi's *Canadian Illustrated News (Montreal): Index to Ilustrations* could prove to be practical sources for specialists in nineteenth-century Canadian literature.

To turn to more recent forms of the visual arts is to realize that the written contexts are much less secure. Someone recently proposed on CBC radio that the rock video is the short story of the visual arts, a striking analogy that is useful for demonstrating to students the unique properties of short fictions. But the difficulty of going in the other direction (and conveying some sense of video art in a book) is illustrated by the banal *Canada Video*, the catalogue of Canada's exhibit at the 1980 Venice Biennale. Nonetheless, the comments on interrupted narratives and parody of soap opera in the work of Colin Campbell, and the use of the pun in work by General Idea, both suggest how video technology is breaking down the barriers between print and the visual arts. Organizations of the other dominant form of moving images is found in the annual compilation *Film Canadiana* (National Film Board et al., $20.00), which catalogues all films produced in Canada in a given year (2,500 in 1983-84) with detailed bibliographic information, and several indexes — one listing all films about, or related to, literature. The trade journal *Cinema Canada* ($22.00 annually) is useful for the technical understanding often found in its reviews: the review of "My American Cousin" (June 1986) is illuminating for its discussion of the grammar of the film (editing, angles of shots) in the specific terms seldom found in the popular press.

Other odds and ends related to the theme of this issue include Jean-Cloude Corbeil's *Visual Dictionary* (Stoddart, $29.95) which illustrates contemporary technical terms by blow-ups of those illustrations often almost invisible in conventional dictionaries; if you cannot visualize the difference between an orbiculate leaf and a cordate leaf, this is the place to look. Prentice-Hall's series, "The World of the Novel" (n.p.), has recently produced Student Guides to *The Stone Angel* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* which attempt to give students a sense of social, geographic, and literary contexts of each work through a collage of photographs, contemporary advertisements, journalistic excerpts, and poems. *Great Canadian Lives: Portraits in Heroism to 1867* (Doubleday, $24.95) will not be nearly so useful: it's too grand and expensive for a kid's book, but as a reference source for young people, it lacks both substance and documentation. A few reproductions of art works are attractive, but most of the illustration is corny — trivializing rather than enhancing any potential heroism. Roch Carrier's monologue *La céleste bicyclette*, reprinted in Stanké's Quebec 10/10 series, comes liberally illustrated with shots of Albert Millaire, grinning and bewildered, as he performs the piece on stage.

E.-M.K. & L.R.

THE REPRINT INDUSTRY has a curiously two-fold relation with reputations: it follows them, and it creates them, in about the same measure. What this statement comes down to is a resonant tautology, of course: people do not remember the names of the writers they've forgotten. Yet the issues are broader than that. For readers do not remember the names of writers that their whole cultural history has been willing to forget; and because such names disappear, readers and critics are often inclined to reason that they can't have been worth reading anyway. Time winnows out the chaff: all that sort of thing. Yet memory is itself a political act, encouraged by the availability of books, which is in turn encouraged by a cultural desire to remember particular kinds of books, which is in turn . . .

Current publishing programmes will therefore inevitably be creating new imbalances and orthodoxies while they're addressing old ones. But some of the new directions are particularly instructive. Efforts to bring women's writings and Third World writings back into print, for example, relate directly to readers' demands for such works, and also help create this demand. Politically, such publishing enterprises also constitute a critique of received historical judgments. For instance, a "received" list of great English-language writers is still primarily male, primarily English and American. Why? One answer would insistently say "because the best have survived"; another would counter with reality. As long as women were *deemed* ephemeral writers, their works would be considered minor; as long as male presumptions were *considered* normative, then female attitudes would be considered aberrations rather than an alternative norm; as long as Joyce, Conrad, and Mansfield were considered significant, they were rechristened "English." It's a political process of naming and claiming that's going on. Establishing American literature as something intrinsically interesting (different from English literature and still also important) was a political act, not just an accident of aesthetics. Bringing attention to women's writing, Canadian writing, Third World writing is equally political: so much depends on the right name, the working category. A political desire (to challenge existing norms, to counter received conventions, to articulate the *perceived realities* of gender, colour, place) may well motivate the reprinting of particular works; the "working category" makes them marketable.

Pandora's "Mothers of the Novel" paperback series (Methuen, $12.95) is one such strategy, reissuing a number of early novels, among them Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* and Mary Brunton's *Self-Control*; especially welcome is Gibraltar-born Charlotte Lennox's 1752 novel *The Female Quixote*, a shrewd lampoon of the aspirations of one Arabella, who has been educated by her times to expect the fanciful, perhaps because she is a woman. Virago Modern Classics is another series, a recent work being Eleanor Dark's 1959 novel *Lantana Lane* (£3.95), an engagingly vernacular amusement at the weediness of Australian culture. New Women's Press in Auckland has probed a third society's literary history for books whose time has come; among its titles are two of particular interest: Joy Cowley's *Nest in a Falling Tree*, a novel concerning the presence of a mother in her daughter's life; and Robin Hyde's *Nor the Years Condemn*, a 1938 novel whose social importance was probably minimized as much for its critique of economic and class norms as for its gender, or perhaps because of its particular combination of gender and social criticism in an age of more conventional expectations. Additional books by Australian women have been reprinted by various presses: Thea Astley by the University of Queensland Press, Barbara Hanrahan by Chatto, Criena Rohan and Jessica Anderson by Penguin. Anderson's *The Only Daughter* ($7.95) demonstrates a sure skill at social portraiture. And A. W. Martin's edition of 'Menie' Park's letters to her father, *Letters From Menie* (Melbourne, n.p.) offers a different vantage point (not without its fictional overtones) on the politics of relationships in late nineteenth-century New South Wales.

Various critical works address particular female authors: Arnold E. Davidson's *Jean Rhys* (Oxford, $19.75), Eve Bertelson's selection of criticism on *Doris Lessing* (McGraw-Hill, n.p.). New Women's Press has also published *Women's Studies: A New Zealand Handbook*, by Candis Craven and co-authors, an introductory guide to the study of women in New Zealand, their relation with education, the law, male bias, feminist theory, etc. Carole Ferrier's *Gender, Politics and Fiction* (University of Queensland, $32.50) is a collection of essays on Australian women's fiction; one of the most striking comments is Sneja Gunew's "Migrant Women Writers: Who's on Whose Margins?" which asks how ethnicity complicates critical generalizations-by-gender. *Rewriting English*, by Janet Batsleer et al. (Methuen, $9.95) is a lucid survey of the "cultural politics of gender and class" in con-

temporary England. Not all the details of the authors' observations cross cultural boundaries easily, but enough do to warrant considerable reflection. The bias of the book is anti-establishment, anti-canon, therefore also canonical in its own way; what it elucidates, however, are the implicit political strategies in literature (the gender hierarchies of "game" and "romance") and the more explicit ones of publication and review. Ultimately the book focuses on feminist commentary (its relations with class and colour, its distrust of the unreflective hegemony, its deconstructive character) and on the implications of these changes for the language of criticism.

Similar "conclusions" derive from commentaries on Third World experience and verbal resistance to received form. Hence other reprints find a readership also ill-at-ease with conventional generalizations about literary history. It's part of the appeal of Zulfikar Ghose's "Brazilian Trilogy" (*The Incredible Brazilian, The Beautiful Empire, A Different World*; Overlook Press, $9.95 each). Ghose (born in prepartition India and now resident in Texas) has himself resisted the easier categories of national description, hence has resisted some of the labels that would have given him a direct line to readers. But in an age that is "deconstructing" conventions, he may be finding them at last. His "trilogy" is at once history and anti-history: a record of colonial conquest (by force, by speech, by occupation) and a resistance to "settled" versions of speech and order. As the trilogy advances, the linear patterns of history collapse into moments of discrete recurrence, the revelations of an animating memory. Like B. S. Johnson, with whom he collaborated on an earlier book, Ghose works at disrupting the "normative" course of narrative, aware that "reality" is not fixed, and is not fixed by art. Johnson's own *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry* is re-released by New Directions ($6.95), winning a wider audience than Johnson got when he was alive. But perhaps the same generalization holds for Joyce, to whom innovative late twentieth-century writers still owe some verbal/cultural allegiance. What patient critics have discovered, moreover, are some further gaps in received literary history. Joyce's *Ulysses*, when first published, was typed from manuscript by several hands, and never adequately proofed. Newly set (Garland, 3 vols. plus a separate alphabetical index), the novel returns to its intended design, and once more (re)de/signs the speech of narrative afresh.

W.N.

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