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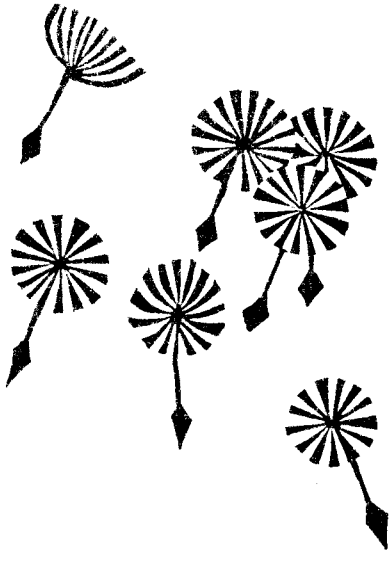

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WHERE WE LIVE

A COLLEAGUE OF MINE offered me a Current Fashion Update recently: *digital watches are going out of style* — not because of their illusory exactness, I am led to believe, but because of the mechanics of display. It seems many people still seek what the traditional clockface provides and the flicking numerals do not: a sense of a *space* of time — the leisurely obtuse angle's worth of twenty minutes or twenty-five, the acute pressure of only two. Einstein on guard for thee! In a country ruled by distance, people inevitably measure space by time (the four-hour flight to Ottawa, the four-day drive across Ontario); but apparently Mercator — "the man who gave most to Canada," the old joke goes — stands behind even these approximations, inducing us to measure time in turn by space.

As a lifelong lover of maps, and an admirer of the aesthetics as well as the execution of volume I of the *Historical Atlas of Canada* (1987), I have been looking forward to the next two volumes in this series. In 1990, skipping volume II for the moment, the University of Toronto Press released volume III, which was edited by Donald Kerr and Deryck Holdsworth and which adopted the cartographic designs of Geoffrey Matthews. Volume III covers the period 1891-1961. It's large. It's full of information. It's also a disappointment — for reasons that involve conception as much as design, and for a selectivity that governs the patterns of representation and that can be read as unconscious bias.

Admittedly, the idea of representing (through map, graph, and pie-chart) the complexities of Canadian social change during the twentieth century offers a daunting challenge. For one thing, finding consistent data from all across the country proved in some cases impossible; hence not all the 66 plates offer "national" paradigms — many are specific models governed by region, industry, or institution. Imperial Oil and Massey-Harris get separate maps (Imperial Oil was one of the financial backers of the publication); so do Dixon Brothers General Store, Eaton's, the Canadian Western Lumber Company, and Ontario and Quebec cheese factories. None of this might seem exceptionable, except that over the course of the book, several presumptions begin to become apparent. One has to do with the

normalizing of sociopolitical dominance; the other has to do with the function of selective representation, which rapidly turns a "sample" into a synecdochic trope. In other words, from being one example of a variety of possibilities, a charted figure comes to be taken as a model of the "whole," a process which leads to distortion at least as often as it leads to illumination.

Consider the mapping of educational institutions: Queen's University in Kingston is taken as an example of Canadian practice — but because no alternatives are offered, it rapidly becomes "the" example. And is Queen's representative? How can any institution that had private religious affiliations designing its origins (and its function, through many years of its history) adequately "represent" the structure and history of the large nondenominational *public* institutions of Western Canada? The *absences* in this book sometimes loom as large as the illustrations. I am not speaking of mere omissions. I am speaking of the way a series of recurrent choices *designs* certain absences as "natural" by — unconsciously, perhaps, or at least without examining the ideology involved — consistently attaching "importance" elsewhere.

Numerous plates do chart interesting material, of course. There is an instructive guide to the interlocking directorships in corporate Toronto in 1913 (though nothing parallel from the 1960s). There is a tiny map of the extent of damage caused by the Halifax explosion. Interesting maps also examine such issues as immigration sources and movements (demonstrating the substantial draw of population from the U.S.A. and therefore highlighting a largely ignored American "ethnic" influence in Canada). There are maps of median rent (by street) in Montreal in 1901; of the sectarian amalgamations that led to the formation of the United Church of Canada (from the 1780s to 1931); of tribal lands in the Skeena Valley; of the expansion of provincial boundaries (reminding one visually that Quebec's — and Ontario's — current political boundaries alike derive from an early twentieth century *federal grant*, which makes the James Bay territories, historically, "Cree" and/or "Canadian" but not, by ancient custom, "Québécois *pure Paine*"). There is a map of the distribution of flu deaths in Winnipeg in 1918; and a map of the birthplaces of NHL hockey players between 1927 and 1961. But there's no index, so it's hard to find data without already knowing where it is.

Some of the colour distinctions also leave much to be desired — affecting, ironically, the "ethnic divisions" map among others; when the sliver-sized pie-chart segments indicating differences of ethnic source depend upon visual distinctions between grey, grey-brown, and steel grey hues, and when the whole map is designed in fashionable pastels, with the explanatory legend at some remove from the chips of coloured data, then the page is not effectively communicating its message. (Unless it's more radical than I think, and is deconstructing the idea of colour-bars and visual discrimination.) In any event, the statistics behind these ethnic divisions are dubious at best, for census data until 1981 did not record mothers' lineage.

Statistics nevertheless constitute the heart if not the soul of this entire volume, apparent from the outset in the interest in "manufacturing value added in millions of dollars," in the text's concern for the "gross reproduction rate," and in the charting of the evolution of corporate railway emblems and the movement of bank and insurance company head offices. Fundamentally, this is a book about social power. But in visually recording the way power is associated with finance and number in Canada, the book goes on to *enact* the uneven distribution of power it ostensibly just depicts. "Regionalism" offers an example. Anachronistically, the book institutionalizes the presumptive term "Central" Canada (though in one unclear map involving language distribution, the Ontario/Quebec border is misleadingly referred to as the "Bilingual Belt"); but it does not examine its terms. Nor does it always explain its inclusions. While a fascinating "isodemographic" map (which distorts "standard" dimensional relations to emphasize the areas of largest population) enumerates census areas all across the country, it *names* (in an attached list) only those from Ontario, Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces; any names from Manitoba west and north, and from Newfoundland, are simply omitted from the page. This same map also indicates that the Vancouver-Victoria urban area is the third largest in the country; but while the rest of the volume provides detailed maps of Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa (for aborted urban design plans), Halifax (for port development), and Edmonton and Winnipeg (for population expansion), only one tiny map of an innovative and cancelled rapid transit system adds anything further about Vancouver, the second largest port on the entire west coast of North and South America. It's not the only omission. Besides the Skeena tribal lands, relatively little is said of the native population. (A graph of the grade distributions of Indian students in 1936 and 1957 comes without an adequate context for interpreting the data.) And the Alaska Boundary negotiations go without notice.

Presumably these "margins" don't fit into the design package — that is, into the *intellectual* "design package" that constitutes, alas, a currently pervasive perception of Canadian culture. The editors write that they are discarding the "hewers of wood" version of Canada, and tracing the change from a Canada that was still "unknown territory" in 1891 to a Canada of "increasingly homogeneous tastes, values, and standards," and that the book, further, depicts "Canada's social, economic, and cultural evolution." But what happens page by page? Any interest in raw natural resource *location* gives way to an interest in the shifting centres of economic crisis and resource *management.* (Drought and relief feature prominently in portraying the prairies during the 1930s, though nothing makes particularly clear that Quebec — *pace* the 1991 Allaire Commission Report — is still the *recipient* of Equalization Grants from three other Canadian provinces, namely B.C., Alberta, and Ontario, and not the *donor.*) The book focuses on finance, trade, manufacturing, grain-*handling* — in other words, on industrial profit. That might seem all to the good. But when, to these maps of industrial design, one adds

all the comments on *labour*, something curious happens. Almost always, labour is associated with strikes, strikes with violence and military intervention, and hence with interference in profit-making and disruption to civil order. "The strike," the editors write, "represents the most accessible measure of *overt conflict* between workers and employers" (my italics). It's not just selectivity that constitutes a judgment in cartography; so does the language of arrangement.

Even "culture" — one of the "evolutionary" terms the editors intended to illustrate — refers here more to the sociological than the aesthetic. Culture consists of sport, disease, and broadcasting, apparently, but not of art, music, or literature — even though the industrial involvement of Massey-Harris and the CPR in establishing the status of the Group of Seven is now well known. The one painting reproduced in the volume — a Franklin Carmichael — depicts a minesite and is positioned on the page analyzing Canadian Shield resource development. While "industry" is the book's palpable interest, nothing on the publishing industry, the magazine industry, the film industry, or the music industry is to be found here — despite the fact that *Chatelaine* is as much of a *national*, popular, commercial success story as was "National" League hockey during these years, and even though the cultural industries collectively contribute greatly to the GNP. Perhaps gender politics as well as a narrow definition of culture dominates the cartographic decisions on the point. That there is no map of the birthplaces of the stars of Canadian literature, however, in the long run tells less about literature (or about hockey) than about undeclared priorities.

Or are they truly undeclared? The editors may be doing nothing except reflecting the dominant social discourse in Canada, a discourse apparently as dominant in 1991 as it was in 1913 or 1966. And for cartographers to map presumptions, or map the gaps and absences that presumptions construct, may present altogether different dimensions of challenge than Descartes dreamed of. *May*. Even declaration is fraught with uncertainties. In giving their volume of the Atlas the separate name *Addressing the Twentieth Century*, the editors intend, I think, not just to allude to time and social change but also to indicate the process they have gone through in devising ways of visually representing historical data. Yet in an age given (perhaps over-readily) to deconstruction, it's hard not to read the title also as the number sign of the house where we live. If that's the case — sobering thought — we live in a house that's riddled with biases that a great many people remain unaware of. To accept these biases as natural because they can be graphed and mapped, or because they have not been consciously and carefully questioned, would be to accept a corporate version of cultural priorities as well as a selective version of history. That's not something a whole society should do lightly, even for the illusion of space, in the name of national homogeneity, or under the pressures of time.

W.N.

OPEN HOUSE

J. A. Wainwright

In the gymnasium
the balance beams arranged
for performing children
like theorems perfectly proven
they walk the line
to their parents' applause

the newly-divorced couple
sits months apart
as their eldest smiles and falls
falls and smiles delighted
at his body's curves
the crazy dance the air invites
unparalleled
at the beam's end

while their youngest knows
only his mother and his father
praise him in the same moment
for his own small pantomime —
how happily he works for words
from one and then the other
as if they could not speak
except for his dumb-show

beneath the rings so round
and somersaults chaotic
no lies are told
or revisions allowed
the kids are alright
landing at all angles
laughing at their flight
as if gravity
were not a serious matter

SCHOLAR AS A CHILD

Steven Heighton

Four years brought a sunrise of memory
and it is a beam of light descending a stairwell
lined with ancestral faces. Now I see them, baffled
under glass, trapped behind iron
bars of sunlight from the forge
of a star much older, cooler than their own.
Their lips and hair, pale sepia skin
all like my father's, flickering
on the memory's concave screen, the blank
back of the skull, where I still watch
the dark door of his study
swing ajar, his body in the threshold a guardian
his teeth grinning like a chain of keys.

And when I went in: dim shelves refuting the faint
light trailing me from the door, desk of rosewood,
broad-backed chair, so many books my head spun
when I tried to count them. And trying to reckon
with the room's seductions I went in again
and again, a moth caught by the spidery light of print on bindings
or sucked by the vortex from a bonfire of volumes
burning in a city square.
When he caught me
he said nothing, led me out with soft compositor's hands
more used to a book's brittle spine — and the door behind us
shut like a cover. So we stood there, outside of words
in the cool passage, hand-in-hand, and as I grew
to fill his absence he held me fast, those portraits
fading, my father gone, and still
on the carpeted stairs the sunbeam
slept like lightning.

CONTRARY RE-MEMBERINGS

The Creating Self and Feminism in "Cat's Eye"

Judith McCombs

TO EXAMINE CONCEPTS OF self, creativity, and feminism in Margaret Atwood's seventh novel, *Cat's Eye* (1988), is tempting but tricky: for *Cat's Eye* is a *bildungsroman* portrait of the artist that incorporates transmuted autobiography; and its contrarily re-membering seer-narrator is Atwood's most elaborate representation of the human self as complexly layered, with fluid and sometimes buried layers. This stratified, metamorphic concept of the self builds upon Atwood's idea of the self, explicated in Sherrill Grace's *Violent Duality* (1980), as a place where things happen, and that is changed by their happening in it;[1] and leaves *Cat's Eye* free to play not only with feminist and literary concepts of the self, but also with other, pre-literary and non-literary concepts of the self, drawn from folklore and faith, physics and the life sciences, psychology and games, popular and visual art. Furthermore, *Cat's Eye* represents — whether Atwood's contrary seer-narrator admits it or not — what a feminist perspective can recognize as profoundly woman-centered and feminist-oriented re-memberings and visions: in its yearning, painful girlhood rites of passage and its crotchety, womanly coming to terms with aging; in its portrait of the artist, not as a young man, but as a fifty-year-old woman, and in the private iconography of her paintings; in its sometimes contrary or camouflaged extensions of Virginia Woolf's concepts; in its story of tangled, failed, but haunting female friendship; and in its human and archetypal female evil, as well as in its human and envisioned female compassion.

Elaine Risley, the novel's central character and narrator, is its cat's eye seer: a self that sees, from early childhood on, in vivid right-brain images of shapes and colours;[2] a self that will in adulthood become the artist who paints the wild, almost-unseen eyes of cats in *Deadly Nightshade*, and, much later, the self-portrait she calls *Cat's Eye*. During the contemporary time of the novel, Risley has returned to Toronto for her first retrospective show, at Sub-versions, an alternative women's gallery on Toronto's now semi-trendy, transitional Queen Street. The novel, *Cat's Eye*, is her literal retrospective, her looking back and re-membering of her earlier selves, and of others' selves, that she sees now as she tries to see time, looking down through a shape "like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another" (3).[3]

Risley's cat's eye is also the prized blue marble that her nine-year-old self, Elaine, sees as an alien's eye, unknown but nonetheless existing (62-63). When Elaine, who is herself an alien newcomer from a different, nomadic, scientific family, is belittled by three sly Toronto schoolgirl friends, she hides her cat's eye marble in her pocket, where it can sometimes secretly empower her, by letting her see people as *it* sees them, unfeelingly, as shapes, moving shadow, and "blocks of colour" only (141, 155). In fairy tale and folklore, this talismanic cat's eye marble draws its powers from both good and evil: from the Snow Queen's icy, heartless, rationalist grain of glass that lodges in Little Kay's eye (and heart), in the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale (633-36); and from the Hispanic and Mediterranean traditions of the amulet against the evil eye, which like the evil eye itself is usually blue — blue eyes being a foreign, distrusted colour there.[4] *Cat's Eye*'s enthralling chief tormentor, Cordelia, has a northern version of the evil eye, with a still more unusual, changeable eye colour: "grey-green," "greenish," a "muted sea-green" (4, 70, 6).

It is Elaine's girlhood torments — and not the older self's escape, or happiness, or getting even — that decisively form and catalyze the creating self: for the desperate, outwardly powerless child begins to see, eidetically and iconically, in moments of fear, hatred, and shame. Years later, a new fear calls up these eidetic images, and they become the still lifes of 1940's household objects that form Risley's breakthrough series of paintings, exhibited on the earliest, east wall of her retrospective. The gallery's retrospective catalogue, which Risley tries not to endorse, perceives this series as " 'female symbolism, and the charismatic nature of domestic objects' " (404): the catalogue's jargon is true, in an unintended sense. We readers know what the gallery's catalogue writer does not: Risley's wretched, terrified nine-year-old self had seen her mother's old silver toaster, glass coffee percolator, and wringer washing machine, exactly and eidetically, focussing on these objects to stretch out the time before and after school, when she could escape her three girlfriends' secret, whispered condemnation. Caving in under their malice, urged verbally towards a suicidal black nothingness, the nine-year-old Elaine had begun to see the toaster and wringer as ways to burn or flatten out her shamed and punished self.

Sixteen years later, adult fear calls up the forgotten childhood fears: the twenty-five-year-old painter's self,[5] pregnant, unmarried, and terrified of the consequences, begins to paint, for the first time, not things seen but "things that aren't there" (337): toaster, percolator, and wringer appear as eidetic images, sharp, clear, detached from their context and suffused with an anxiety that she consciously perceives as theirs and not hers. We readers know what the twenty-five-year-old self does not know in words: the fear is hers: and perhaps the creative, image-seeing, inarticulate, right-brain self has been given these images precisely because the conscious, left-brain self could not face them, and they had no other way of surfacing.

Fear calls up fear, object object: as the creative breakthrough takes hold, shards of the buried, denied memories surface. The household icons are followed by other, transitional still lifes, first of the three sofas that we readers recognize as belonging to her childhood tormentors' mothers; and then of "a genie's bottle" bouquet of red-berried deadly nightshade, concealing the scarcely visible eyes of cats (337). Though the twenty-five-year-old painter is apparently cut off from conscious knowledge of what the nightshade means,[6] we readers know that it grew by the bridge in the ravine, where Cordelia, Elaine's enthralling chief tormentor, told stories of poison and death; we also know that nightshade is the "dark word" — Risley thinks literally and visually — that covers the square of blackness that goes back in Risley's memory to things she can't remember: her ninth birthday party, and the deep, black hole in Cordelia's yard where Elaine "lost power" when the others buried her and left, pretending it was a game (107-08).

Then, without conscious warning, the bigotted, deadened Christian and bad-hearted ogress of Elaine's childhood, Mrs. Smeath, floats up "like a dead fish" (338), smugly accusing the pregnant painter, whose fear of judgment has called her up. Mrs. Smeath's image had been fixed eidetically, in the shame and hatred of fifteen years before, when the ten-year-old Elaine, coming up from the cellar where she played with Grace Smeath, the second-in-command of the tormentors, had heard Mrs. Smeath and her ex-missionary sister condemning Elaine and her family as heathens, and approving the other girls' persecutions: " 'It's God's punishment' " (180). The ten-year-old self was not a painter, but she was a visualizer, and an imitator of the few art forms she had seen: Elaine saw her own wave of shamed hatred as a white-stemmed, fat, fleshy burdock stalk; and she saw Mrs. Smeath grotesquely and fatally squeezed, as in a comic book, through the wringer of Elaine's mother's washing machine (180).

The twenty-five-year-old self is a painter, in command of the demanding media of egg tempera, which gives her the "luminous flatness" she wants, and had first seen in her father's scientific slides, then in Mrs. Smeath's church windows and Sunday School slides (36, 247, quoted 326). And, until she marries, the pregnant twenty-five-year-old self has the energy of shame and terror: her luminous, grotesque icons of Mrs. Smeath multiply "like bacteria" (338), becoming the anchor series of her first group show, and perhaps the major series of her retrospective.

The fifty-year-old self, re-viewing her work at the retrospective, is not the same as the mid-twenties self who painted the righteous Mrs. Smeath in shame and terror; now, forgetting those catalytic emotions, Risley sees instead her own merciless malice and vengeance. And, for the first time, Risley sees in, and through, the painted eyes of Mrs. Smeath the latter's defeat and uncertain charity: Risley sees now that Mrs. Smeath too was a "displaced person," transplanted from somewhere smaller, who yet took in what must have seemed to her an unbaptized, ragamuffin child of feckless, heathen parents (405).

As the narrator warned us, early on, "[t]here is never only one, of anyone" (6): the creative self may retrieve and make visible what the conscious, left-brain self has refused to see; an older self may screen or transform what a younger self has seen. Re-membering in words, the fifty-year-old Risley tells us that her young-adult painting, *Falling Women*, depicts three women falling from a bridge, "their skirts opened into bells" (268), onto sharp rocks that are really dangerous men: interpreted thus, *Falling Women* depicts, in a gender-reversed Lorelei image, Elaine's own romantic fall, and another young woman's fall, for an older, dangerous man.

But the reader can see *Falling Women* as a screened, right-brain re-membering of the ten-year-old Elaine's almost fatal descent from that bridge — a descent that the late-twenties self who made the painting could not consciously recall: Elaine's three girlhood tormentors had sent her off the bridge into the dark ravine, and, when she fell through the winter ice, had abandoned her to freeze. And the reader can also see how *Falling Women* connects to the painter's dream of Cordelia, who, we readers know, had been the enthralling ringleader of the tormentors, falling and falling, "her skirt open like a bell" (360), from a bridge or cliff; that dream came after the late-twenties Elaine, who had become the stronger self of the two, refused to help Cordelia, who had fallen apart mentally and tried to kill herself, to escape from a private institution. The quite real heterosexual dangers of *Falling Women*, then, are surface strata, overlying the earlier, buried female dangers.[7]

ATWOOD SEES THE SELF as layers, like time itself; Risley sees her paintings as luminous slices saved from time. All of Risley's five paintings from the previous year, which hang now on the west wall of her retrospective, were made after she had seen her "life entire" (398) in the talismanic cat's eye marble of her childhood, retrieved by Risley and her dying mother from the family steamer trunk. Risley's twelve-year-old self, who had put the cat's eye there to put away childish things, had lost all conscious memory of her persecution by the other girls and her near-death. The late-forties self could not, before she found her long-lost marble, recall the bad time that her now-dying mother wanted to discuss; her conscious mind had only an image, rising through memory tremulous as "water breathed on," of the three girls walking towards her, faces shadowed, over snow (395, 136-37).

Cat's Eye, the retrospective's title "self-portrait, of sorts" (407), shows this long-buried eidetic childhood image, now retrieved: the top half is Risley's present face, aging, and behind her a convex pier-glass "like an eye" that shows, as in Johannes Van Eyck's 1434 painting of *The Arnolfini Marriage* that Risley has told us of

(327), things otherwise unseen: the younger subject's hairdo, and the three small ill-willed girls of forty years ago who were her tormentors.

Seeing her life entire in the cat's eye marble, then, has enabled the forty-nine-year-old self to see back through time; all five of that year's paintings, hung on the west wall of the retrospective, look backwards or inwards in time, to re-member and re-create those lost and buried: her dead parents; her three muses, each aliens bearing alien gifts; her dead brother; the *Cat's Eye* self-portrait; and the Virgin of Lost Things.

The first, *Picoseconds*, of her parents, is mostly landscape, in a style reminiscent of 1920's and 1930's Canadian landscape paintings; her young parents are painted with snapshot realism, but in an altered light, in a small out-of-the-way corner, seen as if through a window in the landscape — as if through the re-membered window in the blackness that made them and the childhood seer seem far away, and unreal (68), or, in a later childhood dream, receding into the earth, as if into ice (167). Below the painted parents, like a burial platform, rendered in Egyptian tomb style, is a row of three of the white spherical logos that were set atop 1940's gas pumps — logos that may have been the child's first iconic symbols (23, 405-06). Both Risley's painting and the memories behind it strongly recall Edward Hopper's 1940 *Gas* station painting, in Burnett's *Colville* (152-53), with its altered, conflicting lights, its windows in the dark surrounding landscape, and its three round, luminous logos set like heads atop the row of gas pumps.

Three Muses is a triple portrait of the three adults who were kind to the alien child, and who were themselves aliens: Mrs. Finestein, the then-exotic Jewish neighbour; Mr. Banerji, the scientist from India; Miss Stuart, the teacher from Scotland. All appear as magis, presenting their gifts — an orange, a slide with spruce budworm eggs, a globe — to someone unseen, outside the picture, who must be the painter's childhood self. The gallery catalogue writer notes unhappily, in deconstructive gender-power phraseology, that not all these muses are female; Risley is amused. The reader may note that these three adult muses counterbalance, in Risley's re-membered childhood and in their placement as second picture here, the three malicious, hooded little peers of the fourth picture, which is the *Cat's Eye* self-portrait.

The third painting, *One Wing*, is a triptych for her brother Stephen; like the earlier *Pressure Cooker* six-frame painting of her mother, it is Risley's attempt to bring back the dead. And to let him fly, in his last moments, as he would have liked: for the brother, who falls slantwise against the clouds, an Icarus without a parachute, had been pushed from a plane and shot by hijackers. The side panels, of a cigarette-card style plane from World War Two, and a luna moth, are of other flying things treasured by Stephen's boyhood self — the self of his that Elaine had known, before he changed into a physicist whose language she could not understand. The form of *One Wing* strongly recalls several of Joyce Wieland's plane

crash paintings and constructions; the content — of other parts of the *Cat's Eye* novel as well as of *One Wing* — recalls the compassionate acceptance of multiple perspectives on suffering, the children "who did not specially want [suffering] to happen," and of course the "boy falling out of the sky" in the Breughel's *Icarus* of W. H. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts."[8]

The titles of Risley's first and fifth new paintings, *Picoseconds* and *Unified Field Theory*, come from her physicist brother's language, and are another way of reaching out to him. *Unified Field Theory*, the fifth new painting, portrays the dreamed or miraculous Virgin Mary, "Our Lady of Perpetual Help, . . . Perpetual Hell," who had saved the freezing ten-year-old, by stepping down from the bridge, through the air, to give her the warmth and will to climb up the cold ravine and live (182, 189-90). Risley identifies her as "the Virgin of Lost Things" (408), found by the painter in a Mexican church over twenty years ago; at her heart the Virgin holds an oversized cat's eye marble. She is placed mid-air, slightly above the bridge, a Queen of Heaven with star lights in her black robe, and the lower half of the moon above her;[9] behind and below the Virgin are her realms, sky and earth and under the earth, where the clear stream flows down from the dissolving dead people of the cemetery, as the eight-year-old Cordelia had said (75), and underneath the bridge.

The retrospective's west wall paintings, then, are one summing up, of what Risley has made of her time. Re-viewing her handiwork before the opening, the fifty-year-old painter sums up their human figures with compassion, the gallery catalogue with irritation, and the paintings themselves with a painter's appreciation for the fluid edge of time that she has made, or preserved from time; and, finally, with a painter's jealousy: why not burn or slash them all? For they have taken their energy from her, and she herself is only "what's left over" (409): in Atwood's concepts of self and creativity, the creating self is a place that — like the pregnancy-weakened mothers of gods in *Surfacing* (181) — is drained by what has taken place in it.

FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE, the *Cat's Eye* artist, and the *Cat's Eye* novel that portrays her, are deceptively yet profoundly woman-centered and feminist-oriented. Though the fifty-year-old Risley contrarily refuses to give feminist answers in interviews, distrusts women, and would of course much prefer a retrospective at the more prestigious male-oriented Art Gallery of Ontario, and more men to flirt with at her openings, Risley's own re-memberings, her intensely introspective paintings, and her solitary, inward rather than peer-oriented, jail-breaks and re-creations of herself as an artist, stress what are characteristically, but not exclusively, female experiences and female patterns of creativity.[10] As it is, Risley's (bristly? grizzly?) resistance to feminist commentary can only partly

camouflage her pursuit of female icons and myths in Mrs. Smeath and the Virgin. For, although a chorus of reviewers has been misled on this point, Risley's life and art do engage and dramatize a number of salient feminist concepts — albeit at times covertly, ironically, or with radical extensions.[11]

Risley's *Cat's Eye* self-portrait is an intra-gender, all-female version not only of the Van Eyck portrait she tells us she has studied, but of something she does not mention — Virginia Woolf's remark, in *A Room of One's Own* (94), about each gender's power to show the other the unseen spot at the back of the head. This self-mirroring *Cat's Eye* portrait, which sums up so much of Atwood's novel, is also a conversely all-female, peer (and pier-glass) version of Woolf's argument (35-36) that woman has served as man's reflecting, falsely enlarging mirror; and of Simone de Beauvoir's argument (xvi-xvii) that woman has been man's inessential, objectified "Other": for Risley's adult self has been haunted, consciously and below the layers of her conscious knowing, by the falsely belittling mirrorings of her younger self that the painting's hooded, pier-glass-reflected girls had made her see.

The scene in which the young painter Risley saw herself mirrored, "a great deal smaller than life-size," in Cordelia's sunglasses (303), when Cordelia was temporarily flourishing, and Elaine was the crestfallen one, similarly re-conceives Woolf's and de Beauvoir's arguments, by locating them not between the genders, but among women only. Comparison with two of Atwood's earlier novels makes plain how Atwood's generic concept of the human self's good and evil, tormenting and victimhood, has progressed from direct dramatizations of the earlier feminists' woman versus man mirrorings: for in *The Edible Woman* (1969) the succumbing Marian sees "myself, small and oval, mirrored in his eyes" (83) at the moment when her fiancé Peter gains power over her; and in *Bodily Harm* (1981) the despairing, drunken Rennie sees her own image as "two little faces, white and tiny, reflected back at her from his [Paul's] sunglasses" (99).

Risley's *Life Drawing* is a tableau that both criticizes and comically reverses the gendered game of reflector and Other: in it Josef and Jon, the two painters who were her first lover and her first husband, stand stark naked, their bodies luminous in Risley's "somewhat idealized" realism, with "wonderful bums" (365-66). Each man is painting his own culturally-oriented projection: the older, European Josef has created a mysteriously brooding Pre-Raphaelite face; the contemporary Canadian Jon has hot red, pink, and purple abstract expressionist-process swirls. Neither man's art depicts what we and Risley see: the female model who sits between them, flat-footed, mostly sheeted, hands folded, facing front, her head "a sphere of bluish glass" (366). This ironic, tentative, and somewhat schematic female seer's sphere-eye is presumably a glimpse of the childhood cat's eye sphere that was then still buried to the painter's consciousness.

" 'Chloe liked Olivia,' " Woolf had said in *A Room of One's Own*, welcoming the women's novels that would tell the untold story of women's friendships, "those

unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone," without men's capricious or coloured illuminations of them, without men's "astonishing extremes of [their] beauty and horror" (quoted 86, 88, 86). *Cat's Eye* tells such an untold women's story — but extends Woolf's liberal feminist welcome to include *women's* capricious or coloured illuminations, *women's* projections of beauty and horror onto women.[12]

Better still, Woolf had urged, let women share an impersonal, undomestic interest: "Now if Chloe likes Olivia and they share a laboratory," Woolf argued, their friendship will be "more varied and lasting," because less personal (86-88, quoted 88). Perhaps. Atwood's Elaine and Cordelia do share a laboratory together, in grade 11, after Cordelia has begun to fail and Elaine to excel; Elaine dissects the specimens for both of them. Cordelia fails the mid-year exam, and Elaine, excelling in the final Grade 13 exam — " 'I can draw anything' " — finds her vocation: she is not going to be a biologist, but a painter (255).

Atwood's Elaine and Cordelia, then, are each other's mirroring, complementary, and sometimes darker Others; and the basic narrative structure of their now-told women's story is their counterpoised rise and fall. For the first half of the novel, the enthralling Cordelia projects what we later learn is her own shame and vulnerability onto Elaine, until the weaker one loses power, falls, and then regains herself. Midway in the novel, Elaine gets possession of the power that had been Cordelia's, in the ostensibly comic cemetery scene where Elaine pretends to be a vampire, and Cordelia becomes the uncertain one (232-33). From then on, Elaine is the stronger one: she uses her newly acquired "mean mouth" on Cordelia (234), overcomes her own later, lesser falls, rises from a failed marriage and a failed suicide attempt that in part reflects Cordelia's earlier attempt; while the once-enthralling Cordelia falls apart, failing school and chances, drifting, drinking, "let[ting] go her idea of herself" after her failed suicide attempt, and finally vanishing (358).

The possession, mutual vampirism, and complementary pairing of Elaine and Cordelia, that go back in the novel to Risley's re-memberings of their first times together, go back also to Atwood's own discussion in 1986 of these darker elements of the girlfriend novel in Joyce Carol Oates's *Solstice* (1985): "The apparently weaker, more conventional, more insecure one is Monica. . . . The dominating eccentric is Sheila, a painter (watch out for those artists) with black eyes, 'strong cheek bones' and a 'long straight nose,' who has dirty boots and who first appears riding up on a horse, just like the Gothic hero she at first resembles. What she appears to hold for Monica is 'a childlike offer of complicity, mutual recognition' " ("That Certain Thing" 39).

Atwood's *Cat's Eye* plays with pieces of this passage — and with Goddess, witchcraft, Edenic, and Shakespearean allusions — to re-create a girlhood version of the *Solstice* (soul's test?) pair: in the beginning, the strange, dominant Cordelia some-

how "creates a circle, takes [the apparently weaker, conventionally insecure Elaine] in," by "confiding" in Elaine about the dog-poop-coloured fallen apple that has dirtied Elaine's shoe (70). This strange Cordelia's richer mother has artistic tastes, and paints still lifes; Cordelia's exotically Shakespearean-named sisters spin "a web of conspiracy around [their] Mummie" (73); Cordelia herself fascinates the other girls by telling them, in jest or earnest, to break their eggshells "So the witches can't put out to sea" (72).

"For we think back through our mothers, if we are women," Virginia Woolf had argued in *A Room of One's Own* (79): Risley's Mrs. Smeath series, her *Three Witches* painting of the three sofas of her three tormentors' mothers, and her Virgin paintings radically extend Woolf's concept to include all Risley's mothers, evil as well as good, visionary as well as real. Perhaps evil *more* than good, for it is the evil mother, Mrs. Smeath, and not the real, good mother, or the good, maternal Mrs. Finestein, who gets the more intensely powerful representations in Risley's paintings and re-memberings. And it is Mrs. Smeath who becomes for the narrator what Virginia Woolf had called "Milton's bogey," shutting out the view (118): it is Mrs. Smeath, multiplied across one wall, who dominates the retrospective as no other figure does: "bigger than life, bigger than she ever was. Blotting out God" (404).

Mrs. Smeath *is* bigger than merely human life, as literary and feminist reclaimings of the untold stories of female gods and traditions make clear: for Mrs. Smeath's Smith/Teeth name and image evoke not only Everywoman, but also the terrible, devouring Teeth Mother, the Kali Ma archetype, blood-worshipped, one with or accompanied by her moon (see, e.g., Barbara G. Walker's very useful *Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* 488-94, especially 491; and 669-73). Mrs. Smeath's kitchen is an ogress's lair that "smells of marrow-fat and stewing bones"; her hands are red and knuckly; the worn-thin knife in her right hand is "a crescent-moon sliver" that creates a potato-peel "long pale spiral" (96), the shape of Kali's female serpent, signifying death and rebirth.[13] Mrs. Smeath's face is round, white, luminous, potato-like and moon-like, with a flat "hair crown" or "hairpin crown" (97, 352); in Risley's *Rubber Plant: The Ascension*, she rises to heaven on her sofa, while a doily-shaped moon floats behind her (86).

"Her bad heart floats in her body like an eye, an evil eye, it sees me," the condemned Elaine thinks, after overhearing Mrs. Smeath judge Elaine's family heathen and her persecution deserved (180); two of Risley's later paintings, *AN·EYE·FOR·AN·EYE* and *THE·KINGDOM·OF·GOD·IS·WITHIN·YOU* panel of *White Gift*, show Mrs. Smeath with her "wicked paring knife" and exposed reptilian heart (352). Mrs. Smeath's concealed, evil witch's eye is, of course, an almost wholly negative version of Elaine's concealed, creative cat's eye. Both versions go back, in female archetypes, to the all-seeing eye of the pre-Chris-

tian, and sometimes cat-headed, Egyptian Goddess of Justice, Maat, and to Neolithic " 'Eye Goddesses' " (Walker 294-95, 561-63).

Mrs. Smeath's bad heart goes back in the *Cat's Eye* text to the exposed, eye-like turtle heart "glistening dark red down there in its cave" (170), a life-in-death and obviously uterine image that the ten-year-old Elaine had seen at her father's Zoology open house, shortly after seeing bottled, fetal human twins; she fainted in the turtle room. The red turtle heart also goes back, in the novel, to the section remembered just before it — to her parent's exposed, blood-splotched mattress, the morning after her mother had lost a baby. In female archetypes, the bad, caved red heart goes back to Kali Ma as "the primal Deep, or menstrual Ocean of Blood at creation" that is the flux between universes — and between Elaine's life and suicidal despair, her girlhood and womanhood (Walker 491).

Risley's Virgin Mary paintings honour a female saviour who, like her Kali-imaged Mrs. Smeath, goes back to ancient female myths and goddesses suppressed by the Christian patriarchs (Walker 602-13). As a young mother, painting at night, Risley had tried to create a non-traditional, female iconography, one "more accurate about motherhood than the old bloodless milk-and-water Virgins of art history" (344). Her Mary is fierce, wild, lion-headed like the Egyptian Mother of the Gods as Sphinx (Walker 374-75), with a gnawed bone at her feet, and Christ as a cub in her lap. Her other Mary, "descending to the earth," is a tired Everywoman, or Everymother, *Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, carrying groceries (344). The fathers of the church had humanized Mary to discredit her worship; Risley creates a Mary in her own, human image that re-credits and re-claims female history. It is characteristic of Risley's contrary, visual, let-the-right-brain-make-what the-left-brain-denies creativity, and of her deeply scarred, contrary feminism, that these two heretical Virgins, with their Christ-like lion ferocity and female humanity, appear in the text immediately after Risley's articulate, left-brain protest against her consciousness being raised by feminists: "Sisterhood is a difficult concept for me, I tell myself, because I never had a sister" (344).

The envisioned Mary who had saved the freezing Elaine had walked, not on water, but on "nothing . . . on air" down from the bridge, an alien greenish-yellow light in rays behind her head, her heart a partly revealed "glimpse of red" in her half-opened cloak (189). In the text, Mary's good red heart mirrors Mrs. Smeath's bad red heart; Mary's saviour/godmother gift to Elaine is the ability to walk, with freezing feet, on snow, up the hill and, a few days later, the ability to walk away from Cordelia: "It's like stepping off a cliff, believing the air will hold you up. And it does" (193). In female archetypes, Risley's envisioned Mary, her Mexican peasant Virgin of Lost Things, and her *Unified Field Theory* Virgin are all three older images that reveal Mary as the composite of versions of the pre-Christian Great Goddess: moon-mother; God-Mother; creatrix of the universe; Queen of

Heaven, Earth, and Hell or underworld; goddess of life and death, water and earth (Walker 602-13).

In female archetypes, Cordelia's name, Risley tells us, is goddess-linked: "Heart of the moon, jewel of the sea"; failing, her powers in eclipse, Cordelia's face becomes "a blurred reflection of a moon" behind a window (263, 259). Elaine's own name, she does not tell us, goes back to the British Queen Elen or Elaine, the "Lily Maid" (lily-livered?) who was the Arthurian bride of Lancelot-Galahad, and whose "sexual-symbolic charm," that made Lancelot invincible, was a "pearl-bedewed sleeve of red silk" (Walker 272): this ancient woman's charm becomes, in *Cat's Eye*, the red plastic oval 1940's-style purse with a gold-coloured clasp, where Elaine hides the cat's eye marble that she had wanted to make herself invincible.[14]

RISLEY'S CONTRARY RESISTANCE to feminism, and her understandable and all-too-womanly distrust of women, then, should not block our seeing that *Cat's Eye* is structured not only as a reflector and Other struggle of female friendship, but also as a struggle against female evils, human and archetypal, and a quest for a female saviour. The ten-year-old Elaine had tried to pray to a Mary she had found on a Catholic Sunday School paper lying in the street, and, failing, had visualized a Virgin's heart that looked like her own red plastic purse (183-84). The young painter had searched for Mary's statues for years, but had not known what in her own life had been lost, when she finally found the primitive, uncrowned, Mexican peasant Virgin of Lost Things, and tried to pray to her. Only after Risley's dying human mother had unearthed the forgotten red purse, with the forgotten cat's eye marble in it, could Risley "see [her] life entire" (398), and paint the Virgin as Creatrix Mother Night, in *Unified Field Theory*, holding the omniscient cat's eye that is also her World Egg, embryo of the universe, at her heart (Walker 270).

Risley has been twice tested in the streets during the week of this novel: once a graceless, Smeath-like drunken old Catholic woman calls for Our Lady and love; once a darker, foreign, middle-Eastern young woman, who looks like a *Lady of Perpetual Help*, Risley's tired Virgin as Anywoman (151-53, 313-15), begs for money to feed her family. Each test scene brings back, or is brought back by, something that is the sea-green of Cordelia's eyes. Each test scene is framed in Risley's re-memberings of mothering: the first, in re-memberings of Risley's own mother, dead and alive, including the painting Risley made to try to bring her back, *Pressure Cooker* (150-51); the second test, which is preceded by re-memberings of Risley's own mothering, is followed by other sorts of mothering — the help that the young adult painter had given, and failed to give, to another woman hemorrhaging from a self-induced abortion. Each test Risley passes yet also fails: a partly

good Samaritan, she gives some help, some money, but in her heart she resentfully or guiltily holds back: she has been, yet partly failed to be, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

The meaning of this fairy-tale structured quest could traditionally be called Christian — were it not that Atwood's woman-centered novel repeatedly depicts these values as belonging to the Mary-Goddess, not Christ. Risley's quest ends with the hero breaking through the win-lose bondage of reflector versus Other, removing the mote of vengeance that was in her own eyes, rejecting the traditionally masculine code of justice ("An eye for an eye leads only to more blindness"), and learning, in three stages, or stations, of her past, present, and future among women, to accept Mary's traditionally feminine code of "mercy" (*Cat's Eye* 405; Walker 607-08). Mercy first for her elder enemy, Mrs. Smeath, whose defeat and charity Risley (wisely?) sees with compassion, at the retrospective, when she learns to see through her old enemy's eyes and to find her own old hatred wanting in compassion.

Mercy second for her peer, Cordelia, who does not appear at the retrospective. Risley, who has drunk too much at the retrospective, mourning Cordelia for dead, finds her the next day in the Goddess's primal ravine, on the path by their old bridge. This revenant or image is the dangerous Cordelia, the wild, defiant child at the height of her powers; but Risley, who is now the older and the stronger, can finally see what at nine she could not see and in Grade Thirteen she had refused to see (252-53): Risley sees, compassionately, that the crippling loneliness and shame are not hers but the father-angering Cordelia's — and always were. Wisely, mercifully, Risley reaches out, comforting this Cordelia as the envisioned saviour Mary had once comforted her; but, as in witchcraft and vampire lore, "[t]he snow in my eyes withdraws like smoke" (419); the primal powers that let her Cordelia through are gone.

The *Cat's Eye* seeings end with Risley's third and future affirmation, "flying or being flown, westward" through the night (420), alongside two old women whose red mouths, raucous laughter, and hobbling gaits mark them as the crones that were hunted down in other, evil times, for witches. As they eye her "cunningly" — Atwood's female-rooted word is not a random choice — Risley sees them as they are: old, carefree, tough, "innocent and dirty" with their bathroom jokes, playing like children, but without the childhood pain (420). Old ladies, old women, old friends, they are what Cordelia's and her own innocent, tough-mouthed thirteen-year-old selves had stared at, in Risley's first-presented memories of Cordelia (4). Now the aging Risley sees these elder crones with compassionate identification, not as Others but as her kind, the future that she and her Cordelia will never have.

The night through which they fly is moonless, starlit. The stars are reflections, temporary, "shining out of the midst of nothing" (421) — like the rest of the universe. Yet something has come of nothing: Risley's fluid, layered, partly transparent self, her re-memberings, her luminous images born from the nothing of

despair, a despair that was Cordelia's and her own. The light is old and scant, but it is, the seer tells us, "enough to see by" (421).

NOTES

[1] Margaret Atwood, ' "the self is a place in which things happen,' " High Barnett Tape, 1973, quoted in Grace (86, 106).

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association des litteratures Canadiennes et Québécoise/Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures, Laval University, 30 May 1989. Part of a different version was presented at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association, Washington, D.C., 28 December 1989. I am again indebted to Roberta Rubenstein for a perceptive and exact critique, and to Carole L. Palmer for bibliographic help; and also to Ellen Stekert and Diana Brydon for their comments.

[2] See Edwards' germinal, practical, artist-oriented discussion of right-brain creativity and seeing (vi-vii, 25-43).

[3] Compare Anaïs Nin speaking to Judy Chicago "about the 'transparency of the psyche' — the sense of being able to see through successive layers to the very core of reality" in Nin's and Virginia Woolf's work, in Chicago (176, 179). The *Cat's Eye* seer's image of overlaid transparencies also suggests Ian McHarg's transparent plastic overlays, used for regional planning, as described in McPhee (147-48); but Atwood's transparencies are liquid, "like water" (3).

[4] Folklorist Ellen Stekert linked, in our 18 September 1989 telephone conversation, Elaine's blue cat's eye marble to the blue-eyed evil eye and the amulets against it.

[5] Risley's breakthrough series can be dated in *Cat's Eye* (336-39) : the paintings come in the first trimester of pregnancy; the child, Sarah, is over two years old when Risley will be thirty in a couple of years.

[6] Because these two paintings, of the sofas and the nightshade, are briefly described, without any mention of Elaine's childhood memories, and because they come between the household objects and the Mrs. Smeath series, for which Elaine says she has no context and no connection, the implication is that the sofas and nightshade also arrive detached from memory (337-38). But the fact that the painter has named the three sofas painting *Three Witches* in the first, group show (348) must mean some knowledge of context — or an inconsistency in the novel.

[7] Compare Atwood's 1986 comment on Mary McCarthy's *The Group*: "even in the 50's a substratum of women's friendships underlay all the surface heterosexual cheerleading" ("That Certain Thing" 38).

[8] See especially Joyce Wieland's *Double Crash 1966*, Figure 22, p. [55]; *Cooling Room 1964*, Plate 15, p. [57]; *Cooling Room II 1964*, Plate 42, p. [132], in *Joyce Wieland* [57, 132]. Lines 7 and 20 of Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" are quoted.

[9] Risley's painting has the moon at the top of the sky behind the Virgin (408) — not, as in Jamie Bennet/Reactor's dustjacket cover illustration, below her feet.

[10] The first two sentences of Margaret Avison's "Snow" that conclude Atwood's 1972 *Survival*, also sum up Risley's development of herself and her art: "Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes. / The optic heart must venture: a jail-break / And recreation" (lines 1-3). Compare also Susan J. Rosowski on the inner pattern of female creativity in Cather: "While to grow up male is to be dispossessed of childhood in adolescence and then of adolescence in adulthood, to grow up female concerns claiming that which is within, then giving it form" (61). Risley's detailed,

scientifically exact, surreal paintings and her explanations of them are strikingly akin to the scientific surrealism and private, female iconography of Remedios Varo's paintings, as explicated in Lauter.

Risley's concealed narrative line, and her use of private, household experience from family and childhood, are sometimes discussed as female characteristics, for many female painters use them; but these characteristics are very salient in certain male painters as well: compare, for example, Risley's *Falling Women* and Andrew Wyeth's *Winter 1946*; Wyeth's mysticism, and his use of charged objects to convey emotions, are particularly akin to Risley's (Corn 58-59). Compare also Risley's and Alex Colville's preoccupation with the individual, nature, gravity, seeing, and mortal time, in Burnett, *Colville*.

[11] This paper is indebted to Glover's perceptive tracing of the levels of meaning, imagery, and creative autobiography in *Cat's Eye*, which goes deep enough to recognize Risley's Virgin of Lost Things as "female lunar goddess, mother of all things" (14); and to James's succinct evaluation of *Cat's Eye*, which follows Atwood's "That Certain Thing," as perhaps "the finest addition to the Best Girlfriend genre yet" (16). See also Atwood's discussion, in Peri, of personality development and contemporary feminism.

Although *Cat's Eye* has generally been appreciatively reviewed, in Canada and the United States, as a realistic, or all-too-realistic, novel about girlhood, quite a number of reviewers have seen Risley, or the novel, as anti-feminist: McDermott notes an unconfronted "undercurrent of misogyny" (35); Towers' less enthusiastic review finds Risley's criticism of feminists and women, which he quotes at length, interesting, intelligent, "direct and acerbic" (51); Robinson feels that Risley, "has missed out on both extremes of female experience, the deepest pain and the highest sisterhood" (778); and Yglesias concludes by suggesting that Atwood is either trying to choke off "her passionate negation of traditional femininity," or struggling to acknowledge and embrace "sisterhood, down to its most repellent characteristics" (4).

[12] Compare also the black American Toni Morrison's similarly titled 1970 novel, *The Bluest Eye*, where blacks are the foregrounded villains, as women are in Atwood's women-centered *Cat's Eye*.

[13] Mrs. Smeath is constantly associated with both the potato and the moon; Risley reminds us that potatoes can be poisonous, and are related to the deadly nightshade that in her mind's eye fills in the black square of time where she lost power (108-09).

[14] *Cat's Eye* translates the Arthurian saga among Elaine's men, also, but with less emphasis. Young Lancelot, who had as the ancient phallic god Lanceor descended into the Goddess's womb, defeats the aging solar god, Gawain, to win Elaine (Walker 337-38, 528-29). Jon, who becomes Elaine's first, young husband after impregnating her, defeats her first, aging lover, Josef, who had come, mysteriously, from the Old-World east. " 'You'd think the sun shines out of his ass!' " the young painters (Jon's peers and perhaps Jon) say, jeeringly, of Josef (286).

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SIEVE

Kenneth Sherman

What passes through it
is always more than air.
Fluid of our lives, a moment's density
that weighs upon the handle
then pours down the sink like a prayer —

panic in the pipes,
a running anxiety
under the pitch
of the metropolis.

Once the earth was a sieve —
what passed through it
nourished.

In the nightsky, that colander
of stars, those punctures of darkness,
implosion of black gas,
what the texts term "dark matter"

drawing you into curved air,
an endless returning
where your hands are shining, fluorescent
like the pale limbs of amphibians
or fetal creatures, potential,
there.

AT THE ICE PALACE

from Mall, *a collection of poems about the West Edmonton mall*

Anne Swannell

I

This most public of places, this marble mall,
is really a most private one,
and into it Ed Pauperson sometimes shuffles.
He takes the bus over here from downtown
when he gets the urge — and the money —
spends the day where the snow is not,
and there's plenty happening.

Cross-legged and bony, he sits
under the green and vigorous trees,
under the sun which pours through the roof,
makes the ice glitter, the gliding figures
golden, believing that later
he might just make it to the other end
to find the thing they call Blue Thunder,
or see the dolphins jump.

He knows he must keep moving
or Security'll be on his tail.
They've got a mandate to keep out vagrants
of his scent and vintage.
Ed sometimes goes through the trash cans down on Jasper,
but he knows he can't do that up here
in this cathedral of consumption,
this hall of mirrors.

2

He wishes
he had one of them wheeled jobs
they rent to scoot around in.
Then, by God, he'd get 'round some:
sail over that shiny marble
like it was water and him a schooner
with the wind behind him.

He'd find himself
some hotsy-totsy little woman called Edwina —
not one of them you see nowadays —
one of the ones he has in his mind from before.
He'd scoop flowers out of the florist's —
if he could find a florist.

Red roses. Piled in her lap.
She'd take off then,
and he'd chase her
over the marble
as far as the fountains,
where she'd throw the flowers — one at a time —
into the water shooting upwards.
The force of the fountain
would keep the blossoms jumping
and everyone would clap.

When Security came,
Ed and Edwina would rip all their clothes off
real quick like, and jump in the fountain
along with the flowers.
The trumpet of water, the sun-lit bubbles
would keep them up
rising high and forever
out of Security's reach —
clean, and sparkling, and laughing out loud.

3

He looks around, casual,
fumbles a crumpled bill from his pocket,
buys a cup of chocolate;
it tastes sweet to him, and hot enough.

MISS CALCULATION LEARNS THE FACTS

Margaret Blackwood

No one bothered to tell me
the real facts of life.

They explained the bees,
and the birds too, of course,
but not entirely.

I learned why bees are significant
because of their hairy little legs,
why humming-birds perform
a kind of cunnilingus on unsuspecting flowers;
and I grew up thinking I'd be queen of a hive,
that humming-birds were somehow to be avoided.

I'd been led to believe
that delivery was something
that saved you from evil,
until I saw a pair of forceps
in a hospital display.

I was given a copy
of *Gray's Anatomy*,
I pressed flowers in it,
spread the petals
over the diagrams of female genitals.
Men were in there somewhere,
but I had the distinct impression
those pages were to be avoided.

I learned about elephantiasis,
ringworm and rabies,
and there'd been a lot of abstract talk
of love and babies.
I was taught never to laugh at a man —
that there's no telling
what they'll do,
but no one explained
the other woman, tetracycline, and scabies.

DON'T FENCE ME IN

Where to put bpNichol's "Three Western Tales"

Julie Beddoes

> To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, 'operations' or effects of subjectivity.
>
> This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it *says* it is.
>
> *Jacques Derrida*[1]

bpNICHOL'S *Three Western Tales* is historiographic metafiction, multiple parody, word game and old-fashioned narrative. It simultaneously depends on and ridicules many conventional literary categories, from traditional biography to what is generally called postmodernism. But whom or what is indicated by "it"? On the answer to this question depends the acceptability of many statements about the text, most particularly any claim that, as text, it performs actions, whether textual, such as parody, or textual-political, such as constructing images of identity or interpellating particular reader positions.

To insist that this "it" is not singular, but a collection of "effects" of subjectivity, as suggested by Derrida, is to ignore much textual evidence: the *Tales*' location as a unit of a book called *Craft Dinner*, copyright bpNichol; the suggestion in the untitled passage which follows the dedication that the book itself possesses a voice; the inclusion of the tales under one heading; and the many repetitions and similarities between them. The *Tales*' jokes and parodies coexist with, rather than cancel out, the issues raised in its themes and wordplay: the relationships of speaking and writing, rumour and truth, of trustworthiness and history. Do these serious discussions depend on a singular locatable voice amid its multivocality, as does Derrida's assertion of the existence of "incontrovertible truth" between the assertion of grammatically plural "operations or effects of subjectivity" and of a singular subject which is not "what it *says* it is"?

The simplest answer is to say that "it" is fifteen pages of a book called *Craft Dinner, Stories and Texts 1966-1976*, published in 1978 by Aya Press, copyright bpNichol.[2] The first of the three tales, "The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid," had appeared on its own in 1970 and was one of the books that earned Nichol the Governor General's Award for poetry that year. So there is a fashionable generic confusion here: a book awarded a prize for poetry reappears in a collection called *Craft Dinner*, which is described in its dedication as "a bunch of proses." Near the end of the book is a page headed "After Words" and ending with the printed words "bpNichol, Toronto, May 2, 1978," which describes *Craft Dinner* as "the short prose pieces."

If the *Tales* have no clear generic fence, at least they have a paper one. They have, like the book they inhabit, a title page and a dedication. Their subheading "1967-1976," raises a temporal fence simliar to that of *Craft Dinner*, which is subheaded "1966-1976." The three tales pretend to be a book, even though they share their cover and ISBN with several other pieces. They mark their difference — as book — from the other pieces in the book, which are merely pieces, by repeating the signs of a book, and, of course, by including three tales. Since a choice has to be made, *Three Western Tales* will henceforth be referred to in the singular, as "it" not "they."

Michel Foucault, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*,[3] has described the way discursive formations, which are collections of "statements" (*énoncés*), as well as of larger units which he calls "associated fields," can be defined in terms of their relations with other formations; the specificity is dependent on systems of differences. Saussure has shown how the meanings of smaller units of language, words, are along one axis, functions of their relations with each other, along another, of their differences from other words.[4] Another way to fence in *Three Western Tales* would be to call it an "associated field," or a text, made up of statements whose relationships also function along two axes. The idea of *différance* tells us that these axes are infinite in length, offering limitless possibilities of substitution. Understanding is possible because the axes are closed off in conventional ways, such as publication in books, and enclosure between fore- and after-words. The relationships of the *Tales* and the larger book which physically encloses it can be played with in a way similar to Nichol's play, in *The Martyrology*, with syllables and their arbitrary assembling into words. Foucault's and Saussure's proposals that linguistic units, whatever their size, are bounded by differences, not fences, have many demonstrated advantages over more traditional definitions. Nichol's fifteen pages of divine silliness show that interstices and differences are just as movable as, and a lot more permeable than, pickets and barbed wire.

But while post-Saussurean theory, including the work of Foucault, weakens the basis of traditional, critical categories such as genre, or author as unifying or originating subject, critics seem to need to go on using them, at least heuristically, in

order to be able to do criticism at all. bp would notice that the word *différance* contains "fence." M. M. Bakhtin, in "The Problem of Speech Genres," an essay written in 1952-3, is quite happy to give authorial intention, unqualified by linguistics or Freud, equal place with generic conventions in the production of "utterances." (Bakhtin's utterances resemble Foucault's statements in their independence of grammatical structure and their dependence on textual surroundings.) "The finalized wholeness of the utterance," Bakhtin says, '... is determined by three aspects (or factors) that are inseparably linked in the organic whole of the utterance: 1. semantic exhaustiveness of the theme; 2. the speaker's plan of speech will; 3. typical compositional and generic forms of finalization."[5] Foucault too includes in the specification of what constitutes a statement that it be "a group of signs" to which "the position of the subject can be assigned,"[6] but disconnects this position from any authorial identity or plan. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, however, in its many undecidabilities, leaves a space for the idea of the occupant of the "subject position" as prior to the existence of the statement: "It is in this gap and the attempts to bridge it that Foucault can be spied resorting to categories which have been vehemently rejected in other parts of the text."[7]

Recent discussion of texts sharing the attribute "authored by bpNichol" has most often concentrated on questions of voice, pronoun and subjectivity. This is the case in many of the essays appearing in *Tracing the Paths: Reading = Writing The Martyrology*, edited by Roy Miki.[8] Critics have discussed, for example, the multiplicity of possible references for the pronoun "i" and the juxtaposition of passages which propose the existence of a transcendent authority with passages which undermine the possibility of such authority. In Saussurean linguistics, language is a system of differences with no positive terms. In literary criticism, however deep one's post-structuralist convictions, it is hard not to resort to the notion of a positive term, even while avoiding giving it a name, let's say bpNichol. The *Tales* is a text which, like the *Martyrology*, illustrates the ways in which the existence of a positive term is simultaneously indefensible and indispensable.

Critics who get so solemn about Nichol's work that they forget that it is funny risk the fate of billy in the first tale, who shot himself — and a lot of Freudians — from behind a grocery store: "god said billy why'd you do all those things & billy said god my dick was too short." These tales are about billy the kid in particular and about kidding in general. It is best not to keep the face too straight when talking about the ways in which *Three Western Tales* plays around with its relationships with some related texts and with the relationships of the multiple subject positions within it, including those of "it" itself. To recognise the parodies in the text is both to deny its origin in the creative impulse of a unique subject and at the same time to maintain the generic and stylistic "unities" of conventional criticism. But when we say it is performing a parody, joking, kidding, is it possible to find a referent for this "it" without reerecting all the logocentric fences that have been knocked down

by, among others, bpNichol himself? Many critics, perhaps out of nostalgia for this positivism, have substituted the infinite and unknowable mental processes of readers. It will be shown later on in this essay why this solution is as challengeable as Bakhtin's notion of author/subject identity.

THE *Tales* LOOKS LIKE A BOOK within a book, one of whose three books has also been a book. (Stephen Scobie has a similar discussion of *Book 6* of *The Martyrology* in *Tracing the Paths.*[9]) Each of the *Tales* has its title and is divided into sections — numbered with subheads in the first; dated Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday in "The Long Weekend of Louis Riel"; merely numbered in "Two Heroes." This proliferation of subdivisions can be seen as mocking the very notion of a bounded, autonomous text — or as doing the opposite.

As well as being graphically subdivided, the *Tales* is a collection of constantly changing subject positions. According to Bakhtin, it is this "change of speaking subjects" which "creates (the) clear-cut boundaries of the utterance. In his next paragraph, however, he finds that a novel "as secondary speech genre" is a "conventional playing out of speech communication and primary speech genres" (or utterances) in which "the speaking subject does not really change."[10] For Foucault, on the other hand, a novel is a "set of statements" which do not presuppose "the same enunciating subject."[11]

Tale one, "The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid," mimics the form of traditional scholarly biographies. It has an introduction in which the putative author discusses sources and relations with other texts, followed by numbered chapters with no intrusion of the authorial "i," starting with the words "billy was born" and ending with his death and a sort of epitaph: "everyone said, too bad his dick was so small, he was the true eventual kid."

Benveniste has pointed out that the pronoun "I" is one of the marks that "refers to the act of individual discourse," is "dependent only with respect to the instances of discourse in which they occur, that is, in dependence upon the I which is proclaimed in the discourse."[12] This distinction is maintained by Foucault when he claims that the personalized subject of the introduction to a mathematical treatise is different from the subject of the impersonal scholarship that follows.[13] But in both cases the subject that changes is the subject of the *énoncé*, not of the enunciating act. While the subject of the *énoncé*, the proclaimed "I" in the unnumbered first section of "The True Eventual Story" pretends to coincide with the subject of its *énonciation*, in the following sections it varies from statement to statement. But the cynical, wise-cracking voice of the commentator often returns, prompting the question, should one read the numbered sections as a different level of narration, the enunciation of the enunciated, or as on the same level as the first section, the

product of the same enunciator? Just as there are not enough graphic distinctions of underlining and quotation marks to differentiate all the books and sections of books present in the *Tales* and *Craft Dinner*, there are not enough critical terms to distinguish clearly the multiplicity of subjects of acts of enunciation here.

The four sections of the "biography" travesty the stability of meanings suggested by the illusion that scholarship is reproducible, regardless of identity of scholar and historical situation, as well as that authenticity is guaranteed by multiple sources. Here is most of section 2, titled "HISTORY":

> history says that billy the kid was a coward. the true eventual story is that billy the kid is dead or he'd probably shoot history in the balls. history always stands back calling people cowards or failures.
>
> legend says that billy the kid was a hero who liked to screw . . . legend always has a bigger dick than history & history has a bigger dick than billy had.
>
> rumour has it that billy the kid never died. rumour is billy the kid. he never gets anywhere, being too short-lived.

There is another dig at totalizing historical generalizations: "the sheriff stood on the sidelines cheering. this is how law & order came to the old west." The tale's relationship with accepted accounts of Billy the Kid's life, documented or legendary, is also one of travesty.

"The Long Weekend of Louis Riel" is similarly a calling-into-question through jokes of the delusions of academic historians, more widely held, one hopes, when these tales were being composed than nowadays. Any solemn thematizing of this tale, however, is to do exactly what the text is parodying when it mocks the fetishization of guilt by liberals more interested in the sacred cows they invent than in the historical figures who remain silent. Here the critic encounters one of those indeterminacies pointed out by Frank Davey.[14] Talking about *The Martyrology*, he refers to the "insertion into the text of passages which qualify or contradict uses of discourse elsewhere" but which "enable the assertion of 'absolute' truth through its unassertion." The first two sections of "The Long Weekend of Louis Riel" juxtapose nonsensical chatter about Riel and Dumont with what can be accepted as "real" history: in the section headed "Friday" there are a lot of jokes about breakfast, then the words, "he never ate after four in the afternoon" come right next to "spent his time planning freedom the triumph of the Metis over the whiteman." In "Saturday," more jokes about bacon collide with the historical fact that the whites deliberately starved the Metis and Indians. The Sunday and Monday sections poke fun at liberal guilt-trip mythologizing of those we now make heroes of, Riel and Dumont, with the implication that there is, somewhere, a true story to be told. Can we take the undermining of this notion carried out by the first tale as applying to this one? Do the two tales make up a single statement? This question postulates a unifying authority but one which perversely says that records of starva-

tion and execution are of no account, founded on no authority. "The True Eventual Story" seems to say that if a rumour is repeated it will be accepted as true; but if we support our serious beliefs about past events by recurring documentary evidence, how do we tell reliable repetition from unreliable? Can we say that the enunciators of the first tale were only kidding while the unidentified though intrusive enunciator of the second is to be taken seriously sometimes and not at others?

In these first two tales we have met at least three enunciators: the "i" of the first paragraph, who seems to say that it is kidding, the unspoken "I" of the kidder who narrates the biography, and the serious joker of "The Long Weekend." They appear in separately labelled sections, but also under the inclusive title "Three Western Tales." What relationships do they have to each other and to the reliable scholarly enunciators of the historical/literary texts they evoke? Is there a single subject enclosing them in its enunciation, despite the different histories behind their production and in their stories?

"TWO HEROES" IS THE TITLE of the third tale, inviting the unfulfilled anticipation that in it billy the kid might encounter Louis Riel. Its connections to the first two are more suggested than specified. It looks different since it uses upper case letters in the conventional way, except that, in section 2, there is a lower case "i" narrator who may or may not be the same voice as the upper case one at the end. Just as the first tale parodied biography and the second diary form, the five pages of "Two Heroes" imitate the frame novel. It starts with two old men reminiscing in a garden and ends with them dying there. In between we have stories of their lives together. They go west to fight Riel and Dumont and to Africa to fight in the Boer War; there is an embedded story about Billy the Kid, which they may or may not have written, and a lot of digressions about their families and friends. More parodies emerge — of several narrative styles, of cultural cliches, of pop psychology, of strong silent heroes.

There is no consistent subject position, neither the anonymous editorializer of "The Long Weekend of Louis Riel" nor the personal and impersonal kidders from "The True Eventual Story of Billy the Kid." The first section seems to be a description of the old men's death: the narrator says, "They have ceased speaking just as we appeared. They have finally reached an end to their conversation." No clue is given about who make up this "we" who heard nothing. In section 2 a lowercase "i" narrator talks of the old men's past behaviour with some of the same reservations as the opening speaker of the first tale: "but i did not know them then, never heard them, can only write of what i learned second hand." Again, there is no clue how to take this disclaimer: are we in the realm of kidding — of history shot in the

balls, of Riel shooting up breakfast — or of the serious, of comments on the self-serving mythologizing of Riel by whites? Are the two old men the "damn whitemen they're sitting up in all-night diners staging a food blockade"?

This undecidability continues through the sections. The third section warns us not to make connections between the tales when it gives a more conventional account of the deaths of Riel and Dumont. While the story of the men's imperialistic adventures is being told, the grammar is conventional with complete sentences and helpful commas. But when it switches to a potted history of Toronto, the narrator loses control, sentence fragments pile up and the referents of the repeated pronouns are unclear. In section 5, the narration moves to another level with the embedded story of a resurrectetd Billy the Kid and the Clockwork Man. The absence of the usual indicators, quotation marks for instance, makes it hard to know whether the narration stays on that level or moves back and forth, especially when the familiar self-questioning "I" seems to be present: "I don't know. I read what I read. Most of it's lies. And most of those liars say Billy the Kid died." The first tale, with its odd sentence structure and cheeky enunciator, seems to have erupted into the third, though the upper-casing of the "I" here confuses the issue. The status of the embedded story is in doubt in other ways: the old men's friends and relatives think they wrote it but we, its other readers, are given no evidence that they did and if we are still listening to the first narrator — of "Two Heroes" that is — how would he/she, who never heard them speak, recognize their style?

Section 6 is more straightforward although we do not know if the "I" who comments at the end is someone we have met before or yet another storyteller, that is the enunciator of just this chunk of the tales or of more than one section, perhaps all of them. In section 7, we go back to the story's first level for some more Freudian parody apparently coming from the narrator of the first two sections. At least, it is someone who knows the family and seems free from the doubts of the "I" of the passage last quoted. The crazy story of Billy and the Clockwork man goes on with its parodies of macho-violent heroes; is the title an ironic reference to these two inarticulate bullies or to the imperialistic old men? In section 10 the narrating "I" recurs, the slangy sceptic who doesn't know the end of Billy's story:

> If he went back home, he died a quiet old man. If he stayed in Africa he was never heard from again. He's not a fit man to tell a story about. Just a stupid little creep who one time in his life experienced some deep emotion & killed anyone who reminded him of his pain.

Section 11 produces an articulate narrator who seems to go back to the "we" of section 1 by referring to "my cousins and me." The presence of an overall controlling voice is paradoxically raised by the confession that the tale is falling apart: "I was never able, tho I listened often, to draw the whole thing together into any kind of story, any kind of plot, would make the sort of book I longed to write." But

this voice has not been in charge all the time, and anyway, which book are we talking about — "Two Heroes" or *Three Western Tales*?

THE *Tales* THUS CREATES POSITIONS for a series of narrating subjects, existing only in the instances of discourse that constitute them, at the same time as it suggests connections and continuities between them, from section to section and from tale to tale. Much depends upon what we take as the unit of text. If we take the three tales' coexistence under a title in a book to be more than accidental, we want to find in it a unifying enunciating voice, though such unity is immediately called into question by the proclaimed ten-year time of composition, let alone European theory from Freud onwards. If we find in the collection of short texts called *Craft Dinner* a yet more encompassing system of relations with the *Tales*, we have to deal with the strange untitled passage which follows the dedication page at the beginning of that book:

> you turn the page & i am here that in itself is interesting to
> me at least it is interesting since my existence begins as you
> turn the pages and begin to read me i have no way of
> knowing your motives . . .
> now we have
> begun we have begun again as we did before so many time
> each time you are different each time there is something
> about you that is different i am always the same . . .
> i am because you
> read me i was when that person wrote me . . .

Here is a voice inside *Craft Dinner* but outside the *Tales* and itself split by its proclamation of the "i." It — or they — draws attentions to the problems raised by Anthony Easthope when he says, in a passage which strangely echoes *Craft Dinner*, "I am placed as subject of the enunciation. But you, dear reader, wherever you are in my absence, when you read this . . . *you* take the position of subject of the enunciation because you produce the meaning."[15] But that "you" is, of course, as much split, as much representative of an absence, as the "I." These pages acknowledge the instability of the reader's position — "each time there is something about you that is different" — while emphasizing the iterability, the reproducibility of the material text, of the "i" and the "you" that are, the instant they have been enunciated, beyond the control and reach of the enunciator.

The act of interpretation, this passage points out, is no more the unifying origin of a text than is the act of composition; but the reader's inference that such an origin exists stems from the composition's implication of an originator, reinforced by the text's material unity, enclosed as it is by a copyright notice and an "Afterword"

and by a cover. It must then be the text in its material existence that speaks the "i" that claims to stay the same even while the reader is always different. Easthope's book as a whole contradicts the passage I have quoted when it points out the codes — the ideological significance of iambic pentameter for example — that enable particular readings and which exist independently of single acts of either reading or writing. This opening passage of *Craft Dinner* points out the multiplicity of all linguistic meaning, dependent on both preexisting codes, for instance, the literary conventions that the *Tales* parody, and unique acts of writing and interpretation, when it says, now echoing Bakhtin, "i am because you read me, i was when that person wrote me."

In following its own theoretical presuppositions as well as the processes of Nichol's text, my argument has returned to where it started: it is hard to talk about a text without positing some singular "it"; the conventions of our critical practice allow us to do so even when the existence of a unifying speaking voice is problematized. Otherwise, what have I — and the various other critics who have written about *Three Western Tales* — been talking about all this time? But if the text is not bounded by the limits of a single act of enunciation, the only entity this "it" can be said to refer to is its material and formal existence, the ink and paper, the signifiers and their arrangement on some pages. Here, even this unity is problematized by both the publishing history and the printed form of the *Tales*.

But billy reappeared in another tale, although its ending is uncertain. The small issue of whether literary criticism has a definable object merges with the large political one of how texts are to be held responsible for their consequences; both, to a large extent, rest on whether we can assume, for the time being at least, that there is a stable subject position within a text. Foucault urges us to look for the differences and relations of statements, fields and formations; we are sure to find that fences are built — which may be what he is suggesting when he describes statements as subjected to "the conditions and limits" of a "field of stabilization."[16]

There can be no supposition of any extratextual origin for this builder of fences round the enunciative position: it will be found only in the system of relations within and between texts, which includes the conventions within which it is criticized. Nor does it interfere with the process of Derridian *différance*. It does not function as a guarantor of meaning, merely as a device that would unify a text just enough to make it function as a unit. The postulation of such a subject-function, even for dialogic texts like the *Tales*, makes it possible for us to talk of them as performing acts like parody or kidding, or, for that matter, insulting, commanding or inciting to action. At the same time we have to remember the political dangers of such postulations, of how close they are to the reinstatement of the transcendent authoritative voice, whether of text or reader.

Perhaps we can regard *Three Western Tales* as, in Frank Davey's words, "a work-

book, . . . a place where these things can be done 'without penalty',"[17] which puts the *Tales* inside a playful fence of high seriousness.

NOTES

[1] In Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), 125.

[2] All citations are from this edition, which is not paginated.

[3] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

[4] While Foucault himself denies that the statement necessarily coincides with the units of language studied by linguistics, his terminology and the fact that he very seldom analyses signifying practices other than language justify the analogy with Saussure. See B. Brown and M. Cousins, "The Linguistic Fault: The Case of Foucault's Archaeology," *Economy and Society* 9:3 (August 1980), 251-78.

[5] M. M. Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres." *Speech Genres and other Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1986), 76-77.

[6] Foucault, 95.

[7] Brown & Cousins, 268.

[8] Roy Miki, ed., *Tracing the Paths: Reading = Writing The Martyrology* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1988).

[9] Stephen Scobie, "On Dangerous Ground: Two Essays in Six Books," in Miki, ed., 260-77.

[10] Bakhtin, 72-73.

[11] Foucault, 102, 93.

[12] Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Miami: Univ. of Miami Press, 1971), 220.

[13] Foucault, 94.

[14] Frank Davey, "Exegesis/Eggs a Jesus: *The Martyrology* as a Text in Crisis," *Reading Canadian Reading* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1988), 238.

[15] Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (London: Methuen, 1983), 43.

[16] Foucault, 99.

[17] Davey, 243.

HOW TO TREAT HOSTAGES

Sarah Klassen

1

Offer them blank paper and a pen. Tell them to write
their childhood, order their black fear and pour it
like blood into the emptiness.

2

Imagine them butterflies, or rare moths you have dreamed of
imprisoning. Their beautiful wings broken against the net,
their silence is yours now.

See what you can do with that.

3

Remove the ropes long enough for TV cameras to capture
their bleak, unguarded eyes, their naked feet. Unveil
in the evening news a clenched hand.

4

If they have wives, let them exchange a few words.
If they have children, let them weep.

5

About diet. Deprive them of everything sweet.
They must not see the luminous moon, orioles on a wet branch
in spring. The evening star.

Even a cloud's blue shadow nourishes.

6

Don't let them know the demands you make of their native country.
The impossible price of freedom, unsparingly revealed,
resolves the alarmed mind, unchains the heart.

Someone might even die for that.

7

As for mercy, don't rule it out. It is the trump card
you may never need.

JAEL

Sarah Klassen

Most blessed of tent-dwelling women. Judges 5:24

The woman who stands here in the entrance
to her tent
holds in her hand a stone
hammer and a tent peg.

Imagine
if you like, she's also holding
history
balanced for a moment in the sun's red glow.

You might ask what's going on in her mind
is she amazed
afraid
does she notice the wind riffling her hair?

The man asleep in her tent is a general. Perhaps
she remembers with what great need he drank
from her hand, took the blanket and her words
for granted.

The man you might assume dreams victory.
Chariots he abandoned gleam
on the blood-soaked plain. This is war.
Orders must be given and obeyed. Or not obeyed.

The sleeping man stirs. The woman's hand
aches with the terrible weight of the hammer.
Sun-browned fingers tighten
around the tent peg.

SHIFTING FOCALIZATION AND THE STRATEGY OF DELAY

The Narrative Weaving of "The Fionavar Tapestry"

Neil Randall

LIKE ALL LONG NOVELS in the genre of high fantasy, Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Fionavar Tapestry* — a trilogy comprised of *The Summer Tree*, *The Wandering Fire*, and *The Darkest Road* — relies strongly on suspense. The resolution of the plot is uncertain until the end, even though the genre practically demands that the confrontation between Good and Evil end with a victory for Good. The problem with such a victory, as Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* established over three decades ago, is that it is essentially pyrrhic; the Evil is overcome, but the cost is enormous. Part of a fantasy's suspense, therefore, is not whether Good will win, but how much will be sacrificed to achieve the victory; in high fantasy, which often depicts the end of an era, such sacrifice is invariably great. For Tolkien, the suspense is also, to a large extent, a function of space and geography; the One Ring must be carried, in great danger, to the land of Mordor, and the novel centres upon that journey. For Kay, to an equally large extent, suspense results from the technique known in narratology as shifting focalization.

Focalization is Gerard Genette's term, from *Narrative Discourse* (published as *Discours du recit* in 1972, with English translation in 1980), although Mieke Bal claims it as well, in *Narratology* (a 1980 translation of the second edition of *De theorie van vertellen en verhalen*). Interestingly, both theorists have similar reasons for adopting the term. Genette suggests that most discussions of point of view or perspective "suffer from a regrettable confusion between what I call here *mood* and *voice*, a confusion between . . . the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*" (Genette, 186). Almost identically, Bal rejects typologies of point of view or perspective on the grounds that "they do not make an explicit distinction between *those who see* and *those who speak*" (Bal, 101). Genette goes on to choose the "abstract term *focalization*" because it both solves the problems of "the too

specifically visual connotations of the terms *vision*, *field*, and *point of view*," and because it recalls Brooks and Warren's "focus of narration" (Genette, 189). Bal prefers *focalization* because *perspective* represents "both the narrator and the vision," because *focalization* can be easily turned into a verb (where *perspective* cannot), and because it is a technical term, "derived from photography and film," and thus fits well with the technical nature of narratological analysis.[1]

I have chosen *focalization* as my operative term for several reasons. First, I agree with Bal about the problems with *perspective*, and I understand Genette's point about critical confusion in the terms *perspective* and *point of view*. More importantly, however, *focalization* carries with it, as Bal suggests, the notion of the lens; we perceive an event in a story *through* the senses of a character, in much the same way as we view a natural scene through the lens of a camera. *Focalization*, furthermore, has an advantage over *focus* (which carries similar photographic connotations) because *focus* is usually followed by the preposition *upon* while *focalization*, at least as Genette has established, normally takes the preposition *through*. When we write of a narrator focalizing *through* a character, we clearly distinguish *who sees* from *who speaks*. Of course, the term *focalization* does not adequately address the problem in narratology of the visual metaphor, but even in this regard it out-performs both *point of view* and *perspective*.

Three other terminological issues need explanation. First, I use *kernels*, as Barthes' *cardinal functions* or *nuclei* are sometimes called, to denote those events that "constitute real hinge points in the narrative" (Barthes, 265); by doing so I partially deny the strict rules of *kernel narratives* developed by Prince in *Narratology* (83f.). Second, I have changed Genette's *variable focalization* to *shifting focalization*, because *shifting* seems more accurate. *Variable focalization* seems to suggest a change not only in the character focalized through but also the type of focalization, of which Genette identifies three (Genette, 189-90). By changing *variable* to *shifting*, I place the emphasis where it belongs, on the character through whom the focalization proceeds. Finally, I use *focalizant* in place of Bal's *focalizor* (Bal, 102), because the latter term once again confuses *who sees* with *who speaks*. *Focalizor* suggests one who acts, and only the narrator acts; the *focalizant*, like the camera lens, acts primarily as a medium.

In a novel of over one thousand pages and with eighty characters, constantly shifting the focalization of the narrative opens up the strong possibility of confusion. One typical chapter in *The Wandering Fire*, for example, Chapter 8, shifts the focalization four times, beginning with Sharra and moving through Kimberly, Loren, and Darien. Only three chapters in the entire trilogy are focalized through just one character, and one chapter, the eighth of *The Summer Tree*, shifts focalization twenty-one times. Obviously, shifting the focalization twenty-one times in twenty-four pages demonstrates either ineptness or strategy on the part of the author, and ineptness can be ruled out on two major grounds. First, the novel

works; the plot is complex, but at no point do the threads fall away from one another. Second, such rapid shifts of focalization are common throughout the *Tapestry*; chapter 8 of *The Summer Tree* is indicative of the novel's narrative technique, not an aberration of it, and as such it must be considered part of a total narrative plan.

Kay's plan is nothing as regimented as focalizing a given number of sections through each major character, or ensuring that all characters have the same number of pages dedicated to them. Nor, in fact, is there any evidence suggesting a planned order to the focalizations. Instead, the narrative strategy in *The Fionavar Tapestry* controls the speed and the manner in which we assimilate the culture of Fionavar, the progression of the plot, and the complexity of the novel's characters. In the absence of a Tolkien-like quest, the *Tapestry* demands a different kind of focus. That focus, it becomes quite clear, is on the interactions between the five primary characters (and us through them) and the world in which they find themselves.

Assimilating a secondary world through the mind of a naive character is scarcely a new concept in fantasy. We come to learn of Middle-Earth through Frodo and Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, we grow with Thomas Covenant towards an understanding of The Land in Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, we experience the bizarre world of Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* simultaneously with Severian, the main character, and we comprehend the world of magic and wonder with the narrator in Kinsella's *Shoeless Joe*. But Kay's work owes much more to the richly populated Victorian novel than to the sparser contemporary novel; in fact, its closest correlation is to the thick historical novel of the Dorothy Dunnett tradition. Whereas the four fantasies mentioned above are focalized through one or two central characters, Kay's forces us to experience Fionavar as its many characters do. *The Fionavar Tapestry* employs twenty-six different agents of focalization (*focalizants*) and even adds, in a very few places, an unspecified omniscient focalizant. Our task is to piece together the world by understanding the focalizations.

The effect of the *Tapestry*'s technique of shifting focalization is four-fold. First, as discussed, the shifts enable us to assimilate the world of Fionavar. Second, they form our knowledge of character; the technique of focalization, through its internalization, forces an understanding of the character of the focalizant. Third, the constant shifting moves the novel from incident to incident, and in fact makes possible the co-ordination of important events (*kernels* in Barthes' terminology). Fourth, and seemingly opposed to the third effect, the shifts delay the unfolding of the story; kernels that might occupy only a few pages if focalized through one character take several under the focalization of more than one. All four effects, it seems evident, have as their aim the reader's comprehension of a complex story, and all four point, as well, towards a rhetorical effect of grandeur and scope.

High fantasy might well fall under the genre of romance, but its aim is clearly the genre of epic. To this end, it considers mythology and apocalypse its proper study, with the conflict between Good and Evil forming the central focus of its plot. Typically, the battle against Evil will fall to the small, the naive, but by the end of that battle the small will have become part of the mythology of the world. This essential element of high fantasy, the idea of myth in the making, particularly the myth of the struggle against ultimate Evil, is accomplished only through the rhetoric of grandeur and scope. The battle is told against an ample backdrop, and its sweeps and movements are large and heroic. In Frye's terminology, high fantasy aims towards the mythic, even though it often settles for the high mimetic. The rhetoric of the battle between Good and Evil is identical to the rhetoric of grandeur and scope, and in *The Fionavar Tapestry* that rhetoric is partially the result of the shifting focalizations.

Assimilating the Secondary World

Helping the reader assimilate the novel's secondary world, certainly, is the most obvious purpose of the shifting focalizations. With each focalization, we learn something more about Fionavar; more than one is necessary because there is a great deal to assimilate. To demonstrate how the *Tapestry* achieves this effect, we need examine only two brief passages. Both are taken from the early chapters of *The Summer Tree*, because as the first volume in the trilogy its assimilative role is the most exacting. In the second and third volumes, our ability to assimilate grows precisely as the focalizant's understanding of Fionavar grows; thus, for example, we perceive the importance of Kimberly's freeing of the Paraiko in *The Darkest Road* because, like Kim, we have grown to understand the mythological meaning of the Paraiko's pacifism. In *The Summer Tree*, however, we know as little about Fionavar as do the five Torontonians, so what we come to know of the secondary world depends wholly on the experiences of the focalizants.

Early in the trilogy, Paul Shafer sees the dog Cavall for the first time, and the narration focalizes the sighting through him:

> So Paul lived, observed, oblivious, and after a time he drew a long breath and lifted his eyes from sightless fixation on the shadows below.
>
> *To see a thing none of the others saw.*
>
> High on the stone outer wall enclosing the garden stood an enormous grey dog, or a wolf, and it was looking at him across the moonlit space between, with eyes that were not those of a wolf or a dog, and in which lay a sadness deeper and older than anything Paul had ever seen or known. From the top of the wall the creature stared at him the way animals are not supposed to be able to do. And it called him. The pull was unmistakable, imperative, terrifying. Looming in night shadow it reached out for him, the eyes, unnaturally distinct, boring into his own. Paul touched and then twisted his mind away from a well of sorrow so deep he feared it could drown

him. Whatever stood on the wall had endured and was still enduring a loss that spanned the worlds. It dwarfed him, appalled him.

And it was calling him. Sweat cold on his skin in the summer night, Paul Shafer knew that this was one of the things caught up in the chaotic vision Loren's searching had given him. (*ST*, pp. 56,7)

Actually, neither Paul nor we know as yet that the grey wolf is, in fact, Cavall; not until considerably later do we discover the animal's identity. What is important in this passage is that the strict focalization both introduces us to the mystery that night holds for Fionavar and reveals something of Paul's character.

The sighting of Cavall occurs during the characters' first night in Paras Derval, and it represents the novel's first attempt at heightened mystery. The only way we can partake of the mystery is to be as ignorant as is Paul of the identity of the creature. The focalization *through* Paul ensures this ignorance. Further, the narration establishes a characteristic of Paul's, by stating immediately that Paul — and only Paul — sees the wolf. "To see a thing none of the others saw" simultaneously demands that we recognize the specificity of the focalization and points us towards Paul's unnaturally keen ability to perceive what others do not. At this point in the novel, in fact, Kay's focalizing technique is still being developed. This section of Chapter 4 contains an internal shift from Paul as focalizant to Kevin as focalizant, and it ends with what seems a further shift, to an unspecified observer watching the two men from oustide.[2] After this scene, such shifts become rare, with sections separating most of the shifts and with only occasional shifts without an accompanying section or sub-section break. "To see a thing none of the others saw," then, becomes prophetic not only of Paul's perceptual abilities but also of the novel's future narrative technique.

The second passage is from Chapter 6 of *The Summer Tree*, and it narrates Eilathen's giving of knowledge to Kimberly:

She saw the shaping of the worlds, Fionavar at first, then all the others — her own in a fleeting glimpse — following it into time. The gods she saw, and knew their names, and she touched but could not hold, for no mortal can, the purpose and the pattern of the Weaver at the Loom.

And as she whirled away from that bright vision, she came abruptly face to face with the oldest Dark in his stronghold of Starkadh. In his eyes she felt herself shrivel, felt the thread fray on the Loom; she knew evil for what it was. The live coals of his eyes scorched into her, and the talons of his hands seemed to score her flesh, and within her heart she knew him for Rakoth the Unraveller, Rakoth Maugrim, whom the gods themselves feared, he who would rend the Tapestry and lay his own malignant shadow on all of time to come. And flinching away from the vastness of his power, she endured an endless passage of despair. (*ST*, 97)

The purpose of this passage is easy enough to determine: it demonstrates how Kim acquires the knowledge of Fionavar she needs to become Seer of Brennin. It is a chronological history of Fionavar, albeit a highly sensory one, and the focalization

through Kim provides us with an understanding both of that history and of the nature of Eilathen's magic. Interestingly enough, this focalization is, in one important sense, a "point of view"; a Seer *sees*, even if the concept of "seeing" is really an extension of the common metaphor that equates seeing with understanding.

Despite the strict focalization of the passage, though, signs of an external narrator are much in evidence. When we are told that "she touched but could not hold, for no mortal can, the purpose and the pattern of the Weaver at the Loom," we have moved beyond Kim's perception. The passage does not, in fact, provide an explanation of the Weaver's pattern, and in that sense it maintains its strict focalization, but the fact that Kim perceives a pattern at all somewhat denies the focalization. What she is given, and what we are given as well, is the history of Fionavar as told by an immortal, one who knows that a pattern exists, even if he does not understand the pattern itself. For this passage, that narrator is Eilathen; the narrator's identity in other passages is much more difficult (and probably pointless) to determine.

The second paragraph of the passage re-introduces us (the initial introduction occurred in the Overture) to Rakoth Maugrim. Because he represents Fionavar's evil, and thus the source of conflict in the novel, Kim must understand his power and so must we. That we assimilate the immensity of his evil is especially important, because at the end of *The Summer Tree* Rakoth will rape Jennifer, and we must know something of him if we are to comprehend the scope of that crime. Of course, this paragraph, like the first, implies Eilathen as narrator, but what Kim assimilates is, here, fully within her power to know.

Understanding the Characters

Unlike much fantasy fiction (and genre fiction in general), *The Fionavar Tapestry* insists on the psychological development of its characters. Over the course of the trilogy, Kay's five Torontonians assume heroic, even god-like, stature, but their rise in stature is predicated on the human characteristics they possess when the novel opens. What they become, in other words, is an extension of what they were. But for us to understand the characters' elevation, it is necessary that we know their characteristics as well; the novel's shifting focalization is the central means by which we gain such knowledge.

For each character, one central incident demands our understanding most: for Paul, the self-sacrifice on the Summer Tree; for Kevin, the self-sacrifice to Dana; for Jennifer, the refusal to show love to Darien; for Kimberly, the decision not to bind the Crystal Dragon to her needs; for Dave, the decision to leave Fionavar at the novel's end. Interestingly, our understanding of important events centering on the non-Torontonian characters do not spring from focalizations through those characters. Diarmiud's death, Sharra's decision to marry the prince, Jaelle's ac-

ceptance of Paul, Ailell's willingness to allow Paul's self-sacrifice, Arthur's calling of Lancelot from the dead — we comprehend the sources of these events because of the focalizations through the Torontonians, not through the involved characters themselves. In accordance with the way in which the shifting focalization allows us to assimilate the secondary world, we understand the Fionavarians as we see them through Paul, Kim, Dave, Kevin, and Jennifer. Conversely, though, we learn almost nothing about those five from the focalizations through the Fionavarians. As perhaps the most blatant example of this, the focalizations through Ivor help us learn of the culture of the Dalrei, but they teach us very little about Dave himself.

One important instance of focalization determining our understanding of character is Kimberly's refusal, in *The Darkest Road*, to bind the Dragon of the Dwarves to her will. Earlier in this volume, Kim obeys the urgency of the Balraeth, her magical ring, and changes the culture of the Paraiko by bringing these giants out of their mythologically-imposed pacifism. Now, she has just witnessed the duel of crafting between Kaen and Matt end with the Dragon's reaffirmation of the rightfulness of Matt's kingship. Once more, the Balraeth demands that a myth be destroyed so that the war might be won:

> She carried the Warstone again, the summons to war. And it was on fire to summon. To compel the Crystal dragon from its mountain bow. Kim had no illusions, none at all — and the sight of Matt's stricken face would have stripped them away from here, if she'd had any.
>
> The Dragon could not leave the Lake, not if it was to be what it had always been: ancient guardian, key to the soul, heart-deep symbol of what the Dwarves were. What she was about to do would shatter the people of the twin mountains as much and more as she had smashed the Paraiko in Khath Meigol. (*DR*, 290)

But after crying out, "I don't have a choice!", she realizes that, in fact, she does have one. Consistent with the trilogy's single most dominant theme, the freedom of individual will, Kim slowly understands that nothing can force her to do what, in the end, she does not wish to do:

> On her hand the Baetlrath was pulsing now so wildly that the whole of the meadow and all the mountain crags were lit by its glow. Kim lifted her hand. She thought of Macha and Nemain, the goddesses of war. She thought of Ruana and the Paraiko, remembered the kanior: the last kanior. Because of her. She thought of Arthur, and of Matt Soren, who stood, not far away, not looking at her, lest his expressions plead. . . .
>
> 'No," said Kimberly Ford quietly, with absolute finality. "I have come this far and have done this much. I will go no farther on this path. There is a point beyond which the quest for Light becomes a serving of the Dark." (*DR*, 290-1)

Both the Dragon and the Paraiko incidents are focalized strictly through Kimberly, a strictness necessary for our comprehension of both the significance of the events and the strength of Kim's character. In *The Summer Tree*, as examined

above, a focalization through Kim allowed us to assimilate, for the first time, the major elements of Fionavarian mythology. In *The Darkest Road*, the focalization through Kim lets us assimilate the mythology of the Paraiko and the Dwarves, while simultaneously providing insight into Kim's character. In effect, the novel's technique here merges two major functions: with one focalization, we further our understanding both of Kim and of Fionavar.

Moving the Scenes Along

In a novel *filled* with major events, or *kernels* in the terminology of Roland Barthes, one of the author's greatest challenges is in simply getting the story from one point to the next. From the reader's standpoint, much of the success of a kernel-filled book is precisely the effectiveness of this movement. Furthermore, if the novel is populated by several major characters, the difficulty intensifies. Each character might influence each kernel, and therefore co-ordinating the characters' activities, and demonstrating that co-ordination through a workable narrative, is essential to the novel's effectiveness.

All authors of fantasy fiction have a single standard by which their efficiency in moving from kernel to kernel is judged. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* confronts the problem of co-ordination by concentrating first on one set of characters, then on another, and sometimes on a third, drawing each group towards a climax that does not always wait for the appearance of all individual focalizations. The Battle of the Pelennor Fields, in fact, during the trilogy's final volume, begins without our knowing the whereabouts of Aragorn, who will ultimately turn the tide, and who will only later share with us what happened while he was absent. In fact, most of the considerable rhetorical strength of Aragorn's arrival on the battlefield stems from the fact that we have not seen him for quite some time; we do not know of his battle with the Corsairs of Umbar, and thus we are as surprised as Eomer, through whom we see Aragorn's arrival, when the coming of the black ships signifies hope rather than despair.

Kay seems determined *not* to have important events surprise us in this way; he arranges the story's kernels in a more tightly-knit fashion than does Tolkien, mainly through a much more frequent shifting of our attention from one character to another. In only one instance is an extended portion of the trilogy given over to a sequence of events covering the activities of one character over a relatively lengthy period of time. This is Part III of *The Summer Tree*, "The Children of Ivor," in which Dave Martyniuk moves from newcomer in Fionavar to accepted rider with the Dalrei. Chronologically, "The Children of Ivor" removes the tale from the present established with the death of Paul on the Summer Tree, forcing us into the past, to the moment of the crossing of the Torontonians into Fionavar. The narratological purpose of the chronological disruption is clear enough — it gives us a

partly advantageous position from which to observe the sceptical Dave's initiation into Fionavar — but the technique is never used again. Not even the sailing to Cader Sedat in Chapter 16 of *The Wandering Fire*, one of the longest unbroken episodes in the trilogy, demands this degree of chronological reorientation; the sailing is a continuation of an already established event, not the beginning, as is "The Children of Ivor," of an entirely new sequence.

How, then, does the technique of shifting focalization help the story's kernels unfold? First, because the characters are separated from each other geographically, and each character is part of a different kernel, the shifting is necessary if we are to observe the kernels directly, instead of having them related by direct speech or another kind of sub-narration. More importantly, though, the movement from kernel to kernel is, in essence, equivalent to the movement from character to character, hence from focalization to focalization. Put another way, the trilogy's focus upon characterization makes character growth and plot progression both simultaneous and of equal narrative value. As one example, Jennifer is central to several kernels: the rape by Rakoth, the second crossing to Fionavar, the birth of Darien, the awakening of Arthur and resurrection of Lancelot, the turning of Darien towards his father (with the resultant downfall of Rakoth), and the resolution of the Arthur-Guinevere-Lancelot triangle. Each kernel is not only the result of, but is also dependent upon, the growth of Jennifer's character. Rakoth's rape nearly destroys Jennifer's capacity for love, but only by regaining that capacity — albeit with an unprecedented coolness — can she both guide Darien and re-enact the Arthurian triangle. And only through the re-enactment, as can be traced through a series of kernels, can the overall plot resolve itself as it does.

If this is true of Jennifer, it is no less true of Paul, Kevin, Dave, or Kim. Paul's characteristics send him to the Summer Tree, and the resultant change ultimately allows the ship Prydwen to reach Cader Sedat. Kevin's personality urges him towards his self-sacrifice to Dana, and this kernel opens the way towards Cader Sedat and begins the joining of the sky and earth magics in the battle against Rakoth. Dave's character causes the intercession in the war of the goddess Ceinwen, while Kim's brings the Paraiko into battle, enables the reunification of the Dwarves, and allows the important heroism of Tabor.

The shifts in focalization among the characters, therefore, essentially create the story's kernels, because the characters' psychological changes, which we understand *only* through these focalizations, inspire new events. Furthermore, by carefully co-ordinating the shifts in focalization with the unfolding of events, the narration establishes an equivalence in importance between character and kernel. Kernel prompts character growth, which in turn creates new kernel, which prompts further character growth, and so on. Note that, in this discussion, I freely use Barthes' idea of *kernel*, but not his concept of *actor*. Barthes' implication in "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" is that a narrative's char-

acters are simply agents that allow the plot to proceed. Here I treat characters as part of a bi-partite function, with kernels, of narrative progression. It is unsurprising, given this bi-partite function, that Kay's trilogy ends with the return to the primary world of Kim and Dave, the two characters who have experienced the greatest character growth. The story's final kernel is thus also its strongest statement on the importance of its focus on character.

The Strategy of Delay

The shifts in focalization move the plot from kernel to kernel, but they also, seemingly paradoxically, delay the individual climaxes. In other words, the strategy of shifting both advances and impedes the story's events. To some extent, the delays serve Kay's obvious desire for the kind of long tale appropriate to the genre of high fantasy, but their value from the standpoint of literary criticism is more interesting. By delaying the climaxes, again and again, Kay builds slowly towards a final event — the death of Darien — that is both the narrative climax and the rhetorical climax of the trilogy. As narrative climax this kernel represents the final victory over evil; as rhetoric climax it epitomizes the novel's basis in pathos. The language of Darien's fall differs from that of the story's heroic climax (the last battle) in that it is pathetic in both the classically rhetorical sense (the appeal to the emotions) and the more commonly used sense (pity for a seemingly small action) of the word.

Following the story of Darien offers the most useful example of this process. Darien first appears early in *The Wandering Fire*, but his first focalization does not occur until almost one-third of the way through that volume. This passage, like most of the Darien plot, contains a rhetoric of the sentimental, with the narrative concentrating almost solely on pathos. "Finn was his brother and he loved Dari most of all and he was the most wonderful person in the world and knew everything besides" (*WF*, 117), part of the scene reads, and the attempt at child-like thought is obvious. Our next sight of Darien is at Finn's departure for the Longest Road (*WF*, 133-4), and the pathos here is stronger, even though the focalization is through Finn and, later, Vae. Through Finn: "He had said it ["I love you"] so often, though, had meant it so much. Surely it had been enough in the little time he'd had. Surely it would be enough?" Through Vae: "What broke her in the end was to see that Dari, moving quietly in the snow, was tracing his flower neatly with a thin branch in the growing dark while tears were pouring down his face without surcease" (*WF*, 134). Coming after the calm of the Darien-Finn passages, and combined with Darien's inability to comprehend, this scene establishes the novel's central pathetic appeal.

Darien's next scene is one of the trilogy's most significant kernels. Paul and Brendel lead Darien to the Summer Tree in Mornirwood, where he experiences an instantaneous maturity from childhood into adolescence. Yet, even though only

one night of story-time has passed between Paul's arrival at Darien's home and the maturation scene, sixty pages of narrative have transpired. In those pages, Arthur has reunited with Cavall, Jennifer has come to realize the significance of her role as Guinevere, Kim has used the Baelrath and the strength of the others to learn of the Cauldron at Cader Sedat, Kevin and Dave have hunted the boar, Diarmiud has proposed to Sharra, and Kevin has sacrificed himself to Dana. In other words, the primary kernel of the *Tapestry*, the event that will ultimately lead to the climax of the conflict between good and evil, to the narrative's strongest rhetorical moment, has been delayed by a succession of no fewer than half a dozen other significant kernels.

At this point in the story, indeed, the importance of Kevin's sacrifice easily supersedes that of Darien's maturing. This sacrifice, too, has been long delayed by shifts in focalization. But Kevin's death is structurally important only as a prerequisite for the destruction of Metran and the Cauldron, which is in turn a prerequisite for the events in *The Darkest Road* leading to the final battle, which are in turn prerequisites for Darien's confrontation with Rakoth Maugrim. With Rakoth's death, the defeat of evil is assured, even though the story has a few more twists to play out. Thus, all of the trilogy's kernels lead towards the Darien-Maugrim kernel, and none leads away from it.

Darien's last appearance in *The Wandering Fire* shows him looking down upon Jennifer and Matt as they return to Paras Derval (*WF*, 224). Not until two hundred pages later does he return to the story, this time in *The Darkest Road*, where he takes the dagger Lokdal and the Circlet of Lisen. In the meantime, once again, a great deal has happened, the central kernels being the destruction of the Cauldron, the resurrection of Lancelot, and the corruption of the Paraiko. Despite the grandeur of these kernels, it is Darien's theft of Lokdal, an incident treated almost casually even during the Kim-Darien scene, that matters the most to the resolution of the plot. As before, the constantly shifting focalization produces a framework for the narrative and rhetorical climax.

From this point on, the story is predominantly *about* Darien, even though events transpire that do not seem to reflect Darien's progress. Darien meets Jennifer (*DR*, 118f.), then begins his long march to find his father. We encounter him in Pendaran Wood, watching the battle between Lancelot and Curdardh, but this scene is focalized through Flidais, not Darien. Darien disappears from the story for all of Part III of *The Darkest Road*, returning a full 100 pages after the Lancelot-Curdardh battle, and 130 pages after his previous focalization, for a focalization (*DR*, 302-5) that confirms both his desire to visit Rakoth and his sense of isolation. During the 100-page interlude, Kimberly has seen Matt proven King of the Dwarves; after Darien's short focalization, the last battle begins and Diarmiud dies at the hand of Uathach. Part IV begins with a two-page focalization through Darien, ending with the predictive, "Then he heard the sound of his father's laugh" (*DR*,

329); but the laughter's effect is delayed throughout the chapter, as focalizations through Dave (twice), Kim (twice), Leila, Paul, and Tabor (twice) keep returning us to the battle. Finally, in Chapter 16, Darien's plot is resolved, and the entire chapter is focalized through him.

From the kernel in which Darien, at the Summer Tree, experiences his sudden maturation, until his death in Starkadh, Darien's story directly occupies very few actual pages. Furthermore, three of this story's kernels — the maturation, the theft of Lokdal, and the meeting with Jennifer — are not focalized through him at all. During Darien's search for Rakoth, the narrative shifts focalization eighty-seven times, with Darien as focalizant only nine of those times, usually in brief passages.

The effect of the delayed resolution of Darien's story is to heighten the rhetoric of the trilogy's climax. Unlike Diarmiud, whose death is watched by many and, accordingly, is focalized through several different characters, Darien dies alone in the presence of his father, and the pathos of the scene is possible only because it is focalized through Darien. Previous focalizations through Darien have established his alienation. He feels abandoned in turn by his brother Finn and his mother Jennifer, and thus the betrayal by his father Rakoth Maugrim, because Rakoth completes the family unit, confirms in his mind the impossibility of his belonging. Darien's suicide, then, is much more an act of despair than of heroism, and thus the pathos is established. But only the sweep and grandeur of the rest of the trilogy's plot has enabled the pathos at all, because Darien's inability to understand his world contrasts sharply with the purposeful actions of the other major characters. Unlike those characters, Darien is alone, frightened, and utterly self-centered, traits that strike us because of their basic humanity.

Darien's is not the only plot that lingers because of the trilogy's shifting focalization, but it is certainly the central one. All other plots are subordinate to it. Yet in the number of pages it is given, the number of focalizations it receives, and even its style, it *seems* subordinate to the more self-consciously glorious plots of Kim, Diarmiud, Kevin, and the Arthurian triangle. Compare, for example, the style of Darien's passing with that of the departure of Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere. First Darien:

> Darien was lying on the floor. There was a bright blade in his heart. With fading sight he looked out the high window and saw that the fighting had stopped on the plain so far away. It became harder to see. The window was trembling, and there was a blurring in front of his eyes. The Circlet was still shining, though. He reached up and touched it for the last time. The window began to shake even more violently, and the floor of the room. A stone crashed from above. Another. All around him Starkadh was beginning to crumble. It was falling away to nothingness in the ruin of Maugrim's fall. (*DR*, 366-7)

Sentences are short, description is concrete. Except for the first two and the last sentences, the scene is restricted to Darien's sensory perception. The tone, moreover, is matter-of-fact. By comparison, the departure of the Arthurian trio is much more magnificent:

> It had come. Under the silver shining of the moon, that long slender craft caught the rising of the wind and it carried them away, Arthur and Lancelot and Guinevere. Past the promontory it sailed, and from that solitary height Shahar raised one hand in farewell, and all three of them saluted him. Then it seemed to those that watched from the plain that that ship began to rise into the night, not following the curving of the earth but tracking a different path. (*DR*, 394)

Like the language of many other passages in the *Tapestry* (cf. Kevin's death, Paul's death on the Summer Tree, Diarmiud's death), the language here is an obvious attempt at rhetorical "high style." It represents, of course, myth in the making, but for Fionavar the incident is less mythically significant than Darien's death. The difference lies in the focalization. The departure of the Arthurian trio is one of several brief passages in the trilogy that shifts to an unspecified focalizant, to omniscience, to what Genette calls *zero focalization* (Genette, 189). By contrast, Darien's death is focalized squarely through him, because in his case there are no observers. The departure of the trio is more magnificent because it is perceived by minds capable of comprehending magnificence.

The Darkest Road completes many separate plot-lines, some of which began in *The Summer Tree*, some others in *The Wandering Fire*. Regardless of where they begin, however, the key to understanding the narrative of the trilogy is that each plot-line has been delayed until its appropriate culmination by the technique of shifting focalization. Shifts in focalization allow us to assimilate the trilogy's fantasy world, and to grow and understand the characters, but more interestingly they both advance and delay the plot-lines. All four effects are, of course, interrelated and interdependent. Our first task is to assimilate the world, and we do this by perceiving the world through the characters' focalizations. This perception, in turn, enhances our understanding of the characters themselves, as well as our comprehension of the characters' growth. Character growth, furthermore, is the essence of the trilogy's plot; thus, the plot moves according to the focalization through the characters. But because the characters' actions are spread over both time and space, and because the major characters are, for the most part, separated from one another geographically, the story's focalizations must shift among them, and the effect is to delay the resolution of each character's plot-line. This delay permits all plot-lines to culminate at the appropriate time: specifically, during the last battle. Such culmination, the final defeat of evil, is integral, of course, to the rhetoric of high fantasy.

NOTES

[1] Whatever the reasons for the similarities of Genette's and Bal's discussions, the real point is the recognition of *focalization* as an important term in narratology. Gerald Prince does not mention *focalization* in his brief study called *Narratology* (in fact, he discuses only *point of view*), but the term is given relatively lengthy discussion in his recent *Dictionary of Narratology*. Roland Barthes offers very little discussion of the problem in his "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," seeing *person* only from the standpoint of "personal and apersonal" (Barthes, 283). Wayne C. Booth's "Types of Narration" chapter, from *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, obviously cannot be overlooked, but his typology represents precisely the difficulty Genette finds in the published literature on perspective (see Genette, 182). Genette finds similar problems with the categories developed by F. K. Stanzel in *A Theory of Narrative*, who cites the inconsistency with which *point of view* has been used by critics from Henry James forward (see Stanzel, 9) to put forth his theory of narrative situations, a concept developed differently by Barthes (285f.). Stanzel himself uses *focalization* rarely (see 71), but he clearly disagrees with Genette in several areas.

[2] By "section" here, and throughout this paper, I mean a part of the chapter separated by a graphic symbol taken from the painting on the jacket. The trilogy uses the following system: Books are divided into Chapters, Chapters into Sections, and Sections into Subsections. Books and Chapters are numbered, Sections are distinguished by a graphic symbol, and Subsections are prefaced by a blank space on the page. The three volumes of the trilogy I will refer to as Volumes.

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HAREWOOD

John Marshall

for Ken Cathers

Remember where the mountain was in the sky
before the mountain is money
I remember the morning fluorescent ribbons
materialized the fields

remember our names as they were called
through cupped hands
we were always far enough away
to claim we couldn't hear

remember how we'd get hell for it
our being late their worry
but some days wouldn't end even
and we just had to get in one more round
and how we learned to make our breath silent
to better play dead in those fields

remember looking back and the shapes
our bodies left in the grass
the grass lifted them back
in the air each blade
lifted us back in air

I remember wondering are we that light
and how excited I was to read
my first book about angels
also how disappointed I was
not in the pictures

remember how we told time
evergreens gone violet in sunset
how I want to remember the beauty
of that time

remember the not-wanting and wanting
to go home and knowing all the way
who lived in every house
I remember their names now

remember where you were known as love
love they called you every day
remember whatever story
it was you told
was it fishing for surgeons
whatever it was every time you told it
what laughter they laughed how dear
we must have been even then to them

I remember what it was
I wanted to remember
we found that bell in the muck by the stream
and we kept it we kept moving it
to more and more secret places
until we forgot
all about it

do you remember
is it hidden there a memorial
a perfection of its place and its finding
and where would we go now
in search of it

all the cows are long gone
fences gone the sheds fallen in
the cedars of the barn were gone silver
back then remember how slippery
they were to climb
and it was a little dangerous
but we climbed it anyway
as children always do
against what they are told

why was there some distance or view
we wanted to take on or in or was it
just to give ourselves something
to remember ourselves by

and what if we can't remember
what if we can not find the courage now
if only to pull ourselves away
from all we've let die in us

do you remember that day we decided
to become men
we were only children
our parents had a certain pride in our lives
and we stood in the air we had climbed
and we decided to remember
what it all was
where everything was

I call us on that pact we made
I remember what it was we saw that day
it was our last glimpse
of the dust of the sea.

SOMMERNATT: OSLO

(after a painting by Harald Sohlberg)

Tom Marshall

for Michaele and Bjørn

A lean summer light gives precise
definition to things: flower-beds,
wood houses. A balcony, two seats,
a table with two empty glasses, two
partly-full decanters. Two people
have moved off-stage
to sleep or make love. White light
leaks up over hills that hide horizon.

ARTISTRY IN MAVIS GALLANT'S "GREEN WATER, GREEN SKY"

The Composition of Structure, Pattern, and Gyre

Lesley D. Clement

MICHEL BUTOR, IN HIS essays "The Novel as Research" (1960) and "Research on the Technique of the Novel" (1964), contends that the distinctive element of contemporary life to which the novel must adapt is the extraordinary amout of information that all individuals engaged actively in the world about them must address and accommodate to what they have observed and experienced for themselves. To keep pace with contemporary life and to avoid becoming an anachronism, the novel, particularly through its structure, must exploit its intrinsic tendency "toward its own elucidation"[1] by becoming its own testing ground for any truths that it professes: "The only way to tell the truth, to search for the truth, is to confront tirelessly, methodically, what we habitually say with what we see, with the information we receive, in other words to 'work' on narrative" (Butor, 16). Such tireless and methodical confrontation between perceived and received truths does not culminate in the writer's discovery and enunciation of any absolute truth but rather in the desire and need to suggest life's "*compossibility* — the capacity of one thing to coexist with another thing or to concur in time and space or in conception."[2] For Butor, the novel thus becomes a "mobile structure," allowing problems to "admit of several solutions" by anticipating "within the novel's structure, different trajectories of reading, as in a cathedral or a town." To engage the contemporary reader, over-burdened with information, the novelist "must then control the work in all its different versions, take responsibility for them, much like the sculptor, who is responsible for all the angles from which his statue might be photographed, and for the movements which connect all these views" (Butor 24).

Herein lies the difficulty for the contemporary novelist confined to "the book as commercial object" with the restrictions imposed by the horizontal and vertical axes of the page and the "third axis in depth, perpendicular to the other two" that is the construction of the bound volume itself (Butor 41). In his essay "The Book as Object" (1964), Butor addresses in theory the restrictions imposed by these three

dimensions, restrictions that have become an invigorating practical challenge for him and other *avant-garde* postmodernists such as Vonnegut, Barthelme, and Federman. These writers have met the challenge by experimenting with the physical restrictions of the novel's medium and, in so doing, have found occasion to dip into the visual artist's toolbox to borrow canvas, brush, and colour. Mavis Gallant, in contrast, has eschewed non-verbal devices, finding her freedom through the traditional medium of language. She aims for the same "optical realism" as many French and American postmodernists, realism that Butor notes has "caused so much surprise" (22-23), but does so by adapting in language techniques of colour, light and dark, line, composition, and framing to create those visual analogies that allow her to explore her thematic concerns.[3]

Gallant's adaptation of these techniques of the visual artist has been essential to her depiction of the compossibility of subjective and objective, perceived and received, truths. From those earliest stories that appeared in the *New Yorker* throughout the 1950's (the best of which are now contained in *The Other Paris*, originally published in 1956) to the stories appearing, still primarily in the *New Yorker*, throughout the 1980's, Gallant's main thematic concerns have been generated by the confrontation between an imagined world, which her characters create to protect themselves, and the jagged edges of raw reality. In her earliest short stories, the often satiric tone rests in Gallant's delighted exposing of romantic and idealized images of self against the harsh and prosaic light of experienced reality. These stories capture her characters in a suspended or caught moment in a manner reminiscent of Harry Levin's description of Joyce's *Dubliners*:

> Things almost happen. The characters are arrested in mid-air; the author deliberately avoids anything like an event. . . . Joyce's slow-motion narrative is timed to his paralzed subject. . . . The author merely watches, the characters are merely revealed, and the emphasis is on the technique of exposure.[4]

Because they can see no escape from the bleakness of contemporary life, the characters in Gallant's earliest stories usually retreat to the often sentimental but reassuringly safe world of imagined reality, blocking off access to or awareness of experienced reality, slicing the continuity between perceived and received truths, denying the compossibility of these truths. They enclose or frame themselves within their own subjectivity.

Green Water, Green Sky (1959) is a pivotal work in Mavis Gallant's canon because the medium of the novel allows Gallant to manipulate her characters in a less enclosed, more open and fluid space than the short story has yet provided for her. The frame has been broken: the characters must test the truth of perceived images of self and others against received images. The characters cannot retreat: they must adapt to the compossibility of these truths or be overcome by the inconsistencies and paradoxes that such compossibility produces.

The six characters of *Green Water, Green Sky* naturally group themselves into three pairs according to the way they perceive themselves and perceive and react in their relationships: Doris Fischer and Bob Harris are the structured characters with a structured perception; Wishart and Bonnie McCarthy fit into a patterned perception of self and relationships; George Fairlie and Florence are caught in a gyral perception. Although Gallant explores a number of relationships in this short novel, of particular importance are the two concentric circles that form around self: the family and the cities of Cannes and Paris, which are the main settings of the novel.[5] By exploiting and adapting the techniques of the visual artist, Mavis Gallant confronts and tests, with a high degree of "optical realism," the compossibility of the perceived and received truths experienced by her six characters.

Bob Harris, the husband of the central character Florence, and Doris Fischer, a visiting American living in the same apartment house as the Harrises, are the structured characters in the novel: their images of self and others are harmoniously composed in a linear construct that is uncomplicated by obtrusive colours or shading; their harmonious compositions are fluid and able to withstand tension and change. Doris and Bob have successfully integrated their private images of self with the public images they project, largely because neither "had much feeling for the importance of time: either of them could have been persuaded that the world began the day he was born." Therefore, although they are alike, they are not "perfectly matched . . . not in a way that could draw them together."[6] They are both structured individuals, but their structures run on two parallel planes, planes that cannot meet.

Gallant paints a portrait of Doris Fischer as an ascetic whose prudent left-wing sympathies (73) make her uncomfortable with any sign of indulgence or ostentation. Like the "blond-wood exports from sanitary Sweden" (42) that she favours in furniture and the clear, unobstructed light she prefers (42, 45), the image of herself that Doris perceives and projects is a plain and sensible young woman (43). But Doris, the exponent of "hard, sunny reality; the opponent of dreams," is forced to test her structured, unilateral view of life (70). Her husband, the "cameraman" or "film technician" or "special consultant," has temporarily left her and so challenges her to adapt her images to a new frame (44). At first, she attempts to fit into the structure of the Harris family and life in Paris, but when Flor locks her out, she realizes that "what is needed is not slow suffering or hanging on to someone else, but a solution . . . and the solution was a decision and so now I am going home. I am not going *away* but going *home*" (83). For Doris, even with the threat of her husband's having left her, the structure holds together; all the fragments of her life fall deftly into place as she returns to her family and friends in America, a return that is not a regression but simply a continuation of a linear structure that began when she was born.

BOB HARRIS TOO IS A structured, cheerful individual, who has been able to integrate private and public images of self because he lacks a historical sense and hence can build a linear structure that takes himself as its origin and focus.[7] Unlike Doris, however, he is somewhat of a hedonist, revealing a complacent satisfaction with his having harmonized commercial and aesthetic values. The contrast between Bob and Doris emerges clearly in a scene in which they observe a modern painting purchased by Bob. Doris, while relieved to be viewing a modern painting because "she disliked the past," sees it in a stereotypical way: puerilely composed and exorbitantly priced (42-4). Bob perfectly understands the meaning of the painting for him: "Bob looked at a rising investment that, at the same time, gave him aesthetic pleasure; that was the way to wrap up life, to get the best of everything" (43).

Bob's structured view of self and life is based on his successful balancing of a safe materialism and a safe hedonism. Although in his patronage of the arts he harmoniously combines the two elements of money and pleasure, in his profession — he runs the French side of his father's American-based wine-importing firm — he integrates a third element: family. Bob has cultivated a still tightly structured but less ascetic image of self than Doris because, although relations and friends are the "breath of life for him," they are all "of the same quality": "he did not distinguish between the random and the intense" (110). There can be no colour, no shade, in this world that is clearly defined in terms of black and white, dark and light.

With the advent of Flor into this world, Bob must test the truth of his colourless, shadeless images, which fit so well into his structured world.[8] He perceives Cannes, where he and Flor have met, as a shadowless, black-and-white composition: Manet's *The Balcony*, with its starkly lit figures in the foreground on the balcony and the mysteriously dark interior of the room in the background, corresponds with Bob's perception. Two years later, Bob and Flor, now married, are living in Bob's white, well lit world of Paris (33-35). As Flor, advancing towards a mental breakdown, closes herself in her darkened room, Bob judges this "shutting-out of light" to be "wicked," the "nature of sin" (36), however, Bob sought this very darkness through Flor when he first saw her at "the far table of the dark café in Cannes" and she "looked up and before becoming aware that a man was watching her let him see on her drowned face everything he was prepared to pursue — passion, discipline, darkness" (37). Bob's perception does not permit light and dark to blend as they might through the filter of a curtain; rather, they are blocked into bars or slats, structured evenly as light passes through shutters (65, 67-68, 109-11). Bob seeks to experience passion, but his journey into darkness will be safe, controlled by what he perceives to be the discipline of materialism and family.

For Bob, such discipline comes through ownership. He creates his own structured

composition into which all elements fit neatly, this structure in turn fitting just as neatly into the structured world in which he lives. His original conception of the ideal woman to fit into this structure is of "some minor Germanic princess," who wears the "printed silk" and "pearls" provided by her family as she waits with "patient supplication until a husband can be found" (105) to whom the deed of ownership can be passed. His ideal woman is transplanted into the twentieth century from the Biedermeier tradition.[9] But because Flor cannot have children, she does not fit this image of domesticity; so Bob accommodates the image to Flor, and she instead becomes, not the supplicating domesticated object of the Biedermeier tradition, but the more radiant sexual object of the Impressionist tradition:

> He had prized her beauty. It had made her an object as cherished as anything he might buy. In museums he had come upon paintings of women — the luminous women of the Impressionists — in which some detail reminded him of Flor, the thick hair, the skin, the glance slipping away, and this had increased his sense of possession and love. (37)

Two years later, Bob thinks Flor has "destroyed this beauty, joyfully, willfully, as if to force him to value her on other terms" (37-38) and sees her "hair, loose on the pillow," and the shuttered windows as "a parody of Cannes" (65). For Bob, Flor no longer has the tamed, coy seductiveness of a Renoir nude or bather;[10] she has become as sordid as Manet's vacuous *Olympia* on a crumpled, yellow sheet.[11]

Bob's structured composition is challenged not only by the shade and colour that coexist with the light and dark and the black and white, but also by the oblique lines that counter his parallel linear view of life. Bob thinks that if Flor is not on the same plane as he is, moving in the same parallel line, she must be on a different plane, moving in a different line (36-37). There is, however, a third option: perhaps they are on the same plane, but their lines are oblique; oblique lines on the same plane will eventually cross, but each has its own autonomous existence and direction. At a critical point in the novel, as the "faint summer light" creeps "in between the slats of the shutters" of their room, their lines almost cross. Flor sees that for a moment whatever usually protects Bob (money and charm) has left him; "he seemed pitiable and without confidence." During this moment, Bob has remembered "what it was to be sick with love," and his usual structured perception of their relationship as superimposed lines becomes vertiginous. As he experiences the vertigo that characterizes Flor's existence, he even thinks he tastes the salt of the sea that is closing in on the drowning Flor. Flor, meanwhile, experiences a moment of calm from her usual turmoil. But Bob does not accept the challenge of the nauseating momentum of this vertiginous gyre and sets their lines back in their now separate planes by having them "resume their new roles: the tiresome wife, the patient husband" (65-68).[12] The moment has passed: dark and light are restored to their chequered places, lines to their separate planes. The harmony of

Bob's structured composition has been preserved. Bob has been given the moment to pursue the passion and darkness — or, to borrow Prufrock's words, "to force the moment to its crisis" — but fear of the dangers of the vertiginous gyre sends him scurrying back to the discipline of the orderly structure. "And would it have been worth it, after all" is a question they both go on to ask (69).

FLOR'S MOTHER, Bonnie McCarthy, and Wishart, Bonnie's summer friend, are as much survivors as Bob and Doris, all understanding and conforming to the requirements of life. Neither Bob nor Doris is an idealist, and therefore only rarely does either harbour any "lingering vapors of adolescent nostalgia — that fruitless, formless yearning for God knows what" (35). Whereas their perspective is firmly fixed and enclosed within a structured frame of here and now (although fluid within this frame), Bonnie has the appearance of waiting for "some elegant paradise" beyond the frame, and Wishart, in her presence, reflects the same "air of waiting" (92-94). Wishart later comes to think that Bonnie's "air of expectancy" is false and that she has been waiting for something within the frame, not beyond it (113). What emerges, however, is that despite the multiplicity of images of self that each perceives and projects, a clear image of a past self gives a pattern to what might otherwise be a chaotic array of fragmented images — a chaotic array of colours, light and shade, lines, and shapes — in their lives.

Wishart is the only character to remain outside the Paris scenes and family circle. Cannes is his natural *milieu* because it provides a holiday existence, constantly in flux, with no need to form attachments. Wishart can enact the many roles he has perfected in the ever-changing tableaux of Cannes. He is an artiste (even his name is contrived) who might be unmasked should he posture too long in one place or allow any member of his audience too close an examination of his mask.

Wishart's role in the novel, however, is not to be observed but to observe, and most of the third section is devoted to his perception of the Bonnie-Flor-Bob composition. This section opens with the statement, "Dreams of chaos were Wishart's meat" (86), and his dream of the sinking ferryboat, presented immediately after the dream that has sent Flor into an asylum, might seem to forecast another victim of the storm. But from this "deplorable confusion" Wishart strides, a survivor who has remained unscathed by remaining detached (86-87). Wishart prides himself in his dreams, products of a creative subconscious, and sees this particular dream as "a ballet . . . or, better still, because of the black and white groupings and the unmoving light, an experimental film . . ." (87). A pattern emerges from what might have been a chaotic series of tableaux because of Wishart's steady perspective, which constantly enlarges to take in the whole scene.

First, Wishart adapts his images of Cannes. Unlike Bob's black-and-white composition, Wishart's has shading and light:

> . . . at first sight, Cannes looked as it had sounded when he said the word in London, a composition in clear chalk colors, blue, yellow, white. Everything was intensely shaded or intensely bright, hard and yellow on the streets, or dark as velvet inside the bars. (94)

He must now enlarge his perspective to accommodate in this composition the new images he is receiving: "the milling, sweating, sunburned crowd . . . the sour-milk smelling cafés" (94); the blue and sparkling sea which is probably full of germs, and the sky violated by an airplane writing the name of a drink (98); the sand, cigarette butts, and smears of oil that coexist with the light, dark, and blueness (113). After several weeks in Cannes, it seems that Wishart will become a victim of the chaos of perceived and received truths, not only of Cannes but of Bonnie, Flor, Bob, and himself. Masks are constantly slipping. Images of raw reality attempt to displace those artistic images that compose themselves into a harmonious tableau: Bonnie as peach-coloured hostess; Flor as Venus; Bob as worshipping victim; himself as English gentleman sought after by the hostesses of Europe.

Whereas Bob's moment of crisis is marked by the vertigo of the parallel lines holding his structured view together, Wishart's moment of crisis is marked by the garishness of the bright colours contained in his patterned composition. "Everything trembled and changed," as glaring realities jostle with clear tones in "this new landscape" and threaten the harmony of the old pattern. Wishart has not been "victim of such a fright" for years, but he now composes himself: he wades out into the cluttered sea, once again becomes the detached observer and reporter of this absurd and chaotic world, and returns to shore, inspired to assume a new mask in a new tableau (122-23). Outside the frame of this and all his tableaux, however, lies an image that, although it controls his art and is the very *raison d'être* of the tableaux, must never intrude on the tableau itself: the image of himself as a dirty slum child hanging on the dress of his servant sister, Glad.

Bonnie's perspective too is fixed on an image from the past, outside the frame of present reality, that acts "as a timid anchor to Bonnie's ballooning notion of the infinite" (24) and enables her to give a pattern to the "petty disorder" (25), the untidiness of her life (28). Unlike Wishart, however, who dares not expose this image for fear of being exposed, Bonnie has the image of herself "in her wedding dress, authentically innocent, with a wreath of miniature roses straight across her brow" (22). What looms nastily, threatening to obscure this image now well in the background, is the image of herself involved in a "surpassingly silly affair," which has created a "fragmented, unreconciled" conception (23) of herself by severing the continuity of past and present.

To establish a sense of continuity in her life, Bonnie, like Wishart, has created a number of masks, all softened by filtered or shaded light (2, 38, 125) and complemented by different coloured voices — blue, violet, green, coral (38, 46), nothing harsh or garish — which tie past and present together by suggesting what Venus Bonnie might have become had not her life been ruined. The first section of the novel to be devoted entirely to Bonnie reveals her sitting before a triptych: a three-panelled mirror, no panel ever reflecting a violated Bonnie, although such an image occasionally threatens to take form. Trying on a "chaste blue" hat, Bonnie appears "slightly demented, a college girl aged overnight," but she drops the hat on the dressing table "among the framed pictures and the pots of cream" (22), themselves symbols of artifice, preferring her recently perfected mask of a frowning, pouting child that one panel of the mirror reflects (21). Another panel reveals the image of a "super-Bonnie," "a kind of American Mrs. Hauksbee, witty and thin, with those great rolling violet blue eyes" (22-23). The centre panel of the triptych, however, is devoted to the "authentically innocent" Bonnie, a "lost Bonnie" whom she seeks "to duplicate every time she look[s] in the glass" (22) and for whom the present Bonnie is in mourning.[13]

The triptych is Bonnie's creation, her work of art, but surrounding it is the chaos of life, the clutter of Bonnie's dressing table, which, although it makes an "oblique stab" at Bob's desire for structure (25), is a clutter that has meaning and pattern for Bonnie. Among this clutter, mostly pictures representing the disorder of Flor's and Bonnie's life, "two small likenesses" are isolated to one side "in curious juxtaposition." The significance of the "monster" Bob, clad in his tartan bathing costume and outfitted in underwater fishing gear, is clear enough: after all, Bonnie has abnegated one of her images — that of self-sacrificing mother, protecting her drowning daughter (49) — to Flor's new protector, Bob (68). The other likeness is that of "a tinted image of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus," the "Little Flower," a saint having "little function in Bonnie's life, except to act as a timid anchor to Bonnie's ballooning notion of the infinite" (23-24). This image of Teresa of Lisieux (1873-1897; canonized 1925), the most popular saint in the twentieth century, who had constantly to fight depression and the threat of nervous breakdown because of her neurotic condition,[14] must surely be associated with Florence, whose name suggests not only one of the greatest cities of art, but also its Latin root, flora. Bonnie seeks to retain an image of an unblemished self both in the panels of her triptych-mirror and, with more serious consequences, in the image she projects on her daughter. Through Flor, an inviolate Flor, Bonnie may re-establish the continuity of past and present and thus absolve herself from the guilt of the infidelity that has caused a fragmented conception of self as well as the breakdown of her marriage and the impending breakdown of her daughter, who was exposed to her infidelity and then forced to live a wandering lifestyle. Whereas Bob sees Flor as an object necessary to confirm his is structured perception, Bonnie sees her as an object necessary to con-

firm her patterned perception. Flor becomes a projection of Bonnie's desire to be *une belle dame sans merci*, a sensual yet spiritual Venus (96, 105-06), a muse for a Burne-Jones or a Rossetti.[15]

Bonnie too must test this image and her first moment of crisis comes as she transfers her ownership of the image of Flor to Bob. Her main concern, however, is whether there will be a place for her in this new pattern, for if she is not in the composition, she sees nothing at all, as her reaction to Bob's modern painting well illustrates (43). Lines, colours, and shapes are secondary to her perspective, to how she perceives her own place in a new tableau. The test comes at Cannes through a dream in which she envisions Flor as a mermaid — not a Siren in " 'the blue sea, and the grottoes, everything coral and blue. Coral green and coral blue,' " not " '*la belle Florence*, floating and drifting, the bright hair spread,' " as some members of Queen Bonnie's court on the beach suggest — but rather a monster with " 'an ugly fish tail, like a carp's' " (121-22). That image of herself that she has kept alive through Venus Flor, like those feet that she has tended, risks violation:

> She was perplexed by the truth that had bothered her all her life, that there was no distance between time and events. Everything raced to a point beyond her reach and sight. Everyone slid out of her grasp: her husband, her daughter, her friends. She let herself fall back. Her field of vision closed in and from the left came the first, swimming molecules of pain. (124)

That evening, Flor comes to Bonnie's room, and although Bonnie still fears that she is to lose her image of innocence, she is given a reprieve. Stroking Flor's hair, she thinks, "My mermaid, my prize. The carp had vanished from the dream, leaving an iridescent Flor. No one was good enough for Florence. That was the meaning of the dream. 'Your hair hair is so stiff, honey, it's full of salt' " (129). Unlike Bob who actually tastes the salt, Bonnie remains outside the suffering: for the moment, the pattern holds, although it will be retested as Flor slips further away from her (for example, 47-48). But by adjusting her perspective, Bonnie can always rework the composition to accommodate any new figures or changes in the tableau. With an image of her past self firmly fixed, a pattern emerges from the chaos of life.

Florence, however, has had so many images projected upon her without ever being given the opportunity to develop any authentic image of self that the colours, lights, lines, and shapes, which for her husband form an enclosed structure and for her mother an expanding pattern, become a circle that ultimately develops into a destructive gyre. As she loses her grasp on reality, Flor tells Doris, " 'I'm a Victorian heroine' " (72); she is not, however, the Victorian heroine of the Biedermeier, Impressionist, or Pre-Raphaelite traditions. She sees herself as "the sick redhead; the dying, quivering fox," giving off a rank odour that both defines her as a woman and disgusts her (32, 67).[16] In some respects, Flor resembles Munch's *The Sick Child* (1885), with her orange-red hair loose on the pillow, this orange-red being reflected in the table that juts in from the left foreground and the glass that seems

to float in the right foreground, all these splashes of orange-red attempting to emerge from the overwhelming dark greens of the picture. Munch's painting departs from the usual pathos of the dying child in so many lesser Victorian paintings to offer a still life of pain. But the pain comes through the rounded shoulders of the mother, not the serene, brightly lit face of the dying girl whose gaze is cast beyond the mother. This cannot be Flor whose habitual "waking look" is one of "horror" (44). No, *The Sick Child*, despite the extreme suffering conveyed, is not the final image of Flor that the novel projects; rather, Flor is the shorn, contorted head of Munch's *The Scream* (1893), caught in a swirling world of lights, colours, lines, and shapes that do not compose themselves into any recognizable image for Flor. Bonnie thinks, "That was how you became, living for Flor. Impossible, illogical pictures leaped upward in the mind and remained fixed, shining with more brilliance and clarity than the obvious facts" (40-41). Therefore, Flor does not have any particular moment of crisis in which she tests her perception; she is constantly testing perceived against received truths.

CONTRARY TO WHAT BOB thinks, the world into which Flor yearns to escape is not a dark world devoid of light but rather a shadowed one in which light and dark coexist. Whereas two years previously Bob sought darkness through the mysterious Flor, Flor sought light through the structured Bob who "had no attchments to the past." One night in Cannes, Flor woke up in the dark and a bar of light from a car's lights swept across the ceiling and walls of the room. Flor perceived this as a beacon of concrete happiness. She saw that her own family, "the chain of fathers and daughters and mothers and sons," had been "powerless as a charm" against suffering and believed that, lacking her own "emotional country, it might be possible to consider another person one's home" (111-12). She accepted the imperfection of her lover, but two years later, as Flor's trust in Bob's ability to provide light and focus in her life has been betrayed, she seeks relief in the shaded, gray world of dreams. Light and dark are "outside the scope of her fears" (65); only "dreams experienced in the grey terrain between oblivion and life" (30) can provide her with the calm she now seeks.

Within the chaotic world of bright lights and colours in which she finds herself (29, 106-07), Flor can neither define nor place herself. Thus she attempts to assert her existence in "wide-skirted dresses in brilliant tones" — corals and reds (27). The two colours consistently associated with Flor are the complementary colours of green and red: green eyes, red hair. Significantly, these colours are what identify her as a McCarthy (151-52) and distinguish her from her mother's family, the Fairlies, with their "light blue eyes, and pale brows, lashes, and hair" (139; cf.

15-16, 140)— features to which Flor aspires with her insistence that she is anemic (60, 67). While giving Flor a unique beauty, which Bob sees as luminous and Bonnie as alluring, red and green, being complementary, are ultimately destructive: when mixed, these pigments cancel one another out, leaving a gray tone or black.

Meanwhile, however, the colour red is Flor's assurance that the ruin is incomplete as when she imagines Paris as having perished and the red geranium as "the only color on the gray street" (79-80; cf. 52). And the only image, among all those imposed on her, that Flor can grasp of herself is that of a little red fox. In the dream that marks Flor's final slipping into insanity, the red fox departs in the green sea. Flor finds the "right direction" as she turns away from this red image, which, having merged with the green sea, must now be a gray-black speck, and grasps at yet another image of light.[17] Riding her pony through a tunnel of green trees, she attains the perfection that Bob and Bonnie have demanded. In her dream, however, it is neither Bob nor Bonnie who greets her, but her father, a figure beyond the vanishing point formed by the parallel lines in the world of here and now (84-85). This is the "image of torment, nostalgia, and unbearable pain" (55) that she has kept enclosed, suppressed, for so many years.

The image of the fox is associated with the vertigo that Flor experiences in her attempt to make parallel lines perform as they should in a structured world: tapering until they meet at the horizon. Both the fox and vertiginous lines are symbols of the "torment" that Flor began to experience when she was twelve (30), thus being consequent to her exposure to her mother's infidelity and her father's rejection of them both (10) and coincident with her arrested sexual development (114). Like Touchstone from *As You Like It*, a passage from whom Gallant quotes for her epigraph to the novel, Flor is seeking a "better place." By fourteen, she strives to break "the circle of life closing in . . . the family, the mother, the husband to come" (143) and so destroys the necklace of glass beads. Flor is caught in the centre, however, and her breaking of the necklace only sets the scene in spinning motion: "the air was full of pigeons and bells and the movement of Flor breaking something because she wanted something broken" (19; cf. 4-5, 142).

Ten years later, at Cannes, the circle has become an underground tunnel in which she is enclosed and watched over by such insect enemies as Wishart (120-21). Nor does her marriage to Bob provide a "better place," a home fer her. In Paris, her movements are circumscribed within a "familiar triangle" (33). Only in her empty apartment, as she desperately seeks a dream world, can she broaden the tunnel, open up a vertex of the triangle, to form a funnel (82), But the vertex becomes a vortex, and as Flor attempts to escape the circle, tunnel, and triangle, these shapes are gyrating so rapidly that they have become a whirlpool or whirlwind and suck her into the eye of the storm.

Because Flor is inside the imprisoning shapes, but with no sense of self, she cannot

gain any perspective and her field of vision is gradually foreshortened as the shoreline narrows and the sea encroaches (28). Only the neutral gray world can stop the chaotic gyration of colours, lights, lines, and shapes that tosses her about like an alien piece of flotsam. Flor's image of the world is like Bob's modern painting, in which Flor sees no structure, no pattern, only exploding, floating forms, "absolute proof that the universe was disintegrating and that it was vain and foolish to cry for help" (43). She has become Munch's silent scream as the sea sweeps over her. There can be no "better place," but as for Timon, only an "everlasting mansion / Upon the beachèd verge of the salt flood, / Who once a day with his embossèd froth / The turbulent surge shall cover."[18]

All the characters except Flor attain a perspective that enables them to accommodate received truths to perceived truths and thus to survive the "turbulent surge" of the compossibility of these truths. Through the narration of Flor's cousin, George Fairlie, in the fourth section, which takes place several weeks after Flor's breakdown, the victim and survivors of the storm are portrayed. For Bob, it is as if he has "come into a known station only to find all the trains going to the wrong places or leaving at impossible times: endlessly patient, he was waiting for the schedules to be rearranged" (137). Bonnie is trying out a new role, that of "a crone; she seemed to have made up her mind to be old and tactless, and dress like the Mad Woman of Chaillot" (138). Both of them, as they make their journey through the Paris night, are fixing an image of the new Flor into their structure or pattern: that of a tamed Flor, gentle and affectionate, feeding her husband little pieces of bread from her tray (136).

This image, however, George finds to be "a swampy horror on which his mind refuse[s] to alight" (142): he retains the image of the old, rebellious Flor, petulantly breaking her necklace, glass beads scattering, pigeons eddying, bells ringing. But George, because he has a sense of self gained through a sense of family and place (8, 20, 139-40, 151-52), has a perspective and therefore does not become a victim of the storm. He, like the survivors, finds structure and pattern in the world, but unlike them, he sees life whole. His is the eye of the truly kinetic artist through which, Naum Gabo insists, the fourth dimension — time — can genuinely, not just optically, be introduced.[19] George does not simply adjust his focus or shift his position to attain an optical illusion of having accommodated new images into the structure or pattern. He actually sees through eyes other than his own. Although like Flor, the victim, he receives a multitude of exploding, fragmented images, unlike Flor who is caught in the centre with no focus, he does not become a victim but a transmitter of the compossibility, even the harmony, of the images within the whole picture. Thus his narrative becomes a "mobile structure" as he replicates the qualities of the glass bead that he no longer needs, receiving and transmitting colours, lights, lines, and shapes, which while gyrating, do so in a kaleidoscopic rather than tornadic fashion.

THE FIRST SECTION OF the novel, focusing on the day George's parents, while in Venice, go off on an excursion to see some "old pictures," leaving George with Bonnie and Flor, reveals the evolution of George's kinetic, kaleidoscopic perspective. This day is memorable because, as a child of seven, he moves from a simple two-dimensional, through a reflective three-dimensional, to a kaleidoscopic multi-dimensional view of life. The Grand Canal, in the opening scene, is a flat, green "hardly moving layer of morning muck." Similarly, his parents' faces are flat and expressionless; therefore, he has been unable to read "betrayal" under their composed masks. All is static, stagnating, the scene only being broken by his "churning across to the Lido" in an open boat with his aunt and cousin. Once on the beach, everything returns to its two-dimensional plane, although the memory of Bonnie has a sense of depth through the optical illusion of concentric circles: "She sat under a series of disks, in dwindling perspective; first an enormous beach umbrella, all in stripes, then her own faded parasol, then a neutral-colored straw hat" (1-2). The rest of the scene, even filtered through his memory, remains flat: Flor "sitting straight in the center of a round shadow"; the sea "so flat, so still, so thick with warmth you might have walked on it" (4).

What propels George from this flat two-dimensional perspective to a reflective three-dimensional one is the image of Flor "angry, and enjoying herself, all at once" as she breaks the encircling necklace of glass beads (4-5). The bead that George retrieves becomes "a powerful charm; a piece of a day; a reminder that someone had once wished him dead but that he was still alive" (5-6). In itself, however, the bead cannot produce a kinetic image; it is simply a three-dimensional object, each dimension dependent on the other.

But already the image of the bead is expanding, gaining a fourth dimension, because contained within it are not simply the images of green water, green sky, two two-dimensional images gaining a third dimension through reflection, but the associative value of all the images. Flor's eyes, as she looks at him, are "green as water, bright with dislike." His memory too adds a facet as he recalls "the heavy green water closing out the sky and the weight of clouds" on the day he fell into his grandmother Fairlie's pond (6-7). The images contained in this memory are placed over the images contained in the memory of Flor's green eyes looking at him with hate, and all are set in motion as he looks into the bead, "glass over glass" (7, 19). The associations gained through experience and memory have developed the bead into a multi-dimensional image.

After a telescoping of ten years, the first section ends with George's account of an encounter with Flor in New York shortly after her marriage to Bob. George, now seventeen, is a well-adjusted individual and an astute observer (3, 16): for example, he accurately notes Bob's desire to possess Flor's beauty (16-17). When

Flor questions him about the accuracy of his memory, however, George seeks verification through the existence of his glass bead that "proves" he was "somewhere" (20). Soon after this, George loses his talisman: his memory of Flor is so firmly implanted that it needs no objective verification; he is able to travel "through a hole in time" and be with Flor just as "one goes back to a lake, a room in a city, or the south" (142-43).

Because of this firmly fixed memory, George successfully undergoes the nightmare journey through Paris, guided by Bonnie and then Bob, confronting the "swampy horror" of the truth of the new, shorn Flor. He resembles the "White Rabbit" (139) in the world beyond the looking glass, a world in which received images do not correspond with perceived ones. Most importantly, George is responsible for preserving the image of the old Flor, which conflicts with this new image. At some points in the journey, George's equilibrium is threatened as he experiences the same sensations as Flor (although his route does not parallel any of the journeys taken by Flor described in the novel). For example, he too has a sensation of a perished Paris: full of people, none of them belonging (138; cf. 52). The most precarious moment of the journey occurs when he becomes "physically aware of the absence of Flor": "It would be nice to believe she was happier, calmer, more loving than ever, but he thought she was not anywhere." Like Flor several months earlier, George now loses "hold of the real situation" and observes the trio of which he is part from the outside (145). But for George this is merely a temporary sensation because he has a clear idea of who he is and of what being George implies (133).

Although during this journey, George's "shed youth" seems "a piling-up of hallucinations, things heard and seen that were untrue or of no use to him" (139), George does not allow anyone to impose false images on him; thus he resists Bonnie's attempt to absolve her guilt by reversing his history with Flor's (147-48). As George is flooded by the compossibility of truths about himself and the various relationships to which he has been exposed, he realizes that had he "still owned the bead he would have got rid of it now" (148). At the height of this onslaught, he hears Bob's voicing a desire for a simple, structured life and Bonnie's insistence that Flor was a *femme fatale*. "The Seine was moving faster; the reflection of bridges cracked and shook" (150). But the composition does not explode for George even though he knows, "When the three separated that night, Flor would be lost. Their conversation and their thoughts were the last of the old Flor. If she was cured, she would be different. He was sure of that" (152). George offers the image of Flor to Bob, as husband, to preserve, but Bob seems "unaware of the magnitude of the stroke" to put Flor outside the Fairlie family composition and into a composition with her husband (153-54). George cannot abnegate responsibility by simply shifting focus. And George has yet to confront the inhibiting effect that the image of Flor has had on his relationships with women (142-43, 148). As George recrosses

the bridge he has an "authentic hallucination." Flor is not the ideal object of the Biedermeier, Impressionist, or Pre-Raphaelite traditions. George is a citizen of the twentieth century and his final image of Flor is a kinetic one:

> He saw Aunt Bonnie and Flor and the girl on the Quai Anatole France as one person. She was a changeable figure, now menacing, now dear; a minute later behaving like a queen in exile, plaintive and haughty, eccentric by birth, unaware, or not caring, that the others were laughing behind their hands. (154)

Perhaps this mutability is forecast at the beginning of the night's journey by the "funny light over the Louvre, as if beams of warm, theatrical color were being played from somewhere behind . . ." (132). The old Flor is no longer fixed as an object of art in a gallery of old paintings. She is no longer a spectacle at whom strangers daily stare. The image of the wild Flor has secured its place in a collective image of all displaced and suffering souls of whom Munch's silent scream has taken possession.[20] Meanwhile the new Flor, a broken Flor, sits in an asylum feeding her husband pieces of bread from her tray. Gone is the reflective green image. It no longer suffices. The "last blaze of day" fades. "Nothing remained except a vanishing saffron cloud" (132).

The more *avant-garde* postmodernists of the last three decades have challenged what they perceive to be limitations imposed by the three-dimensional page and the written word through such mechanical devices as unbound pages that can be rearranged however the reader wills, unusual design and colour of print, and visual symbols and illustrations. Mavis Gallant neither chafes under the restrictions of a three-dimensional page nor sees the medium of language to be confining. Thus, Gallant has not felt compelled to dabble in the fashion of mixed media, but rather exploits the techniques of the visual artist — colour, shading, line, shape, framing, and ultimately fluidity — to compose, metaphorically, the structures, patterns, and gyres within her novel. In the hands of Mavis Gallant, a true literary artist capable of creating vibrant visual effects, the language of fiction moulds "mobile structures" that reffect the compossibility of truths and produce different trajectories for a reading of these truths.

NOTES

[1] Michel Butor, *Inventory: Essays by Michel Butor, ed.* Richard Howard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 30. All further references to Butor are from this collection.

[2] Richard Howard, "Foreword," *Inventory: Essays by Michel Butor,* 10.

[3] Mavis Gallant's fascination with art is revealed throughout both her fictional and non-fictional works. Describing a museum located on the street on the Left Bank of Paris where she lives, Gallant notes that, "Nothing reveals the state of mind of a

class and a society quite so much as what it chooses to hang on the wall. The Hébert Museum is interesting not so much for a way of art but for a way of looking at life." "Paris Truths: On the street where she lives," *Destinations*, 1:4 (Winter 1986), 42. In his 1977 interview with Gallant, Geoff Hancock described some of the paintings and etchings on the walls of her apartment, conversed with her on the Surrealist movement, and, observing the visual quality of her stories, conjectured that she "might [have] liked to have been a painter at one time," to which Gallant replied that she often thinks in terms of being a painter and how she would respond to a scene were she a painter. "An Interview with Mavis Gallant," *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, 28 (1978), 19, 51, 55.

[4] *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, Revised and Augmented Edition (1941; rpt. New York: New Directions Paperback, 1960), 30.

[5] In his 1964 essay "The Space of the Novel," Butor suggests that Paris is an important illustration that "[s]pace, as we experience it, is not at all the Euclidean space whose parts are mutually exclusive. Every site is the focal point of a horizon of other sites, the point of origin of a series of possible routes passing through other more or less determined regions" (37). Paris is not simply a sender of information or a receiver of information, but rather a city that both sends and receives, "thus establishing new relations between other places" (38). This idea is particularly pertinent to my discussion of the narrative voice of George Fairlie.

[6] Mavis Gallant, *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1983), 46. Further references are to this edition.

[7] See especially 33-36, the first portion of the novel to be devoted to Bob's viewpoint, as illustration of Bob's integration of public and private selves and his lack of historical sense.

[8] The only time that colour appears with reference to Bob is in a scene in which Flor has lamented the lack of bright flashes of colour in Europe; in contrast, Bob sees "the sun flash off a speedboat and everywhere he looked he saw color and light. The cars moving along the Croisette were color enough" (107). Perhaps it is Bob's inability to distinguish between the random and intense that reduces everything to white or black — to a reflection of all colours or no colours.

[9] This idea is developed in Edwin Mullins, *The Painted Witch: How Western Artists Have Viewed the Sexuality of Women* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1985), who although not addressing Biedermeier artists specifically, discusses how artists have traditionally outfitted women to enhance their "value as a man's possession. . . . She is a prize, a prized object" (106). A series of such women, adorned with pearls, jewels, silks, laces, and furs, can be seen in Joseph Karl Stieler's portraits, now housed in Schloss Nymphenburg, Munich; see illustrations in Günter Böhmer, *Die Welt des Biedermeier* (Munich: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1968), 241-43, and Stieler's portrait of the aristocratic *Amalie von Schintling* of which there is an excellent reproduction in Geraldine Norman, *Beidermeier Painting: 1815-1848* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 127. Also helpful for defining this attitude towards women are Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), especially Chapter One.

[10] Such paintings as Renoir's *Nude in the Sunlight* (1875) or the more pallid *Blonde Bathers* of the 1880's — note their wedding bands — well illustrate this. See reproductions of these in *Renoir* (New York: Harry N. Abrams/Arts Council of Great Britain, 1985), 75, 105, 107. Mullins, 84-85 comments generally about Renoir's attitude of taming and owning the loved object.

[11] Although attitudes towards Manet's *Olympia* differ greatly, Paul Valéry's comments in his introduction to the catalogue for the Manet centenary exhibition are noteworthy here: "Her empty head is separated from her essential being by a thin band of black velvet. Impurity personified — whose function demands the frank and placid absence of any sense of shame — is isolated by that pure and perfect stroke. A bestial Vestal of absolute nudity, she invokes a dream of all the primitive barbarity and ritual animality which lurks and lingers in the ways and workings of prostitution in the life of a great city." *Degas Manet Morisot*, trans. David Paul (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), 109.

[12] This scene is carefully structured in blocks, with the alternating viewpoints running in a parallel — and then for a moment in an oblique — direction, to reinforce content.

[13] Despite the delicately coloured images, Bonnie is usually pictured in *chic* black; see, for example, 27, 134.

[14] *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, ed. Donald Attwater, 2nd edition (Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), 313-14; *The Saints: A Concise Biographical Dictionary*, ed. John Coulson (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1958), 425-27.

[15] That Bonnie has ambitions this way is reinforced by the scene in which she has promised to help an artist who has a flattering portrait of her in her studio (63). It is interesting to note in this context the Pre-Raphaelites' preference for red-headed models for their Venus and Madonna figures, this particularly being the case with Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

[16] As such, then, Florence sees herself in much the same way as many Victorian women. See, in particular, the second chapter of Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

[17] See 29-30, 54-55, for the association with light of this image of the tunnel of trees.

[18] William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens* 5.4. 100-03, quoted in *Green Water, Green Sky*, 28.

[19] "Russia and Constructivism" (An interview with Naum Gabo by Arbam Lassaw and Ilya Bolotowsky, 1956), *Gabo: Constructions, Sculpture, Paintings, Drawings, Engravings* (London: Lund Humphries, 1957), 160.

[20] Despite Janice Keefer's contention that Gallant's two novels are "period-piece histories of female experience and sensibility," the archetypal images created through Gallant's adaptation of the techniques of the visual artist surely place this novel in the context of Keefer's general thesis concerning Gallant's fiction, that "female experience, in which passivity, captive and sometimes complicit suffering have been traditionally the norm, becomes archetypal of the human experience of history" in today's world. Janice Kulyk Keefer, "Mavis Gallant and the Angel of History," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 55:3 (Spring 1986), 301 n. 32, 296.

TO BE (AND NOT TO BE) CONTINUED

Closure and Consolation in Gallant's "Linnet Muir Sequence"

Karen Smythe

MAVIS GALLANT'S 'LINNET MUIR' sequence in the *Home Truths* collection is an anomaly in many ways. First, the stories are consistently set in Canada and, based on setting, have been labelled "the Montreal stories"; they have also been described as Gallant's most autobiographical work, using what is in any of her fiction the voice closest to her own.[1] These two aspects of the sequence are the most obvious marks of difference, and the focus on these textual elements has dominated criticism of the stories.[2] Gallant's use of the sequential form, however, is an anomaly in itself, and deserving of attention.

Each of the Linnet stories has been published individually, but it is the story sequence, at once both structurally continuous and structurally broken, that is unusual in the Gallant *oeuvre*. Other linked stories do exist in the author's canon: there are three groups of intra-connected stories in *Overhead in a Balloon*, for instance, and Gallant has written two novels and three novellas which also consist of self-contained sequential parts (*Green Water, Green Sky* was published as four separate short stories, and *Its Image on the Mirror* consists of seven numbered sections). But the linked Linnet stories are unique in that a single consciousness is presented in detail at various levels of time, thereby producing a multi-layered single text in a form that Barbara Godard has recently labelled "modular fiction."[3]

By linking the Linnet stories in this way Gallant surprises her readers; what is not surprising, however, is that the story sequence is unconventional and discontinuous, constructed from fragments. As Virginia Woolf says of Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One's Own*, she is "tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence. Very well," writes Woolf, "she has every right to do both these things if she does them not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating" (78). Gallant, I suggest, establishes the literary sequence only to break it by experimenting with the genre, for the "sake of creating" — and of re-creating.

There are reasons for this sequential experiment. Gallant states that she wanted to restore "in some underground river of the mind a lost Montreal";[4] but at the story-level itself, the Linnet sequence seems to be, among other recognizable forms, an exercise in elegy.[5] The focus on the almost silent father, often absent even while alive (285), is one aspect of this elegy in its consideration of what the text calls the "principle of the absent, endangered male" (227). The absent father is a strong shaping principle in Canadian fiction[6] and is central to elegy in general, since (according to Peter Sacks) the patriarchal figure traditionally upholds the social and familial structures.[7] Linnet herself is aware of this conventional structure, though clearly she undercuts and rejects it with ironic commentary: "It was the father's Father, never met, never heard, who made Heaven and earth and Eve and Adam" (269).

Nonetheless, Linnet's father haunts both the text proper *and* the text-within-the-text, the one she writes in order to confront her loss and be consoled.[8] Because of the covert nature of this intra-textual elegy, Gallant's sequence might be read as a subversion, even as 'anti-elegy.' It is anti-elegiac for other reasons as well. For instance, the conventional pastoral contrast between the (ideal) rural and the (negative) urban settings is reversed. Similarly the traditional longing for a Golden Age or paradisical childhood[9] is inverted: Linnet's childhood was marked by "a feeling of loss, of helpless sadness" (311) and by "a long spell of grief" (223), and she thinks of her youth as "the prison of childhood" (225). The ironic nature of this reversal emphasizes a 'home truth' about Linnet's past: if a home truth consists of "the contradiction between what *is* and what *should be*,"[10] then it is 'true' that her upbringing was not as it should have been. Consequently, it is also 'true' that after the loss of her father, she is not consoled by what 'should' comfort her; recollecting the past is not a useful method of mourning, nor is writing about it.

The event of her father's death is described in abstract terms:

> Peacetime casualties . . . are lightning bolts out of a sunny sky that strike only one house. All around the ashy ruin lilacs blossom, leaves gleam. Speculation in public about the disaster would be indecent. Nothing remains but a silent, recurring puzzlement to the survivors: Why here and not there? Why this and not that? (235)

By using the connected short story genre, Gallant appears to be instituting an orderly narrative sequence designed not only to answer these questions, but perhaps also to console on the structural level of the aesthetic. The sequence form may have the opposite effect, however; as Melissa Fran Zeiger writes, "the modern sequence reflects the tendency of modern elegy to create uncanniness by undoing narrativity, chronology, personality." (17)

Clearly Gallant's sequence is less linear or chronological than that of a traditional elegy, and though it offers a formally coherent narrative structure, it also paradoxically 'undoes' chronology. The story structure that seems smooth on the surface

is, as Frank Kermode would argue, an "illusion of narrative sequence" that must be in conflict with narrative "secrets" that are kept from the reader ("Secrets and Narrative Sequence," 81). For example, the mystery of Angus Muir (who had "nothing but" secrets himself [230]) surfaces only long enough to offer what Kermode would call "evidence of [an] insubordinate text" (83), the text which constitutes an elegy for Linnet's father.

Linnet's elegiac story sequence calls into question both the idea of "narrative sequence" and the potential of aesthetic consolation. As elegy, it is fundamentally self-reflexive, drawing attention to its narrativity and artifice. What is at stake in Gallant's use of the elegiac genre is the possible convergence of the aesthetic and the epistemological, as well as the aesthetic and the historical, in terms of the possible recuperative power of such unions.[11] The breaking of the sequential form is accomplished with digressions on other familial relationships and parent/child politics,[12] and also by the movement back and forth in time, and the intermittent focus on the self as an artist figure.

This 'breaking' has a double function: first, it literalizes a Kermodean-like theory of sequence and secrets, thereby drawing attention to the problem of accurately narrating the "insubordinate texts" of history; and second, the existence of a broken sequence is often one diagnostic test of the genre of elegy — it draws attention to the condition of the narrative as a drama of the mind, an internalization that works against narrative and what Jonathan Culler calls "its accompaniments: [chronological] sequentiality, causality, time, teleological meaning" ("Apostrophe" 66). Culler goes on to suggest that this type of narrative posits a "temporality of discourse," and that the "clearest example of this structure is of course the elegy which replaces an irreversible temporal disjunction, the move from life to death, with a dialectical alternation between attitudes of mourning and consolation, evocations of absence and presence" (67).

THIS WRITTEN REPETITION of her past makes Linnet a historiographer, if we characterize historically as Ricoeur does: "in terms of the emphasis placed on the weight of the past and, even more, in terms of the power of recovering the 'extension' between birth and death in the work of 'repetition' " (167). The "concern for the past" is what generates history, Ricoeur writes (177); in Linett's case it generates a particular history — her/story — and Gallant, through Linnet, explores different modes of memory and writing, as well as their relationship to history and truth.

The broken sequence form itself enacts an aesthetic that recovers life, that "extension between birth and death" of which Ricoeur speaks. Linnet writes to attempt a recovery from the loss, as well as to recover or regain the lost, only to

re-cover it again by distancing herself from her father. In the first story, she recalls a time when she had yet to recover in any of these senses of the word. She is vulnerable, thinking "I had survived, but perhaps I had failed to grow some outer skin it was now too late to acquire" (232). On the actual return to her birthplace (Montreal), she carries her birth certificate and an object that synecdochically links her to her father: an Edwardian picnic hamper. She makes the connection between the hamper, his death and her life (which seems to be 'mourning in motion') by describing her luggage: "[it was] a preposterous piece of baggage my father had brought from England some 20 years before; it had been with me since childhood, when his death turned my life into a helpless migration" (219). Though she is 'hampered' by memories of him, she chooses to remain attached to the inherited object that once belonged to him in *his* travels despite her claim that she "did not believe in inherited property" (232).

Linnet not only inherits her father's identity as traveller, but resembles her father physically, as well: "I was so like him in some ways that a man once stopped me in front of the Bell Telephone building on Beaver Hall Hill and said, 'Could you possibly be Angus Muir's sister?' " (249). Linnet is bound so closely to the identity of her dead father, in fact, that three people in the story say on different occasions that they had heard *she* had died (224, 229, 249). Through the conventionally elegiac ritual of writing in response to loss, she fills the basket with her own marks of life, her poems and journals. The stories in the hamper migrate with Linnet, and the fictional elegy that they eventually compose moves in a 'migratory' narrative pattern as well.

Gallant plays with the genre of elegy and emphasizes the psycholinguistic components of the mourning *process* over a potential literary monument, which is the conventional product of elegy. Janice Kulyk Keefer suggests that Gallant's sequence achieves "continuousness" and "avoids programmatic closure" (Keefer 75), which are precisely the narrative strategies appropriate to elegiac fiction. The paradoxical *dis*continuity of the broken sequence prevents the programmatic closure often found in elegy. The consolation in Gallant's fiction is found in the lack or disruption of closure, in the process of merging epistemology with the aesthetic, and *not* in a structurally closed (and internally continuous) monumental piece of art.

Closure is also avoided by the inclusion of the autobiographical mode.[13] While the first story in the sequence opens with the words "My father died" (218), and two of the three segments in the narrative begin with the phrases "my father's death" and "I know a woman whose father died," most of this story (like the five others in the sequence) consists of Linnet's overtly autobiographical anecdotes; taken in sum, they emphasize her will to live and her roles as 'survivor' and 'storyteller,' both of which are crucial to the work of mourning. She believes that "having come down on the side of life [whereas her father chose death] . . . writing now had to occupy an enormous space" (249).

Gallant uses Linnet's 'life-writing' (autobiography being the counter-mode of elegy[14]) to fill the space of Linnet's mourning and to resist traditional elegiac consolation in closure. The autobiography often has a confessional tone, which also draws the reader into the immediacy and openness of the text; we are told things that Linnet never wanted "anyone to know" (226), things that she "never mentioned" to anyone (219). This mixture of genres and modes within the elegy emphasizes the fact that a crisis of *representation* parallels the crisis of loss experienced by the writer. The metafictional text thematizes an aspect of the elegist's mourning: the need to write. By emphasizing sequence in Linnet's autobiography, Gallant is fusing three types of fiction: the *Künstlerroman*, the autobiographical, and the elegiac. This combination of modes points to both of Linnet's crises, which themselves are linked: how to deal with her past, as well as how to write, and thereby recover from, absence.

By exploring the relationship between the past and the ability of the mind not only to remember, but also to *record* or *represent* history, Gallant embeds an aesthetic of elegy in the stories. The use of repetition throughout the sequence is a significant component of this aesthetic. Different versions of events in Linnet's life are told in narrative variants (stories about her relationships with Uncle Raoul Chauchard, Olivia, Georgie, and fiancés, for example) and they become what Barbara Hernstein Smith woull call "modified retellings of a particular prior narrative text" (211). Subsequently, the reader is forced to face the unreliability of any one memory *and* of the act of writing down that memory. There is, after all, no single 'truth': only multiple (often painful) 'home truths,' as the repetition-with-a-difference of certain stories about her former home life indicate.

Anecdotal wanderings or repetitions in and about the past are endemic to elegy. The subsequent temporal doubling-back in Linnet's writing is indicated by phrases such "that *is* how it *was*," and "I *was now* eighteen" (219; emphasis mine), phrases which fragment the temporality of the story and suggest that a voice does exist in the *present* as well. Repetition both within each story and between stories in the sequence allows her to enact certain verbal rites that eventually complete the work of mourning. But the story sequence enables Gallant to literalize not only the phychological need of the grieving mind for repetition of memories; it also provides a form whereby she can literalize the primary characteristic of memory itself: fragmentation.

The status of Linnet's writing is autobiographical, but the temporality of the fiction does not refer to the historical past; the digressions, narrative gaps, and non-linear story sequence *within* the stories work against chronology, and install their own temporality of discourse. Gallant seems, however, to combine these two temporal modes (the referential and the discursive): the writing mimics the movement of Linnet's mourning mind, putting it on public display. The outer event — Linnet's story — and the inner event — Linnet's belated work of mourning[15] —

become so closely aligned that the dramatic discourse is, in its relationship to the present mental drama, highly referential.

LINNET'S PUBLIC STORY IS clearly a staged one, in which she speaks from a dramatic perspective.[16] Her techniques are the "staging devices" of an elegist (Sacks 19), and though her experience is private, her writings (on the surface at least) are not. Linnet mildly rebels against the "shamed silences" of people who refuse to display what they feel (227), a practice that she considers "murder in everyday life" (228). But she guards her own emotions despite this judgement, and despite the writing of her elegy. Though she does address the reader directly at times, thus establishing a sense of intimacy, the content of the 'public' address is often secretive, a mysterious piece of private information about her father and her past. For example, Linnet writes that "How I happen to know the revolver was loaded and how I learned never to point a gun even in play is *another story. I can tell you* that I never again looked in a drawer that didn't belong to me" (234; emphasis mine). Though the address is direct, the meaning is held back, the implication being that there is always "another story": either other versions of memory, or secret narratives embedded in the overt sequence, or both.

The public form of the elegy announces an attempt to assert a state of control over the emotions that underlie it, to make "*public* life tolerable" (228). Control is something Linnet admires about people in a crisis situation, as she comments early in the sequence. Linnet's writing style is blunt, factual, even clinical, and while these features *could* derive from Linnet's experience as a journalist, they seem, more importantly, to suggest and endorse the emotional detachment of the elegist which produces necessary control at certain stages of grief. Linnet becomes detached from *herself* as well. She simultaneously becomes both character and implied author of the text, and this doubling puts her at a remove from the life-story she writes, despite the fact that it is her own.[17] She refers to herself in the past as "the smaller Linnet" (225), which also distances her self in the 'now' of the text from her self 'then' *within* her own writing, and implies a splitting of the subject-past from the subject-present. The voice of the grieving self is, in this way, controlled and silent.

Linnet suspects that "death and silence can be one" (228) and encodes this suspicion in her elegy for Angus, who is figuratively represented in the white spaces on the page and between the stories in the sequence. We may be hearing him at one point, when Linnet breaks off a childhood anecdote about tulips, addressing the reader with the words "no, let another voice finish it; the only authentic voices I have belong to the dead" and then quoting one such dead person as if he (or she) could speak: " 'then she *ate* them' " (283). The dead parent is seemingly her

father, since the next line begins with "It was my father's custom" and since the story is at least nominally about his relationship with another woman. The title of the story is "Voices Lost in Snow," a title that would be suitable for the entire sequence.

That Angus is "lost" to Linnet is obvious. How she finds him in memory and in writing is less clear. Linnet's stories are *not* an attempt to capture her father in words. She collects three different versions (or "men's woolly stories") about her father's death, and then has to assimilate them, to compose a story that lets her live with the death, the manner of the death, and the memory of the emblematic gun she found in a drawer. But she refuses to attempt to extract the 'true story' from real events since she realizes that the impulse to give narrative shape to events always results in a form of fiction, in what Hayden White calls "an aspect of narrativity" (4). That is, Linnet has learned to distrust the ability of story to capture truth, and by creating a vague story that encompasses most variants under the rubric of "homesickness" (235)— a story as plausible as any other — she is able to "settl[e] his fate in her mind" (235).

Linnet's version of the truth, then, is as dubious as those of her father's friends. (Her unnamed acquaintance, who tells different invented versions of *her* father's death at dinner parties, is a parodic parallel to Linnet is this respect.) In "Truth with a Capital 'T' " Gallant explicitly plays with the idea of writing 'truth,' and Linnet, from the vantage point of her "critical nostalgia"[18] where she can "hear the past" (329), knows that the narrated past is fiction. A voice, such as that of her godmother Georgie, is closer to truth than a written anecdote, since memory is unreliable: "Her voice, and her particular Montreal accent, were like the unexpected signatures that underwrite the past: If this much is true, you will tell yourself, then so is all the rest I have remembered" (325). Only the ideal of 'pure' recall, "not reconstructed or approximate," — and therefore not written (since writing is necessarily a reconstruction of thought)— is true (229); but since memory is not pure but selective and inaccurate, and since to Linnet's mind "nothing but the present [can] live" (280), then even pure recall is impossible.[19]

Despite Linnet's thinking that "one's impulse was always to write to the dead" (281), the traditional apostrophe to or invocation of the dead is absent in this elegy. The elegy is usually addressed to an absent audience, but Linnet's address is a silent one. Her refusal to write directly to the dead, to resurrect the dead with words, is her 'refusal to mourn' in the conventional sense. In other words, she recognizes the remembered past as a fiction, since in the present "she recognized nearly nothing and had to start from scratch" (235)— that is, to start remembering in the present, and to create new fictions *based* on the past. Linnet detaches herself from Angus, turing away from a type of "object-fixation" on the dead and lost to an intellectual acceptance of their unrecoverability. She has committed an "act of troping" (Sacks 5) by putting distance between herself and the dead father and her

past — by turning from object to sign, from father to story. Gallant portrays Linnet's performative grieving in this focus on her use of language, which paradoxically both fills in and maintains the space left by the death of Angus.

The resulting detatchment takes the form of actively putting the past behind her, of "shedding past time" (222). "If I was to live my own life I had to let go," she writes, deciding that the "whole story [of her father's death] somehow became none of my business" (235). A verbal portrait of him would be the equivalent of "impersonations," like those "wash drawings of Canadian war graves" which her father's "painter-chum" sold to "heartbroken women" who "had them framed — the only picture in the house" (231). As Linnet implies in "The Doctor," it is not reminders that console, but synecdochic or metonymic "true fragments" (301)— like the books of poetry the doctor-friend had written himself, secretly, or paintings her father had done, paintings which are now as lost as his voice.

Gallant seems to be advocating a Hegelian-like aesthetic wherein to write is to forget. In the act of writing down thoughts and memories, we allow ourselves to forget them.[20] But Linnet's writing process (the embedded elegy) appeals to what Derrida calls the "living, knowing memory" or *mnēmē*. She avoids the construction of inventories and chronicles, which constitute "not memory itself . . . only monuments" that are *hypomnēmatic* (Derrida 107). Though Linnet does memorialize *place* through the work of memory, her memories of her father reproduce a presence, and paradoxically by *not* writing about his life in her version of the elegy, she does *not* forget him.[21] Whereas traditional consolation occurs in the conflation of art and history, in the creation of a lasting, closed verbal monument for the dead, Linnet's consolation occurs when writing and history are bridged but remain divided. Her writing remains 'open' in the sense that it does not attempt to capture the past in words.

This division of the aesthetic and the historic, or art and reality, is a sign of what de Man calls "true mourning": "the most *it* can do is ta allow for non-comprehension and enumerate non-anthropomorphic, non-elegiac, non-celebratory, non-lyrical, non-poetic, that is to say, prosaic, or better, *historical* modes of language power" (de Man 262).[22] The aesthetic (i.e., narrative art) is considered to be false consolation in this poetics for the very reasons that Gallant distrusts memory and cannot claim truth for written versions of any single memory. This is another inversion of elegiac convention where in the art/reality dichotomy (which is similar to the rural/urban contrast), artifice is the preferred realm of existence.

Linnet's declaration that "mostly when people say 'I know exactly how I felt' it can't be true" (260) indicates a distrust of memory similar to Gallant's, and while what de Man calls the historical mode of language is, ideally, true referentiality, the best a writer such as Linnet (or Gallant) can do is to merge the epistemological — memory — with the aesthetic, in order to arrive at a version of history, and at linguistic consolation. The convergence of these two is accomplished through

a near-historical mode of language which provides the bridge or passage from the aesthetic to the historical, such as that employed by Linnet in her clinical, unconventional elegy.

IN WHAT WE MIGHT CALL an "untrue mourning," Linnet attempts to merge history and aesthetics as her monument to place, producing a "*faithful record* [of a historical Montreal]" written by "a true survivor" (223; emphasis mine).[23] It is rebuilt from memory, like those "cities we build over the past to cover seams and cracks we cannot account for" (313), and it consists of "a superior civilization" where "the vision of a house upon that street was so painful that [Linnet] was obliged to banish it from the memorial." The *city* is memorialized, written down and forgotten as a "dream past" (228), but her father is not subjected to this somewhat ironic "faithful record"; in Linnet's textual performance he is mourned indirectly, non-anthropomorphically and non-celebratorily — silently, in fact, since "true mourning" cannot be written.

This relationship of memory to writing and of writing to history is problematic for Linnet because of her vocation as a writer. She thinks of her father's artistic failure on several occasions (253, 257), wondering if she "had inherited a poisoned gene from him, a vocation without a gift" (249). This issue of poetic inheritance is an elegiac convention, and Gallant treats it ironically by making Angus a failed artist. Though he was not a writer, and despite the fact that her *mother* "rewrites" people's lives, "providing them with suitable and harmonious endings" (287), Gallant suggests that Linnet's artistic inclination and perceptiveness came from her father.[24] Her evasion of closure is a rejection of her mother's aesthetic, and an acknowledgement of the falsity of truth claims.

This acknowledgement leaves Linnet on shaky ground, "between zero and one," to quote the title of another story in the sequence. The interrogatives that end this story leave the reader with the same uneasy feeling, asking with Linnet "What will happen?" In Gallant's story, Linnet replaces the uncertainty by turning the unknowable into fiction (261), which here is a state of artistic uncertainty and openness. She ends each story by beginning again with another — hence the sequence of stories, however broken. Mnemonic repetition — vacillation between zero (amnesia) and one (the knowledge of 'whole truth') — becomes the only writable consolation for Linnet.

As Paul Ricoeur asks, "is not repetition itself a kind of resurrection of the dead . . . ?" (186). Gallant's stories speak silently of Linnet's dead father in a sequence that seems to be without beginning or end, a sequence that "only terminates and never concludes" (White 23). The sequence that can be aesthetically "comforting"

can also be unsettling, as Frank Kermode notes (81). Linnet overcomes this discomfort and achieves an eventual consolation by first understanding the relationship between memory, language and history, and then responding to the past by being free to invent it over and over again. The need to start over, to repeat in language, is not only an elegiac method of achieving continuity, control and ceremony (Sacks 23); it also suggests an inherent failure in the ability of memory and language to provide aesthetic consolation in the form of a single written historical 'truth.' Gallant's series of elegiac stories paradoxically emphasizes beginnings,[25] and reinforces Linnet's resistence to closure, as is suggested in her affirmative yet oxymoronic motto: "Unless you die, you are bound to escape."

NOTES

[1] In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Gallant assures us, however, that these stories are *not* "straight autobiography," which "would be boring. It would bore the reader. The stories are a kind of reality *necessarily* transformed. The people are completely other, and some characters two or three different persons all at the same time." See Hancock, 28.

[2] See Ronald Hatch, "The Three Stages of Mavis Gallant's Short Fiction," *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (1978): 92-114. Hatch states that "in the series of Montreal stories," readers learn "something about Gallant's own early life in Montreal" (107). George Woodcock also discusses the Montreal setting and similarities between Linnet's life and Gallant's, though he does stress that "everything has been reshaped and transmuted in the imagination so that what emerges is a work of fiction on several levels." (Woodcock, 88).

[3] Godard discusses Laurence's *A Bird in the House*, a story sequence that is structurally similar to the Linnet series.

[4] "An Introduction," *Home Truths*, xxii.

[5] The term *Künstlerroman* could also be used to describe this sequence of stories. The relationship of this form to the prose elegy is significant since the elegist is self-consciously an artist-figure, and makes use of the autobiographical as well.

[6] Laurence, Munro and Atwood have all written similarly elegiac works mourning the loss of a father. In an interview with Geoff Hancock, Gallant notes the thematic importance of fathers in Canadian fiction. (Hancock, 25).

[7] See Sacks, 15 for a Freudian reading of this aspect of elegy; see also Celeste M. Schenck, 1986 for an interesting perspective on elegy, patriarchy and poetic inheritance.

[8] Kenneth Reinhard and Julia Lupton write of a "mournful hermeneutics in which texts are imagined boxed up or *eingekastelt* in each other." This self-reflexive narrative structure of the text-within-the-text is, I think, common in elegiac prose — modern examples include *Heart of Darkness*, *The Good Soldier* and *The Waves*, for example. The phrase "mournful hermeneutics" seems useful in the interpretation of such texts.

[9] On this elegiac convention see Edward Honig, 163. Linnet *does* long for one aspect of childhood, though: intuitive knowledge: "everyone under the age of ten knows everything . . . It is part of the clairvoyant immunity to hypocrisy we are born with and that vanishes just before puberty" (304).

[10] See Malcolm Ross, 83-89.

[11] de Man discusses these issues at length in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. See especially "Autobiography as Defacement" (67-82), and "Anthropomorphism and Trope in the Lyric," (239-262). I am equating aesthetics with writing and the epistemological with memory in the formulation of my theory of elegy.

[12] "Varieties of Exile" is a story-length digression that is like an allegory of the sequential elegy. In the story Frank Cairns takes on both roles of Linnet *and* her father — he is depressed and homesick like Angus, but he also suffered a "childhood of secret grieving" as did Linnet (269).

[13] The terms 'mode' and 'genre' are often confused in the discussion of both elegy and autobiography. While Reinhard and Lupton argue that "autobiography is not one genre among others but rather a mode in which texts participate when performing the literary work of mourning" (63-4), in my argument I take the position that the autobiographical *mode* is incorporated into the *genre* of elegy.

[14] Here I paraphrase Claudio Guillèn in *Literature as System* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971) where he discusses the idea of "genre" and "counter-genre."

[15] Angus' death had been kept from Linnet for years. Her elegy is not written until several more years have passed, after she learns of the manner of his death.

[16] Eric Smith in *By Mourning Tongues* suggests that elegy is basically a dramatic form (15).

[17] On one level Gallant's use of Linnet as a first-person narrator constitutes a primary narratological distancing technique (separating the implied author from the elegiac content of the story), but it also provides an inherent resistance to the efforts of some critics to read the Linnet stories as *Gallant's* autobiography. As Michelle Gadpaille writes, "it is to these stories that readers and critics look for the autobiographical material that Gallant so continually denies her public" (52). For example Lorna Irvine, in "Starting from the Beginning Every Time," discusses the autobiography of "a woman writer" with alternating references to Linnet and Gallant (252-255). On the other hand, Neil Besner clearly differentiates between author-proper and author-character in *The Light of Imagination* (131).

[18] For a definition of the term "critical nostalgia," see Michael Squires, *The Pastoral Novel* (14). Squires suggests that the "critical nostalgia" employed by authors such as Faulkner involves the interplay between the past and the present, noting that this perspective is available "only when the fantasy of returning home is surrendered." Linnet has definitely surrendered this fantasy, if indeed she had ever entertained it.

[19] de Man discusses the assimilation of truth to trope in "Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric" (239-243).

[20] See Derrida on the *pharmakon* in *Dissemination*; see also Paul de Man's "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*."

[21] This again is a reversal of the tendency in much elegiac literature to write about the past in order to release oneself from its grip. See Kenneth Bruffee, "Elegiac Romance," for a discussion of this convention.

[22] Linnet is aware of the anthropomorphic potential in her own thinking and writing and is usually careful to reject the tendency: "The house he came to remained for a long time enormous in memory, though the few like it still standing — 'still *living*,' I *nearly* say — are narrow, with thin, steep staircases and close, high-ceilinged rooms" (302; emphasis mine).

[23] Neil Besner notes that Linnet writes in a "historical framework" after recognizing that memory "makes necessary fictions." (133).

[24] On inheritance of the poetic vocation in pastoral elegy, see Celeste M. Schenck, *Mourning and Panegyric.*

[25] See Lorna Irvine (252).

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THE QUILT-MAKER'S DREAM

Margaret Blackwood

It is the time of snow. January. A spindrift.
Last year's leaves cross the ice; reeds,
cat-tails and rushes sweep the perimeters.

The Quilt-Maker dreams. Dreams of his figure
returning through the snow. A useful shape
he used to skim the cat-tails from the pond.

A dubbin-coloured moon, three-quarters
turned away, lies on its back, could rock
itself to sleep, embryonic, yet wise.

Fence posts smattered with tar lean
along the headland, take their direction
from the trees. A cabin squats in the cold.

She had placed a candle in the window for nine
consecutive nights. At half-light, novena completed,
the sky was a tender grey. The grey of doves.

These nights even the windows freeze. Fixed
by winter, the panes crystallize, simulate faces
pressed to the glass. One door jammed with ice.

Sparks fly at the rag rug beneath the stove.
A feather bed, precarious, draped with a sunburst
quilt. Leeks dangle from rough-hewn beams.

A preoccupied mind, smudged fingers, smooth
the table cloth again. A rush candle burns with a long,
pointed light. Cold breathes through the key-hole.

And she waited for him to free the rope
from the gate post, run the cattle through,
knock the crusted dirt from his boots.

A game of patience. The Jack of Spades blinking
in the candle-light, covers a red Queen
and the tallow stains her satin jacket.

Last year, she used his shirt for the sunburst,
picked out the seams one by one. Clipped it
carefully into a dozen diamond shapes.

For a time, they mingled with the scraps
of her old winter dress. Together they formed
a six-pointed star. Her fingers bled.

She didn't use his clothing in the rug.
Couldn't bear to walk on his things,
or to see them burned by the stove.

The Quilt-Maker rests on her sunburst
of orange, marigold, and red, plans another
quilt: goldfish suspended in the ice.

Unlooping a cord from her bed post, she thinks
everything looks better in candle-light,
remembers a gate, a poem, an opening eye.

Outside, bulbs are pushing against earth.
Cattle are driven; gates are latched; partners
swing their lanterns, light a pathway home.

CASE HISTORIES UNDER GLASS, IN OUR LITERARY MUSEUM FROM EAST TO WEST

Kenneth McRobbie

A dark patch
("Display under review")
on faded cloth
labelled
The Island.

A smaller island:
silver songs
for golden dongs;
anglican snow;
grindings down.
An asbestos glasses case.

Baseball caps
of Sunday bunters
shy of a team;
desktop
attic insulation.
One per diem expenses voucher
for The Canadian Conference on the Arts.

Centre space:
light fixtures removed,
floor bare
"Permanently on loan"

Pebble-shadow fences.
A rejection slip:
"regret your
'Forged in War
Their Baffle Cry'
doesn't accord with
our policy . . ."

At the back
of the hall,
the other island:
steam-whistle horns
choked with leaves.

From above
the muzak,
the unmanning
Pacific

THE WORD AND THE STONE

David Solway

Is dictust ollis popularibus olim
Qui tum vivebant homines atque aevum agitabant
Flos delibatus populi, Suadaeque medulla.

Quintus Ennius, quoted in the Attic Nights *of Aulus Gellius, Book XII, Section ii, 5.**

To be sure, the sculptor uses stone just as the mason uses it, in his own way. But he does not use it up. That happens in a certain way only where the work miscarries. . . . To be sure, the poet also uses the word — not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word.

Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'

As ROBERT SCHOLES COMMENTS in *Textual Power*, developing a theme we now associate with Russian Formalism but which is native to the Western literary tradition as a whole, "Much of our poetry has been written . . . to remove the veil of language that covers everything with a false familiarity." The Romantics, as we know, embarked upon the same defamiliarizing project,[1] Coleridge remarking in the *Biographia* on Wordsworth's noble attempt to strip the "film of familiarity" from our perception of the world and Shelley picking up the same phraseology in the *Defence*: "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar."[2]

The Romantics, of course, hold no monopoly on this restorative function of poetic language, which is an effect of the best poetry whenever it may be written. Dr. Johnson, commenting on the distinguishing qualities of Pope's work in his *Life* of the poet, similarly observes with approval that "familiar things are made new."[3] Although today we speak of dehabitualization, 'ostranenie,' the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* or simply the A-effect, displacement, estrangement, and so on, modern formalism has basically articulated a standard and venerable insight into the essential nature of the poetic transaction with the world in a renovated (i.e., critically defamiliarized) idiom that enables us to grasp an old truth with renewed vigour. But the identical insight persist, from Plotinus in the 3rd century Neoplatonically

* He by his fellow citizens was called,
By every man who lived and flourished then,
The people's chosen flower, Persuasion's marrow.

affirming "that the arts do not simply imitate what they see" but reproduce the *logoi*, the original and pristine forms of the Creation, to the protocols of Imagism, Futurism and Formalism in our own time. One thinks of Pound and Williams strenuously "Mak[ing] it New," Viktor Shklovsky exhorting us to "make the stone stoney."[4] (oddly reminiscent of Husserl's famous cry, "Back to the things themselves!"), of Susan Sontag prescribing the recovery or the erotic rehabilitation of the senses through art, and J. L. Austin advocating the use of the abnormal to "throw light on the normal," thus penetrating "the blinding veil of ease and obviousness . . ."[5]

But there is a complementary impetus as well in the Western tradition which asserts that poetic language finds its central purpose in purifying the dialect of the tribe, renovating the medium not only to enhance and clarify our perception of the world but to purge and intensify our relations with language itself. Mallarmé and Eliot are by no means theoretical pioneers in this regard and the preoccupation with language *per se* has always been an inalienable portion of the poet's linguistic patrimony, as was recognized, for example, by Heidegger in his late essays when he defined the function of poetry as *an intercession on behalf of language*, the house of Being.[6] These two aspects or moities of poetic practice are neatly summed up and paralleled in Michael Riffaterre's distinction between the two forms or stages of reading, the "heuristic" in which signs function in a chiefly referential fashion, and the "retroactive" in which certain difficulties, obscurities, "ungrammaticalities," that may arise in a text defeat a mimetic reading and require a new, *depreconceptional* approach.[7] Or as Scholes puts it in his comment on Shklovsky's dictum about making stone stony, poetry may "at least make language itself visible . . . [that is] . . . make the word wordy."

These are the two ideological poles, the limit points between which poetry has always shuttled and still continues to oscillate in its recognition of its own peculiar nature and purpose. It sets language in place between the frames of its margins like a clear pane through which we are meant to glimpse the problematic grandeur of existence. Or it presents us with a stained glass window which foregrounds its own colour and design, diffracting the light that irradiates the world outside in order to accentuate its own intrinsic luminescence.[8] At one extreme, poetic language tends to efface itself, to become invisible, literally *unremarkable*, decarnalized, and to subordinate itself to the greater and more memorable discourse of the world to which it directs our attention;[9] at the other extreme, the world itself fades toward the status of ghostly back-up or is, at least, *reduced* to offering the minimum support necessary to sustain the verbal artefact and allow it to be perceived. The most exorbitant formulation of this latter tendency is probably Alfred Döblin's, "Poetry is categorically opposed to rational scribbling that is subordinated to external ends."

Within this general bipolar context the poem takes up its position. But the meta-

phor of the window works only in so far as the poem moves conspicuously toward one or another of its limiting conditions. As soon as a poem is perceived as embodying *both* functions, the visual metaphor is probably best replaced by an aural one, in which the notion of harmony or counterpoint renders its dual nature with greater adequacy. For the great poems inevitably participate in both dimensions of our experience, situated in language that is constantly recuperating itself as something unique, memorable, noble, ophicleidic, resonating, and at the same time urging us outward toward the world in all its beauty and ugliness as something that demands our recognition and involvement. Great poetry is both *in language* and *in the world* simultaneously, dividing our attention into two complementary halves and then reuniting these halves stereoscopically or stereophonically so that our experience is one of depth or immersion. In such cases, form, style, period and all taxonomical considerations fall away, so that whether we are reading Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock, or Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence,' we find ourselves in the presence of a poem in which language and world, sound and sense, *logos* and *cosmos* are wedded and reciprocally amplified.[10] We find ourselves, that is, moving in two directions at once without experiencing the disabling sense of contradiction — we are in the condition of dream — to arrive if only for a moment at the center of an exaltation, a reaffirmation of language and world in which neither is sacrificed for the sake of the other.

Thus, in the presence of the great poem we gradually become aware of an aspect of language that generally escapes our attention. The illumination of the world in all its fulness, that is, of our experience of the world in its rich multidimensionality, necessarily involves the *privileging of language in itself as well.* For language, complex and insoluble phenomenon that it is,[11] does not only reflect or influence the world, thus fulfilling an exclusively agential function. It is also *a part of the world* in which we live, as 'real,' as objective, as manifest as mountains, dreams, dictatorships, diseases, weather, tables, sunsets and curbstones. It has not only an instrumental significance but enjoys an ontological status as well. And it is the peculiar and historical nature of poetic discourse to inflect this double nature of language as both tool and object, implement and substance, *at the same time.* When language proceeds to blue-pencil itself, disappearing effortlessly into its function, it may succeed in opening a portion of the world to our inspection but it obscures and suppresses another equally vital aspect of our experience — in fact, precisely that which distinguishes the mind from the animal plenitude of the Creation. Heidegger tells us that the malfunctioning tool, the breakdown of equipment, restores our awareness of Being by startling us out of the sleep of smooth functioning.[12] The *success* of language in drawing attention, not only to the world but to itself (and thus, to ourselves as well), is equivalent on the ontological plane to the *failure* of equipment: it restores a significant portion of the world and the intrinsic stratum of our existence to our attention. (Or what amounts to the same thing: the success

of language on the ontological plane is predicated on the failure of language as equipment, that is, language on the *purely* instrumental or utilitarian plane.) When poetic language commits what C. S. Lewis calls "verbicide," profaning its high or scansorial nature, it does not go alone but takes an innocent victim along with it, a constitutive element of *both* the poem and the world which is lost in the sleep of eudaimonistic or functional efficiency.

The claim that poetry violates its historical nature and its constitutive value by dispossessing language *qua* language or rendering it transparent does not imply that it fulfills its 'mandate' by going to the opposite extreme of rhetorical opacity or by a programmatic thickening of its lexical pigmentation. A language that delights mainly in expressing an ultimate inexpressibility, not disappearing tamely into the inaudible hum of function but congealing grumously into substance, shutting out the world by virtue of its own precedent visibility, produces a poetry that is distressing once again for its onesidedness. (However indiscriminately we employ the acoustic and pictorial metaphors here, the point remains equally well or ill taken. The poet's slam-dunking his words phonetically on the page or splashing them about with tachiste abandon amounts to the same thing — an attack of disabling lexemia.) Swinburnian excess is no antidote to metalinguistic transparency. The poet who emphasizes the wordiness of the word, the sheer facticity of language, at the expense of a non-discursive subject, of theme or passion or insight, comes to resemble Swift's nonplussed geographer in 'On Poetry' who, poring over an empty map of Africa, places elephants for want of towns. It *should* be clear that poetic language is — to continue the metaphor — an elephant one rides *on the way* to the town and that the poet is not only a (Swiftian) geographer but a mahout as well.

Thus, when Yeats writes in 'The Man And The Echo':

> Did that play of mine send out
> Certain men the English shot?

he is turning to account the double nature of poetic language. On the one hand, the poem directs our notice to a significant issue *outside* the poem, to an event in the world which the poem reflects and about which the poet reflects, broods, meditates; on the other hand, metre, rhyme and the sense of strong verbal charge draw attention to the lines themselves *as language* consciously manipulated *inside* the poem. The attention which the poem calls to itself establishes it as an inalienable part of the larger event which it both queries and describes, adding to its complexity and underscoring its composite, multi-layered, interrogative force. It is precisely this curious, dream-like sense of being in two places at once, both inside the poem minding its language and outside the poem reconstructing the event toward which it points, that accounts for its acknowledged power to move us and prehaps even to change us.

CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH-LANGUAGE poetry has by and large forfeited the power to move by its determined attempt to factor language out of the poetic equation.[13] It is not *on the whole* a poetry which insists on its status as word and it no longer tends to define itself, as Derek Attridge says in *Peculiar Language*, "in terms of its difference from natural language." As it converges increasingly on the idiom and cadence of prose and, even further, begins to echo the flat, indolent and anonymous rhythms of normative speech, it proceeds to obliterate the *objectivity* and *viability* of language as an essential and miraculous part of the larger world which it presumably describes, questions, opposes or underwrites. The poem begins to disappear into its subject, drawing away from itself, sacrificing its own incommutable nature as noble or memorable 'speech' and thus paradoxically impoverishing the experience it is intended to clarify or enhance. Especially is this the case in contemporary Canadian poetry in which many of our most talented writers, in bringing us close to the object of their concern, render their language transparent and inoperative as language *in itself*. It is almost as if the very intensity of their feelings, the depth and legitimacy of their preoccupations, their moral integrity as such has dimmed the vitality and power of the language in which they are constrained to work — a language which has fallen victim to the enormity of the event whose distance from the imagination has been effectively cancelled. When Michael Harris in his award-winning 'Turning Out The Light' brings us almost bodily, as it seems, to the bedside of his cancer-stricken brother and allows us to watch him die, the horror and pathos, utterly genuine as they may be, proceed to bury a poem which has just died before our eyes, turning out the light on its existence *as a poem*. Most readers are not aware of this because they are not aware of the poem. The poem has abolished itself as language and thus effaced language itself for the space of our reading as that part the world which transcends its occasion. I am not suggesting that certain themes and subjects should be proscribed as too dangerous, too 'real' for poems to handle safely, but rather that the poem should simultaneously demand recognition *as a poem* in the face of even the most outrageous and irreducible of experiences — as does, for example, Dylan Thomas' 'Do Not Go Gentle,' villanelling its way past its subject in order to *centralize* itself as a linguistic and aesthetic artefact. Otherwise it is deprived of its distinctive mode of existence as poetry and can be readily assimilated to anything else that works as well in re-enacting or transmitting the experience it confronts: effective journalism, moving prose, intense or persuasive conversation, psychotropic telepathy. But when Irving Layton writes of the death of his mother in 'Keine Lazarovitch,' the reader may suffer an induced vicarious anguish, find himself quite literally moved to tears, and re-approach the poem only in fear and trembling. At the same time *the poem affirms its own existence as a poem* and continues to resonate verbally in

the imagination, surviving the death which it mourns by virtue of its 'peculiar language' — lines like "the inescapable lousiness of growing old," "how / She had loved God but cursed extravagantly his creatures.", and "her youngest sings / While all the rivers of her red veins move into the sea.", insisting on their own poetic autonomy as *lines*, as a collocation of memorable and glorious *words*. The poem has refused to surrender to the mortality which it laments.

Or considering the scandal and terror of dictatorship as described in Gary Geddes' recent *No Easy Exit*, once again I find my response troubled and somehow devitalized. It may seem frivolous to lodge an objection to poetic technique in the face of the manifest horrors perpetrated in Pinochet's Chile and recorded in the poems in this collection, yet the *literary* response is an integral part of the total experience of which 'the poem' is both catalyst and medium. Emerging from a reading of the book, I am overwhelmed by disgust and indignation at the events transcribed therein but somehow unmoved by the poetry — very much as with some of the work of Carolyn Forché (especially her Salvadorian "Return"). The poet is invisibly present throughout as an honest and sensitive observer, as an authentic conscience, and the depth of his moral concern must affect even the most callous of his readers. But — possibly as just such a callous reader — I have almost no recollection of any of the words and lines of which the poems are constructed. I retain certain images and sensations but I retain none of the poems. I am aware that the poet may take precisely this seizure of linguistic amnesia as an indication of the success of the book, but once again I stress that such an effect is producible in many other ways that have nothing to do with the peculiar nature and power of poetic language, including a visit to Chile. What is going on inside the poem does not appear able to escape the gravitational radius of the event horizon into which it has plunged. As does not happen, for instance, with Wilfred Owen who, recording the horror of war from the trenches, about as close up as one can get, will conclude:

> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
> Pro patria mori.

— giving us in this poem not only a vivid and immediate representation of a soldier in a gas-attack "gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs" but also a skilful and perhaps even magisterial deployment of poetic language in which two Latin words are made to march in English military rhyme, another line ("To children ardent for some desperate glory") which imprints itself indelibly upon the memory, and a clever hemistich which brings the entire piece to a cold, blank, snapped-off closure that echoes on ironically in the imagination in aftertones as moving and significant as Hopkins' latreutic "Praise Him":

The reader finds himself inhabiting a very different *poetic* territory when he turns to the works of Geddes and Harris which I have singled out for consideration.[14] For example, the former's "Little Windows":

> a number killed at the air-base
> others thrown into the sea
> from helicopters, stomachs opened
> . . . . . .
> When they break her eyes
> images remain.
> Sound of the helicopter
> recedes. Sea is a window
> above him, water
> tongues the red from his stomach.

or the latter's 'Turning Out The Light':

> He is tired of the shame
> of wetting his bed; he wants
> the wheelchair toilet . . .
> . . . . . .
> Even the sound of the softly opening door
> has him cry and gag
> on the dregs of his vomit . . .
> . . . . . .
> The morning drip
> eases red cells
> into the bloated arm.

— in which individual words, lines and stanzas melt into their correlative circumstances, dissolving into the experience rather than crystallizing out of it. More to the point, however, is the general *cumulative* effect of the longer sequences, in which the pain, the anguish, the sense of magnitude experienced by the reader even at a second remove erase the poems *qua* poems from his awareness and may equally be said to sublate the poems from themselves. When the distance from the recorded event is collapsed, the awareness of language, the distinctive essence of the poem, is also wiped out. Whereas in reading the previously cited poems of Yeats or Owen or Layton a paradoxical *linguistic joy* is felt to accompany the sense of sombre empathy evoked by these pieces, owing to our recognition of a certain aesthetic control, a self-conscious lexical and architectonic mastery. It is almost as if the voluptuous delight the poet takes in his mastery of words is communicated directly to the reader, who cannot help but share in a sort of lexical radiation of pleasure.

It is the *linguistic* effort to establish the poem's countervailing reality, its gritty, heteronomous respeaking of the world — an effort which enables us to recognize not only the subject or the event but the aesthetic object as well — that generates the composite experience we insist on coming back to, on remembering, on *delight-*

ing in despite what may be its frightful or melancholy theme. Without this peculiar species of reality-matching, of linguistic equity or cardinality, the poem ceases to exist as a poem and becomes something else, a pure transparence, a verbal enzyme, a form of cinematic immediacy. It is, strangely enough, as if such writing fulfils the condition of the good translation, which succeeds best when it disappears entirely from view. What this sort of 'poetic language' gives us, in effect, is a *translation* rather than a complementary and autonomous *aspect* of the real. But the defining and promethean claim of all genuine poetic language is simply that it is as real in its own stubborn, energetic way as the real itself. Or to change the metaphor, if the poem moves across in its entirety from its status as language to take up its position in or *directly beside* its subject, then discourse and event find themselves on the same side of the diegetic seesaw — depriving the work, as well as the reader, of that strange and distinctive sense of aesthetic exhilaration we associate with good poetry. This soaring emotion may have something to do with the tragic function of all serious art, the Lapis Lazuli vision of the world *sub specie aeternitatis*, but it need not flow from anything so philosophically austere as Aristotelian catharsis. The reaction of delight or euphoria in the presence of works treating of catastrophic subjects may strike the more ethically rigorous as disturbingly sadistic, but the skilful or Magian deployment of the aesthetic medium induces that sense of wonder, appreciation and joy which enables the mind to resist sentimentality or despair.[15] And the aesthetic medium in which poetry moves and has its being is, after all, language in all its resident complexity. The poem, then, as it confronts its subject, attempts to make not itself but the world transparent, accessible to meaning, communicable, *it tries to make the stone wordy.* Concurrently, in rendering its theme with all the resources at its disposal — rhythm, image, form, tone, and especially diction (or what Edward Said calls "linguicity," an all-inclusive category) — it tries to render not the world but itself as solid, lapidary, mosaic, or, if one likes, as *Demosthenean* as the rhetoric of enunciation permits, *it tries to make the word stony.*[16] And both at the same time.

Thus when I read Yeats, Owen, Layton, my response to the solemnity of the events called forth by the poems is not diminished but enhanced by my complementary appreciation of the language manipulated on the page. Such an experience is rich and complex, deepened by the consummate verbal skill which does not only articulate itself *in vacuo* but *preserves the event* as well,[17] preventing it from dispersing with the inevitable gasses of an immediate visceral reaction. This is the paradox of poetic language[18] which preserves the world only if it survives its occasion as belonging to the world about which it writes, in which it is written, and of which it forms an indissoluable part as an object of writing. But poets in the English tradition today, with a few notable exceptions, have tended to succumb to the ideology of the real, betraying language in its poetic or *aculeated* function in order to honour a commitment to 'fact' or to the 'real' as it impinges upon the

personality. In contemporary Canadian verse especially, the stone has battered the word into a condition of insensibility, as even the merest acquaintance with our recent productions should make distressingly clear. But it would be a mistake to assume that language must necessarily falter and submit before reality, glumly reconciling itself to a harsh, rupiculous existence. Amidst the upheavals and sufferings of a country very much subject to the depradations of the reality principle, the work of George Seferis, for example, sensous, digraphic, and superbly crafted, continues to be read and recited *as poetry*, as much for the language it commands within the poems as for the experience it invokes and memorializes outside them — as if in proof of the children's game in which paper always covers stone:

> Όπου καὶ νὰ ταξιδέψω ἡ Ἑλλάδα μὲ πληγώνει.
>
> Στὸ Πήλιο μέσα στὶς καστανιὲς τὸ πουκάμισο τοῦ Κενταύρου
> γλιστροῦσε μέσα στὰ φύλλα γιὰ νὰ τυλιχτεῖ στὸ κορμί μου
> καθὼς ἀνέβαινα τὴν ἀνηφόρα κι' ἡ θάλασσα μ' ἀκολουθοῦσε
> ἀνεβαίνοντας κι' αὐτὴ σὰν τὸν ὑδράργυρο θερμομέτρου
> ὡς ποὺ νὰ βροῦμε τὰ νερὰ τοῦ βουνοῦ. * [19]

Although the best poetry will avoid both ends of the sliding scale of its performative ambience, the petrifactive and the verbifactive,[20] it understands, intuitively or consciously, that a strong, lithic, corrugated language is what distinguishes its own existence as poetry and that such language remains an integral part of the world it addresses. "With good authors," writes Alfred Döblin in a less doctrinaire moment, "language always wins."

* Wherever I may travel Greece wounds me.

On Pelion under the chestnut trees the Centaur's shirt
glided through the leaves to wind about my body
as I climbed the slope and the sea followed me
ascending like mercury in a thermometer
until we found the waters of the mountain.

NOTES

[1] See Robert Scholes' *Structuralism in Literature* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974) for a thoroughgoing discussion of the subject.

[2] See Craig Raine's 'A Martian Sends A Postcard Home' for a contemporary example of this defamiliarizing procedure. Raine's poem, however, is compromised by a conceptual flaw: the Martian, who knows neither what a book is nor the common

word 'book' (he compares books to birds and refers to them, oddly enough, as 'Caxtons') is nevertheless quite at home with the adjective 'bookish' and the verb 'read.'

[3] Johnson was with his usual astuteness commenting on the *double* function of metaphor, which constitutes "the two most engaging powers of an author. New things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new." Formalism does not for obvious reasons focus on the first or *domesticating* function of metaphor.

[4] Cf. Mandelstam's extraordinary book of poems, *Stone.*

[5] Austin's work is pointedly applicable here, especially his essay 'A Plea for Excuses.' In fact, the value of his work in this connection is triply relevant, as it not only compels us to reconsider the ways in which language negotiates the world but to refresh our awareness of the ways of language itself; and finally and inadvertently, its deconstruction at the hands of Derrida tends to place that renewed understanding in an even stranger, more auroral light.

[6] See the *Attic Nights* (London: Heinemann/Loeb Classics, 1927) of Aulus Gellius (c. A.D. 123-170), which is devoted in large part to the study of etymologies and the right use of words in Latin poetry to avoid the twin perils of the ridiculous and the redundant. The erudite and belletristic Gellius provides an extreme example, perhaps, of the philological preoccupation, but the study of the right use and application of poetic language as such runs from classical antiquity through the entire Western literary tradition. Interestingly, the twin attitudes I am discussing here, the emphatics of Shem and Shaun, were already represented for the Romans by two emblematic personalities, Gellius on the one hand and on the other, the polymathic Terentius Varro whose study of literature stressed the primacy of subject matter. In the words of R. M. Ogilvie (cf. *Roman Literature And Society* New York: Penguin, 1980), Gellius manifested "a very different attitude from that of Varro, who searched earlier writers for knowledge."

[7] The by now standard distinction between metaphor and metonymy is not appropriate to our discussion, as the language/world polarity cuts right across such tropological discriminations. Though metaphorical language, especially in its more 'conceited' forms, tends to draw attention to itself, to revel in its conspicuousness, it does not follow that metonymical language is necessarily self-obliterating. See David Lodge's discussion in *The Modes of Modern Writing* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press, 1977) of Forster's *A Passage to India* for a good example of how the principle of contiguity or linearity can generate a rich and *apparently* metaphorical language. The polarity we are working with is more a question of the writer's focus, attitude, instinct or interior 'set' toward his material.

[8] See Robert Hillyer's *In Pursuit of Poetry* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960) for a rather different application of the metaphor of the stained glass window. Hillyer identifies the poet *in himself* with "the stained glass window that transmits sunlight just as ordinary windows do, but colors it as it passes through. And the poet should rest content with that; no man is great enough to be both the window and the sunlight."

[9] The world as 'discourse' is, of course, an idea with a respectable pedigree in Neoplatonism, in the Smaragdine Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus, the doctrine of 'signatures' in Boehme, the 'correspondences' of Swedenborg, and the poetry of Blake, Hopkins and Yeats.

[10] I use the nuptial metaphor advisedly, as if to say: poetry cannot celebrate its complex marriage with the world unless it pursues at the same time its love affair with language. There is no question of infidelity here, but the mature sufficiency of an 'Italian' arrangement.

More seriously, this relation of language and reality should not be misconstrued as a Hegelian dialectic of reciprocal negation or as implicated in the workings of a deconstructive strategy in which the one undoes its representation of the other. Rather the relation is one of mutual subsumption, perhaps even of mutual need. Poetic language, in fact, is the authenticating imprint, the ISBN number of the Real, which is at the same time and paradoxically an *event* in itself, thus demanding its registration in consciousness and memory.

[11] I often think of language not only as a phenomenon but more particularly as a *phonemenon.*

[12] The same idea *mutatis mutandis* which Tolstoy develops in *The Death of Ivan Illyich.*

[13] Some notable current exceptions: James Merrill, Joseph Brodsky and Sharon Olds in the U.S.; Seamus Heaney (in part) and Medbh McGuckian in the U.K.

[14] I wish to go on record here and state that Harris and Geddes are, in my estimation, both excellent poets, among the finest of their generation in this country, and in their best work manage to stay clear of what I am calling 'the ideology of the real,' word succumbing to stone. See, for example, Harris' "The Gamekeeper," "Uncle Edward," and "The Dolphin" (from *In Transit,* Montreal: Signal, 1985) among many others, and Geddes' *The Terracotta Army* (Ottawa: Oberon, 1984). I have chosen to subject some of their poems to critical scrutiny here *precisely because* they have, as poets, produced an impressive body of work. If *their* work has in part failed to resist realistic petrifaction, what shall we say of their confrères? (I cannot refrain from suggesting, however, that Michael Estok's praise of Geddes, recorded on the book's last page — namely, that the poet's elegiac power "puts him on the same level of poetic intensity (perhaps he surpasses it) of Milton's "Lycidas" and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*" — may be a trifle premature.)

The essential drift of my argument, however, has to do with *tendencies.* Owen and Thomas, for example, have produced a certain amount of undistinguished work in which the language element may appear flat, archaic, tedious, redundant. But the perceptible effort or *nisus,* more often than not successful, is toward that "intercession on behalf of language" which renders their work memorable *on the whole.* The corresponding tendency in contemporary English-language poetry is toward the intervention on behalf of the world, at the expense of linguistic specificity, which produces that strange quality of anonymity or transparency to which the *works themselves* generally succumb.

[15] The experience of aesthetic joy seems to be regularly misunderstood by professional philosophers. I refer not only to Aristotle's emetic theory of tragedy but to Kant's Third Critique in which the pleasure of "fiction" is interpreted in the somewhat naive sense of displacement therapy, as if art were a universal Recreation Center, part of the Sunday pottery syndrome. "We entertain ourselves with it when experience becomes too commonplace," writes the renowned Könisberger, solemnly insensible to the jocoserious (to quote Joyce, who got the word from Browning's *Jocoseria* of 1883) enchantment of the mind produced by the aesthetic medium. The aesthetic pleasure has a serious cognitive function in helping us face up to and not merely circumvent or betray our experience of reality. It *braces* the mind, opposing both the insidiousness of sentimental diffusion and the paralysis of radical despair. As Browning writes in 'Ixion' from the *Jocoseria* volume:

> What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
> Pain — and despair's murk mists blend in a rainbow of hope?

[16] Such language gives the impression of concrete *entasis*, pleasing because it convinces us of the poem's solidity, the words bulging under the compressive stresses that support its deposition — like Doric columns.

[17] Or in the antinomial formulation of Jean Baudrillard, the language we manipulate is not simply that of analysis: "it seeks to preserve the enigma of the object through the enigma of discourse." We must resist the temptation of defining and relating to the object as "the subject's mode of disappearance." (See *The Ecstasy of Communication.*) Interestingly, Baudrillard's warning works as an updated, linguistic, (and defamiliarized) version of Augustine's *concupiscentia oculorum*, the temptation of *seeing* rather than experiencing, which is also taken up in Mallarmé's famous quip that "all poetry has gone wrong since the great Homeric deviation." Eliot would seem to date this 'deviation' somewhat later, though the idea remains:

> Where shall the word be found, where will the word
> Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence . . .

[18] What I am here calling 'poetic language' the American poet, Oscar Mandel, denominates simply as "music," which, Mandel writes in his *The Book of Elaborations* New York: New Directions, 1985), "signifies a patrician order of words victorious over words as amiable rabble." When "stern structure and high music" go out of poetry, what is left is a typical combination of "slouch in the form, bric-à-brac for the matter, and decayed statement in the message . . ."

[19] The test of recitation strikes me as a telling one, and one moreover which has nothing to do with the phonocentric impulse, the privileging of voice over writing, that Derrida has made a career out of deconstructing. What moves us tends to seek utterance, to outer itself. This is a fact of whatever 'nature' we may still be said to possess in our deconstructive and psychocritical times — to which, for example, any non-celibate may persuasively attest. But the vast proportion of our poetic productions is perfectly compatible with an encrypting silence. I have rarely seen or heard anyone among my literary acquaintances in this country joyfully or compulsively *reciting* the work of their contemporaries, whereas in Greece I have listened to hotel clerks and restaurateurs movingly declaim passages from Seferis, Elytis and Gatsos. This is not because — or *only* because — the Greeks may happen to be a more lyrical and effusive people than we are, but because — or *also* because — their poets still tend to write a more incantatory, significant and *linguistically compelling* poetry than ours. (Two Nobel prizes for poetry in one generation may not be an accident.) This property of their verse will often come across even in translation. One need not, of course, cede this privilege or monopoly exclusively to the Greeks. I think of the work of Yehuda Amichai and Abraham Sutzkever in Israel, Gaston Miron, Sylvain Garneau and Jacques Brault in Quebec, Eugenio Montale, Mario Luzi and Valerio Magrelli in Italy, and anyone familiar with other languages and traditions will readily come up with similar examples. The point remains, however, that a certain kind of poetry tends spontaneously to utter itself *through our voices* in a sort of benign yet demonic possession. I find myself reciting or at least reading aloud in the works of Layton, Thomas, Garneau, Seferis, Merrill, partly *taken over* by the gift of rich, passionate, elegant, tensile or marmoreal language which these poets exhibit and deploy. I cannot say the same for the great majority of my strict contemporaries.

The citation incorporated here is from Seferis' celebrated 'ΜΕ ΤΟΝ ΤΡΟΠΟ ΤΟΥ Γ.Σ.' in which the first line, repeated toward the end of the poem — Wherever I may travel, Greece wounds me — has become part of the 'cultural literacy' of contemporary Greece. Phonetically, 'Meh Ton Tropo Tou G.S.,' i.e., gamma epsilon, George Seferis' initials, would translate as 'In the Manner [Style] of G.S.'

[20] See Tzvetan Todorov, *Literature And Its Theorists* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984), for an illuminating study of Russian Formalism and its distinction between heterotelic or practical language and autotelic or poetic language. Todorov goes on to consider the relation between Döblin and Brecht, a discussion to which I am indebted for some of my citations. The now 'classic' analysis of the subject is, of course, Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972).

KAWAI-SAN

Terry Watada

He was always a quiet man.
His stern Meiji face hid emotion,
yet he felt passion, I'm sure.

As a lumberjack,
he once told my father
he wanted a woman — not a hooker
but a wife.
He wanted the boss's daughter.

My father
decided to be go-between
for love and beauty,
and in the end,
she chose him over all others
because he was a quiet man.

My father was Best Man
at the wedding in Minto,
a ghost town turned prison
at the start of the war.
The wind and trees swayed
with laughter for a time
deep into
the forest night.

For a quiet man,
he sure raised a lot of hell.

Jikemura, Watada,
Kawai, Rikimatsu,
Takahashi,
Tohana, Minamide
— men out of place —
— men running out of time —
sang and drank
until they ended
their drunken dance
in the streets of Vancouver.
There was a hot time
in the old Raku Raku
saloon for many a night.

Say, whatever happened
to the company's
ONE HUNDRED GRAND?

The quiet man knew.

And where does bo-shin
go every night after work?

The quiet man knew.

And who kidnapped
the wife of the minister
so that she could live
with her lover?

Well, the quiet man knew,
but wasn't talking.

He raised two children
during the abundance
and tolerance
of the 1950s,
two beautiful children
who saw in their father
unabiding
vigilance, strength
and an uncompromising hand.

They never dared whisper
at the dinner table.
Never
did they speak out of turn.
And never did they question
the past.
He was a quiet man, after all.

I knew him from the gin games
in my father's kitchen
where old friends gathered
to keep the fires burning.
Raised glasses toasted
to a memory made ideal
through the haze of liquor.

The wooden chairs creaked
throughout my night's sleep.

And now that he's gone to be with
Jikemura,
Rikimatsu, Takahashi
and Minamide,
his children know nothing and
his grandchildren even less.

I stand in the dark
while a cup of starlight
that I had saved
slips quickly through my hands.

But I can still
hear the voices singing
and laughing
beneath old Japanese songs
during the moment
they forgot
they were all quiet men.

GLASSCO'S GOVERNESSES

Some Literary and Psychosexual Sources

Patricia Whitney

IN FEBRUARY 1928 John Glassco had set off for Europe with his friend Graeme Taylor. Both lately of McGill University — more lately of the jazz at the Union and the beer at the Prince of Wales Tavern than of the lecture halls — the two sophisticates were determined to join the literary crowd of Montparnasse. Four years later, however, Glassco, seriously ill with tuberculosis, was being fetched home from the American Hospital in Paris by his mother. Admissions to the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal followed in 1932, 1933 and 1934.

In June of 1934, while Glassco was recovering from yet more surgery on his chest, weary of the fear of death, exhausted by suffering, frustrated in his attempts to write poetry, he first writes in his diary of what will become a life-long preoccupation — masochistic pornography:

> I had been feeling tremendously excited and enthusiastic over a story to be called 'The Way Back' — the story of a masochist. It seemed that I got frightened at the depths I found in myself, depths of sexual perversion, while thinking out this story — rather like my sensations after reading [Octave] Mirbeau's 'Torture Garden' [Le Jardin des supplices]. I wrote 500 words of a masochistic scene in great elation the night of May 31st, and then, after I had gone to bed (or rather turned out the light) the 'dreadful imaginings' began. At any rate, things got steadily worse for a week — two weeks — and I began to be frightened about everything . . . . the most awful feeling of nausea all day long. (McGill Journal 28B-28C).[1]

There is a connection between Glassco's creation of pornography — it was to become a near obsession and in later years he would regret the time he had given over to it — and the experiences of his childhood. Glassco not only wrote about masochistic sex, he practised it. It can be argued that masochism, what Freud called "the most frequent and most significant of all perversions" (Reik 6), had its beginnings in the disturbance of Glassco's childhood. His father was a sadist who viciously beat his sons, both John and his elder brother David, before fondling them sexually.[2]

These frequent and horrific experiences seem to have bred in Glassco a compulsion for suffering, a sexual need that demanded satisfaction. Thomas Reik

argues that masochistic pleasure, "depending on the idea of being beaten and used sexually by the father, is dispelled and inhibited as soon as the same idea becomes conscious" (20). Such an idea can give pleasure to a male only when it remains repressed: "it is unbearable for the conscious. . . . For it is associated with the other idea: 'I am a woman'. . . . So it must be repulsed for the sake of endangered masculinity" (Reik 20). It is a commonplace that insight destroys fantasy. The desire must, therefore, be masked. For the masochist, the mask is the figure of a woman. The idea "I want to be sexually gratified by my father" is replaced by the reality "I am beaten on the buttocks by a woman" (Reik 20). Reik argues further that for the masochist "to be beaten means . . . to be loved. He wants to be loved in the form of punishment" (22). While the conscious love object is a woman, this person "is a composite figure: she is the loving and loved woman but with the punishing gesture of the father" (23).

It is my conviction that Glassco's behaviour — he had frequent masochistic encounters throughout his life — and his pornography represent two different but related responses to the trauma of his childhood suffering at the hands of his father. In the writing of his pornography, he not only re-enacted his *unconscious* desires for his father's violent caresses, but also created a mannered world where the "victim" is, in fact, in control. In masochistic sex, the man being beaten (for this does seem to be almost exclusively a male practice) is actually in control of the amount and degree of punishment he will receive from the dominatrix.[3] Similarly in the writing of masochistic pornography, the author is, at least in a consciously superficial way, in control of the narrative, and consequently of the descriptions of humiliation, degradation and physical punishment. Such descriptions are, as are the practices of masochistic sex itself, ritualistic. Steven Marcus states that "the principal character in such scenes seems to be rehearsing some twisted recollection from early childhood; and the whole atmosphere of some kind of play, of roles and role playing, of a domestic drama comes through as well" (127). The suggestive parallels with Glassco's experience, both literary and personal, appear all too obvious.

Susan Sontag argues in "Fascinating Fascism" that

> to be involved in sadomasochism is to take part in a sexual theatre, a staging of sexuality. Regulars of sadomasochistic sex are expert costumers and choreographers as well as performers, in a drama that is all the more exciting because it is forbidden to ordinary people. Sadomasochism is to sex what war is to civil life: the magnificent experience. (103)

Sontag makes the further point that "What the French call 'the English vice' could . . . be said to be something of an artful affirmation of individuality; the playlet referred, after all, to the subject's own case history" (104).

As interesting as Sontag's amoral theorizing may be, there is beyond the trappings of costume and ritual, beyond the tormenting unconscious fantasies of the maso-

chist, the reality of what she calls "the subject's own case history."[4] The publication of Freud's lecture of 1896, translated by James Strachey as "The Aetiology of Hysteria," and made available in Jeffrey Masson's *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (1984) makes clear the consequences of sexual abuse on children: "Sexual experiences in childhood consisting of stimulation of the genitals, coitus-like acts, and so on, must . . . be recognized, in the last analysis, as being the traumas which lead to a hysterical reaction to events at puberty and to the development of hysterical symptoms" (267). In Glassco these symptoms of hysteria frequently took the form of incapacitating panic attacks. On 15 December 1957, his forty-eighth birthday, Glassco describes such an episode experienced while alone in the house with his mistress, Elma Koolmer:

> The attack began as soon as I entered the house. Absolute horror, feelings of compulsion to commit homicide — *on anyone,* and Elma was alone in the house with me. . . . This time, terrible. Symptoms: Sheer terror over what I *might* do — strangulation, stabbing, braining: attempt to tell myself I *could not* really do so, unavailing. It is what I might, and physically could, do. The Imp of the Perverse. . . . Claustrophobia: I want to undraw the curtains, open the windows, even in the middle of winter.
>
> What is worst is the conviction I am going mad, and must be restrained before I kill someone. N.B. Only when I am alone with someone: two others has no effect.
>
> Then I feel I must be alone. Only then am I safe against the compulsion. Had to ask Elma to leave Saturday morning. Thank God. When she was gone half the terror vanished: there was no one to kill.
>
> Symptoms: Indescribable horror and tension. Perfect command of limbs, vision etc. Only when tension mounts a nervous jerking of the hands and legs, desperate courting of tears to relieve tension, no use. N.B. Terrible nervous susceptibility to the *slightest sound* even someone clearing the throat goes through me like a knife.
>
> Obsession at such times: to commit suicide — but how? (McGill Journal 156)

This frightful description of a man in agony is an expression of hatred for and frustration at the father, but directed against the self. Masson argues that what is meant in Freud by the "father aetiology" is the "source of neurosis that lies in actions on the part of the father, i.e., sexual attacks on the [child]" (Masson 115). Glassco's father had been, at this point, dead more than ten years; his younger son had attended the funeral. But the nightmare memory was not dead: Glassco had consciously wanted to murder his wicked father, but could not do so. Glassco's rage was expressed not only through his attacks of panic hysteria, but also through extreme anxiety, recurrent clinical depression, and the acting out of, and artistic description of, masochistic sexual practices. In an essay, "The Pornographer as Artist," Glassco wrote, most revealingly:

> the pornographer's task is not only to give pleasure, like any artist, but to recognize psychosexuality under all its aspects, and thus present another facet of the artist's aspiration to reveal, to testify, to validate every path to the enchanted country which man may discover in solitude. (3, PAC Vol. 17)

I assert that Glassco's pornography was essential to his mental stability. If, in Freud's words, the "Outbreak of hysteria may almost invariably be traced to a *psychical conflict* arising through an incompatible idea setting in action a *defence* on the part of the ego and calling up a demand for repression" (Freud 271), then one means of channeling the psychic pain was to describe, over and over, the sexual and physical pain and humiliation suffered long ago, to render into art the bitter experience of childhood. This Glassco did most effectively in two pornographic novels, *Harriet Marwood, Governess* (1976) and *The English Governess* (1960), also known as *Under the Birch* (1960). On 22 March 1938, Glassco records in the McGill Journal that he had read a curiosity published in Paris in 1913 and known as *La Gouvernante* by Aimé Van Rod.[5] This book was to define and delineate both *Harriet* and the *Governess.*

La Gouvernante tells the story of an English governess, Miss Humphreys, who is hired to instruct a young boy of thirteen who lives in London near All Souls Church: "James Lowell avait treize ans lorsque mourut sa mère." James is described: "C'est un petit garçon un peu insignifiant . . ." [7]. Compare these brief passages to selected passages from the opening of *Harriet Marwood*:

> Richard Belsize Lovel was fourteen years old when his mother died. He was even then a rather insignificant boy. . . . (5)

> In London's Great Portland Street, not far from All Soul's Church, there is a row of gloomy mansions. . . . For here, more than fifty years ago . . . there blossomed the romance of Richard Lovel and Harriet Marwood. . . . (3)

Like that of the young hero of *La Gouvernante*, Richard Lovel's family seat was originally said to be located "near Christchurch" in Hampshire.

The essential outline of the plot — a sadistic but beautiful governess inflicts severe corporal punishment on her young pupil with the clear purpose of satisfying her own sexual preferences while developing an appropriately masochistic young male whom she will eventually make her husband — is the same in both novels. The subjugation of the boy is symbolized in *Harriet* by Richard's taking his wife's name: "Here, then, is your petition to have your name changed by act of deed poll to Richard Marwood. A pretty name, is it not?" (222). Richard's reply is enthusiastic: " 'To me, it is the loveliest name in the world,' he said as he signed the paper" (222). On his governess's instructions he is sterilized before their marriage; needless to say there can be no room for children in a relationship where one partner must remain forever a burlesque of the child: dependent, chastised, humiliated. As Harriet tells her whimpering husband-to-be: "And you, Richard, will . . . be doubly dear to me, to love and to cherish — both as husband and child" (226).

Once married and passing their honeymoon "in the absolute seclusion of the

house at Christchurch," Harriet, like a perverted parent, surveys her creation and savours her absolute victory and control over the boy:

> She smiled in the semi-darkness. The promised goal had been reached, her cup was full at last: she enjoyed the entire possession and control of the man whom she loved with all that mixture of tenderness and severity which marked her nature. He was indeed, she thought, such as she had made him: a creature dependent on her, body and soul, the plaything of her humours and caprice, the helpless, beloved and obedient instrument of her desires. . . .

Such complete domination of one person by another, exemplified in Richard's reaching toward his beloved Harriet and "commingling his agony and rapture in an embrace which was a sheer ecstasy" (219), is thematically identical to *La Gouvernante*. While I have explained that the plots of the two novels are highly similar, significant events have been rearranged. In Glassco's own copy of *La Gouvernante* he had marked turning points in the plot, examples being: "the house full of howling; then seaside" (165); "seaside" (172); "Honeymoon piece. B.'s ardours. Return to Christchurch where the punishment-room has been fitted up" (181).

In *Harriet*, the seaside incident is occasioned by a trip to Bournemouth where Richard is to visit a Mrs. Barrington and her daughter, Alicia, who "greeted him with all the affection and vivacity of their earlier meeting" (188). Richard is delighted to find that Harriet has "engaged a bathing-machine immediately beside the Barringtons' own" (194). Richard's pleasure is somewhat dimmed by Harriet's insistence that he wear a bathing costume that exposes his buttocks, and don "a bathing-cap of thick white rubber, of the style which fastens under the chin" (195). This detail, original to *Harriet*, is a reflection of Glassco's own rubber fetish,[6] and is enlarged upon and combined with the obsessive flagellation and humiliation in the climax to chapter six of the novel where Hariet takes Richard into the bathing-machine while Alicia and her friends listen in horror to "low tones and the governess's voice and the youth's almost inaudible reply; then . . . the sharp report of whipcord on naked flesh . . ." (199). The beating over, Richard emerges to Alicia's disgusted rejection. Alicia's "normal" feelings for Richard are extinguished and his humiliation exacerbated.

Another plot variation between *La Gouvernante* and *Harriet* concerns the "Honeymoon piece," to quote Glassco's marginalia. In *La Gouvernante*, Miss Humphreys and James Lowell are married, take their wedding trip, then return to "Christchurch where the punishment-room has been fitted up" (Glassco's holograph comments, *La Gouvernante* 181). In *Harriet*, Miss Marwood and Richard go abroad to holiday in France at a château, where they are to be attended by two servants, Berthe and Angèle, who become participants in the boy's discipline. Subsequently, Harriet and Richard spend an idyllic year in travel: "like a long en-

chanted voyage overseas forever calm and beneath a sun that shone endlessly" (152). Their return to Christchurch, after a short visit to the "discomfort and gloom" of London, is described in terms of romantic harmony of nature and mood:

> The day of the journey to Christchurch marked the visible beginning of spring. The sun was shining in a blue sky variegated with great white clouds, the air was soft, and the countryside, seen from the windows of the train, was putting on its first and freshest green. Richard felt like one just released from prison. (165)

In a nice irony Richard is, of course, headed into his own gilded prison. Upstairs, Richard finds his bedroom changed from its original "monastic bareness" to a chamber of luxury. Christchurch has been transformed, but only so as to accentuate the perverse contrast between the security of the luxurious house and furnishings and the harsh tyranny of the dominatrix. Richard's new-found delight is soon cut short when he is forced to put on the punishment "harness of his boyhood" (182) and lie "face downwards on the bed" (182-183) to await his whipping, a punishment for masturbation. The position of punishment adopted by Richard is the very one young Glassco was made to assume to receive his father's sadistic beatings and sexual invasions.

While Glassco had claimed inspiration from other works in the writing of *Harriet*, he never did acknowledge publicly his debt to *La Gouvernante*. In the Preface to *Harriet* — Leon Edel has noted that "an entire essay might be written on Buffy the prefacer" — the author writes that in his search for an appropriate style for his pornographic novel "I found that the finest model I could take was Frances Trollope . . ." [vii]. This reference has the quality of a passing witticism. It is perhaps of interest that the Trollope work the author mentions in the Preface to *Harriet* is *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, published in England by Mrs. Trollope in 1832, some fifty years before the period of the 1880's Glassco had sought to evoke in *Harriet*. One can hardly fail to smile at the sexual possibilities suggested by the words "fanny" (in both the North American and more daring British meanings of the word) and, of course, by "trollope." As for "Domestic Manners," it is these, albeit of a special kind, that are the subject of *La Gouvernante*, and of Glassco's *Harriet* and *English Governess*. There is the tantalizing exchange in Mrs. Trollope's work where Miss Blair is called upon by a distraught Mr. Blondel: "Miss Blair! Now, pity, I'm a quack! for whip me . . ." (240). But no, surely we do Mrs. Trollope and her severe intentions an injustice here.

Glassco wrote to Geoffrey Wagner, with whom he enjoyed an epistolary friendship based on their shared enthusiasms for Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon*, and for flagellation in general, that: "I drew on Sadlier's *Fanny by Gaslight* for *The English Governess* — the look and smell of London in the 1880's, and Harriet's costumes" (PAC Vol. 4).[7] Of *Fanny by Gaslight*, Michael Sadlier claimed that his novel integrates much that was factual. In the author's note he had written:

> The institutions and scenes presented as characteristic of London night-life at the dates in question, are purely fictitious as regards locality and detailed description. But little is made to occur which, in some form or somewhere, did not actually take place. Similarly one or two of the characters, in themselves imaginary, have life-stories borrowed or blended from those of real people. The manner of speech and the slang used are as far as possible in period.... [v]

It is possible that Glassco did draw on Sadlier, although my reading of this book does not suggest any dramatic similarities. Certainly the life of London is vividly described, much is made of the description of women's clothing, and there is one reference to flagellation when Fanny, on her own in London, changes her name to Kitty Cairns and "fell in with a Nepaulese [*sic*] Rajah — a man of fabulous wealth and sadistic tastes — who took her to Mother Stewart's School of Flagellation, just off Wardour Street" (301). This long novel (491 pages) is written in an unintentionally lugubrious style, and is a female picaresque. There is no apparent relation between this work and either *Harriet Marwood, Governess* or *The English Governess.*

While Glassco claims to have been influenced by Mrs. Trollope and Michael Sadlier, the Queen's University Glassco Collection holds neither novel. It seems clear from the textual evidence that the true literary antecedent of both *Harriet Marwood, Governess* and *The English Governess* is, in fact, *La Gouvernante.* If there is, however, one text that somehow infuses Glassco's mind and pornographic prose it is *Lesbia Brandon.* He discusses the importance of Swinburne's novel to his own thinking in a letter to his friend Geoffrey Wagner on 10 December 1966:

> Your ideas on 'sadism' jibe with mine. Civilized sadism (we must find another word for it: Denhamism [refers to Denham in Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon*] comes to mind, but would doubtless be confused with the recent fetishism for denim trousers) has of course nothing to do with whips, blood, tortures, etc. I have an idea the real sadist feels he is expressing the most intense form of love, and his attitude and acts of domination (only *symbolized* by the infliction of punishment) are conceived by him as being indications of a deep and protective regard, and moreover as actually affording a moral (*not* a masochistic or even sexually toned) pleasure to him *vis-à-vis.* The ideal partner sought by the sadist would thus be someone who craves the security and assurance of absolutely boundless love and finds the proof of it in despotic, possessive behaviour: for her, or him, the motto or epigraph is "Whom God loves, he chastises", and the more, the more. A kind of absolute idealism.
>
> (PAC Vol. 4)

There is a plaintive note here in the words "I have an idea the real sadist feels he is expressing the most intense form of love" that seems to express longing for a love, perhaps even a father's love, so impossibly remote, so unattainable, an idea that echoes in John Glassco's poem "The Crows":

> Absolute power and absolute submission
> Locked in each other's loving arms

NOTES

[1] "The Way Back" would undergo some thirty drafts before emerging as "The Black Helmet" in *The Fatal Woman: Three Tales by John Glassco* (1974).

The McGill Journal is a holograph document of 128 leaves held in the John Glassco Collection at McGill University. The Journal is a diary Glassco kept, with greater or lesser regularity, from February 1934 until 24 March 1964. Glassco destroyed a good deal of material; for example, the existing Journal begins only on fol. 24. Quotations from the John Glassco Papers (MS 467) are provided with the permission of the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University.

[2] Interview with Cecilie Glassco (Mrs. David Glassco), Westmount, P.Q., 21 July, 1984.

[3] See Steven Marcus's excerpts from *My Secret Life* in his *Other Victorians*, 125-126, for such a description.

[4] Against Sontag's amoral, non-evaluative theories of pornography, one might oppose the arguments of Irving Kristol's "Is This What We Wanted?":

> if you believe that no one was ever corrupted by a book, you also have to believe that no one was ever improved by a book (or a play or a movie). You have to believe, in other words, that all art is morally trivial and that consequently, all education is morally irrelevant. (188)

Or consider the answers offered by George Steiner in "Night Words" when he advances his chillingly persuasive thesis that there is a disturbing parallel between pornography and the death camps: "there may be deeper affinities than we as yet understand between the 'total freedom' of the uncensored erotic imagination and the total freedom of the sadist." (312)

Kristol's and Steiner's arguments are compelling, as are those of such feminist critics as Susan Gubar (see especially her "Representing Pornography"). I do not believe that pornography is neutral. However, my purpose in this paper is to argue the connections between Glassco's abusive childhood and his adult pornography, as well as to present the principal literary source of his Governess novels.

[5] The happily-named Amié Van Rod was the pseudonymous author of at least thirty-five works of flagellatory pornography including *L'École du fouet* (1910), *La Fascination du fouet* (1910), *Le Fouet au couvent* (1922), *Le Fouet dominateur, ou l'École des vierges* (1909), *Les Humiliations des Miss Madge* (1912), and *Visites fantastiques au pays du fouet* (1910).

[6] In an Autobiographical Sketch Glassco wrote in 1961, when he was again in hospital suffering from tuberculosis, he notes that he was aware of being made sexually excited at the age of six by the smell and feel of a rubber bathing cap he was required to wear to his swimming lessons at the baths near his school.

[7] *The English Governess* (or *Under the Birch*) is the novel derived from *Harriet*, composed by Glassco and his companion, Elma Koolmer ("gentrified" to von Colmar), in Foster, P.Q. and Paris, 1958-59 and subsequently published in 1960.

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THE TECHNOLOGY OF ALCHEMY

Kim Maltman

Diamond, as is far from widely known, is not the stable room-temperature form of carbon. A pity, of course. Nonetheless, the energy required to bring about the rearrangement to its humbler (and more stable) form is of sufficient magnitude that, while not strictly zero, the likelihood of the spontaneous conversion of, say, the Hope diamond or, more modestly, the solitaire engagement band on the trembling finger of some excitable and flabbergasted nineteen-year-old, is of such insignificance as to require many many lifetimes of the universe. Sad fate indeed for (speaking here probability-wise) so singular a happenstance, especially given those whose secretmost allegiances are to such somewhat-cruel-in-the-particular, and yet amusing, even humbling, on the broader scale, serendipities as one is apt to stumble on only at night, nestled in a big old armchair with a good stiff brandy or a shot of scotch working up a grand nostalgia for the old spiritual chestnuts, Truth, Beauty, Etc., now so thoroughly and heartlessly shorn of their capital letters. Had the medieval alchemists set their sights on turning coal into diamond, as opposed to dross to gold, how much closer to the mark they would have been, though this, of course, would be of little consolation to them. The character of diamond, nonetheless, behind the jeweller's case, alarmed and locked, remote from casual perusal, is meant to signify immutability, resembling in this the cool, refractory quality of certain older women, obsessed with a distant, abstract notion of physical beauty. One might, for instance, trying on the teal green rayon shirt — Lily Dache — a touch of pale bronze shimmering the surface, in the store, espy them, as one stands before the mirror irritated by the ever-present last elusive pin, and they pass by then, on their way toward Dior or Givenchy, a shared but public condescending smile, noting one's scruffiness/one's abject penury before the ultimate vicissitudes of fate/one's migod-Dorothy-take-a-look-at-that/one's. . . . almost anything! And yet one too, at times, inclines to such aesthetics by negation — moral negativity! — the principle that an object may be more sharply defined by its negative ground being well established in perceptual psychology and the basis of numerous illusory paradigms

and peccadillos. The pin, however, is a real pin, and must be both discovered and removed. So much for the beauty of unassailable aesthetic vindication! Rilke poking at the underbelly of Beauty (though with his bare hand, it must be admitted). Bob Hope lecturing on semantics (this, of course, by negation). Were it not for the intricately balanced biochemistry of carbon, however, not the tiniest smidgen, not the least, minutest, vanishingest iota of these notions, truth, or beauty, any of it, would exist. This does not mean we must bow down before the godlike figure of carbon, or, in studying the diamond, extend to it some crucial rite of true affiliation due a distant, albeit mineral, cousin, though we may, at times, wish to engage in possibly drunken, certainly ecstatic, paeans to its multivariate polyvalency. Let us, however, agree that, henceforth, elaborate honorifics bearing on our carbonaceous nature will be considered in the worst of bad taste. Things are simply as they are — they come into being without yearning. Only then does yearning begin to attach itself to them, like barnacles to the bottom of a ship. They seem inseparable, but we are neither owed the glory nor entitled to the amused, vicarious near-pleasures of responsibility. Or, of beauty and being, of ultimate goals and all such large things, as Dorothy might have said, years ago, finding herself suddenly again in Kansas and a work-a-day life: yes, but it all seemed so *real.*

JOHN GALT AND THE CANADIAN STAR OF DESTINY

Elizabeth Waterson

JOHN GALT CAME TO CANADA IN 1825 seething with ideas for practical improvements in canals, mills, and roads, and also with notions about business engineering: money-raising, lobbying, cash flow, and company organization. He also arrived with a major reputation as a writer. By the mid 1820's he was a very successful novelist, rivalling Sir Walter Scott in popularity and in sales, if not in critical reputation. He was admired by Coleridge, by the Royal Family, by Byron his erstwhile travelling companion in Europe, and by many thousands of less illustrious readers. Galt had produced nineteen novels, eight biographies, three children's books, eighteen plays, four books of poetry, a long string of school texts and an even longer list of short stories and essays. Ian Gordon, in his excellent book *John Galt, the Life of a Writer*,[1] lists forty-two volumes published in Galt's lifetime, and Professor Gordon has been busily bringing out other unpublished works every year or so since.[2]

Galt's career as a writer, like his business career, had its reverses. He made the fatal error of writing in the vernacular of the west of Scotland — a Lowland language that became increasingly inaccessible to readers both in Britain and in the New World. Galt's admirers of course make a case for the strength and suppleness of the language,[3] but the argument against it on the grounds of narrow audience seems indisputable. Admirers of Galt also argue that even greater than his novels was his achievement as autobiographer. Certainly the two accounts of his life, the *Autobiography* (1833) and *Literary Life and Miscellanies* (1834), are invaluable source books on the years of transition between late Romantic and early Victorian days.[4] They are also wonderful accounts of the dabbling of this virtuoso in all the political, business, scientific and publishing ventures of his day. For Canadian social and literary historians, they provide essential information. But again, fate has operated against Galt's claim to attention, and the two autobiographies in their

easily readable standard English are now out of print — at a moment when more and more of his minor works are being given handsome production by the Scottish presses.

Nevertheless, in the light of his gifts to the world in letters, as well as in practical improvements of life through technology, and advancement of prosperity through business facility, John Galt might well consider himself in 1825 a genius.

He came to Canada with the belief that all his previous endeavours — in business, in political lobbying, in authorship — had been links in a chain drawing him to Canada as a destined stage. To understand how he himself explained his failure to fulfill his dreams, particularly in Canada, the land of his highest hopes, I propose to focus briefly on four of Galt's lesser known works, connected with the concept of destiny. Together they suggest the way Galt's vision of destiny affected his own life, and was tied to the moment in Canadian history in which he played a part.

Galt had grown up in Scotland in an epoch when the national life seemed poised between culture and technology. The last years of the eighteenth century had been glorious ones for Scotland. In architecture, philosophy, literature, political science, and many other branches of the humanities, Edinburgh, "Athens of the North," had been illuminated — glorified — by Adams, Hume, Walter Scott, Adam Smith, and a galaxy of other Scots. By 1800, that glow was being replaced by the harder light of industrial and technical genius, manifest particularly in western Scotland, especially Glasgow. Stevenson, Watt, McAdam — the railway designers, the steam power geniuses, the engineers — pulled Scottish energies into non-humanist channels.

John Galt, twenty-one years old at the turn from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, had been early infected by dreams of technical advance. As a boy, he tells us in his *Autobiography*, having "a bias for mechanics" (*Ab* I, 17), he constructed a scheme for tunneling to bring water through a mountain; as a youth, he projected the turning of Glasgow into a seaport (*Ab* II, 255).

John Galt was equally inventive in business. He had begun as an under-educated clerk in a Greenock counting-house; quickly rose to a London business partnership, which as quickly collapsed, in 1807. Behind a smoke-screen of genteel travelling, sometimes in the company of Lord Byron, Galt managed to get some import-export businesses moving. (Terms such as "smuggling" and "black-market" come to mind when one reads about these enterprises of 1809-1811.) Another entrepreneurial career began when he became involved in lobbying in British Parliament first for a canal from Glasgow to Edinburgh, later for a scheme to sell Crown and Church lands in the Canadas in order to repay Canadian loyalists for their losses in the War of 1812. This second scheme swelled into the great Canada Company, of which Galt became Superintendent.[5]

Like most Scots of his time John Galt was in the process of converting the Presbyterian dogma of divine predestination into a new sense of personal power and

control. Yet in spite of rational scientism and business proficiency, like many Scots he preserved a deep sense of the irrational, based on the awful thought of a fate after death, implacably set by God's will, rather than by man's will, his works, or his faith. In Scotland, an interest in second sight, in chance, and in omens had always misted the hard doctrine of election. From the Highland fastnesses, in the Celtic cadences, swirled a belief in mysterious personal destiny, revealed in visions and in fey foreknowledge. The bardic sense of great heroes differed from the Presbyterian idea of the humbling will of God, and in the early days of the Romantic revival that occult sense of human grandeur spread southward through the vogue for Ossian, for James Thompson, Hugh Mackenzie, and the young Walter Scott, balladeer. These popular writers displayed a concept of destiny very different from the official Scots creed of predestination.

John Galt joined these Scottish writers in capitalizing on the revitalized interest in the dark and the mysterious, expressed in the taste for Gothic. Lord Byron — Scot and fellow-traveller — climaxed the gothic phase of Romanticism with his Faustian dramas, *Manfred*, *Cain*, *The Giaour*, and with his poems of restless, fateful flight. Galt's first writing on the theme of destiny was a Byronic drama. "The Star of Destiny," written in 1813, soon after *Manfred*, dealt with the wilful sale of a soul to the devil.[6] The hero is destined to damnation because of his pact. That is, as in the traditional Faustian plot, the hero wills his own tragic fate. In Galt's version, there are some interesting variants.

Everything the hero wants, he receives: the beautiful Beatrice comes to him, her husband is discredited, a mountain is moved. But the hero comes to regret each of the demon's gifts, and arranges to countermand the demon's arrangements: his friends, and his nation eventually benefit from his life, rather than suffering from his egomania. Furthermore, each of the demon's contrivances can be explained by naturalistic causes; Galt lets his audience see that pacts with the devil have in fact little to do with the working out of human stories. Yet some unknown power of nature does link man to universal history. As the hero says in his first speech,

> O'er every birth a star of fate presides,
> And he that knows his orb of destiny
> May, by the changes of its radiance, tell,
> Whene'er his good or evil genius reigns. (*Ab* II, 377)

Byronic verse, but the sentiment is Galt's own. Humans have powers for good or evil, powers in either case for genius. And the working out of human fate is not foreshadowed but reflected in the stars, in the cosmos. The stars do not affect us; we affect the stars. The universe shines more brightly when our genius expresses itself in good, benevolent deeds.

In 1833, Galt added a preface to this early effusion. At that later date he underlined the fact that he had meant to create in his early work an allegory of self-deception. "The silent servitude of the fiend is but the phantasy of [the hero's]

morbid and moody imagination" (*Ab* II, 373). But the star of destiny is real, he says, and the power of working out one's genius in such a way as to brighten the radiance of heaven continued to seem real to him.

Second of Galt's works on destiny was a novel, published anonymously in 1825, the year of Galt's first trip to Canada. This novel, titled *The Omen*,[7] was very well received; it was attributed by some reviewers to Sir Walter Scott. It is a strange, very readable, very creepy story in a tone soon to be popularized by Edgar Allan Poe. (Galt incidentally was one of Edgar Allan Poe's literary mentors: he was connected with the Allan family; Poe as a child had visited Irvine, Galt's home; Poe echoes quite closely many of the older writer's effects.)

The Omen is based on *Hamlet*, with a double dose of fated, incestuous passion. Threaded through the gothic scenes and events are comments on the mystery of destiny, "tremendous and impenetrable destiny." Once again Galt presents a hero who desires to turn his genius to the good of the world; but again life goes awry. "Alas!" says the hero, "I have been but predestined to rue and endure the miseries of those crimes which . . . I had fancied myself commissioned to weed from the world" (*O*, 103). In this novel, the realities of destiny are conveyed to the spirit by foreknowledge, or "bodements."[8] In analyzing the power of some people to foresee the future, Galt distinguishes carefully, and interestingly, between two kinds of dreams. One kind of dream is an involuntary remembrance, the association of impressions which have been made on the senses: "the mere metaphorical clothing of unregulated reflection. . . . It may be that the soul never sleeps, and what we call dreams, are but the endeavours which it makes, during the trance of the senses, to reason by the ideas of things associated with the forms and qualities of those whereof it then thinks" (*O*, 85). Such dreams are metaphors for cares and anxieties and fears — a good Freudian definition of an ordinary dream.

But there is another kind of dream, "an apocalyptic admonition from heaven" (*O*, 117). Galt is interested in this other kind of dream — a bodement, a foreknowledge of destiny. Such foretokens, he says (and his language here is precise and interesting) are part of "providential engineery," fitting into the notches in the machinery of fortune, though we cannot trace "the manner in which webs and chains and racks combine" (*O*, ch. 6). These apocalyptic dreams have their own impalpable energies; they in part instruct fate. The same inscrutable intelligence that works between the ocean and the moon, the season and the flowers, Galt says, links the dream, the omen, and destiny.

WHEN GALT WAS WRITING *The Omen* he was also packing for a first trip to Canada. Between January and April 1825 he travelled with four other Commissioners through Upper Canada, exploring the possibilities of estab-

lishing settlements there under the aegis of the Canada Company. In 1827 he returned to Upper Canada as Superintendent of the Canada Company. Then for the next two years he set aside his writing and moved into practical action. His *Autobiography* traces the course of that movement as he flung himself into the life of Upper Canada. He played with schemes for harnessing Niagara's power, and worked out plans for pumps, mills, locks, and canals. He drew up a project, a pretty sensible one, for a St. Lawrence Seaway (*Ab* II, 45-47). Perhaps his most interesting idea from the Canadian days was the invention of a way of constructing a railway: laying the lines on tree stumps, cut to the proper height to serve as God-made supports for the steel, and thus to avoid the expense of building embankments.[9]

Few of his plans eventuated, partly because he quickly antagonized the political and ecclesiastic establishment in York, and the Canada Company accountants in London, England. Yet in spite of opposition he began to create new hope and a new life for many settlers. He took pride in founding a model town sixty miles west of York at Guelph, and in the subsequent cutting of a road westward to the town of Goderich on Lake Huron. His *Autobiography* records in particular his sense of the significance of his plans for Guelph. He sees Guelph resembling "all cities *fated* with a high destiny" (my emphasis; *Ab* II, 63). He saw the city as a plane on which he could work out his aspirations to benefit mankind, by applying his own technical, commercial, and cultural gifts.

He did what he could to popularize his own notion of the city's auspicious destiny. "I was well aware of the boding effect of a little solemnity, on the minds of most men," he says, "and especially the unlettered" (*Ab* II, 54). With his friend "Tiger" Dunlop he came through the Ontario bush in 1827, to a place where a river formed a horseshoe around a pleasant piece of land. Here he ordered his woodsmen to lay axes to a big maple tree, he himself beginning the task by striking the first blow. As the great tree crashed, "Tiger" Dunlop wrapped himself in two Indian blankets — one draped like a Roman toga, the other wrapped like a Highland kilt — and poured a dram of whiskey as a libation.[10]

Galt, more soberly, faced westwards, turning his back on York and on Britain, and laying his hand, fingers outspread, on the stump of the tree, he decreed that the woodsmen cut five avenues in the shape of those fateful fingers. One road was to run southwest to a school-house and a public square. A second was to scale a western bluff where a Catholic church would sit. A third would stretch to St. George's square, chosen for the Anglicans because there was a nice flat spot there for a cricket pitch; the fourth to another mound where the Presbyterian church would rise. And the fifth would run northwest from the business office, where Galt himself would run the business affairs of the new community, to the profitable sawmill on the swiftest part of the river he named the "Speed."

The details about the whiskey and the toga may be *post hoc* additions to the

legend, but there is no doubt that John Galt did make a grand ceremonial gesture of the founding of his town. He believed it would be a royal city, a centre of world culture and technology. He worked out the ceremonial felling of the tree because he recognized the importance of ritual "at eras which betokened destiny, like the launching of a vessel, or the birth of an enterprise, of which a horoscope might be cast" (*Ab* II, 54). Such an "era," fit for ritual launching, was the founding of a city.

Galt's city plan was directed westward, partly because of the lay of the land, but more importantly because of Galt's vision. He turned his back on the political, theological, and economic powers of the east, and fanned his hand toward the Great Lakes and the unknown country beyond them.

The city as he designed it would have been a pleasing manifestation of all the interests of a transitional age. The central section would have risen westward along three avenues to the three religious establishments; education, commerce and sociability would have been accommodated to the southwest with the academy and the market place; technology (the sawmill) and administration (the Priory, company headquarters) would have loomed on the northwest. Guelph — Galt's Guelph — would have been a visible reminder of Galt's mastery of all the channels in which men of his time were moving.

Yet the *Autobiography* had to record also a sense that the desired future might not eventuate for Galt or for Guelph. He noted "an inexplicable boding of evil with which I had entered Upper Canada" (*Ab* II, 8). When he came to ready the *Autobiography* for publication he included in volume II the announcement that *The Omen* was his work (breaking the secret of anonymity), and he tucked into the end of the "Canadian" volume of the *Autobiography* that early play "The Star of Destiny." It was as if, in connection with his tale of the frustrating Canadian adventure, he wanted to remind readers of his earlier meditations on the complex relations between the man of genius, his bodements, and the destiny worked out as part of the "engineery" of the universe.

Gifted in both cultural powers and in technical know-how, believing he could work out a life in which both aspects of his genius could combine, he was fated to be discounted on both sides. He believed himself destined to muster all his abilities, cultural, technological, and entrepreneurial, to further the good of humanity. He believed the working out of his destiny would make the stars of the universe glow more radiantly. But something in Canada frustrated him.

The city he designed was not destined to develop in the crescent of the Speed. His plan for Guelph was not approved by Galt's employers, the Canada Company. The grand design was not considered financially sound; in a slow exchange of charge and counter-charge — slow because the age of rapid steamships had not quite arrived — the patience of officers of the Canada Company in London ran out, and so did Galt's tenure of his job as Superintendent.[11]

Few in Upper Canada rallied to his defence. John MacTaggart's *Three Years in Canada* (1829) was one of the few contemporary accounts to speak warmly of Galt; years later Samuel Strickland's *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West* (1853) would corroborate this endorsement.[12] But Galt had offended all the Toronto powers, political and ecclesiastical; had sparred with Maitland, the Lieutenant-Governor, and antagonized Strachan, the Anglican archbishop. The quarrels had concerned social protocol in the one case and the depletion of church funds and lands in the other. Galt felt that these quarrels and his difficulties in Guelph were matters of high moment, not only for himself but for Canada. In his *Autobiography* he was to describe the whole sequence of events in a highly-wrought way.

Galt told the story of his quarrel with Maitland in terms of high fate: he was accused, he said, of "undervaluing those among whom it was my destiny to sojourn" (*Ab* II, 51). But clearly Maitland was deterred from helping Galt because as Lieutenant Governor he considered Galt offensive in his proud assumption of the airs of a man of rank and power. Maitland and his secretary Major George Hillier had also turned against Galt because apparently by chance Galt had become connected with his fellow-Scot, the radical William Lyon Mackenzie. Archbishop Strachan had also become ill disposed toward Galt, as the man who years earlier had furthered the proposal of Roman Catholic Bishop Alexander Macdonnell to sell Church lands in Upper Canada. Was it indeed fate that had caused Galt's business affairs to cross the interests of the great Ontario churchman, years before Galt ever dreamt of coming to Upper Canada himself? Certainly his early west-of-Scotland friendship with Macdonnell had queered Galt's chances of enlisting Strachan's support in the final quarrel with the Canada Company.

The tone of the *Autobiography* suggests a further cause for friction. Galt's conception of his own genius (well founded as it was in his accomplishments) rubbed sorely against the other geniuses in a sparsely settled colony. Strachan and Maitland considered themselves to be geniuses also.

In other writings Galt suggests that the Canadian climate proved very depressing to his spirit: perhaps that too affected his destiny. *Bogle Corbet*, the fictional account of founding a settlement on the "Slant," emphasizes the melancholy effects of Upper Canadian climate and landscape.[13] The depression of exile, so finely expressed in "Canadian Boat-Song," published by members of Galt's Edinburgh circle in 1829, also enervated many Scots far from the hills, the small clear streams, and the tombstones of home.[14]

Yet he persisted in his work, feeling that through his efforts social progress was being achieved, and insisting, like the hero of *The Omen*, on the purity of his motives:

> For my tasks were so evidently calculated to lessen the mass of afflictions, that, however teasing in the performance, they could not be contemplated without vivid

> delight. The emoluments were no doubt respectable, but I have ever regarded pecuniary matters as subordinate, and at that crisis, if a thought gravitated down towards them, it was but for a moment, when I remembered my children.
>
> (*Ab* II, 153)

Nevertheless he was touched by the bitter recognition that his time in Canada was ending, that he was being "unworthily treated" although his efforts "were all flourishing, and, without the blight of one single blossom, gave cheering promises of ample fruit" (*Ab* II, 154). He returned to the old concept of destiny, and with it reversed the imagery of a flowering harvest:

> The Canada Company had originated in my suggestions. . . . Yet without the commission of any fault . . . I was destined to reap from it only troubles and mortifications." (*Ab* II, 157)

Galt left Upper Canada in April 1829, and no one protested. Within a very short time, Galt's plan for his city was replaced by a more practical chart. The new plan guaranteed increased revenue from sale of house-lots now drafted into the public market area. Those house-lots had been laid out between the academy and the town centre. The generous public gathering space had been sacrificed to business imperatives. Other changes followed: the Anglicans decided to build by the river, and St. George's Square became the hub of small businesses, stores and banks; the Presbyterians chose to build *their* first kirk in the Market Place. Only the Roman Catholics were left on high ground. The new plan blotted out the general cultural pattern Galt had designed. The town he founded had shifted its shape to accommodate an imbalance he deplored; the country he had helped build withheld its confidence. He would never return to the little city in the bush.

SOON AFTER RETURNING TO Britain, John Galt was confined to debtors' prison; there he wrote *Lawrie Tod* (1830), the story of successful working-class emigration to the new world.[15] This best-seller was followed by another much-read work, his *Life of Lord Byron* (1830),[16] and then by *Bogle Corbet* (1831), the sad story of a rather Byronic gentleman who settles on the banks of the "Slant" in Upper Canada and there works out an ironic destiny.

Galt ended his life in Scotland, knowing his three sons were making their way in Canada, but of course not knowing that his children and grandchildren would play crucial roles in the development of the country. (One son would become Chief-Justice of Canada, another would be Finance Minister and first High Commissioner to London; one grandson would help develop the coal and rail industries in south-western Alberta, while another in our own day would superintend the traumatic move of the Sun Life Headquarters from Montreal to Toronto.)[17]

John Galt died in the west of Scotland, in 1839. At his deathbed, a grotesque scene took place in which a minister tried to argue the paralyzed, speechless, dying man into confession and repentance of sins as a means of finding salvation. Galt had reasserted a faith in predestination in his *Literary Life and Miscellanies,*[18] although in the *Autobiography* he admitted his aptness, "notwithstanding the strictness of my belief in predestination, to wince a little at the thought of having been sent into 'this breathing world' to accomplish no purpose, but only to endure 'the ills that flesh is heir to' " (*Ab* II, 286-7).

Galt left unpublished in his lifetime a long poem that should also be considered in the story of his own fate in Canada. This is "The Demon of Destiny," published posthumously in 1839.[19] "Who shall unfold the mysteries of fate?" is the unpromising first line of this long meditation, reminiscent of Wordsworth in its slow sad music, and also in its espousal of resolution and independence in the face of apparent failure. The young hero asks:

> Why, when I thought to build a monument
> With blessed bow'rs, in yon far sunny land,
> Was I so shaken from that bright design? (*T*, 256-7)

Wise advisors suggest that there is no answer to the pain of frustrated ambition, and urge patience on the young hero. But the Satanic Demon of Destiny offers the oposite advice. He urges the hero to renew his benign ambition, and "to seek preeminence."

It would be foolish to compare this poem with *Paradise Lost*, but like Milton, Galt succeeds all too well in dramatizing the Satanic arguments. What emerges most strongly from the poem is not the official consolation of modified ambition, but rather a passionate questioning of the ways of the universe. The Demon presents the theory that genius is a glorious emanation of God; the hero is "fumed" into believing himself "destined to improve mankind."

The outcome shows the falsity of the Demon's inflaming promises:

> When hope's in the ascendant,
> And all the aspects of the horoscope
> Allure with promises of Fame and Fortune,
> Something that's native in the field of life
> Untimely balks the reaping of the harvest.

Opposition to the hopes of genius has shifted from the Canada Company to an unspecified "something" in the field of life. Galt never did understand what it was that had "balked the reaping of his harvest" in Canada and directed subsequent generations away from his "bright design."

There was to be a further twist in the fate of the finger-plan of Guelph. Between Galt's time and ours, the city he planned was powerfully affected by technology. In the 1850's, railway construction further blotted his town plan. By 1880, four

railways had been laid through Guelph, spawning stations where spaces had been, and leaving an overpass where the ceremonial maple tree had stood.

There was a prophetic symbolism in the new pattern superimposed on the city. The rail lines sickled within the curve of the Speed. The Wellington Bruce and Grey County Railway ran to the north, the Grand Trunk Northern to the northwest, the Great Western to the west, and the Green Valley Railway ran to the southwest. There was still no direct connection with Toronto and the East. Just as Galt had turned his back on Maitland and Strachan and the city of Toronto, so Guelph, thirty years after Galt's death faced westward, thanks to the new technology. The diminution of the Via railway service between Guelph and Toronto in 1989 is the latest sign of the weakening link with the east.

On a grand scale, history has validated at least the westward-facing aspect of Galt's vision. The destiny of Canada, ultimately, has been western-directed. In our own time we have seen a shift of economic power from Montreal to Toronto, and to some extent from Toronto to Vancouver. Culture too moves westward, to Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria, as writers, painters, musicians, architects, and critics realize the west.[20] The shift is still in process. It is perhaps an extension of the movement in Galt's century, and in his country: from East to West, from Edinburgh to Glasgow, from Europe to America — a shift accompanying the emergence of modern technology. Galt, refusing to bow eastward to Great Britain and York, to Maitland and Strachan, could not survive in his Upper Canada; but ultimately destiny would seem to face, like the little town of Guelph, westward.

Two final notes conclude this story of a fated Scot and his fated Canadian city. First, Galt's rough sketch of a plan for Guelph, which had remained literally obscured for over a hundred years, has been rediscovered by Dr. Gilbert Stelter, an urban historian at the University of Guelph. Using high intensity lighting while photographing the 1829 plan, he noticed a blurring in some of the lines. He peeled back an overlay — and there was Galt's original dream of a city, still surviving its long masking by the company which substituted business imperatives for cultural ones.[21]

Another work by Galt, identified by Nick Whistler among new acquisitions to the Scottish collection at the University of Guelph, is an unfinished short story, in Galt's handwriting, titled "The Man of Destiny," not yet transcribed or analyzed. Soon it too may be "peeled back, to reveal some other secret about Galt's philosophy of fate.

Galt's life had been a mix of the grand and the ridiculous, a turbulence of hope and disappointment, a record of honour and contumely. But the results of that life remain, and are important: the great body of novels, Lowland dialect and all; the city of Guelph, railway lines and all; and perhaps the shift westward, literally and metaphorically, of Canadian destiny.

NOTES

[1] Ian Gordon, *John Galt: The Life of a Writer* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972).

[2] P. H. Scott in *John Galt* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) lists eleven novels which have been issued in new editions since 1970.

[3] See Scott, *John Galt*, 4; Derek McClure, "Scots and English in *Annals of the Parish* and *The Provost*," in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh: Ramsay Head, 1979), pp. 195-210; Henri Gibault, *John Galt, romancier écossais* Grenoble: Publications de l'Université des langues et lettres de Grenoble, 1979), p. 169.

[4] John Galt, *Autobiography* (London: Cochrane and McCrone, 1833), 2 vols.; cited hereafter as *Ab*; *Literary Life and Miscellanies* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1834), 3 vols.

[5] The background of the Canada Company affair was traced in R. K. Gordon, *John Galt* (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1920); new insights are added in Roger Hall and Nick Whistler, "John Galt," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. VII (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1988).

[6] John Galt, "The Star of Destiny," published as an appendix in *Autobiography*, II, 378-409.

[7] John Galt, *The Omen* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1825). Cited hereafter as *O.*

[8] Nick Whistler draws attention to Galt's recurrent use of this term in "Galt's Life and the *Autobiography*," *John Galt: Reappraisals*, ed. Elizabeth Waterston (Guelph: Univ. of Guelph, 1985), p. 50.

[9] Jennie Aberdein cites David Moir's record of these projects in *John Galt* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936).

[10] Carl Klinck reprints a letter from Galt to Moir, first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, (November, 1830) II, 456-7, in *William "Tiger" Dunlop* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1958), p. 137.

[11] Ian Gordon, "Galt and Politics," *John Galt: Reappraisals*, p. 123.

[12] John MacTaggart, *Three Years in Canada* (London: Colburn, 1829), 2 vols.; Samuel Strickland, *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West* (London: Bentley, 1853).

[13] John Galt, *Bogle Corbet, or the Emigrant* (London: Bentley and Colburn, 1833), 3 vols.; Vol. III and part of Vol. II are reprinted as *Bogle Corbet*, ed. Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977).

[14] See "The 'Canadian Boat-song': a Mosaic," compiled by D. M. R. Bentley, *Canadian Poetry*, 6 (Spring/Summer, 1980), pp. 69-79.

[15] John Galt, *Lawrie Tod, or The Settlers in the Woods* (London: Bentley and Colburn, 1831). This novel has not been included in the recent series of reissues by Scottish presses. Although set in New York State, it reflects settlement conditions in Upper Canada.

[16] John Galt, *The Life of Lord Byron* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830).

[17] H. B. Timothy, *The Galts: A Canadian Odyssey* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977).

[18] *Literary Life and Miscellanies*, I, 287-8, cited by John MacQueen, "Ringan Gilhaize and Particular Providence," *John Galt 1779-1979*, p. 109.

[19] *The Demon of Destiny and Other Poems* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1839), reprinted in *The Collected Poems of John Galt, 1779-1839*, ed. H. B. Timothy (Regina: s.n., 1982), hereafter cited as *T*.

[20] See Dennis Cooley, "RePlacing," *ECW* 18/19 (Summer/Fall, 1980/81); Eli Mandel, "Writing West," *Another Time* (Erin: Press Porcepic, 1977); W. H. New, *Articulating West* (Toronto: New Press, 1972); Fred Wah, "Contemporary Saskatchewan Poetry," *Essays on Saskatchewan Writing*, ed. E. F. Dyck (Regina: Saskatchewan Writer's Guild, 1987).

[21] Gilbert Stelter, "John Galt: the Writer as town Booster and Builder," *John Galt: Reappraisals*, p. 38.

STANDING ON GUARD

Elizabeth Brewster

Back there in high school
in the first year of the War,
I won a prize for an essay
on "What Canada Means to Me."

Can't remember a word of it now
except the title,
but it was probably full of nature,
snow and violets and fresh-ploughed land;
I doubt if I thought of politics,
Grit or Tory.

Maybe the War came into it, too.
It would have come into that other essay
for the sale of War Bonds
for which my friend Phyllis and I shared the prize.

Then we stood on the steps of the Sussex Post Office
selling tags for the benefit of the Navy;
or went from door to door Saturday morning
collecting from housewives
their bits of soap and left-over bacon grease,
to be recycled into —
munitions, I suppose?

Our high school history teacher, Mr. Harris,
compared Hitler to Napoleon;
told us to study about the Greeks
because they invented democracy,
which we were defending now.

The copy of Socrates' Apology
(as transmitted by Plato)
and some of the other dialogues
that I read back then
came from the Army Camp library,
brought home by my father.

Reading them, I discovered reason
is possible, questions are possible.

Later, I might question the questions.
(Was Socrates sometimes too clever?)
But for now, anyway,
a window was opened.

By means of argument
Opinions might be changed.

Is Socrates my countryman?
(As much my countryman — say —
as Mackenzie King?)

What is my country?

If battling were my nature,
what country would I battle for?

WHAT IS MY COUNTRY?

Elizabeth Brewster

Partly, my country is a place, or places:

a patch of blueberry bush in New Brunswick,
or Crescent Street in Montreal
(have they changed its name?)

Mackenzie King's grotesque ruins
at Kingsmere
or Diefenbaker's grave on the university campus
here in Saskatoon

the willows by Dow's Lake

this vicious climate

sometimes frosty, sometimes thunderous,
too much of wet or dry or cold

the clouds sweeping the wide sky
over the prairies.

Partly, it's people: Sir John, Sir Wilfrid,
    even Pierre Trudeau;
poets who wrote about mountains or cheeses;

pioneers, grandparents.

Partly, it's the mind's country,
not limited by place or time

Jerusalem yet to be built
on whatever continent;

and from that country
no citizen can be displaced.

It has no boundaries,
its language is
all languages
Or none

BLISS CARMAN'S "LOW TIDES"

Thomas Vincent

THE PUBLICATION OF "Low Tide on Grand-Pré" in the *Atlantic Monthly* of March 1887 has been generally recognized by literary critics as the first significant milestone in Bliss Carman's development as a poet. It reflects an increased confidence in craftsmanship, a deeper maturity in poetic voice, and a greater clarity of poetic vision and direction. Carman himself acknowledged the importance of the poem by placing it first among the poems in his first volume of verse and by entitling that volume *Low Tide on Grand-Pré* (New York, 1893). Later, and with the benefit of hindsight, in a letter to H.D.C. Lee (29 September 1911), he expressed the view that he "did not write any poetry of any consequence" before the period in which he wrote "Low Tide."[1] As the importance of Carman's position in Canadian literature has become clearer, there has been a growing recognition of the significance of the poem in Canadian literary history generally. Today, few would dispute the view that it is a central work of Canadian poetry. And so, the existence of an early (if inferior) draft or version of the poem (see pages 134-35) provides an opportunity to take a new look at an important work. It provides an illuminating insight into the evolution of the poem, and an interesting view of Carman's development as a poet at a critical point in his career.

Carman wrote his first draft of the poem at Windsor, Nova Scotia, in June 1886, judging from the place and date notation found at the end of the first published version, reprinted below under its title "Low Tide on Avon."[2] At that time, he was staying with his cousin, Charles G. D. Roberts, who had been appointed to the Chair of English Literature at the University of King's College in the autumn of 1885. The milieu in which Roberts moved at King's (and into which Carman entered) was not only academic but also intensely literary. Upon arriving at King's, Roberts had immediately been elected (10 October 1885) President of the College's very active literary society, "The Haliburton," and through the early months of 1886 had been lecturing in various Maritime towns on "A Few Aspects of American Poetry," as reflected in the works of established poets such as Longfellow, Emerson, and Whittier, and in the works of younger poets such as Sidney Lanier and Joaquin

Miller. Carman himself had just returned from visiting Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities in the United States in search of a compatible graduate school where he might further his studies in literature and philosophy beginning in the fall of 1886. Both men would have been present at the activities surrounding the Convocation ceremonies at King's College in late June, during which George Stewart, Jr., a fellow New Brunswicker who had gained national recognition as a journalist and literary critic, received an honorary D.C.L. and delivered the Encaenia Address entitled "The Literature of a Nation." Stewart was among the more vocal proponents of the pressing need for an indigenous literature as a fundamental element in the development of national consciousness and a sense of national identity.

In this highly intellectual, academic, and literary climate (fraught with nationalistic overtones) Carman set about the writing of his poem, "Low Tide on Avon," in June 1886.[3] It was printed in October in the *King's College Record*,[4] a monthly magazine published by the University, edited by students, and supervised by Roberts. No doubt it was Roberts who was instrumental in seeing it into print; Carman by this time had gone on to Harvard to pursue his graduate studies.

The early part of the "Avon" version focuses explicitly on the Evangeline legend and attempts to amplify that legend by projecting a vision of a ghostly, ethereal beauty in the guise of Evangeline, who returns to haunt the forests and fields of Acadie through the mystical hours of the summer solstice. In effect, we are given a kind of midsummer night's dream, but one that only distantly and tangentially reflects the imagination of Shakespeare. The perspective here is romantic, but is rooted in historical tragedy, not comedy, and is governed by a North American literary tradition and imaginative vision that reaches back through Longfellow to Emerson and Thoreau. Indeed, the dynamics of North American historical romance and literature so dominate the foreground or surface of this version that the poem appears to be part of the self-conscious search for nationalistic themes that characterized the work of many post-Confederation writers. One is reminded of Roberts' use of Acadian materials in his fictions of the 1890's.

Not far below the romantic surface of the piece, however, lies a meditative melancholy mood and a nostalgic tone that become the artistic vehicles for investing the poetic imagery with transcendental meaning, and for drawing the reader affectively into the poet's vision of a metaphysical reality embedded in the sensuality of the natural world. In the "Avon" version, this visionary element is somewhat obscured, buried in the poet's efforts to harness romance to historical and literary purpose. But in the mystical underpinning of "Low Tide on Avon" lies the poem we know as "Low Tide on Grand-Pré." When, sometime during the winter of 1886-87, Carman edited out the elements of historical and literary romance (only an echo remains in the new title and in the term "Acadie"), he allowed the mystical background to emerge fully and clearly into the foreground, creating a

more sharply focussed if not distinctly different poem. The specifics of time (summer solstice) and place (Avon River tidal flats) in the first stanza become lost in the sweep of the mystical vision that now strongly informs the poem's imagery. Most important, the central female figure, no longer confined by the particularities of historical and literary context as Evangeline, emerges as a sensual, mystical entity who functions as the key to unlocking and expressing both the emotional intimacy and intellectual significance of the poet's spiritual experience.

The suppression of historical specifics and the amplification of meditative mood and nostalgic tone in the "Grand-Pré" version have led some critics (unaware of the "Avon" version) to surmise that the poem grew out of a traumatic experience in Carman's emotional life and that his apparent growth in artistic maturity should be viewed in that light. Donald Stephens[5] points to the death of Carman's mother in February 1886 and Sorfleet[6] argues that he experienced a moment of profound mystical insight in June. Either way, the "Avon" version suggests that the writing of "Low Tide" did not begin as a direct response to his mother's death or to a mystical experience. The focus of "Low Tide on Grand-Pré" (however one may interpret it) emerged through a process of editing and revision that took place during the winter of 1886-87. At that time, Carman was immersed in his studies at Harvard, and was particularly absorbed in the philosophy course he was pursuing under Josiah Royce.[7] Royce's lectures dealt with the intellectual basis for idealism and spirituality, and clearly had a salutary effect on Carman's understanding of the purpose of poetry and of the relationship between the sensual and the ideal in human experience.

While it is hard to specify exactly what Carman drew from his academic experience at Harvard in 1886-87, there is no doubt it precipitated a significant maturation in his understanding of human realities and in his poetic sensibility. The difference between "Low Tide on Avon" (June 1886) and "Low Tide on Grand-Pré" (March 1887) is a convenient, even remarkable, yardstick by which to measure that change. Where the "Avon" version strains to stitch together a self-conscious concern for nationalistic and literary myth-making with the emotional and perceptual complexities of a moment of special mystical insight, the "Grand-Pré" version focuses sharply and confidently on the import of that moment in all its subjective intimacy and exclusivity. Carman does not back away from the inherent difficulties involved in exploring and articulating intuitive insight in an emotionally and intellectually coherent form. He trusts his perceptions and he trusts his poetic ability to communicate them. His intention and focus are clear, even if the logic of the narrative is at times vague.

But that vagueness itself can be seen as an appropriate (perhaps even unavoidable) attribute of the poet's sense of his subject and his approach to it. In the "Grand-Pré" version, narrative structure is made clearly subordinate to lyric impulse. In the process, the controlling, referential effect of time and space are sus-

pended and the force of some other controlling power is made imaginatively and affectively clear through sensitive response to natural imagery and nostalgic memory. The what, who and when of narration are less important to the poet's intention and to our understanding than the tone and mood of the poetic moment that flow from the pattern of image and sound.

In light of the muddled form and intention of his earlier effort, "Low Tide on Grand-Pré" becomes clear evidence of significant maturation of the poet's eye and the poet's voice. A new-found confidence in lyric effect is matched by an increased trust in intuitive awareness of the presence and importance of dimensions of reality that lie beyond the empirical. In the context of the poem, this awareness is presented as a remembered thing, implicitly lamanted as a moment now gone, but the effect of the lyric itself (the record of memory if you wish) is to recreate that intimate moment for the perceptive reader. The medium here is art not nature and perception functions in imagination rather than through memory, but the proof of a forceful reality that transcends the empirical rests in the lyric effect of the poem. The poem is the imaginative gateway the poet offers the reader as evidence of the ideal world which intuitively he knows lies all around him in nature and in his art.

NOTES

The two versions of "Low Tide" are reprinted on pages 134-35. For the 1893 printing of "Low Tide on Grand-Pré," Carman returned to the indention pattern of the stanza form used in "Low Tide on Avon."

[1] Noted by J. R. Sorfleet, "Transcendentalist, Mystic, Evolutionary Idealist: Bliss Carman, 1886-1894," in *Colony and Confederation*, ed. G. Woodcock (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1974), pp. 189-210. Full text of the letter is in *Letters of Bliss Carman*, ed. H. P. Gundy (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 189-191.

[2] Sorfleet identifies June 1886 as the date at which "Low Tide on Grand-Pré" was written. He appears to be unaware of the first published version and that it is substantially different from that published in the *Atlantic* in March 1887.

[3] Avon is the name of the river that runs past Windsor and into the Minas Basin at the eastern end of the Bay of Fundy. While historically related to the Acadian Expulsion, it carries none of the literary connotations invested in Grand-Pré by Longfellow's poem *Evangeline*.

[4] King's College Record 78 (October 1886) : 5-6.

[5] Donald Stephens, *Bliss Carman* (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 42-43.

[6] See Sorfleet, p. 190.

[7] Royce was the author of *The Religious Aspects of Philosophy* (Boston, 1885; rpr. New York: Harper, 1958) which had deeply impressed Carman before he went to Harvard. See Sorfleet, p. 194.

LOW TIDE ON AVON

Bliss Carman

"Avon" Version: June 1886

The sun goes down, and over all
These barren reaches by the tide
Such unelusive glories fall,
I almost dream they yet will bide
Until the coming of the tide.

And yet I know that not for us,
By any ecstacy of dream,
He lingers to keep luminous
A little while the grievous stream,
That frets uncomforted of dream.

I know too well that not for thee,
And not for any smile of thine,
He stays, but failing utterly,
Some day across a waste of brine
Shall draw to prayer those hands of thine!

A grievous stream that to and fro,
Athrough the fields of Acadie,
Goes wandering, as if to know
Why one beloved face should be
So long from home and Acadie!

And every year in June for him
There comes a dream — Evangeline,
As on that day her loss made dim!
Through all the years that intervene
His deathless love Evangeline!

At evening fall in midsummer,
Just when the radiant fleurs-de-lis
From trammel of winter and the stir
Of breathing Death one hour are free,
She comes with radiant fleurs-de-lis!

Above the ageless hills there breaks,
Over their purple bloom of pine
And blue ravines, in crimson flakes,
Her light whose hands are come to twine
Shadow of rose with shade of pine.

LOW TIDE ON GRAND-PRÉ

Bliss Carman

"Grand-Pré" Version: March 1887

The sun goes down, and over all
These barren reaches by the tide
Such unelusive glories fall,
I almost dream they yet will bide
Until the coming of the tide.

And yet I know that not for us,
By any ecstasy of dream,
He lingers to keep luminous
A little while the grievous stream,
Which frets, uncomforted of dream, —

A grievous stream, that to and fro
Athrough the fields of Acadie
Goes wandering, as if to know
Why one beloved face should be
So long from home and Acadie!

And all the land makes glad her coming,
If only once in a year of time,
The Underking's strong hands o'ercoming,
She move one night through a dream sublime,
In beauty still untouched of time.

Was it a year or lives ago
We took the grasses in our hands,
And caught the summer flying low
Over the waving meadow lands
And held it there between our hands?

The while the river at our feet,
A drowsy inland meadow stream,
At slip of son the afterheat
Made running gold, and in the gleam
We freed our birch upon the stream.

And down along the elms at dusk
We lifted dripping blade to drift
Through twilight scented fine like musk,
Where night and gloam awhile uplift
Nor sunder soul and soul adrift.

And that we took into our hands,
Spirit of life or subtler thing,
Breathed on us there and loosed the bands
Of death, and taught us whispering
The secret of some wonder thing.

And all your face grew light and seemed
To hold the shadow of the sun;
The evening wavered, and I deemed
That time was ripe and years had done
Their wheeling underneath the sun.

And all desire and all regret,
And fear and memory were nought;
One, to remember or forget
The keen delight our hands had caught;
Morrow and yesterday were nought!

* * * * * *

The night has fallen, and the tide —
Now and again comes drifting home,
Across these arching barrens wide,
A sigh like driven wind or foam:
In grief the flood is bursting home!

Windsor, June, 1886

Was it a year or lives ago
We took the grasses in our hands,
And caught the summer flying low
Over the waving meadow lands,
And held it there between our hands?

The while the river at our feet —
A drowsy inland meadow stream —
At set of sun the after-heat
Made running gold, and in the gleam
We freed our birch upon the stream.

There down along the elms at dusk
We lifted dripping blade to drift,
Through twilight scented fine like musk,
Where night and gloom a while uplift,
Nor sunder soul and soul adrift.

And that we took into our hands —
Spirit of life or subtler thing —
Breathed on us there, and loosed the bands
Of death, and taught us, whispering,
The secret of some wonder-thing.

Then all your face grew light, and seemed
To hold the shadow of the sun;
The evening faltered, and I deemed
That time was ripe, and years had done
Their wheeling underneath the sun.

So all desire and all regret,
And fear and memory, were naught;
One to remember or forget
The keen delight our hands had caught:
Morrow and yesterday were naught!

The night has fallen, and the tide . . .
Now and again comes drifting home,
Across these aching barrens wide,
A sigh like driven wind or foam:
In grief the flood is bursting home!

P. K. PAGE OU LA QUÊTE D'UN AUTRE ESPACE

Evelyne Voldeng

QUAND P. K. PAGE affirme dans "After Reading *Albino Pheasants*"[1] que sa vérité est faite d'un dixième de matière et de neuf dixièmes d'imagination, elle invite le lecteur à une lecture de l'imaginaire d'une oeuvre poétique où l'oeil visionnaire de l'imagination transforme en symboles une multiplicité de détails sensoriels perçus par l'oeil sensuel du peintre — poète. Les six recueils de poèmes de P. K. Page: *As Ten as Twenty* (1946), *The Metal and The Flower* (1954), *Cry Ararat* (1967), *Poems Selected and New* (1974), *Evening Dance of the Grey Flies* (1981), *The Glass Air* (1985) ainsi que son recueil de nouvelles *The Sun and the Moon and other Fictions* (1973)[2] se placent sous le signe de la quête, de la conquête, de la métamorphose par l'oeil, l'oeil physique et l'oeil intérieur des données sensorielles du monde.

Nous allons voir comment, dans le cadre des structures imaginaires du régime diurne tel que défini par Gilbert Durand,[3] s'opère cette quête à travers une richesse de symboles spectaculaires,[4] selon la modalité de conquête, modalité de structuration dynamique du langage poétique caractérisée par l'écriture de la révolte et le régime antithétique.[5] Nous allons suivre l'évolution de cette quête poétique qui d'abord tentée par un désir de refuge dans l'eau amniotique de l'inconscient, se fait vol imaginaire dans une autre dimension appréhendée par l'artiste dans une illumination esthétique où se réconcilient les contraires.

Même une lecture superficielle de l'oeuvre poétique de P. K. Page fait apparaître l'omniprésence de l'image de l'oeil et du symbolisme du regard. L'oeil à la myriade de facettes ("Fly: On Webs," *GA*, 111) de ce poète visuel est extrémement sensible à l'image physique. C'est à partir des sens et de l'imagination que "l'oeil subjectif" va dégager sa vision du monde. L'objet de la vision de l'oeil est la nature inanimée végétale et animale. Voulant toujours voir plus profond au coeur des choses, l'oeil absorbe le paysage sur le mode de l'oralité. Le poète parle de ses yeux affamés et du besoin de tout dessiner pour se l'assimiler ("Questions and Images," *GA*, 188). Cette oralité transformée en empathie sous l'impulsion de l'imagination s'accompagne le plus souvent d'une vision sensuelle et anthropomorphe de la nature où la vue s'allie au toucher: les collines vierges sont "as a thigh smooth" ("Personal

Landscape," *GA*, 1), les fraises "hot on the ground as blood lay in their leaves as we in ours" ("The Map," *GA*, 62) et dans "Suffering" (*GA*, 173) le goût du pain emplit la bouche de la dense dorée des odorants champs de la terre. L'oeil, infatigable dans s quête, veut capter le mouvement de la vie organique. La nature est appréhendée dans un tourbillon de vie, les fleurs sont douées de vertigineux tropismes, elles barrent la route, formant une vague écumante tandis que l'oeil lui-même devient un bouton en train d'éclore (*SM*, 35).

La vision du monde naturel s'opère de deux façons différentes. Dans le premier cas, dans un mouvement centrifuge le locuteur voit dans les choses et fusionne en elles. Le voyageur dans "Round Trip" exprime le désir "to be caught in a glacier . . . to be mint in the heart of an ice-cube, to be contained in anything smooth" (*ATT*, 6). Dans le second cas, le plus fréquent, le locuteur voit les choses en lui et les absorbe: Cullen "felt the grass / grow in his heart" ("Cullen *GA*, 16) tandis que la locutrice de "Summer" qui nous dit brouter la verdure sent en elle d'étranges métamorphoses:

> and in my blood
> the pigments flowed like sap.
> All through my veins the green
> made a lacey tree.
> Green in my eye grew big as a bell
> . . . . . .
> and in a whorl of green in my ear
> it spun like a ball (*MF*, 40)

Dans "Travellers' Palm" la voyageuse boit l'eau du ravenala et alors:

> taster, water, air
> in temperature identical
> were so
> intricately merged
> a fabulous foreign bird
> flew silent from a void
> lodged in (her) boughs (*GA*, 92)

Comme nous venons de le voir, l'oeil dans son désir de s'approprier le monde perçoit dans une vision empathique la réalité statique des choses inanimées ou le développement organique de la vie végétale et animale. C'est "Now This Cold Man" (*GA*, 41) qui donne peut-être le meilleur exemple de panthéisme empathique dans un poème qui retrouve les mythes anciens de la naissance du printemps[6] et les Métamorphoses d'Ovide. La glace fond des branches des poumons du vieil homme, son souffle est jaune, blanc et violet, de luisantes jonquilles éclosent de son crâne "and something rare and perfect yet unknown stirs like a foetus just behind his eyes." Un dernier exemple à considérer est celui fourni par "The Sun and the Moon" où cette vision empathique va jusqu'à revêtir un caractère pathologique.

Kristin, née lors d'une éclipse de lune peut assumer une identité quelconque dans les règnes minéral, végétal ou animal. Elle connaît tantôt l'état de l'objet inanimé (une pierre, une chaise), tantôt la poussée végétative du végétal:

> She slept knowing sleep, conscious of it, aware of its quality of slow germination, of gradual growth. She remembered nothing before it, nothing more than the stirring, the easy evolution of the seed that was herself (*SM*, 57)

Enfin, conséquence extrême de son pouvoir de vision empathique, elle peut, sorte de lune fatale éclipsant le soleil, s'emparer de la lumière de vie de son fiancé.

La vision du monde par l'oeil pagien se fait essentiellement, surtout dans les deux premiers recueils sur le mode antithétique. Dans sa quête, d'unité, de communion, l'oeil dénonce l'absurde de la vie quotidienne dans un monde fragmenté où l'innocence de l'enfance cède la place à l'aliénation de la vie adulte, un monde placé sous la signe de la lutte archétypale de l'Enfer et du Paradis.

Si l'on considère d'abord le thème de l'innocence de l'enfance, il apparaît comme la matrice d'une vaste constellation d'images étroitement reliées au mythe pastoral tel que défini par Northrop Frye:

> The pastoral myth in its most common form is associated with childhood, or with some earlier social condition . . . that can be identified with childhood. The nostalgia for a world of peace and protection with a spontaneous response to the nature around it, with a leisure and composure not to be found to-day is particularly strong in Canada. . . . Close to the center of the pastoral myth is the sense of kinship with the animal and vegetable world.[7]

C'est à travers l'isomorphisme de la blancheur, de la neige, de la plume blanche, de l'ange d'une part, du végétal — de la fleur en particulier — de la croissance et de la couleur verte d'autre part que le peintre-poète transcrit l'innocence, le bonheur, la croissance et la vitalité de l'enfance. Dans "Stories of Snow," le monde fabuleux de l'enfance est évoqué dans une surréelle symphonie de blanc où la neige imaginaire tombe parmi les lis, se fait tempête de rêve sous un globe de verre et où les chasseurs, étranges rêveurs au souffle de plumes blanches, dans des bateaux ailés, sous une blanche lumière chassent le cygne qui meurt dans une chaude métamorphose neigeuse ("Stories of Snow," *GA*, 42-43). "Journey Home" dans une blanche tempête de neige nous présente "The innocent traveller . . . walking home / and his shoulders were light and white as though wings were growing" (*GA*, 32), tandis que les enfants de "The Bands and the Beautiful Children sont "White with running and innocence" (*GA*, 3). Il apparaît bientôt que l'analogie entre la neige blanche et l'enfance par l'intermédiaire de la fleur blanche — l'on pense aux champs de pâquerettes de l'enfance ("Images of Angels," *GA*, 82) — se transforme en l'analogie entre la croissance du végétal fleuri et celle de l'enfance. Le corps dans sa jeunesse a "a leafy smell" (*GA*, 164), les jeunes soeurs de "Sisters" communient "into pastures of each other's eyes" (*GA*, 7) tandis que les petites filles "renew / acquaintanceship with all things / as with flowers in dreams"

("Little Girls," *GA*, 6) et que les adolescents "in love . . . wore themselves in a green embrace" ("Adolescence," *GA*, 11).

A la vision de l'enfance symbolisée par des plumes de neige blanche ou par le végétal fleuri s'oppose un monde de noirceur où prédomine la pierre et le métal. Dans "Only Child" la fin de la douceur, de l'innocence, la mort des rêves dans un monde que régissent les mots et la loi a lieu dans "the bald, unfeathered air," contre "a metal backdrop" (*GA*, 5) tandis que la perte de l'innocence par les enfants de "The Glass Air" les transforme en Léviathan qui "broke / the glass air like twin figures vast, in stone."[8] Plusieurs poèmes sont le centre de la lutte antithétique de la noirceur et de la blancheur, de la fleur et du métal. Deux poèmes en particulier, "Photos of a Salt Mine," "The Metal and the Flower" expriment cet antagonisme. Dans "Photos of a Salt Mine" l'on passe insensiblement d'un blanc paysage de neige saline à une caverne de jais où est emprisonné le sel et si, pour les premières photos, innocence / has acted as a filter," sur la dernière photo:

> Like Dante's vision of the nether Hell men struggle with the bright cold fires of salt, locked in the black inferno of the rock: the filter here, not innocence, but guilt —
>
> ("Photos of a Salt Mine," *GA*, 35)

De la blancheur du cristal l'on est passé à la noire caverne infernale, symbole nyctomorphe doublé à travers le schème de la descente, de la chute, d'un symbole catamorphe. L'oeil pagien ne peut s'arrêter sur une vision d'innocence, ainsi dans son jardin, la fleur et le métal, l'innocence et l'aliénation le mal sont inextricablement mêlés. Le poème "Le métal et la fleur" est la parfaite illustration de ce jardin manichéen, jardin de barbelés et de roses qui, noir et blanc, luit à minuit ("The Metal and the Flower, *GA*, 78).

SI LA DUALITÉ DE l'univers pagien s'exprime sous forme d'opposition du blanc et du noir, elle s'exprime également sous la forme antithétique de la multiplicité et de l'unité. C'est ainsi que, de par l'ambivalence du symbole, la végétation verte en vient à représenter non plus l'enfance, mais l'exubérance proliférante d'un monde multiple et bigarré qui s'oppose à la blancheur de l'unité où se résorbent les couleurs du prisme. Dans les pays où "the leaves are large as hands / where flowers protrude their freshly chins / and call their colours" l'oeil s'affole devant l'envahissement proliférant de la nature et se réfugie dans "the area behind the eyes / where silent, unrefractive whiteness lies" ("Stories of Snow," *GA*, 42-43).

En dernière analyse c'est une quête de l'unité à laquelle se livre l'oeil. Mais en un premier temps l'oeil se heurte à la vision d'un univers manichéen qui l'agresse. L'oeil du locuteur va alors refléter la folie d'un monde routinier et aliénant ou se

sentir crucifié par l'oeil de l'autre, "pinned by the nails of their eyes" ("Ancestors," *EDGF*, 76), l'oeil de l'autre devenant hallucinant oeil photographique ("The Landlady," *GA*, 27), pervers oeil métallique ("This Frieze of Birds," *CA*, 20) dans la lumière crue du jour. Dans une première et courte étape, l'oeil blessé se laisse tenter, dans un désir de refuge par les symboles nocturnes de l'intimité et opte pour une descente dans l'élément liquide, le monde de l'inconscient et du rêve où il trouve une protection contre la blessante lumière du jour dont

> the shine is single
> as dime flipped or gull on fire or fish
> Silently hurt — its mouth alive with metal ("Element," *CA*, 57)

Le locuteur de "Element" sent que son visage a "the terrible shine of fish / caught and swung on a line under the sun." Effrayé, crucifié par la lumière que les autres créent, il se réfugie dans l'obscurité liquide, "freed and whole again / as fish returned by dream into the stream" ("Element," *CA*, 57). Cette descente nocturne dans l'élément liquide marque l'unité retrouvée au delà de la fragmentation par la lumière qui isole les chromatismes. A la lumière du jour "coupante comme une lame," à l'univers de la fragmentation douloureuse que traduit l'éclair de la truite arrachée de son élément par la violence succède le retour au courant maternel dans l'univers de la plénitude. C'est dans cette eau amniotique que le rêveur dans un doux carillon de cloches retrouve momentanément la coïncidence des contraires:

> . . . in this dream of immersion
> Mouth becomes full with darkness
> and the shine, mottled and pastel, sounds its
> own note . . .
> . . . . . .
> There are flowers — and this is pretty for the
> summer — light on the bed of darkness ("Element," *CA*, 57)

Si dans l'univers pagien l'on assiste tout d'abord à une tentative de régression dans l'élément liquide, c'est que l'eau est considérée par le poète comme l'élément de l'enfance. Plusieurs poèmes nous montrent en effet l'enfant quittant l'élément liquide pour devenir amphibie dans l'adolescence et dans l'état adulte faire de la terre son état naturel. Dans les derniers recueils de P. K. Page le désir de refuge dans l'eau laiteuse amniotique de l'enfance va céder insensiblement la place au rêve d'un vol imaginaire dans la lumière.

Déçu par la vision de l'oeil physique, le poète se tourne vers l'oeil visionnaire de l'imagination seul capable de transformer la multiplicité en un symbole unitaire, de relier le microcosme au macrocosme et de déceler une lumière plus claire, une lumière immatérielle derrière l'apparence des choses ("The Filled Pen," *GA*, 102). P. K. Page dans son article "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman"[9] rappelle les trois fonctions principales de l'imagination, fonctions de voyageuse, de visionnaire et de

créatrice magicienne et alchimiste. Quand dans "Dwelling Place," se référant à son corps le poète se définit comme

> I, its inhabitant, indweller — eye to that tiny chink where two worlds meet — or — if you so discern it — two divide (*EDGF*, 78)

elle insiste sur la situation très particulière de l'oeil qui s'ouvre sur deux mondes, le monde sensible et "l'unrefractive whiteness" ("Stories of Snow," *GA*, 43) du monde imaginaire. L'oeil est le médium qui rend possible le voyage poétique, le passage du paysage extérieur au paysage intérieur, de l'espace extérieur à l'espace intérieur et ceci grâce à l'imagination qui permet en quelque sorte de traverser le miroir sans le briser en une multitude de fragments qui déchiquettent à leur tour le sujet.

Plusieurs poèmes dans l'oeuvre poétique de P. K. Page ont été consacrés au voyage, au voyageur mais c'est probablement "Round Trip," un poème de son premier recueil *As Ten as Twenty* qui amorce l'obsessionnelle quête imaginaire du poète qui avec chaque recueil se fait plus urgente:

> . . . the world is mist forever
> and focus has to shift and shift for far
> and near are now identical — colourless, shapeless — echoing ghosts of snow.
> Oh where is what he dreamed, forever where
> the landscape for his pattern? The desired
> and legendary country he had planned? (*ATT*, 6)

P. K. Page pour définir sa quête artistique utilise le mot "transportation"[10] jouant sur la qualité polysémique du terme. Son voyage poétique est "transportation," "transport" au sens de "transporter quelque chose" grâce à la faculté imaginaire et "transport," au sens d'"être transportée" (véhiculée et illuminée) par l'imagination. Dans "transportation" est de plus contenue l'idée de mouvement, de transport métaphorique. Le poète poursuit ainsi sa définition:

> At times I seem to be attempting to copy exactly something which exists in a dimension where worldly senses are inadequate. As if a thing only felt had to be extracted from invisibility and transposed into a seen thing, a heard thing."[11]

Dans sa tentative de passer le seuil d'une autre dimension, d'atteindre le centre invisible, le poète qui, selon P. K. Page est un "voyant" recourt à l'imagination visionnaire qui s'exerce le plus souvent dans l'état de rêve éveillé branché sur l'inconscient. C'est l'image symbolique de l'immense fourchette en argent aux dimensions cosmiques qui traduit peut-être le mieux cette quête compulsive par l'imagination visionnaire du poète:

> I am a two-dimensional being. I live in a sheet of paper. My home has length and breadth and very little thickness. The tines of a fork pushed vertically through the paper appear as four thin silver ellipses. I may in a moment of insight, realize that it is more than coincidence that four identical but independent silver rings have

> entered my world. In a further breakthrough I may glimpse their unity, even sense the entire fork-large, glimmering, extraordinary. Just beyond my sight. Mystifying; marvellous. My two-dimensional consciousness yearns to catch some overtone which will convey that great resonant silver object
>
> ("Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," 35)

Cette immense fourchette résonnante qui traverse la feuille de papier où vit le poète est aussi un diapason[12] qui vibre avec les quatre éléments.

Cette recherche par l'imagination d'une "nouvelle direction qui s'ouvre comme un oeil," d'un ordre de perception plus grand que la vue se voit à l'oeuvre par une quasi dénudation des procédés dans plusieurs poèmes où la perception se fait vision imaginaire. Dans "The Flower Bed" par exemple le parterre de soleils se métamorphose et la locutrice voit un parterre de fleurs:

> Shooting their eye-beams at their Lord the Sun, like so much Spider's silk stretched — true and taut, And my own yellow eye, black lashed, provides triangulation. We enmesh three worlds with our geometry (*GA*, 152)

Nous assistons à un double mouvement. Nous avons d'une part les héliantes qui dans la vision du poète sont de vrais soleils, réplique cosmique du Soleil, leur Seigneur qu'ils regardent dans un rituel adorateur et "l'oeil jaune aux cils noirs"[13] de la locutrice qui jette son filet de triangulation sur trois mondes.

C'est dans le rêve et en particulier le rêve éveillé que P. K. Page entrevoit cet autre ordre de perception. Si le poète se défie dans l'ensemble des rêves nocturnes, rêves qui brouillent par leurs symboles "as blunted and as bright as flowers" the "outward focus" of the "subjective eye" (*MF*, 55), rêves nocturnes qui peuvent se changer en cauchemars visités par le cheval chtonien et infernal sous la forme de la ténébreuse mère terrible ("Nightmare," *GA*, 46), par contre, elle accorde une place privilégiée à la vision du rêve éveillé qui selon elle pourrait être une projection émanant de l'inconscient collectif jungien ou des anges de Roumi ("Questions and Images," *GA*, 191). Plusieurs de ses poèmes les plus connus: "Arras," "Cry Ararat," "Another Space," entre autres, se déroulent dans une atmosphère de rêve placée sous le signe de la métamorphose, du dédoublement et de l'inversion. Dans "Arras" sur la tapisserie où sont représentés de royaux personnages, la locutrice fait apparaître le paon, symbole de cette autre dimension, le paon qui entre à la fois dans la tapisserie et dans l'oeil extasié du poète dans un moment de plénitude cosmique:

> Voluptuous it came.
> Its head the ferrule and its lovely tail folded so sweetly; it was strangely slim to fit the retina. And then it shook and was a peacock (*GA*, 91)[14]

Un autre poème qui selon P. K. Page elle-même, ouvre la porte à l'imagination visionnaire est "Cry Ararat." Ce mont Ararat sur lequel s'est posée la colombe eprès le déluge est une sorte d'Eden recréé par l'imagination dans l'état de rêve of "focused reality."

When dreaming, you desire
and ask for nothing more
then stillness to receive
the I — am animal,
the We — are leaf and flower
the distant mountain near (*CA*, 105)

Dans des poèmes comme "For Mstislav Rostropovich with love" ou "After Reading Albino Pheasants," c'est la musique, le son d'un mot qui dans un état de rêve plus éveillé que l'état de veille font vibrer "la pupille de l'oeil intérieur" (*GA*, 104).

Il reste à dégager les caractéristiques de cette autre dimension, ce monde de lumière entrevu par le poète. Cet autre espace comme l'appelle P. K. Page dans le poème du même nom est principalement caracterisé par le schème ascensionnel.[15] Il convient tout d'abord de remarquer que la conception même de cette autre dimension est liée par le poète à sa redécouverte de l'échelle ascendante des êtres et des liens étroits qui unissent le microcosme et le macrocosme. Comme le dit P. K. Page, elle a ressenti la présence de "another realm — interrelated — the high doh of a scale in which we are the low" ("Questions and Images," *GA*, 191). On voit également que influencée par ses lectures de poètes soufites, de Roumi en particulier, P. K. Page dans plusieurs poèmes mentionne l'échelle céleste que doit gravir le disciple pour accéder au neuvième ciel.[16] A cette échelle astronomique dont les neuf échelons correspondent aux planètes et au soleil se trouve également associé l'arbre cosmique, tantôt appelé par le poète "the royal tree":

Prince, to whom three ladders lead
dreams and dreaming are my lot.
. . . . . .
Let us move as air in air
Skywards up the Cosmic Tree.[17]

Il est intéressant de noter que le schème ascensionnel de cet autre espace apparaît déjà dans le poème plus ancien "Cry Ararat!" sous le symbolisme de la montagne sacrée.

Cet autre monde créé par le désir dynamique d'élévation, de sublimation est lié à l'archétype de la rêverie du vol représenté par l'oiseau et son doublet l'ange. L'oiseau, la plupart du temps dans les poèmes de P. K. Page comme chez les poètes soufites symbolise l'élévation de l'esprit comme par exemple le paon de "Arras" et la colombe de "Cry Ararat." Dans d'autres poèmes comme "After Reading

Albino Pheasants," "Finches Feeding" (*GA*, 106, 153), c'est l'oiseau qui occasionne le départ de la vision ascensionnelle vers cet autre monde, cet autre espace peuplé de créatures angéliques, tels ces "yellow people in metamorphosis" qui gravissent des échelles d'or jusqu'à l'extrême ciel ou le séraphin aux six ailes dorées.[18]

L'on retrouve dans l'univers pagien l'isomorphisme de l'ascensionnel, du lumineux et du céleste. Le poète a recours aux symboles ascensionnels dans sa tentative d'élévation vers un au-delà du temps, un zénith imaginaire où est la "Suprême Essence" source de toute lumière. A la lumière du jour, lumière crue qui peut être coupante comme la lame, le poète oppose la lumière immatérielle derrière l'apparence des choses. Cette lumière peut irradier des différentes couleurs du spectre, formant, comme le décrit P. K. Page dans "Unless the Eye Catch Fire . . ." (*EDGF*, 40), un spectre brillant et un spectre sombre mais dans plusieurs poèmes tels "The Trail of Bread" (*EDGF*, 88), "Seraphim," "Three Gold Fish" (*GA*, 103), "The Yellow People in Metamorphosis" (*GA*, 119), elle est la lumière céleste dorée. Cette lumière couleur or, représentative de la spiritualisation est une lumière solaire, lumière de l'Essence Suprême. Dans "The Trail of Bread," sorte d'illumination très semblable à la transfiguration soufite, la locutrice, flacon soudain descellé est conduite d'un paysage ombreux:

> into dawn.
> Rose of the air unfolding
> petal and thorn
> . . . . . .
> and sun-up with a rush
> The world gold-leafed and burnished (*EDGF*, 89)

Ailleurs, dans le poème "Seraphim" l'illumination est suivie de matins brillants comme l'aile où

> high in the fronds of brass palms sunbirds sang
> Girasols swung their cadmium — coloured hair.[19]

A la lumière de cet autre espace est associé le feu — lumière, feu — purificateur, feu céleste, prolongement igné de la lumière. Le "Seraphim" du poème du même nom donne le baptême du feu à l'initiée tandis que les poissons de "Three Gold Fish"

> burned and shone
> and left their brand
> . . . . . .
> stamped on the air, on me,
> on skin and hair (*GA*, 103)

Le feu céleste peut également prendre la forme de la flèche ignée, de l'éclair qui frappe l'illuminé:

Hurl your giant thunderbolt that on my heart
falls gently as a feather ("Dot" *GA*, 118)

L'autre élément purificateur qui accompagne souvent cette lumière dorée est l'eau lustrale. Dans "The Trail of Bread" la locutrice, dans la lumière de l'aube a bu l'eau lustrale dorée et s'est purifié les mains dans cette eau couleur or. La lumière de l'univers pagien, en dernière analyse, est une lumière blanche, une lumière incolore, symbole de l'Essence en laquelle se résorbent toutes les couleurs, toutes les qualités universelles. C'est la lumière de l'unité qui préside à la réintégration des contraires. Dans "Unless the Eye Catch Fire . . .," la locutrice parle de cette lumière, "right in the centre of my being. Occupying an immense inner space" (*EDGF*, 39). Le spectre blanc et le spectre noir se rencontrent "as if two equal and complementary circles centered inside me — or I in them" (*EDGF*, 40). La narratrice elle-même devient lumière durant une expérience très semblable à l'illumination soufite. Ce monde lumineux recherché par l'oeil visionnaire pagien est le monde des structures synthétiques de l'imaginaire où se réalise la coincidence des contraires. Sur ce monde préside le dieu des soufites, qui est ombre et lumière, dispersion et unité, qui est indifférencié et principe de toutes distinctions comme le soleil et ses rayons.

CE MONDE DE LUMIÈRE coloré par la couleur jaune de l'imagination ("Unless the Eye Catch Fire . . .," *EDGF*, 39-40), monde où se rencontrent les rayons de l'oeil du soleil est le monde de la transcendance divine dont l'image symbolique est le cercle, le centre. Le cercle nous dit P. K. Page est

> Symbolic of All, of One, of Nothing. Enigmatic, paradoxical. The Whole and the Hole. An enclosure for concentrating energy. The Wheel of the Seasons, the Dial of the Hours. The Cosmic Clock where Past and Future are one.[20]

L'on pense immédiatement au poème de "Another Space" et à son cercle mandalique de la danse cosmique. Du cercle l'on passe au centre, le centre mystique où le repos et le mouvement, l'infiniment grand et l'infiniment petit, la nuit et le jour, le blanc et le noir et tous les contraires coïncident, ce qu'exprime P. K. Page dans le poème "Dot" et dans "Chinese Boxes" (*GA*, 116) où l'oeil visionnaire embrasse les deux infinis. L'oeil tantôt devenu un oeil qui voit dans toutes les directions, un point, un aleph, symbole de l'unité, d'un seul regard rapide,

sees heaven and hell united
as a globe
in whose harmonious spinning
day and night
and birth and death are conjured into one (*GA*, 116)

Tantôt l'oeil percevant l'infiniment grand saisit l'absolu dans le vide de l'immensité. C'est toujours dans le mouvement, mouvement tantôt vibratoire d'apparitions lumineuses,[21] tantôt giratoire, évoquant à la fois la danse mystique et la danse cosmique des atomes, que l'imagination visionnaire tente la réintégration dans l'unité, dans le "measureless continuum." Dans "Another Space" l'initiée, après avoir reçu la flèche de l'Amour sent comme une cloison de verre fondre en elle:

> And to-fro all the atoms pass
> in bright osmosis
> . . . . . .
> where now a new
> direction opens like an eye (*GA*, 123)

Ici l'initiation consiste à rendre la limite, la cloison de verre, le lieu des fragmentations de l'éclatement, à la foi poreuse — dans une osmose permettant la traversée des apories intellectuelles et des barrières matérielles et ceci avec réversibilité — et mobile, ce que suggère la métaphore du mouvement de l'oeil qui s'ouvre.

Si l'on considère pour finir la syntaxe de l'imaginaire des différents recueils poétiques de P. K. Page, l'on est frappé par l'évolution de son écriture où une vision antithétique se transforme en une quête de réintégration des contraires. C'est d'ailleurs après un silence de plusieurs années pendant lequel le poète s'est mis à peindre "Comme si (sa) vie en dépendait" ("Questions and Images," *GA*, 188), que parallèlement à des tableaux cosmiques, fusionnels est apparue cette nouvelle écriture influencée par la littérature soufite et l'art de l'Islam.

Les deux premiers recueils de P. K. Page, *As Ten as Twenty*, *The Metal and the Flower* sont marqués par la confrontation des contraires caractéristique de l'écriture de la révolte, écriture de l'espace plein recherché par la vision empathique, espace où les schèmes d'ascension s'opposent aux schèmes de la chute aliénante. Le parallélisme établi, comme nous l'avons vu précédement, au niveau thématique, la fleur et le métal, le blanc et le noir le blanc et le vert etc. se traduit alors en une syntaxe de l'antithèse ordonnée par un régime manichéen de l'imaginaire, régime schizoïde selon Durand.

Après *Cry Ararat*, qui représente une époque de transition, le poète va recourir de plus en plus à la syntaxe d'une dialectique des réconciliations qui, sur le plan thématique se reconnaît à l'évolution des images guidée par la coïncidence des contraires. Cette évolution de l'écriture pagienne se laissait déja entrevoir dans la thématique des premiers recueils et dans la place privilégiée accordée par le poète à l'image métaphorique, façon de voir par l'oeil du poète qui " 'gives two for one' — gives two in one. Two or more separate ideas, objects, images, fuse. In so doing generate energy. Illuminate."[22] L'emploi fréquent par le poète de la synesthésie, aspect particulier de la métaphore trahissait également sa quête de l'unité. C'est par l'oeil unificateur de l'imagination que le poète est insensiblement passé de la multiplicité du monde des sens au symbole, s'est acheminé à travers la dialectique

des contraires à la quête de conciliation des inconciliables dans une écriture poétique où, sous la forme de l'oxymore et de la synesthésie cultivée domine la sumultanéité des apparemment contraires.

Dans son article "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," P. K. Page s'est qualifiée de voyageuse. Elle est la voyageuse influencée par ses séjours en Australie, au Brésil et au Mexique, elle est également la voyageuse qui selon la terminologie soufite n'a pas encore atteint la transfiguration finale, elle est aussi le peintre-poète dont l'imagination voyageuse aspire à un art qui satisferait, tous les sens, un art créé par un super-sens ("Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," 38) dont l'expression suprême serait la parfaite métaphore qui unirait tout dans le silence.[23]

NOTES

[1] P. K. Page, *The Glass Air* (Toronto: Oxford, 1985), 106. Toute référence ultérieure au recueil apparaît dans le texte sous la forme abrégée *GA*.

[2] Page, *As Ten as Twenty* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1946); *The Metal and the Flower* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1954); *Cry Ararat!* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967); *Poems Selected and New* (Toronto: Anansi, 1974); *Evening Dance of the Grey Flies* (Toronto: Oxford, 1981); *The Sun and the Moon* (Toronto: Anansi, 1973). Toute référence ultérieure aux recueils apparaît dans le texte sous forme abrégée soit dans l'ordre des références: *ATT*, *MF*, *CA*, *PSN*, *EDGF*, *SM*.

[3] Cf. Gilbert Durand, *Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Bordas, 1969), 69 sq. L'on sait que les régimes de l'imaginaire (régime diurne et régime nocturne) proposés par J. Durand sont fondés sur trois dominantes réflexes posturale, d'avalage ou rythmique. Les structures de l'imaginaire répondent à 3 grandes orientations: schizomorphe (ou héroïque), phrasique (ou mystique) dramatique (ou synthétique). A chacune de ces structures sont liées certaines images importantes.

[4] Durand, 162-73.

[5] Cf. Jean Burgos, *Pour une Poétique de l'imaginaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), pp. 155-59.

[6] L'on pense en particulier à Xochipilli, le seigneur des fleurs dont le corps écorché symbolise la matière qui s'ouvre pour laisser passer la graine de la vie nouvelle Cf. Page, "Darkinbad and Brightdayler: Transmutation Symbolism in the Work of Pat Martin Bates," *arts canada* 28:2 (april/may 1971): 35-40.

[7] Northrop Frye, "Conclusion," *Literary History of Canada, Canadian Literature in English*, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1970), pp. 840-41.

[8] Page, "The Glass Air" *CA*, 95. Il faut noter la minéralisation des sujets et de leur environnement.

[9] Page, "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," *Canadian Literature*, 46 (Autumn 1970), pp. 35-40.

[10] Page, "Traveller, Conjuror, Journeyman," 35. Le mot "transportation" évoque également le vers de Baudelaire "qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens."

[11] Page, 35.

[12] En anglais le mot "fork," "fourchette," utilisé dans l'expression "tuning-fork" devient un "diapason." On pourrait également voir dans l'énorme fourchette en argent une sorte d'aimant qui reconstituerait un "spectre" de limaille, métal fragmenté noir, sur une feuille de papier représentant l'unité blanche.

[13] Le "yellow eye, black lashed," l'oeil jaune aux cils noirs de la locutrice rappelle les noms anglais de la rudbeckie qui est en fait un petit soleil "black-eyed Susan," "Yellow daisy."

[14] L'on peut remarquer que le paon "ocellé" qui entre dans l'oeil extasié du poète a lui-même des yeux, des yeux multiples.

[15] Durand, 138-62.

[16] Cf. Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Wellingborough: Thorsons, 1976) ; William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: Univ. of New York, 1983).

[17] Page, "Poems," *Canadian Literature*, 63 (Winter 1975), p. 39. L'arbre cosmique est une structure légendaire et mystique indo-européenne.

[18] Page, "Seraphim," *Tamarack Review*, 69, (Summer 1976), p. 45.

[19] Page, "Seraphim," 45.

[20] Page, "Darkinbad & Brightdayler," 36.

[21] Les vibrations lumineuses de "Unless the Eye Catch Fire . . ." font immédiatement penser à la théorie soufite de l'"état" spirituel. Un "état" comme le dit Titus Burckhardt dans son *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* est une immersion momentanée de l'âme dans le lumière divine. Suivant l'intensité et la durée de ces "états" ils sont qualifiés de "lueurs," "eclairs," "irradiation."

[22] Page, "The Sense of Angels," *Jewish Di'al-og* (Passover 1973), p. 19.

[23] Page, "The Sense of Angels," 19.

books in review

MANDATE & MANIFESTO

JOVETTE MARCHESSAULT, *Mother of the Grass*, translated by Yvonne M. Klein. Talonbooks.

JEANNE DEMERS, LINE MCMURRAY, eds. *Femmes scandales: 1965-1985*. La nouvelle barre du jour.

MARY D. GARRARD. *Artemisia Gentileschi*. Princeton University Press.

FEMINIST WRITING has not outgrown its subversive mandate, but it has achieved a certain grace and maturity. This quality is evident in Mary Garrard's *Artemisia Gentileschi*, a work which redresses, brilliantly, scholarly neglect of an Italian Baroque artist who was a woman. It is evident, too, in the courageous exploration which continues to characterize feminist writing in Quebec, and in the steadily growing audience for such writing in English Canada.

Thanks to Talonbooks, Jovette Marchessault's *La mère des herbes* can now be read in English. *Mother of the Grass* is the second volume of Marchessault's epic trilogy, *Comme une enfant de la terre*, a classic of feminist dreaming which rediscovers myth from the perspective of a working-class *Québecoise*. *Le crachat solaire* (*The Solar Spit*) is a creation story; the cosmic egg cracks; the protagonist is born. *Mother of the Grass* opens with this child living happily beside the Ouareau River, until the end of W.W.II closes the munitions factory which employs her father and grandfather. The family moves to Montreal, "the Land of Permanent Sacrifice," and womanhood overtakes her.

The girl's grandmother embodies the mythological figure of "the Mother of the Grass": "In relation to the past, she was like a cow in a meadow, perpetually chewing the cud. For her, the creation of the world, the appearance of signs and beings on earth and in the sky, was not an event that was finished but something which was eternally alive and near at hand." In Montreal, however, the girl learns that her grandmother is "a heretic . . . a hypostasis, a circus performer, a squaw, a herbalist, a woman who had lived in sin." Furthermore, "God had already punished her well." This is no fairy tale, and the girl-protagonist must find her own way out of life-in-death. She dreams of writing. *Mother of the Grass* is the realization of this dream.

Marchessault must be difficult to translate, but Yvonne Klein succeeds, sometimes beautifully. Two minor complaints. Why did Talonbooks not include an introduction to situate Marchessault's work for anglophone readers? And, couldn't someone have caught the five incorrect accents which occur on the verso of the title page and on the back cover of the book?

In the preface to *Femmes Scandales: 1965-1985*, Jeanne Demers and Line Mc Murray explain that the book is part of a continuing research into the manifesto as a textual/gesture (texte/geste). In opposing one authority while imposing another, the manifesto inscribes a binary logic which replaces power with power. The editors theorize, however, that women's manifestos are marked by a "quest for identity" which is based on plurality and difference: "Un je/nous énonciateur en somme qui fait de la différence la base même de la pratique proposée, qui appuie sur celle-ci toutes les revendications, échappant de la sorte au modèle 'guerrier' en situant son action politique en marge de la politique." To further their research, Demers and McMurray invited feminist militants to respond to their theory.

As one might expect, the responses are

uneven. The Clio Collective, author of *L'Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* (Montréal: Quinze, 1982), sets the tone with a thoughtful, pragmatic narrative of what was done and why. Louise Toupin, one of the militants of LE FRONT DE LIBERATION DES FEMMES DU QUEBEC, reflects on feminism's achievements, but remembers also the price paid by many women and the work which remains to be done. The most substantial contribution to *Femmes Scandales* is from Louky Bersianik, who takes issue with Demers and McMurray, arguing that they misunderstand Susanne Lamy's analysis of *bavardage* and underestimate women's writing. Popular feminist theatre, as an exemplary instance of the feminist manifesto, provides something of a focus for the rest of the collection. Louise Cotnoir and Louise Dupré tell the story of *Si Cendrillon pouvait mourir!*, a drama produced at Thetford Mines in 1975. Solange Collin and Véronique O'Leary recall their years with Le Théâtre des Cuisines; Denise Boucher remembers *Les fées ont soif*, and Louise Laprade writes of the Théâtre expérimental des femmes.

Mary D. Garrard's *Artemisia Gentileschi* is a scholarly and beautiful book, with twenty-four full-page colour illustrations and 324 in black and white. It is the first full-length study of Gentileschi's life and work, and two appendices present, also for the first time in English, Artemisia Gentileschi's letters and the transcripts of an infamous rape trial in which she was involved. Gentileschi, who completed her first major painting while still in her teens, was a follower of Caravaggio. In her painting, she consistently expresses female perspectives, while her choice of subject matter and her virtuosity of style invite comparison (and contrast) with the work of her male contemporaries.

Part I, "Artemisia Gentileschi in her Time: Life and Art," gathers together what is known of her extraordinary life. Part II, "Historical Feminism and Female Iconography," broadens the historical context, outlining the feminist debates of the early Renaissance, known as the *querelle des femmes*. Garrard also considers the complex iconography of gender, into which Gentileschi effectively intervenes. Part III, "Artemisia Gentileschi's Heroic Women," presents Garrard's erudite readings of Gentileschi's iconographic statements. Five themes prevalent in Western art, and painted by Gentileschi, are examined in detail: Susanna, Lucretia, Judith, Cleopatra, and Pittura (the allegory of Painting). Several of Gentileschi's most important surviving paintings interpret the Biblical heroine Judith, slayer of Holofernes. Male painters, (unconsciously) identifying with Holofernes, have tended to paint her as a virago or *femme fatale*. Gentileschi identifies with Judith or, perhaps, with her maidservant; her paintings present two ordinary, courageous women doing what needed to be done.

SUSAN KNUTSON

WRITING HOME

ALISTAIR MACLEOD, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood: New & Selected Stories*. Ontario Review Press (Princeton), $10.95.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED with MacLeod's first Canadian book, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* (1976), this new one contains only 4 stories from the original, 6 stories from *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun* (1986), and one haunting new story, "Island." Joyce Carol Oates has edited this volume to launch MacLeod's American debut.

Alistair MacLeod writes about rural life in the Maritimes, and usually about northeastern Nova Scotia. Perhaps I should add, *as he imagines it*. But when he itemizes the agonies of shoveling coal

in a bootleg mine, or catalogues the objects that wash up on his particular shore, or describes for us what happens to pack ice on the ocean in late winter, one gets the impression that MacLeod is there, at home, in more than imagination.

In his stories an entire community seems to proclaim itself. In "The Closing Down of Winter," for example, the narrator speaks in the first person plural, almost never referring to himself as "I" or "me." Speaking as "we," MacLeod's narrator is presumably spokesman for a species, the miners on Cape Breton. They may work and die in mines all over the world, but like MacLeod, they most emphatically *come from* somewhere. They belong to the beaches, graveyards, beer parlours, the Gaelic songs, and stories of their own mining community.

MacLeod writes about rural maritimers as only a maritimer can. His years out west and in Windsor have only served to confirm his status as a maritime writer. His characters are farmers, miners and fishermen and their families. They are largely working class, and when he introduces middle class characters into his stories (a teacher or T.V. producer, for example), there is often an uneasy tension between that character and the rural inhabitants. I am not saying, therefore, that the virtues in *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* are largely sociological or documentary. I am saying that this passionate engagement with place, this evocative rendering of Cape Breton, is vital to the success of these stories *as stories*.

If we look at how he deploys these authentic observations of his region, we see much more than a social historian or a folklorist at work; we see the storyteller firmly in control. In "The Road to Rankin's Point," for example, the narrator (who is terminally ill) returns to the house of his grandmother after a long absence. Both Calum (the narrator) and his grandmother are coming to the end of their lives. Indeed, they will die on the same road Calum's grandfather died on seventy years earlier. Calum states his situation this way: "I have returned now, I think, almost as the diseased and polluted salmon, to swim for a brief time in the clear waters of my earlier stream. The returning salmon knows of no 'cure' for the termination of his life." Calum arrives at the house and describes it. "Entering the porch that leads to my grandmother's house it is necessary to step down. With the passage of the years the house has sunk into the earth. The stone foundation of more than a century has worked itself deep into the soil and now all doors are forced to open inward."

I suppose it is rewarding enough for readers to see through the eyes of a writer who can show them the "diseased and polluted" look of a spawning salmon or what happens to an old frame house by the edge of the sea. But to me the reward comes in the suggestive value of MacLeod's images, the precise way they lie in the weave of his story. Calum's return is indeed almost like that of the diseased and polluted salmon. The waters of his earlier life are comparatively clear, as he rediscovers, but unlike the doomed salmon that might manage to spawn before they die, Calum is the end of his line. He and his grandmother are (to switch images) sinking slowly into the earth. And on this doomed voyage, they are also sinking into themselves, into the past, away from the outside world into a solipsism in which all doors "open inward."

In two of his recent ones ("As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" and "Vision"), MacLeod tells his story, then goes on to tell the story about the story, exploring its impact on future generations of maritimers. His narrator of "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun" tells first of the death of his great-great-great-great grandfather, who was attacked and torn apart by a pack of huge wild dogs. People of his own

generation are still haunted by the tale and move "like careful hemophiliacs, fearing that they carried unwanted possibilities deep within them."

Perhaps MacLeod's most recent work (stories that investigate and comment upon themselves) aligns him with the postmodernists to some extent. But calling Alistair MacLeod a postmodernist or a regionalist does him little justice. If he is a regionalist, he is not bound by the parochial snares of a limited vision. And if at times he appropriates the structures of postmodernists, he does not succumb to the complacency of the professorial voice that enervates a lot of today's metafiction.

I think the greatest peril he courts in this volume is the one faced by all who write elegiacally about their region; it is the danger Buckler did not always escape. This is the tendency to write with such vigilance about the vanishing rural past that the other world, the urban world most of us inhabit, seems tainted by comparison. And while this may be true in fact or compellingly true in fiction, the elegy tends to lose credibility whenever the tone or moral disapproval invades it.

I must conclude, however, that we could use more writers as probing and compassionate as Alistair MacLeod. His new Selected brings to the American audience some very good news indeed. The dozen or so American reviews that I have read are very positive. I am not surprised.

DAVE CARPENTER

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAGILITY

Théorie littéraire: problèmes et perspectives, sous la direction de Marc Angenot, Jean Bessière Douwe Fokkema, Eva Kushner. Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.

CAROLINE BAYARD, *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec: From Concretism to Post-Modernism*. Univ. of Toronto, 1989, $45.00.

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS alike will find *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec* to be a valuable resource. Blending textual analysis with an historical account of avant-garde discourse and relating both to philosophies of language debated in Plato's *Kratylus*, Caroline Bayard intelligently explores the last three decades of poetic innovation in Canada and Québec.

Bayard locates Canadian concretism within an international context featuring, for example, Ernest Fenollosa (the first writer to use the term *concrete*, in 1908), Sweden's Oyvind Fahlstrom and Germany's Max Bense. The T.R.G., bill bissett, b.p. nichol and Judith Copithorne come into refreshing focus. Their work is compared to that of Québécois writers engaged in similar experimentation, whether it was called "*la nouvelle poésie*," "*poésie infra*" or perhaps "*le stéréo-poème-audio-visuel*."

Tracing the development of performance art in relation to poetry, Bayard honors the literary legacy of Claude Gauvreau, "the one who opened the door" for experimentation by Raoul Duguay, Paul Chamberlain and others, and who thus helped to create a more receptive climate for poetry in Québec than that which existed in English Canada. In the heady days of Expo 67, experimental poets in Québec joined forces with musicians, film makers, painters and other artists to produce mixed media events which enjoyed mass exposure.

> While developments in Toronto and Vancouver almost exclusively reflected the activities of marginalized groups, their Montreal counterparts during the 1960s were not only well entrenched within their own intellectual culture but were also apt to be the ones who articulated its expectations, goals and contradictions.

The discussion of deconstructionism is less satisfying, and the framework linking Plato, post-modernity and concretism is unable to account fully for the feminist writing of Nicole Brossard, Lola Lemire Tostevin, or Daphne Marlatt, although Bayard's comments about these writers are intriguing. Nonetheless, *The New Poetics in Canada and Quebec* makes a real contribution to our understanding of the Canadian and Québécois avant-garde.

The bibliography (35 pp) is an excellent resource, but there are errors; for example, Marlatt's second book of poetry is called *leaf leaf/s*, not *Leaf Is*. It is also inconveniently divided into genres, a curious irony considering the theoretical weakening of genre which the book documents. The strengths and weaknesses of this book seem to arise equally from its encyclopedic character. The enormous amount of information brought into perspective enables novel comparisons; however, at times one feels that the book covers too much ground. This study of the avant-garde is methodologically conservative in that it is a literary history, dependent on one individual's knowledge and focus. As Eva Kushner points out in *Théorie littéraire*, this problem is not that of one author but is symptomatic of the epistemological fragility of the literary institution as a whole.

Théorie littéraire is a collection of essays addressing and aiming to synthesize international debate on the problems of contemporary literary theory. A project of The International Comparative Literature Association, the book was first envisioned as a study of literary theory considered from communication theory as well as literary perspectives. Two related 1982 colloquia of the I.C.L.A. engendered broad debate which is reflected in the quality of these essays. Twenty-one authors from eleven countries collaborate.

The book is in four sections, each of which pursues a specific dialectic: 1/ Identification et identités du fait littéraire; 2/ Le système littéraire; 3/ Texte et communication littéraire; 4/ Voies et moyens de la critique. The first section reviews classical modes of identifying literarity. Eleazar Meletinsky's "Sociétés, cultures et fait littéraire" (revised by Jean Bessière) is cross-cultural; subsequent articles review theoretical and practical aspects of literarity (Jonathan Culler, Régine Robin), especially within the context of comparative literature where the problematic of universality and comparability is critically posed (Pierre Laurette, Hans-George Ruprecht).

The second section considers literary systems and their theorization, for example, that of genre (Michel Glowiński) or literary history. Theatre Science is re-evaluated (Patrice Pavis); the sociology of literature is scrutinized (Edmond Cros), and translation and intercultural studies are reviewed (José Lambert, Earl Miner). Outstanding in this section is Eva Kushner's "Articulation historique de la littérature." Taking as her starting point the epistemological vacillation within literary studies, she analyzes the nature of literary knowledge in its rapport with the crisis within literary history — a domain which, she argues, has occupied a paradigmatic place within *Literaturwissenschaft*.

The third section focuses on textual production: the forces which determine it and the communication play which surrounds it. Mihàly Szegedy-Masàk critiques the structuralist hypothesis that the literary can be identified linguistically, affirming, however, that semiotics contributes to our understanding of the liter-

ary text as structure and construction. He interrogates the rules governing textual construction, considering them as figurative tropes and conventions. Other contributions consider rhetoric and textual production (Aron Kibédi Varga), the incidence of the subject in literary discourse (Wladimir Krysinski) and literary reception (Elrud Ibsch).

The fourth and final section takes up the problematic of interpretation from a double perspective: how do we interpret the literary? what does it offer for interpretation? Interpretation itself is reexamined (Mario Valdés), as is literary evalution (Jochen Schulte-Sasse) and the question of representation (Jean Bessière).

The final essay of the collection foregrounds epistemological questions in a contemporary perspective (Douwe Fokkema). Fokkema points out that the problematic of literary interpretation has intensified, rather than diminished, since the appearance of Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* in 1967. The displacement of objectivity and general authority in favour of the analysis of particular texts in specific contexts has not resulted in consensus. We have learned instead to distinguish between degrees of certitude and to seek to discover the rules by which any particular proposition can be considered correct. Thus, Fokkema argues that if the rules governing an argument are not put into question, we consider the argument to be ideological; I would say, naive. Perhaps, as Régine Robin proposes in her contribution, the explosion of the discrete literary object, brought about by technology, mass culture, women's writing, and the third world critique of ethnocentrism, is a symptom of a new imaginary — "numérique, ironique, ludique et kitschisé" (46) — which has simply overtaken our former ways of knowing.

SUSAN KNUTSON

MIDDLE-EASTERN VOICES

MARWAN HASSAN, *The Confusion of Stones: Two Novellas*. Cormorant, n.p.

JOHN MIKHAIL ASFOUR, ed. & tr., *When the Words Burn: An Anthology of Modern Arabic Poetry: 1945-1987*. Cormorant, n.p.

MARWAN HASSAN'S TWO NOVELLAS mark a new chapter in the Canadian volume of immigration. They chronicle the Manichaean world of Canadians of Lebanese origin: the heroes are torn between their emotional and spiritual attachment to the soil of Southern Lebanon and the compulsions of survival and adjustment in the new Canadian terrain. Juxtaposing images of folkloric Islamic motifs, using flashbacks, and deploying dream-with-dream, Hassan registers his characters' sense of nostalgia and dislocation. In the first novella, "The Confusion of Stones," he dramatizes vividly violent scenes of chaos and carnage created by constant Israeli bombing of the South. Despite its angry, tortured tone, the narrative succeeds in engaging its reader in the tribulations of a destitute Lebanese peasant victimized by the almightly bombers. Out of this suffering, Canada looms as a sanctuary. However, getting there is not easy for the hero, Falah Azlam, especially when he has his right hand handicapped and deformed by bombing; his cynical cousin explains to him the shenanigans of immigration officialdom: "With all the newspapers in Canada telling bad news about the Muslims, you would not have a chance. . . . A refugee in your own country, nobody [sic] wants you."

Landing eventually in Canada brings, ironically, numerous disappointments: Azlam finds that his sponsoring uncle has devolved from a generous, genial gentleman to a dour, penny-pinching hack, who, bitter and disillusioned, has lost faith in

all. Anxious to establish his roots, the hero finds the terrain unwelcoming, the culture cold emotionally, and the people indifferent: stones (recurrently deployed in the narrative) become apt metaphors. Happily, the novella ends with daffodils of hope.

This neat suggestive conclusion to Hassan's first novella is not to be found in the confusing ending of his second one "Intelligence." The hero, Salah Abourezk, a physician who makes the reverse journey back to the South of Lebanon to reconnect with relatives and who survives an intimidating interrogation by two C.I.A.-trained operatives, finds himself on his return to Canada accused of drug-trafficking by a foul-mouthed, sexist narcotics officer. Such a closure seems more contrived than convincing; the author's intent is to draw a parallel between the aggressiveness of intelligence officers in Lebanon and the vulgarity of the Canadian drug officer. Callous and corrupt, power abusers everywhere are all alike, so suggests Hassan. This corruption creates and causes deformity, recurrently symbolized as physical, moral or political: a deformed hand microcosms a country dismembered by a civil war; a society cheapened by an acquisitive drive runs the risk of moral bankruptcy.

When the Words Burn is a solid scholarly work of translation, prefaced by a thorough 60-page introduction covering over forty years of progress in modern Arabic poetry. John Mikhail Asfour anthologizes major, representative works by thirty-five Arab poets: his accomplishment manifests patience, dedication and a clear control of the task undertaken. His introduction is quite informative, if at times a bit too technical, and his synoptic introduction to the individual poets most useful. Above all, I find the translations quite sensitively rendered, preserving (as much as translations do) the poets' distinctive voices. Since Asfour uses the term "modernism" quite often with reference to the innovations in modern and contemporary Arabic poetry, and given the definition debates that this term engenders, I only wish that he has provided his readers in English with illuminating signifiers to compare and distinguish the Arabic "modernism" in poetry from the European "modernism/s" that variably cover numerous genres.

More importantly, the section on Palestinian resistance poetry is definitely a valuable service to Canadian readers: indeed, touching and engaging is the poetry that expresses an attachment to a homeland and an aching for justice. In fact, the indelible conclusion one derives from an anthology with such a striking title is that poetry and politics are inextricably intertwined in the Arab world: innovation in poetry stems from the spirit to dismantle rigid, restrictive, albeit venerated, forms of classical poetry; this rebelliousness matches the poet's conscious commitment to espouse and express social causes. Is it any wonder, then, that the poets who resist or refuse being eulogizing lackeys for tyrants face starvation, jail, torture, or exile? A few have actually been assassinated, and one, the Lebanese Khalil Hawi, committed suicide two days after the Israeli invasion of his country.

If I were to criticize the format of these two otherwise elegantly-designed books, I would certainly mention the poor editing: granted that the two books contain numerous Arabic words, yet the large number of typographical and grammatical errors are too many to be ignored. (The one recurrent irritant is the inconsistent spelling switch between "Moslem" and "Muslim"; this is a common colonial confusion: the correct spelling is the latter.) Despite these eyesores, I find it quite insightful and inspiring to see Cormorant Books, still a fledgling Canadian concern, undertake the publication of these two books. I sincerely hope that it shall con-

tinue launching similar projects: new voices, expressing the depth and diversity of the Canadian family, are always eager to be heard.

AMIN MALAK

COMPLEX YET CLOSED

MARY DALTON, *The Time of Icicles*. Breakwater, $19.95.

SHEILA MARTINDALE, *No Greater Love*. Moonstone, $7.95.

PATRICK LANE, *Winter*. Coteau, $21.95.

A NEWFOUNDLAND POET, Mary Dalton makes extensive use of traditional verse forms as derived from song in her first book. Ballads, villanelles and nursery rhymes inform her lyrics which are themselves often concerned with music — jazz, blues, rags and reels, as well as the music of local speech. A puzzled student's "i sweated bugjuice" is "a burst of himself — / words free from the page," and has an authenticity for Dalton that the ponderous lines of the creative writing professor in "Larry's Nightmare" do not. This poem shows a direct confrontation between the literary establishment and the marginalized avatars of the authentic who screech at the professor: "poetry / Is of presence, you are a huge absence, you wear the colour of void." Privileging dialect and the local, Dalton's is a cultural record composed of individual songs — of people, places and events. Even the everyday rhythms of a jackhammer or an egotist's ranting create syncopation in this world. And so *Icicles* aspires to exceed its frame and be more than the sum of its parts, many of which are rather trite poems. In "he calls me his Hecate," the speaker is in control of her words; "she" understands, whereas "he" is at their mercy. So, in accepting his label for her she yet circumscribes it: "i accept the frame" without being penned (in) by it. In this as in other of Dalton's poems a refrain acts as a frame, a necessary but not necessarily limiting structure. Unfortunately, this poem among others suffers from the speaker's smugness in a manner common to poetic juvenilia. Another problem with this book is the manifesto-like quality of many of these poems. There is too little argument for her position and too much drumming for it. Where Dalton is not preaching to the converted this sloganeering seems eccentric, perhaps even quaint.

No Greater Love is a trinity of poem sequences corresponding to the Holy Trinity and unified by a redemptive impetus: the book moves from the mythic to the mundane; from an impersonal collage of voices composing an event to a personal narration of one's relatedness in the world. In the first poem sequence, Christ the Son is the absent focus of "Voices," an ambitious piece which, ironically, is powerful due to its failure. The poem reconstructs the Passion from the perspective of some key figures speaking in their own voices, presumably to invigorate the absent Word through their particular, authentic speech. Alert to the artifice of this enterprise, Martindale cleverly gives the final word to the scribe so that the effort is ultimately of a writer to transcend words and redeem the Wor(l)d:

> So
> I've written down
> a lot of what they said
> trying to record
> all that I've heard
> hoping my pen will do justice
> to the phenomenal power
> of their words.

But the voices fail to actualize the presence of the Word, and what the reader is irremediably left with is the failure of words to articulate any power greater than themselves. This desire of language to overcome its own corporeality — sacrificing the body to the cause — is thematized by Martindale in her Passion, but where Christ triumphed "Voices" does

not. One of the reasons is that many voices are indistinct (an exception is the fine portrait of Mary Magdalene, whose inconsistent diction — both elevated and vulgar — is striking and evocative), and generally the idioms and diction vary little from character to character. While the structure suggests a variety of perspectives, the interchangeability of personae shows but a single voice, presumably the scribe's, unable to do justice to any power but her own.

The second section, "Reflections," again employs a biblical frame but the narrative purports to be nothing less than a history of God's activity in our world, taking us "From Chaos into Creation" with the first poem and finishing with the "Second Coming." The "Letters" section, each poem dedicated to a friend of the author's, is even more worldly, celebrating human milestones (marriage, anniversary, coming of age, death) but with an overbearing sentimentality which parodies the gravity of the occasion.

Pat Lane's *Winter* suffers only occasionally from the sentiment of *No Greater Love* and the stridency of *The Time of Icicles*. It is a well crafted poem where the extended metaphors create an atmosphere of desolation. Linebreaks, too, enhance the meaning rather than simply reflecting the syntactic breaks of a prose line; Lane creates through his linebreaks a certainty of absence and a tentative movement onward:

> he wonders at his garden as the wind
> carves it into the shapes
> that do not matter, a kind of chaos,
> perfection
> being the one thing the wind does not know,
> just as ice does not know it is only in the eye
> of a fish
> another form of sky.

But Lane's projection of his own sensibilities onto others, here ice and fish, makes metaphor into pathos, as when the seal hunter thrusts his spear into "the sweet simplicity of their mouths." Further, while discussing the relativity of perspective, the narrator evinces a confidence in his own perception at odds with his observation. Lacking self-awareness here, the narrator's self-reflection is acute elsewhere:

> He sees himself inside a body that resembles
> his own, the forms of himself progressively
> weaker and weaker, each version fading
> into a line of translations
> that are always the same text.

This reflexivity is thematized throughout *Winter*, the form waiting to be filled that is a recurring metaphor and reflects the poem's circular form: a cycle moving to closure. This formal ambiguity (the final lines — "entering / leaving.") amplifies the theme of winter's savage beauty and recurrence indifferent to human loss. The form is drawn neatly by the structure which suggests emptiness at the end of the line and fragmentation in glimpses through the white page/snow. Where Winter is less effective than it could be is in telling the reader what the images mean rather than leaving them ambiguous. *Winter*, despite the appearance of tiny poems on great white pages, is not spare, and when the images are pre-interpreted for the reader it shows us less the image than the poet's sensibility. And that's a general flaw with these volumes: the poem is used to convey the poet's message and need, rather than enabling the reader to play with an open text and interpret for herself.

SUSAN MACFARLANE

ORDINARY SIGNIFIERS

MARLENE COOKSHAW, *The Whole Elephant.* Brick Books, $9.95.

GEORGE LAKOFF AND MARK TURNER, *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor.* University of Chicago Press, $11.95.

FLORENCE VALE, *Seven Hills.* Chartres Books, $15.00.

SINCE I READ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* about five years ago, I have often used its argument and examples in undergraduate classes to explain the highly difficult concept that, contrary to common sense, we not only use metaphors, metaphors also use us. Lakoff's recent book, written with Mark Turner, will be equally useful to students of language, poetry, and philosophy because it argues that "[t]o study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture":

> To understand poetic metaphor, one must understand conventional metaphor. To do so is to discover that one has a worldview, that one's imagination is constrained, and that metaphor plays an enormous role in shaping one's everyday understanding of everyday events . . .
>
> We cannot have an appreciation of how metaphorical thought functions either in literature or in our lives without a rudimentary knowledge of what metaphor is and how it works.

More Than Cool Reason articulates clearly, concisely, and with numerous examples, the implications of such common and powerful poetic metaphors as life is a journey, death is departure, time is a thief, reason is cool (along with a whole range of others) for what we take for granted about ourselves and the world, for our common sense.

As Derrida does, Lakoff and Turner note that the Western tradition has effaced the metaphorical nature of philosophical language, has "excluded metaphor from the domain of reason," and has "thereby relegated poetry and art to the periphery of intellectual life." Their accessible and yet sophisticated argument is that what we call "ordinary" language takes its metaphors for granted: "[poets] can appeal to the ordinary metaphors we live by in order to take us beyond them, to make us more insightful than we would be if we thought only in standard ways."

Unfortunately, Florence Vale's *Seven Hills* and Marlene Cookshaw's *The Whole Elephant*, which I read alongside Lakoff and Turner's book, seem unaware of the power of either metaphor or the ordinary, not to mention the extraordinary ideological implications of the "ordinary metaphors we live by."

Bruce Pirie calls Florence Vale's *Seven Hills* "[a] children's book for adults." Through its simple language and everyday reference, the poems might have opened up, as the best children's books and poems do, multiple significations for the rereading and/or resisting reader. The poems do, through puns and unusual juxtapositions, make it possible for us to notice the metaphors we most take for granted by giving us (usually only one) other meaning for common words. Because the signification is still limited, however, they remain banal and uninteresting for the adult reader: "If you were watching a nude juggler . . . / it would be difficult to keep your eye on the balls." Similarly, there are linguistically playful poems (my three-year-old daughter giggles at most of them):

> Fee fie fo fum
> Thee thou though thumb
> See sow sew sum
> Bee stung my bum.

But they do not remain intellectually playful or interesting — as do bp Nichol's poems, for example — for the adult reader.

The front cover and frontispiece — watercolours also by Florence Vale — display the constructedness of the ordinary in ways the poems do not. In "Girl in Blue Chair," the frontispiece, two sides of what we initially assume represents an ordinary open curtain are painted in two different colours and patterns. The painting challenges common sense again in a third panel of colour painted in blue between the other two. There is no outside world to be seen through this window. All we have is blue paint.

Marlene Cookshaw's *The Whole Elephant* is unsatisfying in another way. Like many contemporary women writers, Cookshaw takes as her subject women's experiences, what Bronwen Wallace calls "the countless gritty details / of an ordinary woman's life." Consider the opening of "Cupboards," for example,

> On the kitchen table branches of plum and apple blossom from the 200-year-old pitcher retrieved last summer from my mother's dusty shelves. The annual visit become on my part a basement search for clues to a distrust of mirror and telephone.

The word "blossom" functions here in much the same way "balls" did in the Vale poem. Here the enjambement allows for two readings instead of one. But the play of meaning stops there.

Rather than try to articulate the implications of the ordinary, why or whether, for example, the word "patchwork" is, as the narrator in "Flying Home from the Prairies" says, "an overused / but irreplaceably accurate word for the fine farms / stitched by fences," these poems acknowledge representation and metaphor only in obvious signifiers (the images and words evoked in "mirror and telephone" in the lines cited above), not in ordinary things like pitchers and basements. Cookshaw's ordinary details, like Vale's linguistic play, remain banal:

> When I've finished *The T E Lawrence Poems* and the last spiral of sugared orange peel from the paisley tin, M caresses me till the sand drifts in the corners of my eyes Where are you, he asks.

What is the point? I ask. Not even the overt (mixed) metaphors — "till the sand drifts in the corners of my eyes" — work very well. Moreover, there is no challenge *to* or *of* the ordinary that one finds in Wallace or Atwood or Mouré.

Lakoff and Turner's *Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* constructs an extremely powerful and accessible argument about the effects of metaphor on the "ordinary ways we think." But Cookshaw's and Vale's poems do not, as Lakoff and Turner say poetry can, "explore the consequences of our beliefs, challenge the ways we think, and criticize our ideologies." Vale's hills and Cookshaw's elephant do their best to remain ordinary (unexamined) signifiers.

SUSAN RUDY DORSCHT

PERSPECTIVAL ARRANGEMENTS

ROSMARIN HEIDENREICH, *The Postwar Novel in Canada: Narrative Patterns and Reader Response*. Wilfrid Laurier. $29.95.

THE QUESTION WHETHER "Canadian Literature" can be both French and English is at present not just of academic interest. Rosmarin Heidenreich is a critic who takes a clear comparative stand in this issue: her study belongs to "Comparative Canadian Studies." It reads English and Québécois novels side by side and it sees no need to translate passages from the French. This does not mean that the author believes in a literary Canada that transcends the linguistic and cultural differences; on the contrary, her careful contrastive study of the postwar novel inevitably leads to the conclusion that the English Canadian and Québécois

novels differ more than that they resemble each other. Heidenreich is not searching for the elusive "Canadianness' that is for so many critics what "literariness" was for the Russian formalists, but she does not dodge the issue either: she analyzes its emergence in the thematic criticism of Canadian literature and its reversal and subsumption by more recent postmodernist critics such as Robert Kroetsch.

The book's structure is straightforward: after a characteristically precise and articulate "Foreword" by Linda Hutcheon, the reader is presented with an introduction in which the theoretical parameters of the study are introduced. Less convincing is the division of the rest of the book into three parts of which the second and the third offer a short introduction (on indeterminacy and allusion), and two chapters with a focused reading of a novel each. The first part has an introductory chapter on perspectival structures and norm repertoires which could easily have been subsumed in the general introduction, followed by two chapters which follow the same pattern as parts II and III. The author herself may have been less than happy with these short introductory chapters because the reference notes to these sections follow Chapter One in each part. The "Afterword" draws the inevitable conclusion from the findings in the preceding chapters: "If one were to postulate an emerging literary tradition, it is not likely that it would be one common to the two socio-political groups representing English and French Canada."

If it is possible to claim that the criticism of CanLit has shifted from a thematic criticism in the sixties and seventies to a theoretical and postmodernist aproach in the eighties, *The Postwar Novel in Canada* represents another alternative. Although the author writes in a continuous dialogue with critics of both persuasions, her theoretical allegiances, as the subtitle of her book testifies, lie in the work of the Constance School, most prominently Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader* and *The Act of Reading*. For the discussion of the novels of the forties and fifties, his typology of perspectival arrangements is useful and his concept of indeterminacy is central in Heidenreich's reading of the more recent works. With its emphasis on the growing role of the reader in Canadian fiction, the book offers an "inventory of the communicative strategies" in the modern Canadian novel which is rooted in a generic approach to literature. Heidenreich shows how these developments occur within a specific set of literary conventions, but at no time are we allowed to lose sight of the historical conditions in which these texts were produced and in which they were meant to function.

The most powerful readings are undoubtedly those of Hubert Aquin's *Trou de mémoire* and *Prochain épisode*: in their sensitivity to the diversity of the paths the reader is forced to follow only to be frustrated even more. These chapters belong to the best of what has been written on Aquin. The chapters on the English Canadian novels are generally less satisfying, maybe because the novels lend themselves less to this type of approach. Another reason may be that Heidenreich has decided not to include "high postmodernist" novels by Kroetsch, Hodgins or Findley, which is surprising in a book that seems to lead so unavoidably to their type of work.

Another weakness of the book is a direct result of its Canadian focus; it would have been helpful, especially for the earlier periods, to have had more of a sense of the changes in the international (English, French, American) genre conventions into which these novels were introduced and to which they react. The reading of Klein's *The Second Scroll*, and especially the discussion of the book's Joycean intertext, suffers from this disregard. When Joyce's juxtaposition of epic myth and

modern reality is compared to Klein's use of the Bible, it is never made explicit which Joyce we are discussing, although the comment that Stuart Gilbert's *James Joyce's "Ulysses"* is indispensable to the student of James Joyce, seems to suggest that Heidenreich is talking about the Joyce of the late fifties and not the author as he is read today.

But these are mere trifles: *The Postwar Novel in Canada* is an important study and a welcome alternative to the thematic and postmodernist approaches which have dominated the field for so long.

GEERT LERNOUT

BACK TO AFRICA

LEON WHITESON, *White Snake*. Mocaic Press, $12.95.

BILL SCHERMBRUCKER, *Mimosa*. Talonbooks, $12.95.

RETURNING TO SOUTHERN AFRICA after an absence in North America of several years, I am sent two books for review which focus on exactly this kind of return. *White Snake*, by Leon Whiteson, narrates the visit of a successful architect from the U.S. to his native Zimbabwe — then Rhodesia — while *Mimosa*, by Bill Schermbrucker, charts the research undertaken by the author, now a Canadian, towards a biography of his mother, a South African who lived the later part of her life in Kenya.

My context reviews the books for me. *White Snake* is hardly, barely readable; I get through it at last by quarrelling constantly in pencil in its margins. It is a badly-crafted, ill-thought-out novel which I could discard as harmless if it did not trivialize what still confront me on my return as profoundly disturbing African problems: problems of loyalty, problems of race, problems of violence.

Whiteson uses the narcissistic first-person method of narration popularized by Ian Fleming and probably begotten originally by Hemingway. The speaker, Paul Kahn, is the main character, and he is a manly man, a man of few words; hence, other characters must be continually reflecting his prowess, especially women. ("I have a clever son"; "You're the best lover I've ever had"; "In this town I'm still known as Paul Kahn's little sister"; and the refrain: "he is his own man.")

Kahn returns to Rhodesia to become a "white terrorist." His motives are obscure: he does not noticeably share the repulsion evidently expected of the reader towards his relatives, a fat white family usually portrayed as gulping down food or abusing their servants. Although Kahn appears to be less of a racist than his family, his attraction towards the "terrorist" leaders whom he meets — one Nkabi and one Nkunzi (Mugabe and Nkomo?) — is hard to account for, since they are usually abusive towards him. The other black characters are merely pathetic, and the novel finally (but unintentionally) supports the belief held by most of its white characters: that a black person is not bright enough to blow up a sensitive piece of technology or to work out the best moment to equalize a couple of cabinet ministers.

These complicated tasks, Kahn, as a representative of the high-tech world beyond Africa, feels himself specially gifted to perform. The disregard of human life and the enjoyment of the *spectacle* of violence for its own sake, smack of a B-movie:

> Flames shot out as the gas tank exploded. A black spume of oil and sand billowed into the air. . . . In the back were three torched corpses. The charge must have exploded just under their seat; their severed and roasted legs were resting on their bloodied heads.

But many B-movies and cheap thrillers are better contrived than this novel. Dependent though the genre is on realism, Whiteson never quite achieves plausibility

either in description or in characterization. It is hard for me to believe that he has ever set foot in Africa. Surely someone who has lived here could never make the mistake of calling kudu "deer" or referring to servants' quarters as the "piccanini kaya" (a slightly jocular term for an outhouse)? More annoying than these inaccuracies is the constant impression I have that not one of the characters — given the situation of each of them — would have spoken the words he or she is reported as uttering. Black English, for example, is extremely unlikely to contain such words as "bulky" or "splendid"; a ten-year-old's utterances would probably exclude the sentence: "That's not a topic for public discussion." The least credible remark is made by a young black man of his grandfather, a *sangoma*: "The old fellow stank of goat's blood and chicken shit."

What depresses me about *White Snake* in the end is not its inherent gaucheness, but my own suspicion, aroused by the rave reviews on the back cover and by the reputability of the publisher, that somebody somewhere is taking this book seriously. Canadians, who are notoriously badly informed on Southern Africa, are nevertheless fascinated by it, even in a novel as obviously second-rate as this one. But there is no excuse for the second-rate: from the shelves of every bookstore in this country I am greeted by scores of new novels in English, most of them by black authors. Even the weakest are redeemed by immediacy and relevance from the stale banalities of *White Snake*. And the best are very interesting indeed. Perhaps some enterprising publisher will one day consider showing to Canadians what a spiritual and cultural renaissance we are at present experiencing.

Mimosa evokes totally different feelings. I find that it reads itself, partly because of Schermbrucker's wonderful ability to recreate atmospheres and settings, some of which are familiar to me. It is the record of a quest, undertaken in a most non-judgemental spirit, to reconstruct a life. The book is suffused with love, and with that peculiar haunting sadness which attaches itself to the idea of the youth of one's parents — like a nostalgia that belongs to someone else. It is not quite a biography in the traditional sense. Schermbrucker's memories of his mother are too shadowy to allow him to build up her personality from them, and yet they intrude on his ability to fictionalize her. However, his unusual narrative technique is a conjuring trick which serves to bring her dramatically to life. The book is written in the second person, addressed directly to "you," the woman who is both protagonist and reader:

> Damn it, Mother! The more I come alive, the more you disappear. As each flesh and blood memory of my own arises in my mind, so you recede into the familiar darkness. Why is that? I can deal with you as a figure before my arrival at awareness much more easily. I can get closer to your feelings as a girl at school in Pretoria in 1924, long before I was born, than I can at the house on Serengeti Avenue. From the time my life begins, yours becomes increasingly frozen behind the enigma of a smile.

Mimosa contains a kind of history of South- and East Africa, including a sincere effort to tap the springs of the present sense of colonial guilt and of the atrocities for which South Africa has now become notorious. Though it is not a book which forces ironies upon the reader, it does not omit the torture and deaths that occur even as it is being written, some of them in the very places where Schermbrucker's mother lived her sheltered and mainly happy life.

Mimosa's profoundly historical vision marks one of its principle differences from, from, and advantages over, *White Snake*. Schermbrucker seems to hold the faith that all events have a thousand mysterious sources in the past, the stronger currents

of which can be accounted for if followed with devoted attention through enough of their windings and permutations. Whiteson springs upon his reader a situation of crisis — the Rhodesian bush war after U.D.I. — without imparting any real understanding of this war in its historical context. He treats his readers much as his character, Kahn, treats women: he leaves them guessing. Schermbrucker, intent on rebuilding the past, will accept no omission, injustice, or untruth except as the symptom of something hidden that can be retrieved. His fine narrative of the Boer War and his relatives' part in it is prefaced by an accusatory enquiry:

> Landdrost Munnik and his son Henry, my own great-grandfather and grandfather, played major roles in that war that profoundly influenced the future course of their country's history. Yet I grew up in another part of Africa knowing nothing about it. . . .
>
> Let me ask you this, Mother: Why was there no copy of your grandfather's *Memoirs* in our house in Kenya? . . .
>
> Let me ask you this: How come there are grandchildren of my grandfather, living cousins of mine, whose names I wouldn't even know but for your sister-in-law's notes that she wrote down for me last year? . . .
>
> Let me ask you, why does my aunt, your sister, even today repeat such a statement as this? "Of course the Munniks never took up arms against the British."

Much of the book is concerned with discovering in detail, in terms of individual people's lives, how and why such lies are perpetuated in the light of facts. Many significent events are dramatised, such as the one in which English schoolboys call out (in direct speech) to Schermbrucker's grandfather, an Afrikaans boy at an English private school: "Hey *jaapie*! Hey you bloody Dutchman!" Though as individual events these must be fictions, they explain, in terms of the minute particulars that make up lived time, how attitudes and personalities are shaped.

Schermbrucker's greatest merit occurs exactly where Whiteson fails most dismally: in the plausible realization of character, dialogue and event. His South African colloquial style is just right: " '*Ag* no Elma, it wasn't a *boomslang*! It was just a little green garter snake.' " Aware, as Whiteson is too, that his actual audience is probably foreign to the landscapes he describes, he is adroit at evoking them: "sugar-bushes, *suikerbossies*, like little olive trees on the brown hillsides."

Although *Mimosa* closes rather abruptly and hence fails to draw itself together very satisfactorily at the end, it is an absorbing and thoughtful book which represents its period and its people with sympathy and credibility. The same cannot be said for *White Snake*.

CATHERINE ANNE ADDISON

TENSIONS

CYRIL DABYDEEN, *Coastland: New and Selected Poems 1973-1987*. Mosaic Press. $12.95.

ROD ANDERSON, *Sky Falling Sunny Tomorrow*. Wolsak and Wynn. $9.00.

MARY MELFI, *A Season in Beware*. Black Moss Press. $9.50.

CYRIL DABYDEEN IS A GUYANESE who came to Canada in 1970 and has published widely. The poems in *Coastland* create interesting juxtapositions, as they deal sometimes with life in Canada, and at other times with life in Guyana. The immigrant who "strives for the albino state" in Canada is also the revenant who feels like a ghostly outsider in his place of birth. In "Sir James Douglas: Father of British Columbia," Dabydeen dramatizes the career of a West Indian of mixed race who managed to become governor of British Columbia and a K.C.B. The brilliant stroke is the sardonic use of Creole dialect to discuss Douglas's multicultural career: "I remember pouring suga' in me tea/In St Mungo's City/Where you wuz educated, thinking — / If you wuz

more Scottish, Sir James,/I'd be less of the tropics." Ironies of tone and circumstance abound in Dabydeen's poems. "Halifax" summons up a glamorous and tragic past: Leif Erickson, Cabot, the Micmacs, Howe. But present day Halifax is a museum — the Citadel, the Historic Properties, the Bluenose — and our fashionably multilingual narrator notes that the Ministry of Education speaks a merely clever language. Ironies are not enough to generate poetry, of course. Dabydeen also has a keen sense of form — these poems are carefully structured. Those not arranged in stanzas still show a careful sense of pacing and balance. Even more noteworthy are the images, which are sharp and often original. Naturally his Guyanese background gives him a store of imagery unfamiliar to most Canadian readers, but he is not a local colourist: the images are not merely descriptive, exotic as they are. They convey strong feelings and often serve as the basis for original metaphors. Dabydeen is truly a poet of the Americas. He writes of the first great Modernist in Spanish tradition, Nicaragua's Ruben Dario, and dedicates one poem to the West Indian poet, Derek Walcott (who has perhaps been an influence). His work shows a strong social conscience. He deals with subjects like Soweto, the sufferings of an Ecuadorean refugee, and the *Komagata Maru* incident, and is never perfunctory or patronizing. Dabydeen's work is a rich accession to Canadian literature, and this superbly designed book deserves a wide readership.

Rod Anderson has real talent, but his book is a little premature. At the very least it should have been thoroughly pruned before publication. He tends to be sentimental in his serious work, as in the poems about children. He is at his best when he is most whimsical, playing with language and concepts, as in "Syntactics," a poem about transitive verbs, or TTTT, a poem about nails in which every letter "T" is capitalized. He deals now and then with the findings of science ("Song of the Blue-Green Bacterium") in a way that evokes Al Purdy. Perhaps the most interesting and witty poem in the collection is "Twenty Hypotheses," which muses on Einstein's assertion that "What I'm really interested in is whether God could have made the universe in a different way." Various elegant and concise speculations about the universe, God and Einstein are played off against each other. Near the end of the book, Anderson's playfulness results in some contrived fantasy poems that quickly become tedious. In "At First They Thought," for example, a man begins to sink into the earth, and after various adventures he and his family adapt to the situation. Anderson is not Kafka, and the poem comes off as awkward. But Anderson does have wit and imagination: a poet to watch for when his work becomes more consistent.

Mary Melfi's poetry is slack. The line breaks tend to be arbitrary, the themes rarely come into focus. There are occasional sparks of epigrammatic wit and sometimes a lyric coheres, like the entertaining ones on spring. But the poems are self-conscious and shot through with mannerisms like parentheses, sometimes within single words, which give them a contemporary air, but there is no real invention, as Pound would say, just some postmodern gestures. It would be unfair to be negative without letting the poet speak for herself. The poem "(Rotten) Apples" is representative:

> The average flower cannot fail
> Its destiny, a function of its lack of will or ego
> Its obedience, made-to-order
> But you and I prepare the way for our downfall
> by speculating (What can I be?)
> Failure, part and parcel of our family tree
> If God has a head on its shoulders
> wouldn't it be nice if it were a bouquet of flowers
> (unable to ....., and .....)?

This poem goes through the motions of thinking without engaging real ideas, although it does have a tightness which is lacking in much of Melfi's work. The longer poems ramble on without capturing any important feelings or thoughts. It would be instructive to read Sylvia Plath's powerful, searching "Tulips" along with Melfi's glib poem on the same flower, "A Hostess." The casualness and archness of Melfi's poem is more evidence — as if we needed it — that postmodern conventions make it remarkably easy to write something that looks like a poem because the mannerisms are so familiar. After drifting through various thoughts about tulips, Melfi's "A Hostess" ends with a parody of an epiphany: "Oh dear (The cookies are ready) / something majestic is bound to take place." If poetry can no longer render the sublime, it can still offer more than cookies.

BERT ALMON

CONTINUING ABUNDANCE

DORIS HILLIS, ed., *Plainspeaking: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers*. Coteau Books, 1988. $13.95 pa.

GEOFFREY URSELL, ed., *Sky High: Stories from Saskatchewan*. Coteau Books. $5.95 pa.

Sky High: Stories from Saskatchewan is the fourth collection of prairie fiction published by Coteau Books. "These are dry times on the Prairies, the driest for 100 years," editor Geoffrey Ursell informs us in his introduction. "It's a desperate time for farming. But there is no drought of words; here the climate is more of a literary rain forest." In the rain-forest metaphor, Ursell perceives an abundance in Saskatchewan writing. But this is a cultivated rather than a wild abundance. The Saskatchewan Writers Guild, now in its twentieth year, and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, in its fortieth year, have been significant forces supporting writers in their work. Publishers such as Thistledown, Thunder Creek, NeWest, Wood Mountain and Coteau — along with the Fort San Writers Colony and the city of Regina — have nourished the writing climate.

The collection of twenty-four stories opens with Rick Hillis' "Blue," which tells about a woman taking on a non-traditional job in a desperate struggle to make a living. Hillis' piece ends at a dance hall with uneasy partners facing an uncertain future. The tone of uncertainty struck in Hillis' story resonates in Wilma Riley's "The Girl in Rose Brocade," where a group of university students interested in history decide to re-enact the Victorian era by duplicating customs of dress, food, and conversation. In spite of their efforts at recapturing the past, the present is always intruding: "But who needs historians now?" Francine, the narrator, asks. "Aren't our leaders making plans to blast human history off the face of the earth?" The young group's attempts to establish a vital connection with the past is sabotaged when one of their participants mysteriously disappears.

Humour, satire and playfulness are well represented with Dave Margoshes' comical tall-tale "Uncle Tom Bragg Comes to the MD of Rocky View," Pat Krause's "Star Bright," Robert Currie's "How I Became a Poet," Don Kerr's "Dead Soldiers," William Robertson's "Toplady," Lois Simmie's "Sweetie Pie" and Steven Smith's "painter." The destructive effects of racial and sexual stereotyping are evident in Regina Haensel's "Love Letters" and Ven Begamudre's "Word Games," while variations on the subject of love and care for fellow human beings in beginning relationships, and in ones that have run their course, are developed in McCrosky's "A Time for Us Someday There'll Be,"

Wesseler's "The Gift," Niskala's "Rainbow Show," McDonald's "my father in another city," Horne's "Exposure," Brewster's "Visit of Condolence" and Macfarlane's "John and Mac."

Many of the stories rely on the power of the mind and dreams to make connections with an elusive reality. Barbara Sapergia's "Night Riders" is a miraculous bringing together of an African woman who is a housekeeper for a white Madam in South Africa with Kate, a middle-class white woman. In Sharon Butala's "Babette," Ginny ministers to two dying women — her mother who is slipping pleasantly into death accompanied by marvelous dreams and her mother-in-law, Babette, who in resisting the onset of her death from cancer suffers nightmares of dark wells and visitations from her diseased husband and friends. In order to survive the cold implosion of a heavy mortality, Ginny clings to erotic fantasies of an imagined lover who keeps her body warm and attached to life.

Of the other stories Ursell includes in this collection by new writers such as Sara McDonald, Terry Jordan, Judy McCrosky, Marlis Wessler, and Marina Endicott, my favourite is Endicott's "The Orphan Boy." Primarily a playwright and actor, Endicott creates vivid, dramatic encounters between characters. She fuses the myth of Ariadne and the young Bacchus with a contemporary view of split personality and a woman's mental breakdown. The abused Ariadne of the legend becomes the misguided and perhaps — though we are never sure — neglected wife and mother Ariadne Keller, who suffers from lost youth and lost opportunity. "The Orphan Boy" has echoes of fairy-tale and childhood reminisence, about the consciousness of growing up. It reads well once and even twice. I am looking forward to reading more by this new voice in fiction.

A good companion volume to *Sky High* is Doris Hillis' *Plainspeaking: Interviews with Saskatchewan Writers.* Five of the writers interviewed are also included in Ursell's anthology: Butala, Simmie, Sapergia, Brewster and Barclay. However, by repeating essentially the same formula used in her 1985 collection of interviews, *Voices & Visions*, Hillis begins to sound wooden and overprepared. Since she is careful to include a biographical abstract of each writer preceding the respective interview, it seems wasted to probe for similar information by asking how family and location influenced the writer's work.

Hillis listens not only to writers but also to critics. When *Voices & Visions* was criticized for not including any Native or Metis writers, Doris Hillis made an effort to correct the oversight. In this newest collection, she includes a Metis woman, Maria Campbell. And as if to withdraw completely from taking over and guiding what Campbell has to say, the interview with the author of the autobiographical *Halfbreed* (who has also worked in film and theatre), has less of Doris Hillis than any other interview in the book.

I am impressed by the range of literature covered by the writers. Those whose work consists primarily of poetry include Mick Burrs, Gary Hyland, Elizabeth Brewster and Andrew Suknaski. The playwrights are also well represented by Geoffrey Ursell, Rex Deverall and Barbara Sapergia. The fiction and novel category includes Sharon Butala, Byrna Barclay, David Carpenter and Lois Simmie, while an interview with Joan Givner focuses on her interest and achievements in writing biography.

It is to Doris Hillis' credit that in spite of her sometimes rigid focus, she draws from her subjects an awareness of critical issues that might be surprising to those who consider Saskatchewan writing marginal. Add to this quality an up to date bibliography of each writer's work, and you have a handy and informative intro-

duction to the variety of writing and writers of the Prairies

ELAINE AUERBACH

PARENTS & CHILDREN

MARTHA BROOKS, *Paradise Café and other stories*, Saskatoon, Thistledown Press, $12.95.

J. J. STEINFELD, *Forms of Captivity and Escape*, Saskatoon, Thistledown Press, $14.95.

THE TITLE AND THE COVER of Martha Brooks' book could be misleading: the hazy shot of two adolescents under a pink neon sign "Paradise Café" might lead one to expect a bowdlerised version of *The Last Picture Show*, or a Canadian remake of the film *American Graffiti*. Fortunately, this selection of short stories strikes an original note: the topic is not nostalgia for lost innocence and unspoilt small towns. Neither is the collection, as is often the case, a kind of fragmented biography, centered on the maturing of one character. The protagonists are girls or boys of various origins, involved in immediate experience — the stories are often in the present. Most of the children are around fourteen, a moment in time when they can look back on the comforting coherence of their childhood world and begin to relate to outside realities. Some stories establish parallels between the difficult loves of teenagers and grownups: adult couples are no longer allegorical figures but just as clumsy and vulnerable as their offsprings, who relish the discovery: "As if a parent, for pete's sake, isn't supposed to have feelings like the rest of us mortals."

The stories diverge from the initiation pattern in that the moment of "epiphany" does not imply immediate change. The adolescent often delays facing the full implications of his new knowledge: the small town beauty is no Lauren Bacall, the young intern has not fallen for the ward aide, the local "King of the Roller Rink" is bound to chase classier girls from the city — yet it is some help to keep to one's dream regardless. The young people here manage both to develop a no-nonsense approach and to protect romantic fantasies, maybe as a last privilege from childhood. In the dialogues and first person narratives, Martha Brooks has managed to render the specific voice of the early teens, without being patronising.

Much more complex are the effects produced by the disturbing collection *Forms of Captivity and Escape*. The fifteen stories present many dreamers — a conjurer, rebellious children, an actor, writers — all suffering from more or less severe delusions: a magician who knew Bosch and Houdini transforms money into elephant turds for a TV show, a Jewish man, in "Dancing at the Club Holocaust," goes regularly (or believes he does, or says he does) to New York to watch the perverted rites of a Nazi Night Club, an actor who plays the part of Ida Solomon, his dead mother, endorses her identity . . . These various tales can be best understood by focusing on a recurrent motif: the code number tattoed on the arms of those who survived captivity at Auschwitz or Mathausen and who "escaped" to modern Canada, an escape which is an illusion as something is dead in such survivors. They are not really here, they die or commit suicide; one of them is "the Garbage man" . . . But the focus of these stories is not on that generation — that of the writer's parents — but on their son, the son who invents a tattoo for his own arm and dreams his own forms of captivity and escape.

All the characters, variations on the figure of the son, are caught in a double bind: they refuse the "imprisoned existence" of comfort or success, the social adaptation proposed by psychiatrists, because they hate "forgetters." The actor who impersonates Ida Solomon feels bound to achieve this dangerous imper-

sonation, because otherwise his mother would die again. Writers, conjurers, psychotic heroes try to inhabit in fiction a world of suffering which is not theirs, a doomed attempt to be Elie Wiesel by proxy. They live at once in Montreal 1985 and Berlin 1940, like their mother: "Even watching me in Dubuque / she / was still in Poland." But this deliberate dreaming is repeatedly shown as a failure. The imaginings of the insane hero who refuses trite present reality to keep memory alive are made of second hand fantasies from movies, and the fascination with Nazi cruelties is in a way morbid.

But whatever their strategies in exposing the present boring reality, these heroes get nowhere. Even worse, their righteousness is shown as ineffectual, and smug, their proxy suffering is never more than a pastiche, their delectable humiliation mere posturing. Such heroes are not tragic, not even pathetic, even irritating in their self-pity and complacent clichés. All the same, the overall effect of this collection is disturbing and tragic. This is baroque art, grotesque and stark; the burlesque and the tragic are interwoven in the vein of G. Grass, H. Böll, and the writing here is most successful in the most improbable of these nightmarish dreams.

JACQUELINE BARDOLPH

(HOW TRUE)

PAULINE J. GREENHILL, *True Poetry: Traditional and Popular Verse in Ontario*. McGill-Queen's, $29.95.

BRIAN TREHEARNE, *Aestheticism and the Canadian Modernists: Aspects of a Poetic Influence*. McGill-Queen's University, $34.95.

ONE OF THE BOOKS under review deals with what must be the worst verse ever published in this country; the other, with some of the best. Pauline Greenhill's purpose in studying traditional and popular verse in Ontario is principally (but not entirely) "sociocultural." Folk poetry opens, one would assume, a fascinating window on the psyche of rural and small town Ontario. Brian Trehearne's purpose is a more traditionally literary critical one, the assembling of an argument on the aesthetic and aestheticist foundations of the first generation of Canadian modernists.

Professor Greenhill's project at first glance seems precisely the sort of study of primary documents from the popular culture that might tell us something about the *mentalité* of the Ontario communities she studies. In fact, the cultural study she might have done *needs* doing, now more than ever. But, unfortunately, she hasn't done it.

The problem? She has misconceived her task, by misconceiving the nature of the doggerel she studies. It is simply not worth approaching and defending it as art. So she wastes a good deal of her time mimicking a kind of semi-structuralist and aesthetic close reading of poetry so artless that it collapses under the weight of her imaginary critical apparatus. For some reason she feels she must defend its value on aesthetic grounds: "Apart from its sociocultural significance, vernacular poetry is a valuable example of the prodigious creativity that human beings display in their every day lives." Here's an

example of a prodigiously gifted poet from Dover, Ontario

> There's lots of things we just can't do
> So she does it alone

So far so clumsy, but at least there's a situation here with possibilities. What is this mysterious thing she does alone?

> Like when she does the dishes while
> I'm talking on the phone.

Greenhill's comment? The poet here "uses demonstrative rhetoric" in praising her mother. And this with a straight face? The poem goes on to reveal that the father instead of going out that night, stays home, embraces his hard working spouse, and "resolves to lead a more virtuous life." My lord, this wouldn't even pass muster in 1881, let alone in 1981 when it was published. But as a way of understanding why rural Ontarians need to see life, domestic and communal, generally through rose-coloured glasses, or in certain clearly defined political and social (including gender) stereotypes, then the material Greenhill has accumulated might be of some use.

Instead Greenhill's study seems an apologia for small town Ontario life and is itself part of that long tradition of small town insularity in which conflicts are either hidden away (if they are really nasty) or transposed to the level of polite, meaningless words if they are part of the acceptable system of topics that polite people are permitted to disagree about (such as, whether Christmas is too commercial nowadays — Greenhill devotes quite a few pages to that burning issue.) Perhaps a quick re-reading of Stephen Leacock or Alice Munro on the life of small Ontario towns might help with the rose-coloured glasses.

What is needed is a comparison of small town Ontario as imaginatively invented by vernacular poets and the sociopolitical actualities of these communities. How does vernacular poetry, in its own small way, contribute to maintaining the ideological facade of a rural culture that is threatened, internally, by the breakdown of traditional communal and domestic patterns and, externally, by economic and political forces perceived as frightening intrusions into communities that like to imagine themselves untroubled Edens?

One can hardly believe that a book in which Kenneth Burke and Mikhail Bakhtin are quoted approvingly, in which Michel Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss are listed in the Bibliography, could be so thin in examining the important issues it raises, say, of the relation of certain kinds of popular discourse to power and, especially, to rural powerlessness, or, of what role the figure of the hero (Terry Fox in this case), and of the male hero in particular, plays in the making and maintaining of the imaginary institution of patriarchal small town society.

We turn from this to Professor Trehearne's book with some relief. At least he knows what he is doing and why he is doing it. The book looks at the influence of English aestheticism on the first Canadian modernists from Raymond Knister and W. W. E. Ross to John Glassco and A. J. M. Smith. His book is most valuable in making available much new research in the unpublished writings of the poets under scrutiny. Trehearne's study adds an important chapter to the story of the making of modernism and the modernist canon in Canada.

The poetry we associate with these poets is work they themselves have chosen, edited, and presented to their readers. Trehearne proposes some revisions to the received canon and they are worth taking seriously. For example, F. R. Scott's early "decadent" verse in the "Brian Tuke" poems will change our notion of Scott's early development. Seeing Scott in the context of Oxford aestheticism in the 1920s (the Harold Acton period, wittily

satirized by Evelyn Waugh as Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead Revisited*) also gives us a suggestive picture of a dandyish Scott that has never fully emerged before. There are plenty of other insights, revelations, and revisions of the poets Trehearne discusses. His research in the writings, published and unpublished, his investigations of context, and his usually sensitive readings of their work contribute much to the continuing redefinition of early modernism in Canada.

However, Trehearne's book has a few shortcomings. First, he could use a more ruthless editor. Trehearne's prose style runs to the prolix: the long windup to some of his sentences, "I for one cannot help feeling that . . ." makes one edgy after a while. Also, his notions of literary modernism are hopelessly out of date. It has been a long time since one has heard Morse Peckham's views cited as the last word on the development of the modernist sensibility. And for that matter what is one to make of Jacques Barzun, whose *The Use and Abuse of Art* (1974) Trehearne describes as "scintillating." There have been so many excellent studies of the evolution of modernism since 1974 that reliance on Peckham and Barzun's ideas invites dismissal. Luckily Trehearne is very good with the poetry and ideas of his primary authors; as a cultural historian, however, he leaves something to be desired.

JOHN XIROS COOPER

FOREIGN VIEWS

ROBERT HÉBERT, *L'Amérique française devant l'opinion étrangère 1756-1960*. Hexagone, $19.95.

IN THIS ANTHOLOGY of literary, philosophical, political, and travel writing, Robert Hébert concisely reveals two hundred years of foreign thinking about French North America. Hébert is a professor of philosophy, and has chosen his texts for their relevance to intellectual history. Most of the works represented are from France, England, and the United States.

In his lively introduction, Hébert identifies various kinds of foreign influence which have shaped both the international and the domestic conceptions of French Canada. From Britain the influence has been mainly constitutional, political, and legal; France has left its impressions in the fields of education, literature, and religion. From the United States, French Canada has derived a technological economy, as well as the notion of a "territorial mythology," that is, a national self-conception based on the awareness of being part of a new world frontier. Hébert's historical demarcations run from just before the fall of New France to the beginning of the Quiet Revolution, when Québecois decisively took their political and cultural destiny into their own hands.

From the earliest years, foreign writers were sharply divided on the subject of French Canada. On the eve of France's new world disaster, the Marquis de Mirabeau could reaffirm the theoretical validity of an enlightened and benevolent imperialist government, while Montcalm's aide-de-camp, de Bougainville, writing from Quebec, expressed a sense of the decadence and impending doom of the colonial regime. After France had not only lost its American colony but had turned its face toward a new destiny, the question of what to do with the human spoils of conquest became a vexed problem for the conquerors. According to some British opinion, the best thing that could be done with them was to transform them into British citizens. Edmund Burke, in the famous debate of 1791 that led to his rejection of the "New Whigs," argued in the British parliament against the Quebec Act, which would leave the colonists in the darkness of their Gallic language, laws, and social and religious institutions,

depriving them of the enlightenment of British traditions. In the nostalgic meditations of that disillusioned American farmer, Crèvecoeur, as well as in the travel notes of the Americanophile Tocqueville, the French colonists were the pathetic victims of imperial conquest, and there was nothing to be done about them except lament the loss of their Arcadian past. The romantic Chateaubriand, on the other hand, could imagine the rise of a French North America equal in strength and freedom to the United States.

In the early nineteenth century the European view of French Canada was largely based on imagination and political bias rather than first-hand knowledge. Even when the colonists in 1837 tried to call attention to their national aspirations by armed rebellion, European attitudes continued to be rather casual and self-interested. What little foreign concern there may have been with the realities of French North America tended to decrease with Canadian Confederation, which seemed, to an inattentive external regard, to be a durable solution to long-standing problems. After 1867 there was a prominent inclination to see French Canada in increasingly imaginative or sentimental terms, as a vestige of an older, simpler way of life snugly ensconced in the midst of materialistic and progressive English America.

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, some more careful observers, such as the cultural historians Victor Du Bled and Virgile Rossel, could note with optimism the emergence of an important literary tradition as a sign of Quebec's ability to maintain French culture in the New World. By the early twentieth century, this optimism was being extended to science and technology, although Quebec's importance in this regard remained on the level of possibility.

But as the new century wore on, some foreigners became dimly aware that French Canada's potential for international influence may have been severely limited by the decisions of 1867. Hébert makes no secret of his own disapproval of the "pacte fédératif," which — although he doesn't put it this way — left Quebec to the tender mercies of Anglophone colonists who saw themselves as the inheritors of British power over a "conquered" people. Perhaps because their opinions are not exactly "foreign," Hébert does not include representative texts from English Canada in his anthology. It might have been enlightening to see in this context the opinions about French Canada expressed by such people as George Munro Grant, Egerton Ryerson, Goldwin Smith, or Harold Innis.

Hébert's volume may well have been improved by supplementary or alternative sources, but the texts he has included effectively reveal the ingenuity, cynicism, benevolence, and at times the desperation of foreign attempts to deal intellectually with the enigmatic French fact in the New World.

JAMES DOYLE

MODERN WORLD'S ARISTOTLE?

JOHN AYRE, *Northrop Frye: A Biography*. Random House, $27.95.

A. C. HAMILTON, *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*. U of T Press, $45.00.

JOHN AYRE'S *Northrop Frye: A Biography* garnered very good notices from the popular press (*Globe & Mail*, *Maclean's*,), which is not surprising. It is basically a work of journalism, in which respect it is rather like Otto Friedrich's recent *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*: both authors disclaim any field expertise, and aim their work at those "curious about . . . but not conversant with" their subjects' work.

But it is worth asking: Who is such a readership? Frye himself admits what Ayre demonstrates abundantly: that his life has been "uneventful," thus eliminating the casual reader; and since Ayre cannot, or does not want to discuss Frye's theories, the academic reader is eliminated. So, who is left? The audience for something like Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus*, looking for a simplified glimpse into the life of a (to them) inaccessible genius because their curiosity can be satisfied where their intellect cannot? This conclusion may seem harsh — but what other reason would there be for commissioning and publishing a five hundred page biography of one of the century's most influential figures by a professional journalist — and in this case, a self-proclaimed anti-academic as well?

One rationale would be to forge some connection between the subject's life and work: and indeed it would be interesting to know the origin of Frye's passion for order — his desire to envision the world "in terms of a single intellectual pattern" — his disdain for value judgements, his "evangelical attitude to the teaching of literature," his nationalism, his conservativism, his preference for comedy over tragedy; and above all, his desire to escape being "possessed" by literature by possessing *it* through systematization. Not that one should expect a *Rosebud* chapter at the end, just *some* attempt to determine, for example, why, in spite of the Holocaust, Frye continues to cling to a vision of the possibility of man's return to Eden.

Ayre attempts no such coupling, however, presumably because to do so would have led him into a scholarly discussion of Frye's *thought*, which it was his stated intention to avoid. He defends himself here on the rather weak grounds that had he proceeded by academic standards his "overdue and underfunded" project would have taken "another twenty to thirty years"; and anyway the eight years he had already spent on the project had given him "cabin fever and oxygen starvation."

What we are left with then is, by journalistic standards, well-researched and congenial enough to read. Still I think even journalists would cringe at Ayre's grammar (constantly confused are "who" and "whom," and "like" and "as") and spelling (for example, developement, seige, McCartheyite) and how would Frye himself feel about the Book of Revelation being called "Revelations," about the dropping of an "n" from *Finnegan's Wake*, the misspelling of the name of the eminent critic Murray "Kreiger" [sic]; and about being called "illusive" (for "elusive") about his ideas? . . . But Ayre's is a book of little value to anyone seeking any insight into Frye's achievement as a man of letters.

At a polar extreme from John Ayre's *Northrop Frye* lies A. C. Hamilton's *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of His Criticism*. This is a book of exclusively academic interest, well-written (although Hamilton has the same problem distinguishing "as" and "like" as Ayre, viz: "As a New Critic with a poem, I . . .") by one who is clearly knowledgeable about Frye's work.

The opening chapter ("Introduction to Frye's Poetics") is in itself worth having the book for. It provides as concise and comprehensive an overview of Frye's theories as I have seen; and Hamilton understands Frye very well indeed — so well that, as Frye himself did with Blake in *Fearful Symmetry*, he seems to adopt his subject's very mindset and terminology, leading to such felicitous Frye-isms as "Criticism is a necessary obstacle between the reader and the literary work, even as learning to play a piano is an obstacle to playing it."

Once past the first chapter, though, Hamilton's *Anatomy* dries out a little, as, in spite of his claim that the book was

written to place the *Anatomy of Criticism* "in its historical context," it in fact becomes not much more than a restatement in his own words of the central points of Frye's masterpiece, words which are often unfortunately less clear than Frye's own (for example, "The synchronic history given by this series remains diachronic because myth is increasingly displaced, that is, increasingly disguised by mimesis."). And where in the *Anatomy* Frye is especially exciting and lucid, as in the seminal Third Essay (on "Archetypal Criticism"), Hamilton's exegesis simply seems redundant — less interesting, less clear — perhaps because, after all, as Hamilton himself admits, "[Frye's] major critical concepts are metaphors or myths and therefore irreducible to plain sense."

The real value to scholars of Hamilton's book is that it treats Frye's writing as a whole, developing his points by constant cross-reference to the sixty-two published Frye titles listed in the preface. While this technique might, in lesser hands, lead to an imposition of the writer's own meaning on his subject, I never got that sense with Hamilton (which probably speaks as much for the consistency of Frye's critical development as for Hamilton's exegetical integrity). He does, however, regard some of Frye's more openly Blakean positions (that is, his claim that the action of myth "takes place in a world . . . prior to ordinary time" or, that in the anagogic phase of language "nature is . . . inside the mind of an infinite man") as "woo-woo noises," which is simply intolerance. Also, readers curious about why Frye has contributed so relatively little to tragic theory will have to wait: "The explanation may be that Frye's interest in literature tends to centre in comedy and romance rather than in tragedy and irony," is Hamilton's rather unhelpful *petitio principii.*

Along with the Introduction, Hamilton's forty-page conclusion forms the best part of this book. It is a masterpiece of insight, placing Frye convincingly in a line with Sidney and Arnold.

It makes you think: what if Frye *is* the modern world's Aristotle? And if he is, when shall we see a proper literary biography?

GRAHAM FORST

TWO PLUS TWO

GILLES COP, *Victor,* Editions des Plaines, $9.95.
CATHERINE DUPONT, *La Grève des animaux,* Editions des Plaines, $9.95.
MARIE-LOUISE GAY, *Angel and the Polar Bear,* Stoddart, $12.95.
ADELE WISEMAN, *Kenji and the Cricket,* Porcupine's Quill, $12.95.

THESE FOUR BOOKS, representing different genres, languages, and centres of cultural activity, demonstrate that writing for children continues to be a significant activity across Canada.

Intended for young children, the two English books appeal to common experiences and basic needs. Adele Wiseman's *Kenji and the Cricket,* which recounts the quest of a Japanese war orphan for a family, addresses every child's desire for love and security. Kenji, a starving street boy, adopts a pet cricket that leads him to a childless couple who in turn adopt him. The warmth of the narrative is enhanced by Shizuye Takashima's watercolour illustrations, whose blurred edges relieve the harshness of the details of Kenji's daily life and give the story the cast of memoir or fable. The style and length of the narrative indicate that this is a story to be read to children rather than by them; as the parent who read it aloud, I felt that some pruning of the language could sharpen the focus. This is Adele Wiseman's first children's book, and writing for children is different from writing

for adults. I find that the most engaging books for adults to read to children are those which contain no expendable words — a feature I especially admire in Roald Dahl's juvenile stories.

Angel and the Polar Bear, written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay, does indeed contain far fewer words; however, the comparison is somewhat unfair because its impact and humour are made primarily through its illustrations, and Gay had already won awards for her artwork before she began to compose texts as well as pictures. Here the common experience is the situation of the young child who bounces out of bed early in the morning, long before her parents are willing to join her. While they attempt to sleep Angel, an almost six-year-old with a loud voice and a lively imagination, negotiates a flooded house, ice-skates down her hallway, and then plays dominoes and eats bananas with the polar bear that emerges from her refrigerator. The wryness of her adventures recall those in Robert Munsch's children's books: like Munsch, Gay fully acknowledges and enjoys the reality of children's imaginary experiences and refuses to undercut them with adult rationality. Gay's pictures fill the pages with the bright, offbeat humour of the story, their sharpness contrasting markedly with the muted illustrations to Wiseman's book.

The two volumes of French-language plays, published in Saint-Boniface, address different audiences and purposes. Gilles Cop's *Victor* requires an adult cast. Written in *joual*, it centres on a colourful 63-year-old Franco-Manitoban farmer whose business and personal matters have reached a turning point. Although the accompanying publisher's notes suggest that the piece suits senior high school students, the central problematic relationship, between father and son, involves a life crisis (including sexual infidelity) beyond the teenage years. It seems to me that this is rather a play for adult Francophone community theatre groups, which, if viewed by teenagers, could generate good discussion in a high school class.

La grève des animaux, on the other hand, is a collection of three dramatic scenes written by a teacher for grade six students. Each features a cast of at least 20 characters and, while composed with Canadian francophones in mind, would also suit French immersion students. Unfortunately, I find all three plays at best pedestrian and at worst reactionary in that they reinforce conventional social and power structures at a time when our children should be stimulated to discover new ways to think about themselves and their world. The most adventuresome play, "La Caverne des Voleurs," is not set in Canada (where there are plenty of opportunities to develop smuggler stories) but in France. In the title play, the strike of the farm animals is not resolved by addressing their grievances, but pacified by informing them that they have been misled by what they have read in the newspapers. And in all the plays, the most active and powerful roles are given to males. Imagination is in short supply here, and I would hope that children could do better by developing their own scripts. Indeed, in this random selection of four texts, is it simply coincidental that the greatest degree of creativity appears in the book with the youngest female protagonist?

CAROLE GERSON

ICARUS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

CHRIS BROOKES, *A Public Nuisance: A History of the Mummers Troupe*. Institute of Social and Economic Research, $19.95 paper.

A QUICK GLANCE at the table of contents reveals an unusual feature of this book:

the author compares the history of the Mummers Troupe to the successive stages of an airplane disaster. Grouping the seventeen chapters under such headings as "getting it off the ground," "flying," "losing altitude," and "crash landing," Chris Brookes charts the four-year climb and six-year descent of this Newfoundland theatre company, the Mummers Troupe (1972-1982). The crash came, it seems, when the troupe became entangled in personal and professional differences, purchased and ran their own theatre space, and spent resources it did not have to search for further funding.

Created in 1972, the Mummers Troupe was so named after a group of actors — Chris Brookes, Lynn Lunde, and John Doyle — revived the ancient British ritual of Christmas mumming, or "mummering," as it is called in Newfoundland. In their revival of the ritual, the actors arrive, unannounced and disguised, at Christmas parties in private homes. Combining folk drama and theatre antics, the troupe reenacts the battle between St. George and the Turkish Knight, inverting the social order in a manner reminiscent of a Feast of Fools to challenge the status quo. Mummering in Newfoundland died out earlier this century, outlawed for its occasional violence, a fact that Brookes discovers when the local constabulary reminds the troupe of the 1861 act for the Prevention of Nuisances.

Brookes devotes the middle six chapters to the first Mummers' productions, the collective creations in which he and the other troupe members maintained the popular form and flexibility of mummering: political and social commentary and transportable theatre (the Mummers toured Newfoundland and Labrador outposts until 1976). They continued to be a political public nuisance in such plays as *Gros Mourn* (1973), an agitprop ("agitation propaganda") attack on the federal government's expulsion of area residents to create the national park of Gros Mourn in the Northern Peninsula area of Newfoundland, and *Buchans: A Mining Town* (1974), a documentary history of the town told in the words of the miners. In each case, the actors and the plays become community animators, recreating real-life political and social struggles for the subjects — that is, the audience — to see.

As with the Mummers' early work, Brookes uses humour and political insight in recounting his own revisionist history of Newfoundland mainstream theatre in a humorous and insightful manner. However, the latter part of the book, in which he chronicles the Mummers later tours of propaganda plays for national audiences (*What's That Got to Do with the Price of Fish* (1976) and *They Club Seals, Don't They* (1977)), seems much less involved, much less committed. I suspect, in fact, that Brookes may have been. He makes it clear in the writing that his nationalism is for his province, and his political theatre is for his province's people.

Brookes quit the Mummers at the end of the 1979-80 season, after the company's personal, professional, and financial difficulties seemed, at last, insurmountable. Surviving only two more seasons, the Mummers dissolved in 1982. Like the mythical figure of Icarus, then, the company flew a bit too high, buoyed by its own idealism, and was ultimately brought down by the realities facing any interventionist theatre. But as the country's most important political theatre for a decade, the Mummers Troupe demonstrated that a blend of folk tradition and political activism could produce unique Canadian theatre, and as stuff for a book of theatre history, a good tale in the telling.

JILL TOMASSON GOODWIN

THE POLITICS OF STEREOTYPES

JÖRG-PETER SCHLESER, *Kanadier, Pepsis, Frankokanadier und Quebecois: Darstellungen der frankophonen Kanadier in der kanadischen Literatur, 1940-81*. Niemeyer, n.p.

"... poets arrived, hoping to turn the expected riot into a rehearsal."

(Leonard Cohen)

THE EPIGRAM WITH which Schleser's book begins suggests that art not only reflects reality, but to some extent shapes it. According to Adorno, who is invoked in Schleser's introduction, this connection is achieved when art showcases, and therefore exposes and overcomes, dominant ideology. Schleser does his part by exposing how francophone Canadians have been depicted in Canadian Literature and how these depictions have changed in response to the changing bicultural climate. This project is of particular socio-political relevance, because the depiction of francophones in Canada's literature was and is one of the few contact points between the two solitudes.

He breaks his study, 1940-81, into four unequal periods, each of which depicts and names francophones differently to reflect the dominant anglophone perceptions: 1940-60 ("Canadiens"), during which francophones were romanticized and simultaneously trivialized as pan-Canadian heroes, leaving their plight under Duplessis' regime totally unexamined; 1961-70 ("Pepsis"), which saw the rise of the Quiet Revolution, ending with the not-so-quiet October crisis; 1971-76 ("French-Canadian"), which marks the fall-out of Pierre Laporte's assassination and the banishment of the F.L.Q.; and 1977-81 ("Quebecois"), which begins just after the election of the Parti Quebecois and ends just after the defeat of the 1980 referendum on sovereignty association.

Each of these periods is divided into a further five sections, parallel for each period, in which some of the consensual depictions of francophones are grouped and arranged in descending order of frequency. Thus a student of Canadian Literature can get a quick overview, for instance, about the ways in which the depiction of francophones as 'Latin lovers' and the prevalence of such depictions varied from period to period. As such, Schleser's book is an interesting and well researched reference guide for anyone interested in a statistical overview of how artists both mirrored and moulded public opinion in response to Canada's increasingly complicated anglo-francophone relations.

One word of caution, however: while he cites the number of texts in which characteristic treatments of francophone Canadians appear, he often does not tell us the total number of works published during the time period examined nor whether he has considered them all, or what his selection criteria may have been. His bibliography consists overwhelmingly of male authors and poets, as does his selection of works for in-depth analysis, though these analyses are often excellent. Still, this work is a useful reference work, providing a guide to the depiction of francophones in Canadian Literature written by anglophones.

THORSTEN EWALD

TURNED INSIDE OUT

THOMPSON, JUDITH, *The Other Side of the Dark*. Coach House Press, $16.95.

GILBERT, SKY, *The Dressing Gown*. Playwrights Canada, $9.95.

DYBA, KENNETH, *Lilly, Alta*. Playwrights Canada, $9.95.

VIOLENCE IS A RESPONSE to an absence, or 'vacuum,' that threatens us with a terrifying a-pathos. Our response to the

apathetic withdrawal of human relationship and feeling? To threaten back, often with elaborate rituals of pain that invert — and by inverting, both challenge and reaffirm — the bonds of relatedness presupposed by the age-old institutions of love, family, and marriage. Or so it would seem, given the plots, characters, and general themes developed by the playwrights listed above — Thompson, Gilbert, and Dyba — each of whom explores how violence visits characters whose distance from mainstream culture seems to open a chasm within themselves, turns them inside out, and sets them against each other.

Winner of the Governor General's Award for Drama, *The Other Side of the Dark* collects four of Judith Thompson's plays: *The Crackwalker*, her first play (1980); *Pink*, a short monologue commissioned for the Arts Against Apartheid Benefit in Toronto (1986); *Tornado*, a radio play commissioned for CBC's *Sextet* series (1987); and *I am Yours*, her third full-length play (1987). Thompson peoples her stage with characters whose social, economic, mental, or physical condition underscores their status as outsiders. In *The Crackwalker*, the four protagonists are at the bottom of Kingston's social and economic ladder — one a retarded half-breed who "sucks queers off at the Lido" for five dollars; her husband, a mentally unbalanced dishwasher; and their friends, a waitress who aspires to bartending and her sometime husband, a violent drifter. In *Pink*, the two characters are shut out by age and by race: a ten-year-old South African girl and her black nanny who lies in coffin, the victim of a shooting during a demonstration. In *Tornado*, one woman is marginalized biologically — a middle class social worker who can afford financially to have children, but is barren; the other, marginalized economically — an epileptic welfare mother of five who can have children but can ill afford them. And in *I Am Yours*, we return to *Crackwalker*-like characters: an ex-convict and his mother, an "uneducated woman of great power," a schizophrenic artist and her tarty sister.

The action of the plays beat out the consequences of the characters' states of displacement. Each play charts a violent inversion of relation: a loving father strangles his newborn child (*The Crackwalker*); a white child loves her black nanny more than her natural parents, but despises her colour (*Pink*); a barren woman so desires her mother's fertility that she mimics her epilepsy (*Tornado*); a woman prefers to give her unborn child for adoption than to the natural father (*I am Yours*). Each of these characters has tried to fulfill his or her need to create a "normal," relationship in which love, or the possibility of it, predominates.

Instead, violence, a result of the vacuum of unrelatedness, defeats the characters, as the language of Thompson's plays constantly reminds us. Functioning as both an extension of the violence — the characters continually abuse each other verbally with swearing or threats of physical harm — and as expression of the fear of unrelatedness, the dialogue of these plays is riddled with predatory and disease-filled images. Characters speak about animals lurking behind walls, about a colony of fifty-thousand bees nesting in an office, cancerous growths from a woman's vagina, or a black belly kicked until it cannot hold babies ever again.

Equally dispossessed, the characters in Sky Gilbert's *The Dressing Gown* search for relatedness with as much fervour and as much pain as Thompson's. As gays, these characters are marginalized because of their sexuality. The play consists of seven main characters — a teenager, a drag queen, his trick, an older man, a "middle class clone faggot," a leatherman, a masochist — and the action is developed over eight scenes which portray brief en-

counters between pairs of them. A dressing gown, the common thread, so to speak, holds the characters and the scenes together. This gown becomes both the play's unifying structural principle and a constant visual motif which points to the ways in which these men try to relate to each other: in love, in fear, in violence. These attempts merge and culminate with the climactic end of the first act, as one lover is injected with a dirty syringe and hospitalized after a deadly game of S and M.

The play's epilogue returns the dressing gown to the boy, now a young man, who first gave away the garment. More pointedly, it repeats the play's opening maxim: "Men are hard and men are cold and they'd rather kill each other than love each other." Gilbert has demonstrated precisely this moral: the longing for relation and the contingent violence its lack produces.

In tone and style, Kenneth Dyba's *Lilly, Alta.* sets up a striking contrast to the openly violent, present-day plays of Thompson and Gilbert. Ballad-like in quality, this play employs a huge cast of characters (forty-six humans, animals, and birds, some of which can be puppets or masks), uses songs and live music, and is set in the misty past of thirty years ago. In content and theme, however, *Lilly, Alta.* is strikingly similar to the plays discussed above. Except for the two young lovers who try to leave Lilly to marry, the characters are interlocked in patterns of frustration and unrelatedness: the barren town matriarch who has taken the illegitimate child of her dead husband; a half-breed who fishes in Yellow Pond for her drowned baby and husband; a father and son undertaker team who ghoulishly await business; a man who retreats to his shop downstairs while his wife and the town preacher commit adultery.

An on-stage narrator who comments on the past with present-day knowledge, one of the lovers, Willy, becomes the living image of the violent consequences of the town's destructive habits. He is fire-scarred, limping with one arm paralyzed, the result of the play's climactic action in which a fire at the town Christmas celebration kills his pregnant fiancee just as they are about to escape Lilly by train. Now, the town reeks of decay and lost hope: no train, no tiger lilies, no Yellow Pond, no marriage, no children. It becomes a monument to the way in which the townfolk marginalized each other, and in a fine Canadian symbol, to the way in which the town has isolated itself from the rest of the world.

The titles of these works reflect the playwrights' dominant image of the 'vacuum': Thompson uses the poetic and mysterious description, "the other side of the dark"; Gilbert, the visual motif of the dressing gown; and Dyba, the spatial symbol of the town, Lilly, Alberta. Of the three writers, Thompson seems most obsessed with the themes of the difficulty of love, the ever-present threat of violence, and the marginalization of people. For this reason, perhaps, her plays by contrast are the most richly textured and certainly the most haunting.

JILL TOMASSON GOODWIN

BLACK CURTAIN

DAVID GURR, *The Voice of the Crane.* Coach House Press, $18.95.

THE VOICE OF THE CRANE is David Gurr's seventh novel and another attempt to wrestle with what is, perhaps, the great subject of this century and certainly his personal obsession: World War II. Once again Gurr has approached his theme by portraying the shattering impact of momentous public events upon the private lives of individuals, some of whom are

significant, historical figures, but many of whom are ordinary human beings caught up in the infernal machine of the gods. In earlier novels, such as *Troika* (1979), *A Woman Called Scylla* (1981), and *An American Spy Story* (1984), Gurr combined the techniques of the mystery and spy novel with carefully researched historical material about the second world war to produce a set of closely related narratives that take the world for their territory and the tragedies of individual lives for their focus. In his brilliant *tour de force*, *The Ring Master* (1987), he combined many of these same techniques with a confessional and metafictional structure to produce a major work on a Wagnerian scale.

What intrigues me is how and why Gurr moved from the comparatively straight forward narrative strategies of the earlier work to the experimental complexity of *The Ring Master* and *The Voice of the Crane*. Unfortunately, to trace that development, together with the capillary links that mark this work as distinctly his and connect one book to another, would require a larger study than this brief review. I have no doubt that Gurr's work warrants this kind of attention and that it will as richly repay such scrutiny as it does an initial reading. What an initial reading of his last two books demonstrates, however, is that the Gurr reader must take the task seriously. Here is a writer who demands and deserves such attention.

The Voice of the Crane is set in twentieth century Tokyo, between 1900 and 1986; its titular "hero," the Crane, is Japan's Emperor Hirohito. It recounts the personal tragedies (and occasional joys) of the Western-educated nobleman, Count Mochiwara, who has been charged by the former Emperor Meiji to look after his grandson and heir, the Crane, and of an American-Portuguese business man, Ambrose Magellan, who was born in Japan, orphaned during World War II, and adopted by the Count. The private trauma of these three men is seen against the ineluctable rush of history — political upheaval, modernization, and war: the Boxer Rebellion, the First World War, the Japanese invasion of China and the Second World War.

But this is not exclusively, or even primarily, an historical novel. Count Mochiwara is ninety-seven in the fictional present (1986) of this narrative which is, in fact, the text of the Bunraka play we are reading, the play he has just finished writing before he commits a most anti-traditional suicide on the last page. Ambrose Magellan is tall, thin, red-haired, fifty-eight and, because of his position in Count Mochiwara's household, has married a Japanese princess and mixes with other former aristocrats. Despite all this, however, he is neither accepted by Japanese society nor at ease with himself. His story emerges from fragments of his interviews with a psychiatrist who has been sent to Japan by IBM to help Americans adjust. The personal stories of these two men, as of that third whose actual name cannot be uttered, intersect and touch, over and over, to form an intricate and mysterious texture of event that ruptures in the violent collision, or climax, towards which Gurr's story has been moving from the start: Hiroshima.

To explain here how these lives meet would be to give away the show, and *The Voice of the Crane* is a most extraordinary show that no one should miss. While recognizably a novel, and a highly post-modern one at that, it is presented in the form of a Bunraku puppet play called "Kuromaku" or "Black Curtain." Count Mochiwara, our author/narrator (and David Gurr's puppet), explains (speaking of himself, as he must throughout, in the third person) his strategy thus:

> Bound by convention to tell his tale obliquely, a Japanese interpreter might set history within the triangular frame of the Puppet

> stage — that famous 'Art of Threes': the tale-teller, the puppeteer, the puppet itself — in the knowledge that while it can be shown only as crude strokes on parchment, the true intricacy of the pattern may be appreciated later, as it would be in performance, from careful study of the costumes, clappers, and musicians.

The play itself progresses through a series of three voices, each of which speaks briefly in turn (for two or three pages), before turning the stage over to the next one. The Count speaks in the third person, often in an elevated, poetic-philosophic tone, and his narration contains the dialogue and speech of others, including the private voice of his ward, the Crane. Ambrose speaks in the first person using a blunt, ironic, crude language in a fragmented style that captures a sense of the analysand's situation and projects the quality of Ambrose's troubled, bitter personality. When the Crane speaks, it is always in the highly formal, artificial voice of a God which Gurr introduces with the chrysanthemum symbol and sets in the patterns of poetry. Here is how he sounds as a small boy and Emperor-in-training:

> In our praying together
> Before Spirit Shrine of our Household
> To our Ancestress Sun-Goddess and
> Descendents
> Our Ancestors
> We are-learning to be-saying in order
> With our Special Voice
> Yes!

Clearly, *The Voice of the Crane* is not an easy or accessible work. It is a fiction that demands vigilance from its readers, a willingness to participate in the fiction-making process (what Hubert Aquin called co-creation), and an encyclopedic knowledge of world history, Japanese culture, Bunraku theatre, modern art, psychology and international politics. In other words, the more one brings to the novel, the more one will receive from reading it. The same is true of *The Ring Master* which is, to my mind, the best novel published in Canada since Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973). Indeed, *The Ring Master* and, now, *The Voice of the Crane* place Gurr at the forefront of Canadian fiction, together with Hubert Aquin (in *Prochain episode* and *Neige noire*), Timothy Findley (in *The Wars* and *Famous Last Words*) and Robertson Davies (in his Deptford trilogy), and in the company of such major twentieth century figures as Malcolm Lowry, Thomas Pynchon, Siegfried Lenz, Salman Rushdie, Umberto Eco and Yukio Mishima (whose sinister genius hovers somewhere behind Count Mochiwara's black curtain). What these writers share is a profound concern with the apocalyptic events of this century as they shape, distort and destroy the lives of individual men and women, and the ability to shape the narrative of fiction in challenging, experimental ways out of an encyclopedic knowledge of so-called historical facts.

David Gurr has cast himself in the role of master fabricator/story-teller AND as the conscience-witness of our time. In all his work, although especially in these last two novels, he raises major questions about the meaning of twentieth century history, about the role of fiction, of story, in interpreting that history, and about the nature of our common humanity. From behind the black curtain comes the voice of a master story-teller, and it is a voice we should listen to.

SHERRILL GRACE

INTEGRATION

REAL-GABRIEL BUJOLD, *L'intolérable illusion d'un jardinier d'enfants*. Guérin Littérature, n.p.

AUDE, *Banc de brume ou Les aventures de la petite fille que l'on croyait partie avec l'eau du bain*. Garamond du Roseau, n.p.

THE ILLUSORY WORLD of the dream and the inescapable confines of an imposed or physical reality are juxtaposed and opposed in these two very different works of fiction. Their underlying theme is similar; it is characterized by the effort of the protagonists to reconcile the real and the ideal (or imagined), to explore, redefine and reintegrate the differing exterior and interior worlds of the self.

The protagonist and narrator Gildor Larochelle of *L'Intolérable illusion* is a schoolteacher-writer from Gaspé, in search of an identity. He expresses both the desire to understand his personal actions and aspirations as well as the regional history and particularities of his people ("J'ai déjà voulu rendre aux miens le mince hommage de leurs espoirs,"). Misunderstood and full of questions, this literary "musketeer" fights for acceptance and self-understanding in a society of pragmatists who see little value in a literary profession ("Théâtre, littérature, poésie . . . De la bouillie pour les chats,").

Gildor finds no adult willing to embark with him on his voyage of self-exploration. A short-lived affair with the mother of one of his students brings many of his dreams into focus, though her ultimate refusal to share Gildor's long-term enthusiasm for idyllic romance quickly draws him to the depths of despair ("Citadelle conquise, inachevée. . . . Risque lamentablement couru,"). Gildor finds himself caught between the security of his marriage and role as husband and the compulsion to reincarnate scenes from an inner world of fantasy he cannot explain or justify to others. His position is thus precariously balanced and "intolerable" as the title suggests.

The story is told as an interior monologue in the first person, an approach which reinforces the solitude of the protagonist. The reader alone is witness to the interior lamentations, interrupted by moments of exaltation, which characterize the narrator's vacillating emotional state. While often drowning in a sea of self-pity, the narrator will occasionally resurface to reward the determined reader with a dose of refreshingly poetic prose ("Assis dans la coquille craquelée d'un oeuf de Pâques à deux jours, j'arrondis les coins de ma vie,") or with a critique of the educational system ("Les êtres encore vivants dans le milieu de l'education sont devenus de moins en moins vivants. Ils sont graduellement fermé la porte de leur classe et se sont cantonnés dans un conservatisme, voir un égocentrisme, décourageant,").

Not only does the narrator fight for understanding and acceptance in a pragmatically-oriented social group with inflexible moral standards, Gildor attempts to enter the closed circle of "la maternelle," kindergarten. This traditionally female-dominated sanctuary is well-protected from intruders and Gildor discovers that he will never gain complete acceptance from his colleagues, especially since his pedagogical methods differ from the norm. The main appeal in teaching children, for Gildor, lies in the acceptance of his students, who provide (though young) receptive listeners for the teacher's stories, needed escapes to the realm of the imaginary and ideal. In this novel, the narrator's struggle to integrate the interior world of the imagination and exterior realities is never completely resolved.

This struggle for self-integration is also the principal theme of the collection of short stories by Aude, *Banc de brume*. As the title suggests, the characters of these stories wade through a fog of uncertainty and misunderstanding in their search for self-identity, self-reconciliation and self-liberation. The majority of these twelve narratives are recounted by first person female narrators and can be interpreted as so many different portraits of the female personality or condition. From subjugated woman to *femme fatale*, from

adolescent to orphan child, from possessive mother to abused wife, from woman as object to woman as cat, all of the characters portrayed are isolated beings, isolated from others who strive to reinforce or impose roles upon them, and isolated from themselves because of the roles they play.

The stories contain a similar progression, which helps to unify them and give them meaning in sequence. In each story, the role is represented as a kind of cage or chain, as in the first narrative, "Le cercle métallique." The closure of each story effects a shattering of the role or an escape from the "prison" which the fixed role represents. In one revealing story, "Fêlures," the artist's attempt to fix an image of herself on canvas results in death; the self cracks and crumbles as the effort to "fix" an exterior image of the self becomes more and more strained. In the final story, "Rangoon ou l'imaginaire enclos," the woman represented as a porcelain figure is finally released from the "prison" of her role as object by a man frustrated enough to break her shell. The chains she wears recall the image of the woman in the glass cage of the first story with a chain around her ankle. While the woman of the first story is able to break through the alienating glass barrier through self-expression, the chain around her ankle, like the chain around so many others, remains to be broken. The narrator predicts: "Un jour, nous arriverions à la briser." The final story of the sequence breaks the "chains" as predicted, as the porcelain woman leaves her body and the old role behind and steps out of herself as an independent cat.

CYNTHIA HAHN

MYSTERY STORY

JANICE KULYK KEEFER, *Reading Mavis Gallant*. Oxford University Press. $14.95.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS'S move to commission a critical study of the writing of Mavis Gallant in its new series "Studies in Canadian Literature" came at a most appropriate time. As one of the foremost writers of fiction in English from the 1950s to the present, Gallant has begun to receive much critical attention over the last decade, but the books to appear on her have been only two in number: Grazia Merler's *Mavis Gallant: Narrative Patterns and Devices* (1978); and Neil Besner's more recent *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant's Fiction* (1988). Gallant's non-fiction, while hardly as significant as her fiction, includes telling pieces of social commentary such as her diary of the Paris 1968 "Events" and her account of the Gabrielle Russier affair. Since Oxford does not intend its new series to be simply a sequence of perfunctory introductions, but a contribution to Canadian culture, the Press asked Janice Kulyk Keefer — herself a short story writer and poet as well as the acclaimed author of *Under Eastern Eyes*, a critical study of Maritime fiction — to undertake *Reading Mavis Gallant*. What Oxford wanted was a study of Gallant's work from the point of view of a writer who knows the craft of writing and could engage with the writer's own preoccupations.

Oxford should be pleased with the result, since there is no doubt that Keefer wrestles with the Gallant canon as writer grappling with writer. Fastening on some of the large issues in Gallant's fiction — the plight of children, the role of women, and the constitutive nature of memory and history — Keefer imaginatively relates these issues to the known facts of Gallant's life and the context of the post-

World-War-II period. At times, the intensity of Keefer's engagement with Gallant's themes and narrative structures propels the reader forward as if in a mystery story — a rare feat for a work of critical analysis.

Yet the volume also suffers from distracting flaws. Keefer draws extensively from her previous articles on Gallant (without acknowledgement) and the book shifts frequently from one track to another, one tone to another. Keefer's cut-and-paste method also causes a good deal of duplication, with the same Gallant stories and biographical information appearing over and over again. Indeed, it is perhaps this collage approach that makes Keefer appear to hold quite opposing views about Gallant's importance as a writer.

In the preface she claims that reading too many of Gallant's stories at one time is like "downing a bottle of the finest vinegar," and she suggests that Gallant must be "savoured in small doses." Later, however, we read that Gallant's fictional techniques are so varied that the stories must be read "*en masse*" — apparently a suggestion that the reader down the whole demijohn in a single quaff. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that at the heart of Keefer's depiction of Gallant lies the observation that Gallant's readers frequently come away from her stories with two distinct and contradictory opinions. Drawing on her own responses and those of numerous reviewers, Keefer claims that, while readers are delighted by Gallant's brilliant and authoritative prose style, they are repelled by the limitations of her world view — the fact that so few of her characters escape their situation or change their lives.

Keefer's title, with its emphasis on *reading* Mavis Gallant, indicates that she wants to give her study a phenomenological emphasis, but in fact once she comes seriously to grips with Gallant's stories, the phenomenological strategy disappears. Instead, she offers a series of different responses to Gallant's polished, brilliant prose style and her supposed lack of compassion for her characters.

In the chapter entitled "The Prison of Childhood," for example, Keefer simply denies her earlier observations, and asserts that Gallant shows a great deal of compassion for children. Here at least, in the stories of childhood, Keefer claims, there is "no zero degree of narratorial disinterestedness." Moreover, once she begins to discuss Gallant's presentation of children, Keefer's concern with the question of authorial compassion is supplanted by an engagement with the thematic questions of childhood raised by the stories. In a typical Gallant situation, the children find themselves at the mercy of parents or guardians who treat them as if they were not truly human beings. This childhood experience of a world ruled by injustice and informed by chaos maims many of Gallant's characters for life, leading them to search frantically for love or reactionary social institutions to give form to their lives. As Keefer convincingly shows, Gallant's characters, collectively, bring into being a world which grants them security but at the cost of their own individual integrity. Yet having convinced us of Gallant's profound insights into her child characters, Keefer turns around and laments the pessimistic implications, calling for more compassion, more positive endings. It all seems a bit anti-climactic and self-contradictory.

In her chapter on "The World of Women," Keefer again changes her position, now arguing that Gallant's distanced portraits prove highly effective in allowing us to understand, à la Jane Austen, women's denial of their own potential, their dependence on men, love and marriage for their sense of self. Keefer now applauds Gallant's distance from her characters, claiming that it creates a subversive

"bitchiness," that the narrative distance proves necessary for the reader to understand the inherent limitations of our social order. Yet as soon as she comes to discuss the few Gallant women whom she sees as acting "freely" (the Linnet Muir stories in *Home Truths* being the touchstone for the type of story that allows the character "freedom"), Keefer once again becomes dissatisfied with Gallant's distance, her satirical emphasis. Keefer finds herself especially troubled by the reader's inability to decide how much of Gallant's supposed pessimism is metaphysical, and thus unchangeable, and how much is socially created.

Given the ambivalence on Keefer's part toward Gallant's narrative distancing, it is perhaps unexpected that the most insightful section of *Reading Mavis Gallant* should be the chapter entitled "The Angel of History." Developing an image of history taken from Walter Benjamin and combining this with Gallant's own comments on time from her essay "What is Style?", Keefer argues that Gallant's narrative structures distance her readers in order to allow them to recognize the consolatory (and factitious) historical forms that her characters create to keep existential reality at bay. Keefer quite rightly points to Gallant's ability to transform her readers' "sense of an ending" and to remind them that all closures are merely specious creations of the mind. Although Keefer partially develops these ideas — the relation of history and memory — she is prevented from applying them fully because once again she adduces her old bogey about Gallant's distanced narration preventing her from sympathizing with her characters. The result is, for Keefer, a self-defeating confusion. In this regard, it is a pity that she did not consult Neil Besner's *The Light of Imagination* which, in its resolution of the "distanced narration" question, would have strengthened enormously her handling of Gallant's use of memory and history.

Curiously enough, given that she is herself a fiction writer, the place where Keefer seems to feel most at home, most confident in her writing, is her final chapter, dealing with Gallant's non-fiction. Here Keefer's prose moves with great stylistic power and force of thought because she feels that in writing about "real" people Gallant describes social situations in a way that extends compassion to the victims. But Keefer's endorsement of the compassion she finally discovers here in Gallant causes her to over-value the non-fiction; she ends with the surprising statement that Gallant's book on Dreyfus — which remains incomplete and unpublished — may be the best of all her work. Overcompensation for an irresolute reading of the fiction? Back-handed praise?

Indeed, such indirect criticisms of Gallant lead one to wonder if Keefer does not exhibit something of what Harold Bloom termed "anxiety of influence," in which the younger writer-reader misreads the older one in order to make room for her own imaginative endeavours. The problem may even go deeper, for at numerous points it becomes apparent that Keefer is personally bothered by Gallant's pessimistic view of the individual's place in the world and the small role she gives to quickening love. Again curiously, Keefer implicitly defends a role for women that proves far more conservative than the one that Gallant projects.

Before I close, it will be helpful to future Gallant scholars to correct a number of factual errors. The first is so obvious that one wonders how Keefer's editors let it slip by. Keefer contends that many of Gallant's texts are out of print. While this may have been true some years ago, at the time Keefer received the commission for this book all of Gallant's earlier volumes were either in print or rapidly coming into print — thanks to the warm

reception given to Gallant in Canada over the last decade. The second point involves biography: Gallant did not financially support her husband, as Keefer claims — apparently following a persistent rumour that has plagued Gallant for many years. And finally, the *New Yorker* did not reject Gallant's first story because it was too Canadian, but because Gallant's handling of her setting had been clumsy. Gallant herself has explained that at the beginning of her career she had not yet learned how to incorporate elements of setting so that they would appear natural and inevitable.

Despite its flaws, however — and perhaps because of the engagement they represent — *Reading Mavis Gallant* presents a compellingly strong analysis of one of the finest fiction writers in English today. It raises questions that concern everyone.

RON HATCH

SONGS & LOVERS

IAN ADAM, *Songs from the Star Motel.* Red Deer College Press, $8.95.

WALID BITAR, *Maps with Moving Parts.* Brick Books, $9.95.

SHAUNT BASMAJIAN, *Biased Analogies.* Anthos Books, $7.95.

RICHARD OUTRAM, *Hiram and Jenny.* Porcupine's Quill, $9.95.

I DON'T INTEND to be patronizing in saying that *Songs from the Star Motel* (part of the *Writing West* series) is just the sort of book you would expect from a professor of English who has a sense of playfulness, humor, some intelligence, and a bit of talent. Mostly, however, it is good, genial, postmodern fun. The poems deal with mountain and prairie and badland, with marriages (and breakups), and very much with literature, literary criticism — and themselves: at one point the persona berates a bird for "ridiculing my deconstructive, anti-symbolic posture."

The poems are framed by the narrative of two "legendary Western heroes": Rattlesnake, "the pitching wizard from Hobbema," and the Champ, a three time world whistling champion, who discover the poems in two bottles in a gravel pit. Rattlesnake and the Champ are artists in their own right, of course, and have an absurdly good grasp of modern literature, allowing for a good deal of (usually ironic) commentary, both on the poems themselves and on poetry in general and in one particularly postmodern turn, on their own reality. But "A man's speech should exceed his gasp, or what's a metaphor?" will provoke as many groans as it does smiles.

This sort of literary game suffuses the book. There are paraphrases with appropriate and often humorous twists; explicit references to authors and books; a host of indirect references the reader must fill in, some obvious (Kinsella's "Hobbema," above), some less so (Randolph Stow's *To the Islands*); and games with poetic form itself (one poem suddenly breaks into Old English half-lines).

Under all this playful intertextuality, self-consciousness, and self-referentiality, however, lies an acute awareness that whatever the poet writes, he is trapped inside language, inside other writing — and reading. Adam accepts Derrida's view that "there is no text except by way of the intertext," and goes a step further: even if you *are* trapped, it does not mean you cannot still have a good time.

Walid Bitar shares some of Adam's preoccupation with words and language, but wraps the cloak of poetic imagery much more closely around them. The poems in *Maps with Moving Parts* reflect a greater density of language, thought, and imagery than Adam's; less busy on the surface, they demonstrate much more internal compression. In a poem about "words," the persona says "and though / even the cattle graze / our retinas like bullets /

we continue to spin old 45s / whose trumpet solos have blown / all the air up."

The poems explode and exploit the possibilities of language, as meanings split, shift, fuse. A common technique is to use a word (or image, or common phrase) in two senses simultaneously: "An overseas / operator has time / on her hands like imitation diamond rings." Themes and images recur like obsessions: distance, displacement, separation (and connection), love, loss, language. The photograph renders truthfully and lies, tellingly reveals and preserves; in the world of physical objects creation is balanced with destruction, fabrication with reversion to the natural state.

It is the images themselves, however, which keep drawing the reader in, the flashes which emanate from the fusion of the seemingly disparate, as in an image of what "used to be God, and is still / up in the air, kept / up there by the preachers / like a volleyball." This is a new voice (Bitar is only 28) and a promising one.

Somewhat more bitter, and a good deal less dense, the poems of Shaunt Basmajian's *Biased Analogies* use everyday language in an attempt to grapple with real street-level experience. Unfortunately, they do little to illuminate or reveal to the reader anything faintly original about that experience. There are endless beers in endless down and out taverns, failed relationships, loneliness, despair, and bitterness.

When the poems strike a personal note, they too often seem merely self-preoccupied. The exceptions usually deal with love, where occasionally wistfulness has no taint of wallowing: "when love feels sorry for the poet / there's always someone there / to buy him the next round / and the angel of mercy / still in his arms / past the dawn." When the poems reach out into the wider world to become "meaningful," however, they are generally clumsy and obvious: greedy capitalist imperialists are ruining everything, they shout; third world immigrants encounter intolerance; social injustice exists.

By contrast, the poems in *Hiram and Jenny* are assured, careful, and precise, even in their laconic imprecision. The book relates (to quote the jacket) "the deeds and evasions, the Private Poems and Sacred Ejaculations, the maunderings and heroics, the reflections and refractions of past, present and future, of one Hiram and his lady friend Jenny," along with other inhabitants of a small Maritime town. Outram has an obvious love for these characters, their frailties and foibles, their canniness, their exuberance, and the rhythms in which they couch their homespun wisdom.

Largely lyrics (and always lyrical) the poems can be soft and whimsical or a welter of confusing images, difficult to fathom. For the most part, however, the images are elegantly focussed, whether cerebral, as in "the various staggered fences / their formal declared grammar of inner / and outer," or tender, as in a description of "Aunt Ruby," "with her thin / elaborate hands clasped in her dress-lap / like motionless answers." This excerpt from "Metaphysic" gives a reasonably accurate sense of the flavour of these poems — and gives Outram the (well deserved) last word:

> Hiram saw the sun
> set the other morning,
> didn't tell anyone,
>
> things being, at rock-bottom,
> elegantly askew.
> Truth is the cry of all, but
> the game of the few.

DAVID INGHAM

FASCINATING JOURNEY

Engaged Elsewhere — Short Stories by Canadians Abroad, Ed., Kent Thompson, Quarry, n.p.

THE TITLE OF THIS COLLECTION of short stories, *Engaged Elsewhere*, is an evident assault upon the reader; it is a challenge to the traditional critic, who does not like to see his certainties disturbed. Kent Thompson's provocative intentions are displayed in the opening of his lively introduction. *Engaged Elsewhere* is to be, he says, "a gesture to correct much common thinking." The "common thinking" to which Mr. Thompson refers is a large issue about which a great many things have been said and written: how Canadian is Canadian Literature? Mr. Thompson, former editor of the magazine *The Fiddlehead*, does not believe in geographical boundaries or national borders, especially in literature. Anglo-American modernism dismissed any cry for local or personal identity because it considered art an end in itself; post-modernism has made borders and maps into a question of creative writing since restrictive bonds are alien to literature. The only identity literature now recognizes is its own act of creation, while its nationality is to be found in its core and in its beauty: a deep sea of sensations and memories into which the reader may be easily and pleasurably drawn.

We cannot but agree. However, it is helpful to have a local identity, to be aware of the risk of being lost in large spaces and endless time. Besides, didn't even modernists such as Pirandello and Sciascia express a Sicilian 'regionalism' in their writing? The flavour and the warmth of their experience added something special to the magic of the universal world of their fiction. Who could have helped us better to find our way through the narrow streets and closed windows of Sicily, than Pirandello or Sciascia? Who could have better fed our imagination and opened our eyes to reality? But "art has to be valued not by its use, but by its excellence," Mr. Thompson argues. Kent Thompson's argument, however, goes even further. While leaving distinctive characteristics of the 'Canadian-ness' of the Canadians to sterile academic discussions, he believes that "distinctions and identities are disappearing in the commercial homogeneity of twentieth-century North America"; but he then concludes by demonstrating how good Canadian writers can be in making the French more French, the Germans more German, the Americans more American and so on.

Engaged Elsewhere shows what "the Canadian writer's panoptic view of the world" is like, and, as the title suggests, all of its stories are set abroad: in France and Germany, in Bolivia and Japan, in Italy and Texas, in Asia and Africa. Some contributors are established writers such as Mavis Gallant or Margaret Laurence, others less famous, but the contributions are all strong. In the short-story "Red" Douglas Glover successfully establishes a bridge between a society that smells of disillusion and ugliness, and a golden atmosphere that is miles away from supermarkets or Coca-Cola drinks: a world of love, sweetness and emotional truth. "Red," basically shaped as an interior monologue, could have been a perfect subject for a film-script or adapted for the stage, but on a second reading we realize that its real dimension is poetry.

With Stephen Henighan's "Cochabamba" we face the ambitious scope of a novel. The exoticism of a Southern American world is combined with a political issue which remains a half-told story. Love too is only hinted at, briefly suggested and soon removed. The story seems to embody

a sort of interrupted graceful gesture. Less graceful and more shocking is "Bones" by Keath Fraser. In an uncertain setting, the action takes place, literally, amongst mountains of bones. They are the remnants of past violence, of war and domination where even living bodies become nothing else but corpses.

In "Letters from Sevilla," Sara McDonald experiences displacement or better to say, 'misplacement.' Language, in this never-never-land, turns into a silence as deep as the ocean, an ocean where even our consciousness becomes mute and floats to the surface. When that language is finally heard, it turns into an endless buzzing which fills up brain and ears to the point of distress and confusion. Here Spain is a symbol, a patchwork of a different culture; impossible to harmonize, the fragments of this particular experience gradually stick together and give us a perception of an entity — life — which is itself fragmented.

In "Origami" by Linda Svendson travel and solitude become two key words which keep criss-crossing without a final solution. Much of the atmosphere is heavy and suffocating; stillness and paralysis seem to be general features of the whole collection, an impasse which we are obliged to behold from the beginning to the end of the fascinating journey experienced in reading *Engaged Eleswhere.*

LILLA MARIA CRISAFULLI JONES

CRAZY QUILT

KENT BAKER, *A Man Wanders Sometimes.* Stoddart, $22.95.

D. R. MACDONALD, *Eyestone.* Penguin, $8.95.

KENT BAKER'S NOVEL, *A Man Wanders Sometimes,* charts the physical and mental movements of Harry Fleet, an American university professor who seeks "therapeutic" retirement in Nova Scotia, on the recommendation of his doctor. The novel is composed of his fragmentary narration of present relationships with friends, neighbours, and lovers, interspersed with recollections of events of his recent and distant past, and with forays into the surreal realms of vision and legend.

Harry's eccentric autobiographical act is as much the subject of the novel as its substance; the metaphor of life-as-writing arises explicitly at several points. Harry has been diagnosed as an "hysteric," the victim of a delusional cancer. His difficulty in coming "to terms" with his life is, first, symptomatic of a mental illness:

> Even in the telling I am trapped, hooked, the line going back through a tangle of years and experience without even emotional continuity. This chronology of people and places I swim through, ever seeking the wave, the one that will pick me up and carry me clear. Why do I always believe it will one day make sense — coffee and toast sense, right here on planet earth sense?

Telling as *making* sense becomes a diagnostic act for Harry Fleet. Perhaps the central puzzle of *A Man Wanders Sometimes* is: just what *is* the trouble with Harry? Despite his geographical change of scene, he remains "fixated," entangled in a professor's love of contradiction, and insistent, despite the down-to-earth protestations of his lover Joan, on a moment-by-moment self-absorbed theorizing of his daily existence.

Joan, indeed, is constantly deflating Harry's rhetoric with "coffee and toast sense;" in this she may stand in for the reader impatient with his incessant abstraction. She tells him, for instance, "You can dream all you want, but you'd save yourself a hell of a lot of time and pain if you'd get present." Joan offers the ordinary — and significantly feminine — metaphor of the quilt as a potential solution to Harry's mental/narrative problems with the past:

> "I'll make a quilt of them," she said, "a crazy quilt of all your little tales and stories, your words. Even your evasions. And then I'll sew them all together and . . ." She reached out for my hand.
> "And what?"
> "Crawl under it."

The quilt is associated with relationships as well as stories. To a large degree, *A Man Wanders Sometimes* is about the ties that bind the "crazy quilt" of characters that constitute the community surrounding Harry's new home: Maud Bone, the general store-keeper; "Tom" (Tired Old Man) Everett, a transient tow truck driver; "Burlap" Billy, a fourteen-year-old voyeur; Andrew and Della Hayward, who become Harry's surrogate parents; the members of a local commune; Burr, a taciturn, threatening handyman; Mildred and Nebula Patch, a mother and daughter whose names explicitly associate them with quilting, and who seem to offer Harry possibilities of healing.

Eyestone, D. R. MacDonald's book of short stories, is also set in Nova Scotia, and it, too, uses the significant figure of a woman rocking, although in keeping with the elegiac tone of the volume, she is here a kind of grieving *genius loci*. In the story "Wharf King," Graham, a man who returns home to Nova Scotia from California after his brother's death, observes his mother:

> She was Cape Breton country, a woman who could sway until the worst of her grief was gone, moving in that rocker like a metronome. Graham wanted to be moving too in some significant way but he did not know the right motions anymore, too many years away to be eased by rituals.

In the story "Eyestone," Royce, an American artist who purchases a piece of the Cape Breton rock, must await the death of another local woman who "comes with the place," in order to take possession of a house on "his" land. In an enigmatic resolution typical of the stories in this book, she teaches him the difference between property and home, sight and epiphanic vision, treating his afflicted eye with the magic of the eyestone.

The volume *Eyestone*, as its title suggests, may repeat the old woman's ritual act. This is a subtle collection of stories rooted in place, told with a wistful sense of displacement. Its characters are often returning to, or searching for, a lost family/home. As in the story "Poplars," in which a nephew takes his invalid uncle back to visit the elderly man's old house, the site has sometimes been badly marred. The language of the volume enacts a similar ambivalent return. In "Sailing," two expatriate Cape Bretoners listen to a radio interview on Celtic music in which the subject is questioned on the location of the Nova Scotia island:

> But, strangled either by ignorance or stage fright, he could not locate Cape Breton very precisely. "It's west of Ireland, isn't it?" The woman said helpfully. "And east of Quebec?" After a long delay, the man said, "yes," which was true but not useful, and there Cape Breton remained.

In *Eyestone* Cape Breton is located, more than anything else, in the music of its language and the language of its music. Royce and his wife listen to the marine weather report "just to hear the flow of the names," and John Willy in "The Wharf King" sits in his shop "like the caretaker in a forgotten museum, composing Gaelic verse few but himself would ever sing." Gaelic is often present in this volume, both literally and echoing within the accents of English speech. In "The Flowers of Bermuda," for instance, the central character recalls how his grandfather taught him the Gaelic names of things, tracing the words for heaven and hell back to Druid roots. His friend, a minister, embarks on a trip that similarly revives pagan energy within modern Christianity, leaving Iona, Nova Scotia for its "double," Iona, Scotland.

The old man in "Poplars" has had a

stroke that took his speech, but he learns a "new language," refusing to remain silent. This new voice reverberates with the old, of which he observes, "So many of those words are going unspoken . . . and words die, too, like anything that lives." *Eyestone's* stories compose a "lament," in the musical sense, for the gradual death of a culture, language and history in modern Cape Breton. In so doing, however, it also preserves — and honours — their traces.

MANINA JONES

COLLECTING PRATT

E. J. PRATT, *E. J. Pratt: Complete Poems*, 2 vols., eds. Sandra Djwa and R. G. Moyles. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press. $75.00.

IN AN ARTICLE on editorial procedures for modern Canadian texts, R. G. Moyles argues that Canadian criticism has arrived at the stage of "close reading," a stage for which a precise editorial method that takes into account compositional variations and complexities of textual transmission is now needed. The two volumes of *E. J. Pratt: Complete Poems*, edited by Moyles and Sandra Djwa, may, in part, be seen as a response to that need. This important collection of all of Pratt's published poems, and a selection of previously unpublished poetry, including the verse drama *Clay*, might also be seen as the achievement of Northrop Frye's dictum that Pratt "must be read in bulk or not at all." Put slightly differently, the format of *Complete Poems* allows the works in Pratt's corpus — as well as variant versions of individual works, and annotational material — to form contexts for each other that have until now been unavailable.

The collection is among a growing number of critical editions of Canadian literary works that pay attention to what A. M. Klein editor Zailig Pollock might call (as he did at a recent conference on editorial problems) "stories" of the text, tellings both of the history of its presentations to the public and its formal transformations through time. Pratt's *Collected Poems* thus includes a comprehensive textual apparatus listing variant readings, evidence of textual transmission, and explanations regarding editorial decisions, as well as a detailed descriptive bibliography. While it attempts to present and privilege a definitive text, then, it also offers its readers the opportunity to construct alternative readings from the evidence provided.

The chronological presentation of poems in these volumes encourages us to see the corpus as forming a biographical/historical line of development, especially since this arrangement contrasts Frye's more generic organization of the selected poetry in *The Collected Poems of E. J. Pratt* (1958). The biographical line is reinforced in Sandra Djwa's introduction, which relates Pratt's personal story to the development of his poetry. In fact, the introduction begins and ends with the image of (photographic and painted) portraiture, implicitly relating the collection of Pratt's poetry to the recollection/representation of Pratt as an individual. The introduction is also guided by Frye's well-known reading of Canadian literature's ambivalent relation to nature and God, a view, as Djwa has observed, itself probably derived from Frye's early assimilation of Pratt's work.

While the order of presentation in *Collected Poems* is chronological by date of first publication, the copy-text is that of the last authorized publication, a disjunction common in critical editions that remains to be satisfactorily resolved. It complicates, for example, the debate on Pratt's position(s) in literary history, since a given poem's copy-text is sometimes more than forty years distant from its

chronological position in the order of the volume. This approach also fosters a (perhaps misleading) sense of unity among the collected poems. Pratt's editors have used the latest authorized published version of each poem as the clearest reflection of the author's final intentions, and this is certainly within accepted editorial practice. However, the question of the author's intentions raises both practical problems (Pratt was an inveterate reviser), and theoretical issues which cannot be adequately dealt with here. What this editorial practice seems to posit is a teleological model in which the author has a unified intention relatively uninfluenced by changing contexts, and which culminates in a final "ideal" text. The texts of the poems put forward here represent "a copy which Pratt would have presented to the public," but one might well be prompted to ask Which Pratt? Which public? The collection may not fully take into account issues involving social/historical contexts of presentation and reception, or, as Jerome McGann puts it, the author's intentional or unintentional collaboration with others. It does, however, very much to its credit, provide material that will allow us to begin to address such issues.

Fine annotations for each poem work to provide key contextual information for the historically and geographically embedded, allusive, and technical language of Pratt's poems. Textual notes and annotations are, however, difficult to find, since no page references link them with individual poems. As part of the annotational procedure, each poem, where possible, has been conveniently cross-indexed with Pratt's commentaries from the first volume of The Collected Works of E. J. Pratt, *E. J. Pratt on His Life and Poetry* (*E. J. Pratt: Complete Poems* comprise the second and third volumes). The latter provides yet other (notably "authorized") contexts for the reading of Pratt's work.

E. J. Pratt: Complete Poems is a valuable edition sure to produce both reassessments of just how the Pratt canon is constituted, and close readings of poems whose text is based on informed judgement. These volumes provide, not just a collection of texts, but a significant guide to their reading. Like all guides, nevertheless, their basis of judgement should be recognized and questioned, producing new collaborations among Pratt, his most recent editors, and contemporary readers.

MANINA JONES

THEATRE HISTORY

RENÉE LEGRIS, JEAN-MARC LARRUE, ANDRÉ-G. BOURASSA, GILBERT DAVID, *Le Théâtre au Québec 1825-1980*. VLB Éditeur. n.p.

TO MARK THE tenth anniversary of the founding of the Société d'Histoire du Théâtre du Québec, an exhibition of material from the collections of the Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec relating to Quebec theatre history was organized. *Le Théâtre au Québec 1825-1980* was published to accompany that exhibition. In her Introduction, Renée Legris, the president of the STHQ, gives three main reasons for publication: to create awareness of the need for the systematic conservation of theatrical documents; to stimulate greater interest in research into theatre history, and to disseminate knowledge about plays of earlier periods.

The period covered by the exhibition is divided into three sections, each represented by a selection of illustrations and documents, accompanied by an analytical essay. The first one, by Jean-Marc Larrue, covers the period 1825-1930, from the inauguration of John Molson's Théâtre Royal to the emergence of professional theatre in French. Certain important events, such as the production of two

plays on Quebec national themes by Louis-Honoré Fréchette, the tours of Sarah Bernhardt, and the introduction of American-style vaudeville all helped to create a broad potential audience and a demand for professional productions in French. Some interesting light is shed on the Roman Catholic clergy's attitude to the theatre. To keep French Canadians from endangering "their souls and their mother tongue" by flocking to the English theatres, the clergy became a reluctant ally of theatre in French. The period from 1902 to 1914, known as "l'âge d'or" of Francophone theatre, is covered in some detail, but the period from 1914 to 1930 gets short shrift, partly because so few texts or documents have survived. This first essay seems to bear little relation to the photographs and documents it is meant to amplify, since they contain an admixture of material from the folowing period, and are presented in no particular order.

André-G. Bourassa gives his analysis of the second period, 1930-1965, when so many theatrical institutions were established, the first theoretical writings appeared, and the stage director emerged as an important new force. From this period date such important groups as les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent, le Rideau Vert, la Jeune Scène, le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, and le Théâtre-Club, as well as the *théâtres de poche* — les Apprentis-Sorciers, les Saltimbanques, and l'Égrégore — which staged controversial and experimental works. Bourassa provides two interesting and contrasting examples of theoretical writing, one by Claude Gauvreau, an Automatiste, associated with Emile Borduas and *Le Refus global*, and the other by Gratien Gélinas. The creation of schools such as the Conservatoire and the École Nationale de Théâtre made it possible for actors and other theatre practitioners to be trained in Quebec. Among the documents for this section are notes by Eloi de Grandmont of the founding and first year of operation of the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde.

The final section, 1965-1980, presented by Gilbert David, is politically anchored between the introduction of the Canadian flag and the rejection of the Parti Québecois' sovereignty-association strategy in the referendum of 1980. David describes the number and condition of theatres in 1965 — only about 10 houses in Montreal, most of which were unsuitable for professional productions—and then proceeds to document the amazing expansion that took place in Montreal, Quebec City and the various regions. At the end of the text he gives a very informative chronological table of the theatre companies founded during this period. It would have been helpful to have similar tables for the previous sections as well. The plays performed in these theatres illustrate three major trends discerned by David: neo-nationalism and a proliferation of Québecois playwriting, avant-garde theatre on international models, and the embracing or shunning of "Americanness" — American models of commercial success, entertainment as a product to be marketed, and production values in theatre. This was also a time of intense self-reflectiveness, with a great deal of discussion and theoretical writing about the role of theatre, plays and playwrights in defining Quebec's culture. Two important examples, Jean-Claude Germain's "Ce n'est pas Mozart mais le Shakespeare québecois qu'on assassine" (1970) and the second Manifesto of le Théâtre Euh! of Quebec City (1971) appear among the illustrations.

The pairing of essays with documentary evidence of theatres, set design, actors, scenes from productions, programs, posters, published scripts, reviews and press coverage, and theatre journals makes this book particularly useful to students of theatre history and entertaining for more general readers.

It is to be hoped that theatre companies and individual owners of theatre documents will be inspired to conserve them carefully or turn them over to institutions such as the BNQ, where they will be available for research.

BARBARA KERSLAKE

PASSION OF AGE

MARGARET AVISON, *No Time*. Lancelot Press, $9.95 paper.

C. D. MAZOFF, *Waiting for the Sun: Poetics/Theology/Rhetoric in Margaret Avison's sunblue*. Cormorant Books, $9.95.

LYRIC POETRY IS often associated with the passion of youth and the glory of dying young, but there is another style, illustrated by the mature W. B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens, which expresses the passion of age. In Stevens we find a starkness of vision and language that grows more acute as they approach death. Margaret Avison's poems in *No Time* compare favourably with Stevens' powerful last work. Just as he contemplates the bareness of reality stripped of all illusions, so she creates a minimal world of air and light, in which perception is refined until it seems elemental. *No Time* is dominated by two meditations on death, the first describing the death of Avison's friend, Jo Grimshaw, the second describing the death of her mother. Each is a poetic sequence that approaches death, contemplates it, and searches beyond it. Like Stevens, Avison is fascinated by beginnings and endings, by the renewal of imagination just when it grows most impoverished, and by the angelic gifts of nature and of love. But where he tries to step barefoot into reality, she treats reality as a threshold to the eternal. She is a religious poet, and in this respect I prefer to compare her with Emily Dickinson (echoed at least once), for whom simplicity permits intensity, which in turn offers an avenue to mystery: "The unknown, the unrecognized, the / invisibly glorious / hid in our reality / till the truly real / lays all bare."

Avison is famous for being condensed and enigmatic rather than simple, but her formidable talents are directed toward a simplicity that is the reward of intellectual and emotional effort. We still find the familiar intricacies of her style: sinuous syntax, imagistic juxtapositions, ellipses, interpolated questions and reservations. But after the struggle comes a simplicity that she treats in various ways: as faith or glory, as the uniqueness of individual things, as purified vision, as air, light, trees and water, as joy: "Under incomprehension, awe, nothing we can / account for, we nonetheless know / a forceful current / joy inexpressible." To cite one example of her technique, Avison tests ordinary words for their range of implication. The simplest words are often the most revealing: "matter," "still," "give," "receive," "suffer," the verb "to be" or common prepositions ("what 'in' there is, to go"). The unexpected density of these words yields an insight, which abolishes difficulties and which she identifies as "still" or "clear" or "simple": "There need not be, there are / no words for / what is clear."

Avison's poems are uplifting, but not in the sense of being didactic or sentimental. They provoke even when they reassure, when they affirm faith, or when they display her customary virtues of patience, endurance, sympathy and respect. Her style may be called parabolic in at least two senses. She frequently treats poems as parables in which skeletal situations point to a moral or divine pattern. Sometimes she comments on biblical passages; sometimes she describes a landscape, cityscape or dramatic encounter that serves as an analogy to launch her

thought. The poetic pattern is also parabolic because it traces an emblematic arc from the known to the unknown. Parables are "promises" — another recurring word — in that they embody a heartfelt intention, bond and resolve, all of which must look ahead for fulfillment. The poem entitled "The promise of particulars" indicates the style nicely. The particulars of life must first be savoured in the particularity of the living moment: "all everywhere / burns with minutiæ and risk and / wonder." Seen in this way, they "alert" the senses and the spirit: "and yet in that one-eyed / heart-whole wonder / tiny particulars will be known within wholeness." This unified vision, represented by a shaft of sunlight, finally promises transcendence: "The moment winks, is gone. / But everything is shaped in prospect of the / glory." The mystery given shape by Avison's parabolic form is the Incarnation, which is the eternal promise/glory/bond made particular.

The relation between æsthetic particulars and theological universals is the subject of C. D. Mazoff's study of Avison's previous volume *sunblue*. Through rhetorical analysis, he argues that her theology is Pauline rather than Johannine, Christocentric rather than Logocentric, relational rather than substantialist in its ontology. In practice, there are only several pages summarizing these doctrines. Most of the book is devoted to close readings which examine Avison's sacramental view of nature as evident in themes of release, perception, wholeness and transcendence. Apart from the occasional flourish of rhetorical terms, the readings are acute and well-informed. I have some reservations, however, about the development of theory.

Here is one instance. The Introduction announces Mazoff's resolve to "approach *sunblue* from its beginning: from what I consider to be the author's intention," an intention illustrated by a letter in which Avison describes how she compiled the poems in *The Dumbfounding*. Her retrospective authorial intention, which is already problematic, is quickly complicated by a series of other kinds of intention. There is the intentionality of Christian typology, of biblical allusion, of intertextual echo, of symbolic interpretations, and of Avison's personal repetoire of imagery. There is also the intentionality of what might be called critical resolve. Any interpretive strategy is driven to find symbolic import and creates it where necessary, as Mazoff shows when he says that the key word "sighing" from *Paradise Lost* is "skilfully left unsaid" in "A Lament." These forms of intention are complicated further by his distinction between "eisegesis" (reading into a text: intruding) and exegesis (reading out of it: "a valid hermeneutical, or interpretative enterprise"). Intentions have a bearing on Mazoff's thematic concerns, especially on the notions of wholeness and transcendence. But we are not given a supple enough account to be clear what for Avison promises wholeness — æsthetic and theological — and permits it to exceed itself.

J. M. KERTZER

CONFIDENT MUTUALITY

RON SMITH, *A Buddha Named Baudelaire*. Sono Nis Press, $7.95.

DAVID MANICOM, *Sense of Season*. Porcépic Books, $7.95.

CLAUDE LIMAN, *Becoming My Father*. The Caitlin Press, $8.95.

ALL THREE OF THESE BOOKS are significant and rewarding experiences, but I will discuss each in the order of its level of imaginative excitement for me. Smith's is a single, long-poem sequence, while Mani-

com's and Liman's books are looser collections of discrete poems, although both are focused thematically.

For me, Ron Smith's *A Buddha Named Baudelaire* is the most engaging. After setting its tone with quotations from Rimbaud, Char, and Bataille, this often surrealistic prose-poem leads the reader through the labyrinth of a developing relationship between the speaker and a 'beloved,' which can be both a human lover and the speaker's poetic art, as suggested by the phrase "White sheets, white bodies, white paper" with which the book opens and closes. Soon the relationship assumes the studied caution of a game of chess, the pieces struggling to preserve themselves within their squarely defined isolation, within the "walls" of "this grotesque geometry." It is only through escape and "assassination" that the speaker is able to move beyond the square (conventionalized) walls to accept and be accepted by the 'beloved' in "the holy grace of moonlight." The theme is the necessary death of the old, self-centred "self," or literary convention ("We embrace only when we deny that we belong to our own longing.") and the resurrection into a new vision of the mystery of the 'other' ("Yet never has your skin appeared so soft and white. A cool nakedness."). It is the theme one finds in D. H. Lawrence's "The Ship of Death" and in Martin Buber's shift from the 'I-It' to the 'I-Thou' relationship.

Smith's language and surrealistic imagery evoke remarkably the steep terror of isolation and vulnerability as well as the final joy and repose of confident mutuality. The freedom of his 'broken' form allows him to shift from the prosaic ("We rise when it's late and the night air cools our kitchen above the front stairs of the apartment house where we live") to the poetic ("The night is as quiet as bones") within a short paragraph and with great effectiveness.

David Manicom's *Sense of Season* is divided into three parts, the middle of which — a five-part single poem — bears the same title as the collection. For the most part, Manicom's poems speak in a strongly personal voice, registering with considerable force the speaker's painful awareness of his separation from the past: from ancestors, parents, and others through death; from places and seasons now lost to him; and from his young child now removed in time and place.

Manicom has an exceptionally good ear for sounds and, as the blurb on the back cover instructs, "The poems in this book are meant to be read aloud." It is only with such reading that the sonorous, almost symphonic, effects in such poems as the complex "Sense of Season" can be fully caught. This central poem opens with the speaker's characteristic sense of failure in trying to reach back to the essential past, especially of his mother as "a slender girl," while searching the "yellowing photograph" before him. The poem evokes precious memories now outgrown, now unreclaimable. It is crowded with images half-recalled, of ancestors, grandparents, parents, the colors of eyes, seasons and landscapes, of time static in memory and flowing, of a daughter now removed into her own separate time, close but unreachable. The poem laments that "tropes cannot reason" and ends: "You want a line . . . / a touch beyond auroral typeless white," a 'touch' which the poem succeeds in achieving despite the impossibilities.

Sensitivity to the potentials of sound is only one of the strengths of Manicom's poetry. His best poems also establish themselves with startlingly fresh and apt images, as in "Autumn Child" in which the speaker looks down at his small daughter nestled in his arms and sees "The velvet scalp of an infant / heart breathing through the membrane / of the crown's bruise." Ask any parent about the right-

ness of this impression. In "Stillbirth," where the forced birth of a stillborn calf works as a metaphor for 'stillborn' love, the graphic brutality of the calf's emergence and dispatch by "Hawley's Stock Removal" rivals the evocative power of Ted Hughes.

The poems in the collection's final section are more various. There are love poems set in Montreal and thoughtful musings prompted by certain evocative places in Canada and Ireland. There are also other, less personal poems that lack the intensity of the force of the personal poems.

Calude Liman's *Becoming My Father* is also a collection of highly personal poems divided into three sections. Roughly, the poems move from his responses to his father's sickness and death in the first part, to his developing relationship with his own young son in the second, to his growing awareness of what he has inherited from his father and what he is passing on to his son in the final part. Hence, the title may be seen to apply to his son as well as to himself. The collection is made even more personal by the presence of family snapshots, on the cover and within the book, which picture his father and himself at various stages of their lives.

In general, Liman's poems speak in a straight-forward fashion, in a tone and style that heightens the felt emotion behind the statement. A group of lines from his "Poem for My Father's Slow Dying" illustrates the effect gained: "One of my hands should go to his hand. But / I need both hands for this writing at bedside, / to record the sound of his leaving: / the sound is a pant. / There is a tube in his arm. / All this I record. I need both my hands." The struggle for control and the stifling of grief are dramatically evoked. The poems about himself and his father and about himself and his son almost always succeed in this manner, but one poem, "The Inheritance," dealing with his teaching his son "how to hit round stones / across the river with a walking stick" becomes a lyrical song: " 'These genes will fit you,' my violence said, / threaded wrist-to-wrist with my father's will / as it seeded itself, bone after bone, / across this wide river, from me to a son, / and into the marrow of everything still."

While the general effect of Liman's book is very moving, it is difficult to see why some poems are included, because they have no bearing on the major relationships and seem only intrusive in such an otherwise finely focused sequence, although they may have their own strengths. Among such questionable inclusions are "The Sauna," "Saturday Morning at the Hardware Store," and "Garbage Day in March."

WILLIAM LATTA

RAVENING

MORDECAI RICHLER, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Penguin, $25.95.

DAVID LODGE, THE ENGLISH NOVELIST, notes of his 1984 book *Small World* that it 'resembles what is sometimes called the real world, without corresponding exactly to it, and is peopled by figments of the imagination.' On this basis, the bootlegging dynasty of Gurskys in Mordecai Richler's *Solomon Gursky Was Here* is not the Bronfman family. Nor, as a matter of *fact*, does the name Ephraim Gursky, the grandfather of the Solomon of the title, appear in the Muster Books of the *Erebus* or the *Terror*, the ships of the ill-fated Franklin expedition in search of the North-West Passage in the mid-nineteenth century. But, as a matter of *fiction*, Ephraim Gursky was there. He was.

So Richler insists in this farraginous fiction. Combining elements of theosophy, conspiracy, fact and fiction in a volume

in which the names Oswald Mosley, Tom Driberg, Geronimo, Marilyn Monroe, 'Mad Dog' Vachon, Kurt Waldheim and R. B. Bennett (among many others) consort, Richler constructs a world which, in its Canadian lineaments, begins with the arrival of Ephraim out of darkness, heralded by a raven, the emblematic bird of grandfather and, later, of Solomon, his 'annointed one.'

> One morning — during the record cold spell of 1851 — a big menacing black bird, the likes of which had never been seen before, soared over the crude mill town of Magog, swooping low again and again. Luther Hollis brought down the bird with his Springfield. Then the men saw a team of twelve yapping dogs emerging out of the wind and swirling snows of the frozen Lake Memphremagog. The dogs were pulling a long, heavily laden sled at the stern of which stood Ephraim Gursky, a small fierce hooded man cracking a whip. Ephraim pulled close to the shore and began to trudge up and down, searching the skies, an inhuman call, some sort of sad clacking noise, at once abandoned yet charged with hope, coming from the back of his throat.

Ephraim has an eye for the main chance. His kosher rations and his adaptability enabled him to survive when all others perished. So, wearing the *talith* of his Ashkenazi heritage, the sealskins of the indigenous Netsilik, and donning a clerical collar to establish the Church of the Millenarians (and, in time, the Millenarian Trust Company), he becomes a northern magus. He conflates religious practices and symbols from the old and new worlds. His raven is 'the bird that failed Noah' and the deceitful bird with a 'smooth trickster's tongue' which, according to one version of the legend from Haida Gwai, has an 'unquenchable itch to meddle and provoke things, to play tricks on the world and change things.' Ephraim meddles with gusto in matters spiritual and worldly. He is a swindler, forger, bootlegger, gunrunner, linguist and a master of disguise.

These talents he passes on to his grandson, Solomon, the Great Gursky who, playing a game of chance with the world, always comes up '*Gimel*' and carries away all the gelt. Solomon seeks to found a latter day Kingdom of Prester John; Bert Smith, customs officer and product of the failed kingdom of Gloriana, an all-British colony in the Canadian west, is out to stop him. Smith is appalled at Canada falling to the mongrels; Solomon, listening to Hitler's speeches on short-wave radio, plans to bring Jews from Nazi Germany to the Laurentians, a scheme unlikely to be endorsed by this novel's collection of bigots.

It is Solomon's contention that 'This country has no tap root. Instead there's Bert Smith. The very essence.' Though a happier version of the Burkean notion of nation as tree might be to see it as having a fibrous root system drawing nourishment from a congeries of sources, Richler seems unready to concede the possibility. He has Tim Callaghan say: 'Canada is not so much a country as a holding tank filled with the disgruntled progeny of defeated peoples.' Bernard Gursky, the family cockatrice, in seeking a biographer, demands of Harvey Schwartz: 'For this job I don't want a Canadian. I want the best.' Moments like these trip up Richler's ebullient narrative however much the reader might grant the accuracy of his satiric darts.

Elsewhere, Richler shows himself, at best, uninterested in characterization. With women, for example, his descriptive eye comes to rest on 'high perky breasts' or 'panting bosom.' Breasts and bosom have been perky and panting for a long time. It is an exhausted idiom, the perfunctory tic of a writer heedless to all but the movement of his plot.

He is at infinitely greater pains to show us how the Solomon who said that 'living twice, maybe three times, is the best revenge' is to be glimpsed behind the names

Mr. Corbeau, Corvus Investment Trust, Raven Consolidated, Herr Dr. Otto Raven, Mr. Cuervo and, making his entrance when Solomon manipulates his own apparent demise, Sir Hyman Kaplansky. This, and the paperchase by the 'Gurskyologist' Moses Berger (of the Eastern Townships and The Caboose Bar), are Richler's real interests. He plots our way through the novel, provoking our disquiet at what we have made of our provenance.

Solomon Gursky Was Here is full of Richler's characteristically wicked and ironic touches. Many will think this mammoth novel his best yet. And many will be tempted to agree with Moses Berger that 'if Canada has a soul it was to be found in The Caboose and thousands of bars like it.' Certainly that is how Richler thumbs the scale.

At the end of the book Moses Berger reads a note that accompanied one of Solomon's journals, part of the paperchase: 'I once told you that you were no more than a figment of my imagination. Therefore, if you continued to exist, so must I.' Just so for Richler, the caboosenik, too. Solomon Gursky was here.

JOHN LAVERY

BEAUTY OF LIFE

BARBARA CAREY, *The Year in Pictures*. Quarry, n.p.

BARRY DEMPSTER, *Positions to Pray In*. Guernica, $10.00.

DON BAILEY, *Homeless Heart*. Quarry, n.p.

sometimes my life feels
like what got left out
of the year in pictures

WRITES BARBARA CAREY. A sparer Bronwen Wallace, Carey also investigates "ordinary" life, teasing out the implications of language, and searching out a reality, often a woman's reality, that is neglected or obscured by the clichéd journalistic use of language. This makes for a somewhat earnest but likeable poetry:

I wonder what it's like
to be at the height
of your power

I wonder why it takes
that shape of distance
& trajectory, of rockets
& not, say, the corkscrew
twist of how life's
coiled into the cells

why not like rain
soaking a wide
harvest into fields,
or acorns, or the
intimation of heart
in an artichoke's
outer leaves

There is also a series of very nice poems about the body. Carey suggests wittily that the beauty of breasts enables us to invent the wheel and to realize that the earth is not flat. Hers is a modest but teasingly suggestive poetry that repays re-reading.

Barry Dempster writes evocative, somewhat surrealistic poems of family and childhood, in which memories and fantasies seem to be fused.

I dreamt of a great-grandmother,
sentimental as Niagara
Falls, whispering of satellites,
astronauts, of how their light
rushed to her, or was it she
who fell through them?

Angels are like astronauts, Dempster continues, breaking down barriers.

This poet makes a kind of utopia of the ordinary beauty of life. His work displays a religious sense of wonder born of a private world touched at all times by angels and ordinary miracles. There is also nostalgia for lost childhood in "Family Photograph" as time seems to alter the content of the photograph itself:

Here, father's death mask, flesh
receding into leaves.
Mother sloping, already

halfway to the grass.
Their hope, their son, a sailor
suit abandoned on the ground.

The speaker of these poems develops new selves as time passes, and relies on an imagination that transforms the world. Even his sadness seems to be tinged with the miraculous. This makes Barry Dempster's world an interesting and colourful one to encounter even if one wonders at times if he hasn't wished away the more ugly side of life rather too easily. His poems are always well-made and absorbing.

Don Bailey has not neglected life's ugly side; his book is the most forceful, indeed brutal, of these three. It consists of four sequential monologues which tell the stories of a rapist-artist, an orphan who becomes a convict, an old female mental patient, and a young woman dying of cancer: two men and two women whose unhappy stories sometimes rhyme with one another. One could perhaps pin the label of surrealist on Don Bailey too, because of some very striking imagery, but I think psychological realist might be a more accurate one. (I have myself been called a "neo-surrealist" poet in the most recent addition to the *Literary History of Canada*, and while happy to find myself in quite good company there would probably prefer to be thought of as a psychological realist.)

Homeless Heart is a powerful set of dramatic sequences that has been performed as such in Kingston, Ontario. Don Bailey has lived the kind of life that makes it not just possible — as it might be possible for an artist who had not lived such a life — but perhaps inevitable that he should express, from inside, these four characters' intense pain. But the book also develops a moving statement of the meaning of love.

The poetry is supple and fluid too, probably the best writing Bailey has ever done. His earlier poetry often seemed to me to be fractured prose. But here the shrewd insights into character and situation of an accomplished short story writer are embodied in a flowing rhythm worthy of an Al Purdy or (again she comes inevitably to mind) Bronwen Wallace.

Amidst all the pain of Bailey's four characters' lives there are glimpsed images of the world's beauty, notably some recurrent blue herons. Don Bailey's empathy is akin, perhaps, to that of his friend Margaret Laurence, whose last novel also featured a blue heron and expressed great compassion for the outcast, disadvantaged and dispossessed.

TOM MARSHALL

TRANSCENDENCE

JOHN ORANGE, *P. K. Page and Her Works*. ECW, $9.95.

IN 1985 ECW PUBLISHED "P. K. Page: An Annotated Bibliography" as part of *The Annotated Bibliography of Canada's Major Authors* series. The Page bibliography was compiled by John Orange, who has now published *P. K. Page and Her Works* in ECW's *Writers and Their Works* series. Both the bibliography and the long essay/monograph are very welcome additions to our too-small critical canon on one of our finest poets, and both publications are indispensable to any future scholarship on P. K. Page.

John Orange's essay is obviously intended as both an introduction to and a summary of Page's work to date, although he is careful to note that Page is still writing, and therefore suggests that critics be tentative in their conclusions about her. The approximately fifty pages of text in *P. K. Page and Her Works* are divided into "Biography," 'Tradition and Milieu," "Critical Overview and Context," and "Page's Works." In "Tradition and Milieu," for example, Orange discusses some

very interesting and diverse influences on Page:

> In a number of interviews, Page has listed the writers who influenced her when she began to take a serious interest in poetry in the 1930's and 1940's. She herself had not read the Symbolists, but the generation preceding Page had, and it is this generation that influenced her directly. Besides Garcia Lorca, she lists (in order of importance) Rilke, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot (at least his concept of the objective correlative), Cecil Day Lewis, Wilfred Owen (for his experiments in partial rhyme), and later, Stephen Spender and Wallace Stevens. Her favourite nineteenth-century Canadian poet is Archibald Lampman.

It is difficult to determine just exactly how these influences show up in Page's work. A great deal of work needs to be done on this question, but Orange's brief discussion provides a good starting place.

Orange also provides one of the few critical discussions we have of *The Sun and the Moon* (Page's early novel, first published in 1944 under the pseudonym Judith Cape). He remarks on Page's "feminist views" as they are reflected in the novel, noting her examination of "[women's] capitulation to nostalgic and sentimental notions of romantic love which ironically serve a patriarchial value system. . . ." In her early twenties (which is when she wrote *The Sun and the Moon*), Page may or may not have been conscious of "a patriarchal value system"; if she was, she was not using this kind of language to identify it. But Orange's point is well-taken, and I agree that there is a kind of feminism percolating under the surface of the novel. *The Sun and the Moon* is, however, a very early piece of writing and is not typical of Page's mature work, except perhaps in its interest in "mystical" experience.

Orange discusses Page's poetry by book, summarizing each volume's themes, patterns, and concerns. He is thorough in his coverage, touching on all of the key poems and providing useful commentary on the various connections among poems and on Page's symbology. But a lack of space and the apparent need for some sort of coverage of most of Page's poems mean that not many poems are analyzed in detail, and Orange is forced to summarize Page's technical development in a way that results only in vagueness:

> Rhythms, line lengths, enjambement, concise similes, and a great deal of alliteration heighten the moods of restlessness, loss, desire, and fear which lurk behind all of these poems.

Orange unifies his analysis of Page's poetry by emphasizing a theme that remains central in all of her work — the transforming power of art:

> Like Yeats, Rilke, Eliot, and Baudelaire, to name only the most relevant, Page in her earlier work tends more towards harsh criticism of her world — an attitude which furnishes her with a motive to transcend it. The positive side of that tendency is the implied belief in the existence of an ideal world, access to which is gained through the use of the creative imagination.

This transcendence is what Orange identifies in Page's poetry as "a hidden centre — an implied ideal." We can see the representation of this "centre" in Page's visual art as well. While Orange provides a lucid summary of her development as an artist, he does not undertake any real analysis of her visual work. Again, space may have prevented him from exploring in any thorough way her drawings, etchings, and paintings.

In the section entitled "Critical Overview and Context," Orange does an excellent job of presenting the trends in critical writing on Page. I must confess, however, that I am a little surprised at his failure to mention, either in this section of the essay, or in the Bibliography at the end, Rosemary Sullivan's 1978 article on Page, titled "A Size Larger Than Seeing: The Poetry of P. K. Page" (published in *Canadian Literature*). This seems to me a

curious oversight, especially since Sullivan's was the first article written after A. J. M. Smith's to treat Page's work seriously, and also because Orange's research is otherwise superb. In fact, I am overwhelmingly impressed with the amount of information Orange is able to pack into ECW's necessarily restricted format, and I will continue to rely heavily on *P. K. Page and Her Works* in my own work on Page.

CYNTHIA MESSENGER

CASSANDRA

BLAIS, MARIE-CLAIRE, *L'Ange de la solitude.* VLB, n.p.

THE TITLE OF MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS' latest novel was inspired by Jean Genêt's *Querelle de Breste* in which the angel of solitude is described as an increasingly inhuman creature shrouded in the music that remains when harmony has worn away. Blais' work plays the angel's dissonant tones of emptiness and futility on a group of women portrayed as an outpost of soul-searching nonconformism adrift in the sea of twentieth-century *fin de siècle* gloom and doom. The members of this exclusively female microcosm are introduced in "L'univers de Johnie," the first and by far longest of the novel's two segments: Doudouline the musician, l'Abeille the artist, Johnie the writer, Gérard the drug dealer, Thérèse the sociologist, Polydor the theology student preparing for the Anglican priesthood. The code names they have given themselves are the passwords to their "retraite magique." "La maison de l'Abeille," the womblike locus of their creativity where they encounter one another and from which they periodically flee, is quite literally their hive, the nucleus of their interactions. Set against the backdrop of "History" (the Depression, the death camps of World War II, the Middle East crisis) this lesbian commune serves as a metaphor for alienation. If inside the commune the chant of death is momentarily muffled by artistic pursuits, glimpses of the world beyond the embryonic shelter (Johnie's island interlude with Marianne, a globe-trotting art dealer, for instance) reveal a planet consumed by incongruous superficiality where being flows unhindered into nothingness, where sunbathers are transformed into "gisants de l'eau" and bask to the tune of machine gun fire spewed forth by Baby Doc's armies. It is a decaying world, a planet out of control where, just as the flora and fauna will be wiped out by acid rain, l'Abeille and her generation are destined to destruction by 'une compétence hystérique et avide, celle des commerçants qui dirigeaient le monde."

Blais immediately establishes the dominant theme of estrangement, as it quickly becomes apparent that despite their physical and emotional bonds, each character is a variation on the theme of alienation. This is further reinforced by the fact that their mentors are women of another generation: Paula (l'Abeille's art teacher) and Sophie (an actress, and Doudouline's mother). The latter views the commune from the distance her age affords her, seeing its members as prototypes of a "drôle de génération," ignorant of the monumental historical events she herself has experienced and uninterested in accepting social values she takes for granted.

The inevitable isolation of these women, their personal confrontation with the angel of solitude, is exacerbated by Gérard's violent death. Portents of this tragedy tacitly mark the narrative from the onset through the conferring of tangible forms to the abstract notion of absence: "Ainsi la disparition d'un être cher laissait en nous ces images inachevées, troublantes: longtemps nos âmes étaient lourdes de ces débris de choses, d'êtres vivants qui nous avaient quittés et dont le monde ex-

térieur, soudain déformé, cauchemardeux, nous renvoyait l'image." In this stunning contemplation of solitude, Blais transfers the visual stimuli which arrest the graphic artist to her own writing in such a way that objects become "météores," "signaux de la souffrance."

The aftermath of the shock of Gérard's death forms the novel's final brief chapter, Le seuil de la douleur. In this dark vision of existence, Blais suggests that beyond pain's threshold awaits something more than a confirmation of modern society's absurdity. Global apathy and the devastation in its wake transcend to a cosmic plane. Art is the sole true salvation, yet the artist is faced with creating in a world where aesthetics have been replaced by consumerism, where humanism has been crushed by a clinical, lifeless humanitarianism epitomized by the bland meals Thérèse concocts for the homeless. Hence the need for ritual. Gérard's death becomes a pretext for this rekindling of the sacred. Her passing is symbolically celebrated along with her twentieth birthday; the candles on the cake consumed symbolically by the same fire that took her life then liberated her soul through the flames of cremation. The ceremony of death is thus a reaffirmation of life. It is in this last segment of the novel that Blais, through the character Johnie, pulls together the threads of her novel to communicate a central message: History has always been decided upon by men, founded on an ideal of armed vengeance which belonged wholly to them. Women, behaving as though History did not concern them, inertly watch it unfold. Marianne comes forth suddenly in Johnie's mind as the prime example of this apathy. She is guilty on three counts: desecrating art by using it for monetary gain, misinterpreting the atrocities of war and unwittingly treating Johnie as she would a servant.

Marginality and anxiety have dominated Blais' work from its beginnings with *La Belle Bête*. They are once again the focus in *L'Ange de la solitude* where the characters' inner voices speak of issues which continue to haunt the author: the inevitable lack of communication between men and women, society's fundamentalist rejection of homosexuality, the inefficacy of the System in the face of senseless violence. In its castigation of a male-dominated society and its contemplation of the feminine dilemma from the dual vantage point of two generations of women, the novel is reminiscent of *Visions d'Anna*: Polydor views the Church as "une confrérie de pénis (...) qui décide si oui ou non nous devons avoir des enfants, après nous avoir déflorées"; Sophie muses on the theater as "une institution d'hommes où les femmes passaient inaperçues, on n'écoutait pas ce qu'elles avaient à dire." It is the pervasiveness and expository nature of these social commentaries which cause them to intrude upon the narrative rather than blend with it, ultimately weakening an otherwise provocative work. One cannot help feeling that Blais has cast herself in the role of a modern day Cassandra, prophesying a twenty-first century "sans féerie" where "l'art, c'est fini."

Stylistically, although the force of certain images is riveting, the overriding mood is one of torpor, an effect Blais doubtless set out to achieve. The seemingly interminable paragraphs punctuated only sparsely by breaks, the meandering interior monologues give this slim work a density which mirrors the sensation of weight and claustration continually evoked in the narrative. A reflection both on and of the universe it creates, the text is a masterful exemplification of Johnie's impression that "même si on avançait vers la mort chaque jour, il ne se passait rien, il ne se passait rien."

CONSTANTINA MITCHELL

FEMINISM & MISOGYNY

SYLVIE CHAPUT, *Margaret Fuller (1810-1850)*. Editions Saint-Martin, $24.95.

MARGARET FULLER, *La Femme au 19e Siècle*, Traduction et Notes de Slyvie Chaput. Editions Saint-Martin, $19.95.

SERGE VIAU, *Baie des Anges*. Boréal, $14.95.

WITH TWO VOLUMES recently published by Editions Saint-Martin, Sylvie Chaput has rendered a great service to Francophones interested in women's history and in 19th-century American intellectual history. Her well-documented autobiography of Margaret Fuller presents a portrait of one of the early advocates of women's culture and rights, set against the larger pictures of New England Transcendentalism and revolutionary Europe. Chaput's translation of Fuller's 1845 essay *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is elegant and well supplemented by extensive historical and literary notes.

In the study of literary life during what is often called the American Renaissance, Margaret Fuller's role has long been overshadowed by her friends, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Henry Channing, and Henry David Thoreau. Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1810, Margaret received a rigorous classical and literary education under the watchful eye of her father, Timothy, who was a lawyer, state senator, and United States Congressman. Although her father's alma mater, Harvard, was not open to her, Margaret did join the Cambridge intellectual circle which led eventually to her involvement in the Transcendentalist Club in Concord and to her friendship with the founders of Brook Farm, a Fourierist utopian community in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Between 1836 and 1844, Fuller earned a meager living teaching, translating German texts, and editing the *Dial*, the philosophical, religious, and literary review published by members of the Transcendentalist group. In 1844, Fuller accepted the offer of Horace Greeley to write literary, art, and social criticism for his *New York Tribune*, making her one of the first American women journalists. It was also at Greeley's suggestion that Fuller expanded an essay to the condition of women and published it in 1845 under the title *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*.

In the summer of 1846, Fuller left New York for Europe, visiting England, Scotland, France, and Switzerland before settling in Rome in the fall of 1847. Fuller's reputation and her writings gave her access to literary and political salons where she made friends with English writer Thomas Carlyle, Italian political activist Guiseppe Mazzini, the Polish radical Adam Mickiewicz, French writer George Sand, and others. In Rome, she began a love affair with Angelo Ossoli, a Roman nobleman considerably younger and less educated than herself. Whether or not Fuller and Ossoli were ever married is a subject of much historical debate; what is certain is that Margaret gave birth to their son, Angelo Eugenio Filippo Ossoli, on September 5, 1848. By this time, Italy was in the throes of political ferment. As delighted as she was with motherhood, she was equally excited by the efforts of Roman republicans such as her lover/husband to establish Rome as an independent republic. While Ossoli fought the invading French army with the National Guard, Margaret ran a hospital for wounded soldiers at the request of her friend, the fiery Princess Belgiojoso. After the defeat of the republican movement, Margaret, Ossoli, and the baby lived together in Florence until, low on money and future prospects, they decided to set sail for New York in May of 1850. Tragically, all three drowned in a shipwreck within sight of Fire Island, New York.

Margaret Fuller's body was never recovered.

The enigmatic Fuller and her melodramatic Italian adventures have fascinated a number of American historians and recently feminist scholars have renewed interest in her life and writings. Sylvie Chaput admits that her biography is more narrative and explanatory than interpretative. She acknowledges her debt to earlier Fuller scholars such as Mason Wade, Bell Gale Chevigny, Paula Blanchard, Joseph Jay Deiss, and Joel Myerson. Chaput's work could have been improved by some judicious editing. There are some digressions and obfuscations which annoy the reader and an "Epilogue" which has little to do with Fuller. Nonetheless, for the Francophone reader whose knowledge of English is not sufficient to read Chevigny's anthology (*The Woman and the Myth: Margaret Fuller's Life and Writings*) or Blanchard's biography (*Margaret Fuller: From Transcendentalism to Revolution*), Chaput's biography is very good.

The translation of Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* which Chaput has published as a companion volume deserves high praise. The essay marks a turning point in Fuller's life. Before 1845, she had preferred pure intellectual inquiry to social action and avoided commitment to the abolitionist and feminist movements. In *Woman*, Fuller criticizes marriage as degrading to women, the educational system as limiting women's possibilities, prostitution as the product of the double moral standard. She argues that, in order to obtain the property rights, political rights, child custody rights, and vocational freedom they deserve as man's equals in the eyes of God, women must stop expecting men to take care of them and work for their own liberation. The essay examines at great length notions of "masculinity" (associated with heroism, energy, creative genius) and "femininity" (characterized by intuition, magnetism, spirituality) and arrives at the rather modern conclusion that human beings have both masculine and feminine qualities. Chaput does an admirable job translating Fuller's difficult, often obtuse and overblown language into very readable French. The excellent notes clarify the numerous references to mythological, literary, and historical personages Fuller mentions in her lengthy discussion of female role models. Chaput has performed a great service by making this important text available to Francophone feminist scholars.

On the other hand, feminists should be appalled by Serge Viau's first published noved, *Baie des Anges*. The novel recounts a week in the life of Léo, a Montreal counter-culture freelance journalist who plans to spend a week visiting an old friend in Baie des Anges working on translating the songs of American singer, Tom Waits. Although distracted by booze, drugs, and sexual adventures, Léo soon realizes that life in the scenic village on the St. Lawrence has been disturbed by the mysterious disappearances of twelve young girls. There are no clues as to the identity of the abductor, not even corpses. A rich local merchant hires Léo to find the "Bonhomme Sept-Heures de Baie des Anges," but he is more interested in his hedonistic pursuits than in solving the crimes. Eventually he stumbles across the maniacal criminal, a fat old butcher whom he catches in the process of cutting up and devouring his thirteenth victim. Searching for some meaning in the chaos produced by the unbridled libido, Léo arrives at the startling conclusion that he and all men are equally capable of the horrible crimes committed against innocent young girls. In a moment of alcohol-induced lucidity, he recognizes the amorality and perversity of his erotic fantasies. He prefers to interpret his sleazy adventures as a voyage of initiation or a quest

to possess Beauty which would enable him to abolish Time and Death. It is a shame that Viau could not find a story worthy of his considerable writing talent. The presentation of women characters and sick crimes recounted in this off-beat murder mystery are offensive even in the age of sexual liberation.

JANE MOSS

DOUBLE-FLOWING RIVER

Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence. Ed. Kristjana Gunnars. Turnstone, $10.95 pa.

IT MAY BE WORTH speculating why there has been so little critical attention — as opposed to readerly devotion — to Margaret Laurence. (This is striking in relation to the corpus of work on Atwood, for example — an author who is roughly comparable in production, importance, and length of career.) The editor of this volume notes that Laurence scholarship is still "in its beginning stages" and that there is a "limited" number of works on her. Why this should be so is a puzzle.

A partial answer may be found in the critical writing which has been done to date. A tendency to biographical criticism is overwhelming, but reasonable: the strong personal presence of Laurence herself, and her deployment of lived and historical material, made this inevitable. Other work is frequently thematic; at its best, it has assisted understanding of the persistent concerns, motifs, and *topoi* of the fiction. Feminist work has also centred on Laurence, for her depiction of admirable women characters and the complex and overdetermined relationships between and among sexes and generations. But there has been a lack of attention to what one might call Laurence's *artistry*. Close analysis of style and structure, and "deconstructionist" or rhetorical readings — that is, readings which work against the grain of the text — are absent.

This omission seems to come, in part, from a reverence for Laurence's work; in part, from a sense that hers are somehow *real* rather than fictional worlds. Laurence's language — "normal," colloquial, voiced — seems transparent, noticeable (where it is at all) solely as a feature of the character's idiolect. But it is this very sense of overwhelming verisimilitude, of linguistic naturalness, of what one might even call claim to truth — and the way in which Laurence has achieved these — that needs to be considered.

Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence is varied in topic and treatment. Two memoirs of Laurence frame the text. Walter E. Swayze traces Laurence's career of concern — as writer, speaker, and consciousness-raiser — with attention to the Christian dimension of her work. (He raises in passing one possible reason for the restriction of critical attention. It is difficult to find influences, formulas, frames for such iconoclastic fictions.) Per Syersted narrates moving incidents from Laurence's final days, with information about her growing reputation in Scandinavia.

Feminist perspectives are provided by several critics. Helen Buss takes up the notion of "life writing" (seeing it not as a mimesis but as a realization of an identity theme), and notes Laurence's recurrent division of the psyche into male and female principles. Diana Brydon focusses on the depiction of female experience, seeing female subjectivity worked out through first-person narration, inter-relationality with other characters, and self (mirrored) identity. Aritha Van Herk takes up Brydon's concern with voice and silence in her reading of the erotic disruptive glossolalia of *A Jest of God*. Keith Louise Fulton problematizes Laurence's

"feminism," bringing it into relation with her more expressly-stated "humanism." The question, Fulton concludes, "it not whether Laurence is a feminist writer, but whether we are feminist readers."

Two other papers, in very different ways, look at Laurence's use of the Biblical and biblical allusion. David Williams provides a creative/critical response to *The Stone Angel*, setting up an interwoven dialogue to show Hagar's inner and deep dilemmas. Examining "The Novel Religion of Margaret Laurence," Hans Hauge convincingly places Laurence and her work in relation to the social gospel movement.

Four of the essays point the way to newer approaches to criticism on Laurence. Constance Rooke places *The Stone Angel* in the genre she terms the "*Vollendungsroman*" (the novel of "winding down," of the final days of life) and accordingly categorizes its distinctive motifs and patterns. This procedure suggests that genre criticism is a fruitful area for further work. Paul Hjartarson uses the doubled river of *The Diviners* as a metaphor for split subjectivity (in turn, the fictional split into narrator and character, or narrator and narrated), in an essay which demonstrates the potential of attention to narrative and rhetorical structuring. Craig Tapping looks at the lesser-read African fictions and transcriptions and the interchange between Laurence and Nigerian writers, to make a case for her position in the postcolonial context. Herbert Zirker provides an analysis of the rich semantic field of the word "loon" — its etymology and colloquial occurrences — as a sample of the wide range of denotations and connotations at work, even on the smallest scale, in Laurence's fiction.

Crossing the River, editor Kristjana Gunnars informs us, was originally conceived as a *Festschrift* for Laurence; the plurality of the volume is especially appropriate. A survey of approaches to Laurence and a hint of work to come, this volume provides a fitting tributary to Margaret Laurence's double-flowing river.

HEATHER MURRAY

ENCHANTED SPACE

ALICE MUNRO, *Friend of My Youth*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, $17.95.

THE WONDERFUL STORIES of Alice Munro are a little like hallucinations. They are most intense just when she is being most precise about reference points in the real world. The photograph of Almeda Joynt Roth in the story "Meneseteung," for example, is dated 1865 while the book is published "later, in 1873." Such precision invites a certain kind of attention only to displace it. The main focus of a Munro story is not really on the story line or even on how the world looks. It is, rather, on people in the *act* of looking. Yes, we say, yes: this is how we look at the world. Even as we say this, however, we become aware of the fluidity of the shapes we look at. The "shapes of ice" framed in "Pictures of Ice"; the slippery shape that the singer tries to hold on to in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass"; the shapes that the women try to become in "Wigtime." It is as we try to hold them fast that we confront our own participation in the construction of these shapes.

Of all the passing images, the most haunting is that of the mother. The daughter's failure to understand or represent the mother has been at the heart of Munro's work since "The Peace of Utrecht" — a story that Munro herself has described as being "about" her own mother. *Friend of My Youth* is dedicated by Munro to the memory of her mother and the title story is a profoundly ironic reflection on the process of grieving a mother. In the opening paragraphs of the

story, Munro refers once again to the "paralyzing disease" that claimed her mother's life. Munro's stories seem always to insist on this particular thread of referentiality. It's as if it *has* to be Parkinson's Disease because that is what Munro's mother really had. The thread of referentiality always leads, however, to a conscious dead end.

The daughter in "Friend of My Youth" mocks her own obsession. The mother in the story teaches at "a one-room school, called Grieves School" and boards "with the Grieveses" (FY, 5). The sheer awkwardness of the proper noun turns it into a verb. The story recalls Fame's description, in "The Progress of Love," of "something swelling out behind" the mother's stories like a "cloud, a poison, that had touched [her] mother's life." "And when I grieved my mother," writes Fame, "I became part of it."

It was in "The Ottawa Valley" (a much earlier Munro story) that the daughter first confronted the stark reality that she would never "get rid of" the mother, and Munro here returns to that setting. The narrator notes that it "was not a valley at all, if by that you mean a cleft between hills. . . ." This phrase is an almost exact quotation from "The Ottawa Valley": "It was no valley. I looked for mountains, or at least hills. . . ." While these two passages both refer to a specific region of Ontario, they act (since the Valley is not a valley), like mirrors set up to question reality.

What she does with space, Munro also does with time. Past and present, foreground and background, make up an increasingly dense palimpsest like the layered wallpaper in "The Progress of Love." Confronted with the task of re-presencing the absent shape of the mother in recorded history, Munro rejects the old narrative patterns and opts instead for clarifying moments. Part of her strategy is a camouflage similar to what Kaja Silverman calls thriftshop dressing. The mother's old flowery phrase "*Friend of My Youth*," like the name Flora and other vintage images, is thriftily recycled and reinvested with power. Despite her affection for abandoned cultural objects, Munro cherishes them without nostalgia. Her irony, however, is never corrosive.

Not all the stories in this collection, of course, are overtly concerned with the mother. They share, however, a focus on exploring different ways of looking at the past. The most astonishing is the story "Meneseteung" — the title of which hints at a conjunction of *menace*, *tongue*, and *menstruation*. It is a mock-historical fiction resembling an elegant practical joke. Munro beguiles us with excessive precision of detail into expecting conventional historical accuracy. The effect is like a literary version of *trompe-l'oeil*.

Meda, the nineteenth century "poetess" in the story, "walks upstairs leaving purple footprints and smelling her escaping blood and the sweat of her body." The bleeding edges of these footprints are a conscious absurdity — like self-conscious purple prose — and they make it impossible to essentialize Meda's power. Munro's women do not write with blood or milk. Their compositions are seen as analogous, rather, to cosmetics or to needlework. The flow of Meda's words starts along with her menstrual flow in what is the most "natural" and yet the most daring conflation in the story. Munro dares us to dismiss Meda's poems as so many spontaneous abortions.

So it is that we catch ourselves in the act of looking — looking at how we have decorated the violence in the world we have made. The story does not lead to an easily defined political outrage, and yet there is tremendous implied anger that shakes "Meneseteung" on its very foundations. If you listen carefully, you will hear *wrath* in the name Roth.

The problem of moral responsibility

rises ominously up to the decorated surface of this story as we watch Meda watching a woman being battered. Almeda is an unwilling voyeur and her profound reluctance is duplicated in the writer and the reader. What else is there to do as you watch the decorative patterns of the past coming explosively to life? The story seems to isolate the act of mediation as a response to this question. Meda is rescued from oblivion only because the narrator takes the trouble to *be* the listener or reader. If Meda, however, is invented by Munro, then this posture is profoundly ironic.

The questions in Munro's stories multiply in this way. The stories are like the conscious simulation of *trompe-l'oeil*. They clear an enchanted space in which, when you have finished reading, you can question the "reality" you live in.

MAGDALENE REDEKOP

ROSINANCE

DALE MCINTOSH, *History of Music in British Columbia 1850-1950*. Sono Nis, $27.95 cl.

AS FAR AS I AM AWARE, this is the first book on the history of music devoted solely to the music of British Columbia. As such I welcome this publication. Once I got into the book, however, I began to notice a curious dichotomy between the stated date span "1850-1950" and its contents. The cut-off date of 1950 is unfortunate because it excludes such notable events as the Vancouver International Festival of the early 1960's, under the artistic direction of Nicholas Goldschmidt. During such events Vancouver stands tiptoe on the international music scene. If in retrospect this festival appears to have been a premature venture one cannot help thinking that the festival left a significant artistic impression on the City of Vancouver which was to bear fruit a decade or two later.

The cut-off date of 1950 results in unevenness of coverage. Activities of some musical groups and associations are mentioned up to 1988, but other groups are excluded, apparently because they did not come into existence until after 1950. A case in point is the Vancouver Opera Association founded in 1959. It does receive a brief mention, but its many memorable productions with such notable stars as Joan Sutherland and Placido Domingo receive no coverage either at the end of the chapter or in the five tables within the chapter. Compare this with the fact that Dawson Creek gets its yearly productions named up to the end of 1988. A student of operatic history in B.C. referring to this book must receive a distorted view of the subject.

I wish that both the author and the publisher had chosen as a cut-off point a more suitable date such as 1971, British Columbia's centennial year. This would have permitted them to include developments such as the founding of the Community Music School of Greater Vancouver (now the Vancouver Academy of Music) which again is only incidentally mentioned, the Langley Community Music School, the Courtenay Youth Music Camp, and the Shawnigan Lake Summer School of the Arts (now the Johannesen International School of the Arts).

This work is also restrictive in the sense that it focuses strictly on music, leaving out needed detail for comparison. For instance, the book mentions that two music lessons of one-half hour each cost $4.00 per month in 1897. It would have given the reader a better perspective if the book had also stated the cost of, say, a pound of butter or steak. Nor does the book appear to mention the price for attending a symphony concert in a centre such as Vancouver or Victoria.

Nevertheless, Dale McIntosh's book does contain many interesting archival and

other photographs, and amusing anecdotes about swindlers and adventurers. It relates the fascinating story of Sir Thomas Armstrong, the adjudicator of a choral competition, who amassed all the small choirs which entered the competition together right then and there to rehearse with them and demonstrate the potential of a large choir. I was also captivated by the narrative of Emily Carr, which describes the arrival of the first piano in the Colony of British Columbia. The famous painter describes how the piano was carried on the backs of Indians, how the Indians put the piano down outside the house to rest, how the girls of the family rushed out of the house to unlock the piano with a key and play it, and how the Indians, in astonishment, looked up to the sky and into the woods to see where the sound was coming from. These are the types of stories that make the reading of a history book a joy, and provide welcome relief from the monotonous recitation of names and dates which are a necessary part of such an undertaking.

A particular omission should be rectified in a future edition. I refer to the recognition, insufficient as yet, of the various funding organizations, ranging from The Canada Council and the British Columbia Cultural Fund, to the various smaller community arts councils. The first two named organizations each receive incidental mention in the book. It is an established fact that music, and the arts in general, require heavy subsidies from various levels of government. The degree of importance the country, the province, or the community, attaches to the arts is often revealed in the amout of funding made available to the arts organizations and to individual artists. Bearing this in mind, it seems only proper to name organizations, both governmental and private, that make musical events possible — be they symphony concerts, opera productions, solo recitals, or musical lectures. The omission of such organizations as the Cherniavsky Junior Club for the Performing Arts, the Koerner Foundation, and the Burnaby Clef Society (which for forty years has held musical soirees and scholarship competitions) comes to mind.

Still, the wealth of information that McIntosh and his team of researchers dug up is impressive if not comprehensive. The checklist at the end of each chapter is useful, as are the extensive bibliography, the general index, and the index of names. I hope that a companion book will soon follow that deals with more recent developments in the history of music in the Province of British Columbia.

KEIKO PARKER

FOLKLORIC HERITAGE

EDITH FOWKE, *Canadian Folklore*. Oxford University Press, Paper $9.95.

ROBERT A. GEORGES AND STEPHEN STERN, *American and Canadian Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore. An Annotated Bibliography*. Garland, Hardcover, n.p.

NON-FOLKLORISTS, as most of us are, tend to associate folklore with traditional practices surviving from a vanished culture and usually performed in a ceremonial context. But readers of Edith Fowke's *Canadian Folklore*, will not only be introduced to the wide range of practices that qualify as folklore; they will also appreciate the central place that folklore holds in the development of popular culture. The task of condensing in a small volume the folkloric heritage of a country as culturally diverse as Canada, and of rendering it accessible to non-specialists, is not an easy one. The author, one of Canada's leading authorities in this field, succeeds egregiously. In nine short chapters, she defines the field in the light of a constantly changing conceptual landscape and discusses the various genres of lores and practices that constitute the 'stuff' of folklore

— from tales to cookbooks. Throughout her discussion, her main concern is to describe the particular character of the Canadian folkloric heritage, and to explain its complexity in a country whose history has been marked by successive waves of peopling, and by a strong ethnocultural regionalism.

Thus, readers will not be surprised to learn the large extent to which Canadian folklore is derivative, and how important it is to view it as part of the process of immigration and adaptation to a new life in Canada. Readers will also appreciate the author's attempt to chart a geography of Canadian folklore, one that helps understand the unequal performance of the various regions in this field. But folklore is also a discipline, and so one of the author's main concerns is to show how this field of inquiry has evolved in Canada from the early, pioneering efforts of Ernest Gagnon (who in 1865 authored the first major Canadian folklore collection), to the current interest among Canadian folklorists for the various aspects of material culture. Important features of this evolution are the preponderant role played by French Canadian folklorists, particularly during the formative stage of the discipline, and the growing institutionalisation of folklore research and collection — a tendency that to some extent may be seen as a reflection of the central place of ethnocultures in the Canadian political arena.

Students of Canadian literature will particularly appreciate the author's discussion of the extent to which folklore has either inspired, or has been incorporated in, Canadian fiction. While the cross-fertilization between folklore and literary forms has been central to the work of prominent Canadian writers — from Louis Hémon to Margaret Atwood — it constitutes a little charted research topic in the increasingly rich literary landscape of non-English and non-French Canada. Finally, besides being a survey, *Canadian Folklore* is also a research tool. The long bibliographic section the author has appended to her volume, while clearly not an exhaustive one, reflects the major subdivisions in the field, and should prove extremely useful to persons interested in pursuing further readings.

For Edith Fowke folklore relating to non-English and non-French ethnocultures is only one category, but it forms the sole subject of *American and Canadian Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore: An Annotated Bibliography* by Robert A. Georges and Stephen Stern. The 1900 entries that comprise this bibliography refer to essays and books published between 1888 and 1980, all in English, dealing with the folklore of European and Asian immigrants and their American- and Canadian-born descendents. Using an elaborate but clearly explained system of indexing, the entries are subdivided into 56 sections, each one dealing with a separate ethnic group, and one General Section that lists works of a theoretical and methodological character. A series of additional indexes enable readers to retrieve entries referring to specific authors, folklore forms and topics, as well as to geographical areas.

The reader is warned that, owing to problems of accessibility to sources, "coverage for the United States is more comprehensive than that for Canada." But Canadian immigrants in the United States are not included among the 56 ethnocultural groups. Thus, researchers interested in the folklore of the large New England French-Canadian immigrant population, will find this bibliography of little help. Still, this bibliography constitutes an essential tool for researchers working in this field of folklore, and stands as but another indication of the more advanced state of immigration and ethnic studies in the United States as compared to Canada.

BRUNO RAMIREZ

PATRIARCHY

PATRICIA SMART, *Écrire dans la maison du père. L'Emergence du féminin dans la tradition littéraire du Québec.* Québec/Amérique 1988. $23.95.

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN on contemporary women writers in Québec, and several anthologies of critical essays have appeared in the last couple of years. Patricia Smart's book is the first full-length study devoted to the systematic contextualisation of women's writing in Québec, in relation to the dominant ideology, male writing, and precedents for the emergence of a feminine voice in Québec literature. Some of the latter go back to the late nineteenth century.

The authors treated are first Laure Conan, whose *Angéline de Montbrun* (1884) serves as a foundation and key to the concept of "writing in the father's house," and Germaine Guèvremont, whose *Le Survenant* and its sequel, *Marie Didace* (1945, 1947) are seen as subverting the "roman de la terre" typified by *Trente Arpents.* Anne Hébert's poetry is compared to that of her cousin Saint-Denys Garneau, showing "la défaite du fils, la transgression de la fille par rapport à la Loi du Père." A perceptive analysis of *Bonheur d'occasion* ("le réalisme au féminin") brings out many aspects of Roy's much studied novel which have frequently been noticed by female readers but not previously incorporated into a coherent interpretation of the ambivalence of the women characters, especially Rose-Anna, and of the relationships between them. In her reassessment of the role and character of Emmanuel, generally regarded as the weakest element in the novel, Smart may project the model that Roy "should have" created, rather than the "étourneau" actually depicted; nevertheless, this analysis stimulates new reflection on what seemed an exhausted topic.

The subsequent chapters, "Le cadavre sous les fondations de l'édifice: la violence faite à la femme dans le roman contemporain" and an analysis of Hubert Aquin's *Neige noire,* resume the major elements of the framework established: patriarchy as "la maison du Père," built on a foundation whose strength lies in the brutal suppression of the feminine Other. From all the dead mothers of the early novels to Anne Hébert's "petite morte" blocking the threshold, male erection is exposed as dependent on female de-jection. The complicity of women in accepting object roles is not neglected. The resistance of those who persisted in voicing their presence, and eventually their opposition, as subjects, culminates in a tribute to France Théoret's poetry.

Epigraphs underline the psychanalytic approach adopted. Variations on the Oedipal triangle recur as a series of diagrams showing the relationship between fathers, daughters and would-be suitors, leading to an interpretation of Théoret's work as an attempt to "approprier Electre" and "dire les secrets de famille." The allusions to Luce Irigaray's radical revision of psychoanalytic theory are particularly striking in their relevance. Like Irigaray, Smart adopts a stance of wary optimism, based on the hope that male perceptions also are changing: but her study shows how deeply hostility to the feminine is embedded in the québécois psyche and to what extent the fragile québécois male ego has depended on it for survival. In fact, the assumption of typical or exaggerated patriarchal values in Québec is questionable, when one takes into account the images of castrated or effeminate male figures in a colonized and religious society. The fact that québécois men have perceived themselves as "Other" may however have simply produced even greater oppression/repression of the overtly feminine. How universal is this model, and how specific to Québec?

Readers from other backgrounds will be challenged by the assumptions of "difference" implied here.

As a self-confessed "Canadienne anglaise amoureuse de la culture québécoise," Patricia Smart has provided a perspective which is both from outside and inside. By choosing to publish her book in French, she has addressed a québécois audience; by concentrating on several of the authors most frequently studied outside Québec, she has produced a provocative overview which will prove useful to English Canadians teaching Québec literature. In a study which is practical and polemical rather than theoretical in focus, she has succeeded in combining a high level of textual analysis with eminent readability — which is no doubt why this work won the Governor General's award for non-fiction in French (surely a rare achievement for an anglophone).

VALERIE RAOUL

BRITISH PERSPECTIVE

CHRIS WEEDON, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

THIS OVERVIEW of the problematic relations between feminist practice and poststructuralist theory claims to assume no prior knowledge. In fact, the author does seem to assume some exposure to works such as Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics*. Weedon shares with Moi a position focused on British attempts to weld/wield together the implications of French poststructuralist thought and a pragmatic concern for social change. The bibliography has no allusions to relevant American studies, such as Alice Jardine's *Gynesis*. For those of us immersed in American reactions to French influence, the British perspective provides a refreshingly lucid coherency. Such clarity nevertheless poses further problems, when rationality and common sense are the values brought into question.

Weedon begins by setting out the political foundations of feminism and patriarchy. She makes it clear that theory will be assessed according to its usefulness in the fight for change. Resistance to theory on the part of some feminists is condemned: her aim is to make it accessible. As one would expect, the paramount role of language is emphasized, as is the quandary of proclaiming the value of the feminine without reverting to essentialist concepts of what it is. For Weedon, this dilemma is inseparable from a consideration of class and race.

In the chapter entitled "Principles of Poststructuralism" the author somewhat archly laments the "impenetrability of many important texts for women without privileged access to higher education." Feminism is divided into the now familiar categories of liberal, radical-separatist and (superior but imperfect) socialist. The implications of each branch are situated in relation to the common need for "a theory of the relationship between subjectivity and meaning, meaning and social value." Poststructuralism is perceived as providing a way of conceptualizing the relationship between language, consciousness and social institutions. It is not presented as monolithic, and one of the strengths of this study is the way in which apparent divergences are broached, through their relationship to the theory of subjectivity (more convincingly than by Paul Smith in *Discerning the Subject*). Weedon's preference is ultimately for Foucault's concept of discursive fields.

Separate chapters deal with "Feminist Poststructuralism and Psychanalysis," "Language and Subjectivity" and "Discourse, Power and Resistance." In the first of these, comparisons are made between Chodorow, Irigaray, Cixous and

Kristeva, in relation to Juliet Mitchell's interpretation of Lacan. Feminist emphasis on pre-oedipal relations emerges clearly as a unifying factor, but the basic distinction is recognized between the use of "feminine" as "female" by some and as a gender construct not necessarily related to sex by others. The relative importance assigned to speech or writing is also discerned as an important variable. Weedon brings out the centrality of psychanalysis for any theory of an unstable subject, but concludes her discussion negatively, by questioning to what extent feminists can "accept the Freudian principles of psychosexual development with their universalist patriarchal implications and their reduction of subjectivity to sexuality."

The social construction of both femininity and language is subsequently shown at work in the desire for "self-expression" of a supposedly pre-existent "true nature." Changing concepts of subjectivity are discussed in relation to complicity with oppression. This section includes a particularly succinct analysis of the thetic subject and the semiotic chora of language, as expounded by Kristeva. Weedon makes the point that, even if the feminine is divorced from the female, the equation of it with irrationality (by Kristeva) is "either to concede rather a lot to masculinity or to privilege the irrational, neither of which is very helpful politically." The common-sense tone of this remark is a good example of the difficulty of distancing oneself from the very attitudes that are being deconstructed. Weedon's subsequent discussion of the discourse on subjectivity of social science and religion prolongs the change of tone which seems at variance with the first half of chapter 4.

The following chapter, on "Discourse, Power and Resistance," seizes on Foucault's theory as eminently useful to feminism's goals. Weedon confronts the accusations of anti-humanism levelled against Foucault head-on, defending the concept of subjectivity as socially constructed and claiming this shift in perspective as an aim for feminism. "Biology and Sexual Difference" and "Feminism and the Question of Truth" are further thorny issues tackled.

The concluding section, entitled "Feminist Critical Practice," seeks to sum up the potentially productive alliance between feminist theory and strategy and the premises of poststructuralism. The discursive construction of gender is inseparable from political power. Yet this is the point at which Weedon concentrates on literary applications of theory. She justifies this shift by presenting literary criticism as the paradigm for all "reading," i.e., interpretation and the fixing/changing of meanings. Weedon gives examples of varying readings which expose the assumptions of the readers, and laments the continuing predominance of liberal humanist ideology in institutions, while reminding us that "attempts to change the literary institution from within are fraught with difficulties and the dangers of compromise or incorporation." Her final remarks come back to another issue of frustrating relevance for feminists, the fact that men must change, that masculinity also must be deconstructed if power relations are to be radically modified.

In spite of the tensions arising throughout this book, between conflicting trends within the author's subject position and shifts in the level of knowledge assumed in the reader, I would recommend Weedon's account as a thought-provoking and wide-ranging analysis of the most important questions facing feminist theorists today.

VALERIE RAOUL

JOURNAL INTIME

PIERRE HÉBERT, avec collaboration de Marilyn Baszcynski, *Le Journal intime au Québec. Structure. Evolution. Réception.* Fides, $19.95.

HENRIETTE DESSAULLES, *Journal.* Edition critique par Jean-Louis Major. Presses de l'Université de Montréal, $63.00.

NORTH AMERICAN DIARIES have been accorded a good deal of critical attention over the last few years. Those written and published in Québec have received much less. Pierre Hébert's study follows those of Yvan Lamonde (*La Littérature personnelle au Québec*, 1983) and Françoise Van Roey-Roux (*La Littérature intime du Québec*, 1983). Whereas both of these dealt with all types of autobiographical writing, Hébert concentrates exclusively on diaries. Although he prefers the term "littérature personnelle" to that of "littérature intime" for reasons associated with the problematic nature of writing for oneself alone, he nevertheless uses the expression "journal intime" in his title. This subgenre of the *diary* (which may also be far from "intime" and destined for publication) has been the subject of a large body of criticism and reflection in France and in Germany. (The inclusion of a bibliography by Marilyn Baszcynski of relevant studies in German is an unexpected bonus for comparatists, here). Hébert claims, however, that no theory of the *journal intime* has been developed. In fact, most theoretical (and especially narratological) approaches to the genre have been based on *fictional* journals, which Hébert does not generally refer to in his study, although much of what has been written on them is relevant (e.g., studies by L. Martens and V. Raoul). This is particularly true for the discussion of addressees/narratees (chapter on Lionel Groulx) and the more general analysis of the status of the writing subject in the diary, in relation to that of the ultimately literary/fictional text.

Hébert's book is divided into two parts: the first provides a historical overview of the evolution of the genre in Québec. Only published diaries are considered, and an interesting section is devoted to their reception on publication. The increase in both the number of diaries and the attention given them in the last twenty-five years is attributed to changing concepts of the "self." Whereas in the nineteenth century it was a "moi occulté," it evolved in the twentieth to a "moi recouvré" and finally a "moi affirmé." Tentative links are established with the post-colonial status of Québec and the declining influence of the Catholic Church. A parallel progression is also suggested, from a "moi inexistant" via a "moi haïssable" to a "moi aimable." However, the detailed analyses of three diaries which form the second half of the book (Henriette Dessaulles, Lionel Groulx and Saint-Denys Garneau, the last by Marilyn Baszcynski) show how problematic such distinctions are. The diary of Henriette Dessaulles, for example, illustrates a reverse shift from "moi aimable" to "moi haïssable" to "moi inexistant." To be sure, had she been writing in 1970 rather than in 1870, the eclipse of Henriette Dessaulles as she becomes Madame Maurice Saint-Jacques would be interpreted quite differently. One weakness of the discussion of subjectivity here is that gender identity is not specifically taken into account. Lionel Groulx is a priest and Saint-Denys Garneau experiences "un besoin féminin de se mirer," but these feminizing characteristics are not deemed relevant to the narratological focus of the detailed analyses.

Hébert makes his most important contribution in the distinction he develops between "thème" and "rhème," the former being what is narrated on the level of events or factual information, the latter the indications of the narrator's involvement. The interest of the "récit" in the diary is correctly diagnosed as being on

the level of the latter. A useful method of analysis is illustrated in the sections on Dessaulles and Saint-Denys Garneau. The chapter on Groulx focuses on the question of the narratee(s). It would be interesting to attempt a combination of both approaches, to elucidate the relationship between the "rhèmes" and hypothetical addressees. The status of the latter in the private diary remains problematic, especially that of *imaginary* narratees who, even if designated by names implying certain characteristics (such as "God" or "real" people) are projections of the narrator and contribute to the ultimate "fictionality" of texts initially claiming to reveal or discover the "truth."

The relationship of Self-Other-Text would obviously emerge differently if the approach adopted were marked by Lacan and Derrida rather than Gusdorf and Mauss. However, the questions raised are central and difficult ones. They remain in the background in the detailed, meticulously graphed structuralist analyses of the three individual texts. Other diaries mentioned, such as Marcel Lavallée's *Journal d'un prisonnier* (1978) are worthy of similar treatment. This study provides a wealth of bibliographical information and provocative hypotheses for those interested in the area of diaries, Québec literature in relation to its context, and narratological methods of analysis.

The diary of Henriette Dessaulles is an extraordinary example of the genre. Diaries constitute a type of text for which a critical edition is invaluable. Jean-Louis Major's edition of Dessaulles' journal is exemplary. The previous edition (1971) admitted that some passages had been expurgated, without indicating where, what and why. To what extent should the diarist's grammar and spelling be corrected or standardized? The question of "authenticity" is further complicated by the fact that the notebooks in the McCord museum contain copies of the original, made by Dessaulles herself. Producing a *printed* version of a text in which the handwriting was significant (Dessaulles was herself a graphologist) may serve as a paradigm for the shift from life to book in every diary. The editor becomes, for Dessaulles as for Anne Frank, the ultimate narratee who will serve as mediator between the diarist and her public.

VALERIE RAOUL

NOTES TO HERSELF

MARIA HALINA HORN, *A Tragic Victory*, ECW, $9.95.

AS THE LITERATURE of the Holocaust becomes an established field with a growing body of criticism following each book of poetry and fiction, our attention to the event takes less and less notice of survivors' accounts. The imperative that survivors 'get their stories down" is given lip service, but undoubtedly, it is scholarly texts, well wrought novels and poetry that gain our attention. Maria Halina Horn's *A Tragic Victory* is an account of the author's experiences in the Bialystok Ghetto, in transport to Treblinka, and in her flight across Germany after her escape from the death camp. Written after the liberation of Poland while Horn languished in a sanatorium, it is a distraught, haunted elegy to lost parents, fouled innocence and the destruction of Horn's beloved Warsaw.

No editorial effort has been made to pretty up Horn's lapses in style nor to tone down the emotional — sometimes hysterical — tone of a twenty-year old. The narrator recounts her experiences the way she might tell them around a table among friends. Horn spent only a short time in Treblinka, and her account of the war years is really a wanderer's tale, an almanac of the day to day concerns of partisans, ghetto dwellers, the toughest — or

luckiest — victims of the Holocaust who managed to slip through the cracks and hide themselves among civilians. Horn records her loss of innocence, her guilt over her inability to save her parents, in the sad, ironic lamentations that are so familiar to anyone who has spoken with survivors. *A Tragic Victory* is really an oral account, somehow bonded to the page. And the excesses in Horn's style echo the broad rhetorical strokes a storyteller uses to astound and anger her listeners. One wishes that Horn did not rely so heavily on descriptions of the war's general horror — scenes containing thousands of bullets and pools of blood are less effective than the specific details of the author's experience. The memoir also contains a shrill anti-German tone that the reader cannot simply set aside as the expression of a young woman's heartbreak. Through revisions and translations Horn has chosen to leave her cries against German barbarism intact. It is this type of honest and outspoken testimony, unprettied by literary convention, which offers a sense of how the author lives with her loss. The events that befell Maria Horn might be discovered in history books or in the dark verse of Paul Celan. But there also must be time to read a young woman's notes to herself.

NORMAN RAVVIN

LE QUÉBEC EN POÉSIE

GUY DUCHARME, *Chemins vacants*. L'Hexagone, n.p.

ANDRÉ DUHAIME, *Pelures d'oranges/Orange Peels*, édition bilingue. Traduction anglaise de Dorothy Howard. Editions Asticou, n.p.

COLLECTIF, *Le Québec en poésie*. Gallimard/Lacombe, "Folio Junior," n.p.

PREMIÈRES TENTATIVES poétiques, haïkus modernes, anthologie retraçant l'évolution de la poésie du Québec des origines jusqu'à l'ère contemporaine: autant de manifestations attestant la variété ainsi que la longévité d'un genre littéraire vivace. Sémiosis et mimésis se retrouvent dans les trois oeuvres en question qui représentent concurrement le passé, le présent et l'avenir de la poésie québécoise.

Guy Ducharme offre sa première oeuvre, *Chemins vacants*, lapidaire et construite d'images évoquant mouvement spatial et temporel. Le jeune poète semble percevoir le lien qui relie l'homme au monde ambiant à travers une perspective géométrique, optique qui permet à l'individu de s'approprier le centre comme la périphérie.

La première partie, "La Parade incertaine," s'incarne carrément dans la vie immédiate, instant de prise de possession de l'existence mais aussi de fuite devant le passé, ces ". . . fragments d'époque/ photos sépia/au fond de tiroirs béants." Découvrir le monde équivaut, chez Ducharme, à en apprendre toute la simplicité: "homme des premiers carrefours/ tu apprends/le simple/état des routes/et au radar/le calme obscure de l'air." La promenade qu'effectue le poète dans ces premiers vers lui sert ainsi d'apprentissage.

Dans "Le Pas de la porte," deuxième partie, le poète semble avoir franchi le temps et l'espace des découvertes initiatrices de la première partie pour ensuite s'intégrer à une vie plus stable, plus ancrée dans un lieu connu: "ces rives plus larges/ elle s'y tient en sa chair/et autour de/la lumière s'attroupe / tu arrives toi / de ce quelque part perdu/une fois de plus tu arrives." Au coeur donc de cet événement le temps s'abolit sous l'effet dépaysant de l'amour: "tout s'égrène se perd/demain ne se dessine plus/il n'y a qu'odeurs/que le noir qui poudroie/sur le lit rapiécé/rien d'autre."

"Les Friches," dernière partie, porte un regard sur l'avenir fuyant. Si stabilité et appartenance il y a eu dans "La Parade incertaine," le poète n'est cependant pas

moins sensible aux fulgurances éventuelles qui pourraient venir influer sur la permanence dont il jouit: "demain l'an prochain / rien ne s'inscrit / sur l'écriture des cascades/ici même/le guetteur emporté/ n'a qu'un oeil/pour tout voir." A l'instar d'un Saint-Denys Garneau, Ducharme tisse donc sa poésie autour des pôles permanence / non-permanence et mobilité / immobilité.

Chemins vacants réussit à capter l'attention du lecteur tant par son langage nu mais fécond que par la promesse de l'aboutissement des périples évoqués avec un espoir légèrement pessimiste pourtant. Cette première oeuvre annonce sans doute d'autres à suivre car Guy Ducharme est porteur de l'âme d'un poète déjà mûr.

Tout comme le suggère d'ailleurs l'indication titrologique, *Pelures d'oranges/ Orange Peels* s'inscrit sous le signe de l'insolite en miniature. Petits bijoux en voyelles et consonnes, les haïkus qu'a crées André Duhaime s'inspirent de tous les thèmes de la condition humaine, de l'amour à la mort, du passé au rêve, de la nature à la vie citadine. Son optique semble tout englober pour ensuite cristalliser ses visions dans des images figées dans le temps: "fondant puis regelé/le bonhomme de neige/arqué contre le vent" (the thawing snowman/frozen again/bows to the wind") ou encore "soleil/dans ses fleurs de verre/l'antiquaire somnole" ("sun/in the antique glass flowers/the dealer snoozes"). La version anglaise de Dorothy Howard est efficace tout en captant la neutralité du ton du poète.

Le mérite de *Pelures d'oranges/Orange Peels* est la dispersion que l'on y retrouve, car le recueil ne semble suivre aucun principe générateur ou organisateur. Tout y apparaît comme si le poète jetait un coup d'oeil à la manière d'un appareil-photo sur ses endroits préférés. Le haïku survit donc au Canada, et ce, en bonne partie grâce à la persévérance et à la créativité d'André Duhaime.

L'histoire de la poésie québécoise est racontée avec concision à travers les poèmes choisis dans *Le Québec en poésie*, ouvrage qui connaîtra sûrement un grand succès auprès de jeunes lecteurs francophones. Entre l'oeuvre de Jacques Cartier et celle de Nicole Brossard, entre celle d'Emile Nelligan et celle de Paul-Marie Lapointe se dessinent les étapes marquantes qui retracent l'évolution du texte poétique.

Les grands courants esthétiques et idéologiques sont regroupés sous cinq rubriques évocatrices, à savoir "Un paysage inhabitable," "Contes du pays incertain," "Une histoire d'identité," "De la parole à l'écriture" et "Le Québec aujourd'hui." De ces regroupements se dégagent en conséquence tous les tons et teneurs imaginables. Les poésies choisies sont suivies à la fin de l'ouvrage d'aperçus biographiques sur les quatre-vingt-sept poètes représentés. Dans l'ensemble, le choix des poètes paraît raisonnable, vu le nombre prodigieux des possibilités. Je dois signaler pourtant que l'absence de toute allusion à Marie José Thériault, récipiendaire du Prix Canada-Suisse en 1984 pour son oeuvre poétique *Invariance* suivi de *Célébration du prince*, est notoire.

Le Québec en poésie, loin d'être livre de référence se veut plutôt initiation à une poésie courageuse, éloquente et avant tout hardie. Il est grand temps qu'un tel ouvrage orienté vers les jeunes soit publié, et on se réjouit que cet effort de collaboration entre le Québec et la France ait porté fruit.

Les trois oeuvres en question témoignent chacune à sa façon d'une facette distincte de l'activité poétique au Québec. Dans toutes ses métamorphoses, cette poésie canadienne-française, québécoise ou encore francophone s'ouvre au monde pour mieux participer à la création artistique.

KENNETH W. MEADWELL

COUPLES

VICTOR-LÉVY BEAULIEU, *L'Héritage: *L'automne*. Alain Stanké, n.p.

VICTOR-LÉVY BEAULIEU'S *L'Héritage: *L'automne* has been generally well received by Québécois critics and readers. This success is both understandable and disquieting. Understandable: *L'Héritage* is not only a spin-off from the very popular *Radio-Canada* television series of the same title and by the same author, but also a captivating yarn enriched with moving lyricism on the topics of love, nature and (especially) writing. Disquieting: while Beaulieu has evidently attempted to tone down the sometimes sanguinary sexism that frequently mars his work, *L'Héritage* nonetheless is full of a male chauvinism which seems not to be that of the male characters alone, but to pervade and pervert the world view that gave birth and text to the novel. Nonetheless, Beaulieu deserves credit for manifestly struggling against his usual literary sexism, and for having written a novel probably *intended* to be anti-sexist (and so it is, in parts). Indeed, the dialectic between sexism and anti-sexism, between the novel's intentions and its own temptations dynamizes *L'Héritage* and constitutes perhaps the most interesting aspect of a book which is intriguing in several other ways as well.

Three plots, each involving two main characters, woman and man, pose the problematics of love, desire and sex in powerful and moving ways. The central couple consists of Xavier and his daughter Miriam, whose love Xavier lost by committing incest with her when she was sixteen. Miriam, following the incestuous act, left home and went to live in Montreal where she gave birth to Xavier's son, whom she has brought up in secret. Xavier, fourteen years later, finally goes to Montreal to see Miriam against her will: she rejects his attempts at reconciliation, because in her view, Xavier died one night, when she was sixteen, in a Château Frontenac hotel room. It is here that *L'Héritage: *L'automne* is most anti-sexist: Xavier, the child-abuser, is deservedly punished and rejected by his victim, and is left wanting and trying to die. The reader's sympathies go exclusively towards Miriam, all the more so since Xavier is a repulsive character.

Much of Beaulieu's work involves a dynamic tension and dichotomy between the Trois-Pistoles area on the south shore of the lower Saint Lawrence River, on the one hand, and Montreal, on the other. Miriam left Trois-Pistoles for Montreal, and Xavier travels from the former to the latter and, rejected, back. The same dichotomy seems to structure the plot centred on a second couple, Philippe Couture and Albertine. Albertine, profoundly alienated in her marriage with Gabriel (Xavier's brother), makes a trip to Montreal to visit their daughter Stéphanie and meets Philippe, Stéphanie's boss, the owner of "Médiatexte," a printing business. Philippe (more poet than businessman, at heart) and Albertine (tireless reader and dreamer) fall passionately in love; but to Albertine, leaving Gabriel (whom she no longer loves and has refused to sleep with for some time) is inconceivable. She returns to her isolation in Trois-Pistoles. Philippe, uninvited, comes to Trois-Pistoles; the couple meets and loves again, but their secret is discovered; a furious Gabriel punches Philippe who decides to return to Montreal, because the poet in him thinks it rather natural that a romantic dream should end this way. But Gabriel, having warned Philippe to pay his wife no further attention, then contradicts himself by kicking out both Albertine and their daughter, leaving them little choice but to return to Montreal. The novel thus opens up the prospect

(and probability) of Philippe and Albertine's continuing their relationship.

The third central couple is formed by Albertine and Gabriel. The latter is among the most interesting characters in *L'Héritage*. Gabriel quite simply thinks he is . . . a horse! This delusion probably keeps him in excellent shape for he frequently indulges in long gallops, often pulling a local twelve-year old boy in a cart, but it likely does little to improve his relationship with his wife, Albertine. Gabriel's obsession with the horse in him has no doubt damaged the couple's physical relationship, as he has long and frequently fantasized about copulating with a mare, her "vulve rose" more fascinating and desirable to him than any woman's body. Henceforth deprived entirely of interpersonal sex, Gabriel divides his time between that fantasy, masturbation, and the ever more intimate caresses he gives his young hunting and galloping partner. The break-up of this third couple seems best for all concerned.

Philippe Couture — or indeed, writing itself — is no doubt the most interesting character in *L'Héritage: *L'automne*. Like many of Beaulieu's characters, Philippe Couture is profoundly in love with reading and writing. For twenty years he has been working on a poetic essay on the Saint-Lawrence River. A recurrent feature of *L'Héritage* is its frequent references to French and Quebecois authors (or literary works), often paired in that order in a patriarchal father-son structure. But Beaulieu's fidelity to the "patriarcat" is most obvious in the fact that, among the oodles of writers named in this novel, only one is a woman — Simone de Beauvoir. She is scarcely, however, a representative of the literature, noteworthy for its high proportion of female authors, of which Victor-Lévy Beaulieu is a part: the literature of Québec! Fear of female competition?

NEIL B. BISHOP

MYTH & ÉROTISME

ROGER FOURNIER, *Chair Satan*. Boreal Edns., n.p.

RÉCIPIENDAIRE en 1982 du Prix du Gouverneur général pour son roman *Le Cercle des arènes*, Roger Fournier nous présente son onzième roman au titre révélateur de *Chair Satan*. Le livre s'ouvre sur une double découverte pour Sonia, l'adolescente de 14 ans, à la fois personnage principal et narrateur. Tout d'abord le mot "anfractuosité" et ses corrélatifs viennent s'imposer à sa conscience; ainsi pour Sonia, "anfractuosité" renvoie à la fois à la caverne biologique qu'est son corps de femme, au monde du rêve rempli de monstres et de merveilles et à la caverne mythique qui donne accès à la connaissance. Puis Sonia surprend les ébats amoureux de sa mère et de son amant. Cette dernière découverte enclenchera chez l'héroïne tout une exploration d'elle-même et de son environnement. Issue d'un milieu bourgeois et cossu, Sonia évolue entre son père, avocat totalement absorbé par ses affaires et la politique et sa mère, Marie Hélène, professeure de sciences religieuses dont la conduite et surtout les préoccupations tant sensuelles qu'intellectuelles influeront le passage de l'heroïne de l'adolescence vers la maturité. *Chair Satan* se pose donc d'emblée comme un roman initiatique sur les plans sensuel, imaginaire et épistémologique.

Sauf pour une brève échappée en Europe, l'action du roman se déroule à Montréal, de la fin de l'été 1976 jusqu'à la défaite du oui au référendum de 1981. Les événements présentés dans leur ordre chronologique sont interrompus tantôt par des rêves prémonitoires ou explicatifs, tantôt par des retours en arrière déclenchés par des découvertes fortuites de la protagoniste.

Dans un premier temps, Sonia observe le comportement de sa mère, note ses

alternances entre l'extase et la douleur jusqu'au suicide provoqué par l'abandon de l'amant. La mère décédée, le père emmène Sonia en Europe, question dit-il de se sortir d'un deuil. Rentrés de voyage, le père retourne à ses préoccupations terre à terre tandis que Sonia explore la bibliothèque que lui a léguée sa mère. Au cours de ses recherches, elle tombe sur le jounal intime de celle-ci. Marie-Hélène y relate sa liaison avec Jacques tout en la commentant à partir de et à l'aide de ses connaissances des mythes des diverses traditions religieuses. Les derniers chapitres de *Chair Satan* relatent les démarches effectuées par la protagoniste pour voir, rencontrer et séduire l'ancien amant de sa mère, celui dont la beauté du diable FAISAIT DE LUI UN MONSTRE. L'entreprise réussit. Non seulement l'héroine retrace-t-elle l'itinéraire sensuel de Marie-Hélène, revisitant les sommets et les abîmes déjà observés, elle arrive même à la dépasser en réalisant sa dernière prescription. Aussi Sonia, après avoir assassiné Jacques, apparaît-elle, véritable mante religeuse, repue, libérée et prête au bonheur.

On retrouve dans ce livre, des thèmes chers au romancier: les mythes originels, les rêves, et bon nombre de descriptions détaillées de scènes amoureuses. Or il en va de l'érotisme comme du rêve: la suggestion réussit quelquefois mieux que la démonstration et l'excès peut finir par ennuyer. *Chair Satan* doit cependant être considéré comme une réussite sinon la réalisation du mandat que l'écrivain s'était donné, soit d'initier son héroine à l'essence même de la mythologie comme instrument de connaissance de soi et du monde.

MARIE COUILLARD

A LA RECHERCHE DE . . .

EVELYNE BERNARD, *La Vaironne*. Guérin littérature, $14.95.

PIERRE VOYER, *Les Enfants parfaits*. Guérin littérature, n.p.

DE LA BEAUTÉ, de la Perfection, de l'Art, les éternelles questions posées par les écrivains de tous les pays. Cette quête ne peut se faire, comme nous le rappelle le roman d'Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, sans susciter des questions de moralité et d'éthique des plus pertinentes aujourd'hui. Là où l'art décadent de la fin du dix-neuvième siècle privilégiait au-dessus de tout la démarche de l'artiste (dans la préface de son roman, Wilde avance, "the artist is the creator of beautiful things" et "the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium"), aujourd'hui selon la conscience populaire c'est la science qui remplace l'art dans la quête de la perfection tout en y ajoutant l'efficacité.

Evelyne Bernard, qui a reçu le prix Guérin pour ce premier roman, interroge les origines de l'art et de l'inspiration ainsi que les effets de miroir essentiels à toute quête artistique à travers l'expérience de son narrateur-personnage, Pierre Salvat, auteur de romans policiers. Récepteur-fabricateur de personnages fictifs, écrivain doué du "don des signes," Pierre est hanté d'abord par le personnage d'Agnès dont il ne connaît encore que le nom, obsession qui précipite le départ de sa femme, et ensuite par le déclin et la mort de l'homme perçu dans le métro qui lui a inspiré son personnage Laragne, "journaliste à la pige et détective à ses heures." Prié par la fille de Louis Leconte (Laragne) de résoudre les nombreuses énigmes collectionnées par son père, le narrateur joue à son tour le rôle de détective et, ce faisant, se retrouve dans une maison mystérieuse sur une île terre-neuvienne. Là il rencontre Agnès Corrigan, femme aux yeux vairons, personnage désiré qui refusait de prendre forme, artiste possédant un pouvoir mystérieux sur les sujets de ses tableaux et à qui peuvent être attribués plusieurs décès. Adepte des effets de miroir quoique incrédule devant le pouvoir fantastique de l'artiste, Pierre joue le tout

pour le tout dans cette aventure qui ressemble drôlement pour lui à une oeuvre de fiction. Chose certaine: le lecteur trouvera dans ce roman le plaisir d'une prose savoureuse et d'une intrigue fort bien menée.

Tout autre est l'expérience de lecture offerte par Pierre Voyer dans *Les Enfants parfaits*: elle est déroutante grâce à une surabondance de personnages, de lieux et de complots offerts au lecteur dans un ordre apparemment chaotique; elle est inquiétante dans son sujet (futuriste et invraisemblable il nous semblait hier) devenu trop actuel. La trame événementielle du roman tourne autour du marché des enfants devenu rentable grâce à un déclin croissant en Occident de naissances naturelles. Ainsi se nouent les intrigues des réseaux péruviens, américains, thaïlandais et allemands qui fournissent des enfants aux couples nords-américains. Cependant, l'ogresse du roman ne peut être que Consuelo, jeune Brésilienne et héritière du secret du Doktor Hertzmann, qui fonde *Verlorelei* et qui, sous le nom de Noëmie von Klapp, dirige les recherches génétiques destinées à rendre des bénéfices monétaires excessifs. Après vingt ans, les activités néfastes des chercheurs sont ainsi révélées dans les journaux:

> Au nord-ouest de la République fédérale d'Allemagne, un laboratoire, secret jusqu'à ce jour, accueille des jeunes de tous les pays et les accouple de manière à produire des bébés plus forts et plus beaux, dont la supériorité est de ne pas avoir de race. Ils sont conçus selon un plan scientifique éprouvé, une méthode qui mélange d'une façon presque magique les beautés et les forces spécifiques des différentes races.

Les autres scélérats, de toutes races et de tous pays, sont si nombreux que le lecteur désespère de trouver dans ce roman des détenteurs de valeurs humanistes rédemptrices. Les victimes sont inévitablement les enfants, les enfants parfaits si désirés et si choyés qui pourtant restent angoissés par leur manque d'appartenance. Ce sujet grave se prête bien au roman éclaté de Voyer qui suggère la complexité du monde moderne d'où sont disparus la générosité, l'intégrité et l'altruisme.

Les romans examinés posent tous les deux des questions fondamentales aux domaines de l'art et de la science, et, ce faisant, s'éloignent davantage de thèmes étroitement liés à la spécificité de la société québécoise. De sa part, le roman d'Evelyne Bernard ranime la question de la priorité de l'art sur les responsabilités personnelles et sociales de l'artiste, tandis que celui de Pierre Voyer, plus axé sur le récit futuriste, dénonce les dangers de la recherche scientifique pratiquée hors de tout contrôle éthique ou humaniste. Chacun à sa façon sonde la question des origines, pertinente pour le lecteur de la décennie 90, et dénonce les périls qui menacent la société moderne dans sa course effrénée vers l'apaisement de ses désirs.

ESTELLE DANSEREAU

POST-1984

GUY BOUCHARD, ANDRÉ ROCQUE ET JACQUES G. RUELLAND, *Orwell et 1984: trois approches*. Bellarmin, $22.00.

L'ANNÉE 1984 a vu l'enfflorescence de nombreux événements littéraires et non littéraires dans le sillage du millésime-fétiche qu'est le titre éponyme du roman d'Orwell. Ce titre fonctionnant comme une anticipation, la tentation a été forte de prendre ce roman au pied de la lettre et de mesurer soit le roman à l'aune du présent soit le présent à l'aune du livre prétendument phophétique. *Orwell et 1984: trois approches* prétend prendre le contre-pied de cet effet de mode, le livre étant publié quatre ans après la date fatidique. Le présentateur de l'ouvrage insiste sur la nécessité de dépasser les lieux communs qui ont circulé à propos du roman

d'"un auteur qui n'a pas fini de nous interpeller." On est donc curieux de voir quelles perspectives et idées nouvelles les auteurs apportent à un débat où beaucoup a déjà été dit. Les trois approches en question se présentent respectivement comme historique, littéraire, philosophique: "George Orwell, conscience politique de notre temps" (Jacques G. Ruelland), "*1984*, le pouvoir des codes et le code du pouvoir" (Guy Bouchard), "l'Institution orwellienne" (André Rocque).

Dans son essai, Jacques G. Ruellan dresse un tableau rapide de la vie d'Orwell, son époque et son oeuvre, notamment *1984*, en soutenant la thèse qu'il a cherché à avertir les contemporains des dangers des totalitarismes. Toutes les confusions qui circuleraient sur l'auteur, selon Jacques G. Ruellan, seraient dues à ce "qu'il nous a prévenus non comme un théoricien (qu'il n'était d'ailleurs pas) l'eût fait, mais comme un littéraire." En choisissant le littérature, il aurait "voulu laisser à chacun la liberté de comprendre son message."

L'essai de Guy Bouchard est de loin le plus long. Ce texte est pour l'auteur l'occasion de présenter sa théorie de l'utopie littéraire (déjà énoncée dans son ouvrage *l'Utopie aujourd'hui*) et de la science-fiction, le roman d'Orwell ayant été assez communément intégré dans ces deux ensembles génologiques, comme l'indique un tour d'horizon de la critique. Il aborde aussi le rôle des personnages féminins dans le roman. Pour Bouchard, les questions que pose *1984* concernent la gestion sociale et le pouvoir politique, mais aussi la philosophie, l'anthropologie, la psychologie et même la religion. L'auteur termine son essai en citant Erich Fromm: "La nature humaine peut-elle être modifiée de telle sorte que l'homme oubliera son aspiration à la liberté, à la dignité, à l'intégrité, à l'amour — autrement dit, l'homme peut-il oublier qu'il est humain?"

André Rocque fait, dans "l'Institution orwellienne," une analyse des institutions d'Océania comme s'il s'agissait d'un État existant, et cela sur le fonds des considérations de Wilhelm Dilthey sur les visions du monde et sur les valeurs véhiculées par et dans l'institution. L'institution orwellienne serait "non pas un complexe étatique organisé, fondé et dirigé par un groupe uni conscient de ses buts, mais un ensemble d'institutions publiques et semi-publiques, relativement autonomes et peu ou mal coordonnées, entraînées par la logique totalisante de l'accomplissement de leur mission respective." Telle serait la vision orwellienne du totalitarisme, ce dernier provenant de la conjugaison des pouvoirs locaux, "lorsqu'ils tendent vers l'absolu ou l'atteignent (. . .)."

En résumé, le titre de l'ouvrage est approprié ("trois approches"), car le livre ressemble effectivement à un patchwork. Est-ce une force ou une faiblesse? Quant à moi, j'aurais espéré d'un ouvrage paru après "l'événement" — et qui se donne comme une critique des lieux communs — qu'il fasse le point sur les méthodes auxquelles *1984* a été soumis. En outre, ces essais exégétiques, tout intéressants qu'ils soient, aboutissent à survaloriser le roman dans ses effets de cohérence interne (littéraire) et externe (arrière-plan historique et institutionnel). Il en résulte que le livre d'Orwell est un objet d'adhésion pour les auteurs; que cette attitude s'inscrive dans la profondeur du texte plutôt que dans sa surface (le caractère anticipateur du titre) n'y change rien. *1984*, roman "provoquant" et toujours actuel, comme le proclament les essais et le quatrième de couverture? Une partie de la question est là. Son succès d'époque fait de lui une machine considérable qui en dit long sur les idéologies dominantes des nos sociétés. Les auteurs de ce recueil n'ont pas cherché à dégager — et c'est une lacune importante de l'ensemble de l'enterprise — en quoi *1984* manifeste les limites de l'ho-

rizon idéologique d'un intellectuel de gauche anglais dans l'immédiat après-guerre. Les trois auteurs ayant choisi d'aborder les questions liées au socio-politique dans le texte, on est en droit de le regretter. Bref, ce recueil utile par le sérieux des analyses me semble ajouter trois voix à celles qui les ont précédées sans éclairer le questions sous un jour nouveau.

JEAN-MARC GOUANVIC

UTOPIAS

JACQUES BROSSARD, *L'oiseau de feu: 1 Les années d'apprentissage*. Léméac, n.p.

PIERRE NEPVEU, *L'Ecologie du réel*. Boréal, $22.95.

DEJÀ, DANS *Le Sang du souvenir*, on pressentait le Grand Oeuvre. Et c'est le premier tome d'une série de cinq qui nous ouvre à la voie "royale" d'une écriture. *L'Oiseau de feu* et son sous-titre rappelle, bien sûr, le *Wilhelm Meister* de Goethe, grand initié. Ses années d'apprentissage en tout cas, mais moins ses années de voyages. Car, Adakhan Demuthsen, maître forgeron de la cité de Manokhsor est, comme tous ses congénères, emprisonné dans ses murs, dans son labyrinthe. Cet apprentissage est donc un voyage intérieur dans une mouvance baroque, citadine et ésotérique, appelant parfois Borgès ou García Marquez.

Mais le mouvement des secousses telluriques et des catastrophes chtoniennes y voisine avec le courant sourd d'une subversion provenant d'Adakhan et de certains initiés qui l'encouragent à quérir la pierre philosophale. Par delà les rites incompréhensibles et médiatiques des jeux du cirque où sont sacrifiés sans pitié, en particulier femmes et foetus, Adakhan cherche sens et signification. En cela, dans ce monde où une minorité traditionnaliste est initiée, Adakhan a l'étoffe d'un grand initié renouant avec la vitalité d'un âge à réinstaurer.

Il s'agit donc bien d'une utopie qui nous ouvre, par la structure même du suspense à long terme (puisque certaines questions ne s'éclaireront qu'aux tomes 3, 4 ou 5) à une symbolique débouchant sur une redéfinition progressive des paradigmes.

Adakhan est ainsi un des "Happy Few" chargé d'une "gravité" communiqué par Lhianata, son amante passionnée, animant entre eux les ressources philisophales du désir et de ses connivences définitives. Ceci nous vaut d'ailleurs des pages d'une beauté rare rappelant parfois quelques passages particulièrement réussis de *La Fille aux yeux d'or* de Balzac. Cette puissance évocatoire, déja présente, aussi, dans le rendu des combats rituels, nous ouvre, en fait, au-delà du rite avec ses hiérarchies, ses secrets, ses apparats à mi-chemin entre *1984* d'Orwell et *Le Nom de la rose* de Umberto Eco.

Ce roman repose donc fondamentalement sur la recherche et sur la liberté. Et cette aspiration qui voudrait pouvoir se canaliser dans les aspirations des autres 'fous' ou déviants qui recherchent, eux aussi, le savoir et la liberté, se travaille de plus au niveau du discours et des techniques très élaborées de composition. Par-delà un constat relativistico-ironique, il reste, dans ce texte initiatique, certaines constantes liées, par exemple, à ce qu'explore René Girard dans *Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde.*

La question 'Que veut dire aujourd'hui l'expression littérature québécoise' est au coeur de la réflexion de P. Nepveu. Non pas que l'institution ne soit plus en place mais plutôt que, comme l'expression *canadienne-française*, vers la fin des années 1950, est devenue dépassé, celle de *québécoise* est désormais, en partie, inopérante. L'ère du post, du post-québécois est en marche.

Ainsi, l'écriture remplace la littérature. Le consensus se disperse dans la pluralité;

le totalisant gravite vers le pointillé. En un mot l'hétérogène, les autres ethnies M. Micone, R. Robin, M.-L. Mallet, S. Laferrière s'affirment comme québécois, *Vice-Versa* et *Lettres québécoises* occupent des champs bien définis et la société se pointillise en une métamorphose déja évoquée par les images d'Escher.

Déja Ducharme, en grand précurseur, soulignait que l'épopée comme dans *La Fille de Christophe Colomb* dérivait vers l'ironique pseudo-folklorique et pop et que le roman n'était plus mémoire collective mais recyclage de styles, fragments de textes, fatras de clichés (P. Imbert, *Roman québécois contemporain et clichés*). Du mythe au présent! Des envolées nationalistes et des cris poétiques de *L'Afficheur hurle* de P. Chamberland aux *Silences du corbeau* de Yvon Rivard! Dérive imperceptible suivie, à la trace, ou presque, dans *L'Ecologie du réel.* On commence par Saint-Denys Garneau puis par la question de l'exil intérieur et extérieur avec la fascination du code de l'autre.

Après Nelligan, l'exil sera crié dans l'irréalité au monde chez Miron, l'impossible à écrire, la recherche du nous jusqu'à "l'âge de la parole" et l'aventure de l'Hexagone. C'est alors la croyance en la poésie et sa souveraineté, cette utopie, cet âge d'or romantique qui permet en même temps d'évacuer l'instant. Mais ce mythe est dépassé car la plénitude annoncée fait qu'elle est coupée du réel morcelé, aliéné. Reste la prose dans la ville et le roman comme expérience de la dépossession (*Le Cassé* de J. Renaud) et le réel comme origine non advenue.

Ainsi, la littérature québécoise oscille entre l'utopie et le désastre, entre "la sainteté et le terrorisme" dirait V-L Beaulieu. Cette énergie est évoquée dans un roman à la fois symptômatique et scandaleusement hors de l'histoire qui s'intitule *La Constellation du cygne* de Y. Villemaire. Il ouvre sur un monde où les contraires, les tortionnaires nazis et les victimes sont rapprochés. C'est bien d'un symptôme qu'il s'agit, celui d'un déplacement que P. Nepveu aurait pu souligner davantage et dont il aurait du analyser les stratégies car, dans ce cas, passer simplement et parler 'd'affirmation nietzschéenne de la force' est nettement insuffisant. Ainsi donc les signes ne sont plus liés à des référents et il faudrait relire René Girard (*Des choses cachées depuis la fondation du monde*) car parfois l'excès est bien naïf!

PATRICK IMBERT

L'OUEST CANADIEN

G. BUGNET, *Nipsya.* Edns. des Plaines, $8.95.
MARGUERITE A. PRIMEAU, *Totem,* Edns. des Plaines, $8.95.

DEUX OEUVRES dignes d'attention ont été publiées en 1988 par les Éditions des Plaines à Saint-Boniface, au Manitoba. Le roman *Nipsya* de Georges Bugnet, publié originellement en 1924 par Garand au Québec, est accessible en réédition moderne au lecteur friand de l'épopée pionnière de l'Ouest canadien, et la parution du recueil de nouvelles *Totem* de Marguerite-A. Primeau réjouit les admirateurs de *Sauvage Sauvageon,* couronné du prix Champlain. Les deux oeuvres ne semblent avoir en commun que la mise en relief de certains problèmes propres aux Canadiens de l'Ouest, négligés longtemps par la littérature d'expression française. À y regarder de plus près, *Nipsya* et *Totem,* tout en évoquant l'Ouest canadien à des moments différents de son histoire, prennent le même recul d'une cinquantaine d'années par rapport à un événement-clé. *Nipsya,* écrit en 1924, remonte à la rébellion des Métis en 1885, alors que *Totem* se concentre sur la marque profonde laissée par la grande Dépression sur la vie des Prairies. Si le roman historique *Nipsya* occulte cette distance temporelle par la mise

en scène "réaliste" d'un vécu quotidien de l'époque évoquée, *Totem*, par contre, inscrit cette distance dans la trame même du récit qui entretient un dialogue constant entre présent et passé. Cette différence relève d'une part du genre littéraire adopté par l'auteur; par ailleurs, elle est tributaire des modes de narration employés: à une écriture traditionnelle dans *Nipsya*, où la focalisation externe prend le pas sur les excursions faites dans la conscience de l'héroïne, s'oppose une focalisation interne prédominante dans *Totem* qui donne priorité à la situation psychologique de l'être marginal. À un niveau plus profond, ces différences témoignent de la perspective idéologique divergente des deux écrivains: *Nipsya* est un roman de la "domestication" des Métis, de l'intégration de ces marginaux dans l'édifice colonial, cimenté par le messianisme catholique. Par contre, les nouvelles de *Totem* sont des écrits sur la marginalité de certains individus écrasés par un système social nivellateur. Un tel parti pris des "chiens sans collier" contre la "fourrière" sociale relève d'un point de vue anticolonisateur (dans le sens le plus large du mot), alors que *Nipsya* affirmait puissamment l'idéologie impérialiste.

Conformément au genre du roman historique, l'insurrection métisse de 1885 sert, dans *Nipsya*, de cadre de référence au destin individuel de l'héroïne et de ses partenaires. Cependant, grâce à une curieuse exploitation des événements historiques dans le sens de la propagande colonisatrice, la révolte métisse est présentée comme une épreuve nécessaire à la maturation de la femme métisse Nipsya, emblême de sa nation. Celli-ci est sommée de choisir entre trois voies (ou "voix," à l'instar de Maria Chapdelaine): la cosmologie primitive des Indiens, le matérialisme anglophone et les messianisme français et catholique. La supériorité "évidente" de ce dernier est censée éblouir le lecteur quand Nipsya finit par s'y convertir.

La conséquence romanesque de cette idéologie sublimatrice est une colonisation spirituelle manifeste dans les procédés de narration. Bien que l'éveil de la conscience de Nipsya au monde social constitue l'intérêt principal du roman, c'est la perspective du narrateur omniscent et celle de son porte-parole, Vital, le jeune époux de l'héroine, qui s'imposent n'est qu'une page blanche à remplir de la façon la plus efficace à l'esprit du lecteur Nipsya.

Ainsi est-on frappé l'attitude paternaliste et condescendante que cette voix narrative adopte à l'égard du personnage principal. Au premier contact de Nipsya avec le culte catholique, on nous fait ce commentaire: "cette jeune âme humaine au paganisme imprécis perçut d'un coup, le prestige de la religion." Ainsi le pacte conclu entre narrateur et lecteur est celui de deux colonisateurs se pendant avec une "bienveillance surveillée" sur l'objet de leur étude, le Métis colonisé, qu'il s'agit de hisser à un niveau spirituel acceptable.

Au lieu de tenter, par le biais de la fiction romanesque, d'insérer les marginaux dans un ordre social jugé favorable à l'épanouissement de l'individu, Marguerite-A. Primeau prend résolument leur défense contre une aliénation redoutable. Les six nouvelles du recueil (Le Totem, Paul Polonais, Les mille "Ave Maria" de ma grand-mère, la maison d'autrefois, la la folle du quarteir, Voici mes mains, Seigneur!) présentent des êtres mis en marge de la société par leur état civil (des célibataires ou des veufs, un prêtre défroqué), par leur état physique ou psychique (vieillesse, madadie, "folie"). Le fil conducteur de ces nouvelles est le sort pathétique réservé aux personnes âgées, assaillies par des maux divers, par l'isolement et le rejet. De façon récurrente, la narration nerveuse et frémissante nous place dans la perspective d'une vieille personne malade ou "folle" (majoritairement des femmes) qui puise du réconfort dans l'évocation extatique de scènes du passé,

à l'apparence plus réelle que les déboires du présent. Si la force d'une telle représentation permet à certains de mieux affronter le réel (La folle du quarteir, Voici mes mains, Seigneur!) ou même de rejoindre le présent (Paul Polonais), cette confrontation entre passé idéalisé et présent peut aussi tourner au tragique (La maison d'autrefois).

Dans tous les cas, pourtant, l'élan passionnel de la mémoire permet de mieux cerner les forces mystérieuses de l'être et de plonger le lecteur dans un mode de vie ancien merveilleusement préservé ou redoré par la vivacité imaginaire des protagonistes. Que ce soi la magie étrange d'un totem, les feux des prairies cernant une école de campagne ou un village de pionniers des années vingt, tout sort étrangement intact et vibrant, non pas d'une tasse de thé mais de l'esprit malade ou hyperlucide de personnages coupés de la réalité banale par une situation exceptionnelle. C'est la revanche des marginaux dont la fidélité inconditionnelle au passé est le refus d'une réalité blessante. La société nomme "folie" des comportements destinés à préserver l'intégrité d'un passé heureux. La nouvelle "La maison d'autrefois" est emblématique pour tout le recueil: la confrontation entre présent et passé révèle que ce dernier existe à part entière dans l'imaginaire — où réside le bonheur.

INGRID JOUBERT

L'"INSTITUTOIRE" LITTÉRAIRE

L'institution littéraire, sous la direction de Maurice Lemire, CRELIQ-IQRC, n.p.

L'histoire littéraire. Théories, méthodes, pratiques, sous la direction de Clément Moisan, Presses de l'Université Laval, $29.00.

LA POSTÉRITÉ D'UNE QUESTION posée par Sartre ("Qu'est-ce que la littérature") et des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu et de Jacques Dubois se mesure aujourd'hui à la prégnance de l'approche institutionnelle, dont l'efficace est de rassembler en son sein l'ensemble des disciplines littéraires. L'histoire littéraire, telle qu'elle se redéfinit aujourd'hui, procède de la même vision supra-structurelle, puisqu'elle conjugue l'interprétation des faits historiques ou sociaux à l'analyse des divers dispositifs d'une oeuvre. Ce qui pourrait ici être source de conflit se résorbe dans l'utilisation d'un modèle commun. Car si l'*Institution littéraire* consiste en "un système doté de rationalité qui assure la socialisation des individus par l'imposition de normes, valeurs ou de catégories esthétiques ou idéologiques" (J. Michon) et que l' *Histoire littéraire* conçoit son objet "en tant que système aux fonctions qui revêtent la forme d'une institution" (M. Dimic), il faut alors penser en termes d'équation. On ne s'étonnera donc pas que certaines signatures apparaissent dans l'un et l'autre des deux présents collectifs.

Dans son texte de présentation, Maurice Lemire souligne à juste titre qu'il est difficile de parler d'institution littéraire québécoise sans en parler dans sa relation avec la France, car c'est en réaction contre une littérature française qui s'est autonomisée que se pose vers 1840 la nécessité d'une canadianisation de la littérature, dès lors subordonnée à l'idéologie catholique et messianique. Il n'y a là cependant que l'idée d'une institution nationale, soutient David Hayne, parce que l'appareil éditorial demeure à peu près inexistant. Pendant plus d'un siècle, comme le démontrent les travaux de Joseph Melançon et de son groupe, l'enseignement de la littérature dans les collèges classiques constituera un des principaux lieux de manipulation axiologique.

Pour Benoît Melançon, dont l'objet d'étude est la littérature institutionnalisée, donc postérieure à 1945, l'analyse doit s'orienter du côté des faits de discours, jusque-là négligés au profit de la dimen-

sion matérielle. Poursuivant ses recherches dans cette perspective, Annie Brisset démontre que le théâtre québécois en traduction obéit à des motifs ethnocentriques. Roger Chamberland, quant à lui, illustre de quelle façon la modernité poétique québécoise établit ses propres critères de validation au sein même des textes, pratique d'auto-consécration qui se greffe à des stratégies d'acquisition ou de conservation du pourvoir symbolique que dissèquent Pierre Milot et Bernard Andrès. Ces analyses, si pertinentes soient-elles, privilégient le marché de consommation restreinte au détriment du marché de grande consommation, ce que Denis St-Jacques explique par la substitution de la notion d'institution (Dubois) à celle de champ (Bourdieu). Les travaux complémentaires de Jacques Michon et Richard Giguère mettent en parallèle l'édition pour grand public et l'édition de recueils de poésie entre 1940 et 1960, tandis que Liette Gaudreau démontre que les prix littéraires québécois ne sanctionnent pas les goûts du public et ne les stimulent pas non plus outre mesure. Dès lors, se demande Robert Giroux, le statut de l'écrivain n'est-il pas plus fictif que réel? Vincent Nadeau va au-delà de la représentation romantique de l'auteur pour se pencher sur les rapports que ce dernier entretient avec l'éditeur.

Au terme de ce collectif fort stimulant, ce qui étonne, c'est l'absence d'un questionnement des buts de l'approche privilégiée: quel peut être, en effet, l'intérêt de l'institution de tenir un discours sur elle-même, de dévoiler ses valeurs ou ses stratégies de discrimination? On peut penser que ce que l'institution donne à lire n'est que traces, que dans ses mutations elle devance toujours l'analyse, ou encore qu'elle neutralise les observations formulées en en faisant un objet de distinction.

Dans le cadre d'un colloque portant cette fois sur l'histoire littéraire, Lucie Robert met en lumière le fétichisme de la littérature, "qui masque les événements et les pratiques qui ont présidé à sa naissance et à son institution." D'où l'importance d'étudier les relations entre les formes discursives et les instances qui les déterminent, produisent et diffusent. Rappelant le projet de Gustave Lanson de faire une histoire de la vie littéraire, Clément Moisan propose d'analyser le phénomène "littérature" dans son fonctionnalité (dynamique), son intentionnalité (buts et visées) et son organicité (changements). Manon Brunet souscrit à cette approche et souligne que le travail d'observation doit porter davantage sur les différances créées entre les signes que sur leur similitude, ce que Pierre Ouellet et Eva Kushner conçoivent respectivement en termes de dialogue entre paradigmes et de dialectique entre la tradition et l'innovation. C'est dans son décrochement, sa "boîterie," que la grande oeuvre réalise la pérennité de sa réception, nous dit Antoine Compagnon, non sans interpeller au passage le grand théoricien de la question, Hans Robert Jauss, à qui il reproche d'avoir fait le silence sur certaines idées de Brunetière et de Lanson.

Pour Alain Viala et Laurent Mailhot, la périodisation littéraire doit donc traduire les changements de configurations discursives et faire abstraction du temps historique, ce qui ouvre la voie à des recoupements nouveaux et fructueux. Etudiant le discours littéraire d'une année précise (1889) dans ses relations avec le discours social dans lequel il s'inscrit, Marc Angenot démontre pour sa part l'intérêt d'une histoire en coupe synchronique, rejoignant ainsi un Roger Fayolle qui reproche aux historiens de négliger la réception que connurent en leur temps certaines oeuvres. "L'histoire littéraire est une histoire de la lisibilité," concluera Joseph Melançon.

Si l'enquête biographique de Paul Wyczynski sur Nelligan appartient sans contredit à l'histoire littéraire, où devons-nous

situer, par exemple, la réflexion de Denis St-Jacques sur le rôle de la littérature dans l'élaboration d'une politique linguistique nationale? Quand Maurice Lemire retrace l'histoire de la naissance de la critique québécoise au XIXe siècle et que René Dionne démontre que la subordination de la critique à la morale, à cette époque, n'est pas le fait du seul abbé Casgrain, inscrivent-ils leurs recherches du côte de l'analyse institutionnelle ou de l'analyse historique? Question sans doute subsidiaire, puisqu'il ne s'agit pas ici de masquer l'apport important des diverses communications dont nous avons rendu compte, mais par souci taxinomique nous répondrons: quelque part du côte de l'"institutoire" de la littérature.

ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE

L'ESPACE DU QUOTIDIEN

PHILIPPE HAECK, *L'atelier du matin*. VLB, n.p.
ANTONIO D'ALFONSO, *L'autre rivage*. VLB, n.p.
ELISE TURCOTTE, *La voix de Carlo*. VLB, n.p.
JACQUES OUELLET, *Qui ose regarder*. Poésie Leméac, n.p.

DES CÉLÉBRATIONS par trop souvent éphémères de la transgression idéologique et du formalisme des années soixante et soixante-dix, la poésie québécoise contemporaine s'est tenue à distance mais a retenu certaines postures: une adhésion aux vertus transformatives du langage et la nécessité de saisir les instances productrices d'ordre et de sens. Ces signes de continuité s'accompagnent de mutations profondes, parmi lesquelles on observe un retour de la subjectivité et du lyrisme romantique ainsi qu'un parti pris de narrativité dans l'expression intime de son rapport au langage et au monde, que les textes récents donnent à lire dans un foisonnement des plus féconds.

Chez un Philippe Haeck, l'allégeance marxiste et la vision matérialiste res recueils précédents trouvent, avec *L'atelier du matin*, des résonances dans la prose du quotidien. Attentive aux faits et gestes les plus simples, la voix qui traverse ces pages cherche à réconcilier la vie et la pensée, à opposer à un monde qui se défait les valeurs qui s'affirment dans l'espace de l'intime. Dans la première partie du recueil, un narrateur-témoin raconte la dépossession de H., un écrivain qui n'est pas sans rappeler la figure de Zarathoustra et qui fait l'apprentissage du "connaître dynamique." Les poèmes subséquents nous introduisent à un mouvement qui va de la table de travail au quotidien de la paternité et de la relation amoureuse et du "vécu" à l'atelier. Sous forme de très beaux tableaux qui atteignent aux épiphanies joyciennes, cette parole ouverte aux incertitudes du langage et de l'existence se refuse à toute prétention, à toute "pensée stablarrogante," pour reprendre un de ces mots-valise que l'auteur affectionne. Dans ces textes sans transparence d'une émotion neuve qui constitue déjà un jalon de la poésie québécoise actuelle.

Ce récit d'un apprentissage affectif et intellectuel trouve un écho chez Antonio d'Alfonso, où il se double d'une problématique culturelle. Car pour cet auteur italo-québécois, l'appropriation du quotidien doit passer par la quête de l'identité perdue, par un retour à *L'autre rivage*, c'est-à-dire la mythique Italie des origines. Dans ce quatrième recueil, traduit de l'anglais, la narrativité est autant celle du voyage que des idées, d'où une écriture qui se refuse à toute distinction de genre. Tous les signes qui s'offrent à l'"uomo solo" de ces pages entrent dans dans une dynamique du métissage qui, dans un premier temps, se traduit par des textes brefs. "flashes" parfois bilingues ou trilingues qui affirment la sacralité et la fugacité d'un instant à Guglionesi ou à Rome à l'ombre de Montréal. Le regard que ces poèmes jettent sur une écriture toujours

à redéfinir annonce les deux suites essayistiques du recueil: une autocratique où l'auteur règle un peu maladroitement certains comptes avec la critique et un très beau texte sur le "nouveau baroque," qui serait le point de recontre entre la conscience individuelle et une esthétique universelle qui s'attache aux points de mutation. Dramatisation de l'altérité et de la dépossession, ce recueil s'insère parfaitement dans l'imaginaire québécois tout en l'ouvrant à la voix du dialogue.

Le désir de saisir cette réalité fuyante s'inscrit, chez Elise Turcotte, sous le signe de la "séduction du romanesque," selon le mot du critique Gérald Gaudet. Alors que la génération précédente interrogeait la production du texte, les poètes actuels arpentent l'espace de l'imaginaire. Loin de démissionner devant le réel, its cherchent à en restituer les fragments, mémoire et fiction confondues. *La voix de Carla*, comme le titre l'indique, est la représentation du travail d'une conscience, celle d'une romancière qui est à la fois sujet observé et sujet posant son "regard cassé sur le monde." Bribe par bribe, à coup de "il y a" et de "cela," un désir s'explore et se constitue dans une durée sans cesse morcelée. De cette tension entre le néant et la vie, le silence et la voix, naît une attente qui ne laisse de solliciter le lecteur, qui le gagne à la tentation du romanesque tout au long de ces pages d'une rare unité.

La rhétorique de l'ellipse ordonne également l'entreprise poétique de Jacques Ouellet, lauréat du Prix Octave-Crémazie 1987, qui salue la qualité d'un premier recueil. Pour *Qui ose regarder*, pour qui est à l'affût des signes surgissant de l'oubli ou du présent, le réel apparaît dans ses marges, dans une éphémère fusion du cosmos et de l'intime qu'il faut se garder de trop épeler. Tout en convoquant des thémes classiques, ceux de l'amour, du temps et de la mort, l'écriture de Jacques Ouellet demeure au coeur de la modernité par sa persistance à vouloir déjouer le prévisible. Elle participe de ces paradoxes qui traversent la poésie québécoise des dernières années: décrire un univers dont l'être humain n'est qu'un effet en réinvestissant le sujet, fracturer une quotidienneté aliénante en occupant l'espace du quotidien.

ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE

MORT DU GENRE?

LA MORT DU GENRE (2), *La Nouvelle barre du jour*, nº 216-217 (1989), n.p.

LES RECITS DE VIE: THÉORIE, MÉTHODE ET TRAJECTOIRES TYPES. *Sous la direction de Danielle Desmarais et Paul Grell.* Editions Saint-Martin, n.p.

EN OCTOBRE 1987, la question de la mort du genre réunit à Montréal, le temps d'un colloque, de nombreux théoriciens et praticiens de l'écriture. La *Nouvelle barre du jour* n'ayant pu rassembler en une seule publication (nº 209-10-11) la totalité des communications présentées, un second numéro vient compléter les actes de cette rencontre.

Si l'argument au centre de la réflexion pose la mort du genre comme possible, plusieurs intervenants, voyant peut-être là une simple précaution rhétorique, interrogent déjà l'avenir, l'au-delà de cette mort. Ainsi, pour le philosophe Heinz Weinmann, la mort du genre a eu lieu il y a plus de quarante ans, dans les camps de concentration d'Auschwitz et de Dachau. Mort du genre humain, s'entend, mais aussi de toutes les catégories classificatoires. Dans sa communication de synthèse intitulée "La généalogie de la perte," Louise Dupré exprime différemment cette consubstantialité des deux genres — l'humain et l'esthétique. Percevant dans plusieurs exposés un énoncé commun, à savoir que c'est la voix poétique qui opère un glissement entre les genres, l'auteure suggère que le passage du

masculin au féminin dans la poésie québécoise contemporaine a entraîné une indécidabilité du sens, la disparition de principes de régulation artificiels. Intervenant au nom de cette "écriture du désastre de l'imaginaire patriarchal," Claire Lejeune affirme que la factice distinction des genres — qui assurait les assises du pouvoir masculin — a aujourd'hui fait place au réapprentissage du "je," à une textualité qui s'autogénère.

Dans une optique discordante, Michaël Lachance interroge une lecture "trop pressée de faire valoir l'invention poétique comme rupture," met en doute la naissance d'un imaginaire nouveau et autartique comme échappatoire aux lois génétiques. Exigeant de la poésie une unité métaphysique et de la philosophie une rupture poétique, Lachance propose un dialogue entre les deux genres au sein d'une écriture métissée. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, dans son remarquable article intitulé "Le Règne," questionne lui aussi, quoique dans une perspective différente, l'interaction du philosophique et du littéraire. Retournant au coeur des textes de Hegel et de son commentateur Heidegger, l'auteur rappelle que la mort de l'art constatée par la philosophie allemande ouvre à un nouvel espace: celui de l'esthétique, de ce genre supra-générique qu'est la critique. A cette "clôture" échappe toutefois une écriture, celle que Blanchot a rendue apparente: un discours à la fois en-deçà et au-delà du Livre qui est l'inscription répétée de la mort dans le langage.

L'idée d'un genre métatextuel, ou plutôt d'un gestus commentatif permanent, trouve écho chez Caroline Bayard. Suspectant une corrélation trop vite établie entre le postmodernisme et la mort des genres littéraires, l'auteure entreprend l'examen serré d'un corpus narratif contemporain et du discours critique qui le balise, au terme duquel elle conclut que la fiction postmoderne n'a pas tué les genres, mais en a plutôt fait des matériaux qui trouvent un sens dans une nouvelle dynamique. Si cette thèse rejoint celles d'autres spécialistes de la question, il n'en demeure pas moins que Caroline Bayard explore des horizons moins connus du public francophone, comme les postmodernismes britannique et allemand ainsi que les travaux de l'historien Hayden White, et il n'est pas excessif de penser que "Les genres et le postmodernisme" fera oeuvre de référence.

Si l'on peut croire, à la lecture de ce numéro de la *Nouvelle barre du jour* riche en hypothèses, que le genre n'est peut-être pas mort, mais plutôt recontextualisé, il en va de même, dans le champ de la sociologie, de l'approche biographique. Après s'être effacée, pendant quelques décennies, au profit du discours néo-positiviste et statistique, cette méthode d'enquête connaît actuellement un renouveau, particulièrement sous l'impulsion de chercheurs français et québécois dont les analyses théoriques et pratiques sont regroupées sous le titre des *Récits de vie.*

Certes, donner la parole à un acteur social ne va pas sans poser de sérieuses questions méthodologiques, notamment au niveau de l'interaction du chercheur et de l'informateur et du passage de la subjectivité à la connaissance. Mais pour Daniel Bertaux, la narration par un individu de son histoire a une valeur de synthèse qui inclut et même dépasse les fonctions exploratoire, analytique et vérificatrice, à laquelle Gaston Pineau ajoute une valeur thérapeutique: la formation de l'individu. Les résultats obtenus par une telle approche diffèrent parfois singulièrement de nos opinions reçues ou des apparences d'une réalité chiffrée. Ainsi, Danielle Desmarais démontre que le chômage, chez certaines femmes, est vécu de façon positive, qu'il est l'occasion d'une réflexion et d'une réorientation. L'enquête d'Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame révèle les déterminations insoupçonnées qu'exercent les

femmes confinées au travail domestique sur le projet global familial.

Cette réorientation d'une méthode autrefois tombée en désuétude, cette "redécouverte obligée du sens commun," pour reprendre le titre du texte de Gilles Houde, permet à Paul Grell de retourner contre son auteur ce mot de Pierre Bourdieu: "C'est la malédiction des sciences de l'homme que d'avoir affaire à un objet qui parle." Cet ouvrage novateur n'interpelle pas uniquement ceux qui s'intéressent au récit de vie, mais tous ceux qui s'inquiètent de la place faite à l'individu dans les sciences humaines et sociales.

ANDRÉ LAMONTAGNE

JOURNALISM

JEAN-PAUL DE LAGRAVE, JACQUES G. RUELLAND. *Valentin Jautard (1736-1787). Premier journaliste de langue française au Canada.* Les éditions Le Griffon d'argile, n.p.

LA MAISON D'ÉDITION Le Griffon d'argile vient de se distinguer à nouveau en publiant la vie et les articles de Valentin Jautard (1736-1787), qui fut à la fois le premier journaliste de langue française au Canada, le premier vulgarisateur scientifique et le premier critique de la littérature canadienne. La Préface, élégante et limpide, est d'un journaliste chevronné, Jean-Louis Gagnon, O.C., de la Société royale du Canada. Cette monographie de 420 pages, consacrée à un journaliste jusqu'ici décrié ou laissé pour compte, est l'oeuvre de deux auteurs déjà bien connus par leurs travaux historiques, philosophiques et scientifiques, voire de deux spécialistes du XVIII[e] siècle, Jean-Paul de Lagrave et Jacques G. Ruelland. Le lecteur trouvera, dans cet ouvrage de qualité, outre un essai liminaire étoffé et lumineux sur la carrière de ce journaliste français qui vécut 19 ans (1768-1787) au pays, les écrits de ce dernier (p. 99-320), tous chapeautés d'un titre piquant, un tableau chronologique comparé, une bibliographie succinte et éclairante, enfin un glossaire et un index, Les 16 illustrations sont, à une exception près, nettes et pertinentes. Ce volume figure dans la Collection Fleury-Mesplet et paraît l'année même du bicentenaire de la Révolution française.

Originaire de Bordeaux, où il fit ses humanités classiques et étudia le droit — jurisconsulte, avocat, notaire, il pratique aussi bien en France qu'au Canada — il fut quelque temps rédacteur à *la Gazette littéraire*, premier journal d'idées à Montréal, où il signait ses articles sous le pseudonyme de: Spectateur tranquille. Au vrai, il fut plus qu'un spectateur dans un fauteuil: un censeur personnel, formé à l'école de Montesquieu, un polémiste fort habile, un observateur pénétrant, un critique constructif de l'enseignement et des idées reçues, voire un poète à ses heures, un traducteur du latin ou de l'anglais en français. Après son séjour de 44 mois en prison (juin 1779-février 1783), d'où il sortit, sa santé dans un état si lamentable qu'il ne put jamais retrouver son énergie première, il devint écrivain public et se livra à la traduction pour vivre. La liberté de la presse était alors inconnue, et l'imprimerie, qui n'avait jamais existé au pays sous le régime français, était ici à ses débuts. Loin de juger l'activité intellectuelle de Jautard avec les courants d'idées d'aujourd'hui, on doit plutôt le replacer dans son contexte et essayer d'apprécier son oeuvre à la lumière de ses prédécesseurs immédiats et de ses contemporains. C'est précisément ce qu'ont fait les deux auteurs de cet ouvrage, et cela de façon critique, objective et scientifique. Mais, faute d'avoir procédé ainsi, les essayistes et les historiens des XIX[e] ta XX[e] siècles ont vilipendé Jautard à l'envi; son nom est tout juste mentionné deux fois dans les cinq tomes du *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires du Québec*; autant dire qu'ils ne sont jamais donné le peine de le lire atten-

tivement et de nuancer leurs critiques, puisqu'ils écrivent tous la même chose. Sauf Claude Galarneau, qui a vu plus juste que ses prédécesseurs.

Lisez, par exemple, les pages que Jautard consacre à l'enseignement du français, du latin, aux sciences, aux institutions. Il écrit ce qu'on dit encore couramment dans les Collèges des Jésuites: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, puis *Zelus domus Domini comedit eum*, à propos des obsèques de son ami fort zélé, l'abbé J. F. P. Defeligonde. Il semble avoir beaucoup pratiqué la Bible, à en juger par ses citations du Livre par excellence, par sa superbe traduction du Psaume 37. Lire aussi la page 204.

J'ai relevé sous sa plume alerte et limpide une quinzaine de citations latines, dont plusieurs sont fort bien traduites. Nourri des classiques grecs, latins et français, il écrit à la manière de Boileau et de La Bruyère, de Montaigne, de Fénelon et de Voltaire. Il cite même Fénelon avec une certaine complaisance. Erudit, lettré, c'est surtout dans ses poèmes que percent son savoir et sa finesse, un peu à la manière de Marot, pour qui il ne cache pas son admiration. Il nous apprend aussi beaucoup de choses, par exemple, sur les rues et les quais de Montréal, sur l'instruction publique et les méthodes défectueses de l'agriculture. Ses lettres écrites en prison valent leur pesant d'or.

A en juger par l'acte de naissance, il serait né à Bordeaux le 16 août 1736 et décédé à Montréal le 8 juin 1985. Il aurait donc vécu, non pas 51 ans, mais 49 ans. De toute façon, sa brève carrière d'écrivain, marquée au coin du courage et de la sincérité, de la diplomatie et de la politesse, de la compétence et de la dignité, lui vaudrait au moins une plaque ou un buste sur l'emplacement de la libraine Fleury-Mesplet. Les deux auteurs de cette monographie à lui consacrée auront beaucoup contribué à sa réhabilitation. Ce faisant, ils ont accompli une bonne action qui leur fait honneur et honore aussi la maison d'édition qui a si élégamment présenté le volume.

MAURICE LEBEL

POÈME EN PROSE

JEAN MARCEL, *Hypatie ou la fin des dieux.* Leméac, n.p.

LE TITRE DE CE VOLUME est à la fois si appétissant et fascinant qu'il suffirait à assurer son succès. Le lecteur ne sera pas déçu s'il le lit d'abord, d'une seule lampée, pour ainsi dire, comme un roman de Georges Simenon, car c'est seulement à la dernière page qu'il apprendra la fin tragique de l'héroïne et du suspens indispensable à la trame du récit. Il se doit ensuite de le lire lentement et de le savourer comme des verres de vin d'un bon cru, car ce roman historique, pétri d'érudition, de noms propres, de termes savants et techniques, est aussi un fort beau poème en prose lumineuse, marmoréenne et poétique, ciselée comme les sonnets de José Maria de Heredia. Un vrai chef-d'oeuvre, où l'anachronisme et l'histoire, l'humour et l'iroie font un excellent ménage; il est écrit dans le style de Marguerite Yourcenar, dont l'auteur est, de toute évidence, un fervent disciple.

Ce roman est le premier d'un triptyque des temps perdus; le deuxième, *Jérôme ou de la traduction*, paraîtra à la fin de la présente année; tandis que le troisième, *Sidoine ou la dernière fête*, verra le jour un peu plus tard. Il débute par un superbe Prologue au Djebel Moussa, c'est-à-dire au Mont de Moïse, au Sinaï, où le grand législateur et libérateur d'Israël reçut, au cours d'un entretien de quarante jours avec Yavhé, le *Décalogue* ou les *Dix Commandements*. Montagne sacrée par excellence au pied de laquelle se cache en se tenant accroupi depuis des siècles le monastère de Sainte-Catherine-du-désert, dont je connais un peu la fort riche bib-

liothèque où j'ai travaillé moi-même une quinzaine de jours en juillet 1964; y besognaient ferme alors une vingtaine de moines grecs orthodoxes, alors qu'il en faudrait au moins cinq fois plus aujourd'hui pour prendre soin des trésors inestimables qui s'y trouvent. Sur les flancs du Djebel, à la fin du IVe et au debut du Ve siècle de notre ère, soit du temps d'Hypatie, qui est celui de l'empire romain en l'an 400, le voyageur pouvait voir d'innombrables cellules de moines suspendues comme des nids d'aigles. Un jeune moine aux études, du nom de Philamon, sans doute désireux de rompre la routine de la vie monastique, décida un jour, enfreignant ainsi un ordre séculaire, de faire l'ascension du Djebel pour y contempler le soleil face à face. Mal lui en prit sur-le-champ d'avoir voulu pratiquer le culte du feu solaire. Mais il fera surface un jour, soixante ans plus tard, à la cour de Byzance.

La scène se déplace ensuite tantôt à Ptolémaïs et à Alexandrie, tantôt à Constantinople ou encore en Belgique, en Irlande, en Gaule et en Italie. Jean Marcel a divisé ainsi en six panneaux l'immense fresque qu'il nous trace des derniers moments de l'hellénisme, de ce monde en décomposition, qui est la dernière lumière de l'antiquité païenne à la dérive: Fragments de lettre d'Hypatie à Synésios de Cyrène; Lettre de Synésios à Hypatie; Lettre du Bollandiste F. H. à Philamon; Nouveaux fragments de lettre d'Hypatie à Synésios; Lettre d'Evoptios à Palladas; Le manuscrit du Palladas. Autant de noms grecs qui me mettent l'eau à la bouche.

Il s'agit donc en l'occurrence de l'histoire d'Hypatie, de son milieu et de son temps, rattachée mystérieusement à Sainte-Catherine-du-désert. Hypatie est sans conteste la plus illustre de cette pléiade de femmes: Asclépigénie, Édésie, Sosipatra *et aliae*, qui honorèrent la philosophie néo-platonicienne de notre ère. Astronome, géomètre, et philosophe grecque, originaire d'Alexandrie comme son père Théon, astronome et mathématicien de la fin du IVe siècle, elle étudia plusieurs années à Athènes les mathématiques, la philosophie et les sciences.

Il ne reste aucune trace de sa méthode d'enseignement, de sa doctrine philosophique et de ses écrits.

Il serait puéril de prétendre résumer ce superbe roman historique, divisé en six panneaux, sur les dernières lumières de l'hellénisme, sur la décadence et la décomposition d'un monde. Il est si riche de descriptions, d'incidents, de péripéties, de portraits, de récits, de pensées, de réflexions, de sentiments personnels! Je me refuse aussi à en donner même les grandes lignes. Il faudrait presque un livre pour relever et justifier les détails d'ordre géographique, historique, institutionnel et lexicologique qui forment le tissu de cette oeuvre exotique et pathétique, d'une rare plénitude, où l'antiquité gréco-romaine se dresse avec tout son relief devant le lecteur médusé par le caractère d'authenticité qui s'en dégage. La phraséologie elle-même concourt à dépayser le lecteur, tout en lui procurant l'enchantement que produit la vue de l'étrangeté et de l'inconnu. Notons à ce propos les inversions verbe-sujet, qui nous renvoient d'emblée aux temps lointains des auteurs grecs et latins.

L'auteur amplifie les procédés propres au genre romantique: le dialogue prend ici l'aspect de lettres qu'échangent les principaux personnages; l'analyse psychologique revêt fréquement la forme de sentences qui traduisent l'état d'âme de personnages, frappés par "la placide vanité de notre inexorable existence," ou par la beauté du désert "qui gît dans tout ce qui est l'infini et l'indéfinition." On reste interdit d'entendre dire à Hypatie: "Quand l'éternité m'aura guérie d'avoir jamais existé . . ." ou à Palladas: "Pour toute éternité, il me suffit d'avoir été."

Et si j'avais à en préparer une édition critique, je ne manquerais pas de dresser

deux index, l'un des noms propres, l'autre des termes techniques; ces deux listes comprendraient plusieurs centaines de mots. Je soulignerais aussi la fantaisie, l'humour et l'ironie de l'auteur, son emploi de l'anachronisme (le Bollandiste F. H., de Bruxelles, parle même de la rue Sainte-Catherine, du chemin de la Côte Sainte-Catherine, etc.), de l'histoire et de l'histoire de l'art, voire de la critique d'art, quelques-uns de ses procédés de style, comme la composition de plusieurs paragraphes de trois pages chacune à la Marcel Proust, la cascade de noms propres d'historiens et de savants, les catégories de moines grecs orthodoxes, les métaphores et les comparaisons lumineuses et pittoresques.

Je ne manquerais pas non plus de dire que Jean Marcel s'est peut-être inspiré, du moins pour le titre de son roman, de celui de plusieurs écrits antérieurs consacrés à Hypatie. Ainsi John Toland (1760-1822), de Londres, publia en 1710 *Hypatia: or, The History of a Lady who was torn to pieces.* Le titre complet comprend au moins deux lignes. Son livre souleva une violente polémique, comme l'atteste la cinglante réponse que lui fit Thomas Lewis, M.A., en 1721. *The History of Hypatia . . . In defence of Saint Cyril and the Alexandrian clergy from the aspersions of Mr. Toland.* Le titre complet remplit au moins trois lignes. Le grand romancier anglais, Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), s'est aussi inspiré de l'histoire d'Hypatie qu'il raconta d'abord dans un interminable feuilleton du *Fraser's Magazine*, puis dans un livre intitulé *Hypatia: or, New Foes with an Old Face* (1853).

On le voit par ce qui précède, la lecture du roman de Jean Marcel a vivement piqué ma curiosité, m'a fort intéressé et m'a appris plus d'un fait sur la fin de l'hellénisme en Égypte. Ce n'est même pas une fois par décennie qu'on voit paraître en librairie au Canada français un livre de pareil calibre, à la fois un roman historique et un poème en prose de grande classe. La poésie, qui est délivrance, embellit tout, comme fait le soleil. Voilà une grande oeuvre romanesque que Marguerite Yourcenar eût fort appréciée, ce qui est tout dire. Il me tarde de lire *Jérôme ou de la traduction, Sidoine ou la dernière fête.*

MAURICE LEBEL

ON THE VERGE

*** R. S. BLAIR and J. T. MCLEOD, eds., *The Canadian Political Tradition.* Methuen, $21.95. The contributors to this volume read like a Who's Who of recent history: P.-E. Trudeau, George Grant, Frank Underhill, John Porter, Eugene Forsey, Gordon Robertson, Alan Cairns, Ramsay Cook, Richard Simeon, and almost twenty more (though *none* are women). The book is a reader, aimed at political science students (other readers will also find it fascinating). It is rooted in the maxim that "History is past politics; politics is present history." One might quarrel with the maxim to start with — or insist that "politics" be widely enough defined to explain "culture" as well as "system." Indeed, the "classic" statements in this book do attempt to deal with culture — not by looking at books, but by demonstrating how the contexts of structure and supposition (about "rights," "federalism," "region," "nation") manifest themselves in rhetorical action and political decision. Other articles embrace more warmly the rhetoric of statistics, like so many of the would-be designers of new constitutions. Overall, the articles question political abuses as well as examine political systems, and the book contains useful guides to further reading.

W.N.

***** *Dear Nan: Letters of Emily Carr, Nan Cheney and Humphry Toms,* edited by Doreen Walker. UBC Press $29.95. This is a very important book for anyone interested in the history of Canadian art and also in Canadian social history; it is also a fascinating personal document with immense human appeal. It consists of the correspondence that went on from 1930 until 1945 between Emily Carr and her fellow painter Nan Cheney, with some letters that help tie the pieces together from their common protégé, a personable and intelligent

young man named Humphrey Toms. Cheney was a competent minor painter — her professional speciality being medical drawings. My impression of her, acquired in the 1950s, is of a highly civilized person with an astringent edge to her way of speaking; like Emily Carr, she suffered fools ungladly. However, few of her letters have survived, so that in this book she does seem rather like a sphinx (without a secret?), and the vast bulk of the book's 400 odd pages consists of the rambling, crotchety, misspelt letters of Emily herself. And what a marvellous projection of character it is, better than any of the great letter novels of the eighteenth century! As Nan quite evidently did, one loves and becomes exasperated throughout the book with this courageous, complaining, ungrateful genius with words as well as images, who seems often as if Joyce Cary had created her as a combination of his crazy artists and eccentric old women. Like a good novel, it keeps its hold to the appropriately pathetic end. Here, warts and all — warts especially — is the woman of the great paintings, and the grandeur shines through the cultivated eccentricity and the natural nastiness. A book to be read and kept, and excellently edited by Doreen Walker.

G.W.

*** Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin. *An Iron Hand upon the People.* Douglas & McIntyre. $29.95. Judicious books often stir up more passion than they allay, and this may be the case with *An Iron Hand Upon the People*, in which Douglas Cole and Ira Chaikin discuss the notorious clause, inserted into the Indian Act in 1885 and not withdrawn until 1951, that forbade the holding of potlatches by the Indians of the West Coast. This prohibition was never a clear issue among either Indians or near Indians. There were many converts among the tribes who supported their missionaries in regarding the forbidden custom as outdated and unChristian. There were many whites (including Judge Begbie and perhaps a majority of British Columbians), who considered the potlatch a harmless institution and felt that to prohibit it would only cause trouble. So there was no situation of local whites imposing their own standards on the Indians. Ottawa was quite another case; apart from British Columbian MPs (inclined to be pro-potlatch) parliament was generally and ignorantly inclined to accept the opinion of whoever, from Sir John A. onwards, was in charge of Indian affairs. The elected minister usually took the advice of his leading permanent official, who for many years happened to be the poet Duncan Campbell Scott. The case against Scott on the grounds of inflexibility and unimaginativeness, is immense; singlehandedly, he dealt a blow at the West Coast native cultures from which they have only just been able to recover. And with these remarks I illustrate how hard it is to maintain the judiciousness over the matter of the potlatch at which Cole and Chaikin aim. The attitude of the Ottawa bureaucrats, and Scott in particular, was so crass an expression of assumed cultural superiority that nowadays it seems even more incomprehensible than it is unforgiveable. It blurs our feelings of the sincerity of Scott's Indian poems entirely, and so this work of social history turns out to be a notable and disconcerting contribution to Canadian literary history.

G.W.

**** Jean Barman. *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia.* University of Toronto Press. $35.00. For more than thirty years, after Margaret Ormsby published *British Columbia: A History*, in 1958, there was no new and comprehensive history of that province. Now, within a matter of six months, two new histories have been published, George Woodcock's *British Columbia: A History of the Province*, which appeared in the fall of 1990, and Jean Barman's *The West Beyond the West*, which has just appeared. Differing in approach and style, but united in their intense local patriotism, these books offer the reader a range of impressions and interpretations of the past of the great region beyond the mountains of which both historians see themselves as adoptive children.

Barman's *The West Beyond the West* is a social and economic history rather than a political one, though the political lines of development are sketched in. It speaks a great deal more through the remarks and impressions of plain people — gathered from various archives — than it does through the flamboyant voices of the West Coast's eccentric politicians or indeed through the voices of its scholars. For only a few of the many books on local Indians are noted in Barman's check list, and the principal book on the Doukhobors is neither mentioned — nor, evidently, used.

Still it is the sense of being close to the nameless individuals who created the human community of British Columbia that carries one's interest through the book. For Barman writes a comfortable and mercifully jargon-free prose, but rarely rises above competent exposition to brilliance of writing or insight.

L.T.C.

BLODGETT'S POETRY

WHERE IS THE VOICE coming from? In the context of Canadian poetry Ted Blodgett's work is eccentric — even if it manages to swallow Canada as a central motif. The poems are not documentary, not epic or anecdote, not social drama. We do not hear colloquial speech, the voices of lovers or workers, of minorities or majorities, of newscasters or advertisers. What, then, do we hear? The first poem in *Da Capo: The Selected Poems of E. D. Blodgett* (NeWest 1990), which prompts these questions, reads:

> Voice
>
> of hands, green
> and feet, fern
>
> bodies fill egypt with bones
> and water over stone sings,
> leaves have been eyes.
>
> lay me lively in air.
> the worm grows happy into a tree:
> breathe me in mirrors of eyes

Voice? The poem talks about eyes more than ears, seeing more than hearing or speaking, eyes that become leaves, which become mirrors of eyes. Even if the speaker may ask to be breathed in those mirrors, one is left with a pretty foggy image of voice. What does one make of this?

First, a kind of music: the series "g," "h," "f," the modulation from "feet" to "fern," the alliteration and assonance. The syntax and diction serve melopoeia, as in "bodies fill egypt with bones / and water over stone sings," or "lay me lively in air." Further, the basic elements, water, air, stone, bones, tree, leaves, hands, eyes, reappear in the poems that follow, which may add, for example, a wall, a window of air, beached ships, a chair, orchards, a horse, a father, a child. The penultimate "Trio" introduces a bird in the tree, a bird that would speak "what mouth would gape on air // what seed would burn / upon the small flame / of tongue." But then the whole first section closes with a poem that strips away the richer additions, the orchestral colouring, any expectation of an epiphany or grand harmonic close. We read:

> Language
>
> the bird
> has left
> my tongue
>
> the tree
> is bare
> of birds
>
> my tongue
> is the tree
> stripped
>
> it speaks

Before we may register the poem or the sequence of poems as a discursive development of theme, we may register it as music. And the whole selected poems, drawing on at least five volumes and over a decade of writing, may be seen as developing in the same manner, new motifs being provided by Van Gogh in section two; by animals or a kind of bestiary in section three; by Canada (people and places, texts and events) in section four; and, fittingly and magnificently, by music itself in section five. *Da Capo* means something like "Play it again, Sam," as a coda may recapitulate the earlier motifs, the tail repeat the head, the end the beginning. The title announces something of both the form and the theme.

The theme, yes. One might say it is the desire for and the impossibility of Adamic speech or Orphic song. We would go back to the beginning, but any beginning has already already begun. We do not command the living Word, a tongue of flame,

only language — we do not speak from the burning bush but from the tree "bare of birds," sere leaves, dead letters. We live in language as in a world of glass, of mirrors, of museums. We cannot become a green thought in a green shade, or one with the skylark, nightingale, bird "on the burning branch." At best we apprehend them as we apprehend the lovers and the festive folk on Keats' Grecian urn, the bird "etched as any shepherd on / a vase, abandoned in a field, / the other shepherds like him gone / and all their songs repealed" ("Amoeba").

One of the simplest variations on this theme is found in "Cows." The first line reads, "we kill them." But this is not another poem on the death of the bull calf, or pet rabbit, or gopher. These cows are killed by representation, by art, and hung like trophies on the walls:

> and the cows that turner saw,
> cows that rose upon the stairs
> and stood in rooms,
>
> are cows whose mouths are finally closed —
> hesperidean gardens of cows where the air
> as in museums froze.

Canada becomes just such a garden of cows, from Louisburg to Batoche — a collection of ruins, or runes of ruins, as in Mackenzie King's country "estate," which Blodgett calls "Idylls of the King."

One might identify secondary themes: Oedipal anxiety, Lacanian alienation, Harold Bloom's more literary versions of how the writer would become his father's father, by misprision, by swerves. It leads Blodgett from New Jersey to Provence to Canada; from English to French and German, Italian and Latin and Sanskrit; from Wallace Stevens, Keats and Shelley, to Rilke, to Goethe, to Minucius Felix, to one of the Upanishads. He buries his fathers in epigraphs, but his poetry becomes only the more haunted by echoes. One may go sideways or backwards, from leaf to leaf, but one remains belated. So in the very first poem, the "original" hands and feet become grass, leaves, which become repetitions, echoes, "mirrors of eyes" (or "I's"). The worm entering the tree, the fallen son, grown parlous, is not the great "I Am" but only an "iamb," only Minucius Felix, saying, "Do not use the rotted names," only Chicken Little telling Whitman that his *Leaves of Grass* are really dumb. (If "lays" are songs, what did Whitman sing in his "Song of Myself," but "Lay me lively in air"? Not the song of the last minstrel, only the latest, Blodgett himself, with his possible puns, being only the latest of the latest.)

But even if he would displace these earlier poets, Stevens, Eliot, Whitman, Keats, Shelley, Marvell, et cetera — would put them in their place — he does so in an elegiac manner. For he can identify with their desire for essential speech, to be able to say, "Be thou me!" or "Tat tvam asi!" to the bird in the sky, the bird in the tree, the bird in the rose garden, the bird on the Paumanok shore — and have it realized. But the post-Derridean minstrel expects little. Even Eliot speaks of the "deception of the thrush." Blodgett appears more sardonic when he ascribes the Romantic "bird, immortal bird, you are" to the vulture. Is this a variation on "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," on Stevens' "Death is the mother of beauty"? Are these poems elegies on elegies, or, as in section three, "Arché/Elegies"?

I am struck by the possible relevance of certain remarks of Harold Bloom:

> The word "meaning goes back to a root that signifies "opinion" or "intention", and is closely related to the word *moaning*. A poem's meaning is a poem's complaint, its version of Keats' Belle Dame, who looked *as if* she loved, and made sweet moan. Poems instruct us in how they break form to bring about meaning, so as to utter complaint, a moaning intended to be all their own."
>
> ("The Breaking of Form," *Deconstruction and Criticism*, p. 21)

With free trade, *Lament for a Nation* and *Civil Elegies* are not in fashion. The *Duino Elegies, Kerrisdale Elegies* are not in fashion. Despite war or recession, one is supposed to say, in American fashion, "Damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead." But the moaning remains. Stanley Cooperman (originally a New Yorker) said that Birney's poetry, particularly "A Walk in Kyoto," suggests all cities, all planning, all artifice and technology, backfire — produce slavery and division, not freedom and communion. (So much for the central Canadian dream of civil space, "the rising village.") Blodgett agrees, except the primary technology is not mechanical or even electric. It is language. Even "art" (as Birney implied) is deadly.

Well, almost. Sound may reveal silence. And silence is the end of this writing, its retrograde progression. If Canada is *nada*, a place where practical and semiotic meaning peter out like a Saskatchewan road, it may be a positive place. If I understand the "Totem for Emily Carr," the ending that unravels all the stories, does a *volte-face*, runs language backwards, undeclares, exhales all — even the attempt to say "holiness" becoming "o" — this is good. Whatever lives outside language may return, even if, ambiguously, it takes your breath away.

Blodgett may be original in his reference to Bach rather than Beethoven, fugues rather sonatas or quartets, the fire-bombing of Dresden rather than London, Nellie Sachs rather than Dante, Glen Gould . . . but his moaning finds meaning much in the fashion of Eliot's:

> Words move, music moves
> only in time; but that which is only living
> Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
> Into the silence. Only by the form, the
> pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves perpetually in its stillness.

Eliot's Chinese jar, Stevens' jar in Tennessee, Keats' well-wrought urn, these various icons of "unheard melodies," all underwrite Blodgett's later celebration of Bach, of Bede, of ancient metaphor, ancient music — pointing to something like Eliot's saving conclusion that "the end precedes the beginning, / And the end and the beginning were always there / Before the beginning and after the end."

It may be on the strength of such a thesis that Stevens' "Ideas of Order at Key West" may be allowed to return in the new poems, particularly in "Pavanes, 3." Though a footnote locates the origin of the poem in Blodgett's experience in Spain, disguising the presence of Stevens' muse who "sang beyond the genius of the sea," the whole series here develops through polyphonic echoes of Stevens, Whitman, Keats, and Bede, and generates the title of the selected poems. The girl here "sings of change":

> o alchemies of throats, the bloodied air,
> and old morphologies within the dark
> of swallow, nightingale and other birds
> that streak the air with songs that never end,
> speaking of final things ever *da capo* . . .

Stevens' assertion that the lady sang "beyond" the genius of the sea, appears to be modified by Blodgett's "Pavanes 8," which says that the lady sang only "measured sounds of her mortality," that it is the sea itself "become music in her mouth." Blodgett appears to become more comfortable with art. "Poems in their ancient perfection / might be no more / than a skull," as natural as anything else that speaks to silence. They may thus be spoken, or played, and left, "as one might leave skulls, / careless, upon a kitchen floor." They sing of mortality, not the transcendent. It is "after speech" the words "reach into silence." Some such conviction appears to alleviate the modern anxiety of art, to allow Blodgett to recover the ancient music, even the form of popular song, and sing at his best, as in part 5 of "Fire Music":

who will sing of Dresden now,
of bombs that fall upon the ground,
and corpses lying row on row?
Asche, Asche, all fall down.

Of Sulamith, her ashen hair,
Of Gretchen and her golden gown,
and fire, fire everywhere?
Asche, Asche, all fall down.

Of hands and heads, of legs and feet,
of fire in the houses sown,
and every child's winding sheet?
Asche, Asche, all fall down.

And so on for another six stanzas. It links child and adult, present and past, English and German in elegiac repetition—which does not seem, at this moment, passé.

D. G. JONES

ANTHOLOGIES & OTHERS

C. K. STEAD'S *Answering to the Language* (Auckland UP, NZ$29.95) gathers several essays and reviews on modern writers, many from New Zealand and many from the European mainstream; Stead places his critical faith in the modernist adherence to such values as truth and courage, and seeks honesty in art above all; some of the best writing in the book occurs in the diary entries appended to the essays: in these conversations with himself, Stead meditates on what criticism is for.

Ian Wedde and Gregory Burke in *Now See Here!* (Victoria UP, NZ$39.95) take a different approach to art, language, and translation; their collection of essays, unlike Stead's, is essentially an exhibition catalogue, hence produced from a single perspective, where his is a career's record. Wedde and Burke insist that the visual (from landscape to makeup, from ads to graffiti) is a *text,* therefore a frame through which we view whatever it is we take to be reality. Sometimes the frames are parodic, as in a Neoclassical arrangement with words inscribed in the midst of it: "Poussin Was Here." The illustrations add immeasurably to this text, as might be imagined.

Another noteworthy recent collection is C. D. Narasimhaiah's *An Anthology of Commonwealth Poetry* (Macmillan India, Rs 65.00), a very useful, if highly selective choice of representative poems from most parts of the Commonwealth. The sections on India and on South East Asia are very good, those on Canada and New Zealand surprisingly weak; the section on Africa is fairly conventional, the one on Australia fairly unconventional, the one on the West Indies too limited; but all in all, it provides the most accessible comparative sampler of Commonwealth poetry currently available.

Among other instructive collections are R. Parthasarathy's *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets* (Oxford, $11.95), an important selection of works by Ramanujan, Ezekiel, Kolatkar, and Daruwalla, with helpful reading lists; more reference to women poets would be advantageous in any subsequent edition. Adeola James's edition, *In Their Own Voices* (James Currey/Heinemann, $17.50), is a collection of interviews with African women writers, among whom are Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Ellen Kuzwayo, and Flora Nwapa. Recurrent themes include the question of cultural restraint, on the grounds of gender, and the question of style; the writers are clear that gender restrictions differ from society to society, in large part depending on historical and tribal convention — and they also assert the individuality of stylistic choice.

Fred Cogswell and Jo-Anne Elder, in *Unfinished Dreams: Contemporary Poetry of Acadie* (Goose Lane, $16.95), assemble translations of works by several francophone poets from Acadia: Canadian poets whose works are unhappily not well known outside the Maritimes: among them are Hermenégilde Chiasson, Jeannine Landry-Theriault, Ronald Després, and Raymond Leblanc. Perhaps this useful anthology will help draw attention to them, and counter some of the inadequate generalizations that are often made about francophone writing in Canada.

The first issue of a new journal, *Gatherings* [1.1 (Fall 1990)], comes from the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, B.C.; a journal of "First North American Peoples," it promises a great deal; the first issue offers poetry and prose (including an essay on Native women), and is well worth reading.

W.N.

NORTHROP FRYE 1912-1991

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED Northrop Frye where so many did: in a lecture room, at Victoria College in the University of Toronto, where he taught for five decades. It was his famous "Bible" course, considered de rigueur for any serious literature student at the time. I don't know what I was expecting: thunder, perhaps, or a larger-than-life talking statue. What actually appeared was an unassuming, slightly plump and rumpled figure, with distracted hair and extremely sharp eyes behind Dickensian spectacles. This person placed one hand on the desk in front of him, took a step forward, took another step forward, took a step back, took another step back. While repeating this small dance pattern, he proceeded to speak, without benefit of notes or text, in pure, lucid, eloquent, funny and engaging prose, for the space of an hour. This was not a fluke. He did it every week.

Teaching was not something Northrop Frye engaged in as an unimportant and tedious academic duty. Despite his reputation as the foremost literary critic of his own and many another generation, both nationally and internationally, he always spoke of himself as an educator. He did not lock literature into an ivory tower; instead he emphasized its centrality to the development of a civilized and humane society. As a critic, he did not write for other critics, in an esoteric jargon only a few could comprehend; he wrote instead for the intelligent general reader. His early experiences as a divinity student and preacher stood him in good stead: pick up any of his books and what you will hear (not *see*, for he was enormously conscious of the oral and even the musical values of the word) is a personal voice, speaking to you directly. Because of its style, flexibility and formal elegance, its broad range and systematic structure, his literary criticism takes its place easily within the body of literature itself.

That sounds fairly intimidating, and a lot of people were intimidated by Frye. I suppose it's difficult not to be intimidated by someone so brilliant. But intimidation was not something Frye did on purpose. He didn't suffer fools gladly, it's true, and he could be devastatingly ironic when confronted with malicious or willed stupidity; but he was surprisingly gentle with youthful naivete and simple ignorance. In contrast to the image of austerity and superhuman powers others projected on him, he could be quite impish. His students were often startled to find references to current pop songs, comic books or off-colour jokes injected dead-pan into an otherwise serious-minded lecture on *King Lear* or *Paradise Lost*, which probably intimitated them even more: was there anything this man hadn't read? Apparently not; but since one of his major themes was the way in which plots resemble other plots — whether they are to be found in fairy tales, epic poems or soap operas — there was nothing he refused to consider. He knew also that the way in which we understand ourselves is less through theory than through story. In the life of any individual, as in the lives of communities and nations, stories are primary.

So now I will tell a couple; because, when anyone dies, one of the first things we do is tell stories about them. What to choose from? The apocryphal one about how he first came to Toronto by winning a speed-typing contest? (Actually, he didn't win; but he *was* a very swift typist.) The one about the adulating woman who said to him, "Oh, Dr. Frye, is there *anything* you don't know?" Norrie, gazing characteristically at his shoes, mumbled that he didn't really know very much about Japanese flower arranging and proceeded to deliver an informed page

or two on the subject. Or, from M. T. Kelly, a writer friend with whom he discussed northern-exploration journals: "He came to my book-launch at the Rivoli! Can you picture it? Queen Street West, with the black leather? The man was spiritually generous!"

Or the time we had him to dinner and something burnt in the kitchen and the fire alarm went off, waking our young daughter. She wandered downstairs and got into a conversation with Norrie. Despite his well-known social shyness, he had no difficulty talking with a six-year-old, and she herself was enchanted by him. That interlude, not the high-powered adult conversation that surrounded it, was the high point of the evening for him.

I think one of the sadnesses of his life was that he never had children. But there are many people, including some who never knew him personally, who will feel orphaned by his death.

This tribute first appeared as "The Great Communicator" in *The Globe and Mail.*

MARGARET ATWOOD

REFERENCE

A NEW VENTURE in literary surveys, the *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism,* ed. Martin Coyle et al. (Routledge, n.p.), contains ninety chapters on a range of subjects pertaining to English-language literature, guiding readers not only to conventional history but also to current approaches to the *idea of literature.* Six chapters survey canonical categories ("Renaissance," "Augustan," "Postmodern"); thirty-nine deal with standard genres, though not always in conventional terms, ("lyric," "symbolism," "Contemporary American," "stagecraft," "tragedy," "feminist theatre"; "feminine fictions," "realism," "formalism"); twenty-one examine critical stances ('hermeneutics," "Marxism") and questions of production and reception ("printing," "literary," "libraries," "censorship"); thirteen probe what are called "contexts" (seeing literature in relation to the Bible, folk and popular arts, music and visual arts, landscape, language, and science); and nine consider aspects of "national" literatures in Africa, Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. The international range of subjects and contributions testifies to the exciting range of perspectives, though inevitably there are disparities. There is a chapter on Black American traditions, but nothing specific about native American writing, nor about the impact of ethnic diversity — and twentieth-century diasporas — on the concept of "English" literature. "Post-colonization" might have been probed more in the theory section, and I should have liked to see a separate chapter on the forms of short fiction. But as it stands this is a valuable corrective to conventional histories, and a valuable addition to one's reference shelf.

W.N.

VOLUME 3 of *Short Story Criticism* (Gale, $75.00) contains a section on the work of Alice Munro, pp. 319-350.

A major new book on the art of the short story is a collection of essays edited by Susan Lohafer and Jo Ellyn Clarey, *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads* (Louisiana State UP, US$29.95; pa. $12.95). Included are essays on short story history, surveys of theory, and bibliographies of further reading, and while the bibliography leaves out some references that are particularly useful, the theoretical essays lucidly probe the limitations of a lot of current generalizations about the sources and shapes of the genre. Particularly instructive essays address such topics as framing, beginnings and endings, and sequence structures.

W.N.

BOOKS RECEIVED

1) Anthologies

RONALD VROON, ed. and PAUL SCHMIDT, transl., *Collected Works of Velimir Khlebnikov.* Harvard University, $39.50.

DAVID A. KENT, *Christian Poetry in Canada.* ECW Press, $12.00.

GERHARD DUSTERHAUS and ROLF FRANZBECKER, eds., *Canada — Regions and Literature.* Schoningh GmbH, DM15.80.

COLIN MORTON, ed., *Capital Poets: An Ottawa Anthology.* Ouroboros, n.p.

GEORGE WOODCOCK, ed., *The Dry Wells of India.* Harbour, $8.95.

DANIEL MATIVAT, BRUNO ROY and LOUIS VACHON, *Nous reviendrons comme des Nelligan.* VLB Editeur, n.p.

ALLAN FORRIE, PATRICK O'ROURKE and GLEN SORESTAD, eds., *The Last Map is the Heart.* Thistledown, $14.95.

JOHN METCALF and LEON ROOKE, eds., *The Second Macmillan Anthology.* Macmillan, $16.95.

JOHN METCALF and KENT THOMPSON, eds., *The Third Macmillan Anthology.* Macmillan, $16.95.

LEON ROOKE, ed., *The Journey Prize Anthology.* McClelland & Stewart, $16.95.

WAYNE TEFS, ed., *Made in Manitoba.* Turnstone, $6.95.

GEOFF HANCOCK, ed., *Singularities.* Black Moss, n.p.

COLIN G. CALLOWAY, *Dawnland Encounters.* New England University, $30.00.

HUGH HAZELTON and GARY GEDDES, eds., *Compañeros.* Cormorant, $12.95.

ROBERT HENDRICKSON, *American Literary Anecdotes.* Facts on File, $24.95.

ALBERTO MANGUEL, ed., *Oxford Book of Canadian Ghost Stories.* Oxford, $16.95.

KAMAL A. ROSTOM, ed., *Arab-Canadian Writing.* York, $9.95.

PETER VAN TOORN, ed., *Sounds New.* The Muses, n.p.

ARITHA VAN HERK, ed., *Alberta Rebound.* NeWest, $5.95.

DAVID HELWIG and MAGGIE HELWIG, eds., *Coming Attractions: 89.* Oberon, n.p.

2) Children's Literature

SONIA SARFATI, *Sauvetages.* Québec / Amérique, $6.95.

SONIA SARFATI, *Pari d'Agathe.* Québec/Amérique, n.p.

JACQUES LAZURE, *Le domaine des sans yeaux.* Québec/Amérique, $6.95.

MICHÈLE MARINEAU, *L'été des Baleines.* Québec/Amérique, $6.95.

SUSAN NIELSEN, *Shane.* James Lorimer, $16.95 /4.95.

PIERRE MATHIEU, *Les dinosaures en fète.* Edns des Plaines, $6.95.

KATHRYN ELLIS, *Joey Jeremiah.* James Lorimer, $16.95.

NAZEEN NADIQ, *Lucy.* James Lorimer, $16.95.

SUSAN NIELSEN, *Melanie.* James Lorimer, $16.95.

LESLEY CHOYCE, *Skateboard Shakedown.* James Lorimer, $8.95.

HANNE BRANDT, *My Sister Linda.* Ragweed, $8.95.

KIRSTEN DROTNER, *English Children and Their Magazines, 1751-1945.* Yale University, $27.50.

J. O. PENNANEN, *Heads or Tails.* Penumbra, n.p.

ROBERT MUNSCH and MICHAEL MARTCHENKO, *J'ai envie.* La Courte Echelle, n.p.

———, *L'anniversaire.* La Courte Echelle, n.p.

LINDA ROGERS and DIANNE DURRAND, *Worm Sandwich.* Sono Nis, $9.95.

BERTRAND GAUTHIER and DANIEL SYLVESTRE, *Zunik dans la pleine lune.* La Courte Echelle, n.p.

———, *Zunik dans le Wawazonzon.* La Courte Echelle, n.p.

MARIANNE BRANDIS, *The Sign of the Scales.* Porcupine's Quill, $9.95.

SHEILA EGOFF and JUDITH SALTMAN, *The New Republic of Childhood. Oxford,* $19.95.

CHARLES MONTPETIT, *Temps mort.* Editions Paulines, $6.95.

PIERRE MATHIEU, *Le boulier magique.* Edns des Plaines, $6.95.

3) Criticism

JAMES PHELAN, *Reading People, Reading Plots.* Chicago University, n.p.

GARY SAUL MORSON and CARYL EMERSON, eds., *Rethinking Bakhtin.* Northwestern University $36.95.

D. J. ENRIGHT, *Fields of Vision.* Tennessee University, $12.95.

GARY GUTTING, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason.* Cambridge, n.p.

REINGARD NISCHIK and BARBARA KORTE, eds., *Modes of Narrative.* Konigshausen & Neumann, $48.00.

TATYANA MAMONOVA, *Russian Women's Studies.* Pergamon, $36.00.

COLLECTIF, *Le syndrome postreferendaire*. Stanke, $14.95.

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Introducing Hugh Maclennan's "Barometer Rising."* ECW, $18.95.

ROBERT LECKER, JACK DAVID and ELLEN QUIGLEY, eds., *Canadian Writers and Their Works:* Fiction Series, Volume 2, 8, and 10. $40.00 each.

———, ———, Poetry Series, Volume 6. ECW, $40.00.

JAMES KERR, *Fiction Against History*. Cambridge, £19.50.

BETTINA KNAPP, *Machine, Metaphor, and the Writer*. Pennsylvania State University, £25.75.

CLIFFORD DAVIDSON, *Visualizing the Moral Life*. AMS, US$39.50.

JOHN METCALF, *What is a Canadian Literature?* Red Kite, $9.95.

ALFREDO RIZZARDI, *Italian Critics on Irving Layton: A Symposium*. Piovane Editore, n.p.

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ANOTHER POETRY SAMPLER: Judith Rodriguez's *New and Selected Poems* (Univ. Queensland, n.p.) and Andrew Taylor's *Selected Poems* (Univ. Queensland, n.p.) bring attention again to two accomplished contemporary Australian lyricists. Among Rodriguez's recent works is a series of poems set in Retirement Florida, the tone variously satiric and sadly sympathetic. One lyric, called "Dream Houses" — "They are always by water, and far from town," the American ideal, converted to condominium — closes with a wife dying and the widower ("the ringmaster of finance spotlit") still trying to work the odds with happiness, houses, and his version of art. It's a potent picture of the culturally pervasive American Empire, but also of its evasion of its own emptiness. Taylor's "What We Hear in the Open Air" also declares a sympathy for the predicament of being human; "If I speak in the first person," the poem opens, "that is because, simply, I was the first / to speak . . . / . . . / I say — as always — who I am." Taylor's persona goes on to hear his own words as "leaves on the wind," most voluble "in the needs of others," "most silent . . . in their moment of happiness." That declares a differ-

ent version of values, and community. But is the metaphor powerful — or is it the artifice of ineffectual desire?

Whether or not happiness is possible is an open question for many poets. John Tranter's *Under Berlin: New Poems—1988* (Univ. Queensland, n.p.) finds happiness recurrently in the past; "no regrets" is his running motif. But the forms of contemporary desire prove more dislocating than the memories of experience. Others' preoccupations consequently sometimes seem irrelevant, banal; it's a generalization as true here of cultures as it is of people, and the closeness to self somehow undermines connection, arousing the temptation — if not always the enactment — of despair. Les Murray's *The Daylight Moon* (Angus & Robertson, A$12.95), by contrast, celebrates in narrative and character sketch — the vernacular intriguingly couched inside stanzaic form — the renewal of Australian culture through its present-day reacquaintance with place and past. "Cumulus" closes with a new version of pastoral: "The vixen feeds her cubs, / and kangaroos fold down to graze, above the human suburbs. / Neither fantasy nor fear has built an eagle's nest fortress / to top our nonfiction poetry. We've put the wild above us."

For Lee Cataldi, in *The Women Who Live on the Ground* (Penguin, A$9.99), disappearance is the recurrent trope: bodies, cultures, time itself — all surrender to the various forms that desert takes. Throughout the book, American tourists, preoccupied with the accounting courses they think they should have taken, fail to notice the world they travel through. Meanwhile, the bones of ancestors push up through the oldest of earths, effortlessly offering a new birth, or the promise of a new kind of forgetting. "The women who live on the ground / disappear into the desert," muses the title poem; they also watch the white women fade into their motor cars. "What is plain to see is / plain to see," says another poem; and another still: "if you stay too long in the third world / you will become / accustomed to silence and observation."

Timoshenko Aslanides, in the tightly modulated 14-line lyrics of *Australian Things* (Penguin, A$9.99), balances celebration and complaint, writing about "Good things" ("A start is a good thing") and bad (bureaucrats and relative values, apparently), about things that could be compared ("The book and the beginning") and things that cannot ("all the ands and all the ors, however successful their conjunction"), about annoying things and pleasing things, things best enjoyed from a distance (such as "distance itself"), and many others. Yet underneath these repeated claims upon decisiveness and happiness there lies a militant claim upon order, one that does not altogether hide in wit and repartee its toleration of extreme actions in the defence of a conventional hierarchy of values.

Michael Jackson's *Duty Free* (Selected Poems 1965-1988; John McIndoe, NZ$18.95) places its faith in the power of metaphor; in the title poem dolphins carry the poet — himself identified with the sea — in a multitude of directions, crossing borders at will. The unknown is the attraction: "1987" closes: "the wind / off the sea carries / Spume into the darkness / like a blurred face / like memory left / To its own devices / as stable as sand / a grainy photograph / Of who it is we love / of what it is / we do not understand."

But Jackson's collective "We" and Aslanides' resistance to relativism are just the sort of assertions that several other writers write against. Cataldi provides one model, one shared in some respects by Michael Thorpe, whose *The Observing Eye* (Third Eye, n.p.) records the poet's sympathetic realization of his separateness from the Third World lives he has observed; in India for example, travelling "Economy Class," his persona travels to tourist sites and through streets he thinks of as "Dickensian," but finds that reality crowds in uncomfortably on the artifice of literary trope: "when ragged maimed guerillas / Pluck in the sun at his exposed / Compassion he will, as he regains / The tinkling gilt foyer of the Taj hotel / Give silent thanks he returns to a world / Where he can cope with this by credit card."

Pamela Mordecai, in *Journey Poem* (Sandberry Press, n.p.), counters a too easy marginalizing of the Third World. Writing from the Caribbean, she claims family ("Careful then / how you cross me"), love ("Slowly / the day grew / I was glad / to know you"), the power of creativity ("Seeing / is a making / act"), and the pride of presence ("See me — / Look! / I am / here / I am / here / I am / here").

Yet there remain other empires, and Anne French's *The Male as Evader* (Oxford, $14.50) attempts satirically to unseat some of them: men who say charmingly how much they like women, and share themselves out with several; men who evade commitment, scuttling like cockroaches into any available crevice; men who like power more than middle age; men who please themselves by plucking others; men whose two pronouns are "mine" and "them"; men who seek the "victory" of "absence," which is another form of refusing to recognize either

themselves or other people; men who try to make passes even by telegram; men who refuse to join in conversations; men who will not see that, just off the edge of their own sight line, women are writing poems, telling tales, designing different designs of where the centre is, what matters, who matters, and the plain truths of how things are.

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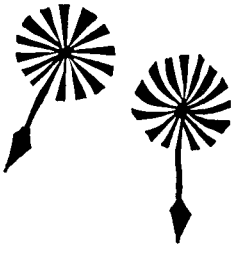

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