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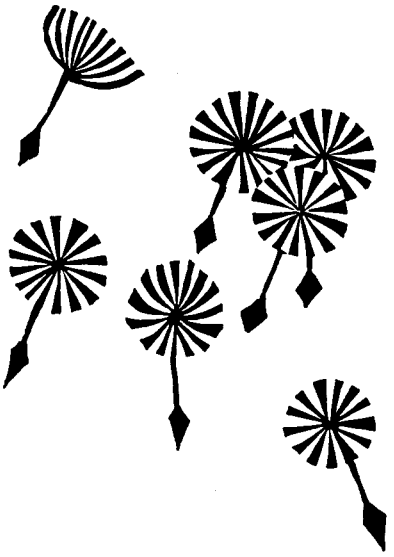

WRITING & CULTURAL VALUES

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

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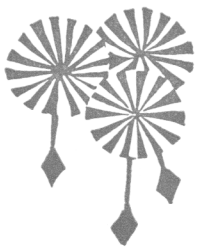

OPINIONS & NOTES

editorial

SO BIG ABOUT GREEN

THE CURRENT CLAMOUR to be 'green,' as with most mass trends, mixes (and blurs the line between) ethical commitment and cynical exploitation. Almost every disposable container that we guiltily, or carelessly, buy boasts a symbol indicating it is recyclable (i.e., *somewhere*, it *might* be if the facilities to do so were available). Your neighbours are concerned. We are all using our blue boxes. Even a national trust company has somehow found a way to 'green' its *accounts*.

Given the hype, something called eco-criticism should prompt as much skepticism as fervour. Literary critics and teachers of literature are rushing to green their accounts. Well, *rushing* is surely an exaggeration. It's a here and there, almost underground phenomenon: in the big picture, the eco-critics thrum like some scattered little grey birds among a flock of cranes beating their way into motion. But I have recently noticed a new poet introduced first as an eco-activist; some sense of spreading interest also appears in *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* (since 1989). And when the giant canonizer takes notice, with the 921 pages of the *Norton Book of Nature Writing (1990)*, then surely something has changed. The Norton anthology includes one Canadian writer — Farley Mowat. Nothing surprising there. Yet readers of this journal will know that nature has loomed large in the Canadian consciousness. Canadian critics have been loud (if they are ever loud about anything) on landscape (whether to emphasize its literary prominence or to lament its obsessiveness as theme). But in the apparently closely related matter of environmentalism, critics on Canadian literature lag behind, despite the odd blip, such as Aritha van Herk's *Places Far From Ellesmere*. Perhaps Canadians are naturally wary of another U.S. academic fashion. Perhaps Canadians' writing of the land as adversary inhibits eco-criticism.

I thought of these things while looking at the latest New Canadian Library reissue of Fred Bodsworth's *Last of the Curlews* (1955), which according to Graeme Gibson's 'Afterword' "has sold more than three million copies in 14 languages." Bodsworth's book — we might now call it an eco-novel — has elicited virtually no

response in the critical community. As W. J. Keith notes in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Vol. 68), the novel has been of more interest to readers than to critics. Yet as one important point in Gibson's tribute indicates, Canadian literature provides fertile ground for eco-criticism: "those who worry about anthropomorphism have got it arsy-versy: perhaps it is because we are animals ourselves that we recognize and partake of the curlew's biological faith and longing." Another version of a nascent Canadian eco-criticism appears in the enthusiastic essays of Don Gayton's *The Wheatgrass Mechanism: Science and Imagination in the Western Canadian Landscape* (Fifth House, $16.95). Gayton, like many nature writers, looks for the world in a grain of sand. To discover the mathematics of the prairie you have to look up close, through a microscope at "the stuff of vegetable life, swirl[ing] in a slow, clockwise motion" in a single "intact phoelm stand." Yes, and the writer and critic need to learn, and teach, words like phoelm (which is not in the 'standard' dictionary in the *Canadian Literature* office).

We grew up, most of us, still learning what William Kittredge calls the pastoral story or agricultural ownership. It instructed us as to what was valuable and how to conduct ourselves. Ecocriticism has a lot to do with this myth and its replacement. To own the land and its creatures *absolutely* will not do, and we look now to a myth that explains a different connection, not of possession but of communication, certainly, and respect. Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1975) seems best to mark the beginning of the contemporary literary/critical version of this process. And as with much else in contemporary criticism, feminism is shaping (in the work of Annette Kolodny and Susan Griffin, for example) some of the most promising approaches in the field.

Ecofeminism resists the inherent sentimentalism of environmental trendiness by recognizing political implications and relevant power structures. Russel Barsh (*Meanjin*, 1990) takes the relationship of nationalism, regionalism, and environmentalism in a different direction by trenchantly defining "environmental racism." Ecocriticism in this form takes responsibility for examining the connection between indigenous peoples and Eurocentric environmental movements. Barsh, for example, bluntly describes the conflict between Quebec Hydro and the Cree:

> Quebec's conservative leadership depicts the Crees and other northern indigenous peoples, who form the majority in the mineral-rich northern half of the province, as standing in the way of Québecois aspirations for independence from Canada. Indeed there is little realistic hope for an independent Quebec unless the natural resources can be exploited.
>
> Québecois nationalists have a choice between sharing power with indigenous people — the foundation of a future bi-national state like New Zealand — or simply taking what they want because they are white. Bourassa's show of military force against the Mohawk village of Kanesatake last August provides the answer, and is a deliberate warning to all indigenous people in Quebec who might suppose that their aspirations are as important as those of Franco-Canadians. The issue at Kane-

satake was not over a few acres of land slated for development as a golf course, but over making indigenous people pay, ecologically and economically, to realize other people's dreams.

The point here is that, today as in the heyday of classic colonialism, environmental racism is associated with the more virulent forms of national and racial chauvinism.

The very coinage ecocriticism implies politics, but not always the overt politics of literature in the service of environmental activism. A new anthology, *Sisters of the Earth: Women's Prose and Poetry About Nature* (Random House, $17.50) might suggest that the exclamation mark, and its echo in overstated language, is often a marker of nature writing: "the land, for me, is a wellspring of delight. . . ." Not to dismiss, but to analyze this feature is part of the project of eco-criticism. One version of such analysis, albeit in a more conventional form and style than Gayton's is Frederic S. Colwell's *Rivermen: A Romantic Iconography of the River and Its Source* (McGill-Queen's, $29.95), which, although it restricts itself to capital R Romantic writers, provides a crucial history of ideas for one of the central metaphors of nature writing. Less conventionally, Erika Smilowitz's recent article on botanical metaphor in Caribbean literature (*WLWE*, Spring 1990) demonstrates the contrasting political connotations of "plants grown for the profit of others" and plants "grown for one's own consumption." So, sugar cane in Caribbean literature invariably invokes slavery and exploitation — a bitterness about sweetness — whereas bananas, plantains, and root vegetables, carry positive associations with farmer and the fertility of the land. Smilowitz notes the gendered resonances of such imagery and the ecocritical dimension of two words used to refer to the same plant — "cypress" to the outsider is "casuarina" to the West Indian.

These examples suggest some directions in which Canadian writers, Canadian critics, and students of Canadian literature might take environmental criticism. Other questions we might try to grapple with: What is the Canadian history of ecological change as documented in imaginative literature? The process has begun with Ramsay Cook's article "Cabbages Not Kings: Towards an Ecological Interpretation of Early Canadian History" (*Journal of Canadian Studies*, Winter 1990-91). More fundamentally, how new is the approach labelled by the new term ecocriticism? how and where does it connect to concepts of 'wilderness' and 'native," to the intellectual history and pre-history of the northern half of North America? Can the infinite deferrals of a post-structuralist view of language engage the infinite interdependencies of an ecological system? Or is a philosophy of language as a referential system essential to eco-criticism? What are the ecological visions in Grove's *Over Prairie Trails*? in Ringuet's *Trentes Arpents*? in Charles G. D. Roberts' poems? in Victor-Levy Beaulieu's *Monsieur Melville*? Is writing about work, which often touches so close to the land, inevitably at odds with environmentally responsible writing? Is environmentally responsible writing, or criticism, something to be wished for?

The challenge for eco-criticism, as for all criticism, is to relate form to language. It's not sufficient to write *about* the environment, or to write about *writing* about the environment — although both these obligations are part of what describes eco-criticism. And it's not sufficient to go on a search to say there's another spotted owl in so-and-so's poem, or novel. Nor is it satisfactory to avoid connections by retreating into the metaphor that language is its own ecology. What aspiring ecocritics clearly must do, at the very least, is to learn the language, the other languages, of science. A poetics of ecocriticism demands a 'scientific' understanding of the subject.

Environmentally oriented critics need to study, at an advanced level, geography, biology, genetics, and anthropology in order to do *literary* scholarship. They have to find a way to do so that can be responsibly tied to departments of literature, to their undisciplining perhaps. Eco-critics have to learn several new languages, to learn species and sub-species, to learn the languages of other cultures (especially indigenous cultures), with their alternate taxonomies, and to learn the stories within the stories of each word. They will have to learn the word "phoelm." As Don Gayton enthuses: "What language! *Geological Loading. Feedback Inhibition. Gravitrophic Movements. Fire Disclimax. Edge Effects.* What *Great Basins* of new metaphor, what ranges for personal exploration!"

Perhaps both Gayton and I are caught in the green hype. Henry David Thoreau, whom, it seems, every writer on the environment must cite, offers in his journals this wise caution about such ambition:

> For our aspirations there is no expression as yet, but if we obey steadily, by another year, we shall have learned the language of last year's aspirations.

L.R.

THE WAXING AND WANING OF SUSANNA MOODIE'S "ENTHUSIASM"

Susan Glickman

"AT MY HEART'S CORE" by Robertson Davies is a Shavian discussion play starring the three Otonabee pioneers who are best known to posterity through their writings: Frances Stewart, Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. The play is set at the time of the Upper Canada Rebellion and Susanna Moodie, whom the stage directions describe as having "a ladylike hint of the drill-sergeant in her demeanour," persistently blames the Methodists for stirring up revolution.[1] "When you say Methodist, you say Radical. They all think that the world can be improved by rebellion against authority. It can't," she declares. At the same time, she refuses to make the usual nineteenth-century association between revolution and poetry, for when her sister Catharine teases her about leaving the Dissenters out of her rousing "Oath of the Canadian Volunteers," Susanna replies stiffly "I do not consider Methodists, even in a time of crisis, to be the stuff of which poetry is made."[2]

Although she was born at the turn of the century, Susanna Moodie does give little evidence of having been moved by the revolutionary and millennial side of the Romantic movement. However, for a brief period just prior to her emigration to Canada, "the stuff of which poetry is made" had in fact been her *own* religious dissent. The title work of her only independent collection of poetry, *Enthusiasm* (1831), is a defense of spiritual ardour, and many other poems in the book draw on Biblical stories or pious commonplaces for evangelical purposes.

Enthusiasm, never having been reprinted, has been little known to students of Canadian literature.[3] Probably Robertson Davies was unaware of it when he wrote his play in 1950; nor would he have known about Moodie's brief conversion to Congregationalism, made public only with the publication of her letters in 1985.[4] But the spiritual turmoil revealed by both book and letters reminds us that Davies' portrayal of Moodie, however entertaining, is fictitious. His humorously self-righteous martinet is no closer to the "real" Susanna Strickland Moodie than is the terrified creature, pathologically alienated from both nature and her own passions, of Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*. Both authors take

considerable liberty with the material available to them and project an emblematic character as a focus for their satire. It is unlikely, however, that either Davies or Atwood would have felt so free to exaggerate if the intimate self-revelations of their protagonist's letters had been available to them.

These letters, supplemented by the editors' thorough biographical notes, trace Moodie's increasing interest in and defense of religious non-conformity from about 1828 on, through her conversion in April of 1830, to her return to the Anglican fold with her marriage a year later. In fact, her spiritual, literary, and marital experiments appear to have been curiously interdependent. For example, on April 2nd of 1830 she was admitted to the congregation of Pastor Andrew Ritchie of Wrentham, and on the 3rd, the following note appeared in the *Atheneum*:

> Shortly will appear, 'Enthusiasm, and other Poems,' by Susanna Strickland, a young lady already favourably known to the public by several compositions of much merit and more promise, in the Annuals, etc.[5]

Then on April 4th this young lady took communion for the first time with her new congregation. Her conversion is movingly described in a letter of April 15th to her confidant James Bird which concludes "I dare not indulge myself dear friend by entering more fully into this subject lest you should think me a mere visionary *enthusiast* [my emphasis]."[6]

That she should write a poem in defense of religious enthusiasm while fearing to be characterized as an enthusiast herself indicates not only self-consciousness but class consciousness; historically, the educated upper classes had resisted the evangelical movement, disdaining religious fervour as "mere" vulgar display. Hoxie Neale Fairchild notes that from the mid-eighteenth century on, "with rare exceptions, 'literary' folk will continue to sing of universal harmony and the social glow . . . the Gospels will be for the believing lowbrow, the religion of sentiment for the believing highbrow."[7] One of those rare exceptions, Susanna elects to stand out from her "highbrow" community by calling her book *Enthusiasm*, and transforming the requisite literary offerings of a young lady — gothic tales of jealousy, revenge, abandoned maidens and heroic battles; sentimental flower-and-love-songs — into illustrations of the illusory joys of this world as compared with the certainty of heavenly bliss.

Moodie is particularly unusual in that she is never content to leave the moral implicit, but insists on articulating the Christian doctrine of sin and redemption. Though her aesthetics owe much to the influence of the genteel Felicia Hemans, whom she considers "a complete mistress of the lyre," her ethics more closely resemble those of William Cowper, of whom she remarks:

> I think his works have little poetic merit. But his sentiments are noble, excellent, sublime! . . . . I consider him as a Reformer of the Vices of mankind to stand unrivalled.[8]

A didactic soul, she opens the letter from which this last comment is taken by saying of a story she is working on, "I hope it may do some good among the young folks of the rising generation," and goes on to note that she prefers to Cowper's expansive and semi-idyllic meditation, "The Task" (1785), his vitriolic "Satires" (1782). Of these, her favourite is "The Progress of Error," an attack on the undermining of faith by scientific rationalism which she feels "must strike home to every heart."[9]

Throughout his work, Cowper defends Christian doctrine against the Deists, but he also inveighs against Dissenters as enemies of "revealed" religion. In "The Progress of Error," for example, he declares that

> No wild enthusiast ever yet could rest
> Till half mankind were like himself posses'd.
> Philosophers, who darken and put out
> Eternal truth by everlasting doubt;
> Church quacks, with passions under no command,
> Who fill the world with doctrines contraband
> Discov'rers of they know not what, confin'd
> Within no bounds — the blind that lead the blind. (ll. 470-77)[10]

Nonetheless, he insists on the necessity for emotional commitment in religion, and argues that intellectual criticism alone will never save souls. Indeed, in "The Task" he asks of satire, "What vice has it subdu'd? whose heart reclaim'd / By rigour, or whom laugh'd into reform" (Book II, ll.316-23). And on the other hand, he inquires in "Conversation":

> What is fanatic frenzy, scorn'd so much,
> And dreaded more than a contagious touch?
> I grant it dang'rous, and approve your fear,
> That fire is catching if you draw too near;
> But sage observers oft mistake the flame,
> And give true piety that odious name (ll. 651-56).

For after all, Cowper was the co-author (with the methodist John Newton) of "The Olney Hymns." So his criticism of "wild enthusiasts" must be seen as a contribution to the historical debate about the difference between faith and fanaticism which also engages Susanna Moodie.

IN COWPER'S DAY, popular opinion was still virulently anti-puritan and complacently utilitarian. But that Moodie, writing fifty years later, should feel herself to be a religious martyr may well indicate more "sensibility" on her part than obtuseness in or persecution by others. Certainly she became distracted from her spiritual quest less than four months after her conversion; in the next surviving letter to Bird, dated August 3rd, her concerns have shifted from the sacred to the profane:

> I send you some prospectuses of my book. I know you will distribute and do the best you can with them for me. I must depend upon my wits to buy my wedding clothes, rather a hard alternative for a smart damsel like me, but I hope Apollo and the Muse will befriend me and if they will not, why then Cupid must.[11]

Her letters of August 12th to the author Mary Russell Mitford and of October 9th to James Bird also enclose prospectuses for them to distribute, but in November she writes Bird "I heartily wish the book was not to be published at all. You will say why? But I have my own reasons for this strange wish."[12] Equally abruptly, in January of 1831, she confesses that she has broken off with her fiancé, John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie.

> Ah! friend Bird our engagement was too hasty. I have changed my mind. You may call me a jilt a flirt or what you please, I care not. I will neither marry a soldier nor leave my country for ever and feel happy that I am once more my own mistress.[13]

However, on April 4th, 1831 she consents to become the mistress of a household instead; exactly one year after her first service as a member of the non-conforming Wrentham congregation, Susanna Strickland married John Moodie in an *Anglican* ceremony at St. Pancras Church, London.

One can not help wondering if, in retrospect, she thought her commitment to the Congregationalists had been a mere flirtation, a "too hasty" engagement. For in the same letter of April 9th which tells James Bird about her wedding she writes:

> As to my Enthusiasm, it begins to cool, and if the printers and editors, who have dawdled so long over it, do not quicken their movements, it will soon be extinguished altogether. Like a glass of evaporated soda water.[14]

Although the book finally came out that spring, its author, acknowledged on the title page as "Susanna Strickland (now Mrs. Moodie)," did not have much opportunity to promote it, since, as she later put it, she "published the book . . . just as I was leaving for Canada, leaving my poor literary babe, like an orphan to its fate."[15] But her *Enthusiasm* never entirely evaporated. The letter from which I have just quoted was written to the (retired) publisher of her prose works, Richard Bentley, on April 24th, 1865, asking him to offer the Nelson publishing house copyright to her poetry book thirty-four years after its original publication — and eleven after she had tried to interest Bentley himself in the *same* proposition!

Moodie's description of *Enthusiasm* in her earlier proposal to Bentley (January 30, 1854) is of great interest. She claims that

> This little work, contains most of the poems written by me between the ages of 14 and 20. It was put to press by the particular request of some kind friends, who loved me well, and through whose influence, the edition of 500 copies, sold, paying its own expenses, and leaving me a profit of some 25 or 30 pounds. It was well reviewed by many of the best papers and magazines and I might have been tempted to try it again, had I not left England, and fallen into the troubles and trials which subsequently beset us. After my death these little poems may have an interest which at

present they do *not possess*. They were the overflowing of a young warm heart, keenly alive to the beauties of creation, and to the sorrows of a very unhappy home. The latter influence, will account for the deep tone of melancholy that pervades most of them, for I wrote exactly as the spirit prompted me — as I felt.[16]

Doubtless *Enthusiasm* includes some juvenalia, but it seems unlikely that many of the poems included in the volume were written when the author was a child; she was twenty-six and had been writing seriously for several years when the collection was put together. But Moodie's exaggeration of her youthful accomplishments reveals more than simple vanity; it shows insight into the book's immaturity of conception and execution. Indeed, her suggestion that these "little poems" will be of interest only after her death is a realistic assessment of their value and, by contrast, of the fame that would, some day, accrue to her prose.

Nor could one argue with her description of the tone of the book as "melancholy," but her attribution of that melancholy to an unhappy childhood is revealing. Her father died when Susanna was only fourteen, after several years of failing health and financial difficulty. Possibly this experience lies behind the preoccupation in *Enthusiasm* with grief, loss, disaster, graves, ruins, and the exemplary deaths of Christians. Mr. Strickland's survivors struggled to maintain the facade of gentility, and of family harmony, despite intense rivalry between the two oldest and two youngest daughters, all aspiring writers.[17] This rivalry may be the source of Susanna's repeated — and clearly ambivalent — admonitions against striving for "earthly" fame, which provide a little spice amidst the homilies. The second poem in the book, entitled "Fame," explores this theme most fully, warning us, in heroic couplets whose prosody emphasizes the young author's seriousness, that we ought never to expect congratulations for our accomplishments:

> Ambition's laurel, purchased with a flood
> Of human tears and stained with kindred blood,
> Once gained, converted to a crown of thorns,
> Pierces the aching temples it adorns —
> Not Sappho's lyre, nor Raphael's deathless art
> Can twine the olive round the bleeding heart;
> In heaven alone the promised blessing lies,
> And those who seek — must seek it in the skies! (28)

The phrase "kindred blood" is certainly suggestive. Of course, even had Susanna experienced an untroubled childhood, melancholy was so fashionable a literary theme at that period she could hardly have resisted its influence. As Eleanor Sickels notes in her study *The Gloomy Egoist*,

> the artificial nature of this whole tradition is . . . pointed by the extreme youth of many of the writers involved. . . . It is not meant to imply that youth is never melancholy, a statement which would be an obvious absurdity; but that young poets, being imitative, will express their melancholy in the orthodox manner, or, if it be fashionable, will imagine that they are melancholy whether they are or not.[18]

Melancholy was cultivated as the state most appropriate to an exquisitely sensitive soul. Moodie's girlhood letters provide many examples of this tiresome affectation of "sensibility," particularly around the time of her conversion. One need only observe her observing herself in the third person, in a letter from June 1829, to agree with Sickels that there is something artificial about the posture of melancholy. After claiming to fear Bird's disapproval of her new religious affiliation, Moodie writes:

> I shall apply to some friends to procure me a place in a mission abroad I care not where and then poor Susy will be alike unregretted and forgotten and those who once knew me and loved me will know me no more. Yet wherever may be my destination I shall bear with me across the foaming waters a heart too true to its human feelings too faithful to the objects of its earthly idolatry. Oh! when will these mental struggles be over. When holy Father will you call hence your erring child. I sometimes glance on the spot I once chose in our quiet churchyard for my grave. How peacefully the sunbeams sleep upon it and I sigh and think how calmly and sweetly I could lie down in the dust beneath that dear old tree — but this is wrong.[19]

WE ALSO FIND Moodie glancing at graves in the following poem, published in *Enthusiasm*; perhaps it originates in the same period as the letter just quoted.

THE NAMELESS GRAVE

Written in Cove Church-Yard; And Occasioned By Observing My Own Shadow Thrown Across A Grave

"Tell me, thou grassy mound,
What dost thou cover?
In thy folds hast thou bound
Soldier or lover?
Time o'er the turf no memorial is keeping
Who in this lone grave forgotten is sleeping?" —

"The sun's westward ray
A dark shadow has thrown
On this dwelling of clay,
And the shade is thine own!
From dust and oblivion this stern lesson borrow —
Thou art living to-day and forgotten to-morrow!"

"The Nameless Grave" is typical of the poems in *Enthusiasm* in its prosodic awkwardness. It is very difficult to scan Moodie's poems, because she has an unfortunate predilection for triple metres, which invade even those poems nominally in pentameter or hexameter. The effect of this pull towards triple measure can be ludicrous when the tone of the poem is meant to be Biblical solemnity, as in "The Vision of

Dry Bones" ("Son of man! can these dry bones, long bleached in decay / Ever feel in their flesh the warm beams of the day" ll. 9-10).

On the other hand, "The Nameless Grave" stands out from most of Moodie's other pieces on the vanity of human life because of its wit and brevity. The theme of mortality is explored in many different ways in *Enthusiasm*, but usually Moodie recycles tired imagery to prop up an equally banal moral. In "The Nameless Grave," both vehicle and tenor have the impact of being unexpected.

Although there are a few other poems about ruins and graveyards in *Enthusiasm*, usually Moodie pursues her theme amid scenes of wild nature. Her nature poems fall into two general categories. In the first, the beauties of the earth are evoked only to remind us that Nature has fallen if not from a state of grace into a state of sinfulness, at least, in the classic Platonic declension, from the perfection of the Divine Idea to lovely but ephemeral shadows. In the second group Nature is not beautiful but sublime and terrifying; it provides the means by which sinful man must be punished. In all Moodie's poems, Nature educates the human spirit by revealing God's will. But the God revealed here is the Calvinist Lord of Judgement — not the benevolent patriarch appealed to by sentimentalists, or by Moodie herself in softer moods.

The wistful conclusion of "The Water Lillies" is typical of the softer mood:

> Beautiful flowers! our youth is as brief
> As the short-lived date of your golden leaf.
> The summer will come, and each amber urn,
> Like a love-lighted torch, on the waves shall burn;
> But when the first bloom of our life is o'er
> No after spring can its freshness restore,
> But faith can twine round the hoary head
> A garland of beauty when youth is fled! (ll. 31-38)

And similarly, "Autumn" reminds us that

> Though all things perish here,
> The spirit cannot die,
> It owns a brighter sphere,
> A home in yon fair sky.
> The soul will flee away,
> And when the silent clod
> Enfolds my mouldering clay,
> Shall live again with God (ll. 33-40).

In the first group of poems nature is pretty; it reminds the speaker of the gentleness of divine comfort. However, in "The Old Ash Tree," in which the speaker discovers that the "favourite seat" of her youthful daydreams has been knocked down by a windstorm, nature is no longer simply God's book, but also his scourge and minister. Again the natural becomes emblematic, but stanza two goes beyond

pat moralizing; it is insistently *tragic*, the death of the tree disrupting the ordinary cycle of nature.

> The storm-demon sent up his loudest shout
> When he levelled his bolt at thee,
> When thy massy trunk and thy branches stout
> Were riven by the blast, old tree!
> It has bowed to the dust thy stately form,
> Which for many an age defied
> The rush and the roar of the midnight storm,
> When it swept through thy branches wide (ll. 9-16).

The personification of the storm as a "demonic" power makes "The Old Ash Tree" a good transition to the second group of Moodie's nature poems, which includes such works as "The Deluge" and "The Earthquake," and in which natural catastrophe symbolizes the final apocalypse evoked more directly by overtly eschatological poems such as "The Vision of Dry Bones" and "The Destruction of Babylon." In this last poem, the prophetic voice not only foretells divine vengeance but insists on its inevitability; in Moodie's Biblical narratives, human history is repetitive and the past prefigures the future. She hopes to be heard as a prophet herself — and not simply as the writer of a dramatic monologue — when she writes:

> An awful vision floats before my sight,
> Black as the storm and fearful as the night:
> Thy fall, oh Babylon! — the awful doom
> Pronounced by Heaven to hurl thee to the tomb,
> Peals in prophetic thunder in mine ear —
> The voice of God foretelling ruin near!
> ("The Destruction of Babylon," ll. 1-6)

Moodie's interest in such topics was by no means original; indeed, the Biblical passages she choses to paraphrase were *typical* exercises for protestant poets wishing to be thought "sublime." In his book *The Religious Sublime*, David Morris quotes an anonymous writer in *The Critical Review* (1761) as asserting that

> To adopt the beautiful sublime of the sacred writings, particularly of the prophecies, which breathe all the wildness of an irregular genius, requires an imagination rather warm than correct, the bold and extravagant flights of genius more than the unaffecting cold accuracy of art.[20]

And as early as 1704 John Dennis, in *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry*, had called for a return to religious themes in literature, complaining that "modern Poetry being for the most part profane, has . . . very little Spirit."[21]

Moodie first confesses her aspiration to write religious poetry in a letter dated January 14th, 1829, when she says she is thinking of undertaking a small volume of psalms and hymns.[22] (*Enthusiasm* includes translations of Psalms forty and

forty-four, and concludes with a "Morning Hymn" and an "Evening Hymn"; perhaps these were part of the projected work.) And the argument of "Enthusiasm," which not only lends its title to her book but, in coming first, provides an introduction to the whole, is that religion provides the greatest inspiration for art as well as for daily life. The poem's invocation provides an etymologically correct definition of enthusiasm as divine presence:

> OH for the spirit which inspired of old
> The seer's prophetic song — the voice that spake
> Through Israel's warrior king. ("Enthusiasm," ll. 1-3)

IN ANCIENT GREECE, *enthusiasmos* referred to the trance-like state of an oracle possessed by Apollo or Dionysios; the term entered the English language in the seventeenth century to describe Anabaptists and other religious sects whose members claimed to experience personal revelation.[23] The word was usually used to imply that this claim was false, or, at best, that its professors were deluded; Robert Burton, in the section of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) dealing with "Religious Melancholy," was the first in a long line of theoreticians to propose that religious enthusiasm was a form of hysteria, possibly sexual in origin.[24] He influenced later writers such as the Cambridge Platonist Henry More whose *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* came out in 1656, a year after a volume by Meric Casaubon, the title of which spells out the "scientific" attitude to religious dissent: *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasme as it is an Effect of Nature; but is mistaken by many for either Divine Inspiration or Diabolical Possession.*[25]

Casuabon analyses many types of enthusiasm, including the "Divinatory," "Contemplative," "Rhetorical," and "Poetical"; as the last two categories suggest, the Classical association between religious transcendence and the muse is also conventional in English thought. Thus Blount's *Glossographia* of 1656 defines "enthusiasm" as "an inspiration, a ravishment of the spirit, divine motion, Poetical fury," a more generous entry than we find a century later in Dr. Johnson's dictionary, where enthusiasm is defined *first* as "a vain belief of private revelation; a vain confidence of divine favour or communication" before also being described as "Heat of imagination" and, finally, as "elevation of fancy."[26]

Dr. Johnson cites Locke as his authority for the contention that "*Enthusiasm* is founded neither on reason nor divine revelation, but rises from the conceits of a warmed or overheated braine." Throughout the eighteenth century, the debate about the nature of enthusiasm engaged many other philosophers, such as Lord Shaftesbury in his "Letter Concerning Enthusiasm" (1707) and David Hume in his essay "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm" (1741). Even John Wesley found himself drawn into it; although a tireless advocate of the necessity for faith, he none-

theless cautions his followers, in his *Advice to the People called Methodists* (1745), that they should "carefully avoid enthusiasm" and "impute not the dreams of men to the all-wise God."[27]

Strangely enough, Wesley's attitude towards enthusiasm resembles that of Shaftesbury, otherwise his philosophical opposite in the period! Both are concerned to distinguish between true and false inspiration, and Shaftesbury even evokes the authority of the prophet Jeremiah on the subject: "Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord." (Jer. XXX.16)[28] Moreover, despite his urbane mockery of religious fanaticism in the "Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," he concedes that

> ENTHUSIASM is wonderfully powerful and extensive; that it is a matter of nice judgement, and the hardest thing in the world to know fully and distinctly, since even Atheism is not exempt from it; for, as some have well remarked, there have been *enthusiastical atheists*. Nor can divine inspiration, by its outward marks, be easily distinguished from it. For inspiration is a real feeling of the divine presence, and enthusiasm a false one.[29]

Two years later, Shaftesbury rehabilitates the term "enthusiasm," broadening it to mean any and all passionate commitments — but most particularly, the ecstatic worship of nature. In "The Moralists" (1709), when the rhapsodies of Theocles convert him to nature-worship, the gentlemanly Philocles is embarrassed, for "all those who are deep in this *Romantick* way, are look'd upon, you know, as a People either plainly out of their Wits, or over-run with *Melancholy* and ENTHUSIASM."[30] But he quickly recovers his equilibrium, concluding that

> all sound *Love* and *Admiration* is ENTHUSIASM: The transports of *Poets*, the Sublime of *Orators*, the Rapture of *Musicians*, the hight Strains of the *Virtuosi*; all mere ENTHUSIASM! Even *Learning* it-self, the Love of *Arts* and *Curiositys*, the Spirit of *Travellers* and *Adventurers*; *Gallantry*, *War*, *Heroism*; All, all *ENTHUSIASM*! — 'tis enough: I am content to be this *new Enthusiast*, in a way unknown to me before.[31]

This "new enthusiast" quickly became a fashionable type in literature and life, celebrated by such poets as the eighteen-year-old Joseph Warton in "The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature." The 252 blank verse lines of the revised version of 1748 make only tangential reference to established religion; God here is primarily the "architect supreme" (l. 137) whose works cannot be rivalled by "art's vain pomps" (l. 4).[32] The poem opens with an invocation to "green-rob'd Dryads" (l. 1) and then appeals to the authority of "the bards of old" (l. 15) who retreated to Nature in order to learn "the moral strains she taught to mend mankind" (l. 20). Following Shaftesbury, Warton's enthusiast seeks salvation in admiring the wilderness, finding evidence in the unspoiled places of the earth not only of the sublimity of the universe, but also of the benevolent character of its creator. Indeed, he is so

intoxicated with this new faith that he closes his poem wishing to escape to "western climes" (l. 233), which he fantasizes as "isles of Innocence . . . Where Happiness and Quiet sit enthron'd, / With simple Indian swains" (ll. 236-39).

Moodie herself inconsistently subscribes to this cult of primitivism; once she is actually living in Canada it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain such pastoral illusions, as *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Life in the Clearings* make clear. Nonetheless, even towards the end of her life she claims to prefer the Belleville of thirty years earlier to the bustling town she now inhabits, writing to her friend Allen Ransome

> Allen, the poetic spirit, the love of dear Mother Nature will never die out of my heart. I am just the same enthusiast I ever was and often forget white hairs and wrinkles when my heart swells and my eyes fill with tears at the beauty of some lovely spot that glows from the hand of the great Master.[33]

Here she uses the term "enthusiast" as Warton does, to mean one who adores nature. But, as we have seen, in her earlier letters the term had a purely religious connotation. In her poem, she seeks to bridge the gap between the sacred and profane uses of the term by defining "enthusiasm" as the "Parent of genius" to whose "soul-awakening power we owe / The preacher's eloquence, the painter's skill / The poet's lay, the patriot's noble zeal" and so on ("Enthusiasm," ll. 30-35). Indeed, most of "Enthusiasm" — from line 70 to line 351 of a total of 449 lines — portrays *non*-religious enthusiasts: the poet, the painter, the nature-lover and the warrior.

The poet is described in terms familiar to Moodie's public from Beattie's *The Minstrel*, and Shelley's *Alastor*:

> . . . He walks this earth
> Like an enfranchised spirit; and the storms,
> That darken and convulse a guilty world,
> Come like faint peals of thunder on his ear,
> Or hoarse murmurs of the mighty deep,
> Which heard in some dark forest's leafy shade
> But add a solemn grandeur to the scene. ("Enthusiasm," ll. 105-11)

But despite his youthful rapture, "penury and dire disease, / Neglect, a broken heart, an early grave" are all predicted for him, because he has not "tuned his harp to truths divine" (ll. 118-20). The painter, on the other hand, is reproached for being "unsatisfied with all that Nature gives" and attempting to "portray Omnipotence" (ll. 135-37), since even the effect of sunlight on leaves "is beyond thy art. / All thy enthusiasm, all thy boasted skill, / But poorly imitates a forest tree (ll. 173-75).

Moodie appears to be unaware of the aesthetic contradiction she sets up here: the poet is to be saved by abandoning nature for sacred topics — the painter by the reverse procedure! Or perhaps she *is* vaguely aware of some philosophical muddiness at this point, for she drops the topic of artistic enthusiasm and starts to examine

the nature-lover instead. He is told in his turn that he will be unable to "read" the natural scene around him properly until he explores the Bible (ll. 192-207), but she seems to hold out more hope for his salvation than for the others — maybe because he is not trying to rival the Creator, but simply to appreciate the Creation. At least, this is what is suggested by Moodie's statement that

> Faith gives a grandeur to created things,
> Beyond the poet's lay or painter's art,
> Or upward flight of Fancy's eagle wing (ll. 222-25).

We then move out of the natural setting for the only time in the poem to visit "Glory's intrepid champion" (l. 259), who seems to stand for all those with *worldly* passions, for

> He too is an enthusiast! — his zeal
> Impels him onward with resistless force,
> Severs his heart from nature's kindred ties,
> And feeds the wild ambition which consumes
> All that is good and lovely in his path (ll. 265-69).

Perhaps because his ambitions are even farther from the true "path" than those of the poet or painter, twice as much space is devoted to the soldier's portrait: 105 lines to their 53. It is interesting that Moodie was married to a soldier herself by the time "Enthusiasm" was published, (though she had not met him yet when it was written), for she becomes absorbed in imagining a fictional childhood for her hypothetical man-of-war, trying to figure out what would turn an ardent soul towards such a brutal vocation. One is also reminded that her first publication was an inspirational tale for young readers, *Spartacus: A Roman Story*, published in 1822; clearly she was drawn towards military heroes in spite of herself.

BUT DESPITE HER sympathy for all the enthusiasts she describes, Moodie argues that their secular interests are just "base and joyless vanities which man / Madly prefers to everlasting bliss!" ("Enthusiasm," ll. 67-69). Coming as she did not only after Shaftesbury and Warton but after the great Romantic poets, she had no need to defend the spirit's hunger for passionate commitment. What she took as her mandate was to prove the superiority of *religious* enthusiasm to other varieties, and to defend traditional Christian belief in sin and redemption.

In this regard, her poem has close affinities with another poem called "Enthusiasm" that published by John Byrom in 1757.[34] In this work, after reminding the genteel reader who scorns religious fervour that everyone has obsessions, Byrom suggests "That which concerns us therefore is to see / What Species of Enthusiasts we be" (ll. 250-51).[35] He enumerates several such "species," beginning with clas-

sicists, Egyptologists and Biblical scholars who, because their erudition is misdirected, are criticised more severely than the frivolous habitués of coffee-houses and ball-rooms. All these folk share one attribute however; "in one Absurdity they chime, / To make religious Enthusiasm a Crime" (ll. 196-97).[36]

Byrom's complaint is reiterated by Moodie; two generations later, she still bemoans the fact that:

> The world allows its votaries to feel
> A glowing ardour, an intense delight,
> On every subject but the one that lifts
> The soul above its sensual, vain pursuits,
> And elevates the mind and thoughts to God!
> Zeal in a sacred cause alone is deemed
> An aberration of our mental powers. ("Enthusiasm," ll. 45-51)

Of course, despite the similarity of Moodie's argument to Byrom's, the two poets have totally different styles, he writing satirical and didactic couplets, she rather Romantic blank verse. His tone is urbane; hers, passionate. Byrom never succumbs to enthusiasm himself, but Moodie is unable to resist it, even when describing enthusiasms she claims to deplore.

Moreover, Byrom's main focus in his poem is theology, while Moodie is preoccupied with character and setting. Herein lies the paradoxical failure of her poem. Her strengths as a writer — even in these early years — clearly lie in the dramatic portrayal of character, and in vivid description, and not in philosophical analysis.[37] And these very strengths undermine her stated purpose in "Enthusiasm," where the lengthy and persuasive rendering of the allegedly "joyless vanities" of earthly life is followed by 35 lines on the vague but "everlasting bliss" to be anticipated in the New Jerusalem: 35 lines which emphasize, by contrast, the genuine seductiveness of those worldly passions she argues we ought to renounce!

To solve this predicament she proposes that experiences which cannot be described by language must be more powerful than anything which can be spoken, a hypothesis which leads her to relinquish the word "enthusiasm" itself as inadequate to convey

> That deep devotion of the heart which men
> Miscall enthusiasm! — Zeal alone deserves
> The name of madness in a worldly cause.
> Light misdirected ever leads astray;
> But hope inspired by faith will guide to heaven! (ll. 411-15)[38]

But given that she herself has elected to call such devotion "enthusiasm" in the poem's opening, this conclusion is rather perverse. We are left with a poem framed by rhetorical, and filled with lyrical and dramatic, self-contradiction. She even goes on to affirm *exactly* those analogies between religious and worldly enthusiasts which she has just rejected, declaring that:

> To win the laurel wreath the soldier fights;
> To free his native land the patriot bleeds;
> And to secure his crown the martyr dies! (ll. 416-18)

Clearly she has not overcome her admiration for martial pursuits despite her condemnation of war as an ignoble subject for enthusiasm. Similarly, though she deplores the inadequacy of poetry and painting to represent spiritual truths, she is very drawn to artistic expression. She is ambivalent about almost everything she says; on the one hand she wants to concede, like Byrom, that it is human nature to be enthusiastic, but on the other, she wants to insist that religious enthusiasm is different in kind, not simply in degree. At the same time, even as she is writing "Enthusiasm," she worries about being considered "a mere visionary enthusiast" by her friends.

WE ARE ALREADY ACCUSTOMED to thinking of Susanna Moodie as ambivalent. Indeed, ambivalence and self-contradiction pervade *Roughing It in the Bush* to such an extent that many critics have followed Margaret Atwood's lead in seeing her behaviour as pathological; Atwood calls it "paranoid schizophrenia." She came up with this label in her afterword to *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, a work published in 1970 and full of post-Centennial fervour about the way "we" live in Canada. Atwood makes it very clear that Moodie is a *symbol* for her of a problem in contemporary Canadian identity when she goes on to say that

> We are all immigrants to this place even if we were born here: the country is too big for anyone to inhabit completely, and in the parts unknown to us we move in fear, exiles and invaders. This country is something that must be chosen — it is so easy to leave — and if we do choose it we are still choosing a violent duality.[39]

Disregarding the political context of this rhetoric, too many critics continue to interpret Moodie's ambivalent response to life in the bush as representative of some hypothetical national predicament — Gaile McGregor, for example, states solemnly that "the question arises as to what Susanna Moodie's experience implies for the Canadian experience as a whole."[40] At its most glib and reductive, this analysis sees Susanna not only as sick herself, but symbolic of the sickness that is in others.

What is bizarre about such an interpretation — quite apart from the self-loathing evident in a couple of generations of Canlit critics — is the ignorance of human nature implied by the expectation that any writer, any person, should be perpetually optimistic, confident, resolved, and philosophically consistent. As another poet wrote, a few years after Moodie,

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then. . . . I contradict myself;
> I am large. . . . I contain multitudes.[41]

Of course, Walt Whitman is exceptional not only in tolerating self-contradiction but in boasting about it; most writers try to schematize their works and suppress any evidence of hesitancy or second thoughts. They feel the literary imperatives of "unity," "coherence" and "closure" as strongly as their critics; anticipating these critics, they banish discontinuity from their works.

That Moodie does not, either in an early work like "Enthusiasm" or in her later Canadian memoirs is, I believe, one reason literary critics have been so frustrated with her. Her opinions are robustly inconsistent — a sentimentalist, she is a defender of the class system; an advocate of progress, she is nostalgic for primitive simplicity; a Romantic nature-worshipper, she is terrified of wild animals. And not only does she not have a consistent point of view, her writing does not conform to the conventions of any given genre. Atwood makes the connection between the character's self-contradictions and the discontinuities of the text in her "Afterword" to *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* when she describes *Roughing It* as a "collection of disconnected anecdotes" held together only by "the personality of Mrs Moodie."[42]

As Michael Peterman notes of *Roughing It in the Bush*, "containing elements of poetry, fiction, travel writing, autobiography, and social analysis, it eludes definition."[43] The most recent attempt to come to terms with the book's resistance to categorization is that of John Thurston who, reminding us of its publication history, argues flatly that

> Susanna Moodie did not write *Roughing It in the Bush*. In fact, *Roughing It in the Bush* was never written. Susanna Moodie and *Roughing It in the Bush* are interchangeable titles given to a collaborative act of textual production whose origin cannot be limited to one person or one point in time.[44]

Thurston is only taking to its logical extreme the policy of Carl Klinck, who argued in the introduction to his 1962 New Canadian Library edition of *Roughing It* that each generation of readers deserved a new version of the book. Following his own principles, he cut out not only all of Mr. Moodie's contributions and Susanna's poems, but also a great many "reports of pleasant excursions, and others of pathetic experiences;" what goes unacknowledged, however, is the paradox implied by the contention that "care has been taken to maintain the balance of the original, and to enhance the unique effect by concentration."[45]

One cannot maintain balance by increasing concentration. Nor does this edition truly maintain the balance of the original: almost all the cuts come from the second volume of *Roughing It*, the "pleasant excursions" showing Moodie enjoying her surroundings and the "pathetic experiences" showing her not only more resourceful

herself but better able to assist others. The result of Klinck's abridgement, therefore, is to emphasize her early difficulties and to underplay her later development; we do not see the protagonist learning from experience. She becomes a more static character, locked in her ambivalence, unable to progress. Curiously, she becomes more consistent in her inconsistency.

The editions of the 1980s have restored the original *Roughing It in the Bush*; contemporary editors have more patience with Moodie's story, and more respect for her text. The tide also seems to be turning in literary criticism — we have more tolerance these days for uncategorizable works; indeed, the greatest praise now goes to texts which break conventions and rupture forms. But Moodie is clearly *not* a litierary iconoclast; we must resist the impulse to project backwards and make her a prophet of post-modernism. The present paper, exploring Moodie's early literary experiments in the context of her English adolescence, suggests more appropriate origin for her unconventionality: religious experience.

The Congregationalists, like other Dissenting sects, believed in confession, in self-examination, in the writing of memoirs detailing one's spiritual development. This model of discourse subscribes to an extra-literary notion of unity: it points beyond the text to the author's life for authentication — exactly what Atwood complains of in *Roughing It in the Bush*. The spiritual memoir does not require unity of mood, or tone, or style, or theme; as an unfinished journey its progress is not always linear, since the author constantly remakes old errors, and relearns old lessons.

No one has yet explored the relationship of this tradition to Moodie's Canadian writings, although the contributions of autobiography to English literature are well established.[46] All autobiography asserts the meaningfulness of the self and plots its adventures over a lifetime. Spiritual autobiography differs only in emphasizing the superior interest of the *inner* life of the individual to such facts as might catch the eye of conventional historians. Self and world necessarily interact: as the individual grows wise in the ways of the world she also starts to understand herself. As Martin Priestman notes of Cowper's memoir in verse, *The Task*, "the theoretical justification for such an experiment on such a scale rested on the Evangelical assumption that the private experience of 'religious persons' ought to be opened to the public in the name of morality and religion."[47]

Of course, Cowper's poem, like *Roughing It in the Bush*, offers little sustained self-analysis — rather, the autobiography is constantly interrupted by satire, didacticism and natural description. It too is a miscegenous work, resisting generic classification. Cowper does not have Moodie's gift for characterization; on the other hand, he is a much better poet than she could ever have been. Perhaps if Moodie had stayed in England instead of emigrating to Canada she might have attempted a long poem along the lines of *The Task*: on the evidence of "Enthusiasm," and in accordance with her own estimation of her work, we ought to be glad that she did

not. Nonetheless, we ought not to ignore *Enthusiasm* as we have done for so long. The young woman who tried so hard to explain what she felt to her English family and friends continued to cross-examine herself once she crossed the Atlantic. That same resistance to oversimplification which pervades "Enthusiasm," filling it with self-contradiction, enabled her to be the most complete chronicler of the settlement experience in English Canada.

NOTES

[1] Robertson Davies, "At My Heart's Core," in *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*, Vol. I, eds. Russell Brown & Donna Bennett (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), 597.

[2] "At My Heart's Core," 599; 600.

[3] *Enthusiasm* is now available on microtext, courtesy of the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (Ottawa, 1985). The CIHM number for the book is 38892. All quotations are from this, the first and only edition.

[4] Susanna Moodie, *Letters of a Lifetime*, eds. Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, & Michael Peterman (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1985). All quotations from Moodie's letters are from this edition, as are biographical facts.

[5] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 48, n.7.

[6] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 45; see pages 43-48 for the details of this eventful week.

[7] Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *Religious Trends in English Poetry. Volume II: 1740-1780, Religious Sentimentalism in the Age of Johnson* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1942), 370.

[8] For her comments on Hemans see the letter of July 31, 1829 to Mary Russell Mitford; *Letters of a Lifetime*, 39. She wrote to James Bird about Cowper on September 5, 1828; see 25.

[9] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 25.

[10] William Cowper, *Poetical Works*, ed. H. S. Milford (rev. 4th ed. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967). All Cowper quotations are from this edition.

[11] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 49.

[12] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 53.

[13] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 55.

[14] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 60.

[15] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 216.

[16] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 147. Apparently the subscription was taken up by Pastor Ritchie himself, since in her letter of October 9th, 1830, Susanna writes to James Bird that "Mr. Ritchie will begin to print when we have got 150 names" (52). And though it was ultimately published by Smith, Elder and Company of Cornhill, the text of *Enthusiasm* was prepared at the Bungay Printing Press, owned by a family friend who was a leading Methodist, Robert Childs. (See *Letters of a Lifetime*, 14-15; 49 n.3) So the book really was the work of "kind friends."

[17] For details of Susanna Moodie's early life, see the editorial notes to *Letters of a Lifetime*, 1-5.

[18] Eleanor M. Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy from*

Gray to Keats (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1932), 83. Sickels quotes these opening lines from an anonymous "Ode to Melancholy" published in the *Scots Magazine*, Feb. 1756:

> Come, sweet enthusiast, from the holy vale,
> Whence streams o'er all thy sadly-soothing lay;
> While Night sits list'ning to thy tender tale,
> That melts the heart, and steals the soul away (49).

The association of melancholy with enthusiasm suggested by this example was common, the enthusiast being typically a solitary contemplative. And the Warton brothers made this pairing of terms irresistible: Joseph wrote "The Enthusiast" in 1740; Thomas, "The Pleasures of Melancholy" in 1747.

[19] *Letters of a Lifetime*, p. 37.

[20] David B. Morris, *The Religious Sublime: Christian Poetry and Critical Tradition in 18th-Century England* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 108.

[21] Quoted by Hoxie Neale Fairchild in *Religious Trends in English Poetry. Volume I: 1700-1740, Protestantism and the Cult of Sentiment* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1939), 187.

[22] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 29.

[23] For the history of the word "Enthusiasm," see Susie I. Tucker, *Enthusiasm: A Study in Semantic Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), and Sister M. Kevin Whelan, *Enthusiasm in English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century* (Washington: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1935).

[24] Clarence M. Webster, "Swift and Some Earlier Satirists of Puritan Enthusiasm," *PMLA* 48 (1933), 1142-43. Molière proposed a similar theory, satirically, in *Tartuffe*.

[25] For Casaubon's *A Treatise concerning Enthusiasme* see "A Facsimile Reproduction of the second edition of 1656," intro. Paul J. Korshin (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970); for More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, see publication 118 of the Augustan Reprint Society, intro. M. V. DePorte (Los Angeles: Williams Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1966).

[26] Blount is quoted by George Williamson in "The Restoration Revolt against Enthusiasm," *Studies in Philology* 30 (1933), 583. For Johnson's definition see *Johnson's Dictionary: A Modern Selection* ed. E. L. McAdam, Jr. and George Milne (NY: Random House, 1963), 166.

[27] Quoted by Frederick C. Gill in *The Romantic Movement and Methodism* (London: The Epworth Press, 1937), 22. See also Clarke Garrett, *Spirit Possession and Popular Religion: From the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), 79.

[28] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm to My Lord Sommers," in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Walter M. Hatch (3 vols., London: Longmans, Green, 1870), vol. 1, 58, n.2.

[29] "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm," 67.

[30] "The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody. Being a Recital of certain conversations or Natural and Moral Subjects," in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* 3 vols. (2nd ed., corr. 1714), vol. 2, 400. At the beginning of the piece, Philocles describes Theocles to a third party, Palamon, as having "nothing of that savage Air of the vulgar Enthusiastick Kind. All was serene, soft and harmonious" (218).

Shaftesbury takes great care to ensure that his refined enthusiasm for natural beauty should be properly distinguished from lower-class religious frenzy.

[31] "The Moralists," 400.

[32] Joseph Warton, "The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature," in *The Three Wartons: A Choice of their Verse* ed. Eric Partridge (London: The Scholartis Press, 1927).

[33] *Letters of a Lifetime*, 299.

[34] Fairchild notes that this poem is "a faithful paraphrase of [William] Law's *Some Animadversions upon Dr. Trapp's Reply*, a polemic appended to his famous *Appeal to All that Doubt*" (1740); see *Religious Trends in English Poetry, Vol. II*, 160.

[35] John Byrom, "Enthusiasm. A Poetical Essay," in *Miscellaneous Poems* 2 vols. (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1773), vol. 2, 22-41.

[36] The text actually reads "to make *Entheasm* a Crime," [my emphasis] but I believe this to be a misprint.

[37] A letter to Richard Bentley dated January 22, 1856, poignantly reminds us that Moodie was well aware of her particular talents. She confides that all her early works had been dramatic, but that she "was persuaded by foolish fanaticks, with whom I got entangled, to burn these MSS, it being they said unworthy of a christian to write for the stage. . . . The little headings in blank verse, that often occur in my books are snatches that memory retains of these tragedies. Nature certainly meant me for a dramatic writer, and having outlived my folly, I really regret the martyrdom of these vigourous children of my young brain. Don't *laugh at me*. That portion of my life, would make a strange revelation of sectarianism. But it may rest with my poor tragedies in oblivion. I do not wish it to meet with their firey dooms or the ridicule of the world." *Letters of a Lifetime*, 164-65.

[38] This distinction itself was fairly conventional. We have seen it in Shaftesbury, Wesley and Byrom; even closer to Moodie, perhaps, is the comment of George Nott in 1802 that:

> What we admire in the soldier, or the scholar ... as Enthusiasm, is something quite distinct from [the religious variety of which he is treating]. . . . This enthusiasm consequently means no more than a laudable warmth of zeal in their several pursuits; in this case the use of the word is improper and may be dangerous. At all events, if it be tolerated in this sense in familiar conversation, it ought never to be so employed in writing.

See Tucker, *Enthusiasm*, 131.

[39] "Afterword," *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Toronto: Oxford, 1970), 62.

[40] Gaile McGregor, *The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1985), 38.

[41] Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," *Leaves of Grass* (1855) ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking, 1959), ll.1314-16.

[42] "Afterword" to *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*, 62.

[43] "Susanna Moodie (1803-1885)," *Canadian Writers and Their Works: Fiction Series 1* eds. Robert Lecker, Jack David & Ellen Quigley (Downsview, Ontario: ECW, 1983), 80-81.

[44] John Thurston, "Rewriting *Roughing It*" in *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*, ed. John Moss (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987), 195.

[45] Klinck, Intro. to *Roughing It in the Bush*, New Canadian Library (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962), x.

[46] See, for example, Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976); Huntington Williams, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983); and Ernest Zimmerman, *Defoe and the Novel* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975).

[47] Martin Priestman, *Cowper's Task: Structure and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 26.

NIGHT WALTZ

Harold Rhenisch

The pear trees waltz
out with the angels
under the moon,
the hard green pears
swaying like earrings
on their limbs,
their skirts brushing through the grass,
their eyes closed in rapture,
their hair thrown back.

Suddenly they open their eyes,
and they are so happy!

They dance effortlessly
even though their roots are torn out
and bleeding,

they dance as if they've always
danced like this,

gliding through the night
with the stars glistening like jewels,

and the grass laughing
and clapping its hands.

The angels have the hundred-faceted eyes of bees,
each facet a different shade of blue.
They have blue lips, grey hair,
and their clothes are printed with cornflowers
on gold stalks.

They dance with the perfect arcs and eddies of cool water,
as if the air was a stone they were spilling over.

Imagine the farmer's surprise
when he finds them there,
the whole orchard uprooted,
collapsed in a heap in the morning,
roots tangled, dry, clawing at the air,
like a beetle turned over on its shell.

I was that farmer's son.
And the tears clotted in the dust on my cheeks
as I threw on the buckets of diesel oil
and threw in a match
and the whole land,
the whole country of my childhood,
went up with a roar
that singed the hair off my arms,
and set my eyebrows aflame,
briefly, like cornhusks.

But those Bartlett pear trees
dance with me every night
in my dreams,

lean over me with their green tresses,
the pears like breasts or flowers —
they are so full of ripeness —
and run their long fingers over me,
tender — a whole field of women,
making such a fuss,
with long skirts like my grandmother
wore on the boat over from Hamburg.
Then they hold me tight to their chests
one by one,

and their sticky psylla tears
clot in my hair like honey,

and even the wind sticks to me
when I turn away.

When I rub my eyes
with the back of my hand
to clear them of tears,
they are glued shut
and I cannot see,

can only feel those trees
dance slowly around me
on the black drum of the soil

and walk off one by one,
until there is only a slow, hollow pair of footsteps
leaving,

then silence
and the cool wind
just five minutes before dawn,
blowing its sagewood trumpet
in the cool even before the birds
strike their harps of grass.

My boots have sunk deep into the mud,
and all around me the wind
blows through the grass like fire,

and the tears stick to my cheeks
like settling bees

carved by hand out of gold.

"KLEE WYCK"

Redefining Region through Marginal Realities

Roxanne Rimstead

EMILY CARR'S FIRST BOOK, earned the Governor-General's award for best *non-fiction* in Canada in 1942. But it has, since then, rarely been considered as history or even "reliable" autobiography. *Klee Wyck* as text, however, is valuable history — not simply because it explains the journey behind some of Canada's most esteemed artworks — but because Carr's subjective expression of experience challenges our colonizing history by telling stories about marginal realities which we have never liked to hear. The adventures recounted in the book were memories of her trips to paint the forested Pacific Coast and the totem art of its indigenous people between 1898 and 1930. Carr was overwhelmed by the national recognition for her book because it was more than she had received in all her years of painting. Yet despite *Klee Wyck*'s instant popular success as personal anecdote and travelogue, the nature of critical study of the text to this point reveals mostly a superficial appreciation of the author's vision and skill and little appreciation of the power of this text to challenge dominant values. But even on the level of style, it was a book which sought and struggled for the power of re-definition. Carr used neologisms, creative arrangement of vignettes, and atypical figures of speech reflecting a naturist philosophy. Why, then, has our response to this text been to further marginalize it by studying it in the limited context of naive autobiography?

One tendency has been for critics and biographers to contribute to the undervaluation of the text by assuming that Carr's deceptively simple and subjective style is naive and artless — "natural." (Tippett 249-51, Sanger 234-35) As Heather Murray has recently observed, wilderness literature written by women is simultaneously canonized and marginalized in Canadian literature according to the bias favouring culture over wilderness, a colonial heritage in our criticism. (77) Murray holds that Canadian women writers may give highly perceptive accounts of nature, but the accounts themselves are seen as "natural" rather than controlling and therefore further removed from culture. While some literary critics have scrutinized Carr's unique perspective and prose style as further evidence of her painter's eye

and her legendary personal eccentricity, even the more sympathetic ones, who have claimed *Klee Wyck* as national artifact, have done so almost patronizingly, overlooking the political subversiveness of Carr's vision and staying on the level of the comic, the visual, or the romantic without penetrating the ideology of the text. For example, though early reviews of the book praised it for portraying the Indians as friends, there has been little or no analysis of how Carr represents her personal friendships in the context of cultural decimation. Similarly, the nature of *Klee Wyck* as female life-writing has been glossed over; few critics have discussed the controversial aspects of Carr's female subjectivity in terms of current theories of Canadian women's writing. Instead, critics seem preoccupied with arguing factually against Carr's version of her own life. As Dorothy Livesay protested:

> So, in the long run, what does it matter to literature or art whether or not in real life the artist was unpredictable, irascible? at times overwhelmingly devoted to someone, at times spiteful? What does it matter if the artist was careless about getting dates in chronological order and contradictory about how events took place? It is a truism worth repeating, as Derek Reimer in *Sound Heritage* emphasizes, that "in examining the past . . . what people *thought* happened is just as important as what *actually* did happen." (147)

Livesay congratulated one biographer for dispelling unflattering myths about Carr's legend; but her main point was to protest the naive supposition that we can know a "true" definitive story to correct the ones which Carr has written herself. Responding to the glut of biographies which began to appear in the late 1970s, Livesay took the opportunity to validate Carr's autobiographical works as subjective art. Somewhere during the argument over fiction or fact, the truth of what the author was saying, in any fundamental sense, had been dismissed.

Klee Wyck was the first book Carr wrote and the most feminist of her autobiographical works — probably because the book's focus on native culture and wilderness allowed her to recreate the empowering experience of marginal realities. With the exception of her painting journal, *Hundreds and Thousands*, the subsequent autobiographical works — *The Book of the Small*, *The House of All Sorts*, and *Pause* — emphasize constraint, rebellion, and survival more than empowerment. The name "Small," which she gave to herself as child and to her child-like side in adulthood, reflects as much about the restricted space a staunch Victorian upbringing allowed a vibrant and sensitive girl as it does about the author's age and place in the family. Small's fierce sense of individuality and her painful rebellion echo the spirit and events in the life-writing of Carr's contemporary, Nellie McClung, particularly her *Clearing in the West* (1935). However, while McClung grew into the political analyst who could then articulate her anger and her place in her region in terms of women's conditions, local and national politics, and the politicized community of prairie farm women, Carr lived out her anger in contrariness and isolation with only the occasional spurt of explicit feminist indignation. She did not begin

writing for an audience until her seventies when poor health kept her from going into the forest to paint. First, as an isolated woman painter, and then much later as a writer without an explicitly feminist agenda, Carr could find a sense of community and belonging only outside of her cuture in a new symbolic order. She developed a love of region and sense of bonding by reaching into a space beyond the exclusionist reality of patriarchy — into nature and native civilization, and her own female subjectivity.

What is implicit in *Klee Wyck's* redefinition of region is the constant pull between the dominant culture and values of Carr's time, which she herself depicts as colonial, materialist, Victorian, and patriarchal, and the marginal perspective she learns to adopt in the forest as a freer, larger spirit than her own world would permit her to be. The book does not depict dominant culture explicitly because it begins with the adventure of leaving the city behind and freeing the spirit. Carr was, as all women are to varying degrees, excluded from patriarchal society. Exclusion of the other gender is precisely what patriarchy means:

> *Patriarchy* — Has been described as a way of structuring reality in terms of good/evil, redemption/guilt, authority/obedience, reward/punishment, power/powerless, haves/have-nots, master/slave. The first in each opposite was assigned to the patriarchal father, or the patriarch's Father God, frequently indistinguishable from one another. The second, to women as 'the other' and in time to all 'others' who could be exploited. The father did the naming, the owning, the controlling, the ordering, the forgiving, the giving, considering himself capable of making [the] best decisions for all. (Nellie Morton in Kramarae, 323)

Having given voice to the usually objectified and excluded native race in her own narrative, Carr also defies her own objectification as the other sex. *Klee Wyck* succeeds at retrieving aspects of native art and culture from obscurity but not objectively as regional artifacts, subjectively as personal history. As she voiced scenes of female support, maternity, eroticism, female ritual, and the power of totem art and the forest itself, she drew a circle around patriarchal reality, not to exclude it, but to make a place big enough, beyond its limits, for herself and the others who had been excluded.

In addition to sketching the land and the natives visually, *Klee Wyck* tells at least two stories of the region simultaneously: the first has a public theme, the negative eclipse of native culture and land by colonial power, while the second has a private theme, a positive unveiling of female strength through the primal forest and matriarchal aspects of native culture. By refusing to separate public from private, however, and holding both of these stories simultaneously in focus, one sees the importance if not the pre-eminence of a kaleidoscope of other muted stories in the text. The heroine/narrator's receptiveness and deep involvement with eclipsed elements on the edge of a colonizing culture enable her to transform herself into "Klee Wyck," (Laughing One) but also enable her to translate the marginal voices into

narration. One may suspect there is a danger in describing the subversive quality of her laughter of diluting its joy, but not if one keeps the tone of the text and its multiple voices in mind.

Through her writing, Carr chose to replace the dominant white male discourse of her time with the muted stories which she had found in the forest, among the native women, and through the art of the totem. In choosing her subject and mode of expression, she made ideological choices which are reflected in the structure, tone, imagery, and style. By choosing to articulate the story of many, the marginal ones, over the usually told story of the dominant, Carr challenged white male dominance while she affirmed feminist, cross-cultural, and naturist values. In order to register this challenge, however, and to acknowledge the stylistic adaptations Carr used to voice it, readers must consent to read her prose as a product of her convictions rather than as mere landscape. For example, Carr's intense love for the natural features of the west coast region has given nature its own voice in her narrative. Yet this naturist voice, which I hear as the most important in the work, is generally rushed over, abstracted, or sentimentalized in critical discussions. There are no characters in *Klee Wyck* more memorable than the forest and the native art carved from it. The other characters, including numerous sketches of native people and the heroine/narrator herself, all seem ultimately to blend together in the blurring of limits which occurs in the intense pantheistic spirit of the stories. "Wilderness," in this narration of region, expands beyond the function of setting; it becomes frame, spiritual character, and voice.

Another empowering aspect of the text is the cross-fertilization which occurs as part of Carr's experience of native culture. Through totem art, Carr grasped the rootedness of art in nature. Contact in this sense takes on intensely personal overtones; although the physical landscape bears the marks of European contact in the abandoned Indian villages, the masses of Indian graves, and the fading and deteriorating totems, the emotional landscape tells a more powerful tale of banished spiritualism. As Carr relates her personal gains from native culture, she captures an enduring sense of loss in the shadow of materialism. For the native women Carr contacts, and for Carr herself, this sense of loss is palpable and uniquely female, striking very close at the roots of maternal love with its expansive sense of nurturing and continuity. Throughout *Klee Wyck* one hears the soft padding of small bare feet as Carr focuses on the birth and death of native babies. Female space is as much the reality of the west coast she depicts as the mountains and the sea. It is part of the mystery she finds in the silence of the "hugging" forest. It is also part of the reality of the region she experiences at a particular moment in history. European contact meant, along with augmenting materialism and missionary work, the imposition of patriarchal values on indigenous women. Carr sketches this aspect of colonization indirectly by focussing on the positive; she identifies womanliness and femaleness as positive attributes in native communities and the totem god D'Sono-

qua — the Wild Woman of the Woods. She fervently embraces the native culture's non-patriarchal symbolic order and comes to terms personally with a female god. She also allows her intense feelings of nature eroticism to speak through the sensuousness of the text as it spoke through the sensuousness of her paintings.

Wilderness

Carr creates a unique relation to space in her narrative by contrasting, from the outset, the constrictive Christian mores of the white world to the more expansive pantheistic native beliefs in the wilderness. She diminishes the white world, often through structural irony and caricature, in order to make a place for native experience on the emotional level. Her affirmation of native culture is achieved through the same highly visual, sensory, spiritual, and subjective method of reporting which she uses to depict nature. The result is that the book is firmly grounded in the particularity of the region, but in a space which existed beyond her own culture, encompassing and thereby diminishing the dominant hegemony.

> We came to Toxis, which was the Indian name for the Mission House. It stood just above hightide water. The sea was in front of it and the forest behind. (3)

> Toxis sat upon a long, slow lick of sand, but the beach of the Indian village was short and bit deep into the shoreline. Rocky points jutted out into the sea at either end of it.
>
> Toxis and the village were a mile apart. The school house was half-way between the two and, like them, was pinched between sea and forest. (4)

Carr's narrative of discovery begins by situating the human on a grander canvas of sea and forest, a juxtaposition which has the effect not so much of peopling that natural landscape as of enlarging the natural by diminishing the human. The overriding aesthetic which guides the narrator's eye is one of space: in her depiction of houses, people, and culture, open space consistently admits freedom, energy, and naturalness whereas enclosure in various forms prefigures spiritual smallness, stagnation, and unnaturalness. In the passages quoted the houses seem dwarfed because they are "pinched" by the expansive, moving landscape: "a long, slow lick of land," "bit deep into," and "jutted out into." Also dwarfed is the church, called by its native name "Toxis" and therefore seen and renamed through distanced eyes.

The diminishment of the two missionaries is achieved through caricature; they are tightly-wrapped in "straight, dark dresses buttoned to the chin" (3) and renamed "Greater Missionary" and "Lesser Missionary," as though having only bird-like status. Comically immovable and trapped in their own gravity, the missionaries never penetrate beyond the outer edge of the forest. The one hates walking there because she can not see the forest floor beyond the "growing green" covering, but the other strides fearlessly over the trails blasting on a cowhorn, to which the Indian children pay no attention. The image of the Greater Missionary going to the

village where she "hand-picked her scholars from the huts" appears merely ineffectual rather than ominous, unlike the powerful image of the child-stealing Wild Woman of the Woods whom Carr will meet as she goes deeper into the forest (5).

An immediate contrast to the missionaries' tightly-clothed bodies is the Chief: "His crumpled shoes hung loose as if they dangled from strings and had no feet in them" (4); and later, the native women: they "waddled leisurely towards church," "full skirts billowing about their legs." (9) Two scenes of nudity, a pantless native man at church and one in the forest, create, early in *Klee Wyck*, associations between native bodies and open space. The nudity is iconoclastic in terms of Carr's turn-of-the-century protestant upbringing but ultimately it strikes a note in the narrative more expansive than negative or fragmenting. Perhaps because Carr remembers the liberating sensation of observing innocence in physical freedom as she narrates these vignettes, she creates the sensation of nudity as a breath of air:

> Women sat on one side of the church. The very few men who came sat on the other. The Missionaries insisted that men come to church wearing trousers, and that their shirt tails must be tucked inside the trousers. So the Indian men stayed away.
>
> "Our trespasses" had been dealt with and the hymn, which was generally pitched too high or too low, had at last hit square, when the door was swung violently back, slopping the drinking bucket. In the outside sunlight stood old Tanook, shirt tails flapping and legs bare. He entered, strode up the middle of the room and took the front seat. (9)

The text provides sufficiently positive values to lead us into the all-encompassing, welcoming space of native culture and the wilderness. The narrator savours the freedom which promises a strange natural mix of decay and sweetness:

> In this place belonging neither to sea nor to land I came upon an old man dressed in nothing but a brief shirt. . . . The old man sawed as if aeons of time were before him, and as if all the years behind him had been leisurely and all the years in front of him would be equally so. There was strength still in his back and limbs but his teeth were all worn to the gums. The shock of hair that fell to his shoulders was grizzled. Life had sweetened the old man. He was luscious with time like the end berries of the strawberry season. (10-11)

In the opening chapter there are mainly humorous negative representations of confinement through European culture: whereas Carr was "shut up tight at Toxis" (6), the Indians "folded themselves into their houses and slept" (8); whereas the Mission House looked "as if it were stuffed with black" (3), Indian houses had been "soaked through and through with sunshine" (6); when the school house "shifted its job to church" on Sundays, the Indian women had to painfully "squeeze their bodies into the children's desks" (9); the men were not admitted unless they followed a dress code, but the Indian houses freely admitted everyone without even the convention of a knock and "always" with a grunt of welcome" (6). The space which Carr found in the native homes was a welcoming space, much like the one she felt waiting for her in the forest, precisely because it

could release her from certain restricting conventions and beliefs. The contrast between a confining white world and a more open native world will gather weight and meaning as the narrative focuses on the distance between the two worlds in terms of loss, but at first the contrast is sketched lightly and comically.

In several scenes the narrator is conscious of the natives observing her. When they, as opposed to she, are the specularizing subject, a reversal takes place which shows the narrator's flexibility and openness to the separate reality of the narrated object. Of course, the natives actually did observe her and so she is reporting what possibility opening onto meaning. The opening prayer scene directs our attention ahead into the "wilderness" toward the promise of new knowledge rather than backward in a negative gaze. Carr's technique of contrasting conceptual worlds with comic effect and her affinity with innocents makes her distancing from austere Christian worship light and promising rather than alienating.

All her life, Carr remained fervently religious by integrating pantheistic principles into her Christian faith. The space explored in *Klee Wyck* may sometimes be of spiritual and cosmic dimension, but it is always clearly identifiable as the rainforests of the West Coast. Her individual quest is through a spiritual landscape that never detaches itself from its natural roots, as her artist's creed affirms:

> "enter into the life of the trees. Know your relationship and understand their language, unspoken, unwritten talk. . . . Let the spoken words remain unspoken, but the secret internal yearnings, wonderings, seekings, findings — in them is the commusion of the myriad voices of God. . . . ." (*Hundreds and Thousands*, 30-1)

Eva-Marie Kröller has suggested that the author's feeling of union with nature both negates Victorian values and patriarchy while actually affirming "the mannerisms of patriarchal authority" by resurrecting her father's flights into romanticism. (94) But, the psycho-sexual implications of the wilderness passages in *Klee Wyck* seem more to point beyond romantic flight, which is fundamentally transcendent, to a more earthy and holistic attachment to the particularity of place. Carr loved her homeland, identified it with expansiveness and freedom, and felt strongly bonded to it. When going through an emotional breakdown during her studies in London, she would recall: ". . . Oh, I wanted my West! I wasn't a London lady." (*Growing Pains*, 124) When Carr pined for her homeland, however, it was for the wilderness and the coastal landscape rather than for the city of Victoria where she grew up. To her mind the attraction of the West was its wildness and the concept of region was chiefly the space beyond Victorian culture. Of her expeditions Carr would recall with fondness the lack of limits:

> No part of living was normal. We lived on fish and fresh air. We sat on things not meant for sitting on, ate out of vessels not meant to hold food, slept on hardness that bruised us; but the lovely, wild vastness did something to it all. I loved every bit of it — no boundaries, no beginning, no end, one continual shove of growing — edge of land meeting edge of water, with just a ribbon of sand between. Sometimes the

> ribbon was smooth, sometimes fussed with foam. Trouble was only on the edges; both sea and forests in their depths were calm and still. Virgin soil, clean sea, pure air, vastness by day, still deeper vastness in dark when beginnings and endings joined. (*Growing Pains*, 78)

Her positive aesthetic for the blurred limits of west coast landscape translated itself into some of the most evocative natural descriptions in *Klee Wyck*:

> the sea, sky, and beach of Skidegate were rosily smoothed into one. There was neither horizon, cloud, nor sound; of that pink, spread silence even I had become part, belonging as much to sky as to earth, as much to sleeping as waking as I went stumbling over the Skidegate sands. (78)

The narrator's perception of limits and of limitlessness set the narrative tone of the book. The focalization shifts between the narrative perspective of the vulnerable individual, enfeebled and discomforted by the hostile elements, and the vision of an artist who sees the grandeur of the forest and sea and is moved to discover and communicate its power and mystery. This shifting perspective invites the reader to experience "wilderness" through both a sense of immediacy and a sense of awe. Quoted out of context of the whole work, these shifts in perspective seem great leaps in tone, but it is precisely the frequency and regularity of such abrupt transitions which make Carr's writing style unique. It is an uncontrived and transparent style because it subordinates itself to its subject and the author's emotion, and it is a memorable style in that it accommodates the concrete, the personal, and the sublime. For example, as vulnerable interloper she reports:

> It seemed an awful thing to shatter that silence with a shout, but I was hungry and I dared not raise my veil till I got far out on the Naas. Mosquitoes would have filled my mouth. (53)

> I felt like an open piano that any of the elements could strum on. (45)

But as artist who feels unity with the sublime, Carr sheds the comic persona of interloper:

> The room was deathly still. Outside, the black forest was still, too, but with a vibrant stillness tense with life. From my bed I could look one storey higher into the balsam pine. Because of his closeness to me, the pine towered above his fellows, his top tapering to heaven. (8)

Grappling with the psycho-sexual implications of wilderness space in *Klee Wyck* is necessary because the narrative treats the forest in such physical, and at times erotic terms. For example, Carr expresses her awe and her longing for the welcoming space of the "hugging" forest and once again defines it in opposition to the colonizers' dominant culture:

> It must have hurt the Indians dreadfully to have the things they had always believed trampled on and torn from their hugging. Down deep we all hug something. The

> great forest hugs its silence. The sea and the air hug the spilled cries of sea-birds. The forest hugs only silence; its birds and even its beasts are mute. (8)

There is more to the hugging gesture than sheer expansiveness: as Catherine Sheldrick-Ross has observed, it is the nurturing gesture which will transfix Carr in her later meeting with the totem mothers of Kitwancool (91, 102), who affirm the same womanliness seen in D'Sonoqua, The Wild Woman of the Forest. The hug expresses a physicality and breadth of inclusiveness for female strength and desire that Carr's own culture did not permit.

While nature eroticism in Carr's paintings may be readily visible, there is a tendency to overlook the physicality and sensuousness of her wilderness prose. Annis Pratt has indicated that when female heroes feel a close affinity with nature and native animism it is often because, from their marginal position, they see society as the engulfing monster which threatens to enclose them in restrictive roles (unlike Frye's male hero who fears being engulfed by nature). In "Affairs with Bears: Some Notes towards Feminist Archetypal Hypotheses for Canadian Literature," Pratt reasons that an archetypal manifestation of the Canadian female hero's identification with nature is "an imagery of plunging *through* enclosures into the open spaces of nature . . . as if Canadian images of societal enclosures constitute modes of access, open at one end." (165) Pratt goes on to postulate that one such image of passage may be the sexual affair with an asocial lover. "Green-world lovers are necessary to women precisely because women are unnecessary as complete beings in society." (173) Through the "green-world lover, who appears as an alternative to societally acceptable suitors, husbands, and lovers," female heroes may reclaim the erotic potential which patrilineal society has made an object of shame, fear, and taboo. (173) In other words, whereas patriarchal society has sought to control and "diminish the potency" of the "ancient triple goddess — young virgin, nurturing mother, and wise old woman," wilderness and naturist religions such as native animism can restore the wholeness of the goddess by restoring her eroticism and her cyclical powers of reproduction. (164) According to Pratt's analysis, the archetypal encounter with a greenworld lover is not always specifically sexual in the coital sense, but may be a form of naturistic epiphany, and the lover is not necessarily a man but any wholly marginal outsider; the greenworld lover may be an animal, or even a plant or a rock through which the female hero experiences natural epiphany outside of culture. Carr's wilderness narrative is replete with moments of epiphany before natural scenes, but what is also interesting, in relation to Pratt's hypothesis, is that Carr consciously decided to opt out of societally approved relationships in her life and to devote herself instead to nature art.

It is well known from her paintings and her personal legend that the physicalness of the forest held a strong fascination for Carr. The towering trees painted with a sense of movement and growth are usually superficially labelled phallic. When the

young man who was her most serious suitor traveled all the way across the ocean to propose to her while she was studying in London, she reflected that he "was like a bit of British Columbia, big, strong, handsome. I had to stiff myself not to seem too glad, not to throw my arms round him, deceiving him into thinking other than I meant." (*Growing Pains*, 140) Though that chapter of her autobiography is ostensibly about the suitor, bearing his name as title, it is chiefly devoted to a description of Britain's tame and manicured forests contrasting them unfavorably to west coast forests. This upset of feminine priorities suggests that Carr's decision to remain celibate was founded not only in her choice to devote herself to her art, but also in her preference for the frank sensuality which she could experience through nature eroticism. Elsewhere in her autobiography, in the chapter titled "Love and Poetry," she remembers: "From the underscored passages in my poets, poetry did not touch love as deeply as it touched nature and beauty for me. Marked passages are all earth and nature" (80) — this self-reflection followed by a passionate description of a train ride through the Rockies.

Carr explains the degree of prudery she struggled with in "Difference Between Nude and Naked" in *Growing Pains* (29-31); she realizes "The modesty of our families was so great it almost amounted to wearing a bathing suit when you took a bath in a dark room. . . . So because of our upbringing Adda and I supposed our *art* should be *draped*." (emphasis added, 29) In Carr's time female art students, if allowed at all into life study classes, were painting only female nudes; but even without having to confront male nudes they were struggling with carefully implanted feminine prudery toward the nude bodies of their own gender. If she invested her forest scenes with so much eroticism, it may have been because she, like other female artists within a masculinist tradition, had never been allowed or trained to express desire for the male body. Frequently described as prudish, even "frigid" (e.g. Tippett 45), Carr was, nonetheless, aware of this aspect of her own character as both a product of socialization and a limitation to artistic expression. (She never did write in any of her books about the deeper reasons which may have contributed to her turn from heterosexual love to the marginal form of eroticism. But in a letter to her closest friend just a few years before her death, she hinted at her father's incestuous advances calling it "the brutal telling" and explaining how he had ruined something beautiful and natural by making it ugly for her. [Tippett, 13, 60; Shadbolt 21; Letter to Ira Dilworth, *Journals of Emily Carr*, Public Archives, Easter Monday 1935].)

Carr's narration of wilderness experience in *Klee Wyck* consistently builds on an amplified awareness of the smells, sounds, touch, and taste of natural life as well as on its explicitly stated visual beauty. This physical description transforms wilderness from mere setting into a substantial character in the work, various aspects of which are seen and felt by the narrator and experienced over and over as an active spirit and presence:

> There was no soil to be seen. Above the beach it was all luxuriant growth; the earth was so full of vitality that every seed which blew across her surface germinated and burst. The growing things jumbled themselves together into a dense thicket; so tensely earnest were things about growing in Skedans that everything linked with everything else, hurrying to grow to the limit of its own capacity; weeds and weaklings alike throve in the rich moistness. (17-18)

The physical description is only sometimes sensuous since the perspective of the interloper often interprets wilderness as encroaching on vulnerable senses, hence the sting of nettles, the stink of skunk cabbages, and the sogginess of unremitting rain. But even when conscious of herself as interloper, the narrator expresses a profound empathy with the forest, describing her landing on a beach as a wounding which shatters silence: "The grating of our canoe on the pebbles warned the silence that we were come to break it," (12) and "Then we went away from Tanoo and left the silence to heal itself." (16) Since nature itself is described as wounding (the sea against the shore and time against the mountains), the image of wounding silence becomes part of a larger whole rather than merely shattering.

The space Carr gives to wilderness in the narrative contains, apart from the naturalistic details of trees, undergrowth, and shoreline, a sense of welcoming space that encompasses all of physical life and spiritual life together: "The near shores were packed with trees, trees soaked in sunshine. For all their crowding, there was room between every tree, every leaf, for limitless mystery." (88) As though in sublimation of the wilderness, the style of the narrative reflects this growing space; it includes the constantly shifting focus from naturalistic detail to spiritual awakening and both are rooted in each other. As Pratt observed in her analysis of women's nature narratives, the encounter of female heroes with nature is not romantic and transcendent, but immanent — "a kind of animistic reciprocity between being of woman and being of rock, tree, and beast . . . an interchange of equally autonomous entities." (162)

Cyclical life patterns and a blurring of limits open one's consciousness to the intimate connection between spirit and body and invites the sort of nature/fertility worship long ago condemned in Christian patriarchy as pagan. Accordingly, when Carr inscribes the forest lovingly and physically, she is stepping beyond the dominant, white, colonial discourse of her period and reclaiming, from the far past before patriarchy, her own truncated sensuality. Her inscription of wilderness in this radical sense is reminiscent of other re-definitions:

> Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and the families we loved was it "wild" for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us the "Wild West" began.
>
> (Chief Luther Standing Bear, in T. C. McLuhan, 45)

> History teaching strengthens white racism, because it is the history of Europeans on the North American continent. White historical anthropologists have developed basically racist materials about American Indian history. There are many examples ... Although whites called the land "wilderness," no such thing existed. Indians knew, occupied and utilized every piece of earth, every stream, river and lake.
>
> (Dr. Lionel de Montigny, 116-7)

> Wild is the name of the Self in women, of the enspiriting Sister Self. The wildness of our Selves is visible to wild-eyes, to the inner eyes which ask the deepest 'whys,' the interconnected 'why's' that have not been fragmented by the fathers' 'mother tongues,' not by their seductive images or -ologies. These are the 'whys' undreamt of in their philosophies, but which lie sleeping, sometimes half-awake, in the wild minds of women. These are the whys of untamed wisdom.
>
> (Mary Daly, Kramarae, 486)

> I sat down to sketch. What was the noise of purring and rubbing going on about my feet? Cats. I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was seeing right, and counted a dozen of them. They jumped into my lap and sprang to my shoulders. They were real — and very feminine.
>
> There we were — D'Sonoqua, the cats and I — the woman who only a few moments ago had forced herself to come behind the houses in trembling fear of the "wild woman of the woods" — wild in the sense that forest-creatures are wild — shy, untouchable. (*Klee Wyck*, 40)

The Totems and D'Sonoqua

Klee Wyck offers a style and form which materializes its wilderness subject while capturing spirit. Similarly, totems blend with the landscape while abstracting essence. There are a number of other parallels between Carr's book and the totem art. The loosely arranged sketches of *Klee Wyck* share with totem art a loose but coherent, associational arrangement of meaning (as opposed to linear story). The figurative language of the book reflects the animistic ethos, also operative in totem art, which refuses to privilege humans over other life forms. The narrator's most intense moments of naturist epiphany come through her contact with totem art and the visual description of the poles during these epiphanies is vivid enough to give the poles their own voice in the narrative.

Insofar as *Klee Wyck* takes up the story of the totems, it serves as one possible bridge between the oral/visual tradition of native history and the white culture's written history. The need for such a bridge under the strain of colonization is poignantly stressed as the narrator registers Louisa's difficulty in telling the legend on her grandmother's pole in "Tanoo": she "told it to us in a loose sort of way as if she had half forgotten it." (13) Carr goes on to empathize from a distance with their sense of loss:

> The feelings Jimmie and Louisa had in this old village of their own people must have been quite different from ours. They must have made my curiosity seem small.

> Often Jimmie and Louisa went off hand in hand by themselves for a little, talking in Indian as they went. (13)

The story trails off, let go by the narrator who consents to know it only partially. The narrator keeps this respectful distance from the totem poles on the mystical as well as the cultural level. At one point the narrator describes them, along with the shoreline, "stole[n]" by the mist, "as if it were suddenly aware that you had been allowed to see too much." (61)

For the most part, Carr maintains a careful distance from natives and their art. One means of achieving this distance is to insert herself as a subjective reporter in the text rather than posing as invisible, omniscient, or objective. When she is not depicting herself as interloper, she is communicating her intensely personal involvement with native art. In the process of cross-fertilization between the artists of both cultures, her descriptions of the totems become even more subjective and personal. Part of their story becomes her story through a process of internalization. Without such openness to the messages of the totems, Carr's expressed intention to glorify the Indians and to let their poles speak would seem like usurpation and arrogance.

One frame for the book is the interloper/artist's statements of intention to the native people. Two conversations with older native women reveal the respect behind Carr's painting and behind *Klee Wyck* itself: in the first chapter she assures Mrs. Wynook that she will not make any more pictures of the old people when she learns that they believe their souls are somehow trapped in their likenesses (8); then, very close to the end of the book, she explains to Mrs. Douse, "chieftainess" at Kitwancool, that she wishes to paint the totems to pass on to future generations and remind them of what the art form was before its decline. (101) The text serves the same purpose as her paintings; Carr is hoping to rescue the totems from the death they are destined to if they survive only as artifacts:

> They took no totem poles with them to hamper their progress in new ways; the poles were left standing in the old places. But now there was no one to listen to their talk any more. By and by they would rot and topple to the earth, unless white men came and carried them away to museums. There they would be labelled as exhibits, dumb before the crowds who gaped and laughed and said, "This is the distorted foolishness of an uncivilized people." And the poor poles could not talk back because the white man did not understand their language. (52-3)

Just what sort of death native artifacts die was discussed by Douglas J. Preston. While conceding that "[b]etween 1880 and 1930 . . . the anthropologists and the museums were the only forces in our society working to protect — or at least to save what remained of — [native] heritage" (69), Preston notes that the Smithsonian Institute holds 18,500 skeletons and will not relinquish control unless legally compelled despite attempts by Indian activists to have them returned for proper burial. Preston tells how the famous anthropologist Franz Boas, first articulated the idea of "cultural relativism, . . . that human races were *intrinsically* equal" (70) on his

arrival in the United States in 1886 (Carr's expeditions to Indian villages started in 1898). Yet, in the name of science, Boas "himself, in the dead of night, raided the graveyards of his beloved Kwakiutl tribe of British Columbia" with little thought for the natives' beliefs. (70) Boas would also, along with a colleague, welcome six "Eskimo" brought to New York by Robert Peary; lodge them on the fifth floor of the museum; make casts of their legs, arms, and faces and note "slight colds" in passing (70); then, when the colds had developed into tuberculosis and the six had died, he would have their bodies "macerated, boiled, and reduced to skeletons" for installation in the museum's collection. (71) There details are drawn, of course, only from the darkest side of scientific objectivity, but a glimpse at the contemporary scientific backdrop illuminates the difference and value of Carr's form of cultural relativism and the need for subjective records of decimated cultures. Carr's notion of cultural relativity was to open herself to what she saw and allow herself and her art to be partially reconstructed in the process.

The totems were not merely symbols; they were ultimately the voice of nature itself. Of the totem artist's intention and inspiration, Carr writes:

> He wanted some way of showing people things that were in his mind, things about the creatures and about himself and their relation to each other. He cut forms to fit the thoughts that the birds and animals and fish suggested to him, and to these he added something of himself. When they were all linked together they made very strong talk for the people. . . . Then the cedar and the creatures and the man all talked together through the totem poles to the people. (51)

At close range, to appreciate their colours and contours along with their primal message, Carr appreciated native art deeply and personally. But from a distance, in a larger frame, she saw the native art in relation to its region, time, and the cosmos. One of the most arresting images of the totems occurs at the end of the thirteenth chapter, "Cha-atl," where the poles are shown in complete harmony with light on the beach, and sea and sky:

> Where the sea had been was mud now, a wide grey stretch of it with black rocks and their blacker shadows dotted over it here and there. The moon was rising behind the forest — a bright moon. It threw the shadows of the totems across the sand; an owl cried, and then a sea-bird. To be able to hear these close sounds showed that my ears must be getting used to the breakers. By and by the roar got fainter and fainter and the silence stronger. The shadows of the totem poles across the beach seemed as real as the poles themselves.
>
> Dawn and the sea came in together. The moon and the shadows were gone. The air was crisp and salty. I caught water where it trickled down a rock and washed myself.
>
> The totem poles stood tranquil in the dawn. (66)

In this passage, Carr shows the totems in a mediating role; aesthetically, they mediate between beach and forest, dream and reality, dusk and dawn, as in native culture they had mediated ritualistically between life and death by telling the story

of the deceased individuals or of family ancestors. Sketches of totem poles in various stages of decline, both natural and cultural, give the narrative a striking emblem for time. Carr describes the potential beauty of natural death within its cyclical relation to new life when she notes: "It was a fine pole, bleached of all colour and then bloomed over again with greeny-yellow mould." (13) The natural fading process cannot diminish their beauty, however, for their strength of expression appears to lie in a wider, more powerful sphere: "They were bleached to a pinkish silver colour and cracked by the sun, but nothing could make them mean or poor, because the Indians had put strong thought into them and had believed sincerely in what they were trying to express." (19)

Still, in terms of colonial history, the poles were already "old" and Carr on several occasions refers to them as the "poor old poles." They belonged to the old rather than the new villages, the old native ways of trading and "potlatch," rather than to the new ways of consumerism and industry for wages as described in Greenville. (51-3) Though initially after contact, more poles had been erected because of growing wealth through the salmon and sea-otter trade, and because of the introduction of steel tools which replaced those of shell, bone, or chipped rock, the totems were gradually disappearing when Carr visited the coastal villages. She noted with their tilting and their fading that the poles had an added symbolic weight just as their speaking strength was diminishing, for now they were the emblems of a dying race in search of its audience.

A common misreading of Carr's style describes her figures of speech as anthropomorphic, a style which gives prominence to the human world by projecting it on to the animal/plant/or inanimate world (Sanger/Tippett). When Annis Pratt discusses "animistic reciprocity" between women and nature which she has identified as archetypal in Canadian women's narratives, she stipulates that the interchange precludes anthropomorphism because it is based on intrinsic qualities rather than projected human qualities. (162) Carr not only avoids anthropomorphic images, she actually reverses the process by superimposing the world of nature and animals onto the human world with the effect of leaving a lasting impression of nature in the reader's mind. The predominant type of simile is animal/plant juxtaposed onto human rather than the contrary:

> ... "Indian mothers are too frightened to move. They stand like trees, and the children go with D'Sonoqua." (35)

> ... but if I had possessed the arms and legs of a centipede they would not have been enough. (20)

> When I looked up, she darted away like a fawn. (105)

> There were so many holes in the road and the men fell off so often that they were always changing places, like birds on a roost in cold weather. ... We threw ourselves on-to our stomachs, put our lips to the water and drank like horses. (98)

> The place was full of themselves — they had breathed themselves into it as a bird, with its head under its wing, breathes itself into its own cosiness. (104)
>
> . . . I flopped on top of the fish hatch and lay there sprawling like a star fish. . . . I lay among the turmoil with everything rattling and smashing around and in my head no more sense than a jelly fish. (83-4)
>
> I floated in and out of consciousness, and dream fish swam into my one ear and out of the other. (92)

These naturist images far outnumber the isolated anthropomorphic images in the text and vary widely in tone and effect from comical to lyrical. There are few exceptions to these naturist metaphors but two are curiously alike in that the imposed image is one of prettified femininity: pines in crinolines (63) and mountains in bonnets (80). Elsewhere, pines march and the sea tosses a boat, like a spoiled child does a toy. These exceptions are rare and isolated. Whereas the naturist figures are frequent and integral, the isolated anthropomorphic images are set apart from intense feeling and general mood.

Like people, canoes and boats in *Klee Wyck* are compared to animals: "like retrieving pups," "like a dog straining on leash," "contented as an old cat" (90, 81, 84); or to horses, beavers, and wolves. And the totems themselves followed the Indians across the sea with a "stare in the empty hollows of the totem eyes . . . as the mournful eyes of chained dogs follow their retreating masters." (60) Shades of anthropomorphism may be assumed in moments where the narrator perceives spirit animating nature, but that is more properly pantheistic (the spirits belonging to the essence of the thing itself rather than its human projection). Similarly when the narrator empathizes with inanimate objects, as she also does with natives and animals, to try to imagine their feelings or their story, the process is more like reception than the projection of characteristics. For example, she intuits the resentment of Indian Tom to her questioning (35), as she intuits the resentment of leaning poles to the stronger elements. (38)

Most of the animal imagery involves domesticated animals: cats, dogs, horses, or birds, the animals whom Carr befriended more than humans. The fiercer, "wilder" animals, cougars, bear, beavers, eagles, and wolves, she presents largely through descriptions of Indian carvings, legends, or dialogue with natives (although she does see eagles and dolphins first-hand). Yet such a source was a reliable one, as Carr explains in a short discussion of totem carvings in *The Heart of a Peacock*; the carver was bound to concreteness and preserving the essence and "[completeness of] being" of the animal no matter how stylized or abstract the carving became. "The carver must make it express weight, power, being. Let wings, tail, talons be unconnected: they must be told." (83)

Her close observation of animals in *Klee Wyck* and in *The Heart of a Peacock* indicates Carr's affection for their actual physical presence as well as their symbolic figurations ("The scraggy ponies dragged their feet heavily; sweat cut rivers

through the dust that was caked on their sides." [98] and "The horses held their bones stiff and quivered their skins. It made the rain fly out of their coats and splash me." [103]). Like a true naturalist, she describes even those animals which she found repugnant (e.g. slugs [65] and devilfish [15]) with careful detail and some empathy, rather than detached objectivity. In so detailing animal life (and plant life as well, for skunk cabbages and kelp are described with as much care as dogwood and cedar), Carr is stepping outside of the hierarchical chain of life generated by European humanism into the non-hierarchical, reciprocal conception of life lived by natives, a conception of life where every living thing has a place, a purpose, and a spirit. The shift of perspective entailed in this marginal but holistic view of wilderness, is brought home in the lightly comic scene at the end of "Tanoo." Shocked to find herself lying on something slithery in the boat, the narrator learns that they are devilfish. When she cries out, Jimmie, the native guide, reassures her that the devilfish are dead so she need not worry because, by rolling over, *she* will not hurt *them.* (16)

In her home, the House of All Sorts, on a slanting wall over her bed, Carr painted two Indian eagles: "they made 'strong talk' to me." (*House of All Sorts*, 10-11). Only when she had abandoned the realistic and traditional landscape schools of European painting and began to incorporate the principles of abstraction and style from native art into her own work could she at last capture the vastness of the wilderness and the spirit she felt there. Doris Shadbolt has explained the influence of schools of painting on Carr's style; unlike the postimpressionist and then the postcubist influence, the Group of Seven's influence, coming especially from Lawren Harris, led Carr to re-examine her fundamental religious values along with her painting style. The nature-centered canvases of the Group of Seven and the nature-centered philosophy of theosophism preoccupied her for a number of years, but ultimately she returned to her own brand of pantheism and her own style of rendering Indian subjects which could give her "a valuable moral and social purpose for her art." (Shadbolt, 30) Totem art also allowed her to redefine god in terms more appropriate to the region.

> God got so stuffy squeezed into a church. Only out in the open was there room for Him. He was like a great breathing among the trees. In church he was static, a bearded image in petticoats. In the open He had no form; He just *was*, and filled all the universe. (*Hundreds and Thousands*, 329)

This caricature of the male god shows both the constricted spiritualism of institutionalized religion and the debasing aspect of frivolous female dress. The juxtaposition of the two produces a bizarre image of an emasculated and impotent male god. In contrast, in *Klee Wyck* the conception of god and also of female gender expands through the narrator's personal receptivity to totem beauty and "strong talk." When face to face with the female totem spirit D'Sonoqua, the relationship of painter/story-teller to the art object becomes reciprocal, a giving and taking,

listening and telling, seeing and showing which is profoundly intimate and permits the totem to move through the text's translation, from objecthood to speaking subject:

> The eyes were two rounds of black, set in wider rounds of white, and placed in deep sockets under wide, black eyebrows. Their fixed stare bored into me as if the very life of the old cedar looked out, and it seemed that the voice of the tree itself might have burst from that great round cavity, with projecting lips, that was her mouth. Her ears were round, and stuck out to catch all sounds. The salt air had not dimmed the heavy red of her trunk and arms and thighs. Her hands were black, with blunt finger-tips painted a dazzling white. I stood looking at her for a long, long time.
>
> . . . I never went to that village again, but the fierce wooden image often came to me, both in my waking and in my sleeping. (3-4)

The three meetings with different D'Sonoquas in *Klee Wyck* are described as constituting a central development in Carr's life. The intensity of these experiences is evident in the building emotional effect from her initial fear of the goddess's fixed stare: "her stare so over-powered mine, that I could scarcely wrench my eyes away from the clutch of those empty sockets" (36), to her ultimate feeling of harmony and peace when she meets what she calls the third wild woman:

> She appeared to be neither wooden nor stationary, but a singing spirit, young and fresh, passing through the jungle. No violence coarsened her; no power domineered to wither her. She was graciously feminine. Across her forehead her creator had fashioned the Sistheutl [*sic*], or mythical two-headed sea-serpent. One of its heads fell to either shoulder, hiding the stuck-out ears, and framing her face from a central parting on her forehead which seemed to increase its womanliness.
>
> She caught your breath, this D'Sonoqua, alive in the dead bole of the cedar. She summed up the depth and charm of the whole forest, driving away its menace. (39-40)

By reading *Klee Wyck* as archetypal autobiography, Catherine Sheldrick Ross is able to interpret the shamanistic function of D'Sonoqua as part of the heroine/narrator's developing identity. She concludes that the narrator listens to the language of the totems throughout the book in order to retrieve the primitive aspects of female identity "buried by white technological society — sexuality, fertility, violence, irrationality and death." (88) Ross compares Carr's experience of consciousness and released energy after "initiatory ordeals" to similar rites of passage experienced by the white heroines who venture into the wilderness through personal contact with native culture in Atwood's *Surfacing* and Laurence's *The Diviners*. Anticipating the spirit of Annis Pratt's article on the "greenworld lover," Ross argues that the female hero feels affinity with nature and the animistic religions of native culture because these worlds will, unlike patriarchal society, accommodate the *complete* woman, the *complete* goddess. Ross interprets Carr's relationship to D'Sonoqua as one of unity in a world with space enough to hold *all* of life:

> D'Sonoqua's mouth that lures away children is also a nest for birds and thus a source of life. Both creator and destroyer, D'Sonoqua eludes our need for clear moral categories. The white person says good or bad, alive or dead, but D'Sonoqua answers with unity. Life and death are held together in the circle of unity of her open mouth and fixed stare. (89)

This holistic spirit is reflected in the loose but connected structure of the narrative and the sentences themselves. Daniele Pitavy-Soukes has carefully studied the looseness of form and elliptical syntax as prosaic reflections of the painter's eye. The loose, non-chronological arrangement of sketches frames the simple and sparse syntax. Both could be seen as a stylistic sublimation of the liberating space which Carr perceived in the wilderness and native culture. Another explanation for the non-linear arrangement of sketches comes from considering Carr's book as women's life-writing. Jay McPherson's assessment of Carr's writing stance in her discussion of autobiography in the *Literary History of Canada* was: "[A] natural arrogance that must snatch the last word, even when unspoken" (II, 132); but she also observed that, among Canadian autobiographers, women as a group are "less self-absorbed and more actively interested in the people around them, and so able to give a fuller sense of life." (133) Among the characteristics of style and form that Helen M. Buss lists in "Canadian Women's Autobiography: Some Critical Directions" (1986), are a strong sense of relatedness with concrete reality, and loose, non-chronological structure which attempts to unify fragments of the self without imposing order. Accordingly, Buss recommends that we read women's autobiographies with "the kind of metaphoric association that poetry demands" (157). When Buss observes possible causes for women's departure from strictly chronological arrangement of autobiography, the form of *Klee Wyck* jumps to mind for it is loosely based upon places and events: "Ucluelet," "Tanoo," "Cumshewa," "D'Sonoqua," "Salt Water," "Canoe":

> those literary women who experiment with style and those native writers who find their assumed style escaping them and a new style being imposed by the material are directed by similar imperatives: a need to find unity of self without leaving out any of the diversity of their lives, a need to redefine womanhood in the face of a changing world, a need to rescue some primitive aspect of that womanhood which is missing in their lives, and a need to abandon egocentric and developmental definitions of self in favor of a sense of self based on relatedness and an accumulation and integration of identities. (157)

The chapter on D'Sonoqua is the only one in *Klee Wyck* which spans several years in Carr's life and is, consequently, the chapter in which the reader is most conscious of the narrator's developing psyche; the other chapters describe seemingly isolated moments in her personal history without a sense of chronology except for very loose threads based on travel. The sketches dip into seemingly randomly arranged memories of her visits to coastal villages and a few recollections of native

people from her childhood ("Wash Mary" and "Sleep"). It is only with D'Sonoqua that Carr shows introspection (although achieved outwardly through reflection on the totem) and submits story line to a personal sense of time.

Those readings which resist the underlying unifying principles in the work upbraid the author for her subjectivity and lack of objective accuracy, and attempt to define the loosely unified fragments of self as evidence of a flawed or incomplete psyche. These readings would impose order on the text's subjectivity. For example, contrary to Ross's reading of the D'Sonoqua as a shamanistic rite of passage into unity and self-growth are two readings (Stich's and Sanger's) which interpret the totem goddess as a mirror for the author and the fragmented psyche of the author. In these interpretations, D'Sonoqua is completely uprooted, pulled out of the forest, out of her cultural and natural setting and sources of power and made to voice psychoanalytical theories of mother/child relations rather than anything even remotely related to the nettles and moss around her. The psychological interpretations disempower D'Sonoqua as goddess and also isolate the author by screening her feelings of feminist, cross-cultural, and naturist power through a dominant sense of normalcy. K. P. Stich has read D'Sonoqua as Carr's "writing" as opposed to "painting" self, an expansive but *demonic* and *repressed* urge to create through words. But it is Peter Sanger's use of D'Sonoqua, in "Finding D'Sonoqua's Child," which perfectly illustrates critical resistance to Carr's subversiveness.

Sanger seeks to locate the "real" author behind the text and, not surprisingly considering his angle of approach, locates fragmentation rather than unity — fragmentation not in patriarchal society's definition of woman, life, and nature, but fragmentation in the female author herself. Sanger interprets D'Sonoqua as a mirror of Carr's very deep psychic schism, a shadow self which he believes Carr sought to conceal both consciously and unconsciously by altering objective facts. (220-21) Claiming that the "shadow side" of Carr's personality disrupts her realistic prose, this critic argues that Carr could not find the appropriate form for her life-writing in any of her realistic biographies but only in the free associations of her journal, *Hundreds and Thousands*. (234) In going so far as to suggest that she might have used a fantasy form like "the *Alice* books" and *Wind in the Willows* rather than realism for her autobiographical prose (234), Sanger minimalizes any concrete tie to the West Coast wilderness in the work and robs nature of its voice in the narrative. His lengthy study focuses on details of the text without accepting its subjective pattern or discussing that subjectivity as valid artistic expression. Surely this is to overlook the forest for the tree, the central totem figure D'Sonoqua. Carr's meeting with the totem spirit is too often picked out of its context, the heart of the forest, and used as a focus for psychoanalysis of the author or for archetypal analysis. Yet if one adheres to the truly marginal voices of the work as a whole, the severance of the whole into parts is exactly what ought not to be done in respect to

the work's own holistic aesthetic. Instead, the multiplicity of voices within the context of the forest is what carries the spirit of the work.

Sanger speculates that Carr's "lie" about her age in the beginning of *Klee Wyck* (according to his research, she was not 15 but 26) and her failure to identify the lady missionary as her sister were attempts to posture as a more courageous traveler than she was. Hembroff-Schleicher documents many of the same discrepancies but ends her chapter, "Sources of Error" with a quotation by Carr herself on her extreme forgetfulness and lack of concern for dates (176). *Klee Wyck* itself yields some secrets about the space outside of objective concepts of time. The chapter entitled "Century Time" clearly exposes the phenomenon of the native culture resisting the new symbolic order of the colonizers. The white man's gravestones, which were replacing totems, could not accommodate the language of the forest nor the breadth of a native vision rooted in connectedness; instead they would carry only a fragmented inscription of the past and of the dead ones, a rational and numbered version. At first when Carr reads "IPOO" on all of the Indian graves, she cannot comprehend but must quiz a native woman who responds that it means " 'die time'." Carr concludes: "Time was marked by centuries in this cemetery. Years — little years — what are they? As insignificant as the fact that reversing the figure nine turns it into the letter P." (96)

Perhaps Carr altered facts for dramatic effect, but the author who so often diminishes herself through comic falls, outlandish clothing, mosquito attacks, and fear of the dark, is not likely an author posing for the heroic. Carr respected fear and did not deny feeling it, describing it, or laughing at it. In *Klee Wyck*, the old native's warning about cougars at the end of the first chapter shows the wisdom of certain kinds of fear in the rain forest. And the meetings with D'Sonoqua essentially concerned the narrator's coming to terms with her fear of marginal realities, both the wilderness and the wild woman. If the objective errors Sanger cites were not used for posturing, as he maintains, and not for dramatic effect, as I have proposed, what were they meant to achieve? I think, in the matter of subjective and personal history, the ultimate answer is Dorothy Livesay's — What does it matter?

Another negative result of all this objective measuring of Carr's autobiographical text is that, ultimately, nature and female subjectivity are somehow seen as obtrusive. For example, Sanger's biographical approach to the text is seriously marred not only by excessive concern for minor errors but by a masculinist attitude to female texts. This critic fails to identify key instances of subjectivity in Carr's books and letters as gender specific and he fails to extend sympathy in such central events in Carr's life as incest, sexual harassment, female bonding, and alienation from the body. He interprets them, instead, as exaggeration, distortion, or fabrication. If this were one isolated masculinist viewpoint, the negative direction of the study would not be worth mentioning. But the truth of the matter is that Carr's biographers,

despite the fact that they have been mostly women, have not extended sympathy in or credibility to the matters of sexual and child abuse, simply on the grounds that she came from a good family and respectable people do not do that sort of thing.

The positive aspect of an "objective" treatment of the D'Sonoqua meetings, on the other hand, does reveal one interesting fact. According to Sanger and confirmed to me in a letter from Peter L. Macnair, Head of Ethnology at The Royal British Columbia Museum, Carr misidentified the third totem in chapter six as D'Sonoqua. It was actually the representation of a male chief or ancestor. Sanger maintains that Carr's misidentification of this totem as a non-aggressive singing spirit proves her inability to accept and express the shadow/warrior side of her own personality. (237) This is only one possibility. A more certain conclusion to be gleaned from such data is simply that Carr projected female gender onto the male totem at a moment when she was feeling free from fear in the forest. Falsely inscribing gender is itself an interesting transposition by means of which the numerous positive associations between womanliness and nature and native culture can be acknowledged. In the description of the Skidegate eagle in *The Heart of a Peacock*, as in the description of "D'Sonoqua," Carr also seems to inscribe gender because she perceives womanliness as a positive and powerful attribute: "This eagle had folded wings. Her head was slightly raised, slightly twisted. . . . Maternal, brooding, serene, she seemed to dominate Skidegate." (84) In Carr's painted version of this bird carving "Skidegate Eagle" (which appears on the cover of the paperback edition of *The Heart of a Peacock*) the femaleness and maternal quality of the carving is not immediately obvious, though the impression of strength and dominance is. If one considers Carr's verbal connection between womanhood and strength while studying the painting, the experience becomes provocative and, for women, an empowering re-visioning of gender.

Sophie

"Sophie" is a glimpse at the story of eclipsed female strength in the history of colonization of native women. Her prominent place as the person to whom the autobiography is dedicated reveals as much about Carr's respect for female strength and bonding as the mystical meetings with D'Sonoqua. Yet, as I stated in my introduction, female bonding in *Klee Wyck* has largely been overlooked by literary critics, with the exception of Catherine Sheldrick Ross's prelude to the theme in her describing a spiritual link between the narrator, D'Sonoqua, the mother totems in Kitwancool, and Sophie. It appears that other artists have been quicker than literary critics to pick up on these deep emotional strains in Carr's work. Dramatic portrayals of Carr's life and poetic dedications have, according to Eva-Marie Kröller, increasingly emphasized rebellion against patriarchy, affinity with natives, and female bonding. Considering that the 1942 Farrar & Rinehart edition of *Klee Wyck*

bears four coloured plates of Carr's paintings which all portray women — Sophie, D'Sonoqua, Indian Village Alert Bay, and Totem mother and child at Kitwancool — the book's theme of women's connectedness was hardly obscure even in the early days, though it was and still is overlooked as a subversive element in Carr's story.

Contributing to the gender specificity of *Klee Wyck* as a woman's account of her personal contact with native culture is the social setting, the moment in history when Carr visited the villages. Initial contact was solidifying into cultural assimilation, genocide, exploitation, and race suicide and native women were experiencing redefinition and drastically shifting female roles. Carr may not be reliable as an objective source on natives (I hear the disapproving ring in my letter from the museum ethnographer which begins: "Regarding the ongoing problem of Emily Carr and the Indians. . ." [Letter, 10 March, 1989]), but what other white woman at this time was writing so emotionally and personally of native friends and native women's lives? Thus, through mood rather than direct objective reporting or political analysis, Carr manages to recreate the sense of decline and eclipsed power in the native community. What she may not have noticed consciously, but what emerges in the tone of her female history, is that the native women of the period were adjusting not only to the losses of their people as a whole but to their own loss of status during the reorganization of their matrilineal, pantheistic culture under a patriarchal, Christian order. Carr would discover and depict this lost female power overtly in telling about her meetings with the banished goddess, D'Sonoqua, but she would also portray a deep awareness of tragic female strength in her depiction of strong native mothers unable to disentangle themselves from death.

It would be wrong to assume that the pre-contact tribes of the West Coast offered a utopian existence or golden age of matriarchal power to native women. Although more fundamentally egalitarian than patriarchal society, they were distinct from Eastern tribes in that they were rank-differentiated and had more gender-designated roles. However, recent essays on the Pacific Coast Indians compiled by Bruce Alden Cox caution that although the pre-contact tribal organization was "hierarchical, slavish even" (158), it was not patriarchal. Despite differentiation of tasks by sex (e.g. only men carved totems and went on whaling expeditions while women wove and played a major role in salmon fishing), women inherited hunting and fishing territories, potlatches were a celebration of female fertility as well as of acquired wealth, female as well as male spirits were worshipped, and menstruation was usually celebrated through ritual seclusion. (158-97) True, in the Haida menstrual blood appears to have been taboo; but the menstrual blood of white European women had been banned from any public attention whatsoever — it had been made invisible. On ititial contact, white traders complained of the strong bargaining powers of the native women saying they drove the prices of sea otter up and therefore delayed or interfered with trading (Cox, 174-6). But by the time Carr

arrived on the scene, the white lawmakers had already spoken out very loudly in the name of patriarchy:

> The 1869 Indian Act imposed on Indians the patriarchal systems of the British and French and defined a registered Indian as "a male person who is a direct descendant in the male line of a male person." A female could be a registered Indian only if she was the daughter or wife of a male registered Indian. People not entitled to be registered Indians were women who married outside the tribe or children whose fathers were not Indians. However, an Indian man marrying a non-Indian woman not only retained his status but the non-Indian woman also gained Indian status. (Dranoff, 98)

Despite publicised legal suits and demonstrations by native women throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Canada did not move to redress the sexist injustices of the Indian Act until 1981 when the UN Committee found the Canadian government in breach of the International Covenant on Civil Rights (Prentice, 398). The disempowerment of native women is a particularly noisy skeleton in the closet of Canadian history because it leads directly to the discovery of other skeletons which reveal white women's disempowerment centuries before in European history.

Contact had meant special losses for native women, losses which are being written into Canadian history only now. The authors of *Canadian Women: A History* point out that while the shift from private to public work in the 1700s and 1800s meant an increasing exclusion of all Canadian women from power, the effect would have been exacerbated in the case of native women as many tribes shifted from relatively egalitarian concepts of collective tribal organization to a more patriarchal and capitalist ordering of production and inheritance. In many tribes this shift in economic system was a result not only of trade but of a concerted effort by missionaries to impose a patriarchal culture and morality on the native population. Religious intervention resulted in a significant loss of status for Indian women: the loss of matrilineal patterns of inheritance; the change from relative sexual freedom and the communal spirit of child rearing in native tradition to white ways: monogamous marriage (with divorce made impossible or more difficult than it had been under tribal laws), the proliferation of prostitution, and the concept of children as private property; the change from maternity to paternity rights in cases of separation; the pressure to exact from wives obedience to the patriarchal authority of their husbands; and the meting out of land by church and government to male heads of the nuclear family. Of course none of these shifts in power was experienced uniformly throughout different tribes, but the authors of this history surmise that the native women in agricultural tribes in Eastern Canada were much more able to resist European influence than hunting, gathering, and fishing tribes such as were found on the West Coast. The native women of this region also suffered special difficulties because of the stronger tendency here to the taking of " 'country'

wives" from among native women, wives who were generally abandoned when white women arrived. (Prentice *et al.*, 24-40, 70-2)

Carr's focus on native women derives, of course, partly from her being able to move more freely among the women than the men, and also from her valorization of female role activities such as mediating, domestic work, child-bearing and rearing, weaving crafts, emotional support, and care of the sick as opposed to the male activities of warring, hunting, and fishing. (Carving, the one male designated activity which Carr valorized, was also upset by the economic transformation under capitalism.) Significantly, the first two representations of native women show them mediating between angry husbands and the white world (7-8): Mrs. Wynook drags herself to Toxis where she strokes Carr's skirt to explain her husband's outburst and the native woman in church covers her husband's nudity with her shawl:

> The service was over, the people had gone, but a pink print figure sat on in the back seat. Her face was sunk down in her chest. She was waiting till all were away before she slunk home. It is considered more indecent for an Indian woman to go shawl-less than for an Indian man to go bare-legged. The woman's heroic gesture had saved her husband's dignity before the Missionaries but had shamed her before her own people.
>
> The Greater Missionary patted the pink shoulder as she passed.
>
> "Brave woman!" said the Greater Missionary, smiling. (10)

The ineffectual and patronizing reward of a pat on the back sets a downward tone for what might otherwise be sentimental renditions of female sacrifice and it foreshadows the rest of the sketches, which show how native women ultimately lose more than they gain in their mediating role between unbalanced powers.

Of the following twelve figures of female strength in *Klee Wyck*, the first ten are portrayed in the shadow of death, illness, or cultural decimation: the groups of female mourners in "The Blouse" and "Sophie"; Old Jenny, who harnessed her blind husband to a wheelbarrow to collect refuse on the beaches (54-5); Sophie, who buried every one of her twenty babies; Sophie's aunt, who suffered so terribly from rheumatism that her "eyes, nose, mouth and wrinkles were all twisted to the perpetual expressing of pain" (28-9); Orphan Lizzie, who fed the entire family on candy and brought wild berries to the crippled child (104-5); Wash Mary whose "brown was all bleached out of her skin" and whose "fingers were like pale yellow claws now, not a bit like the brown hands that had hung the clothes on our line." (68-9); old Mrs. Green, who had long ago mothered the only "tripples" ever born on Queen Charlotte Islands (" 'One died and the other two never lived' " [77]); Granny in the abandoned village of Greenville, who laughed "till the tears poured out of her eyes . . . while the black eyes of her solemn grandchild stared." (50); powerful Mrs. Douse, who was leader of Kitwancool where men carried guns, went to prison, and came back as heroes, but where women made the decisions; the young mother who skillfully paddled the canoe with a babe in arms but who had

a story of how her own blood children had all died; the women on the beach who, all one long day, washed clothes over a fire, baked bread, and boiled jam, and cared for the children and the old (109): and upwardly-mobile Louisa, who transformed her old mother's secret knowledge of the sea and where to find roe eggs into orders from the catalogue (75-6). The gloom cast by a colonial shadow was not unrelenting though it was pervasive.

Native women mothering death — "mothers of all those little cemetery mounds" (31) — leads to scenes of mourning and worrying over the cost of upkeep for all the meagre graves. Without authorial comment or descriptive material on mood, tone, or intent, Carr attempts to reproduce Sophie's own story about the coffin-man. (At this point the question of authenticity of the dialect should, perhaps, be suspended considering the time and the author's obviously sincere attempts to reproduce what she had heard some fifty years earlier.) "Grave man make cheap for me. He say, 'You got lots, lots stone from me, Sophie. Maybe bymby you get some more died baby, then you want more stone. So I make cheap for you.' " (25) Later when Sophie realizes how poor the deal has been, she reinterprets the facts: "She laid her hand on the corner of the little coffin. 'See! Coffin-man think box fo' Injun baby no matter.' The seams of the cheap little coffin had burst." (27-8) The priest is also a powerful and absent male figure in Sophie's story. The fence of the graveyard closes against those babies who died before being baptised and the circle of mourners for one child will be denied closure and must go on "howling . . . like tortured dogs" for three days until the priest returns from the city to preside over the funeral. The women's own ceremony has, however, a quasi-religious aspect as the mourners, "their shawls drawn low across their foreheads, their faces grim," take part in a washing ritual:

> Suddenly they stopped. Sophie went to the bucket and got water in a tin basin. She took a towel in her hand and went to each of the guests in turn holding the basin while they washed their faces and dried them on the towel. Then the women all went out. . . . (27)

The close tactile aspect of their movements contrasts the women's world to the outside world of absent men. Carr repeatedly portrays this physical proximity and gentle touching as a characteristic of native women's community. Sophie makes her entrance selling baskets with a baby slung on her back, a girl clinging to her skirt, and a boy close behind her and she exits from the book longing to touch a white woman's healthy twin babies since her own had died. An inauthentic, foreign utterance stops her hand as she "burns" to touch them: " 'Nice ladies don' touch, Em'ly'." (31)

In the death scene which immediately follows Sophie's story, Carr transforms a potentially morbid even ghoulish experience into something more spiritual by emphasizing the strength of female community and the spirit of sharing which is communicated through touch:

> I thought that she was dead, holding my sleeve in a death grip. One of the women came in and tried to free me. Mary's eyes opened and she spoke in Indian.
>
> "Mary wants your blouse," said the stooping woman to me. (41)
>
> . . . I scrambled out of the blouse and into my jacket. I laid the blouse across Mary. She died with her hands upon it. (42)

Daniele Pitavy has pointed out the intense visual richness of this sketch, citing it as an example of how Carr often develops space in her prose as though laying out a canvas. In particular, Pitavy refers to the cosmic framing of this death scene which seems to join interior concentric circles in ripples:

> Des la première phrase, en faissant référence à la mer, au soleil et à la terre, puis à la mort, Emily Carr inscrit son texte — ou sa toile — dans un cadre cosmique. Elle le replace dans l'ordre naturel, comme est naturelle au début du second paragraphe la vision du corps décharné. Mais en même temps, elle prend soin de rappeler la rangée de pleureuses à l'extérieur et trace ainsi un second cercle, rituel cette fois. Ensuite, l'intérieur de la cabane est pris comme point de vue, ou espace de figuration, l'humain est donc enserré dans ce cadre cosmique et rituel. Toute la tension du texte (ou de la toile) nait du passage de l'un à l'autre. Pour l'exprimer, Carr a recours au procédé pictural de l'encart ou de l'insertion du tableau: elle développe la représentation de l'intérieur de la cabane avec la mourante mais traite aussi de ce qui préoccupe celle-ci, l'autre "cabane" qui, après sa mort, la représentera socialement: . . . (87)

The circles or frames described by Pitavy are, therefore, the cosmic frame of sea, sky and earth; the circle of mourners who enact a ritual; and the encasement of the gravebox where the blouse and the woman's other belongings will be displayed to give a personal history. Without making the connections between female community, touching, ritual, and spirituality, Pitavy recognizes the circle as a means of accommodating spirituality in the work. Yet earlier in the forest the magic circle of femaleness was formed by the narrator, the "feminine" cats, and D'Sonoqua, while the center of that circle was not death but the artist's easel and the story.

The bonding of women in *Klee Wyck* takes place within the larger spirit of innocent reciprocity in which "Indian people and the elements give and take like brothers, accommodating themselves to each others' ways without complaint." (20-1) Moreover, through this ethos of sharing Carr comes closest to connectedness with native culture, for her artistic role of reproducing, translating, and interpreting the wilderness is also the role of returning, in her own way, what she has learned from the totems. Before accepting, however, that the story is in some way central to the sense of cross-cultural female bonding in *Klee Wyck*, one must certainly acknowledge current steps being taken by native writers and cultural leaders to reclaim their stories and their right to tell them. Especially since story-telling has been such an integral part of native culture and because the native languages were suppressed, the usurpation of the story-telling role by white writers and

film-makers has received serious political criticism. In one such recent protest, the taking of stories is depicted as a continuation of oppression:

> the Canadian cultural industry is stealing — unconsciously, perhaps, but with the same devastating results — native stories as surely as the missionaries stole our religion and the politicians stole our land and the residential schools stole our language. As Leslie Marmon Silko writes in *Ceremony*, stories "are all we have, you see — all we have to fight off illness and death." (Keeshig-Tobias)

I believe it is important that we read Carr's *Klee Wyck* today with a consciousness of the native community's struggle to reclaim their own stories, but also with a consciousness that *Klee Wyck* is Carr's own subjective story of how she experienced and was transformed by contact with native culture. The spirit of exchange which Carr encountered in her personal contact with natives reflected a willingness to give and take, but respectfully, and involved her in a strangely circular process of language, of naming and re-naming bringing her closer to the margins of her own culture.

The first gift to Carr from the natives is her new name, "Klee Wyck" and she will return it to them, in a manner of speaking, by titling the book, her story about them, with the same name. The dedication page shows Sophie's name, which is also a returned gift. When Sophie named the biggest and strongest of her newborn twins after "Em'ly" and they both died, Carr bought one gravestone while the mother bought the other (25-6). It may also be part of the chain or circle, that Carr, who was childless herself, has dedicated Klee Wyck to Sophie. A similar circle of support is formed by mourners in "The Blouse" around the dying woman: "Although the woman was childless and had no husband, she knew that the women of her tribe would make sorrow-noise for her when death came." (41) These stories of name-giving open onto the question of why so many natives bear white names and those appearing mostly on gravestones: Jenny, George, Rosie, Mary, Casamin, Tommy, and Orphan Lizzie, Mrs. Green and so on. The proliferation of white names speaks of assimilation, conquest, smallpox epidemics, something taken and then taken again rather than ever being given back. The signification of "Klee Wyck," on the other hand, is "Laughing One" which connotes sharing, understanding, and knowledge, the promise of a closer kind of contact achieved outside of verbalization in a universal space of feeling rather than designation, a space depicted in many scenes throughout *Klee Wyck* where the narrator and natives come together through laughter, gesture, "dumbtalk," "straight-talk," "strong-talk," and the reading of faces. Of all the redefinitions and reinterpretations is one especially intense moment, which I quoted earlier, where Carr comes to terms with the wildness of the totem goddess. We now know that one way in which she came to terms with that wildness is by inscribing a positive female identity onto a masculine ancestor, a transposition or marginal gender onto images of strength similar to the reclaiming of wilderness through redefinition. By renaming some of her new-

found positive knowledge of life, death, and the vast world of the forest "feminine," "female," and "maternal," Carr retrieved and reclaimed the power of subversive womanhood in herself.

But even as she captures some of the native past and of native stories throughout *Klee Wyck,* Carr stands respectfully back knowing there must be more living memory that remains out of her reach, too strong and bright, perhaps, for the linear narrative and the rational foreign language to hold: "Memories came out of this place to meet the Indians; you saw remembering in their brightening eyes and heard it in the quick hushed words they said to each other in Haida." (18) To Carr, the female figure is obviously a more spacious vessel for these memories. Mrs. Green, for example, is Sophie grown old beyond pain. A Mother Courage figure, she steps across time and cultural decline mythically, a simple planter of potatoes nonetheless:

> Whenever I saw that remarkable old woman, with her hoe and spade, starting off in her canoe to cultivate the potatoes she grew wherever she could find a pocket of earth on the little islands round about, I thought of the "tripples." If they had lived and had inherited her strength and determination, they could have rocked the Queen Charlotte Islands. (77)

When Carr returns to "civilization," however, the stories she has to tell of female strength do not seem comprehensible. They too, like native memories, are too large for the scope of language and concepts in the dominant discourse and would indeed have rocked the islands if they had been heard. Strangely though, the larger frames of reference of marginal realities have a way of shrinking or dissolving when the audience will not listen. The Mounted Police, for example, cannot seem to understand how Carr had been admitted to Kitwancool:

> "You have been in to Kitwancool?"
> "Yes."
> "How did the Indians treat you?"
> "Splendidly."
> "Learned their lesson, eh?" said the man. "We have had no end of trouble with those people — chased missionaries out and drove surveyors off with axes — simply won't have whites in their village. I would never have advised anyone going in — particularly a woman. No, I would certainly have said 'Keep out' " (107).

Carr had discovered other stories in the village however. Under the public story of the "hero-man," who was the chief's son and celebrated in the native community after being imprisoned as a "fierce, troublesome customer" in the white world, lay another story of power; it was not the chief but his wife, Mrs. Douse, who was the more important figure in the village, who made all the decisions, asked all the questions, and decided if the woman painter would be allowed to stay or not. Everyone, including the "hero-man" son deferred to her judgement. And then there was the story of the totem mothers holding their babies: "Womanhood was strong in Kitwancool." (102) Instead of revealing this muted story of female power

directly, Carr responds to the police officer's queries and advice simply, mysteriously, but somewhat rebelliously, reclaiming for "woman" the positive connotations she has learned in the forest, rather than the negative connotation of weakness that the white world falsely applies: " 'Then I am glad that I did not ask for your advice,' I said. 'Perhaps it is because I am a woman that they were so good to me'." (107)

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DOWN TO AGAWA

Wayne Keon

dancin thru that
old dimension
once

again called
fractured
time

nd space that's really
just the great
circle

on the northeast side
of superior
when

yellow nd amber mixed
with orange nd
red

floodin out everywhere
yuh looked nd
floatin

along alona bay
hangin near
the top

of that great mountain
great mountain
of mercy
takin

out my sadness
she took my sadness there
with the mist nd the clouds
like ashes comin down
on the wind
thru the pass

to agawa prayin
nd prayin nd raven
divin down
to the bay side of the rock cliff
hearin nothin but the breathin
nd the poundin
between the rocks
nd waves bangin
nd crashin up the canyon
shakin that dull roar all around

nd sacred paintings made
when dimensions meant nothin
nd blood meant nothin
nd time meant nothin
nd standin still
soakin in the power nd people of
so long ago

nd carter startin to shake
like that leaf
thrown on the ground
shakin there
in front of me

nd it starts openin up
she saw it openin up
saw it all openin up
that hole in the air
catchin superior days
clothed all
in gold
in gold
nd fine ojibway dust

BUILDING THE DOCK

Andrew Wreggitt

Malcolm Lowry's dock. Driving piles into the soft sea bottom, his madness rooting like a wild pig in kelp and broken shells. Malcolm standing, shirt off, pleased as hell, thinking he's made something enduring in the physical world. Skinny little hob nob of planks and nails, and it blew away too, as they all do, as he did. Evil little pig rooting in his skull, in spite of warm milk and tea cures, and promises, promises . . .

Us too, this summer, hammering like the just. Old friend and I side by side on the notched logs. Friends of sweet promise, friends of the fervent wish, of the faithless arm, the sure eye. Whack whack in hot sun and black flies, the plank, the nail, the hammer, the forearm, the shoulder, the back . . . Like Lowry healing with the sure feel of tools, the smell of newly sawn wood . . .

He was inconsolable when his dock wrenched loose and broke apart, traitorous sea that gives such hope and then cuts it away. This morning our own dock tipped into the lake, main log rotten in its heart and flooded. Wrecked on the murky bottom, gone, gone. Everything lost again and again in treachery. But what of it? Remember the hammer! The shoulder! The sure eye!

A HOUSE WITHOUT BOOKS

The Writer in Canadian Society

Tom Wayman

AN INCIDENT THAT BEST sums up for me what it means to be a writer in Canada occurred in the summer of 1986 when I was on holiday at the north end of Vancouver Island. I was taking the ferry from Port McNeill to Alert Bay, to visit the Indian museum there. On the deck of the ferry, standing by my car, I fell into a conversation with another driver. He was a fisherman, maybe in his mid-fifties, headed over to Alert Bay to pick up a net. He mentioned that his home port is Pender Harbor, on the Sunshine Coast north of Sechelt. Now Pender Harbor is not a large place, and happens to be the home of my friend, publisher and fellow poet Howard White. So I asked the fisherman if he knew Howie.

Howard White is somewhat of a legend in the B.C. literary world. By trade he is a heavy equipment operator, and still has the contract to manage the Pender Harbor dump. This means besides spending most of his time at his computer pushing large amounts of words around, he spends several hours a week at the controls of his bulldozer pushing large amounts of garbage around. And in addition to running his vital and thriving publishing house, Harbour Publishing, Howie edits the highly-successful magazine about the B.C. coast, *Raincoast Chronicles*. On the side, he is a well-received poet and his oral history books routinely appear on the B.C. best seller list.

But standing then on the deck of that ferry, I watched the eyes of the fisherman darken as I mentioned Howie's name. "Howie White?" the fisherman said, recoiling away from me. A certain tone entered his voice, the tone people reserve for talking about in-laws they despise, or child molesters. "Sure, I know him. Doesn't he *write*?"

This attitude of utter disdain expressed by the fisherman toward writing encapsulates for me the relationship of Canadian authors to their society. At best a Canadian writer is a marginal figure. But that marginality leads a majority of Canadians to view writers as people engaged in a socially unacceptable, if not perverse, activity.

Before I continue, though, let me quickly define my central terms. When I speak of a Canadian writer here, I mean writers of prose fiction, drama, or poetry. Also, when I speak of Canadian society, I refer here to mainstream English-language society. In my experience, literary authors associated with ethnic minorities have a different relationship to readers within that minority than they do to English-speaking Canadians as a whole. For instance, Andrew Suknaski is a nationally-recognized writer who has detailed in his poems the lives of Ukrainian settlers in rural Saskatchewan. Because of this, Suknaski's work has been received with enthusiasm by many members of the Ukrainian-Canadian community. But when Suknaski turns to address the general Canadian population, not as a representative of a minority but simply as a *poet*, he faces the same unease and scorn that greets the rest of Canada's literary practitioners.

Now since cultural values are transmitted by education, I believe a root cause of the marginal status accorded Canadian authors is our school system. One of the triumphs of mass public education in Canada is that we have been able to teach the overwhelming majority of people to read while simultaneously so turning them off reading that, once they are out of school, most never read a book again.

In my experience, a majority of people who endure our high school or university English classes do not afterwards regard reading books — and especially literary titles — as a means of enhancing their lives. Those few who do continue to read, mainly see literature as entertainment, fantasy, escape. I sometimes hear poetry mocked at as irrelevant because "hardly anyone reads poetry." As far as I can see, hardly anyone reads any kind of literature. In the course of my life, I go into house after house where there are *no books*. In the homes of many of my friends, although most of them at least finished high school, there are *no books* — of any kind.

When I taught in the early 1980s at David Thompson University Centre in Nelson, B.C., we set a little quiz for students entering the writing program in which, among other things, we asked if they could name three Canadian writers. Almost none could. And these were students who not only were interested enough in learning to seek post-secondary education, but were presumably interested enough in literature to enter a creative writing program. Most recently, I have been teaching at a community college in a Vancouver suburb. One of my assignments asks each of my students to give a presentation to their classmates on something they learned about how to write from their reading of a contemporary novel, book of short fiction, playscript or collection of poems. I find the response depressing. "But I don't *read*," is one protest I hear *every* term when I announce this assignment. Most students eventually choose to discuss the work of authors like the popular U.S. horror writer Stephen King. One student last term came up

to my desk clutching a newspaper clipping of a personal advice column by Ann Landers. The student inquired: "Is it okay if I do my presentation on this?"

I am convinced that by what we teach, we teach a system of values. If the majority of our population decides the reading of good literature is irrelevant to their lives, and looks with indifference or suspicion on those who produce literature, these are value judgements which Canadians have acquired through their schooling — since school is the *only* place most of us ever meet people whose job it is to try to show us the worth of literature.

When we examine most high school English curriculums, it is not difficult to see why students might conclude literature is pointless, boring or escapist. I worked some years ago in a suburban Vancouver high school as an English Department marker. The students whose papers I marked were bothered by the usual issues facing adolescents — and the rest of us — today: sex, drugs, family breakup, the uncertainty of long-range occupational goals, immediate employment opportunities in a province where the official unemployment rate is 10 per cent, and — if any work can be found — job conditions. The assigned novels for Grade 11 in those days were *The Lord of the Flies*, a science-fiction tale about a group of English schoolboys marooned on a tropical island during World War III, and *A Separate Peace*, about some boys at a private boarding school in rural New England during World War II. If you set out to *design* a reading curriculum more removed from contemporary suburban Canadian high school students' lives, you'd be hard pressed to come up with better titles. Plus, these students would write in their essays over and over again — presumably echoing or mis-echoing what they were taught in class — how *The Lord of the Flies* portrays a microcosm of human existence. I'd patiently scrawl across their papers: "But there are no *women* in that book."

For it was the women's movement that showed us that if in our teaching of literature we omit an accurate account of the experiences of women, we teach that those experiences have no value. My own mission as a writer has been to add that if in our teaching of literature we omit an accurate account of the experiences of daily work, we teach that such experiences have no value. Generations of Canadians have grasped that when the literature we are taught omits the experiences of Canadians — as a people who share a history and geography, as well as individuals who must function in a society and workforce organized in a particular way, then this literature teaches us our own experiences — past, present and future — have no value.

English classes where this literature is taught thus obliterate who we are and what we have so painfully managed to accomplish and to discover about our world. It's no wonder a majority of us don't want to pursue reading any further, except for

whatever escape from daily cares some reading offers. And no wonder we look with disbelief and contempt at anyone who wants to actually write *more* stuff that says we and our lives are worthless.

Let me hasten to acknowledge, however, that here and there in the educational system are English teachers who work very hard to right this great wrong. These marvellous women and men approach even the authorized curriculum with tremendous imagination and energy and often succeed in inspiring readers from among their students. Unfortunately, as house after house without books in Canada incontestably reveals, such teachers are definitely the exception. This very Monday, in educational institutions all across Canada, most students will be back learning that literature has nothing to do with them. Their only *possible* revenge is to have nothing to do with literature.

But the marginalization of Canadian writers is not solely caused by the schools. Canada in its twelve decades of existence has managed to transform itself from a colony of Britain into a colony of the U.S.A. Since one of the hallmarks of every colony is a lack of self-confidence, even if we *were* a nation of readers, we would be mainly readers of British and American books.

I can still get a rueful laugh in high school classrooms I visit when I talk about how when I was a young student I thought poetry was something written by dead Englishmen. My sense is that the curriculum in poetry hasn't changed all that much. Many of my literature professors at the University of B.C. were live Englishmen, or Canadians who thought like Englishmen. I can still remember the comment of one when a fellow student raised a question to do with U.S. authors. "*American* literature?" the professor sneered. "Ah, yes. I really must sit down and read it some *afternoon*." You can well imagine this professor's attitude toward *Canadian* literature.

And to demonstrate the present economic and cultural power of the behemoth we live beside, one anecdote should do. On the same holiday trip I referred to earlier, I was camped for a time on a beach on northern Vancouver Island's west coast, at San Josef Bay. After about a week, we had to hike out for more food, and so headed for the nearest store, at Holberg. Holberg, though nominally a village, really is a large logging camp, but the camp commissary serves as the grocery for the region.

Looking for something to read, I discovered in the Holberg commissary a wire rack of novels, such as is found in urban drugstores or supermarkets. Inserted into a holder on the top of the rack was a computer-generated printout listing the current week's best-sellers as compiled by the *New York Times*.

Such is the awesome might of U.S. industry, that they can supply the Holberg commisary, many kilometres in the bush at the northern tip of Vancouver Island, with the list of what someone in New York City has determined *that same week* to be the latest best sellers. What's more, most of these U.S. best sellers were available

in the commissary. I don't have to tell you that the list did not include any Canadian books, nor that a list of current B.C. or Canadian best sellers was not posted at Holberg. I don't have to tell you that there were no Canadian books of any kind for sale in the Holberg commissary.

PEOPLE ARE SOMETIMES shocked by the economic consequences of this marginalization of the Canadian writer. Sales of Canadian literary titles are for the most part staggeringly low. A novel typically will sell about 2,000 copies in hardback over a couple of years. If the novel sells for, say, $22.95 and the author gets the standard royalty of 10 per cent, the writer earns about $4,600 from his or her creation — over two years. "But what about Margaret Atwood?" people sometimes object. "She gets six-figure advances." Okay. But according to a 1985 *Financial Post* survey, out of the dozens of novels by Canadians published in Canada each year, only *five* will reach sales of 5,000 copies — the mark of a Canadian best-seller. Priced at $22.95 those 5,000 copies will net each of those five, extremely rare, best-selling Canadian fiction authors the glorious sum of $11,500 before taxes. That $11,500 is not much for the amount of time, thought and energy a novel takes to produce. And it certainly isn't adequate to live on.

The numbers for poetry sales are of course worse. An ordinary Canadian book of poems will sell about 400 copies a year. At a retail price of $8.95, that brings the author the grand total of $358 for her or his creativity, sweat and tears.

In fairness, I should mention that the determination and know-how that enables the U.S. book industry to service the Canadian hinterlands where the Canadian book industry apparently is unable to go does not mean the average American author is better off economically than a Canadian one. *Publishers' Weekly* reported in 1981 a survey of U.S. literary and non-literary writers that concluded "figures for authors from households of varying size suggest that writing income places most authors below the poverty line." In fact, despite the articles on rich and famous writers in *People* magazine, *Publishers' Weekly* reported only five per cent of U.S. authors can support themselves from their writing. This is partly because, although the U.S. population is 10 times larger than the Canadian one, most books in the U.S. do not sell 10 times better than their counterparts in Canada. For example, a book of poems in the U.S. usually sells about 1,000 copies and can sell as few as the equivalent book in Canada. Most novels, also, don't do much better in the U.S. than here. A 1980 survey of U.S. children's book authors who had been writing for 20 years or more found half of them earned less than $1,000 a year from their writing, and two-thirds earned less than $5,000 a year from their writing.

As in Canada, writers in the U.S. have no safety net of income indemnity plans, extended health care programs, or other job benefits. Concerning pensions, James

Lincoln Collier, who wrote the 1981 *Publishers' Weekly* article I mentioned, makes a ghoulish observation. He points out that a successful writer's best hope for retirement is to fall face down over his or her keyboard from a heart attack while his or her markets are still holding up.

In the U.S., as here, most authors must support themselves by working at another job as well as writing. Like anyone in the workforce who moonlights, authors who have two jobs often seriously damage their ability to relate meaningfully to other human beings — threatening both family and social life, and negatively influencing the message of what these authors write. In Canada, as in the U.S., a network of public and private granting agencies provides some additional writing-related revenue for authors. But none of it, save an occasional grant providing subsistence income for up to 12 months, fundamentally alters the writers' economic status. In this country, the Canada Council provides support for public readings by authors, and organizes payment to writers for the use of their books by libraries. Yet both of these programs have financial caps: readings are limited by the Council to seven a year, or $1,400 maximum annually, and the library use payment is capped at $3,000 a year. Very few authors receive the maximum in these programs. Once again, the economic marginalization of the Canadian writer is in no way changed by such government aid.

IF THINGS ARE SO BLEAK for writers in Canada — sociologically, culturally, economically — why do any of us continue to write? I think each of us finds a satisfactory answer, or stops writing. For myself, I observe that although only a few people make a living and/or are considered culturally significant because they can dance, nevertheless millions of Canadians enjoy getting out on the dance floor. A similar observation can be made of people who, for example, fly kites or play guitar.

I believe writing, for at least this Canadian author, is no different than kite-flying or guitar-playing is for someone to whom kite-flying or guitar-playing has become a central part of their existence. In such circumstances, building and flying kites represents more than a hobby, although not a livelihood either. Rather, the challenges and sense of accomplishment kite-flying provides approach being an obsession. I have written elsewhere of why I am convinced what I have to say as a writer is important — even if no one is listening. I am fascinated, too, by the difficulty of trying to express myself in a manner that delights a reader while it acquaints that reader with information I believe is crucial. This is a task that seems unquestionably worth a lifetime of struggle, of small achievements and large defeats, even if this is a battle about which a majority of my fellow citizens couldn't care less.

MANAGING

Ron Miles

In this dream too I am surrounded
by work. Towers of paper lean
in my direction, a familiar mob
besieges my office, demanding more.
Phones trill computers beep, mail descends
on uneven ground, secretaries announce emergent
appointments, a squadron of bombers
appears above the credenza.

Luckily I am efficient
banishing obese proposals to the files
unread, scattering electronic mail
for department heads who didn't want
to know, dictating mixed messages
to those who cannot read
glancing at contracts before signing
kicking at a pit of unmade decisions
speed calling my wife every third day
to say I love you and will be a little late
again for Christmas.

In this dream the latest surprise
is a baby in a briefcase
naked, wrinkled, clean
and warm to the touch.
I suspect she is my granddaughter
but don't have time to find out.

THE NEXT FATHER

David P. Reiter

With three fathers already
who needs a fourth?

The first father drives you home
every other Friday — the flat's set mostly
for two. His lover's young as a sister;

she wants to practise on you, unweb
those dark patches under your eyes.
Your room has joy sticks and a flickering
screen where you can take evasive action
from dragon questions of what you've done
since this father's last arid interrogation.
Cornered, you shrug, tell them nothing's
happened, of course school's just the same.
His lover's patient, doesn't want to push,
but her garden is only for his seeds.
You feel her earth warming your feet
though your marrow dries in the wind.

The second father purchased a mansion
and let your mother in. It had a sprawling
master bedroom, another he dispensed
to you. His mind was sharp as blue ice
and for years she spun on his forehead
like a dizzy toy. To deflect his white glare
she had to shrink into fissures creasing
her nightmares. Still you loved the way
he smouldered her with words of snow
and you flayed her with his contempt
if she crossed you. The night she finally
beat him it was more for you than herself.
Her anger frightened him so he quavered
then vanished like a doused flame.

You thought the third father the best,
a brother who played footie with you.
And he was sensitive, knew he'd write
fine poetry one day if only your mother
could channel his dark moods into sparks.
For some months, she was content to spill
her blood to distil love from adolescence
but he was too infatuated with his pain
and her nipples grew raw and tender.
She weaned him with a book by Shelley
and dismissed him with a motherly kiss.

Is it any wonder then when I walk in
you sit in the corner jangling keys?

GENIUS LOCI

The Ghost in Canadian Literature

J. M. Kertzer

Earle Birney's Ghost

BIRNEY'S POETIC BARB, "Can. Lit.," ends with a familiar but still revealing puzzle about Canadian character: "It's only by our lack of ghosts we're haunted." Unlike America, Canada casts no heroic shadows, because our bland citizens lack the historical traumas and the responsive imagination to expose the dreams on which the nation was built or to name its presiding ghost. Our ghost should serve — as Wordsworth advises in "Tintern Abbey" — as "The anchor of [our] purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of [our] heart, and soul / Of all [our] moral being." But the Canadian guardian spirit finds its home too vast and too vacant to fill with images. We have no totemic eagle, only "æromantic hens" — Birney's ungainly phrase probably aimed at poets of the Canadian Authors' Association.

Ironically, according to Birney's paradox we actually are haunted, but only by a palpable absence that identifies, not ourselves, but our peculiar identity crisis. His warning that foreign fancy ("æromantic") cannot cope with Canada conceals his own romantic assumptions. Wordsworth's reassuring tone might be more appropriate to the Wye valley than to the Mackenzie or St. Lawrence, but his effort to touch a spiritual source in "nature and the language of the sense" corresponds to Birney's search for genius and genesis, that is, for the origins of a Canadian *genius loci*. As W. H. New explains, Birney charts the nation's sensibility as it emerges from the wilderness, attains self-consciousness and defines itself through art; but in "a kind of cosmic joke" he finds "nada" within "Canada," silence within our national speech. "Silence and absence become curiously positive virtues," New concludes (260, 266).

Birney's ghost-of-a-ghost is a curious virtue of literary criticism whenever it strives to be specifically Canadian. My purpose is not to characterize the ghost, but to show how its spectral presence haunts the project of defining a national literature. As a spectre of thought, the ghost cannot be captured, but it cannot be exorcised

either. Entrapment and exorcicsm are both necessary yet impossible; they are complementary needs that arise whenever critics investigate what precisely is national about a national literature. We — the community of Canadian readers — trust that "Canadian literature" exists as a viable object of study, but what historical and conceptual expectations do we bring to the project of defining a literature peculiar to our country? In addressing this question, I intend to look back at critics who have fallen from favour, although I will conclude by glancing to the future. I also limit myself to writing in English, although many of my points apply with greater intensity to Québécois writing.

If English-Canadians have a national discourse, what are its unifying principles? Unity is difficult to find in Canadian literature, yet we cannot avoid looking for it because, like Birney's ghost, it is a necessary illusion, a figment that delineates our imagination. By way of contrast consider "The Englishness of the English Novel," an essay in which Q. D. Leavis has no trouble identifying "the true English spirit" as pragmatic, sympathetic, Protestant, wary of absolutes and responsive to "the Shakespearian 'fullness of life' " (311-15). She delights in all that is "very English," but what is remarkable is her own display of "Englishness." It appears in her national pride, in her mistrust of continental Europe, and in her utter confidence that she speaks from the very heart of her culture. The English novel is great because it both draws on and reinforces this centre. Consequently, the merits of particular novels reflect their relation to the central tradition, since the best novels are also the most authentic. Canadians can supply a comparable list of national attributes; Richard M. Coe offers a useful summary. What is lacking in Canadian criticism, for good or ill, is Leavis's confidence in a shared national character and in the centrality of her critical view. I grant that her apparently secure position is actually unstable. She and F. R. Leavis often regarded the critic as an outcast antagonistic to industrial culture, and the Leavises became withdrawn and idiosyncratic in their attitudes (points made by Francis Mulhern in *The Moment of Scrutiny*). Nevertheless, they defend an English tradition that is great in part because it is national, or whose greatness is national in character. It is far more difficult to define a great Canadian tradition and to speak from its centre.

The difficulty in determining how much diversity a national literature can tolerate is itself revealing. Critics such as John Metcalf or John Moss (more recently in "Bushed in the Sacred Wood") reject the national question as a dead end. But even if they could assert standards which were "purely" literary, they still must respond to Leavis's claim that literary merit and authenticity are reciprocal. A national literature helf creates and half perceives. It expresses our temperament; it casts and recasts our history; it speaks for the spirit(s) of the nation. Frank Watt sums up the chief aspiration of a national literature to unite spirit and place:

> Literature is then seen as a force which, quite apart from its motives, contributes to the articulation and clarification of Canadians' consciousness of themselves and

> of the physical, social and moral context in which they live their lives. . . .Canadian writers help to bring alive the shared history, limitations, fulfilments, virtues and depravities which make at least some Canadians feel related to each other and to their land. (236-237)

We can detect Birney's ghostly ghost in Watt's assertion that literature calls into articulate form something that lies "quite apart from" its immediate motives. Its ulterior purpose is to call forth a broad consciousness, which clarifies all aspects of our "shared" life, and which must be elicited by sensitive reading. Note the distinction proposed between the immediate matter of literature and its underlying moral ("virtues and depravities") consciousness. This duality of place and spirit recurs in some form in all accounts of national literature.

SPIRIT AND PLACE combine in the genius loci. It is a "genius" in the Latin sense of guardian spirit, which was associated ambiguously, according to C. S. Lewis, with both the universal, generative God, and the specific *daimon* of any person. The spiritual double later came to represent the poetic self of a writer (169). Genius is both general ("Genius") and particular ("genius"), but in either case it is a fertile power. The *genius loci* was the deity who presided over a given place, whether a sacred grove or an entire country, and who gave it its distinctive character and energy. When modern critics try to pinpoint what joins spirit to place, they are apt to be less mystical but more vague. George Orwell explains the Englishness of the English by referring to the "air," "flavour" and "*mystique*" of the nation. "Something" "somehow" grants an "emotional unity" by which the "nation is bound together by an invisible chain" (64, 74, 77). Orwell is far from mystical when he confesses the impalpable nature of what he is trying to capture. He has a very practical sense of the deceptions involved in defining a national spirit, which may just as well be based on compelling illusions (71). Still, he trusts that the illusions are shared throughout Britain, that they unify the country and that they colour its national character.

When Birney seeks a Canadian genius, he is closer to Orwell than to Leavis. He is far less confident, however, about the spiritual unity of his country, and registers his uncertainty in what we might call his anti-romantic romanticism. He wants to demystify the pretensions of "æromantic" verse, but only because he seeks a more earthy and authentic mystery. The implications of his pursuit parallel those in René Wellek's explanation of the growth of "romantic historicism" in mid-twentieth century American criticism:

> It is ultimately derived from the body of ideas developed by [Johann Gottfried von] Herder and his successors, who looked for the organicity and continuity of literature as an expression of the national spirit, the folk. . . . Many recent critics are con-

> cerned with defining the nature of the American, the Americanism of American literature, often only dimly aware of how much is common to man, modern man, and common to Europe and America (333).

Wellek also notes that the quasi-mystical tendencies of Herder's philosophy were "assimilated to the prevailing rationalist or pragmatist temper of the nation and certainly were rarely pushed to their irrationalist and often obscurantist extremes" (333).

Romantic Historicism and the National Spirit

According to Herder, humanity is divided by fate and choice into distinct geographical/cultural units or *Völker* (nationalities). Frank E. Manuel comments:

> The history of the world for Herder is the history of these *Völker*, their formation as a consequence of the interpenetration of their physical environment and their being, their creation of a mythic cosmology, a music, and a poetry, above all, a language. The union of their original nature, their genius, and the environment reaches a climax in a form-giving moment — it is not quite clear whether this is the discovery of religious or of linguistic identity. But nothing static results. The process of change is continuous as long as the people is alive. (xvii)

Human identity is national in character, because its basis is cultural, historical and collective rather than individual. Identity derives from place, genius, tradition and language, and its highest expression is in religion and the arts (Barnard 7ff.).[1] Birney's satire depends on the comical mishap that Canada's "form-giving moment" has failed to yield a recognizable shape, but in a further irony, his rueful, self-mocking pleasure expresses the Canadian temper he has failed to identify. Although Herder emphasizes language as the key influence, Canadian critics stress place and genius as the physical and spiritual factors appropriate to their nation. Viewed in Herder's terms, Northrop Frye's riddle expressing Canadian perplexity, "Where is here?" (220) takes on a deeper resonance. It refers, not just to the disorientation of the pioneer, or to psychological confusion about identity, but to an unsettling metaphysical plight.

This plight arises because Herder's philosophical idealism is so stubbornly thwarted by Canadian experience. Herder treats mind as the determining reality behind the phenomena of nature and nation. The creative national moment produces a spiritual form, a ghost. Material conditions are decisive, but only because they predispose the growth of mind. Herder speaks of the "*spirit of climate*," which "does not force, but incline: it gives the imperceptible disposition, which strikes us indeed in the general view of the life and manners of indigenous nations" (Herder 20). Literature, at a further remove, is an epi-phenomenon, a network of symbols that give tangible expression to an intangible spirit. Literature is the voice of a people, the highest expression of their history, society and self.

Shifting from German to English romanticism, we find that Thomas Carlyle also treats literature as the "genius" or "national mind" (168, 170) of a country:

> Thus the History of a nation's Poetry is the essence of its History, political, economic, scientific, religious. With all these the complete Historian of a national Poetry will be familiar; the national physiognomy, in its finest traits, and through its successive stages of growth, will be clear to him: he will discern the grand spiritual Tendency of each period, what was the highest Aim and Enthusiasm of mankind in each, and how one epoch naturally evolved itself from the other. He has to record the highest Aim of a nation, in its successive directions and developments; for by this the Poetry of the nation modulates itself; this *is* the Poetry of the nation. (166)

National poetry with its noble physiognomy is the ancestor of Birney's faceless ghost. For Carlyle, reality is spirit (essence), made forceful through will (Aim and Enthusiasm), which in turn shapes the physical world to spiritual ends. History is *Geistesgeschichte*: the perfecting of mind as it leads — according to Hegel — toward self-realization and freedom. For Hegel, too, the course of history, although essentially a spiritual progress, depends materially on a sequence of cultures, all rooted in their own "soil" (80), which nourishes their national genius.[2] Poetry is the voice of their genius and of their history. In Hegel we also find the idea, so seductive that it becomes domineering, that "each particular National genuis is to be treated as only One Individual in the process of Universal History" (53). Since a country is united by a national mind, it can be treated as a single person. The United States becomes Uncle Sam. Canada is more difficult to define, but that difficulty is itself appropriated by the Hegelian model. Canada and its literature are commonly characterized according to a "lexicon of maturation" (Weir 24), by which the country is pictured as a youth striving for self-consciousness.[3]

NINETEENTH-CENTURY romantic historicism appears in Canada in Edward Hartley Dewart's introduction to *Selections from Canadian Poets*:

> The literature of the world is the foot-prints of human progress . . . A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character. It is not merely the record of a country's mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy. It may be fairly questioned, whether the whole range of history presents the spectacle of a people firmly united politically, without the subtle but powerful cement of a patriotic literature. (ix)

Once again, the nation is conceived of as a single intellect, which shares in the mental progress of humanity but leaves its own foot-prints in its own soil. The idealism is less exuberant than Carlyle's, but it is sustained by Dewart's enthusiasm for Confederation. He stresses the unity of a new country which, he acknowledges later in the same paragraph, already has a "tendency to sectionalism and disinte-

gration" (x). His insistence on union, however, is not merely political; or rather, his politics derive from a view of history that regards Canada as a single mind with its own "national character" and "mental progress." Although some of his terms may sound quaint to us today, they are not so different from Watt's, quoted earlier. It is remarkable how often Dewart's ideas recur in different guises whenever Canadian criticism becomes nationalistic, if not openly patriotic. One implication of my argument is that literature conceived in national terms must always be nationalistic, and will tend to draw on the romantic figures enunciated by Dewart.

The quoted passages illustrate a current of thought that sweeps from Europe to North America, with Hippolyte Adolphe Taine's *History of English Literature* (1864) offering the strongest defense of the environmental/national thesis in literature. Dewart reveals, however, that romantic historicism cannot cope with the material diversity of Canada, which challenges the theory's devotion to spiritual unity. Herder notes the essential unity of all humanity (5), a unity expressed differently in the many *Völker*, which in turn display a more specific unity determined by place, language and tradition: "For every nation is one people, having its own national form, as well as its own language" (7). Despite his studious attention to physical conditions of climate and geography, Herder ultimately relies on idealism to secure the indispensable unity of a nation. The great goal of organic unity, which runs through romantic theories, depends on spirit as an invigorating energy. A *Volk* shares not just a country, but a spirit of place and a spirit of climate. Thus the motto of the United States, *E pluribus unum*, announces a political determination to make one out of many. While the individuality of Americans is certainly respected, their motto expresses a common spirit of liberty, which is a liberty to be the same, to share the same national dreams. Herder emphasizes that spiritual unity is ultimately transcendental: the "national mind" is shared by all citizens; or in the loftier Hegelian view, it is a fragment of the Universal Spirit of History. This idealist principle ensures that there will always be a ghost — a spiritual ideal that confers unity — haunting a national literature.

Birney's ghost-of-a-ghost expresses Canadians' wariness of national unity and its idealized forms. To Herder, who disapproved of centralized government, colonialism and "cultural miscegenation" (Manuel xxi), Canada would be an anomaly, a land without a ghost. Because its anomalous position has persisted since 1867, however, it casts doubt on the theory that it infringes. In defiance of Herder, Canada has remained intact (so far) even though its climate and terrain are diverse, its regions are openly antagonistic, and its two main language groups compete with other ethnic traditions. In defiance of Herder, some historians argue that Canadians are actually united by their differences, because they share "particularist habits of mind" (Careless 8).[4] This curious drama appears in Dewart's complaint about "sectionalism and disintegration" at the very moment of Confederation. Nevertheless, he is pressed by his concern for a national literature to insist on a common

spirit nourished by poetry and rooted in a native soil. The best Canadian literature must be "autochthonous," Charles Mair exhorted in 1875; it "must grasp with its roots, and be nourished by, the inner and domestic life of the people. . . . [it] must taste of the wood, and be the genuine product of the national imagination and invention" (152). Unfortunately, this earthy ideal has spiritual sources that fit awkwardly into the realities of Canadian history and literature, with the result that we often find critical ambitions torn by conflicting impulses.

Canadian Criticism and the Genius Loci

Early Canadian critics like Mair found the local soil unsuited to their hopes for a transplanted literature conceived according to the romantic model. Romantic historicism leaves a rich legacy of glorious but unfulfilled promises, which I have summed up in the figure of the ghost-of-a-ghost. The ghost will continue to haunt Canadian criticism as long as we conceive of our literature as the national voice of a *genius loci*. I am not recommending that we reject this literary model, only that we recognize its problematic nature. The following topics are all expressions of the problem.

1. Critical Vocabulary

Romantic historicism bequeaths a legacy of images that we can hardly resist, because they seem so natural, but that are tendentious and unreliable. When we trace them to their idealist origins, we see why they are inconsistent in a Canadian context. For example, I have already used the metaphor of "transplanting" to describe the growth of Canadian literature. It is one of many figures derived from a vocabulary of soil, roots, fertility and cultivation. Imagery of organic process is compelling in the double sense that it imposes itself on us, so that we use it without question; and that it conveys comforting assumptions about the relation between literature, spirit and place.

Wilfred Eggleston is the critic who, in *The Frontier and Canadian Letters*, most fully develops the figure of transplanting: he explains how difficult it was to uproot, transport and transplant European culture in a new cultural soil (23ff., 28ff.).[5] What begins as a helpful analogy gradually works its way so thoroughly into the texture of his argument, that the tropes of planting, nurturing and flowering take on the force of literal statement. When he seeks the "working laws or principles" (18) of cultural transplantation, he moves beyond physical and cultural conditions, which he documents carefully, into a philosophy of history. That philosophy proceeds by extending the gardening analogy, even though it was adopted only as a working hypothesis (23). A figure of speech has turned into a theory of cultural growth. In Herder's theory, "soil" denotes not just place, but the spirit of place. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Eggleston revealing his idealist premises in such phrases as ,"The climate of spiritual values is an intangible factor"

(38) and "a shift to such cultural, intellectual social and spiritual values as may feed the spirit" (55).

Eggleston is betrayed by his own vocabulary. A "strictly *native* literature" (2) must derive from the spirit of the frontier, not from the colonial spirit. But the frontier spirit proves to be positively anti-literary and anti-imaginative: "The adverse influence of frontier life, in short, was capable not only of blocking the emergence of native artists, but also of killing off the literary ambitions of experienced writers among the immigrants" (73). At this point the argument becomes circular. "Inspiration" cannot come from abroad; as the word implies, it must be breathed in from the local atmosphere. Unfortunately the *genius loci* remains breathless until Canada is transformed into "an organic outgrowth of Western European culture" (30), in which case the genius is not local at all. A truly Canadian art is impossible.[6] One solution to the dilemma is proposed by Douglas Le Pan in "A Country without Mythology" in the hidden figure of Manitou, the unrecognized spirit of place. By shifting mythology, Le Pan reinstates the romantic genius in native dress. This tactic is used at much greater length by D. G. Jones in *Butterfly on Rock*. But Eggleston has explicitly refused this avenue: "the spirit and philosophy of the new North American society was to be European, certainly not Indian, or anything else" (30).

2. Genius as Genesis

Romantic historicism bequeaths to national literatures the duty to rediscover and celebrate their origins, a duty that is bound to puzzle Canadians whose origins are so diverse. Genius should be genetic — another term favoured by Herder — in the sense that it identifies a nation according to its moment of birth. Arguing against Eggleston's frontier thesis is "The Case of the Missing Face," an essay in which Hugh Kenner notes wryly that the "surest way to the hearts of a Canadian audience is to inform them that their souls are to be identified with rock, rapids, wilderness, and virgin (but exploitable) forest" (203). He condemned this "half-conscious self-identification with the aboriginal wilderness-tamers" (204) as a hindrance to mature literature, and urged Canadians to "cut the umbilical cord to the wilderness" (207). But the imagery of genesis and originality, which he employs in mockery, actually reveals a national duty that Canadian writers and critics cannot ignore.

I REALIZE THAT MANY CRITICS propose a pursuit of origins as the phantom goal of literature. Virtually any theory concerned with repetition, that is, with literature conceived as a process of renewal and rebellion, will find expression in the endless quest for origins. From the vantage of national literature,

however, origin means Herder's form-giving moment, the creative instant when spirit and place first join. If a writer can touch the native spirit at its moment of genesis when it broods over the virgin soil, then the two competing aspects of genius described by C. S. Lewis will harmonize: the writer's individual genius (talent, vision, inspiration) will merge with the national Genius and give it voice. Accordingly, Canadian writers often feel, or are encouraged by their critics to feel, that they have a duty to rediscover the land as if for the first time. They must be imaginative pioneers. Margaret Atwood invokes Susanna Moodie, and turns her into the spirit of the land she once detested. Margaret Laurence appeals to Catherine Parr Traill, George Bowering to George Vancouver. Jack Hodgins reinvents Vancouver Island. As Barry Cameron notes (111-2), attempts to define a Canadian tradition usually take the form of hunting for a source, which will create "Canada" as a unified, cultural presence, and which will authorize a legitimate line of descent. Numerous poets have followed Archibald Lampman into the woods, not only because they were heeding Wordsworth's advice, but because they reinterpreted Wordsworth's guardian spirit as the *genius loci.*

Critical studies such as *Survival, Patterns of Exile* and *The Wacousta Syndrome* are committed to the same belief. When Atwood says in *Survival* that for the sake of argument she will treat all literary works "as though they were written by Canada" (12), her off-hand remark conceals a grand assumption, which is sustained by the same rhetorical ploy that turned America into Uncle Sam. She asserts rather than proves the psychological unity of her subject: Canada is to be treated as a single person, a patient whose neuroses take the form of literature. Arguing on this basis, she can then track to its colonial and Calvinist sources the *genius loci,* or as she calls it, "the Canadian psyche" (73). Similarly, when McGregor studies the Canadian "langscape," she devises a composite word to probe the point of fusion, not only between subject and object, but between land and language, place and spirit. To describe the peculiarly Canadian qualities of this encounter, she too returns to Frye's garrison and Richardson's *Wacousta,* where she detects the genesis of the Canadian imagination. The same border-line confrontation, she suggests, must be repeated by subsequent writers as they re-enact the primal discovery of the land. True, McGregor is no idealist; she analyzes the encounter in cultural, psychological and ideological terms. But directing these terms in all their manifestations is a Canadian frame of mind genetically shaped by frontier and colony.

3. Merit and Authenticity

For Q. D. Leavis, the literary merits of the best English novels are inseparable from their accuracy in expressing the Englishness of England. Individual talent, æsthetic skill and national character harmonize perfectly. She never worries that cultural and creative values might drift apart, so that poor novels might perversely

be more authentic than good ones. Canadian critics hope for the same balance, but they find authenticity a problem, because it is another name for the national ghost. Frye begins his "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* by praising the volume for treating weaker writers who nevertheless are truly Canadian. The greatest literature "pulls us away from the Canadian context toward the centre of literary experience itself" (214). Canadians lack such classics, he admits, but in the meantime our literature, precisely because it is inferior, gives us a clearer view of the "Canadian context." For Leavis, merit and authenticity reinforce each other; for Frye, they tug in different directions.

A better example of the conflict occurs in Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country*. Beginning with the orthodox assumption that place and spirit are intimately and eloquently allied, Harrison examines dozens of western novels in order to identify the prairie mentality. At first he prefers writing which is authentic: "From a *purely literary standpoint*, the work of Begg, Hayes, and MacLean is no more accomplished than that of Mackie, Ballantyne, or 'Zero,' but it shows a certain promise which was not fulfilled in the writing that followed. The early "realists' documentary impulse might have provided a base from which an *authentically western regional literature* could have risen . . ." (66, my emphasis). The first group are not better writers, but they are more realistic and accurate. Elsewhere, however, Harrison shifts ground when his evidence threatens to lead to the wrong conclusion. Of the many early novels examined, he judges only a few to be valuable, even though they are not typical. Most novels are romantic, optimistic and sentimental, whereas the few important ones are pessimistic, tragic and (more or less) realistic. Because the evidence does not seem to bear out the theory, Harrison must change the basis of his judgment. To defend the authors whom he prefers (Grove, Ross), he shifts his critical ground from authenticity to literary merit, and the tension between the two standards is, to my mind, not resolved.

The problem is all too familiar. We often study authors whom we do not consider particularly "good," but who are "important" in historical or cultural terms. Canons and standards of excellence are now the subject of much critical debate, and this unease with objective standards should alert us to the difficulty of aligning the true (authenticity) and the beautiful (merit), especially when we limit ourselves to Canadian truth and Canadian beauty. John Metcalf comes to mind as someone who would sweep away all inferior writers. More diplomatically, John Moss distinguishes between the conflicting demands of æsthetic excellence and thematic validity, and calls for a return to the former: "It is time now that Canadian literary criticism serve the literature itself, time to stop considering literature a map of our collective consciousness; a mirror of our personality; a floodlight illuminating the national sensibility. It is time to consider Canadian literature as literature and not another thing ("Bushed" 175-6). The trouble is that as long as the literature in question is specifically Canadian and "not another thing," then we

cannot make so clear a distinction. Moss's final phrase (echoing T. S. Eliot), which calls for a formalist purity of æsthetic and critical response, sounds nostalgic. His assurance that "Nationality must be recognized as having more to do with nationalism than with art" (176), ignores the tenacity of romantic historicism.

4. Nationalism

As we have seen, for Herder, the unity of a nation is spiritual in nature. A fragmented country like Canada, which he would not consider a true nation at all, is far too jumbled to achieve authentic unity or to speak in a single, literary voice. Jacques Derrida insists further that for *all* philosophies, whether idealist or materialist, unity of any kind ultimately must be recognized as spiritual essence. Unity is a spectral projection of the mind, as it wanders through the labyrinth of language.[7] Therefore the *genius loci* is bound to reappear whenever writers get nationalistic or stress the political unity of the country.

Its resurgence is apparent even in the writing of history. In his survey of Canadian historiography, Carl Berger detects an oscillation between idealist and materialist theories, and notes that at times of intense nationalism, idealist views reappear and take on a romantic tone. On the one hand we find historians like Frank Underhill and Harold Innis who insist on the "material realities" of staples, markets, technology and political institutions (98), because they mistrust the way constitutional historians rely on patriotic but impalpable matters of spirit, sentiment and moral union (96). On the other hand we find the Canadian ghost re-emerging in Berger's characterization of Arthur Lower's "pantheistic feeling for the mystery of the forest" (115) which extends to an obsession with Canadian unity and the " 'national soul' " (125).[8] Similarly Berger notes the assumption made by the Massey Commission in 1951 "that there were important spiritual resources in the nation that inspired its people and prompted their actions, and that national unity, while resting on material foundations, belonged ultimately to the realm of ideas" (179).

A BETTER EXAMPLE for our purposes is provided by W. L. Morton. He argues that geography and settlement have given Canada "a distinct, a unique, a northern destiny" (4), which pervades all aspects of Canadian culture from manners, to politics, to literature. Like Herder, Morton insists on physical conditions, especially the ruggedness of our "perpetual" frontier (72), but he accounts for the unifying force of environment by appealing to spiritual qualities: "The line which marks off the frontier from the farmstead, the wilderness from the baseland, the hinterland from the metropolis, runs through evey Canadian psyche" (93). After asserting that Canadians share in the native spirit of their land, Morton, like Eggleston, proceeds to reverse his perspective. He argues that the same rugged,

hinterland conditions which forged our national identity, also made the country utterly dependent on foreign metropolitan centres. Subservience is pervasive and has shaped all aspects of Canadian life:

> That is, the whole culture of the northern and maritime frontier, to succeed as well as survive, required from outside a high religion, a great literature, and the best available science and technology to overcome its inherent limitations. These very limitations of climate and of material and human resources made the frontier dependent on a metropolitan culture for those essentials. The alternatives were extinction or complete adaptation to the lowest level of survival in northern conditions. (94)

All the "high," "great" and "best" cultural features, which previously were indigenous, now are transplanted. For Morton as for Eggleston, native (i.e. Indian) values prove to be unacceptable. Both authors are describing a historical process rather than a static condition, a progressive shift in authority and autonomy from Europe to Canada. But what are shifting are the very cultural values that, they earlier claimed, should spring naturally from the local soil.

5. History as Myth as History

The *genius loci* is not just the spriit of place, but the spirit of the history and culture of that place. Because the figure blends spirit with matter, the ideal with the actual, it readily expresses how myth informs history, how history strives to rise into myth, and how myth in turn lapses into history. It used to be common for English Canadians to lament that somehow they had no history or myth. Birney's poem, "Can.Lit.," expresses both the dilemma and the romanticism that provokes the discontent. Such complaints have dwindled but not disappeared, even in the present, post-national age.[9] I would argue, on the contrary, that our vexed desire for a national literature has obsessed us with history and myth, which we produce in abundance, since they offer the two main discourses for interpreting national identity. They provide two ways of identifying — or failing to identify — the Canadian ghost. The two styles dominating literary criticism until recently have been historical and mythological. As Barry Cameron's chapter in the fourth volume of the *Literary History of Canada* reveals, most of the studies published before Frye are literary and cultural histories; following Frye, we find a varied mixture of history and mythology.

I do not wish to enter the long debate between history and myth, only to observe that Canadian critics are inevitably tossed between the two, depending on whether they regard the *genius loci* as immanent or transcendent, that is, within or beyond the patterns of history. I noted in the previous section how historical studies drift towards idealism and even myth; Donald Creighton's "Laurentian thesis" is a prime example. The reverse is true as well: in literature, myth often lapses into history. Works like *Tay John* and *The Donnelly Trilogy* trace a fall from an age of

heroes to an age of mundane reality. Instead of apotheosis, we find *Götterdämmerung*. The arguments, shuttling back and forth between history and myth, recall René Wellek's observation that the mystical and irrationalist tendencies of Herder's philosophy were assimilated to the rationalist temper of America. A similar caution has caused Canadian critics to treat myth in the cool, orderly way that Frye does; or to keep it at a cautious narrative distance, as in Rudy Wiebe's treatment of Indians and Métis; or to convert myth to parody, as in Robert Kroetsch's novels.

Kroetsch has said in conversation: "I have considerable disdain or distrust for history. History is a form of narrative that is coercive. I don't trust the narrative of history because it begins from meaning instead of discovering meanings along the way. I thing myth dares to discover its way toward meanings . . ." (*Labyrinths* 133). Other comments show, however, that Kroetsch cannot leave history alone. In one mood, at least, he would like to advance "beyond nationalism" (as he entitles one essay) and its persistent idealism. This resolve leads him to Michel Foucault's notion of "genealogy," which opposes history by being a dissenting, antimetaphysical mode of enquiry. But as Foucault admits later in the essay cited by Kroetsch, "The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin" (144). Genealogy cannot supersede history; it conducts a running battle with it. Similarly, Kroetsch disdains the supreme promise of history — the identity and destiny of a nation as rooted in its origin — but he remains dazzled by it. In "Beyond Nationalism," he tries to exorcize the phantom of history, but even as he does so, he honours the ghost by generalizing freely about the peculiar qualities of Canadian experience and literature. He rejects nationalism, yet he preserves the national character. In *The Crow Journals*, where he records his plan to write the mythic history of a prairie town, he again reveals his fascination with origins and genesis (69), and with the "genius of place, of that new old place, [that] must be located in the literature itself, not in the absent gods" (17). The new old place is located at the narrative juncture of history and myth. Kroetsch has an aggravated case of the Canadian malaise. He mistrusts the ghost, which corresponds to what he calls "meaning": it is the promise of unity or spiritual presence. Yet he is enchanted with the ghost as well, and even includes an equivocal spook in *What the Crow Said*. The oscillation between history and myth, falling and flying, becomes a structural principle in the novel.

6. Exorcism

Following the publication of *Survival* in 1972, the condemnation of thematic criticism by Frank Davey, Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon, Russell Brown, and by W. F. Garrett-Petts, expressed not so much a scorn for theme as such as for the historical and mythological biases that dominated Canadian writing. These biases reinforce what Francesco Loriggio calls "an ideology of theme" that is cohesive or

federalist in emphasis (59, 63). My purpose in this essay has been to trace some implications of this centralist ideology, which current critics condemn, not only because it is thematic or nationalistic, but because it is essentialist. It evaluates literature in so far as it expresses a national, mythical or æsthetic essence — our ghost. Current criticism, whether semiological, deconstructive or feminist, challenges notions of both essence and place. Since the *genius loci* is the essence of place, it is particularly vulnerable to the postmodern critique, whereby literature is set in a no man's land rather than in a native soil. The implications are unsettling for any national literature, because the national ghost is given no place to settle. Spirit can hardly unite poetically with place, when spirit (idealism, unity, genius) is rejected as a domineering illusion cast up by language, and place (the ground of being, thinking and speaking) is merely a construction. The question therefore arises: is it possible to exorcize the ghost of the Canadian imagination?

Two critics suggest the difficulty of exorcism. In *A Tale of Two Countries*, Stanley Fogel condemns the Canadian fixation on national identity, because it has kept our writing claustrophobic and naive. While postmodern Americans debunk national myths, conservative Canadians still pursue the phantom of identity, which contemporary criticism has already discredited. "National identities are inflated constructs, products of advertising and politics" (30), not of literature, whose duty on the contrary is to explore such delusions. Americans have identified their ghost, and grown tired of its false glamour, while Canadians have not. Nevertheless, Fogel has no qualms in praising American critics who have "defined and redefined the contemporary American sensibility as it is manifested in American fiction" (7). He readily traces that sensibility to its origins by summarizing the familiar history of the "American dream": "With both beneficent and deleterious consequences, the myth has taken hold of and shaped the American character" (10). Therefore he has not dispelled the illusion of an American genius, only rejected some of its manifestations as facile, while elsewhere the wily American temper continues to animate the work of Coover, Pynchon and Gass. He has displaced the ghost and rendered it more sophisticated, not exorcized it.

A more subtle displacement occurs in Barbara Godard's survey of criticism written since the 1970s. She notes with some disapproval that when critics like Davey, Cameron and Eli Mandel purged their analyses of paraphrase and Canadian content, they drifted toward phenomenological and historical positions. In view of the preceding discussion, this drift should not be surprising, since it leads back toward the safe ground of myth and history. Godard in effect complains that these critics were not radical enough, but the remarkable grip that history still has on Canadian critics is confirmed by Linda Hutcheon's *The Canadian Postmodern*, which presents as the pre-eminent Canadian literary form, " 'historiographic metafiction,' " which is "intensely, self-reflexively art, but is also grounded in historical, social, and political realities" (13). This anti-formal mode is more problematic than earlier

models of writing and criticism, but it retains their appetite for history and their tendency to read history as myth and myth as history. Like Fogel, Hutcheon finds a more sophisticated home for the ghost, but one that is still "grounded" in the national soil.

GODARD TAKES THE MATTER a step further by treating Canadian writing as a discourse of "the Other," rather than of national genius:

> Canadian literature is a deterritorialized literature. At the centre of its concerns is the Other — women, natives and immigrants — to produce a hybrid, "littérature mineure," an a-signifying language, in which cultural difference is difference encoded within language itself. . . . The hybridization and dissemination occurring within the Canadian literary discourse as the writing of these minorities is included are themselves emblematic of the place of Canadian literature within world literature, as the rise of the repressed, dislocating and undermining the logic of the literary systems of the Anglo-American world, produces a limit to writing. (44)

"Littérature mineure" is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's term for a "deterritorialized" discourse which shadows and disrupts mainstream culture. It is the marginal literature that a minority writes in a major language.[10] Yet with this counter-definition, we return to our point of departure. The Other is not a ghost (spiritual presence), but then neither was Birney's ghost-of-a-ghost. The Other is a mirror image of the Genius, not its essence but its absence, not its significance but its "a-significance," not its central focus but its "dissemination." It is the Canadian way of erasing history and myth. Just the same, Godard is still concerned with literature that is characteristically Canadian, and so is drawn to speculate about that character. Hegel suggested that a nation should be considered as a single person; Dewart pictured Canada as a Victorian-Canadian gentleman. When Godard favours women, natives and immigrants, she deliberately works against traditional stereotypes, but even in doing so, she is forced to give "emblematic" features to something that defies definition. I suspect that any "Canadian literary discourse," no matter how antithetically defined, will retain a trace of a ghost. To the example of Birney's "Can. Lit." we might add A. J. M. Smith's poem, "The Plot Against Proteus," which comically expresses the quest of critics to capture the ever-changing, formless-form of the *genius loci.*

The ghost cannot be exorcized because it is a local version of a defining feature of literature. Recalling C. S. Lewis's distinction between "genius" as individual ability, and "Genius" as a universal, generative power, Geoffrey Hartman describes an endless contest between the two. When he traces the resurgence of the *genius loci* in romantic poetry, he finds a paradox whereby each requires yet contradicts the other, so that they co-operate and conflict whenever writing is defined as na-

tional in character. On the one hand, the regional genius is comforting and protective. It roots a writer in his or her own soil; it confers identity by serving as the voice of local history and national destiny; it fosters a native, "natural" and vernacular art (317-19). On the other hand, the *genius loci* always retains something of its vast, demonic origins. It becomes transgressive, as it breaks out into a "higher destiny" of inspiration and prophecy (313). It then promotes anxiety about the talent of the individual poet and the worth of his or her country (373). If on the one hand, the *genius loci* provides a base for identity, on the other hand it disperses identity. In Wordsworth's introspective treatment of the figure, for example, Hartman finds a hesitancy that sounds surprisingly like Birney's attitude:

> Wordsworth creates a new and distinctly Hesperidean mode — deeply reflective, journeying constantly to the sources of consciousness. There are no ghosts, no giant forms, no genii in the mature Wordsworth. He is haunted by a "Presence which is not to be put by," but it is a ghost without a ghost's shape, not a specter but an intensely local and numinous self-awareness. (330)

For Hartman, the conflict of genius with Genius expresses a permanent identity crisis, not only within national literatures but within literature itself (329). It expresses the desire for a consummation of meaning, expressed as a holy marriage of spirit and place, but the marriage is precarious because a demonic agent is never far away (333). This legacy remains with us, and is aggravated by our longing for a national literature. The menacing, impersonal destiny that troubled romantic poets, today appears as the radical instability of postmodern textuality and intertextuality. Anxiety about one's country now appears as doubt about the ground of any identity, as it is tossed in the waywardness of discourse. Instead of the romantic "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," we now find the postmodern "Portrait of the Poet as Nobody" — A. M. Klein's earlier title for the poem. Whether we choose to read his poem as an elegy about the betrayal of the *genius loci*, or as a postmodern parody about the disappearance of the author, the ghost remains figured in the poem, invisible yet waiting to re-emerge.

NOTES

[1] "Herder's central political idea lies in the assertion that the proper foundation for a sense of collective political identity is not the acceptance of a common sovereign power, but the sharing of a common culture. For the former is imposed from outside, whilst the latter is the expression of an inner consciousness, in terms of which each individual recognizes himself as an integral part of a social whole. To the possession of such a common culture Herder applies the term nation or, more precisely, *Volk* or nationality. The principal source of both its emergence and perpetuation is language. It is through language that the individual becomes at once aware of his selfhood *and* of his nationhood. In this sense individual identity and collective identity become one. . . . A *Volk*, accordingly is not a substantive entity in any biological sense, a *thing* with a corporate existence of its own over and above, or separate from, the individuals who compose it, but a relational *event*, a historical and cultural con-

tinuum. An individual's consciousness of belonging to a distinct community, likewise, is not a biological fact, but a derivative social and cultural process, the result of the continuous interaction — in both a temporal and a spatial sense — between the self and the socio-cultural setting of its environment. The individual, far from being enclosed within himself or genetically constituted to be a German, or Italian, or Greek *a priori*, derives the awareness of himself as a member of a particular national community from the social milieu into which he is born, from his contact with the world around him." (Barnard 7, 31)

[2] "The general principle which manifests itself and becomes an object of consciousness in the State — the form under which all that the State includes is brought — is the whole of that cycle of phenomena which constitutes the *culture* of a nation. But the definite *substance* that receives the form of universality, and exists in that concrete reality which is the State — is the Spirit of the People itself. The actual State is animated by this spirit, in all its particular affairs — its Wars, Institutions, etc. . . . In history this principle is idiosyncrasy of Spirit — peculiar National Genius. It is within the limitations of this idiosyncrasy that the spirit of the nation, concretely manifested, expresses every aspect of its consciousness and will — the whole cycle of its realization. Its religion, its polity, its ethics, its legislation, and even its science, art, and mechanical skill, all bear its stamp. These special peculiarities find their key in that common peculiarity — the particular principle that characterizes a people . . ." (Hegel 50, 63-4).

[3] ". . . so central has the lexicon of maturation been to our understanding of the condition of literature in this country. In this teleological reduction of texts to 'stages,' of literature to the 'growth' of the country, of individual production to the norms of the marketplace, lies the crucial move within the strategy of containment which has been characteristic of critical discourse in English Canada for more than a century" (Weir 24-25).

[4] "In the Canadian scheme of values there was no all-embracing sovereign people but rather particular societies of people under a sovereign crown. They were exclusive rather than inclusive in viewpoint. Their guide was adapted organic tradition more than the innovating power of the popular will. And they stressed the nearer corporate loyalties of religious and ethnic distinctions — Scots, English, and Irish, as well as French — instead of broad adherence to a democratic state. . . . And the result may be that each of them [the Canadian regions], in whatever varying degree, could exhibit something common, to be called Canadianism, as they viewed the whole country from their own regional, ethnic, or class position, seeing it largely in their own perspective but accepting its limitations and need of continual adjustment, while also feeling the shared benefits it provided" (Careless 8, 11).

[5] Eggleston is influenced more immediately by Van Wyck Brooks' *The Flowering of New England* (1936) and by Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Frontier in American History* (1921), but Turner's theory of the spirit of the frontier (the "environmentalist thesis") clearly follows in the line of romantic historicism.

[6] For a comparable reason, Hegel judges that America does not yet have its own history, or in his special sense, is not yet "in" history because it has not cultivated a historical consciousness: "What *has* taken place in the New World up to the present time is only an echo of the Old World — the expression of a foreign Life" (Hegel 87).

[7] "All dualisms, all theories of the immortality of the soul or of the spirit, as well as all monisms, spiritualist or materialist, dialectical or vulgar, are the unique theme of a metaphysics whose entire history was compelled to strive toward the reduction of the trace. The subordination of the trace to the full presence summed up in the logos, the humbling of writing beneath a speech dreaming of its plenitude, such are

the gestures required by an onto-theology determining the archeological and eschatological meaning of being as presence, as parousia, as life without differance. . ." (Derrida 71).

[8] For a summary of Lower's views see his essay, "Canadian Values and Canadian Writing" in *Mosaic*, 1 (October 1967) : 79-93.

[9] For example, Linda Hutcheon remarks in *The Canadian Postmodern*, "What [Stanley] Fogel sees as important to postmodernism in America — its deconstructiing of national myths and identity — is possible within Canada only when those myths and identity have first been defined" (6).

[10] It is discussed in thir book *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure*, part of which has been translated as "What is a Minor Literature?" *The Mississippi Review*, 11:3 (Spring 1983) : 13-33.

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SELF-COUNSEL PRESS GUIDE TO CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE, REVISED EDITION

Harold Rhenisch

The walls here hold up the roof,
which holds up the sky.

To understand the necessary physics:
drink a tree right out of your hands,
whisper a spider with your heels.

Not all houses can be beautiful,
because not all men

have suffered Robert Kroetsch & Co., Movers,

to deconstruct their house,

but there! there! it's gonna be alright,

the stars will appear
through the mosquito light
and the wind will suck at the grass stems
with its teeth.

I promise.

Look, when the government
pushed down Hans Feldt's
orchard house in Naramata,

after having relocated him
to the Haven Hill Retirement Centre in Penticton,

the house exploded in a cloud of bats,
when the Cat touched the first wall,

right in front of the waiting trucks.

But he came back. A ghost, sure,
but he lived with me for the whole summer,

as I spat out apricots between my fingers,
into the grass, on those white cliffs
above the lake;

and gave me the sky,
as a gift,

and the earth as a chain.

I'd read Virgil, outside,
under the pear trees,

until the light was so thin
the words were only the sound of the wind
in the stiff leaves,

and the bullsnake
slipped through the grass
like a fire — that gave off no light.

When you build a house,
build it by hand,

with some idea of who
is going to live there

with all their children
and their collections of rocks.

Like that architect who built a light-soaked studio out of
hay-bales,
for $3.00 a square foot. Roofed.

THE ONE AND THE MANY

English-Canadian Short Story Cycles

Gerald Lynch

OVER THE PAST HUNDRED years the short story cycle has become something of a sub-genre within the Canadian short story.[1] This is not to argue that the story cycle has been ignored by American and British writers (or by French, Australian, and Russian writers, or, for that matter, by the writers of any other national literature) — it hasn't — only that the form has held a special attraction for Canadian writers. Doubtless there are shared reasons for the story cycle's current popularity internationally and in Canada, even such commercial reasons as its attraction for publishers who assume that readers are more comfortable with the linkages of the cycle than with the discontinuities of a miscellany. But such matters are not within this paper's literary-historical and theoretical scope. The present study sketches the history of the story cycle in Canada, gives an idea of its diversity and continuing popularity, considers some of the fundamental questions about this comparatively new form, and concludes with an illustrative analysis of the function of one important aspect of story cycles, their concluding stories.

Although the short story is the youngest of genres, beginning only in the early nineteenth century, literary historians and theorists often begin their discussions by casting back to the Story of Job, even to pre-literate oral history, so that the epic poems of various cultures are made to seem proto short story cycles.[2] Thus academics dress their new subject in the respectable robes of a literary history. Those interested in the English-Canadian short story cycle can hesitantly claim predecessors in the works of early writers of epistolary novels, collections of letters, and books of loosely linked sketches: Frances Brooke's *A History of Emily Montague* (1769), Thomas McCulloch's *Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure* (serialized 1821-23), Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker* (1836), and the writings of Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. Such writings may indeed anticipate the story cycle, but only to the extent that the political speeches of Joseph Howe to Mechanics' Institutes in eastern Canada in the mid-nineteenth century and, a little later, those of Sir John A. Macdonald on the necessity of Confederation can be said to constitute the beginnings of the essay in Canada. Moreover, much of the serially published and sequentially organized writings of the nineteenth and early-twen-

tieth centuries had to have been influenced by Charles Dickens' *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and *Pickwick Papers* (1837), and Dickens' first books were a seminal influence not only on the English-Canadian short story cycle — especially on Susanna Moodie and Stephen Leacock — but on the English story cycle generally. A similar claim can be made for the importance of Ivan Turgenev's *A Sportsman's Sketches* (1852), the book that Sherwood Anderson, author of the first modern American story cycle, *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), considered "one of the great books of the world,"[3] and which Frank O'Connor described as perhaps "the greatest book of short stories ever written." O'Connor goes further: "Nobody, at the time that it was written, knew quite how great it was, or what influence it was to have in the creation of a new art form."[4]

But earlier writings are too often called upon to perform distorting turns of anticipation and fulfilment, and, intertextual critics to the contrary, it is wise to be wary of committing what Northrop Frye has described as a kind of anachronistic fallacy. For example, to call something " 'pre-romantic' " has, according to Frye, "the peculiar demerit of committing us to anachronism before we start, and imposing a false teleology on everything we study."[5] It is safer to observe that, to the extent these pre-Confederation writings *can* be said to anticipate the story cycle in Canada — apart from what they are as fictional letters and sketch-books — the form comes to fruition in Duncan Campbell Scott's story cycle of a town in Western Quebec, *In the Village of Viger* (1896), and, a little later, in Stephen Leacock's classic treatment of small-town Ontario, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). *Viger* and the *Sketches* were the first to weave for literary artistic purpose the various strands of nineteenth-century short narrative forms — gothic tale, nature sketch, character sketch, anecdote, tall tale, local colour writing, fable, and romantic tale — that formed the modern story cycle. (Scott's *Viger* is a *tour de force* of nineteenth-century story forms,[6] while Leacock's sketches parody many of these same forms.)

The story cycle continues to be well suited to the concerns of Canadian writers intent on portraying a particular region or community, its history, its characters, its communal concerns, regions and communities as diverse as Viger at the turn of the century, the dust-bowl prairies of Sinclair Ross's *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories* (1968), the eccentric west coast islanders of Jack Hodgins' *Spit Delaney's Island* (1976) and the impoverished Cape Bretoners of Sheldon Currie's *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum* (1979) in the 1970s, the Albertan Pine Mountain Lodge of Edna Alford's *A Sleep Full of Dreams* (1981) in the 1980s.[7] Other story cycles such as Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House* (1970), Clark Blaise's *A North American Education* (1973), Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978), and Robert Currie's *Night Games* (1983) focus on the growth of a single character in a particular community, thereby illustrating in the story cycle the interest in individual psychology that characterizes modernism.[8]

In addition to providing opportunities for the exploration of place and character, the story cycle also offers formal possibilities that allow its practitioners the freedom to challenge, whether intentionally or not, the totalising impression of the traditional novel of social and psychological realism.[9] Canadian writers who are inspired to compose something more unified than the miscellaneous collection of stories and who do not wish to forego the documentary function of the realistic novel (whose fictional strategies will likely continue to have relevance in a relatively young country), but who are wary of the traditional novel's grander ambitions, often find in the story cycle a form that allows for a new kind of unity in disunity and a more accurate representation of modern sensibility. Even such early cycles as Scott's *Viger* and Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* portray the struggles of small communities for coherence and survival under contrary pressures from metropolitanism and modernity, and do so in a form that mirrors the struggle between cohesion and a kind of entropy, or between solidarity and fragmentation, between things holding together and things pulling apart. Later, such writers as Laurence and Munro explore the formation of fictional personality in this form that simultaneously subverts and sustains the impression of completion, of closure and totality, suggesting that psychic coherence is as much an illusion in fiction as it may be in fact.

Forrest L. Ingram, still the foremost theorist of short story cycles,[10] offers a workable definition of the form: it is "a book of short stories so linked to each other by their author that the reader's successive experience on various levels of the pattern of the whole significantly modifies his experience of each of its component parts."[11] Ingram's definition emphasizes the constitutive dynamic of the short story cycle: its unique balancing of the integrity, or individuality, of each story and the needs of the group, and vice-versa, what Ingram calls "the tension between the one and the many."[12] Interestingly, Robert Kroetsch has observed of Canadian writing generally a characteristic similar to the distinguishing feature of the story cycle described here — its unique balancing of the one and the many. "In Canadian writing," Kroetsch notes, "and perhaps in Canadian life, there is an exceptional pressure placed on the individual and the self by the community or society. The self is not in any way Romantic or privileged. The small town remains the ruling paradigm, with its laws of familiarity and conformity. Self and community almost fight to a draw."[13]

Kroetsch's observation is based, I suspect, on perceptions familiar to numerous other Canadian writers: in the attempt to find that elusive balance between the one and the many, Canadians, unlike Americans, traditionally have been more willing to sacrifice the gratifications of individualism for the securities of community. Why? The attempt at a complete and convincing answer to that question would require a book. But such an answer would begin with considerations of physical and ideological environment (a geography that isolates, a philosophical tradition of humanism and conservatism) and of broadly historical determinants

(the psychic sense of beleagurement, a feeling of being coerced to choose between opposing positions). Such influences in national character led eventually to various, yet consistent, positions: to the enthronement of compromise as *the* political ideal, to the positing of the middle way as the best mode of figurative travel, and even to finding in the image of the peacekeeper — the one who literally stands between opposing forces — an international *raison d'être*.[14] It was not by chance that Ernest Hemingway declared the first distinctive work of American fiction to be Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*: a first-person episodic novel whose title is the name of its highly individualized hero, a satiric novel from the point of view of an outsider ingenuously castigating his community. The closest Canadian equivalent is Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*: a book whose title focuses attention on the community and whose viewpoint is very much that of the ironic insider, and a book whose form, the story cycle, manages to balance the needs of the one and the many in a manner that may suggest further a geo-political appropriateness of this popular sub-genre in Canadian writing.

Forrest Ingram has also described a system of categorizing story cycles according to the ways in which they were conceived and compiled. He types them as 1) "composed," that is, story cycles which "the author had conceived as a whole from the time he wrote its first story," a cycle such as *Sunshine Sketches*; as 2) "arranged," that is, ones which "an author or editor-author has brought together to illuminate or comment upon one another by juxtaposition or association," a cycle such as *In the Village of Viger*; and as 3) "completed," that is, "sets of linked stories which are neither strictly composed nor merely arranged," but ones which were completed when their author recognized the links within a group of stories, a cycle such as *Who Do You Think You Are?*[15] This method of categorizing has been generally accepted.[16] But Ingram's landmark study goes only so far in coming to an understanding of this form that occupies the gap between the miscellany of short stories and the novel, between the discontinuous and the totalising form.

Perhaps a more useful method of categorizing story cycles is the simpler one of identifying what lends the cycle its coherence. Many story cycles are unified primarily by place: such influential classics of the genre as James Joyce's *Dubliners* (1914) and Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*; or such Canadian examples as Scott's *Viger*; George Elliott's *The Kissing Man* (1962), which is set in an anonymous town based on Strathroy, Ontario; Hugh Hood's *Around the Mountain* (1967), set in Montreal; Hodgins' *Spit Delaney's Island*; and Sandra Birdsell's *Night Travellers* (1982) and *Ladies of the House* (1984), both of which are set in the fictional community of Agassiz, Manitoba. The other major category would be cycles unified primarily by character, such as Laurence's *A Bird in the House*, Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* and Isabel Huggan's *The Elizabeth Stories* (1984). Two minor categories can be added to these major ones of place and character. Some miscellanies are unified by a central thematic concern — any of Charles G. D.

Roberts' volumes of animal stories, Ross's *The Lamp at Noon and Other Stories*, Guy Vanderhaeghe's *Man Descending* (1982). Other collections seem unified by a consistent style or tone — any of Munro's miscellaneous collections, for example. I am wary, though, of including collections from these two minor categories in my definition of the short story cycle; in fact, I exclude them, because on such a basis claims for inclusion could be made for almost any miscellany of stories.[17] That said, if the presence of a dominating theme or a consistent style alone cannot be the defining characteristics of a story cycle, it would be mistaken not to take account of the role those aspects play in strengthening the coherence of cycles unified primarily by place and/or character. And, it needs to be added, what is true of any system is true also of the system being proposed here; namely, that these two major categories overlap, that, for instance, Hanratty, Rose's hometown, serves also to unify Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* and that *A Bird in the House* is unified by a combination of the character of Vanessa MacLeod and Manawaka, or, as in Edna Alford's *A Sleep Full of Dreams*, both the character of Arla Pederson and the setting of an old folks' home lend unity to that cycle.

BUT EVEN IF THIS alternative system of classifying story cycles according to what contributes most to their coherence — what in fact makes them linked series — goes further than does a system that must often speculate on the principles that governed the cycle's composition (Ingram's distinction), it still betrays the spirit of the story cycle, and does so fundamentally. In this regard, categorization is a way to begin discussing a diverse form, not an end in itself. Making recourse to place and character (let alone a single theme or consistent tone) will lead inevitably to the view of story cycles as failed novels, that is, as something which fails within what is an inappropriate category. The traditional novel, from Richardson to Richler, presents a continuous narrative of character, place, theme and style, however scrambled the chonrology of that narrative. And, of course, the novel coheres most obviously in being an extended narrative: it comprises a plot that unfolds over a comparatively lengthy period of time. Short stories, because they so often describe only climactic actions, are distinguished for their concision. Even in the linked series, they will always lack the traditional novel's chief advantage as a unified, continuous, totalising narrative form. Something essential to stories is decidedly un-novelistic, something, as Edgar Allan Poe realized, that is closer to lyric poetry — the illuminating flash rather than the steadily growing light.[18] But reviewers and critics too often persist in approaching story cycles with an inappropriate aesthetic, with the wrong focus. The series of flashes signals a different code altogether from the steady beam: the world as seen by stroboscope, held still momentarily, strangely fragmented at other times, moving unfamiliarly

in the minds of readers accustomed to novels. The steady beam, itself an illusion, is here broken up, perhaps intentionally disrupted.

The success of a story cycle should not be judged, therefore, for its approximation of the achievement of a novel.[19] Its success should not depend upon the extent to which it is unified by place, character, theme or style, nor, for that matter, should it be judged finally by any aesthetic grounded in the desire for a continuous and complete unfolding. Although the story cycle accommodates writers who wish to examine particular places and characters, the form is also unique for the way in which it often reflects the exploration of the *failure* of place and character to unify a work that remains tantalizingly whole yet fundamentally suspicious of completeness. *Place*, Viger for instance, does not hold together Duncan Campbell Scott's *In the Village of Viger*. Or place does and does not unify, for place in that story cycle also fails to lend coherence because *Viger* is about the ways in which the things of Viger are threatening to fall apart before the onslaught of modernity. Perhaps this suspiciously neat paradox can be stated in terms of the outer and inner dynamic of the form, with Viger the setting of the stories, the literal place, representing the outer force that obviously lends coherence to the stories of this cycle, and with Viger the figure of Scott's vision of a communal ideal representing the inner force that is being destabilized and, consequently, destabilizes. Similarly Rose does not ultimately unify Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* That story cycle is about mistaken notions of coherent personality and character — how they are formed and represented -- as whole entities in both life and fiction: with Rose, the representation of the destabilized self, as a covert power threatening ideas of coherent personality, and with Rose as the character who knits the fictions together as the ostensible figure that satisfies expectations of coherent character development in extended works of fiction. Often each story of a cycle raises such problems of continuity and coherence only to defer their desired solutions to the next story in the cycle, whose conflict resembles its predecessor's while yet being different, until we reach the final story of the cycle, which, as one result of its cumulative function, now returns us to the preceding stories in the context of the cycle as a whole. Story cycles viewed with regard to both their outer and inner dynamic, whether cycles of character or place, seldom achieve a satisfying "presence."

It is understandable, then, that this form came into its own in the late-nineteenth century and is in the main a twentieth-century form. (And for once in Canadian literature there is no time lag between its practice elsewhere and its accomplished handling here, as witness Scott's *Viger* in 1896). The popularity of short story cycles coincides with the rise of modernism in literature, when the revolutionary impact of Darwin, Marx, Freud, and Einstein was cumulatively felt and all traditional systems, including the tradition of the realistic novel, were coming under destabilizing scrutiny (by systems themselves totalising, of course). Viewed in this context, the short story cycle is an anti-novel, fragmenting the lengthy continuous

narrative's treatment of place, time, character and plot.[20] There were those in Canada at this time, such as Scott and Leacock, who used the fragmented/fragmenting form paradoxically for intentionally totalising purposes. Leacock employs place, Mariposa, to display ironically his ideal of a tory and humanist community.[21] Yet repeatedly in individual stories, the community, portrayed as robbed from within and without of genuine religious spirit and political leadership, seems always to be resisting Leacock's unifying vision. Those critics who regret that Leacock did not write, perhaps could not write, a novel have failed to see just how appropriate his chosen form — the story cycle — was to his lament for an essentially eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social-philosophy of tolerance and responsibility in the frenetic modern age.[22] When Duncan Campbell Scott conceived of Viger, the small town on the periphery of a Quebec city at the turn of the century, and when his vision showed him, too, that all the values of the traditional humanist were here under pressure from the forces of urbanization and modernity, what better form could he have chosen to display that situation than the short story cycle? Given such visions of threatened disintegration, the novel with its totalising conventions would rightly have been considered as (or, more likely, intuitively by-passed as) formally inappropriate to the insights seeking, and forebodings moving towards, expression. And what was true of formal appropriateness at the beginning of the century became only more apparent as the decades passed.

The story cycle works through a process that Robert M. Luscher has recently described in this way: "As in a musical sequence, the story sequence repeats and progressively develops themes and motifs over the course of the work; its unity derives from a perception of both the successive ordering and recurrent patterns, which together provide the continuity of the reading experience."[23] This process Ingram earlier identified as "the dynamic patterns of recurrence and development."[24] In such a pattern, the first and last stories are of key significance, with the final story of the cycle being the most powerful, because there the patterns of recurrence and development initiated in the opening story come naturally to fullest expression. Opening stories in cycles of place usually describe the setting of the ensuing stories in a way that presents place as one of the cycle's major actors. For example, *Viger*'s "The Little Milliner" and *Sunshine Sketches*' "The Hostelry of Mr. Smith" establish setting in ways that also provide a frame for the stories that follow; the first story of George Elliott's *The Kissing Man*, "An Act of Piety," locates the community quite literally with regard to compass points and lists neighbours who will become key players in the stories that follow. These opening stories also introduce into the contained and framed community a disruptive element: the Little Milliner herself, Josh Smith, Prop. of the *Sketches*, the diseased Irish of *The Kissing Man*, the dehumanizing poverty of Sheldon Currie's "The Glace Bay Miner's Museum," the death-in-life riddle of Edna Alford's "The Hoyer." Cycles whose primary unity is provided by a central character begin, as

might be expected, with a story of the protagonist's childhood, establishing a pattern that is repeated with variation throughout the cycle: *A Bird in the House* opens with "The Sound of the Singing," a story of Vanessa's earliest sense of richness and deprivation in the patriarchal home; "Royal Beatings," the opening story of Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* presents the first remembered confusion of love and pain in Rose's life, and begins to deal with the problem of representation — through mirroring, paralleling, doubling, echoing — of the determining influences on her personality (the problem which also becomes the actress Rose's, and remains the writer Munro's).

But it is the concluding stories of cycles that present the most serious challenges to readers and critics. These stories bring to fulfilment the recurrent patterns of the cycle, frequently reintroducing many of the cycle's major characters and central images, and restating in a refrain-like manner the thematic concerns of the preceding stories. Because of the paramount importance of concluding stories, I will conclude by illustrating their function, with specific reference to the final story in a cycle of place, "The way back" of George Elliott's *The Kissing Man*,[25] and a cycle of character, the title story of Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?*[26]

Both of these concluding stories can be termed "return stories," and, as in such return poems as Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Roberts' "The Tantramar Revisited," and Al Purdy's "The Country North of Belleville," the concern is with the passage of time, change, and identity. "The way back" is as enigmatic and elliptical as the cycle it concludes. It concerns a man, Dan, whose father ignored the communal ritual of having the grinder man (a blade sharpener) present outside the house when Dan was born. As a consequence of his father's stubborn individualism, Dan loses touch with the life of his community, and he must struggle to recuperate the sense of community for himself and his family, to find a way back. "Who Do You Think You Are?" returns the wandering Rose to Hanratty and, as importantly, the reader to the book's riddling title. As both return stories and the concluding stories of cycles, "The way back" and "Who Do You Think You Are?" operate within a tradition that begins with "Paul Farlotte," the concluding story of Scott's *Viger*, where the eponymous hero struggles to reconstitute family at the end of a cycle whose stories have repeatedly portrayed fragmented families as the critical measure of the destructive effects of modernity and metropolitanism. But the signal achievement in the return story of a Canadian cycle remains "L'Envoi: The Train to Mariposa," the concluding story of Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches*, wherein an anonymous auditor — a "you" — boards an imaginative train bound for Mariposa, discovers his face reflected in a dark window and realizes that he will be unrecognizable to those among whom he once lived, as

he has become barely recognizable to himself. But if "L'Envoi" depicts an abortive return for the materialistic auditor, it remains instructive for that other "you" aboard the train, the reader, with regard to the necessity of recovering those humanist and tory values that Leacock associates with Mariposa.[27]

"The way back" focuses on yet another quirky communal ritual in a cycle replete with public, though mostly private, rituals — all of which ceremonialize the passing on of traditions, personal histories, family memories, both the good and the bad. As the cumulative work of a cycle, "The way back" is stronger, moreover, because it echoes and reintroduces many of the preceding stories' particular symbols, rituals and characters. Doctor Fletcher delivers Dan; a blown ostrich egg helps illustrate Dan's alienation as a result of his father's dismissal of the grinder man ritual (127); Dan's overly practical father recalls Finn's hard father; Dan avoids the old man who sits by the pond; Dan marries the community patriarch Mayhew Salkald's granddaughter; and it is Mayhew who insists, " 'there is always hope of return' " (132) — all of these details recalling important aspects of preceding stories. By so echoing and paralleling, this concluding story suggests that "the way back" is effected not only by an individual's decision to participate in the life of the community but by the cooperation of the entire community, or, to speak literarily, by the whole story cycle.

Dan comes to realize that his father's break with communal tradition is not, as his father contends, "a question of fashion or times changing" (130), though it is also and ominously that. He understands the cultural significance of the grinder man and the reasons for his own alienation: "Thing like that, if you don't have a feeling for it, it'll separate you from the kids in school" (129). Here the concluding story emphasizes the preceding stories' emphasis of feeling over intellectualizing. Dan realizes, too, that his father's attitude is "the difference between the life of [his] father and the life of the heart" — the heart which is presented throughout *The Kissing Man* as the chief sensing organ. Dan resolves: "I want the life of the heart and Mister Salkald says there is hope, there is a way back. This is the connection" (134). When an adult, Dan has the grinder man sharpen some tools, including a scythe that once belonged to Mayhew Salkald, the community patriarch who figures centrally in the opening story of the cycle, "An act of piety." Dan's act of concession, which acknowledges symbolically the grinder man's vital role in the life of the community, is simple enough, as simple as tending a grave, blowing an egg, breaking the pendants of a chandelier, or catching a fish (all earlier rituals enabling various individual and communal continuities). The results of the act are complex and profound: the reestablishment of familial harmony, the reaffirmation of the importance of emotion and intuition, the reintegration of Dan's family into the community. Dan's wife places Mayhew's sharpened scythe — temporal symbol of both continuity and necessary disjunction — under the bed of the baby she is weaning, thereby affirming a bond between her family and the community. This is

ultimately a cultural bond: "But when I speak of the family, I have in mind a bond which embraces...a piety towards the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude for the unborn, however remote." That statement from T. S. Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* provides the epigraph to *The Kissing Man*, and George Elliott has framed his story cycle — whose concern is the family community in T. S. Eliot's sense — with "An act of piety," concerning a piety towards the dead, and the concluding "The way back," with its solicitude for the unborn.

But *The Kissing Man* appears to reach a comforting closure only if its readers forget the earlier stories, which should prove difficult since all of them are figuratively present in this final one. To feel only comforted by the conclusion of "The way back" is willfully to forget those unflattering features of the preceding stories, such as the axe-handle factory that now holds practical sway over the lives of many of the townsfolk, the mysterious pond that has been drained, and the undercurrent of intolerance that also defines this (and perhaps every other) small community. Such a forgetting would be ironic indeed, considering that the stories of *The Kissing Man* focus repeatedly on the importance of memory and ritual in the transference of communal values. Along with its reaffirmation of communal and familial values — through repeated image, incident and character from earlier stories — the concluding story of this cycle simultaneously reminds its readers of the persistence of some old habits of exclusion and the beginning of some new anti-communal tendencies.

THE STORY "WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?" delivers Rose to a final confrontation with the question of identity and self possession that, this concluding story reveals, is asked most insistently of oneself by one's origins. Like "The way back," "Who Do You Think You Are?" contains numerous echoes of preceding stories. Both stories focus on eccentric characters, the grinder man and Milton Homer, who embody something essential in their communities. Both characters guardedly contain the key to the central characters' search for identity, and, interestingly, both are associated with birth rituals (Milton Homer assumes it to be his right to chant a blessing over newborns [190-91]), perhaps because the discovery or rediscovery of one's place in the community (for Dan) and self-identity (for Rose) would constitute a rebirth. An Epiphany of a kind occurs in the final story of Munro's cycle when Rose recognizes in Ralph Gillespie yet another reflection of herself, recognizes a spiritual affinity with a man who is, like Milton Homer, closely identified with Hanratty. But readers may experience both resolution and a sort of vertigo at Rose's intimation finally of *who she is*. With the knowledge that Ralph originally found his identity as an impersonator by imitating Milton Homer — Hanratty's carnivalesque figure — and the revelation that Rose, the actress, the

great impersonator, imitates not Milton Homer but Ralph's impersonation of Milton Homer, the possibility of self-possession recedes into a series of reflections of reflections, for Milton Homer is himself a grotesque reflection of Hanratty. This final story with its deceptively illusory resolution actually posits the steady sense of self as something like a series of Chinese boxes. But literal Chinese boxes do end finally. Perhaps the better analogy would be with those literary Chinese boxes in Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman*, the kind that *do* recede into invisibility, pitching readers into the infinite, claustrophobic regressus of the *mise en abyme*.[28] That image suggests one tentative answer to this cycle's titular riddle: You may think you possess a stable identity, a steady sense of self, but you are actually an infinitely regressing reflection of every image of yourself that has been reflected back to you by your environment, especially your early environment. Ultimately — and suggestively, disturbingly nihilistic in a writer often mistakenly considered conventional in her vision — there may well be no grounded "you" from which to launch the self-reflective probe of the book's title.

There is also a metafictive dimension to Munro's cycle that finds expression in self-reflexive literary concerns with the problems of representation and the writer's attitude towards the material of her fiction, questions that also reach problematic resolution in the final story of this cycle.[29] Rose realizes that in her acting she has been representing surfaces, that whatever is essential in another's personality can be spoken of only in "translation," as she puts it, and by which she means not spoken of at all, or gestured at so obliquely as to mean much the same thing (205-06). Again she comes to this realization vis-à-vis Ralph Gillespie, for she sees in Ralph someone who, even more than herself, is an imitator of surfaces, thus residing "one slot over from her own" (206). Ralph, self-condemned to imitate only Milton Homer (who, in being presented as one end-product of its Methodist and Anglo origins, contains something of Hanratty's essence), finally "Milton Homer'd himself out of a job" at the Legion Hall because the new people in town no longer knew what he was doing. In one of the finest ironies in this highly ironic concluding story, Ralph, the imitator of surfaces, dies when, mistaking the Legion Hall's exit, he falls into its basement. Those who fail to find their way beneath surfaces may be done in by that which they ignore or suppress, and so never get out. And this concern with getting away from and returning to origins — what Rose was and is in relation to all that Hanratty represents — is a recurrent theme in all the preceding stories of *Who Do You Think You Are?*

But I am not as concerned here with exploring further the complex issues raised by *The Kissing Man* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* as with showing something of the cumulative function of their typical concluding stories. Both stories depict provisional possibilities respecting the recuperation of community for Dan and the presence of a sense of self and identity for Rose. But those possibilities must remain provisional within both these concluding stories and the preceding stories of

the cycle, preceding stories which the cumulative function of the concluding stories then asks the reader to reconsider. As much as they tempt with hints of comfortable closure, they also destabilize, resisting closure. This is true also of "Paul Farlotte," the concluding story of D. C. Scott's *In the Village of Viger*, of *Sunshine Sketches*' "L'Envoi," of Laurence's "Jericho's Brick Battlements," and of the final stories of numerous other cycles. Such inconclusive concluding stories would appear to be one of the dominant characteristics of the story cycle, and when this conventionalized indeterminacy is worked by writers of Scott's, Leacock's, Elliott's Laurence's, and Munro's skills, the result is story cycles that return to their origins without ever quite closing the circle.

W. H. New has suggested that the popularity of the short story in Canada results from our status as a marginalized culture and its status as a marginalised genre. Stories enable Canadian and New Zealand writers to work, often with subversive irony, in a form that is not the dominant genre in the overwhelming cultures to, respectively, the south and the west.[30] I would add that the story cycles' tension between the one and the many suits the writers of a country that was, in sociopolitical terms, formed out of the tension between the conservatism of England and the liberalism of France, and subsequently between its own communal conservatism and the liberal individualism of its gigantic neighbour to the south. It may also be that the distinguished Canadian short story in its extension to the story cycle most aptly mirrors in its form the distinctive, yet closely linked, regions of Canada: a kind of geo-political fictional linkage of bonds and gaps *A mari usque ad mare*, as opposed to the continuous totalising story written *E pluribus unum*. Such speculations begin to explain the increasing predominance in Canadian literature of what Priscilla M. Kramer has called the "cyclical habit of mind,"[31] a habit that we see expressed in the long sequential lyrical poems of modernist writers such as Louis Dudek, in the deceptively random arrangement of elements in a "life poem" of Robert Kroetsch or bp Nichol, in the increasing popularity of the "documentary poem," and in the shaping of stories into cyclical patterns of recurrence and development by many of Canada's best fiction writers.

NOTES

[1] I prefer the term "cycle" to "sequence" for its historical associations with other cyclical forms, and because "cycle" best captures the form's dynamic of repetition and development. For a different view, see Robert M. Luscher, "The Short Story Sequence: An Open Book," in *Short Story Theory at a Crossroads*, eds. Susan Lohafer & Jo Ellyn Clarey (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1989), 149.

[2] See Forrest L. Ingram, *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century: Studies in a Literary Genre* (Paris: Mouton, 1971), 24; John Barth, "Tales Within Tales Within Tales," in *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Nonfiction* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1984), 218-38; see further Barth's "The Ocean of Story," pp. 84-90, and "Don't Count On It: A Note on the Number of *The 1001 Nights*," 258-81; Andreas Schroeder, "Fear of the Novel: The Linked Short Story in Saskatche-

wan Fiction," in *Writing Saskatchewan: 20 Critical Essays*, ed. Kenneth G. Probert (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1989), 162; and W. H. New, *Dreams of Speech and Violence: The Art of the Short Story in Canada and New Zealand* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1987), 10-12.

[3] Quoted in Ingram, 148, n. 12.

[4] *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (New York: World Publishing, 1963), 46.

[5] Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), 130.

[6] See S. L. Dragland, Introduction, *In the Village of Viger and Other Stories*, by Duncan Campbell Scott (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), 12.

[7] Recent evidence of the growing critical interest in Canadian short story cycles can be seen in *Writing Saskatchewan*, 155-79.

[8] Any survey of the story cycle in Canada must note such unacknowledged experimenters in the form of the linked series as the Frederick Philip Grove of *Over Prairie Trails* (1922) and the Hugh MacLennan of *Seven Rivers of Canada* (1961), though the scope of the present essay does not allow for further consideration of these hybrid forms. See Rudy Wiebe, "Afterword," *Fruits of the Earth*, by Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), 351-59, for a discussion of the cyclical form in Grove's writings.

[9] I would emphasize here the adjective "traditional" or "conventional," aware that there are many contemporary novels, such as Julian Barnes' 1989 *The History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, that resemble story cycles, as this paper describes them, more than novels. See Luscher, 153: "The form's development has been spurred not only by Joyce and Anderson but also by the possibilities of unity demonstrated in American regional collections and by more recent experimentation with the novel."

[10] Although Luscher disagrees with Ingram's method of categorization (162), he concedes that Ingram's terminology is the one "critics most commonly use" (149).

[11] Ingram, 19.

[12] Ingram, 19.

[13] Robert Kroetsch, "No Name Is My Name," in *The Lovely Treachery of Words* (Toronto: Oxford, 1989), 51.

[14] See F. R. Scott's "W.L.M.K.," in *Selected Poems* (Toronto: Oxford, 1966), 60-61, for a satiric poem on compromise as the defining characteristic of Canada's longest-serving Prime Minister, Mackenzie King.

[15] Ingram, 15-18.

[16] For example, those writing on the Saskatchewan story cycle — David Carpenter, Andreas Schroeder, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Edna Alford — work, however unaware of doing so, from these premises first established by Ingram. See *Writing Saskatchewan*, 155-79.

[17] Luscher, in criticizing and attempting to correct Ingram's system of categorizing story cycles, arrives at a "definition" of the form that is practically useless because of its inclusiveness.

[18] See Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," in *Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: Poems, Tales, Essays and Reviews*, ed. David Galloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 480-92; or his review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, "Twice-Told Tales," in *Selected Writing*, 443-46.

[19] See Luscher: "These works should be viewed, not as failed novels, but as unique hybrids that combine two distinct reading pleasures: the patterned closure of individual stories and the discovery of larger unifying strategies that transcend the apparent gaps between stories" (149-50).

[20] Again, Luscher is worth quoting in this regard: "By operating without the major narrative unities of the novel, the writer of the short story sequence courts disunity in order to achieve 'victory' over it by setting up a new set of narrative ground rules that rely heavily on active pattern-making faculties" (150).

[21] See Gerald Lynch, *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity* (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1988).

[22] See, for example, Robertson Davies, "Stephen Leacock," in *Our Living Tradition*, First Series, ed., Claude T. Bissell (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1957), 136, and Donald Cameron, *Faces of Leacock* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1967), 138. This view of Leacock is best expressed in the title of Cameron's article, "Stephen Leacock: The Novelist Who Never Was," *Dalhousie Review*, 46 (Spring 1966): 15-28.

[23] Luscher, 149.

[24] Ingram, 20.

[25] Subsequent quotations will be from George Elliott, *The Kissing Man* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962).

[26] Subsequent quotations will be from Alice Munro, *Who Do You Think You Are?* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1978).

[27] There is quite a difference between the way concluding stories function in Canadian and American cycles. The concluding story of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, the American cycle nearest to Leacock's *Sketches*, is titled "Departure," and when George Willard shakes the dust of *his* hometown from his heels, he looks from *his* train window and sees that "the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood." *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919; rpt. ed. Malcolm Cowley, New York: Viking, 1960), 247. Recall that Leacock's narrator and auditor finally find themselves returned to "the leather chairs of the Mausoleum Club, talking of the little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew." *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), 186.

[28] O'Brien, *The Third Policeman* (London: Maggibbon & Kee, 1967), 72-75.

[29] See Lawrence Mathews, "*Who Do You Think You Are?*: Alice Munro's Art of Disarrangement," in *Probable Fictions: Alice Munro's Narrative Acts*, ed. Louis K. MacKendrick (Downsview: ECW, 1983), 190-93.

[30] See New, ix. See also Raymond Knister, Introduction, *Canadian Short Stories* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1928), xi.

[31] Priscilla M. Kramer, *The Cyclical Method of Composition in Gottfried Keller's Sinngedicht* (New York: Lancaster, 1939), quoted in Ingram, 24.

CORN ROAD

J. D. Carpenter

Driving through the corn to our trailer
is like passing between ranks
of soldiers who tower above us,
ears hanging off their belts
like grenades, banging dangerously
against our mirrors.

Standing on the picnic table,
we listen to the stalks rub
and whisper like dresses.
The breeze makes the corn talk.

To the children of the farmer
who works our land (whose corn this is),
there is no need for comparisons: corn
to silk or soldiers. Things are
what they appear to be.

They sell vegetables at roadside:
tomatoes, peppers, beans. They sit
two to a chair, and push and argue
and laugh. They perch in the bed
of their father's truck
(the youngest asleep in the crook
of his arm) as he
hauls feed to his heifers.
They tell of the car crash
that killed their cousin.

Things are what they appear to be:
tomatoes, heifers, absence.
There are no levels of meaning,
no symbols yet. There is only
the article itself: Josh asleep
in the crook of his father's arm;
a road through the corn;
a dead boy's handsome
colour cameo.

THE FIRE EATER

Bruce Iserman

The fire eater gulps his past,
a basic failure that explodes
from his mouth in a roaring cloud.

To train to eat fire raw,
one first learns the slow
luxurious strokes demanded to pet a flame —
one learns through this the flat taste of pain.

A man has to crave illusions of power,
heroic mastery and the bilious heat
that actors feed on.

But no bright youth steals in
to covet his passion's horde.
In darkness the soft dragon bows his head
to wipe the taste
of gasoline from his lips.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE IN EGYPT

Kenna Creer Manos

Florence Nightingale was clear about bullies
Long before Crimea.
Even in Egypt
She stiffened on the sand,
Refused to be impressed by pyramids
Poking holes in the sky
All day long,
As if they would wear out the air.

DE-AUTOMATIZATION IN TIMOTHY FINDLEY'S "THE WARS"

Vladimir Tumanov

TIMOTHY FINDLEY'S *The Wars* is a very powerful and disturbing book. Despite the novel's historically distant setting, the events of *The Wars* do not seem distant at all: the reader is brought close to the horrible violence of World War I and its devastating impact on a young mind. The question is why? The topic is certainly not new — we are all too familiar with the World War I period. The theme is also an old one — a young man's loss of innocence and baptism by fire on the battlefield. The novelty and vividness of Findley's work are attributable to another source: its form. I hope to show that one artistic device in particular — de-automatization — is largely responsible for the novel's powerful impact on the modern reader.

Any author writing a historical novel about a very well-known period of history has to overcome a monumental obstacle: time. I am not referring to the time separating the writer from the events being described, for that is often just a matter of thorough research. The passage of time presents another fundamental problem — the dulling of the reader's response — and its solution requires much more than the acurate presentation of historical facts. As the present turns into the past, its vividness and novelty are slowly buried under a mound of subsequent experience, which transforms living reality into dusty, boring clichés in the oversaturated mind of most readers. If a historical novel dealing with well-known events is to have any impact, it must trick the reader into reacting to the usual as if it were unusual. The reader must be reawakened and forced to see an old story in a new light.

World War I poses precisely this problem. How does one make World War I appear as bizarre as it really was, given that the modern reader has read countless books, seen endless film footage and heard innumerable historical accounts of The War to End All Wars? This is a very important question, for however "old hat" it may be to today's audience, this war was one of the most baffling events in the 20th

century. World War I was not just another war; it was the initiation of humanity into the concept of total war. It was a break with the past that transformed the world. Modern warfare is just an enhanced version of what began with World War I, and, as Raymond Aron puts it, "the second [world] war was nearly a replica of the first."[1] The machine gun, the flame thrower, the airborne bomb, the tank, the poison gases and the trench all came together and threw the charging cavalrymen off the battlefield. This mechanization was strange, but it is not anymore: The Great War has become "automatized" in our perception. In order to understand how it is de-automatized in Timothy Findley's novel, let us turn to the work of the Russian formalist theoretician, Victor Shklovsky.

In his seminal article, entitled "Iskusstvo kak priëm" [Art as Technique],[2] Victor Shklovsky argues that continued exposure to something causes us to stop perceiving it: "The thing passes us by — as if it were wrapped up — and we know that it exists only according to the place that it occupies, but we only see its surface."[3] This he terms *automatizacia* [automatization] and argues that it is especially prevalent in everyday language where it plays an important role: economy of effort. When the referential function is uppermost in the communicative hierarchy,[4] as in the case of everyday speech, the speaker strives to make his discourse as easily understandable as possible. He resorts to linguistic formulae well known to the listener who perceives them without giving these clichés another thought: automatically. However, when discourse is artistic, there is no question of "economy of effort" on the part of the speaker. He tries to make his discourse complex, present the usual in an unusual light and direct the perceiver's attention to elements which are normally overlooked in everyday speech. In other words, artistic discourse is the de-automatization of perception. Arguing that "the are many ways of de-automatizing a thing in art,"[5] Shklovsky describes one such strategy, which he calls *ostranenie* [making strange].

Ostranenie comes from the Russian word *stranny* [strange], and according to Shklovsky any device that attracts our attention to something by causing it to appear strange is *ostranenie*:

> 'Making strange' did not necessarily entail substituting the elaborate for the simple; it could mean just as well the reverse — the use of the profane or earthy term instead of the learned or genteel one, provided that the latter represented in the given case the accepted usage.[6]

Ostranenie can be achieved, for example, through the explication of a simple concept that we normally accept automatically, without giving it a second thought. Shklovsky cites an example from Tolstoy who takes the simple concept of "flogging criminals" and makes it strange by explicating it: "people who have broken the law are to be undressed, thrown to the floor, and their naked buttocks are to be whipped with rods."[7] This is a typical example of *ostranenie*, one of the de-automatization strategies used by Findley in *The Wars*.

De-automatization in *The Wars* begins with a picture. To most people today the World War I period is nothing but an old familiar photograph: a black-and-white cliché. And this automatized, fuzzy snapshot, which is usually our first association with The War to End All Wars, is one of the first targets of de-automatization in *The Wars*. The novel begins with descriptions of typical period photographs, but these familiar archival relics suddenly acquire unusual qualities. Even before we reach the narrative sections of *The Wars*, the photographs begin to come alive:

> . . . you read on the back [of the photo] in the faintest ink in a feminine hand: 'Robert.' But where? You look again and all you see is the crowd. . . . Then you see him: Robert Ross. Standing on the sidelines with pocketed hands — feet apart and narrowed eyes. . . . He watches with a dubious expression; half admiring — half reluctant to admire. He is old enough to go to war. He hasn't gone. He doubts the validity in all this martialling of men but the doubt is inarticulate. It stammers in his brain. He puts his hand out sideways: turns. He reaches for the wicker back of a wheelchair. 'Come on, Rowena . . .'[8]

At first Robert Ross cannot be seen at all; then he appears as just another of the photographic ghosts we normally associate with the period in question, but gradually he begins to think and move like a "real" literary character. By the end of the novel, this photographic animation is complete: "*Robert and Rowena with Meg*: Rowena seated astride the pony — Robert holding her in place. On the back is written: 'Look! you can see our breath!' And you can." (191) And so the most stereotypical visual image of the World War I period is transformed.[9] Because *The Wars* opens and closes with the de-automatized black-and-white snapshot, the photograph unifies the various de-automatization strategies in the novel and acts as a kind of picture frame, within which these strategies unfold.

One such strategy is the juxtaposition of the violence of total war — very familiar now but absolutely unprecedented back then — with phenomena which are normally not associated with 20th century carnage. This way the reader is shocked indirectly: not by the violence itself but by the incongruity and the contrast involved in such a juxtaposition. Robert's first battle, which is the first instance of actual mass extermination in *The Wars*, begins with one of the most strikingly de-automatizing juxtapositions of violent and peaceful elements: "In [the battle] 30,000 men would die and not an inch of ground would be won. It began with Robert lying under his bunk with a rabbit, a hedgehog and a bird." (109) Nothing could be more out of place, and nothing could contrast more effectively with 30,000 war deaths than three meek little animals.[10]

Some horrors of modern warfare are described in more or less direct terms in *The Wars*, but they too are de-automatized because the narrator is careful to present them in light of Victorian preconceptions about war:

> Oh — I can tell you, sort of, what it must be like to die. The Death of General Wolfe. Someone will hold my hand and I won't really suffer pain because I've suffered that already and survived. In paintings — and in photographs — there's never any blood. At most the hero sighs his way to death while linen handkerchiefs are held against his wounds. His wounds are poems. (49)

It is only in light of passages such as this, and given that Robert has learned about life from the *Boy's Own Annual* and *Chums* (107), that the following passages can have any impact on a reader who has been exposed to the Nazi Holocaust, the nuclear missile and other manifestations of total, impersonal and very un-Victorian warfare in the 20th century:

> By August half a million men were dead. Two million shells were fired that first day at the rate of 100,000 rounds per hour (84).

> In the hours between 7.30 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. 21,000 British soldiers were killed — 35,000 were wounded and 600 taken prisoner by the Germans (103).

Much of the de-automatizing effect in *The Wars* can be attributed to *ostranenie* proper: making something appear strange. One of Shklovsky's most important concepts is *ostranenie* achieved when a phenomenon familiar to the reader is presented directly through the eyes of a character unfamiliar with this phenomenon, i.e., naive observer focalization. Shklovsky cites examples that have to do with the *ostranenie* of the sexual act where the erotic object is presented as "something seen for the first time."[11] In *The Wars* homosexuality and sadomasochism — taboo subjects in the Victorian world of Robert Ross, but almost trite by modern standards — are made strange precisely according to Shklovsky's scheme. As Robert watches the sadomasochistic homosexual encounter between Taffler and the Swede, he is totally bewildered: "[Robert] had never dreamed of such a thing — of being hit and wanting to be hit. Beaten. Or of striking someone because they'd asked you to." (44) A description of the homosexual act would not have required *ostranenie* to make an impression on Robert's contemporaries, but it must be de-automatized if it is to make any impression on us.[12] The *ostranenie* of the encounter between Taffler and the Swede, which Robert likens to a mustang and a rider, is similar to the *ostranenie* illustrated in Shklovsky's article by the excerpt from a Belorussian fairy tale where demons, watching the sexual act, wonder: ". . . who is he riding?"[13]

Not only "deviant" sexual practices but also sexuality in general are made strange in *The Wars*, and part of the *ostranenie* effect is achieved by associating sex with violence or destruction. Compare the *ostranenie* achieved through Robert's perception of sadomasochism as unexplainable violence (see above) with similar bewilderment on the part of Juliet D'Orsey who witnesses the sexual encounter between Robert and Barbara:

> Two people hurting one another. . . . Barbara was lying on the bed, so her head hung down and I thought that Robert must be trying to kill her. They were both quite

> naked. He was lying on top of her and shaking her with his hole body. . . . Robert's neck was full of blood and his veins stood out. He hated her. (156)

The two naive observers, Robert and Juliet, perceive sexual manifestations as violence, and the *ostranenie* inherent in their points of view is part of the general atmosphere of strangeness that characterizes *The Wars*. In this strange world the sexual act is not an act of love but one of destruction. Thus, Robert's masturbation is made strange when it is presented as the destruction of potential life: "He made a fist around his penis . . . A sudden vision of obliteration struck him like a bomb . . . He slept with his fist in its place, and the cold, wet blooming of four hundred thousand possibilities — of all those lives that would never be — on his fingertips." (163) All these instances of sexual *ostranenie* through images of violence and destruction contribute to the *ostranenie* of violence itself, de-automatizing the reader's preconceptions about familiar phenomena and historical events.

THE OSTRANENIE OF VIOLENCE begins even before the descriptions of battlefield carnage, and it involves the romantic view of violence that was to be shattered by the unromantic reality of World War I. When Robert is asked by Heather Lawson to fight a man who is supposedly in love with her, the prospect of such romantic violence is made strange when it is refracted in Robert's perception of the young socialite's request:

> Did Heather Lawson love him? "No," she had said, "of course not." Then why should I fight him?" Robert had asked. "Because he *loves* me," she said. She spoke as if Robert were stupid. It all made perfect sense to Heather, but Robert thought it was idiotic and said so . . . In short — she made 'a scene' of the sort then popular in the books of Booth Tarkington . . . All because he wouldn't fight a man she didn't love and whom he'd never seen. (19)

Heather Lawson's model is Booth Tarkington,[14] and this metafictional allusion to the mindset characteristic of Robert's generation places into perspective the romanticization of violence by other characters in *The Wars*.

Heather Lawson's notions of violence are echoed in another Toronto setting: St. Paul's church where the Bishop speaks "about flags and holy wars and Empire." (53) Here the official sanctioning and traditional glorification of organized violence is made strange through Mrs. Ross's view of the service: "The choir came next and everyone stood. Something was sung. They litanized. They sat down — they stood up — they sang — they sat down — they knelt. *God this and God that and Amen.*" (53) The *ostranenie* effect is achieved because "flags and holy wars and Empire" are strung together with no apparent links, appearing meaningless and absurd. Connections are similarly lacking in the description of the church service where sitting, standing, sitting, kneeling and singing seem unrelated to each

other or anything else and therefore create the appearance of a bizarre and mysterious ritual. Thus, the service and the sermon are made strange because their constituent elements appear disjointed and add up to a meaningless whole.

These and other instances of *ostranenie* preceding descriptions of actual World War I carnage serve to de-automatize the modern reader's conception of attitudes, with which people went into the trenches of Europe in 1914. What follows is the *ostranenie* of total war, which Robert and his comrades face armed with books by Clausewitz (92) and Conrad (107).

The sense of unconnectedness conveyed by the *ostranenie* of the church service is carried over into the description of Robert's first battle. Just as there seemed to be no logical links between the actions of people giving a religious sanction to organized violence, the execution of this violence appears equally disjointed:

> Everything moved in slow-motion — even things that fell seemed to float. . . . There was a lot of noise but none of it seemed to be connected with what one saw. The driven, ceaseless pounding of the guns (from both sides now) had nothing to do with the bursting of the shells and the bursting of the shells had nothing to do with the thudding of the earth beneath one's feet. Everything was out of sync. (114)

While in this case *ostranenie* de-automatizes the unprecedented power of World War I shelling, the device is also used to reanimate in our minds the all too familiar innovations of modern warfare: gas and the flame thrower. In the passage depicting the gas attack, *ostranenie* is achieved not through a strange-making description of the weapon itself but through Robert's perception of the fact that urine, of all things, is required to neutralize it. This realization is so unlike anything previously known about war that simply saying the word "piss" is strange-making: "Clear as a bell . . . came the sound of Clifford Purchas, all of twelve years old, giggling and poking Robert's ribs. 'Piss' he'd said — and been dismissed from class for saying it. Now that one word might save them." (126)

In the case of the flame thrower, the weapon itself is presented through *ostranenie*: "The weapon with which the Germans now attacked had been introduced at Verdun. It was something called a 'flame thrower' . . . Men, it was said, carrying tanks of fire on their backs came in advance of the troops and spread fire with hoses." (132) Only this kind of a description can have any effect on a reader who has seen much deadlier flame throwers in the endless color footage of the Viet Nam War. The mysterious weapon — "it was something called a 'flame thrower' " — is described in no less mysterious terms: "tanks of fire spread with hoses." This *ostranenie* causes us to see the deadly device through the baffled eyes of a World War I soldier: as something incredible, something out of an H. G. Wells novel.

The presentation of the carnage that results from this incredible weaponry involves a problem similar to the difficulty of making a flame thrower look strange and new in 1977 — the year Findley's novel was published. Given that the modern reader is well acquainted with the casualty statistics of World War I, which were

exceeded by the 50 million dead of World War II, the narrator of *The Wars* must once again resort to *ostranenie* if the number of dead is to have any impact on us. The number of dead is presented with a very strange-making addendum: "So far you have read of the deaths of 557,017 people — one of whom was killed by a streetcar [Mrs. Ross's brother], one of whom died of bronchitis [Harris] and one of whom died in a barn with her rabbits [Robert's hydrocephalic sister]." (158) This humanization of cold numbers causes the modern reader to suddenly notice the faces behind dusty statistics that have since been matched and surpassed.

PACIFISM AND ANTI-WAR movements — the negative reaction to total war — have become as automatized in our perception as total war itself; consequently, the peace movement is also made strange in *The Wars*. Findley employs the "naive observer" strategy in Juliet D'Orsey's diary. The use of a twelve-year-old girl's point of view in the description of very 'adult' activities is an effective technique of de-automatization as it was in the sex scene at St. Aubyn's: "Clive arrived with masses of people. All his pacifist friends. I think they want to persuade him not to go back — but he's going. . . . Michael loathes and detests them. He says they are ruining the war." (148) Because of her age, the observer (Juliet) does not understand the significance of the two radically antithetical positions conveyed by her own description. Neither can she assess the absurdity inherent in the idea of "running a war." Thus, by being refracted through the child's mind, pacifists appear as strange creatures indeed. This perception is reinforced by the lack of commentary or judgement by the naive observer regarding the beliefs of pacifists or the beliefs of someone who can object to a war being ruined.

The *ostranenie* of the pacifists intensifies when Juliet describes them as sitting in the garden, "leaning their heads together, smoking cigarettes and talking very seriously." (149) By not revealing — and probably being unable to understand — the topic of the pacifists' conversation, the naive observer makes strange an ideology which is very familiar to the modern reader. Because we know all too well what the pacifists are talking about, their actual words would elicit a very automatized response on our part. When Juliet reports her mother's reaction to the conversation among the pacifists, a doubly strange-making effect is achieved: ". . . and Michael said: 'Why do they huddle like that?' And mother said: 'I think it's because they're literary, dear.' " (149) Here the pacifists are refracted through the perception of not one but two naive observers: the twelve-year-old girl and her very naive mother. As a result, the modern reader can actually experience the novelty and strangeness of pacifists during the World War I period.

The general result of Findley's technique is a sense of closeness to the experience of Robert Ross's contemporaries: a dusty photo is transformed into "blood and

guts" in *The Wars*. The naive observer's point of view makes it possible to communicate the kind of de-automatized experience that would not have been conveyed by simple authorial narration. Because Robert Ross is a young and inexperienced idealist, he is the perfect focalizer for this purpose: his sense of shock and loss of Victorian innocence is a reflection of a similar phenomenon on a global scale. World War I could be considered the greatest strange-making event of the 20th century, inaugurating a period when "the soldier and the citizen became interchangeable."[15] This conflating of social roles makes *ostranenie* most appropriate as the main de-automatization strategy in *The Wars*. Because the horror experienced by citizen-soldiers like Robert Ross has lost its novelty and has been multiplied so many times since 1918, by de-automatizing our customary notions about The Great War the narrator of *The Wars* turns his story into a haunting testimony of a radical change in modern history. Instead of ending all wars, The War to End All Wars was only the beginning: the beginning of something that still haunts us, for the machine gun, the bomber, the flame thrower, the long range cannon and the mustard gas are still with us. And in this respect the title of Timothy Findley's novel can be read as the embodiment of the way The War to End All Wars failed to end all wars: the words "War to End all" have been dropped, and only *The Wars* remain.

NOTES

I would like to thank E. D. Blodgett and Larissa Klein for their helpful suggestions.

[1] Raymond Aron, *The Century of Total War* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1965): 32.

[2] In *Readings in Russian Poetics: Michigan Slavic Materials*, Ladislav Matejka, comp. (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1971): 1-17.

[3] *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 6. [This and subsequent quotations from Shklovsky's article are in my translation.]

[4] See R. Jacobson's "La Dominante" in *Roman Jakobson: Questions de poétique*, Tzvetan Todorov, ed. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973): 145-51.

[5] *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 7.

[6] Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965): 178.

[7] *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 8.

[8] Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1977): 13. [all further references to this edition will be given in parentheses]

[9] For a detailed discussion of photography in *The Wars* see Eva-Marie Kröller's "The Exploding Frame: Uses of Photography in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16 (Fall-Winter 1981): 68-74.

[10] Another very striking example of how the horrors of total war are de-automatized by being juxtaposed with peaceful images is the description of countless human corpses floating in the swampy battlefield: "There was also the sound of lapping — of movement out in the field — and the sound reminded Robert of the early morning slap-

slap-slap from the diving raft at Jackson point. Something floating in the water." (76) The lapping sound is of course made by the bodies of dead soldiers, and this association of mass extermination with the peaceful image of a lake has the same effect as the above-mentioned juxtaposition of 30,000 dead with "a rabbit, a hedgehog and a bird." [cf. note 12]

[11] *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 12.

[12] According to L. M. York, Robert's association of the homosexual with an image of a rider atop a mustang is an example of "familiarization," which is a defensive strategy used by the protagonist to soften the impact of disturbing unfamiliar experiences [Lorraine M. York, " 'A Shout of Recognition': 'Likeness' and the Art of the Simile in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*," *English Studies in Canada*, 11:2 (June 1985): 226]. York argues that throughout the novel Robert makes the unfamiliar, such as violence and homosexuality, more acceptable to his sensitive mind by drawing parallels with the familiar. Deriving the term "familiarization" from "defamiliarization" — the misleading translation of Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, which, as I have pointed out, really means "making strange" — York transforms Shklovsky's original view of *ostranenie* as an artistic device into an aspect of a character's psychology [cf. "Art as Technique" in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 12]. As an artistic device, *ostranenie* is aimed at the reader and his automatized perceptions, while a character's "bewildered" perspective is merely a means of motivating the de-automatization. Furthermore, as V. Erlich points out, "what mattered was not the direction of the 'semantic shift,' but the very fact that such a shift had occurred, that a deviation from the norm had been made" [Erlich, 178]. This means that perceiving the unfamiliar (homosexuality) in terms of the familiar (horse and rider) is just as de-automatizing as the perception of the familiar in terms of the unfamiliar.

[13] *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 14.

[14] A melodramatic American author (1869-1946).

[15] Aron, 9.

THE SNOWBALL

Richard Sanger

It was the history teacher's car
Letting off steam at the intersection.
Walking home through the snow
With a pack of friends, the stop sign
Still recoiling from a bull's eye
I reloaded quick and let go.

We'd just had the causes of World War One
And oh how the whole world had soared
For one brief and joyous moment,
Soared too high for its own good . . .
They told the Archduke not to go
But he, like a fool, up and went.

The car started off. We hightailed it
Leaving a small disturbance
Raised in his rearview mirror
And him to put the two together,
His second-hand powder keg,
My snowball loaded with the weight of events.

PARABLE

Richard Sanger

First, a breeze, a far-off flutter of leaves,
Teasing his uppermost limbs.
That sudden whiff of tar was spring,
Men at work on the ice-fissured streets.

And he spent the day inside, reading.

But beyond the horizon of the story,
He could not see the great shape it raised.
His mind gnawed at its mooring.
Her face shimmered and slipped from the page.

And he spent the day inside, reading.

The book served only to remind him of himself
Till the day she burst in on a warm spell
And swept him away, as only she could.
Pages were lost, heads rolled. He understood.

MAPS

William Robertson

Stretch out my hand
the little finger touches your city
the thumb rests
on mine
but these fingers of longitude
can't hold you
like I did
in that motel room.

Tonight I grapple with distance,
pick up the map and give
your whole province a shake
tomorrow the hot-line shows
will light up on earthquake

but you slept through it
or thought you heard the windows
just
rattle.

DÉMYSTIFICATION OU FUMISTERIE?

*à propos d'*écRiturEs *de Paul-Marie Lapointe*

André Marquis

PAUL-MARIE LAPOINTE, dans son célèbre poème "Arbres,"[1] transcrit, par endroits, des listes de noms d'arbres qu'il a trouvées dans deux ouvrages de botanique: *Arbres indigènes du Canada* de R. C. Hosie et *la Flore laurentienne* du frère Marie-Victorin.[2] Un lien se tisse ainsi entre l'ouvrage scientifique et le poème. Pour Lapointe, la poésie est liberté absolue. Elle n'a que faire du sens. Le vol de mots, voire de phrases complètes, dans des ouvrages scientifiques represente un défi de taille pour un auteur qui veut leur attribuer une valeur poétique. Grâce au collage, le poète fait siens les mots empruntés. Il les inclut dans son imaginaire et en extrait une part signifiante qu'ils n'avaient pas au départ. Le poète opère donc un détournement de sens.[3] Ce qui prouve que le contexte énonciatif délimite le décodage. Ce procédé transgresse la frontière des genres et permet des échappées discursives intéressantes. Ce travail de perversion insuffle une énergie nouvelle à la poésie.

Après le déluge verbal du *Vierge incendié* (1948), Lapointe publiait avec *Choix de poèmes /Arbres* (1960) et *Pour les âmes* (1964) une poésie sociale plus abordable mais toujours contestataire. C'eût été mal connaître le poète que de penser qu'il poursuivrait son aventure poétique du côté du sens. Son *Tombeau de René Crevel*, un livre tiré à 300 exemplaires, est conçu entièrement avec des mots pigés dans l'oeuvre de Crevel.[4] Le procédé du collage refait surface. Lapointe est un pilleur de mots sans vergogne. Il construit son propre langage en puisant son matériel poétique dans la peau textuelle des autres, qu'ils soient poètes, prosateurs ou scientifiques. Peu importe où il trouve sa matière première, le résultat seul compte.

L'entreprise la plus singulière de l'auteur est sûrement *écRiturEs*, publié en 1980, qui se moque des règles élémentaires de la communication et de la poésie. Lapointe affirme avoir composé ces textes à partir des mots croisés que l'on trouve dans les journaux ou que l'on vend en recueil à la tabagie du coin. À première vue, les poèmes présentent les caractéristiques du code: définitions, réponses, synonymes, abréviations, lieux historiques, personnages célèbres. De plus, l'inventaire semble limité, puisque les mêmes définitions reviennent d'un poème à l'autre, comme cela

arrive fréquemment dans un recueil de mots croisés. Les réseaux isotopiques se font rares. Les mots semblent n'avoir d'autre motivation que leur coexistence sur la page; ils semblent s'unir dans cette seule relation de contiguïté. Lapointe cherche à tuer le sens; il aligne des mots pour l'unique plaisir d'écrire, d'où le titre de son recueil.[5]

Je comprends que Lapointe ait été saisi du désir d'exploiter les mots croisés comme matériau poétique. Cette étape cadre bien dans sa démarche d'écriture et constitue une expérience limite de destruction du sens. Il a lui-même expliqué son projet dans un numéro de *la Nouvelle Barre du jour* dont certains extraits sont reproduits sur les quatrièmes de couverture des deux tomes d'*écRiturEs*.[6] Celui qui ne peut concevoir une poésie sans réseau sémantique fort sera incapable de traverser cette oeuvre. En revanche, celui qui accepte l'aspect ludique de l'écriture y trouvera une source de plaisir . Depuis que j'ai lu les premiers textes, un dictionnaire à la main, j'ai éprouvé une grande satisfaction à relier les mots les uns aux autres. Un tel travail ne peut se faire sur tous les textes, car le temps investi ne justifierait pas les dividendes escomptés. J'ai cependant examiné les premiers poèmes et je puis avancer quelques hypothèses de travail. Mais d'abord je décrirai le livre comme objet, comme un ensemble de signes qui privilégie déjà une certaine "interprétation" de l'ouvrage.

L'habit fait le moine

ÉcRiturEs se présente sous un coffret solide et attrayant. Sur un fond de couleur gris-bleu, sont tracés, de façon très stylisée et déployés dans toutes les directions, différents idéogrammes (?) rouges, bleu royal ou jaunes. On reconnaît le "c," le "f," le "p," le "s," le "t,' et le "u"; on devine un "a," un "e," un "i," un "m," un "n," ainsi que quelques signes de ponctuation comme l'apostrophe, le guillemet, le point, le point d'exclamation et la virgule. On peut reconstituer presque intégralement le nom de l'auteur, Paul-Ma[r]ie Lapointe. Certains y verront des lettres grecques, comme le delta, l'epsilon et le mu, et une note musicale. D'autres lettres, d'alphabets que je ne connais pas, y sont peut-être représentées. Ces "dessins" aux couleurs vives créent une impression de mouvement et de légèreté. Ils tranchent nettement avec la sobriété noire, grise et blanche des lettres disposées de façon conventionnelle et statique aux dos des deux livres. Outre l'effet commercial recherché (l'acheteur potentiel est obligé de se procurer les deux tomes à la fois[7]), le coffret ajoute une valeur symbolique aux textes, puisqu'on a pris la peine de les "recouvrir." Habituellement, seuls les livres faisant partie d'une collection luxueuse se vendent en coffret, comme ceux de la prestigieuse "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade." On ne peut pas dire que la qualité de la présentation matérielle d'*écRiturEs* (papier ordinaire, texte dactylographié, etc.) justifie l'usage du coffret. Je crois qu'il faut y

voir, par delà l'effet pratique, un acte ironique compte tenu du type d'écriture expérimenté par Lapointe.

Jetons maintenant un coup d'oeil au titre. Le mot écRiturEs, séparé après le i, est réparti sur deux lignes, sans trait d'union (comme s'il s'agissait de deux mots différents). Sur le tome 1, la première partie, "écRi" apparaît en noir, tandis que "turEs" est de couleur grise (selon le modèle de couleur employé dans les mots croisés?); puis ces couleurs s'inversent sur le tome 2 (la première partie du mot est grise, et la seconde, noire). La raison de cette présentation est très simple. Chaque lettre du mot écRiturEs sert à titrer un "cahier"[8] de l'ouvrage qui en contient neuf. Le premier tome regroupe les quatre premières lettres, le second tome, les cinq dernières. La couleur noire indique donc les lettres du mot écRiturEs qui figurent à l'intérieur de chaque tome. Comme il n'y a pas de piste isotopique forte d'un cahier à l'autre, d'un texte à l'autre, d'un mot à l'autre, l'auteur n'a pas senti la nécessité d'unir les deux composantes du mot par le trait d'union conventionnel. Chaque élément est autonome et se suffit à lui-même. Ce titre rhématique n'a rien d'accrocheur, seule l'utilisation inhabituelle des majuscules lui donne un caractère énigmatique. Il est cependant assez exceptionnel que la somme des intertitres équivaille au titre de l'ouvrage.[9]

Les troisième et huitième lettres du titre (les avant-dernières de chaque tome) sont reproduites en majuscule et forment la syllable "RE." Faut-il y voir l'ablatif du mot latin "res" qui signifie "au sujet de" ou "ce qui est en question"?[10] S'agit-il du préfixe signifiant "à nouveau" et qui nous inciterait à lire *écritures et réécritures*? Si les lettres "RE" apparaissent dans le prénom de l'auteur, Marie, on ne retrouve pas en majuscules les autres lettres constitutives de son nom. Cette piste ne mène donc nulle part. Dans la grille des mots croisés, "RE" forme un mot passe-partout qui répond aux questions de quatre catégories différentes: 1) préfixe; 2) note, note de musique ou dans la gamme; 3) île [française] de l'Atlantique ou île voisine d'Oléron et 4) dieu solaire ou dieu des Égyptiens. Il faut retenir ce pluri-sémantisme qui est à la base du jeu de lettres. L'auteur tente d'éloigner le mot de son sens courant pour l'intégrer de façon surprenante à un poème. L'étonnement est garanti.

Une autre conséquence de la disposition du titre est qu'on peut lire certains mots à la verticale (et,[11] cu[l], re).[12] La liste s'allonge considérablement si on se laisse aller à lire dans tous les sens, en ne tenant compte que de la contiguïté des lettres (écurie[s], écu, écrire, eut, curie[s], cet, cru[e], crut, cri[s], crie[s], cré, cure[s], rut, rue, ri, rie[s], rire[s], ire[s], sire, écru, crise, te, tec, tu, tué, etc.). Je ne parviens pas à trouver une signification par ailleurs plus importante aux textes réunis dans les deux parties désignées par une lettre majuscule. De même, j'ignore la raison qui détermine l'inclusion de tel poème dans une partie du recueil plutôt que dans une autre.

On ne s'étonnera pas de remarquer que le nom de l'auteur est écrit en plus gros caractères que les autres indications au dos du livre. Le titre est banal, le nom de la maison d'édition, peu connu.[13] La crédibilité de l'entreprise repose sur les épaules

de l'auteur, personnage littéraire célèbre et fonctionnaire haut placé à Radio-Canada.[14] En mettant l'accent sur les "procédés d'écriture" et les "exercices d'écriture," devenus justement par déplacement du "s" le titre *écRiturEs*, Paul-Marie Lapointe désacralise le travail de l'écrivain et fait un pied de nez aux écritures bibliques[15] et aux écritures comptables.[16] Entreprise de démystification ou fumisterie?

La première de couverture est d'une sobriété exemplaire: le nom de l'auteur, le titre, l'indication du tome et, au bas, le nom de la maison d'édition, tous justifiés par rapport à la marge de gauche. Les deux majuscules surprennent le lecteur et retiennent son attention. Sur la quatrième de couverture, on retrouve des extraits d'un texte que Lapointe a publié dans *la Nouvelle Barre du jour* en 1977. Double caution. Celle de l'auteur encore, qui explique ce qu'il a voulu faire, et celle d'un lieu d'édition d'avant-garde à cette époque. Ce texte, qui fait office de préface, indique au lecteur de quelle façon il doit aborder *écRiturEs*. Sur le tome 1, Lapointe insiste sur la fabrication de l'ouvrage, conçu à partir des mots croisés. En laissant totale liberté aux mots, il croit parvenir à déjouer le sens. Curieusement, sur le tome 2, il termine son texte en écrivant que "la liberté des mots préfigure la liberté des hommes." Ce thème n'est-il pas au coeur de tous les recueils de Lapointe? L'année de publication de ces extraits nous indique que le projet de Lapointe remonte au moins à 1977. Il s'est donc écoulé trois ans avant la publication de l'ouvrage, ce qui pourrait être un signe, sinon de réussite, du moins du sérieux de l'entreprise. Le nom de l'auteur apparaît donc sur les trois composantes de la couverture.

Si Lapointe n'hésite pas à inscrire son nom sur les deux tomes (il revient à neuf reprises en considérant la couverture, la page de titre et la description signalétique), il n'indique pas la liste de ses recueils antérieurs. Cette omission n'est pas gratuite, Lapointe désire sans doute que le lecteur lise *écRiturEs* sans idées préconçues, qu'il ne considère pas ce recueil comme le prolongement de ses livres précédents. Mais, à moins d'employer un pseudonyme, Lapointe ne sera jamais lu de cette façon idéale. Chacun de ses livres marque une étape dans son cheminement intellectuel et institutionnel. Mais n'est-ce pas ce que le public attend de Paul-Marie Lapointe, qu'il se renouvelle sans cesse?

Nous l'avons dit, les lettres du mot écRiturEs constituent les titres des différents cahiers du recueil. Les huit premiers cahiers regroupent chacun 100 poèmes (*le Vierge incendié* contient lui aussi 100 poèmes), alors que le dernier n'en compte que 89 (dont 53 sont des variantes visuelles de trois poèmes), soit un grand total de 889 poèmes.[17] Pourquoi Lapointe a-t-il rompu ainsi sa structure? On dirait que la machine textuelle s'est enrayée avant terme. Huit, huit, neuf, est-ce que ces chiffres indiquent la fin de la progression? Une chose est certaine, la neuvième partie se termine sur le chiffre neuf.

Lapointe a tenu à ce l'impression de ses textes reproduise le manuscrit dactylographié. Luc Bouvier mentionne que ce "procédé donne une grande liberté à l'auteur puisqu'il acquiert ainsi la capacité de disposer le texte à sa fantaisie, d'en

changer aussi souvent qu'il le désire, le caractère d'imprimerie et l'intensité de l'encre, en somme d'en varier à son gré la présentation visuelle."[18] Robert Melançon insiste sur le fait que ce type d'impression "rend sensible la matérialité de l'inscription" et confère à certaines pages "une plasticité plus riche."[19] J'ajouterai que la dactylographie rend plus "réel" l'effet de "mots croisés" et qu'elle véhicule à son tour l'idée de travail scolaire que comportent les mots "cahiers" et "écritures." Pour Lapointe, seule importe l'écriture brute. La typographie aurait nui au lecteur dans sa relation rugueuse au poème.[20]

Partons en croisade

Vérifions maintenant si le premier poème a subi l'influence de la structure des mots croisés.

petit robert
petit rat possessif
petit foc en toile très résistante
à souder le gratin d'un verbe pronominal
signifiant tomber en s'affaissant avec fracas

aux aguets!
le jeune élève de la classe de
danse à l'opéra
s'écroule

tourmentin
route à suivre vers l'atoll de moi
mot d'enfant

ancienne ville de Mésopotamie ville de l'Inde
là où sucer le lait
tas de foin au trafic des choses saintes

insecte des eaux stagnantes un général français
meule flétrie
brame

fermentation alcoolique.[21]

Nous allons tenter de trouver les liens cruciverbistes qui unissent les différentes composantes des vers. "Petit robert" nous conduit à une double interprétation. D'abord, Lapointe nous indique l'instrument indispensable auquel il faut recourir si nous voulons le suivre dans son labyrinthe poétique: le dictionnaire. En fait, le lecteur aura besoin du *Petit Robert 1* et du *Petit Robert 2*; comme l'amateur de mots croisés, il plongera le nez régulièrement dans ces deux ouvrages de référence. Ensuite "robert[s]" au pluriel désigne, en langue populaire, des seins, et on retrouve au vers 14 la définition suivante: "là où sucer le lait."

Dès le deuxième vers, les choses se compliquent, car l'auteur, à l'exemple des créateurs de mots croisés, insère plusieurs définitions de mots dans un même vers. Il nous faut donc effectuer des découpages pour remettre de l'ordre dans tout ça. "Petit rat possessif" contient deux parties. "Possessif" renvoie au syntagme pronominal "de moi" du vers 11 (à mon avis, "de moi" équivaut à mon; ces deux termes appartiennent à des niveaux de langue différents). "Petit rat" se justifie par un écart stratégique de Lapointe. Non seulement il pige ses expressions dans les mots croisés, mais il recourt à des définitions spécialisées du dictionnaire pour augmenter la difficulté d'interprétation. Ainsi, sous le mot rat, on découvre: "*Petit rat de l'Opéra*, jeune danseuse (et aussi jeune danseur), élève de la classe de danse, employée dans la figuration."[22] Le lecteur apprend du même coup l'origine des vers 7 et 8. Point n'est besoin de spécifier que ce procédé de renvoi d'une définition à l'autre entrave la lecture des textes. Le réseau de filiation des mots croît à une vitesse folle, au détriment du lecteur qui s'est engagé dans ce dédale sans vérifier chaque définition, même la plus simple, dans le dictionnaire. Lapointe effectue ici un véritable collage.

"Petit foc en toile très résistante" est la définition précise du mot "tourmentin" qui forme le dixième vers. On serait tenté d'affirmer que Lapointe dissimule toujours les définitions et les réponses dans le même poème, mais nous verrons que les règles de composition ne sont pas aussi simples. Notons la répétition de "petit," en tête des trois premiers vers, procédé anaphorique souvent exploité en poésie.

Le vers 4 m'embête davantage. Avec "à souder / le gratin / d'un verbe pronominal," l'auteur présente trois éléments hétérogènes comme faisant partie d'un seul vers dont la particule "de," élidée, est un élément fort. Le verbe pronominal se conjugue toujours avec deux pronoms de même personne, "soudés" l'un à l'autre. Le vers 5 contient un verbe pronominal explicite ("s'affaissant") et trouve son correspondant dans un autre verbe pronominal, "s'écroule" (vers 8). Mais revenons au vers 4. La réponse usuelle au verbe "à souder" est "à unir" qui surgit à la toute fin du premier cahier. Le mot "gratin," au sens figuré, signifie "élite," mot que l'on retrouve dans le troisième poème du recueil. Ce qui nous amène à constater que les mots et les définitions ne sont pas exploités selon une structure précise et méthodique. Ils peuvent apparaître à plusieurs pages d'intervalle ou appartenir à des cahiers différents, comme nous le démontre le vers suivant.

Dès la deuxième strophe, Lapointe instaure un nouveau type d'écart, puisque des expressions comme "aux aguets!," suives du signe exclamatif, ne se retrouvent pas dans les mots croisés. À peine utilise-t-on le "he" et le "ha." L'exclamation traduit une attitude affective du sujet parlant reliée à la spontanéité (faut-il voir un lien avec "mot d'enfant"?), à l'émotion, au sentiment. S'agit-il d'un cri lancé par le poète (un rapprochement serait alors à faire avec "brame," le cri du cerf)? "Aux aguets" est habituellement jumelé au syntagme "être sur ses gardes," qui est utilisé pour la première fois à la page 482. Même si chaque mot trouve son corres-

pondant dans l'ouvrage, je ne crois pas que Lapointe exige du lecteur qu'il fasse tous ces liens. Son but n'est pas de vérifier les aptitudes mnémoniques du lecteur. Celui qui désire entreprendre cette quête un peu folle devra se lever tôt, car il suffit d'un moment d'inattention pour enjamber le mot recherché sans le voir, surtout que la lecture des deux tomes n'est pas des plus aisées. En ancien français, "agait" signifiait embuscade, ce qui nous amène à penser que Lapointe a dissimulé des pièges un peu partout dans ses textes. La mise en garde s'adresse peut-être au lecteur qui devra s'armer de patience et être vigilant s'il veut y voir une "logique textuelle." Les vers 7 et 8 en sont de bons exemples. Le mode exclamatif est repris par l'auteur dans plusieurs poèmes et a pour effet de varier le rythme, d'imposer une nouvelle dynamique et de surprendre le lecteur qui se croit interpellé. Ce procédé dépasse le contexte cruciverbiste et est une marque poétique évidente.

Le vers 11 se résout facilement. "Route à suivre vers / l'atoll / de moi" se divise en trois segments qui commandent les réponses suivantes: "itinéraire" (poème 94), "île" (poème 3) et "possessif" (poème 1). Tous les mots-croisistes vous diront que la réponse à la question "mot d'enfant" est "na." Il faut attendre le poème 665 pour identifier cette interjection. Les mordus des jeux de mots me répliqueront que la particule "na" apparaît inversée dans le mot "enfant" lui-même, ainsi que dans le premier mot qui le suit, "ancienne." Il faudrait demander à Lapointe s'il s'agit d'une coïncidence.

Par la suite, les pièces du casse-tête s'imbriquent les unes dans les autres. "Ur" (poème 3) est l'"ancienne ville de Mésopotamie," et "Goa" (poème 3) est la "ville de l'Inde." "Là où sucer le lait" peut aboutir à "mamelles nourricières" (poème 25) ou à "téter" (poème 63). "Meule" (vers 17) désigne un "tas de foin" ou une "barge" (poème 280), tandis que "simonie" (poème 3) a le sens de "trafic des choses saintes." L'"insecte des eaux stagnantes" se nomme "nèpe"; il fait sa première apparition à la page 34. "Napoléon" (poème 20) répond au titre de "général français." "Flétrie" a le même sens que "fanée" (poème 3), et ils sont tous les deux au féminin singulier, ce qui respecte les règles élémentaires des mots croisés. "Brame" trouve son correspondant "réer" à la page 46, et il a des liens indiscutables avec le mot "cerf" (poème 102). Enfin, "fermentation alcoolique" justifie la présence du mot "levure" à la page 3.

Ce que je viens de faire confirme en partie les dires de Lapointe qui prétend avoir composé ses 889 poèmes à l'aide de centaines de termes et syntagmes pigés dans les mots croisés. Cet examen sommaire me permet d'avancer quelques conclusions: 1) Lapointe a vraiment construit ses poèmes sur le principe général des définitions et réponses qui prévaut dans les mots croisés; 2) Lapointe s'est permis des écarts de construction en collant des passages entiers du dictionnaire dans ses textes; 3) les mots trouvent hatituellement leur écho dans le même poème, parfois dans le ou les poèmes suivants, plus rarement dans un autre cahier; 4) les définitions et réponses sont employées plusieurs fois par l'auteur, dans des contextes énonciatifs

différents; 5) malgré le désir de Lapointe de contourner le sens, il n'échappe pas à des règles de construction poétique et à certaines thématiques qui lui sont chères (par exemple, la sexualité et l'antimilitarisme); 6) le plaisir et le jeu sont à la base de cette écriture.

Quoi qu'on pense de la technique employée par Lapointe, il faut imaginer qu'elle fut très stimulante, puisqu'il a conçu près de 900 poèmes. Combien de recueils de poésie regroupent autant de textes? Les jeux de collage autorisent toutes les permutations possibles, dès que l'on supprime la contrainte du sens. Libéré de ce carcan, le texte peut envisager les structures les plus éclatées. Cette écriture se moque des préoccupations mystiques, médiatiques et institutionnelles. On ne peut pas lire tous ces textes avec la même minutie, puisque ce jeu demanderait trop de temps. De toute façon, un tel travail en vaudrait-il vraiment la peine? Trouverions-nous de nouvelles contraintes d'écriture? J'en doute, même si certains points demeurent obscurs, comme la répartition des poèmes dans les différents cahiers. Le lecteur s'interroge face à ces textes qui volent dans tous les sens. Il doit faire table rase de ses conceptions poétiques et cheminer sans idées préconçues dans cet univers hétéroclite.

À la lecture d'*écRiturEs*, j'ai constaté quelques variantes d'une partie à l'autre. Ainsi, le cahier "c" exploite davantage le poème en prose et s'apparente en cela au *Vierge incendié*. Il en découle la même impression d'étrangeté et de non-sens. Parce que des liens syntaxiques relient les diverses propositions de la phrase, le lecteur perd de vue le jeu des questions-réponses. Le rythme est moins saccadé que dans la première partie. Lapointe tente une opération de camouflage et nous lance sur de multiples pistes isotopiques. L'influence des mots croisés se fait moins sentir parce que l'auteur a décidé de recourir à une syntaxe plus orthodoxe et à des effets poétiques reconnus. Parmi ces procédés, l'allitération occupe une des premières places: "l'éclat de rire aux reins / insère dans les raies de la reine" (poème 160).

Lapointe tente aussi des expériences de déconstruction spatiale. Il défie le concept de vers en disposant certains textes de façon très originale sur la page. On notera des acrostiches (poème 51), des blancs séparant chaque lettre[23] (poème 23), des calligrammes non figuratifs aux formes plus ou moins éclatées (poème 84), des lectures pluri-directionnelles[24] (poème 56), des présentations cruciverbistes (poème 71). Bref, Lapointe prend toutes les libertés, se permet tous les écarts, et plusieurs poèmes d'*écRiturEs* s'inscrivent dans le courant de la poésie concrète. À la page 61, il distribue verticalement tous les composés possibles issus du syntagme "fruit défendu."[25] Plus loin, il présente de trois façons différentes le même poème (poème 77). Ailleurs, il aligne sur deux colonnes des séries de mots et leurs définitions, laissant au lecteur le loisir de les associer (poème 30). Il utilise parfois des mots anglais, latins ou espagnols, il entreprend des bribes de narration ou il multiplie les suites cacophoniques.[26] Lapointe cherche à déstabiliser la lecture, à rompre avec les codes

poétiques usuels et à tuer le sens. Quelques rares poèmes sont illisibles (dans le sens premier du terme), comme celui de la page 74, où les jeux de surimpression cachent une partie du texte. Lapointe ne se gêne pas aussi pour badiner. Il écrit, à la page 81: "solution au prochain numéro"; tandis qu'à la page 87, il emploie une série de "mots laissés pour compte."

Lapointe critique son travail et multiplie les mises en garde au lecteur: "Attention, si cela change, il s'agit certainement d'un truc. . . . S'agit-il d'un effort littéraire ou d'une possibilité de pouvoir?" (poème 181). Je répondrai que l'effort littéraire d'*écRiturEs* consiste à revaloriser le langage qui subit quotidiennement les affres de la communication claire et rapide. Lapointe démontre l'aspect aléatoire du principe de pertinence des échanges linguistiques. Il agence les mots pour notre plus grande surprise. Pourtant ce travail poétique ne pouvait être le fruit d'un auteur dépourvu d'un fort capital symbolique. Lapointe est reconnu depuis longtemps comme l'un des poètes majeurs de notre littérature. Il pouvait se permettre la publication d'un tel livre sans se couvrir de ridicule. Il a même obtenu une réception étonnante compte tenu de la difficulté de lecture de son recueil. Quel jeune poète aurait pu investir (dans les deux sens du terme) dans un projet d'une telle envergure?[27] Lapointe n'ironise pas lorsqu'il écrit: "mon travail à saveur rude et désagréable / pénible" (poème 161).[28]

Bien qu'il prétende le contraire, Lapointe ne peut s'empêcher certaines incursions du côté du sens. Ainsi la suite "sexi / ventileuse inerte rosière fée virginité / énorme" (poème 4) peut recevoir une interprétation ironique indéniable. "Ventileuse" est le nom de l'abeille qui bat des ailes devant l'entrée de la ruche pour en renouveler l'air. Si elle est "inerte," elle ne remplit évidemment pas son rôle. La ventileuse se repose. "Rosière" désigne une jeune fille vertueuse et vierge (elle aussi se repose . . .). Voilà qui justifie la présence du mot "virginité." Entre les deux s'intercale un "fée" que l'on décrit dans les mots croisés comme étant une femme remarquable par sa grâce, sa beauté, son esprit. Une abeille, une rose, une vierge; le scénario est tout tracé. À la page suivante, Lapointe réorganise cette suite de mots de la façon suivante: "énorme virginité de la fée: / étaler rosière inerte" (poème 5). Certaines ambiguïtés disparaissent.

Il ne fait aucun doute que Lapointe exploite au maximum la flexibilité du vers libre, allant même jusqu'à le faire éclater. Le lecteur se trouve confronté à une lecture défiant les cadres hatibuels. Que retenir de cette pratique irrévérencieuse du sens? Que la poésie jaillit de tout et de rien; que le collage, opération périlleuse en soi, peut se révéler fort utile pour composer un poème; que le sens émane de l'interaction des mots, malgré les regroupements hétéroclites que l'on prétend concevoir. Il faut plonger dans ce texte en acceptant les règles du jeu et en prenant le risque de ne pas tout comprendre. Le lecteur a droit à une expérience poétique à la limite du recevable. Priment ici la prouesse littéraire et le plaisir du jeu.

NOTES

Cet article est une version remaniée d'une communication présentée au XXXII[e] Congrès de l'APFUCC (Université de Victoria, C.B., les 24, 25 et 26 mai 1990).

[1] Paru dans *Choix de poèmes/Arbres*, (Montréal, Éditions l'Hexagone, 1960).

[2] Lire à ce sujet l'article de Robert Major, "Paul-Marie Lapointe, le combinateur et le jazzman," *Voix et Images, 6:3* (printemps 1981) : 397-408.

[3] Ce qui n'a rien à voir avec le pastiche ou le copiage.

[4] Voici ce que disait Paul-Marie Lapointe à Jean Royer à propos de ce recueil: "Un soir, j'ai repris ses livres et je me suis dit: je vais écrire en Crevel au lieu d'écrire en français, en anglais, en italien ou en chinois! Je me suis défini des façons d'aller chercher des mots et des phrases dans ses textes. J'ai composé ce *Tombeau de René Crevel* en une nuit. En utilisant le hasard, la numérologie et autres méthodes extérieures à l'écriture. Pour essayer, sans qu'il y ait subjectivité de ma part, d'aller chercher Crevel à travers ses mots. Et ainsi de le laisser parler. De faire parler ses mots, sa littérature, son écriture." Jean Royer, "Paul-Marie Lapointe: L'art de la liberté totale," *le Devoir*, samedi 24 mai 1980, 17.

[5] Paul-Marie Lapointe disait en interview à Robert Mélançon: "*ÉcRiturEs* a été fait de soir en soir, systématiquement, simplement, pendant des mois... Écrire. D'où le titre. Ne pas vouloir dire!" "L'injustifiable poésie," *Études françaises*, 16:1, (avril 1980) : 98.

[6] Paul-Marie Lapointe, "Écriture/poésie/1977/fragments/illustrations," *la Nouvelle Barre du jour*, 59, (octobre 1977) : 35-55.

[7] Il n'aurait peut-être pas acheté le second après avoir feuilleté le premier!

[8] Dans la description signalétique, Lapointe emploie le mot "cahier" pour désigner les différentes parties de son "ouvrage" (constitué de deux tomes). "Cahier" connote l'idée de travail scolaire, d'exercice régulier et assidu. Le terme "cahier" est aussi en relation directe avec le titre qui, loin de faire poétique, ramène l'écriture à sa dimension technique, à sa matérialité immédiate.

[9] Genette distingue le titre thématique (subjectif) et le titre rhématique (objectif) de la façon suivante: le premier indique ce dont on parle (l'amour, la mort. etc.), tandis que le second indique de quoi il s'agit (poésie, théâtre, etc). *Seuils*, coll. "Poétique" (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987) : 75, 76 et 85.

[10] "Re" désigne aussi une "chose matérielle," un "objet naturel," un "fait historique," bref ce petit mot représente une foule de choses! J'ai consulté à cet effet le *Dictionnaire latin-français* de Henri Goelzer, coll. "Le latin en poche" (Paris: Garnier, 1928) : 566.

[11] Cette conjonction de coordination remplacerait-elle le trait d'union absent?

[12] Le second r du titre se trouve écrasé par le premier en majuscule.

[13] Ce livre est le troisième publié à cette enseigne, après *Bouche rouge* (1976) et *Tombeau de René Crevel* (1979).

[14] Ce qui peut expliquer l'intérêt médiatique pour *écRiturEs*. Si les critiques ont insisté sur l'importance sociologique de cette publication, peu de personnes ont abordé le texte comme tel.

[15] On dit alors *les Écritures*, avec un grand É.

[16] On emploie alors l'expression "tenir les écritures."

[17] De nombreuses erreurs se sont glissés dans la table des matières en ce qui a trait à la distribution des majuscules et de certains titres. La plus importante apparaît dans la section titrée "Dactylologie" (étrangement, ce titre n'est pas repris à l'intérieur de l'ouvrage) et concerne le nombre de poèmes. L'éditeur écrit que la série de calligrammes se termine à la page 888, alors qu'elle prend fin à la page 889. Y a-t-il un calligramme de trop dans cette section? Lapointe voulait-il terminer son ouvrage sur un nombre qui contient trois fois le signe de l'infini mathématique (présenté à la verticale plutôt qu'à l'horizontale)?

[18] Luc Bouvier, "Paul-Marie Lapointe, Écritures," *Livres et auteurs québécois 1980* (Québec: Les Presses du l'Univ. Laval, 1981): 114.

[19] Robert Melançon, *Paul-Marie Lapointe*, coll. "Poètes d'aujourd'hui," no. 254, (Paris: Seghers, 1987): 79.

[20] Comme Lapointe s'est auto-édité, le coût de la typographie n'aurait que fait grimper la somme déjà considérable qu'il a dû investir dans cette publication.

[21] Paul-Marie Lapointe, *écRiturEs* (Montréal: l'Obsidienne, 1980): 1.

[22] *Le Petit Robert /: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1986, nouvelle édition revue, corrigée et mise à jour pour 1987): 1610.

[23] Ce qui a pour effet de perturber considérablement la lecture, puisque le lecteur doit fournir un effort supplémentaire pour reconstituer chaque mot.

[24] Soit horizontales, verticales et diagonales.

[25] Avec cet exemple, Lapointe se situe plus près du jeu de "Boogle" que des mots croisés. "Pêché" est le correspondant de "fruit défendu" dans les mots croisés.

[26] *ÉcRiturEs* mériterait une étude sonore détaillée. Lapointe compose parfois des vers d'une inélégance sonore indéniable, qui n'est pas sans ressembler à certains vers de Claude Gauvreau. Dans ces moments, Lapointe se permet certains néologismes. Un exemple suffira. "Québec okapi, abrase ugonien,/oliban vole, rigolades inédi-/tes à regard pour enjaveller/Eve infuse, oves lessiveuses/où s'ulcère dehmel." (poème 518) "Enjaveller" ne prend qu'un l, mais ce n'est qu'une des nombreuses coquilles de l'ouvrage.

[27] Quel éditeur aurait publié ces deux briques? Lapointe aurait-il accepté de faire paraître une version abrégée de son ouvrage? Il a résolu le problème en se publiant lui-même, sans faire de concessions esthétiques ou idéologiques.

[28] Lapointe a ainsi rédigé plusieurs vers métatextuels. Voici deux autres exemples savoureux: "phrase truquée contrainte/se prévaut de neuf relations" (poème 681) et "Sans doute adore-t-il les mots croisés." (poème 706).

books in review

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

CARL BALLSTADT, ed., *Roughing It in the Bush or Life in Canada.* Oxford University Press, $12.95 (paper), $24.95 (cloth).

Roughing It in the Bush is the fifth text in the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts series (*The History of Emily Montague, Canadian Crusoes, A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* and *Wacousta* have already been published). Here, as before, the text has been critically established after the history of composition and first publication has been researched and its editions analysed and compared. In the case of *Roughing It* there is no known manuscript or proof and, of the versions published during Moodie's lifetime, the editor has chosen the first impression of the first edition published by Richard Bentley as the basic copy-text. He adds 'Jeanie Burns,' reprinted from *Bentley's Miscellany* and 'Canadian Sketches' reprinted from the second impression of the first Bentley edition.

Ballstadt makes a convincing case that only this edition can be chosen as copy text, yet his Editor's Introduction documents a complicated passage of the manuscript from 'the Canadian west' to English publication. Sometime between 1848 and 1851 Moodie sent the manuscript to John Bruce, an antiquarian scholar, who negotiated with the publisher Bentley on Mrs. Moodie's behalf. As well as negotiating a fifty pound payment for full copyright, Bruce also did some editing of the ms, cutting 'softnesses' from the text and going through the copy with a mind to keeping the comments of Bentley's reader 'in view.' During the printing run of this first impression the proof reader made changes to punctuation which, in Ballstadt's view, suggest a much more excitable author than was probably the case. It was this first impression, which already bore the marks of Bruce and proof reader, which was published in London in January 1852. Moodie did not see this until some five months after publication, when a visitor presented her with his copy. Nor did she receive any remuneration for the American edition published in July 1852 by George Putnam. Putnam's editor made significant alterations to the British edition without any consultation with Moodie.

The painstaking history of the text compiled by Ballstadt demonstrates firstly the impotence of colonial authors such as Moodie when dealing in a market determined by the interests of American and British publishers. In the American context they were unprotected by copyright laws; in place of 'proper remuneration' Putnam sent Moodie ten copies of the American edition. Secondly Ballstadt's Introduction establishes that much of the scholarship on Moodie's work has been based on editions which, palimpsest-like, are the product of accretions of variations, emendations, impressions and editions.

Allegations about the editorial destruction of Canadian literature and the damage done by corrupt texts are not new. Unfortunately the McClelland and Stewart New Canadian Library, since 1957 the mainstay for teaching Canadian literature, was forced by commercial considerations to publish abridged and selected texts. In the case of *Roughing It*, the New Canadian Library edition abridges the pirated and abridged American edition, with the blithe assertion in the Introduction that only a successful book requires as much editing as *Roughing It* has received: 'Now, for the public of the 1960's . . . there

is no reason why the policy of dropping portions of the original volumes should not be carried further.' The readers of the 1990s will be better served, for it is this kind of 'practical' editing that the CEECT project attempts to redress, and the implications for literary scholarship are profound.

For example my salmon pink CEECT edition of *Roughing It* now sits alongside its most immediate predecessor, the glossy green Virago Travellers edition of 1986. This Virago Press edition, introduced by Margaret Atwood, is the first British print of *Roughing It* since 1852 according to Virago blurb. Armed with Ballstadt's history of the text I can now cite English versions by Bentley in 1852 and 1854 and 1857; by Foulis in 1913; by Thomas Nelson in 1938. The Virago text is 'reproduced from the Richard Bentley two volume edition' of 1852 (it is in fact more correctly and precisely identified by Ballstadt as an abridged facsimile). In her Introduction Atwood, much like Klinck in the Introduction to his 1962 NCL edition, invites a thematic and psychological reading. In each case the interests of the 'modern reader' and contemporary preoccupations are foregrounded and there is no attention to textual bibliography.

To read the CEECT edition in this way goes against the grain of the archival detail which cocoons the text. A quite different kind of scholarship is invited. As Michael Peterman writes in a recent *Canadian Literature* (summer 1989), scholarly editions of texts, books of letters, and bibliographies allow informed literary and cultural criticisms which produce a much fuller understanding of nineteenth century cultural history. This approach, which is evident in the work of Ballstadt and Peterman himself, tends to take Moodie out of the bus in downtown Toronto and heightens an historical perspective. For example the textual history of *Roughing It* reveals the extent to which Moodie wrote for the tastes of a particular audience, and adapted her material written to entertain the Canadian readers of a local periodical to suit the readership of an emigrant handbook published in London. The terms in which the text was presented were changed again, as we have seen, for an American edition and yet again by Moodie for publication in Canada in 1871.

The CEECT edition of *Roughing It* comes at the end of a long and not always illustrious series of texts whose relation to Moodie's original has been, in some cases, dubious. With this new edition on hand more of us can write about the sketches and their author with authority. Now could someone please oblige with a republication of the *Garland* 'Canadian Sketches'?

GILLIAN WHITLOCK

MULTIPLE MIRRORS

RELATIONS DE JACQUES CARTIER, *ed. Michel Bideaux.* PUM. n.p.

GERMAINE GUÈVREMONT, *Le Survenant.* ed. Yvan G. Lepage. PUM. $43.00.

ANYONE WHO HAS experienced aesthetic pleasure upon examining Gallimard's excellent *Bibliothèque de la Pléiade* series may derive similar pleasure from perusing the books in the *Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde,* published by Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. The pliable covers, the quality of the paper, the cloth markers and the highly legible texts of these publications all recall the high standards of the *Pléiade* texts. The *Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde* consists of critical re-editions of the basic texts of Québécois literature, and is part of the major research project administered by the University of Ottawa, "Corpus d'Editions Critiques."

In his preliminary remarks to this critical edition of Jacques Cartier's *Relations,* Michel Bideaux proposes that they

are "multiple miroirs plutôt que reliques textes littéraires et non plus documents historiques," and therefore deserve a place of merit in this literary series. The annotated records of Cartier's three trips to the New World comprise only a fifth of the text of this elegant book. The *Relations* themselves are preceded by Bideaux's lengthy introduction, which presents the well-known historical reasons for the trips (the search for the North West passage and for gold), as well as an overview of the fluctuating political situation in Europe which affected François the First's funding of Cartier's explorations. Bideaux presents foreign-language translations of the *Relations* published in the sixteenth century. His detailed historical overview explains why educated Europeans first read of Cartier's explorations in Ramusio's *Navigationi et Viaggi* and in Hakluyt's *Principall Navigations*. The introduction also discusses the on-going debate regarding the authorship of the *Relations* and concludes with detailed notes on the flora and fauna of the New World.

The first and second *Relations* retain the French orthography of the sixteenth century: "partimes du havre et port de Sainct Malo avecques les*dits* deux navires du port d'environ soixante tonneaulx chaincun . . . [et] soixante ung homme," but the relatively large print and agreeable layout render the text easy to read. As there exists no known French version of the third *Relation*, Bideaux provides a translation (in modern French) of the English passage taken from *Principall Navigations*.

Cartier's first *Relation* (1534) consists mainly of observations about Labrador, "la terre que Dieu donna à Cayn," and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence area. The text portrays his contact with the Amerindians, the symbolic planting of the cross in Gaspé, and his extensive topographical work. The second *Relation*, more political in tone, attempts to persuade François I of the merits of the French New World. It describes Cartier's "discoveries" of the Saint Lawrence River, Stadaconé (Quebec), and Hochelaga (Montreal), and the difficulties the French faced during the winter of 1535-36. Of particular interest are the passages which refer to the wily Amerindian chief, "le seigneur de Canada nommé Donnacona," whose exaggerated tales of the gold and rubies of the Kingdom of Saguenay are reported *verbatim*. As is customary, the incomplete *Relation* of Cartier's third voyage (1541-1542) is followed by an account of the voyage of Cartier's superior — and rival — Roberval. François I had revoked Cartier's commission in favour of his protégé Roberval, and the Cartier-Roberval polemic continues to interest today's historians. This third *Relation* recounts Cartier's discovery of stones he mistakenly took to be diamonds, hence the European expression: "faux comme un diamant du Canada."

The previous critical version of Cartier's *Relations*, H. P. Biggar's *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, was published in 1924 for an English-speaking public. Since its publication, pertinent documents have been discovered, and Bideaux's version provides the interested scholar with an up-to-date research tool. Its introduction, chronology, appendices and copious notes (pages 303-304, notes 425-454 are missing) are well organized and rich in detail. It is regrettable that Bideaux did not reproduce the fold-out maps contained in Biggar's version, but, on the whole, this well-documented research is a welcome addition to the field.

In the same series, Yvan G. Lepage has produced a critical edition of Germaine Guèvremont's *Le Survenant*, first published in 1945. This classic of Québécois literature reworks the traditional themes of the "roman du terroir." A stranger arrives in a self-absorbed rural community, and his very presence poses a threat to the

finely-balanced social contracts that assure continuity by tying families to the land. In spite of the beneficial effect the stranger has on the inhabitants of the Chenal du Moine (near Sorel), he finds their closed-mindedness to be stifling and decides to move on.

Recent discoveries of Guèvremont's correspondence with Alfred DesRochers about the creation of this successful first novel helped Lepage in his work. Similar in format to Cartier's *Relations*, this critical edition presents an introduction to the life and writings of Guèvremont, a fold-out map of the Chenal du Moine area, and the integral text of the novel, followed by appendices, an exhaustive bibliography and a lengthy section which explains the numerous Canadianisms in the novel in standard French. Whereas the explanatory notes in the *Relations* appear at the *end* of the text, requiring much turning of pages, the editor's notes appear at page bottom in *Le Survenant*, facilitating the reader's immediate comprehension of the text. The tone of the introduction, however, is somewhat patronizing; Lepage describes the adolescence of this interesting and energetic woman as "une période où l'on attend quelque chose de vague qui ne se produit pas, où l'on espère quelque prince charmant qui ne se présente jamais"! Apart from this old-fashioned attitude, Lepage has produced a work of quality. Indeed, given their emphasis on clarity of vocabulary and historical facts, both critical editions from the *Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde* should be of assistance to the ever-increasing number of scholars interested in acquiring in-depth knowledge of Québécois literature.

MARIE VAUTIER

CONFESSIONS

H. R. PERCY, *An Innocent Bystander*. Macmillan, $22.95.

BARRY CALLAGHAN, *The Way The Angel Spreads Her Wings*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $22.95.

IN READING THESE two novels one cannot help but be struck by the extent to which each, in its own way, revolves around the concept of confession, and how confession, or the release of previously inaccessible information, takes place when the narrator or protagonist is "out of place" in a foreign, often hostile environment.

This is most evident in H. R. Percy's *An Innocent Bystander* where one level of confession is extracted from the narrator — Gaspar Sanchez Caramés — under torture in a South American jail cell. Interestingly, however, Gaspar (an English professor and author) is himself voluntarily engaging in another form of confession; that of trying to assemble his memories on scraps of paper. This reordering of the past is an attempt, by Caramés, to explain his predicament to himself and to understand his relationship to, and with, his cell mate and old Cambridge buddy, the lethal terrorist Paulo Martinez. An escalating series of lies and betrayals are exposed as Caramés remembers, and then records, with tiny, almost unusable pencil stubs, in the glow of the one hour of sunlight that pierces the cell each day, the youthful confidences of Martinez during their days at Cambridge. Later, Martinez, reading his former friend's memoirs in their shared cell, confides, at intervals, further, often cruel information and the pieces of an ugly and corrupt puzzle begin to fall in place.

This skillful interplay of various forms of communication (be they exchanges of confidences, written memoir, willful use of misinformation, or sentences shouted in agony under the hand of the torturer) produces not only a powerful and tight

narrative line, but also a disturbing inquiry into the uses and abuses of information and the nature of the individual's often erroneous perception of the events unfolding around him. The kernel of truth that is revealed after all the layers of rumour, speculation, dream and fact have been pulled away is summed up in the epigraph at the beginning of the book; "There is no such thing as an innocent bystander."

The bystander in Barry Callaghan's *The Way the Angel Spreads Her Wings* is his photographer protagonist, Adam Waters. Written in the second person, Callaghan's book is, nevertheless, like Percy's, confessional in tone as Waters searches, camera in hand, through various war-torn third-world countries for the lost love of his childhood, Gabrielle. A more poetic, less political book, *The Way the Angel Spreads Her Wings* reveals its secrets through long, allusive conversations between characters, and with the aid of the author's artful manipulation of time. Callaghan is so deft in this latter regard that the reader is moved gracefully and seamlessly back and forth between the main character's Toronto childhood and his experiences, decades later, in lush, terrifying tropical war zones.

This seamlessness is all the more impressive when one considers that the structure of the book is composed of a multitude of what might have been, in less skillful hands, unrelated images. Gravestone inscriptions, memories of love-making, glimpses of church interiors, a discarded shoe in a disaster area, a parade thumping down an ordinary Toronto street, and a hotel wall exploding under fire illustrate the narrative. Callaghan, like his photographer protagonist, insists that we look as well as read. Occasionally the reader feels over-burdened by the plethora of visual information, but most often these set pieces clarify and intensify, rather than obscure, the plot.

There are certain moments in *The Way the Angel Spreads Her Wings* when confession and visual information combine. Near the end of the book, for instance, Waters and his unpredictable, essentially unreliable father lie on their backs in the city graveyard making angels in the snow and resolving the differences between them. The picture of two very alive, grown men imprinting the forms of angels in a winter graveyard is one that the reader will carry with him or her for a long time after finishing the book.

When Callaghan unites images of death and transfiguration, or opposites such as peace and violence, the results are often powerful. In the last paragraph the author shows us two more pictures; that of Waters' lover raising her arms against the sky in a gesture of benediction and farewell and that of the Uzi machine gun lying on the floor of the boat that is taking the photographer away. The revelation of the first one, and then the other, serves beautifully to illustrate the cruelty and tenderness that are exposed at the heart of this book.

JANE URQUHART

FEMALE FAMILIES

MARY BURNS, *Shinny's Girls*. Talonbooks, $13.95.

ANNE CAMERON, *South of an Unnamed Creek*. Harbour, $19.95.

WHAT DO WOMEN of the same family find in each other's company? The novel *South of an Unnamed Creek* and the collection of short stories *Shinny's Girls* both examine the dynamics of female families and the question of what constitutes home for women. And they propose two different answers to this question.

The middle and lower middle class families in the stories of *Shinny's Girls* provide the source of identity for the mothers, daughters, and sisters portrayed;

their consciousness is preoccupied, for the most part, with domestic details and details of family history and interaction. These stories are still life portraits in which, as Annette (in the title story) says, "there's nothing happening," except the occasional jolt of recognition of affinity or antipathy with another female. The worlds of these women — most of the stories are concerned with female families — are static, and the women look either backward, inward, or just beyond the present, in which they are often stuck in one way or another; in spinsterhood, in the practical details of making it from one day to the next without catastrophy, or in old habits of response to a parent or a sibling.

Most of the women find in each other what they do not want to become, reflections of themselves or of another family member, and embodiments of all that prevents them from achieving individual identity. In "The Tides," Bernice, her daughter Shirley, and Shirley's daughter Angela live and vacation together out of habit and economic necessity, and watch out for each other. While the narrative consistently draws parallels among their physical looks, adornment, and habit, it also indicates that their only means of individuation is to harbour small resentments and criticisms of each other. In the title story, each of Shinny's two older girls vigorously denies any similarity between herself and Shinny. The house in which they all live is positively claustrophobic, as they all constantly 'compete for the very air in a room.'

And yet, to be fair, the women in these stories also find in each other's company the primitive satisfaction that can come only from the inevitability of a familial bond. In "The Annex," when Christa, the punk daughter, slashes her wrists in the ward in which she is undergoing psychiatric treatment, her mother finds in the crisis a bond that is "as personal as menstruation, blood between females." The strength of these narratives lies in the abundant naturalistic descriptions of dingy, tacky, or worn articles and corners of a well lived-in household. Blood bonds, Burns seems to be saying, are usually obscured by the routine and grime of everyday life, and it takes a crisis — the death of the father in "Immediate Family," Christa's attempted suicide — to force consciousness of these bonds.

South of an Unnamed Creek delineates the perspectives of six women of various backgrounds who have been abandoned or abused by men or by their biological families. Introduced separately, Ceileigh, Aggie, Su Gin, Lily, Mary, and Cora gradually find each other and form a new family, one that is clearly, the author infers, more healthy and functional than any biological family. Even the women's occasional arguments are more vitalising than debilitating, for as they trek to and attempt to forge a living out of Dawson in the late 1890s, they derive their strength from each other and from the unit they have formed. These women, and their dreams, complement one another; they fill in the gaps of each other's knowledge and their skills dovetail.

All the males in the novel are destructive or abusive; all except those who work for the women at the hotel, the dog that acts as their protector and the native who becomes part of the family until he is shot by a white man. The women find harmony of purpose and bonding only in relationships with each other (with the exception of Ceileigh's relationship with Chilkat Joe) and in relationships with their female children. This family serves to help each woman recover from the void left in her by her past and by the disfunction of her biological family. One gets from this novel a very strong sense of working-class women's lives, of the backbreaking toil of making a life without men, and of the emotional truths and gut instincts to

which women are attuned. If this novel is propagandist, it is quite successfully so.

Burns, in *Shinny's Girls*, tries to end her stories in a minimalist fashion, but they simply peter out, which is appropriate to the lack of possibility inherent in the lives depicted. The stories, though truthful in the naturalistic sense, offer little deep insight. *South of an Unnamed Creek* ends on a note of hopefulness and anticipation, which, though perhaps unrealistic, offers the truth of the great human need to look forward. The women, blackmailed out of their hotel, have arranged for it to burn down. They take the fortune they have made and run, whereupon Ceileigh muses on the loss of the hotel and of Joe: "Spring would come again. The snow and ice would melt, fresh green willow shoots would grow, and even the cold empty place inside her would vanish."

DIANE WATSON

COHEN'S COUNTRIES

MATT COHEN. *Emotional Arithmetic.* Lester & Orpen Dennys. $24.95.

EXCEPT FOR ONE earlier book, *Wooden Hunters*, set in British Columbia, Matt Cohen has used two very different locales for his novels. He started off in Ontario, with the mythical stone town of Salem, north of Kingston and its hinterland of decaying pioneer farms operated by a degenerate later generation, drunkards and ecstatics. Even his futurist novel, *The Colours of War*, which stretches its violent train journey from the west coast across a Canada riven by civil conflict, ends in the refuge of Salem. It was a world of its own, real without being realistic, that has been compared with Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, but the novels Cohen wrote about it, *The Disinherited*, *The Sweet Second Summer of Kitty Malone* and *Flowers of Evil* presented an original cast of pathetic-comic characters, portrayed with a bitter benevolence, who often gathered treasures of love, true *diamants dans la boue*, in the course of their degenerate and disorderly existences.

Cohen might easily, one felt, have settled into an interminable series of Salem novels. But, by introducing him to the realities of Jewish experience in the Old World, the first of a series of sojourns in France set him moving in a new direction with novels like *The Spanish Doctor* and *Nadine*. *The Spanish Doctor* is a coloured and melodramatic account of a brilliant Jewish physician surviving the pogroms and persecutions of Renaissance Europe in a progress that begins at Seville and ends in Kiev. *Nadine* is set in France before and during World War II, when the French police collaborated with the Nazis in gathering their own Jews in a camp at Drancy near Paris. Like *The Spanish Doctor*, it is a tale of horror and survival. Left in Paris with an aunt, its eponymous heroine survives while her parents disappear into the Nazi net. She ends up an astronomer in Toronto. In both books one senses the power of will and the power of love combining to sustain and preserve, and looking back over the Salem novels one notices that the Happy Ending is an almost necessary conclusion to a Cohen novel, as it is indeed to the book I now review, *Emotional Arithmetic*.

Once again, it is a book of survival, whose main characters pass through the fears though not the fires of the Holocaust, to live out their final drama in an Ontario that is no longer the mythical and degenerate one of Salem, but a modernized version where yuppies and academics have taken over the rundown lots and operate them as hobby farms.

The central figure is Melanie, once an American girl swept into the dragnet of the "final solution." In Drancy she starts a friendship with Christopher, an English teenage boy who reaches the camp by

pure accident, and a young scientist, Jakob Bronsky, who makes himself their protector, and turns out to be the lost father of Nadine, who will make a walk-on appearance in this later novel.

The two younsters escape because of a mistake that keeps their names off one of the death lists. Bronsky is taken to Auschwitz, but also survives, to spend years in a Russian psychiatric hospital and become a famous *samizdat* poet. Melanie returns to America and the life of the rich, and marries a Toronto history professor, David Winters, whose many loveless affairs with secretaries and students — combined with her memories of the past — drive her into periodical mental breakdowns.

She is recovering from the last of these on the Winters farm when her old friends from the concentration camp come to stay, and their companionship is re-established during a series of dramatic conflicts that end in the errant professor dying providentially of a failing heart. The three survivors — and this is clearly their destined role — remain together, plotting the release of others throughout the world who are the prisoners of tyranny.

Having run into verbal extravagance in *The Spanish Doctor*, Cohen has brought his prose into economic control. The result is a moving novel about the improbable variety — and varieties — of love reminding one in its own way of *The Sweet Second Summer* . . . Only David Winters, conventionally the incessant "lover," is revealed as arid and loveless, and his death as the camp comrades are reunited is symbolically appropriate. It enhances the survival of the imperfect but illuminated ones — Melanie and Jakob and Christopher — in a world where one hopes the darkness may at last be in retreat.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

CONTINUITIES OF MEANING

SANDRA BIRDSELL, *The Missing Child*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $24.95.

MARILYN BOWERING, *To All Appearances a Lady*. Random House, 22.95.

SANDRA BIRDSELL HAS NOTED that "In Canadian literature . . . there is a lack of spirituality in the characters." Birdsell's and Bowering's first novels serve to correct this omission by evoking an understanding of the world that lies beyond that of mere common sense. Both set spiritual ignorance and ill-health — which take the form of religiosity in *The Missing Child*, and desperation and passive acceptance of naturalized societal myths in both — against spiritual perception and memory as the sites where there is an awareness of continuities of meaning. At the heart of both novels is the brutal rape of women, which constitutes the shame of the human race and symbolizes the death of innocence.

Birdsell's glacial valley town of Agassiz, Manitoba, "a pot whose surface churns with conflicting, diverse undercurrents," is inhabited by Métis, French, Mennonites, Hutterites, and British. It is a place worthy of touches of magic realism. Her characters' darkly humorous quirks — like Annie's swallowing of live frogs and June Marchand's hurling of dishes against the wall — are motivated by a sense of doom, guilt, and desperation, as are the women's sexual preoccupations. The women of the Mennonite church, for instance, refuse to acknowledge "the silent string of lights [that] pass across the sky in the shape of a V": "they didn't want to see any apparition the devil might conjure up as supposed evidence of life on another planet."

Birdsell does not provide characterization, in the traditional sense, so much as

explore the contours of individual consciousness and spiritual orientation. The main consciousness in *The Missing Child* is that of Minnie Pullman, who remembers previous lives, shared with the boy composer Mozart and a kind of dominating spiritual mentor called Jeremy. Minnie is considered by the others "the joke of the universe," and yet she is the only one who, like Maurice in Birdsell's short story "The Flood," "listen[s] and watche[s] and . . . feel[s] what's going to happen" to the valley: symbolic justice on a grand scale in the form of glacial flooding, which will put an end to the valley.

The title *The Missing Child*, besides referring to the literal disappearance of the child Hendrick (born with the ability to recite the bible) — and the figurative disappearance of the child in him — alludes to the loss of innocence in a "world . . . gone crazy." This chaos is manifest in Minnie's memory of the rape and murder of her twin sister when young, and in the rape and murder of Sandra Adam (Minnie's clay figure of whom is subsequently ruined and "imprinted . . . with the whorls and lines of a man's fingertips.").

In Bowering's first-person narrative *To All Appearances A Lady*, we follow Robert Lam's physical journey up the coast of Vancouver Island and his spiritual journey to determine the truths of his family's history. The story of his family's history is also the story of Chinese immigration to the west coast of Canada in the latter half of the nineteenth-century and their treatment by the Canadians in the early twentieth. For his physical journey, Lam — a marine pilot interested in the history of whaling — has detailed maps and guides; Bowering presents a great deal of geographical and historical data, which threaten to overwhelm the narrative. Accompanying Lam, who is half-Chinese, on this journey in the Spring of 1957 is the ghost of his opium-smoking, Chinese stepmother Lam Fan, who acts as his "spiritual pilot." As Robert narrates, Fan attempts to counteract his insensitivity, repeatedly interjecting commentary and admonishment: "You are such an idiot Robert Lam. You know nothing about nothing, body or spirit."

Robert Louis Stevenson is the source of inspiration for one of the main players in the story of Robert Lam's life: the man who married his mother. Stevenson's 1886 novellette *Jekyll and Hyde* acts as the metaphor of humans' two faces, one of which is inhuman. People are capable of great inhumanity to one another, but they can also at least partly atone for their failings through remembrance. There is Lam's rape of a young girl — whose grandmother afterwards shot herself and the girl out of shame — and the rape of Robert's mother, who embodied "the strength of innocence" which, says Lam Fan, "does not exist today." On a more general level there is the rape of Chinese self-respect and honour by Canadians, an act signified particularly by the leper colony of D'arcy Island.

The different manner in which rape — literal and figurative — is presented in *The Missing Child* and *To All Appearances a Lady* reveals the power of Birdsell's prose style and the weakness of Bowering's. In *The Missing Child*, Minnie is prompted to tell Annie the story of her sister's rape when Minnie claims to hear "the sobbing cry of a lost child" from the trees at the spot of the alleged crime. Upon hearing the story, Annie's wail "No, no . . . Oh no, no . . . Nooo . . . nooo . . . Stop . . . My heart is breaking" echoes over the water. The incident is presented sparsely and subtly, so that its darkness emerges from what is not said. In *To All Appearances A Lady*, Robert's extensive agonizing over the shame of his past and "for the good in the world, which is so often destroyed by the bad," and the relentless and unnecessary spelling out of the significance of Fan's lessons, actually

mute the realization of humans' capacity for evil.

Birdsell, known as a short story writer, proves a remarkably deft hand at powerful long prose with a poetic edge, while Bowering, who has published numerous books of poetry, proves a somewhat heavy-handed writer of expository fiction.

DIANE WATSON

RITE OF PASSAGE

JAMES HOUSTON. *Whiteout.* Greey de Pencier Books, $19.95.

FRED STENSON. *Last One Home.* NeWest Publishers, $18.95/8.95.

MICHELE MAILHOT. *Coming of Age*, translated by David Lobdell. Oberon, $25.95/12.95.

OF THESE THREE NOVELS, *Coming of Age* is the only one that is *not* about coming of age, at least not in the usual sense. *Whiteout* and *Last One Home* both deal with the period of initiation and starting out in life, whereas *Coming of Age* presents a midlife crisis. All three books are notable for successfully grounding their stories in the particularities of their region. *Whiteout* sets its rite-of-passage story of adolescent-becoming-young-man in the Canadian Arctic. *Last One Home* presents a main character, on the threshold of starting his career as an engineer, who is called home to the Alberta family farm from which he thought he had escaped forever. And *Coming of Age* is an incisive, sometimes angry, and often funny stocktaking of the life of a forty-year old Montreal woman, ex-wife and soon by her own choice to become an ex-career woman.

Whiteout's chief appeal to its readers is likely to be its presentation of Arctic life, and James Houston undoubtedly has impeccable credentials to be an interpreter of northern life to southern readers. He has lived in the north for twelve years and is known as the key figure behind the development of Inuit art. Since 1965, he has written almost a book a year, most of them about the north. Typically, in Houston's books, a child or young adult is called upon to show physical and moral courage in a stark, unforgiving landscape — stranded on an ice floe, starving on the barrens, or making a perilous journey across mountains. Similarly Jonathan Aird, the young adult protagonist of *Whiteout*, is sent from the debilitating climate of Toronto (he has recently been busted on a dope charge) to a small settlement in West Baffin Island to be made into a man by the renovating powers of Canada's arctic. These powers come in three forms: the stern, Presbyterian uncle Calvin, who runs the Hudson Bay store; an Inuit family including the young man Pudlo and his beautiful sister Panee, who provides the love interest; and the treacherous natural world that twice almost kills Jonathan.

The story of the testing of Jonathan is interwoven with informative details of northern life and Inuit culture. Here is a writer, you think, who really knows what it is like to cross Frobisher Bay by Twin Otter plane; what the inside of a northern Hudson Bay post looks like; what the Hudson Bay trader eats ("cases of sea biscuits, sacks of flour and oatmeal porridge, tinned bully beef, boxed salt herring, large tins of dried apples, prunes and apricots" supplemented with lots of walrus stew); and what it is like to make tea over a primus stove in an igloo or to be out in a whiteout when edges and shadows disappear and everything seems to float in a sea of whiteness.

Fred Stenson is another writer who makes the reader believe he knows the territory he writes about. In this case, the territory of the book is a farm in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, near the Pincher Creek area where Stenson grew up. Despite the book's brown cover showing a man and his horse, *Last One Home* is not generically a western, but it does

present a male world from a male perspective. When seven years earlier Gabriel was run off the farm by his dad ("No lazy half-Indian sonofabitch going to sit around here getting fed for nothing"), he left some loose ends and unanswered questions. Now at the age of twenty-five he has to go home again to confront the past and lay to rest old ghosts. The narrative present extends from Gabriel's return home in an April blizzard to the burial of his father in late November. Intercut are flashbacks to scenes from Gabriel's childhood and adolescence on the farm and his university days in Calgary. This is an ambitious novel, with a large cast of characters that includes Gabriel's ex-girlfriend, his brother, a friend from university, his father's girlfriend, an alcoholic poet, and an English professor who is writing an epic poem about Batoche. The novel is uneven, and seems to strain after significance (Gabriel is Metis, and the English professor is given to harangues on Louis Riel). But the slightly macabre ending is a tour de force, bringing together all the characters in a finale that is both funny and moving.

The relation between men and women, of minor interest in the books by Houston and Stenson, is put under close scrutiny in Michele Mailhot's feminist novel, ably translated by David Lobdell. The action is all internal — no driving dog sleds over ice floes or branding cattle here — but blood is drawn all the same in this battle of the sexes. Sexual politics has been the theme of all five novels by Mailhot from *Dis-moi que je vis* (Tell Me that I'm Alive) in 1965 to *Veuillez agreer . . .* in 1975 (the latter title, changed here in translation to *Coming of Age*, comes from the polite salutation of a letter written by the main character to her husband's mistress, "*Veuillez agréer, madame, avec mes voeux de bonheur.*") *Coming of Age* presents a day in the life of Judith — editorial assistant, divorcee, mother. At forty, she has reached an introspective age "when one is instinctively drawn to all that is secretive, silent and intense."

But on this particular day, a seed of resistance hardening within her finally impells her to a grand refusal in which she says no to various roles for women: religious devotee, virtuous married woman, competent career woman. Reviewing her marriage to Claude — their arguments ("But, Claude, I told you, *anyone* but the babysitter") and their divorce — she is by turns angry, distraught, defiant, conscience-stricken (would a real mother desert her two children, even if they are sixteen and eighteen?), defensive, self-affirming, and finally joyous. This brief novel reads like a much larger work compressed down to its essence for maximum intensity. It is certainly not popular fiction, as a reader can tell even without the footnotes for those without "the opportunity to profit from a religious education," outlining the penitential excesses of Pachomius, Anthony, and Simeon Stylites; providing excerpts from a letter of Jerome to Eustochia, a penitent; and explaining who Marie de l'Incarnation is. The translation *Coming of Age* should be welcomed as a step in making a challenging and accomplished Quebec writer more accessible to English-speaking readers.

CATHERINE ROSS

ACADEMIC DETECTIVE

PHILIP KOKOTAILO, *John Glassco's Richer World: 'Memoirs of Montparnasse.'* ECW Press, $24.00.

PHILIP KOKOTAILO was one of the first scholars to study in detail the discrepancies between John Glassco's public account of the composition of his autobiographical work, *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, and the evidence revealed by its manuscript. Kokotailo's analysis of the

two versions of *Memoirs*, the published work and the manuscript, was delayed in its appearance because another account of the same evidence (that of the present writer) happened to find its way into print first. It is a pleasure to see that Kokotailo's careful and valuable research has at last become available in a handsome format (the brilliant juxtaposition on the front cover of portraits of Glassco as a glamorous young man and as the elegant but melancholy figure of his later years is an intriguing counterpoint to the themes pursued in Kokotailo's text.)

Kokotailo chooses in some ways to adopt the manner of an academic detective, subjecting even the slightest evidence to a painstaking and logical analysis. For a reader to whom the story of Glassco's composition of his tale is an entirely new revelation, Kokotailo's attractively written narrative will be all the more interesting for its wealth of detail. A reader with even a slight acquaintance with Glassco's methods may wonder, however, why it is necessary to furnish several proofs that the manuscript was written in the 1960s when adequate and uncontested evidence for that conclusion was provided several years ago. Kokotailo's broad conclusions, on the level of fact, are consistent with what other scholars have found, and do not, in any fundamental way, go beyond what was previously uncovered. Kokotailo does, however, provide some very interesting new details, such as a detailed comparison between the actual time Glassco spent in Paris and the dates he records in his published book. It is also intriguing to learn that the siren Glassco variously calls Mrs. Warfield, Mrs. Porterhouse or Honour Quayle was in fact Marguerite Whitney. The extended extracts from Glassco's manuscript are sometimes more than is required for the sake of documenting a point, but they do make it possible to have glimpses of the fascinating character of the manuscript without visiting the National Archives.

On the level of critical interpretation, Kokotailo again offers analysis that is carefully considered and persuasive, but does not break new ground. On such matters as the personalities of Glassco himself and of important actors in his life like Robert McAlmon, Kokotailo is accurate in comparing the two versions Glassco gives, and sensible in his descriptions of motives and temperments. Glassco himself, with his extraordinarily complexity, is a formidable challenge for any interpreter, and it is understandable that for the purposes of a monograph Kokotailo does not penetrate the darker and deeper aspects of his subject's behaviour. A more ambitious biographer would wish to use some of the tools of psycho-analysis and also to relate the *Memoirs* more extensively to Glassco's lifelong obsession, as revealed in his other literary work, with what Kokotailo calls "subterfuge."

In his final chapter, Kokotailo abandons the role of detective and gives a traditional critical analysis that relates Glassco's book to the poses of dandyism, aestheticism and decadence. Here as elsewhere, Kokotailo pursues systematically the less formal observations of others. His careful research in the secondary literature devoted to these movements does turn up impressive evidence of what he calls Glassco's 'affiliations" with the philosophical tendencies and sexual proclivities of these spiritual forbears. Glassco was the most literary of writers, yet interesting as this chapter is, one does not feel persuaded that the wellspring of Glassco's motivation has been found.

The potential value of other approaches untapped by Kokotailo is revealed in two essays in the recent collection *Reflections: Autobiography and Canadian Literature*. These articles, by Michael Gnarowski and Timothy Dow Adams, take opposite views

of Glassco's misrepresentations in the *Memoirs*. Gnarowski's idea that Glassco betrayed his better self in attempting to pass off fiction as truth is sometimes expressed in acerbic terms, but it does draw on very well researched evidence to present an effectively argued and genuinely original thesis. Adams claims that Glassco's deceptions do not seem objectionable when "a larger autobiographical tradition of problem cases" is taken into account. *Memoirs* is seen as faithful to the spirit of the expatriate Twenties, "a time in which both painters and writers enjoyed the idea of ... duping the public." Adams's contention (contrary to both Gnaworski and an earlier essay by Stephen Scobie) that *Memoirs* is a genuine memoir is maintained at the very considerable cost of arguing that the book provides "little psychological insight into his character." Yet his insistence that *Memoirs* must be viewed in the context of other autobiographies and of autobiographical theory gives his essay a breadth of investigation that Kokotailo's book lacks, and both Gnarowski and Adams are justified, I believe, in asserting, in their differing ways, that the assignment of *Memoirs* to a specific genre matters in evaluating the nature of Glassco's achievement. This is a position Kokotailo unwisely rejects in his opening chapter.

At that very moment in his text, Kokotailo redeems himself by asking a very apt question: "The important question, then, is not 'To what genre does *Memoirs of Montparnasse* belong?' but rather 'What is the truth of Glassco's falsehoods?' " Though a single undisputed truth has yet to emerge from the discussions of Glassco's remarkable text, the search for such a truth has led commentators to many insights both about John Glassco and about the implications his work holds for the theory of autobiography. These three last searchers for the true Glassco may not have got their man, but they have helped to point the way towards him.

THOMAS E. TAUSKY

FACSIMILES

GEORGE GALT, ed. *The Purdy-Woodcock Letters: Selected Correspondence 1964-1984*. ECW Press, $15.00.

WHY IS IT that there is such a scarcity of good textual editions in the field of Canadian literature? George Galt's edition of *The Purdy-Woodcock Letters* is a recent demonstration of this fact. Although Galt states in his introduction that he intended his book "more for the general reader" than for the "academic specialist," this edition does not effectively cater to either audience. Ultimately the problem lies in Galt's having chosen to produce a facsimile edition. Visually, these letters are unremarkable. Only a textual scholar would be interested in the minutiae to be gained from these reproductions, yet the reproductions are themselves so unclear that the originals would have to be consulted for any sort of textual study. On the other hand, it is only the most devoted "specialist" who would strain his or her eyes (and patience) against this often impenetrable print. Not once does Galt provide a transcription. What is more, he states that a number of letters "for technical reasons could not be reproduced in this facsimile edition." Is this a reasonable criterion for an editor to base his or her selection upon? Besides, one could argue that a number of the letters printed here fell into the above category in the first place.

And if for the "general reader," where is the background information that such a reader would require: biographical information on the two correspondents, a bibliography of their writings, footnotes elucidating the many ambiguous referen-

ces in the letters? There is not even an index included in the volume. As for Galt's six-page introduction, it is sketchy to say the least. He gives virtually no biographical information, little commentary on the letters themselves, and no acknowledgement of the nineteen letters from Woodcock to Purdy previously published in Woodcock's *Taking it to the Letter* (1981). Nor has Galt provided even tentative dates for the letters. They are printed in chronological order, yes (excepting one from 1969 which has mysteriously found its way into the 1966 group); however, many are not dated and some, by Purdy, are actually misdated with no attendant correction by the editor. If this book was four years "in gestation," as Galt says, the nurturing time, it seems to me, was far out of proportion to the result.

The letters span the years 1964 to 1984, although Purdy and Woodcock had begun to correspond in 1960. Why Galt begins his selection four years after Purdy's first letter to Woodcock, he doesn't say. He does, however, give his reason for terminating the correspondence in 1984:

> . . . in that year references to publishing the correspondence begin to appear in the letters, and the private, closed-circuit exchange suddenly had an audience. To avoid any self-conscious playing to the camera . . . the writers agreed that no letters after 1984 would appear here.

Actually, although he doesn't say so, it was Galt himself who introduced the "self-consciousness" into the letters, for in the last letter of the volume we find Woodcock mentioning to Purdy Galt's proposal to publish the letters. An aesthetically appropriate ending, yet ironic that Galt should have been the cause for his own project's termination.

As to the letters themselves, while they reveal little that is new about Purdy or Woodcock, they do give an inside view of the close friendship that exists between the two men. In the early letters their relationship is largely a professional one, with Woodcock soliciting poems and reviews from Purdy for *Canadian Literature*. In the course of their correspondence we see them gradually becoming more relaxed with one another, particularly after Woodcock's resignation from his editorship at *Canadian Literature* in 1977. While the letters are perhaps less controversial or striking than one might have liked, they reveal a warmth and straight-forwardness that is refreshing in a literary correspondence. Still, be warned, if you wish to read this volume straight through, be sure to keep your magnifying glass close at hand.

CYNTHIA SUGARS

FAMILIARITY & ALIENATION

PAUL YEE, *Tales from Gold Mountain; Stories of the Chinese in the New World*; illustrated by Simon Ng. Douglas & McIntyre, $16.95.

THE CHINESE IMMIGRANT experience is explored in eight stories in this handsomely produced book: "Spirits of the Railway," "Sons and Daughters," "The Friends of Kwan Ming," "Ginger for the Heart," "Gambler's Eyes," "Forbidden Fruit," "Rider Chan and the Night River," and "The Revenge of the Iron Chink." The stories can be classified as "folk tales," sometimes with fairy tale motifs, sometimes without. Obviously the book is not meant to be a chronicle of the Chinese coming to Canada, but the reader is presented with the floods and famines which drove many Chinese from their homeland; he is likewise presented with the harsh realities facing the newcomers in the New World where they yet had to establish themselves. Though racism is not an overt topic, several scenes in which the white man exploits the Chinese gently

hint that the newcomers had to suffer that indignity, too.

Several of the stories can be grouped together thematically. "Spirits of the Railway" and "Rider Chan and the Night River" are ghost stories in which a fearless hero comes to face the world of the dead and by righting a wrong that had been done to them overcomes the obstacles they place in the path of the living. "Ginger for the Heart" and "Forbidden Fruit" are love stories, the first ending happily with the couple getting married, the second unhappily with the woman wasting away and dying. "Forbidden Fruit" also touches on the tensions arising from an interracial relationship, especially when the partner of the other race also happens to be poor. Interracial problems are also explored in "Gambler's Eyes," the story of a man who pretends to be blind because his white mother had given him blue-green eyes, and whites and Chinese alike had mocked his mixed blood. "The Friends of Kwan Ming" and "The Revenge of the Iron Chink" deal with exploitation of the Chinese at the hands of white men, and the solidarity of the Chinese that makes them triumph over their tormentors in the end. "Sons and Daughters" stands alone; it deals with a rich Chinese merchant who is disappointed at having only daughters since that means to him that the family name will not survive into the next generation. Merchant Moy tries to trick fate, but is tricked in turn.

These brief plot summaries suggest the range of the stories. The stories themselves are told in a simple, straightforward style. There is not much description, but when there is, it is accomplished in a few short and powerful sentences, as in this passage from "Spirits of the Railway":

> When the morning mist lifted, Chu's mouth fell open. On both sides of the rushing river, gray mountains rose like walls to block the sky. The rock face dropped into ragged cliffs that only eagles could ascend and jutted out from cracks where scrawny trees clung. Never before had he seen such towering ranges of dark raw rock.

The style obviously suits the simplicity of the folk tale; it evokes rather than exhausts.

The stories entertain children and adults alike; I read the book to my seven-year old daughter and she was delighted. The sparsity of illustrations (only one per tale) did not bother her; she was willing to let her imagination roam in the landscapes presented to her. She "liked" each one of the stories, but to my surprise she showed a marked preference for the two ghost stories; I had kept these last because I did not know how she would react to the more scary scenes, but she put my parental caution to shame by wishing to have these stories read repeatedly. She enjoyed the thrill of danger and was relieved by the positive outcome.

Some of the distinctly Chinese flavour of the book may be beyond the grasp of a seven-year old, but it adds a special dimension for the adult reader who, whether he is Chinese or not, will find himself both within and without the story; the universality of the folk motifs pulls him into it, the foreignness of the characters leaves him without. In so doing, Paul Yee creates for the reader the same sense of familiarity and alienation which the Chinese immigrants must have felt when they first set foot in a Canadian Chinatown.

GERNOT WIELAND (WITH ALEXANDRA WIELAND)

FICTO-THEORY

PAT KRAUSE, *Best Kept Secrets*. Coteau Books, $8.95.

BEVERLEY DAURIO AND LUISE VON FLOTOW, ed., *Ink and Strawberries*, An Anthology of Quebec Women's Writing. Aya Press, $9.95.

MOST STRIKING ABOUT *Best Kept Secrets* and *Ink and Strawberries*, is their difference(s), post-feminist *cuisine minceur* or deep dish apple pie. Yet it is possible to read both these collections as speaking from the position articulated more than ten years ago by Nicole Brossard's radical feminist publication *Les Têtes de Pioche*:

> Language politique, réalité politique du feminisme ayant comme point de départ: la vie

The publicity flyers for *Best Kept Secrets* give the background for 'Webs,' a story about Krause's father Dr. Allan W. Blair and an experiment he made at the University of Alabama in 1934. He allowed himself to be bitten by a black widow spider so the effects of the bite could be monitored. 'Webs' is the final story in the collection: it functions as closure and retrospective explanation to the discontinuous ficto-biography of a variously located character whom we can read as speaking for Krause. The presence and absence of the father, prematurely dead, possibly as a consequence of his experiment, speaks insistently through the text, as his narrator-daughter is engaged in the process of becoming that identifies the female. All Krause's fictions are locked into the life of the family; the narrator constructs herself as daughter, mother, wife; the body, the life of the fiction speaks both the complex webs of family/political structures, and the secret and buried spaces, the absences that shape and articulate presence, as in the dead father or brain-damaged cousin David of the opening story.

Best Kept Secrets is a distinctively regional collection. Krause's fictions function as a record of place and time in just the way her narrator suggests: the texture of local and cultural history as fiction remembers it, memory making itself plural, engaged in the retrieval of dead fathers, retarded aunts and female childhoods. Most of the time Krause manages to avoid sentimentality in evoking the emotions contingent on her material, but some of these stories slide a bit closer to stereotypes than is comfortable, the beautiful, successful and emotionally unknowing daughter in 'Second Sight,' for example, whose difference from her mother makes generational oppositions a little too glib, or the daughters who are variously reconciled to family structures and their place within them. Krause's girls celebrate their femaleness. But it is a femaleness that retrieves, re-calls, and valorises the conditions of its production, provincial Canada of the 1940's, when men were dreamboats or fathers and daughters hoped to become *femmes fatales*.

If titles can be read as signposts, then the incompatibility of ink and strawberries is written again and again in the short fictions of Daurio and von Flotow on Flotow's anthology. If Krause language politique might be read as a re-viewing of *la vie*, the thirteen contributors to this collection position themselves at the far end of the possibilities of that remark where the site of the text is the conditioned ambiguities of *la vie*, seen in the elusive derived writing of Nicole Brossard, a ceaseless shifting in the spaces of the written text.

Ink and Strawberries features writing by France Théoret, Marie-Claire Blais and Nicole Brossard among others; it announces itself as a collection of what might be called ficto-theory, fiction which writes the elusiveness of the female subject, fiction which continually deconstructs its own authorities, changes the relationship between reader and text,

writer and text, takes place in the acknowledged context of French feminist theory. In this context, even the stories which adopt more traditional fictional models, like Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska's 'Henna for Luck' or Suzanne Jacob's 'Strawberry time' read differently, destabilised by their neighbours into pictograms, other writings.

But writers like these demand committed readers. The collection ends with a long excerpt from Brossard's *Picture Theory*, whose central character, Florence Dérive, signifies the fictional presence of writing adrift: she can only be derived from the text, which continuously ruptures and breaches reality. The relationship of fiction to theory is such in Brossard's work that it is difficult to conceive the picture without the theory, though the pictures transfer their surface textures constantly into the felt experience of the text.

L'écriture feminine de-rives itself, in Brossard's writing of it, from linearity and from patriarchal reality. As a reading experience it remains, finally, inexpressible, which is perhaps itself an expression of how such a text could be produced.

LYDIA WEVERS

CELEBRATION

ELIZABETH HAY, *Crossing the Snow Line*. Black Moss Press, $12.95.

JAN ZWICKY, *The New Room*. Coach House Press, n.p.

MAUREEN MCCARTHY, *The Girls in the Last Seat Waving*. Harbour Press, $7.95.

IT IS DIFFICULT to define the genre of Elizabeth Hay's first work, *Crossing the Snow Line*. Part narrative, part travellogue, the book is divided into four sections, each focussing on a specific location (or locations), so that the protagonist (a nameless "I") makes a journey through time and space, from Yellowknife to Mexico. Moreover, there is evidence of a parallel emotional journey. From loneliness and isolation, "the ruined cabins of conversation," the narrator moves to pregnancy, love, and hope: "One home dissolves into another: the generosity of melting, which, of course, is the generosity of love." Despite an overall narrative pattern, the work defies the label of either "novel" or "travelogue." The four sections of *Crossing the Snow Line* are divided into smaller units; each is linked to the others through narrative development and repeated imagery; yet, each exists as a separate entity. These smaller sections resemble chapters, but could also be defined as stories, vignettes, diary entries, meditations, or prose poems. The sense of separation between chapters (?) is heightened by the gaps in the narrative sequence. If the narrative provides a skeletal framework, it is certainly a skeleton with a few bones missing.

The structural ambiguity is an essential element of the work, serving to point out, among other things, some of the basic paradoxes in life. Indeed, ambiguity and paradox control much of the book, and dominate the imagery. The work juxtaposes, then moves to combine a series of opposites, such as North and South, hot and cold. The controlling metaphor (or perhaps the controlling paradox) of Hay's work stems from the various interpretations of snow. Snow is used to represent absolutes: physical cold and emotional cold, "the coldness between us." But snow also contains the opposite qualities; the "snow underworld" is a place through which "small mammals move," a place where there is a "warm transformation of snow." As *Crossing the Snow Line* progresses, the protagonist consistently links opposities, first in ordinary objects: a piece of pecan pie with whipped cream is "a perfect encounter between hot and cold." Next, this linking is discovered in the natural world, for example, New Or-

leans: "In that city of hot jazz the Mississippi rose like loneliness, fed by snow, by cold. A perfect encounter." Finally, the linking is extended to a human level: "Sometimes retreating into one's coolness is warm." The paradox balances the need to communicate with the equally essential need to be alone:

> When snow falls the world is completely white and we feel partial because incomplete and alone. Or complete, because partial to snow. Snow connects us and isolates us. It teaches us we can want to be connected and separate at the same time.

The book's resolution appears in the final images, which are of springtime, "melting," love and hope as "eternal spring" (a variant of the "constant climate" of the snow underworld).

While this is an interesting first work, its effectiveness is hampered by the repetition of the imagery: the constant references to snow go beyond emphasis into overstatement. Admittedly, something is said well here, but it is said far too often. This is perhaps an argument for taking each passage as a separate unit, on its own merits, and, as the narrator herself points out, "The essence of snow, at least from a distance, is repetition." Unfortunately, the reader is not at a distance; he is likely to feel overwhelmed ("snowed-in").

For the most part, the dialectic in Jan Zwicky's third collection of poetry, *The New Room*, concerns the interplay between solidity and fluidity: "Every detail/ is enormous, fluid and exact." Details and fact, therefore, are at once concrete and fluid. "The Back Kitchen" delineates tactile, observable details: "the rough feel of the dipper on your lip,/the water, cold." Yet, fluidity (after all, water is used here as the concrete object) is also an inevitable, albeit paradoxical, aspect of life. While the external world contains details, a solely objective view cannot be trusted:

> as though the fact of their concreteness
> should have made the centre hold,
> as though it weren't the slipping-down itself,
> steep mossed walls, the far off
> unlit harbour between breaths.

Zwicky's world is active, always moving, often on the attack. Landscapes are personified; verbs are active; one image moves into (is jammed into) another. The summer heat in "Pukaskwa, July, A Driftwood Walking Stick" becomes "world's charred muscle/keloid ropes of quartz," an image which combines fluidity (muscle) and solidity (quartz).

Typically, Zwicky's landscape, while active and changing, is grounded in specific detail; places and things are real. But in "High Summer," the knowable segments of the world become mysterious. There is a sense of dislocation as "Fields dissolve to heat." The hay in the fields, while recognized as hay, is not known by name: "What were the names of hay? Brome? Timothy?/Those tall grey stalks were never so remote." Even the "wild rhubarb at the pig barn/offers nothing," and this rather prosaic plant becomes "unreadable." The concrete and the fluid, the real and the imagined, co-exist.

The overall structure and shape of *The New Room* reinforces the dialectic between solid and fluid. The series of poems parallels a series of rooms: rooms with walls, rooms containing objects. But rooms (poems) here do not enclose or constrict; rather, they open out on to a new dimension, a process of expansion and not of contraction. Individual words are also affected by this dialectic, and Zwicky examines the limited and the limitless properties of speech:

> The etymology of home
> is the entelechy of space: to part
> and come to rest, to open,
> in the many-windowed room of speech.

Maureen McCarthy's second collection of poetry, *The Girls in the Last Seat Waving*, focuses on an ordinary world, ordinary people — but does so in an almost

surreal fashion, thereby reminding the reader that distinctions between ordinary and extraordinary depend on perception. McCarthy also reminds the reader that there is often cause for celebration in the midst of mundane "dailiness." Through her fanciful, even quirky imagery, McCarthy affirms the value of life, displaying in the process, a sense of humour — a rare enough commodity among poets.

McCarthy creates a constantly moving world; "everything is moving — pacing round in circles/that curve into the road and join the endless journey of the sky." Anything is possible; limits (or what are ordinarily perceived as limits) are ignored. A discarded sofa "lies now on its side/like a ship upon the ocean floor/ leaves swim around it, its contents are oozing out." Through the extension of the original simile, the sofa begins to rise, floating into the sky. This pattern of expansion and contraction (earth to sky and back to earth) is a typical one for McCarthy, the return to earth always accompanied by an altered perception of the world.

The transcending of limits imposed by logic lends a joyful quality to much of the poetry. The sheer fun of "Anna" is created by the bizarre combination of images:

> A wind arises, unties all the houses
> they drift into the sky, mingle with the stars
> there is grandma's place, roses trailing from its underside
> grandpa, drunk and singing on the porch
> the moon trying to climb in the window
> the cat meowing for his milk.

The initial action of the houses drifting through the sky, is followed by a series of illogical, unrelated activities. In its totality, this is a chaotic, but exciting world.

Even in more somber poems, there is a movement towards joy, a movement which is often related to change of season. "Dead Time" begins with a wintry landscape ("the streets are brown and endless") and slow moving time ("dead time taps anvil-like against the brain"). The speaker is in a similarly deadened state: "I lie like stone in bed/cannot turn toward you." As is typical of McCarthy, however, the poem moves into spring; the tone changes as "tender feelings sprout continuously like shoots," and the poem becomes permeated with "the smell of spring."

The importance of one's participation in life is emphasized in "Wanda" with the direct command, "Wanda, pull the curtains back, look at that cement next door/ the garden down below, the roses growing rosier." Wanda, who is hidden behind bandages, "only the eyes showing," must remove the barriers and play an active role. There is a surprising, vital world, just beyond our daily perception; "It Will Come" tells us that "everything eludes the thing it's wrapped in/floats slightly out of reach." But McCarthy seems to have captured this elusive life force that animates object and man alike:

> bus stops stay put, rub their feet together, lack imagination
> watch people getting off at wrong places
> or is it anywhere will do for the shy and schizophrenic

McCarthy's answer to this rather startling rhetorical question is that, yes, anywhere (and anyone) will "do."

ELIZABETH THOMPSON

BLACK & WHITE MOODS

MICHAEL BULLOCK, *The Story of Noire.* Third Eye, $10.00.

MICHAEL BULLOCK AND NORMAN RICH, *Vancouver Moods: Poems, Photographs.* Third Eye, $12.00.

The Story of Noire is a tour de force of narrative modes, including enigma, surreal allegory, gothic fairytale, science fiction, metaphysical fable, and psychological

quest. Noire is a black-haired girl of sombre moods, who has a counterpart, Blanche; she is a source of ecstasy and anguish to the narrator; her dreams contain gnomic messages; she undergoes various metamorphoses; she passes through the door of death and returns; she is the Shadow in touch with his Anima.

While Noire undergoes various transformations — from Shadow to Anima; from Shadow to Devouring Mother; from "amorphous shape" to independent personality — the protagonist's self splits into two pairs: I and Anima, Other and Noire. All four then submerge in the river, and the drowning of old selves seems to signify the emergence of a new. The quest for identity includes a perilous return to the lost Eden of childhood. Along the way, the I encounters the Mother Imago, whose power he dispels by giving her a name that masks her identity (i.e., by creating fictions). He advances to a castle of black stone where he meets Noire, her authority symbolized by a black rod. But the self is suddenly armed with a hidden knife that will help him to overcome the Shadow.

Promising as this resolution appears, it is only shadow-play. In a final coda, the narrator and Noire return to their Old House, but the reality of the Past that it symbolizes has been hollowed out, so that it, too, is only a "House of Dreams." The narrator realizes "that I am not here and never again shall be." As the Shadow mood solidifies into a room with black walls, the self ceases to be. The quest that had reached "the threshold . . . of a new existence" ends in oblivion.

One of the key tropes of *Noire* is the reification — or "surrealification" — of words, thoughts, or memories. The narrator's words to Noire become plastic snowflakes or petals. Noire's letters to him turn into flames or ferocious little animals (probably expressing her moods); eventually one turns into a white and purple orchid, emblem of Noire in a kimono. The past becomes a "butterfly with pictures . . . painted on its wings," which the couple cannot capture for fear of damaging the delicate images. Black thoughts flow out of their eyes and form a dense cloud, that threatens to solidify like pitch around them. Only frantic gestures succeed in dispersing it. As they drive out on a winter's day, white thoughts emanate from their eyes and mouths, taking on the form of white birds or "splinters of light-reflecting ice or crystal."

Occult signs abound. Dabs of red paint on a black door "form the outline of a huge spider . . . [or] crab" — a pattern that reappears in red dots on Noire's dead body. A moss-covered wall is a semiotic signboard that can be read like the Tarot or the I Ching. Laurel leaves are covered with "hieroglyphs or ideograms." The Hierophant, the Hermit, and the Magician of the Tarot pack deliver signs and prophecies.

Certain obsessive images seem to spring straight from the narrator's psyche — such as the *danse macabre* of sun-motes over embracing bodies that can also be seen as a kind of leprosy, or the Old House covered with cobwebs and containing the mummified bodies of Self and Shadow. A "bittersweet" or "nostalgic" melancholy haunts the obsessive images of Noire — as if the self's desire to confront his erotic Shadow were in conflict with the narrator's desire for aesthetic distance. At last she lures him into a mental void and the story ends with a *mise en abyme*.

There is a Taoist quality in the poems of *Vancouver Moods*, in which the mind seems to pervade nature. Bullock's poetic art is a thinking with things in which thoughts are transparent images of a mind that becomes, for a moment, what it sees. The poet listens to "green music" or "silence . . . awash with sound," and hears the wordless voice of "the Tao [that] is green and flows through everything."

Decorative touches, as in the brocaded

fantasies of William Morris, are crossed with surrealist mannerisms and Oriental costumery. But if the poet (like the seasons) dresses up nature in bright garments, he also strips her down to frozen essences. He is "the listener . . . in the snow,/ . . . [who] beholds/Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (Wallace Stevens). Correspondences (as in Baudelaire's "forest of symbols") suggest a life that flows through all things and belongs to no thing. Woods, gardens, and seashore are a tapestry of interwoven signs.

The structure of these poetic images is more metonymic than metaphoric: "The charcoaled trunk/of a blasted tree/black armour of a samurai." There is no copula, no punctuation, no syntax to assign logical relations. The natural image simply coexists with the mental association; one does not displace the other. These poems enact a Taoist harmony of outside and inside, nature and mind.

There is an aesthetic of emptiness in frozen scenes that reflects "a mind of winter" (Stevens). Absence of colour reveals an "isness" that is and is not to be identified with objects of perception. Moods mingle with memories; symbolism hovers around the edges of these images. The writer inscribes his impressions on nature, and nature mirrors his activity. Bamboos, like "fingers of autumn," write "white letters" on "the porcelain sky." A series of hieroglyphic signs suggests the signifying process, while the equivalence of mind and nature appears in "brooks/whose thoughts are now of ice." Things become mute signs that gesture towards an unreachable source of significance — "birds are black notes on a lineless page." In the Tao, however, the process of centring mind upon nature is more significant than any meaning.

Norman Rich's black-and-white photographs beautifully complement Bullock's verbal images. A broken reed in the ice, with an arabesque of frozen leaves beneath the surface, is at once geometrical and natural, an image that connects opposites, matching the poetic process. The striking cover photograph (in colour) of a purple water-lily nestling among illuminated leaves, seems to fuse the natural object with the Oriental symbol of the lotus. Textual and visual images interact to make this slim book a pleasure to the eye and mind.

JACK F. STEWART

IMPRESSIONS

CAROL SHIELDS, *The Orange Fish*. Random House, $18.95.

TWELVE STORIES in the post-post fashion. They begin casually, they wander about, sometimes they have little story line, perhaps no closure. They have theme, though; they have, usually, a consistent point of view. Carol Shields is a critic, is a novelist, is an excellent writer of short stories; she knows how these things work. She must remind her readers of Alice Munro.

Not that you would confuse Shields and Munro, though the worlds they draw many of their subjects from are often the same: the professional maze, with its own rules for survival; the domestic scene, banal but viewed in an odd light; the perpetual, depressing puzzle of the generations — "Family Secrets" is a title for either author. But though they both deliver the knockout blow concealed in casualness, Shields is clearer, crisper — devastating but perhaps not quite so devastating as the more diffuse Munro.

The title story, initially one that seems an unlikely choice, insinuates its significance, but you know it's there: that momentary flash of numinousness in the dull disorder of existence. The inadequacy of the response. Bulwarking a collapsing marriage, the couple in "The Orange

Fish" buy a print of a fish, which briefly gives their lives a focus and a lift. Almost immediately a fish cult develops; they attend meetings and find themselves extolling the fish. The fish appears on pins and t-shirts, it is everywhere, it begins to die.

Parodic. You think, this writer's cleverness cannot merely mimic, it must parody the forms it exploits. So in "Today Is the Day" the annual ritual of planting brings the village women briefly back to an earlier language, an earlier community where both the few words and the silence are fertile, "weaving a stratagem of potent suggestion overlain by a wily, votive grammar of sign and silence."

There is always something wistful in those luminous moments. No transcendence is claimed, but only a brief and unexpected excitement, a glimpse of possibilities, of colour. In "Collision" the East-Bloc documentary-film maker, Martä, shares for a few heightened moments the umbrella of the American Brownstone, consultant on tourist entertainments. Nothing more. The bright moment will not change their lives, nor do they even speak — they have no common language. Two ships that pass in the rushhour, to speak in metaphor as, we are told, "more and more we *must* do." More and more too, the narrator tells us, we acknowledge the world's activity as the accumulating of biographical minutiae. Life is not action, not conflict, but the endless recording of trivia. Is Shields saying, We write therefore we are? Perhaps not even write, but file. In the age of archives, of self-awareness, self-analysis, what else is there?

Martä's encounter with Brownstone is one of the non-events that overflow the silent record, a significance only within the life because that is all there is, a brightness that does nothing, goes nowhere. The gap it fills is not so much a need as an inevitability. In the beginning was the biographer.

These are, as the narrator indicates, stories of metaphor; they are impressionistic, catching spots of time as the painter might catch spots of light. In "Fuel for the Fire" the widowed father brings loads of scrap lumber, anything that will burn, including, finally, bowling pins; and the daughter-narrator draws her metaphorical conclusions:

> the sight of burning fires, like right now, this minute, how economical it is, how it eats up everything we give it, everything we have to offer.

As the father's other interest is food, both metaphors inform the conclusion.

There are conclusions, tentative ones of course. Again as in Munro, there is much comment, and more than in Munro much impressionistic speculation on the wry vagaries of life. Increasingly in these post-moderns the impossibility of communication, the betrayals of personal relations, the unforgivingness of time, add up to the futility of life, the uncertainty of everything but death. These "real" worlds conceal the others where the bright moments flash and fade. Where communication fails in silence, so silence can be momentary communication, as the narrator finds after she and her husband have been unscrambling road signs, "the real death of words."

As in Munro's "underground caves paved with kitchen linoleum," these are the "true" world — the world of feeling and fiction — underlying all the realities, and the pretences that have to pass for realities just to keep us going. Like Munro, Shields gets it brightly, deceptively, disturbingly right.

D. O. SPETTIGUE

CHILDREN'S STORIES

JEANINE WINE, *Silly Tillie*. Good Books, $12.95.

RUDYARD KIPLING, *Just So Stories*, illustrated by Safaya Salter. Pavilion Books, $10.95.

DAYAL KAUR KHALSA, *Cowboy Dreams*. Tundra Books, $17.95.

OF THE THREE BOOKS discussed in this review, two have a publication date of December 89, the third of March 90. Despite the fact that the appearance of two of them was calculated to coincide with the Christmas rush, Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories* does not have any connection with Christmas, and though *Silly Tillie* is set in the winter chills, it is not a Christmas story. This review will discuss the two books with the December publication date first, and examine the third, *Cowboy Dreams*, separately.

Silly Tillie is the story of a bag lady who rescues the owner of a laundromat after he had been mugged. She does this since everyone else ignores the blood-covered man and despite the fact that he never gave her any of the "free" coffee which he offered to his customers and that he always chased her away when she huddled close to the exhaust vents of the driers for some warmth in the middle of winter. Even this brief outline reveals two biblical parables as the conscious or subconscious sources of the story, namely that of the Rich Man and Lazarus and that of the Good Samaritan, but where the Bible insists on Lazarus' inability to help the Rich Man, Silly Tillie can wreak revenge on Mr. Slotman by being the Good Samaritan to him and saving his life. Cast in a more modern mold, the story is that of an evil capitalist who is saved by a generous and warm-hearted, though somewhat eccentric, proletarian. Whether one prefers to consider the book's inspiration to be biblical or political, it clearly is educational, attempting to warn its audience not to dismiss asocial or antisocial contemporaries too lightly. The book is classified as being suitable for four to eight-year olds, a classification which seems perfectly correct for a group which makes its first experiences within a social framework larger than the family.

There is nothing in Silly Tillie's story that makes her deserve her name; neither the fact that she is an outcast of society nor her rescue of Mr. Slotman is especially "silly." What is silly in this book are the illustrations, surprisingly produced by Jeanine Wine herself. Tillie is shown to bathe — and play with a toy boat and a rubber ducky — in a public fountain; another time (this picture is also used for the title page) she is portrayed careening down a road in a shopping cart, with a dog, assisted by three puppies, pointing excited paws in the direction of their travel; a pigeon perches on Tillie's shoulder and the aforementioned toy boat and rubber ducky are coming along for the ride. The text reads: "Then a lumpy, bumpy lady, playing hide-and-go-seek with the wind, wheeled her cart into the alley. She began rooting through trash in hopes of finding something warm to wear." Neither the dogs nor the pigeon ever appear in the text of the story, but they are there in the pictures, as in the one mentioned above, or kissing Silly Tillie's mitt as though she were a grand lady, or holding up a mirror to her so that she can admire her charms and so on. The pictures do not illustrate the story, but add superfluous detail, trivialize the text, and actually run counter to it. Since both text and illustrations stem from the same person, the discontinuity between them cannot be blamed on a misinterpretation of a lighthearted illustrator; Jeanine Wine has written a serious, educational story and wrecked its seriousness and its pedagogic value with "silly" illustrations.

Kipling's *Just So Stories* have of course been published before; the present edition contains all twelve stories, among them

such favourites as "The Elephant's Child" (recently made famous by Jack Nicholson's reading), "How the Camel got his Hump," "The Cat that Walked by Himself," "How the Leopard got his Spots," and others. The stories are probably so well known that they do not need to be treated in detail here; Kipling's imagination entertains, amuses, and makes one think. How did the elephant get his trunk or the leopard his spots? Darwinian theories will not engage a child half as much as the Elephant Child's "satiable curiosity" which makes him search out the crocodile down by the "great grey-green, greasy Limpopo river, all set about with fever-trees" to ask him what he eats for dinner. In return for his question he has his "mere-smear nose" lengthened to present-day proportions.

Safaya Salter has provided one illustration per story, depicting one scene of each; for the "Elephant's Child," for instance, she has chosen to depict the scene in which the crocodile pulls the Elephant's Child's nose. The illustrations are elaborately framed, and in their style, with their frames, their muted colours, and their elaborate detail, they are reminiscent of Indian paintings of the last century. Salter evokes both the period of British Colonialism as well as the lush atmosphere of the jungle. Since the book is a time-less "classic," the publisher has not suggested an age group for which the *Just So Stories* are suitable; this edition no doubt will delight anyone from eight to eighty.

The third book, *Cowboy Dreams*, is separated from the others not only by its publication date but also because of its completely different tone. The story itself seems simple enough; it is told by an adult looking back on her childhood; as a girl she always wanted to be a cowboy. She makes herself a horse of the basement bannister and rides into a beautifully and colourfully illustrated Wild West landscape, and as she rides, she sings the songs of the "Poor Lonesome Cowboy" and "As I walked out in the Streets of Laredo." The songs, especially the second one, are sad, but the story ends happily enough with the adult confessing that she still hums these songs to herself every once in a while.

The distance between the girl's happy vision and the melancholy tone of the songs is explained by a biographical fact: when Dayal Kaur Khalsa wrote and illustrated this book she was ill with cancer to which she succumbed after the book's completion. Anyone aware of her fate cannot but help think of her death on reading the lines:

> Get six jolly cowboys to carry my coffin;
> Get six pretty maidens to sing me a song.
> Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me
> For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

Children reading the book, or having it read to them, would of course not know of the author's death, but the songs seem in contrast to the freedom the little girl seeks on the basement bannister. Does being a cowboy mean loneliness and even death? Or does the little girl sing these songs without knowing what they mean? For Khalsa, I am sure, her illness was a lonesome experience, and her death a liberation. The book is therefore powerful as sublimated biography, but even the cheerful "Giddyap" that ends the book will not dispel the child's uneasy sense that cowboy dreams lead to loneliness and to the graveyard.

GERNOT WIELAND

FEMINISMS

FEMINIST RESEARCH — PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT, edited by Peta Tancred-Sheriff, McGill-Queen's University Press for The Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1988. $32.95/$19.95.

JOVETTE MARCHESSAULT, *Demande de travail sur les nébuleuses.* Leméac, $9.95.

DOMINIQUE BLONDEAU, *Femmes de Soleil.* VLB, n.p.

THREE WOMEN-ORIENTED BOOKS: two by Quebec authors, a play by Jovette Marchessault and a collection of short texts by Dominique Blondeau — and the third a wide-ranging collection of essays resulting from the 1986 Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women conference. The issues addressed in these three books testify yet again to the diversity in women's writing, the wide gamut of feminist interests and the continued importance of woman-centered writing and research at a time of conservative retrenchment.

The collection of essays from the CRIAW conference edited by Peta Tancred-Sheriff, *Feminist Research — Prospect and Retrospect,* is presented by its editor as a look forward along the current trends in feminist scholarship, while taking account of past achievements. The collection was not conceived as an overview of feminist work in Canada but is rather a selection of individual essays in many different disciplines. The connecting thread throughout the collection is formulated by Marguerite Anderson in her introductory contribution, one of the few that attempts anything like an overview of feminist work in Canada:

> In my opinion we are in a third period in Canadian feminism, a period troubled by serious backlash. This backlash threatens our academic work as much as our lives and feminism in general.

The book is divided into six sections — reproduction and childbirth, education, women's work, women and well-being, women and literature and lastly, power and political strategies. The socio-medico-legal discourses are the most important aspects of the book — the literary section has only two contributions, an article on "la vieille femme" in the work of Antonine Maillet, the other on the feminist reassessments of Ibsen's *A Doll's House.*

The topics are however very diverse — there are three contributions on aspects of Acadian women's lives, an article on women and mathematics, a piece on the founding of the Canadian Feminist Party, and so on. There is an emphasis on continued feminist scholarship in every field at a time of political conservatism and the backlash identified by Anderson. Margrit Eichler's strong contribution "New Reproductive Technologies: Their Implications for Women" for instance shows how the technico-medical establishment manipulates definitions in order to foreground the importance of the foetus, a saleable product, and undermine control by the individual mother in the name of traditional nuclear family structures.

The articles on education propose both a worthy new ground for feminist teaching (prison inmates) and techniques based on cooperation, discussion and authenticity. The sections on work and health present a series of papers that are oriented on the one hand toward statistical and historical research (women's work in St. John's from 1890-1920, in a recent Mexican development project, in Moncton in the 1880's), and toward a revision of traditional analyses of depression and alcoholism in women and of women's responses to physical abuse within marriage. Finally the section on power and political strategies has several strong articles of general interest on women's ambivalent relationship to political power and responsibility, on tokenism and how to exploit it, on the pro-family movement in Canada. This is an interesting and provocative col-

lection of academic essays whose wide range of topics should appeal to anyone interested generally in women's studies.

The two works of fiction by Quebec authors, *Femmes de soleil* by Dominique Blondeau and *Demande de travail sur les nébuleuses* by Jovette Marchessault function quite differently from the academic discussions reviewed above. Yet Marchessault's drama could also be described as a discussion, or perhaps a family argument. A stereotypic group: mother, father, son and daughter review their history as a family in five "tableaux": the father defends his authority and his patriotism and bemoans his fate as the misunderstood and despised "banque de sperme." The mother uses the sarcasm acquired through years of experience to deflate her husband's pretentions all the while writing to her friend/star Stella and revealing her own disillusionment. The son (bartender in New York) flounders through the new age. Only the daughter (doctor in the Andes) seems to have some control of her life — she is unmarried and expecting a "revolutionary" child. Marchessault's interests in this piece seem rooted in utopian feminism. Throughout the family argument it is the mother who emerges as the important element, and again it is the young mother and her unborn child who are viewed as the sources of hope and healing.

In the work of Dominique Blondeau this is not the case. Her collection of short stories speaks the disillusionment of female middle-age. The women protagonists are often nameless and faceless, designated simply as "Elle"; occasionally there is an "Il" involved, as the desirable other in sexual fantasies ("Une fois, une île") or as the miraculous symbol of this vast country (a raccoon in "Les plus beaux yeux du monde"). Their evaluation of life so far is generally negative: "Elle se plut à faire le bilan de sa vie et le trouva ridicule." The younger protagonists are equally diffident about their lives and prospects: one, oppressed by her mother's vitality ("Dualité") seeks solace with an adolescent boyfriend; another, ("La Clôture") is a naked dancer "parce qu'Elle aimait danser et qu'Elle était belle"; yet another observes a five-year-old seduce her adolescent cousin who is found later, a victim of suicide ("Innocence").

The title of the collection, *Femmes de soleil*, would seem to promise a more optimistic view of women's lives; perhaps, however, it is meant more as a reference to the foreignness of the protagonists who often mention their "pays natal." All in all this is an ambiguous book, based more on women's traditional complaints of disappointment, distrust of each other and "ennui" than on sentiments inspired by the last twenty years of feminism. It is perhaps a product of the new conservative era signalled in the collection of feminist research reviewed above.

LUISE VON FLOTOW

MANIFESTOES

JEANNE DEMERS & LINE MC MURRAY, *L'Enjeu du manifeste: Le Manifeste en jeu.* Le Préambule, n.p.

DANIELLE ROGER, *L'Oeil du délire.* VLB, $12.95.

MONIQUE BOSCO, *Clichés.* Hurtubise, n.p.

IN THE INTRODUCTION to *L'Enjeu du manifeste: Le manifeste en jeu*, Wlad Godzich writes that literature and culture are the places where the redefinition of daily life and values occurs — a re-definition that has become more urgently and more constantly necessary in the last two centuries. Godzich actually takes us back to the *Chanson de Roland* in which he locates the expression of a widening gap between official values and the realities of daily existence. The manifesto, he claims, dates back to this early period, a time when the state and its institutions were

stabilizing their control and displacing feudal and church hierarchies as well as the morals these propagated. The literary manifesto is thus political writing; it is a direct formulation of the concerns, the contradictions and the options of a particular writing practise at a particular time. In fact, all writing is political.

The three books under review all deal with aspects of modern writing practise that lend themselves to political interpretation. *L'Enjeu du manifeste* is a scholarly work on the manifesto as a particular form of writing, to attempt to locate a basic model of the manifesto or at least to establish categories according to which the many examples taken from the last two centuries of European and Quebecois writing can be understood. Danielle Roger's book *L'Oeil du délire*, on the other hand, is not an explicit manifesto, but could lay the groundwork for one. She develops a "female gaze," an aspect of modern culture that has been described as atrophied, if not non-existent. And Monique Bosco's collection of short stories *Clichés* surveys the process of ageing in contemporary society. After reading Bosco's work, it would seem that the euphemism *l'âge d'or* often applied to this stage of life would require some revision.

In *L'Enjeu du manifeste* the authors have divided their speculative approach into three sections: *L'Archimanifeste*, *Manifeste: acte et types*, and *Un discours du paradoxe*. The first section is the most lively: an attempt to "cerner le manifeste" without reducing its oppositional effects which the authors view as a confrontation with *les pairs/les pères*. A manifesto is thus presented as a confrontational practise with a dual role: an attack on one's contemporaries as well as on tradition. I hesitate to say patriarchal tradition here, since the authors only very occasionally mention feminist manifestoes in the remainder of their text. Beyond this dual role of the manifesto, an important differentiation is required — the written manifesto and the action-manifesto. The former obviously has a longer life-span in what is often a short-lived phenomenon and it incorporates aspects of the *manifeste-agi* in its typography and its shock effects. The latter has a more immediate effect however, since it is often perpetrated on an unwilling and unsuspecting audience.

In the subsequent sections of the book the oppositional manifesto is seen to operate in two different ways — from a weak periphery against a strong central, mainstream culture, or, as in Quebec, from a relatively strong and active periphery against a central culture that is rather weak. In fact, the Quebec-bias of the book presents much that is of current interest. Mainstream culture and especially the *institution of literature* in Quebec are sketched as dependent upon prizes and subsidies administered by political agencies; the importance of the oppositional manifesto is thus grounded in political considerations. This concern is reiterated in the last pages of the book.

The authors conclude that the oppositional manifesto belongs in the *schizo-parano* camp. Their research has shown that the often totalitarian impulses of manifesto-writers end up either affirming the dominant culture or destroying their own initiatives. What is required now, and what is currently being developed, they claim, is a recognition of *différance*. Dissidence and contestation produce pendulum movements — *le manifeste du quotidiennisme*, on the other hand, eliminates this bi-polar approach and operates according to a multi-dimensional dynamics.

Danielle Roger's collection of short texts *L'Oeil du délire* is a good example of this type of developing complementarity. The female eye explores the fantastic, the surreal, the criminal and the erotic — in a style reminiscent of Anne Dandurand's writing. The agonizing question of

women's power(lessness) in patriachal society which dominated much of the writing of the 70s and early 80s in Quebec gives way in Roger's text to women's sensuous vision of the world. The problems encountered in the unavoidable and often desirable interaction with men are implicit in many of the texts, but the emphasis is on the female gaze, on the woman's discerning eye. This is an important development, and symptomatic of much recent women's writing (see Alina Reyes in France and Elfriede Jelinek in Germany).

The stories of this collection focus on very different situations: the woman "en chaleur," the rendez-vous and the preparations that precede it and cause its failure, the friendly *bise* that suddenly becomes intimate. One text, "Regards sur paroles" is a sustained and intense study of the "regards" and the "paroles" of a lovers' meeting. The hotel room is dark and seedy: *l'odeur saline des seueurs anonymes* charges the air. The narrator's gaze moves in closer in order to record the man's voice and words, *and* the woman's desire. He speaks; she acts: *il n'en finit plus de parler de leurs bouches . . . elle mène le jeu quand elle l'embrasse. . . .* Her desire is the force that has brought about the meeting, and she acts to realize her fantasies.

The collection is a witty, fantastical and creative response to the lament of women's oppression. It sheds an ironic light on the individual's own implication in his or her "plight" and focusses the reader's attention on the play of appearances, fantasies, rituals and games that intertwine to confuse all issues.

Monique Bosco's *Clichés* concentrates on other social and cultural questions — primarily those connected with growing old. Throughout the collection, the author evokes the fear, the loneliness, the intolerance and the sense of waste and loss that seem to be inherent in this inevitable process. The ten stories of this collection often seem clichés, as the title indicates: clichés of the ageing process (everything we suspected turns out to be true), and clichés in the other French meaning of the word — portraits of people growing old.

Comme les gens de mon age le savent bien, nous avons été manipulés facilement, nous les ignorants, les non-instruits says the retiree who has just signed up for further education. His confession then merits him the unwanted attentions of an older widow and he soon finds himself married again. In another story the medical secretary wonders how to best understand *la peur de la vieillesse, l'inflexible et solitaire vieillesse des célibataires.* There is a pervasive feeling of helplessness, powerlessness and a wasted existence.

Bosco's approach is moralistic. Though she offers the victims of *vieillesse* a certain sympathy, she condemns society's creation of and response to this phenomenon of gruesome solitude and indifference: *tout cela [se passait] dans l'indifférence totale des voyageurs regardant pudiquement par la vitre. . . .*

These are not light, amusing anecdotes; only one story is an exception in this string of depressing accounts of *l'âge d'or.* In "L'Histoire du petit homme et des deux obseses" the nasty little bilious and shrivelled man is frightened to death by the obese couple that has repeatedly been subject to his intolerance and his insults. Finally someone has discovered the power of agency.

LUISE VON FLOTOW

EPISTOLARY VOICES

Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature. Ed. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith. Northwestern Univ. Press, $32.50 US.

LINDA S. KAUFFMAN, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre and Epistolary Fictions.* Cornell Univ. Press, $14.25 U.S.

JENI JOY LA BELLE, *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass.* Cornell Univ. Press, $27.45 U.S.

THE LACK OF KNOWLEDGE about women's pasts has been addressed in at least two ways in recent years: the production of "herstories" such as the Clio collective's *Histoire des femmes au Québec depuis quatre siècles* and the publication of historiographical fictions such as Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* or Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska's *La Maison Trestler*, which seek to reclaim the past from a woman's point of view. Women's epistolary writing provides another focus for this interest in reclaiming women's pasts. *Writing the Female voice* and *Discourses of Desire* contribute to the exploration of letter writing as a means of describing and communicating women's lives and their socio-literary status, examining "the female gender and the letter genre."

Writing the Female Voice presents fifteen essays in three chronological sections. The initial essays examine examples of feminine epistolarity from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when, as Goldsmith notes, the letter began to be considered as a literary form. Katherine A. Jensen's article examines men's appropriation of women's epistolary texts (through selection, publication, and requirements of style) and argues that "male prescriptions for feminine letter writing and models of feminine love letters [uncover] a vested male interest in asserting control over woman." As Goldsmith observes, the praise men heaped upon the supposedly natural talent women have for epistolary writing — especially for love letters — had the paradoxical effect of reducing their scriptive authority: women were expected both to excel at producing letters of passion and to be too "respectable" to claim authorship of them. The most famous example of the genre, the *Lettres portuguaises* (1669), were long believed to have been letters from a Portuguese nun, Mariane, to the French lover who abandoned her. For three centuries, the *Lettres portuguaises* were held up as the model for passionate female epistolary writing, although recent research strongly suggests that the author of these letters was a man. As Jensen points out, if the woman, Mariane, "*had* written these letters, their preface would have effaced her as their author": while it refers to the French lover, the male translator and the reading public, this publisher's preface makes no mention of the identity of the letter writer. This first section, then, addresses both the possible empowerment of women through letter writing and the threat that this new, not-yet-accepted literary art posed to the "male, monarchical, supremacist position."

The second and longest section of the collection examines the female epistolary voice in the eighteenth century. Thus, James Carson offers a somewhat provocative discussion of cross-gender identification in Samuel Richardson's novels; Julia Epstein and Susan K. Jackson respectively investigate female epistolary practices in John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (*Fanny Hill*) and Laclos's *Les Liasons dangereuses*, and Patricia Meyer Spacks proposes that Jane Austen's adolescent novel, *Lady Susan*, challenges the conventions of eighteenth century female epistolarity from *within*.

One of the most impressive essays is Janet Gurkin Altman's article on Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*. Altman argues that Graffigny's work challenges the hegemony of established conventions — in this case, Euro-centered ideology and French Enlightenment stereotypes of the "noble savage." In direct contrast to the positive appraisal and integration of the external world encountered in the letters of Graffigny's heroine is the stark atmosphere of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which is examined in an article by Linda Kauffman in the third section of the book. Here, the narrator's letters — in reality, tape recordings of her voice — are submitted

to the ordering, selection, modification and "publication" of the male archivist who discovers them in 2195. In this they resemble their predecessor, the *Lettres portuguaises*, which were presented as being found, ordered, translated, and made public by male authority figures. Have we come full circle? So it would appear, but the radical rereadings of epistolary practices found in many of the contributions here offer new approaches to this genre. Two studies of non-fictional correspondence — George Sand's letters to her mother and letters to the Marquis de Sade in prison — round out the many contributions in this balanced, serious study.

Kauffman's own work, *Discourses of Desire*, focuses specifically on love letters written by literary heroines: Ovid's *Heroides*; Heloise's letters to Abelard; the *Lettres portuguaises*; *Clarissa*; *Jane Eyre*; *The Turn of the Screw*; *Absalom, Absalom!*; and *The Three Marias: New Portuguese Letters*. This beautifully presented, dense and engaging work begins with a brief discussion of the formal characteristics of amorous epistolary discourse. Recalling the title of Rina Lasnier's *Présence de l'absence*, Kauffman notes that in the absence of her lover, the heroine's "epistle is simultaneously a love letter and a legal challenge, a revolt staged in writing." The heroine writes to be read by her lover, to relive the moment and, to proclaim her "individual worth and honor." Over the centuries, discourses of desire have posed "a radical challenge to traditional concepts of authority and authorship, referentiality and representation," and their authors have been repressed systematically, from Sappho to the three Marias. Kauffman notes a tendency in contemporary feminist theory to discount the importance of authorship, period, genre and mimesis, and proposes a political reevaluation of these issues in her work. She examines stereotypes of *masculine* as opposed to *feminine* writing in traditional criticism of the literary construction of gender. To this end, she focuses on contextualization, from political history, to authorial correspondence, to intertextual underpinnings. This extremely well-documented study also draws heavily on the work of theoreticians such as Barthes, Derrida, and Bakhtin, as well as making frequent reference to rhetorical practices and to Janet Gurkin Altman's initial work on epistolarity. While Kauffman's applications undoubtedly lead to insights which would otherwise be difficult to illustrate, the theoretical writings sometimes appear to displace work on the original literary texts. This is particularly the case in the (otherwise solid) chapter on the three Marias. Nonetheless, *Discourses of Desire* presents a thorough and significant study of amorous epistolary discourse, and its unusual blend of literary history and theory with feminist concerns make it a remarkable book.

Jenijoy La Belle's *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass* is the least engaging of the three works. There are only so many ways a woman can look at herself in a mirror, and there are only so many interpretations of that look. The work provides innumerable literary representations of the woman/mirror/reflection relationship, take from works by American, British and Canadian (Atwood, Hébert, Munro) authors. I find it difficult to accept La Belle's premise that women define themselves, to a considerable degree, through the relationship they have with their reflection in mirrors. Furthermore, her presentation suffers occasionally from lack of clarity. Is she *serious* when she writes: "From reading books and criticizing them, we learn to become ourselves within a cultural continuity. . . . The woman 'consulting' her looks in the mirror is also undergoing an educative experience"? Her work, however, is well-researched; and the division of chap-

ters according to "the ratios of dominance between the woman and the glass" appropriate. Belle investigates the mirror as substitute male, the differences between male/female identities, the self/other paradigm, the fear of aging, and attempts to break free from the mirror's control over the female's self-definition. *Discourses of Desire* and *Writing the Female Voice* contain dense studies of epistolary practices, whereas *Herself Beheld* will appeal mainly to those individuals who are fascinated by women and the mirror in literature.

MARIE VAUTIER

PROTOCOLS OF READING

THOMAS M LEITCH, *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation.* Pennsylvania State. $22.95 U.S.

PETER J. RABINOWITZ, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation.* Cornell, $29.95/8.95 U.S.

ROBERT SCHOLES, *Protocols of Reading.* Yale, $18.95 U.S.

CHRISTOPHER NASH, ed. *Narrative in Culture: The Use of Storytelling in the Sciences, Philosophy, and Literature.* Routledge, $69.00.

THE CURRENT INTEREST in narrative theory is fueled by three things: the hope that narratology will succeed in finding deep rules, and thus make criticism scientific; the question of what it means to interpret a story; and the repeated demonstration that, despite realist prejudices, all narrative and theory is fiction or metaphor. Thomas Leitch pursues the deep rules that make a sequence of events a story; Rabinowitz and Scholes are concerned with interpretive conventions, and Nash's collection is about the fictionality and rhetoricity of narratives that purport to be referential.

Thomas Leitch's book does not live up to its title. It is a rag-bag of poorly argued theory and criticism of individual works. Despite making a display of coherence in the chapter titles — "The Teleological Principle," "The Discursive Principle," "The Polytropic Principle," — I found no coherent account of the nature of narrative. For example, Leitch begins by making a sharp distinction between narrative and drama, because in drama there is no storyteller. But Leitch himself does not take his fundamental distinction seriously, since I count over 70 references to films. This is a poorly written book, which seems to have been cobbled together from lectures on various narrative topics and individual works. While there are a few bright moments, I wish it on no-one.

Peter Rabinovitch's book makes a happy contrast. Rabinovitch is modest, clear, illuminating and even persuasive. His basic idea is that authors "design their books rhetorically for some more or less specific *hypothetical* audience, which I call the *authorial audience.*" Thus the book is entitled *Before Reading*, since the text presupposes certain things ("conventions" is his term for them) and we can only read within those conventions. (Of course we can misread any way we like.) We get from reading to the politics of interpretation by making explicit the evaluative presuppositions that govern any narrative. This is because we must inevitably compare our moral presuppositions with those of the authorial audience.

Rabinovitch lays out what he calls "rules of reading." Any such classification is, Rabinovitch sensibly says, a "rough sorting out of an extremely thorny area." The strength of the argument here is that the conventions Rabinovitch identifies are strongly tied to the normal ways we read (including the ways we read abnormal texts). You can, therefore, check what he says against your interpretive habits and predispositions, and I, at least, found confirmation for his "rules" in my reading practice. (Yes, I do pay more attention to

titles as clues to meaning than to the 80th, 424th and 690th words of any text.) Rabinovitch identifies rules of notice, signification, configuration, and coherence, and the book is replete with persuasive examples from all kinds of works. The danger here is obviousness, but that is greatly preferable to the obscurantism and mystification of most narratology. He is telling us what we tacitly know and obviousness follows. The book reads well, and I recommend it highly.

Robert Scholes's *Protocols of Reading* is a quirky book. It is Rabinovitch who lays out "protocols of reading," while Scholes does nothing of the sort. The first essay, for example, takes as examples of interpretation the interpretation of a painting and the lives of three modern people; interpreting visual works has special problems and interpreting lives is another matter altogether. I need something more than the assertion that everything is a text to persuade me that we can learn much about literary interpretation by taking lives as texts.

The best part of the book is Scholes's argument with Derrida. Although Scholes claims to be adopting some of Derrida's ideas, he in fact offers a lucid critique of the assumptions of deconstruction and shows convincingly that Derrida is both self-contradictory and does not practice what he preaches — most of the time. This has been noted before, but it is worth repeating clearly and genially. The final chapter, "Criticism: Rhetoric and Ethics," is based on a crucial idea: "Textual pleasure always involves some surrender of sovereignty." To read seriously we must join with what Rabinovitch calls the authorial audience, but that audience may have attitudes which we find distasteful or abhorrent. As Nietzsche said (in *Twilight of the Idols*), every work supports evaluations, so there is no art for art's sake. Scholes then wonders what the difference is between advertising and poetry, if the fictions of each just support different values. But he misses a point here. The purpose of advertisements is to make us buy this stuff rather than that stuff and to buy stuff no matter what; the purpose of *Paradise Lost* is to justify God's ways. But the purpose is not the whole set of values that ads or the epic support or criticize by implication. An ad for beer can support machismo, quiet moments of friendliness, family life, and so on. And *Paradise Lost* is a lot more, and for many, a lot better than its purpose. The elucidation of the implicit evaluations in literary works is, I think, one of the most fruitful directions in criticism, one which cuts across political lines but does not erase them.

Scholes is at times annoyingly avuncular — "we should, in fact, read so as to get the most out of our experience of reading . . . just as we should make the most out of our lives" — and he can be rather casual with ideas. For example, he says that "we know that our lives are shaped like stories, with a beginning, middle and an end," but Aristotle rightly pointed out that a life is *not* a story, because "the incidents in one man's life cannot be reduced to unity." (We believe in unity of character, a different thing, and so a life is a unity to us, but that has nothing to do with beginnings, middles and ends.) This book is a lively, if erratic, performance by a sane critic.

"Economists are tellers of stories and makers of poems." So goes the third sentence of *Narrative and Culture*, and there we have the theme of the first part of this collection, "Narrative and 'Fact'." Most readers of economics, unlike readers of fiction, do not know that "marginal productivity is a metaphor" and the *Origin of Species* is referred to as a "skilful fiction." The first part of this collection consists of essays that try to show the fictiveness of various disciplines in which storytelling is the mode of presentation — economics, law, psychoanalysis and sur-

prisingly, but persuasively, biological research. What makes the volume valuable is that the second part contains essays that make the case for the other side, including a shrewd, if unfair, "deconstructive" account of the impulse to fictionalize all discourse: "could we imagine a better way to shore up the status, the credentials of our salaried dabbling with fictions — against the claims of, say, science and technology — than by neutralizing or purging the truth-test from the realm of worthwhile intellectual endeavor" (Christopher Nash, "Literature's Assault on Narrative."). I conclude from the debate that the main issue is the relative importance of plausibility in getting ideas accepted, and the answer seems to be that it varies considerably. There are obviously many reasons for belief other than plausibility, and learning more about them is therapeutic; but it does not constitute intellectual well-being itself. Rhetoric cannot wholly replace reference, even in fiction, but that is another story.

ROGER SEAMON

IRONIC STANCES

LINDA HUTCHEON, *A Poetics of Post-Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* Routledge, $19.95

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS, *Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology.* Routledge, $30.00.

TERRY EAGLETON, *Saints and Scholars.* Verso, $14.95.

EACH OF THESE BOOKS is a meditation on doubleness, self-division, the irony of our condition. The ironic stance stems from the sense that one is both inescapably "inside" the dominant systems and unhappily aware of that fact. There is an inevitable collusion with the capitalist (aka patriarchal) hegemony, but one can attain ditance through parody; irony or other doubling forms. Post-modernism — one name for this collusive opposition — "does not pretend to operate outside that system, for it knows it cannot; it therefore overtly acknowledges its complicity, only to work, covertly to subvert the system's values from within."

Linda Hutcheon's book is dedicated to this theme. It is an academic study which exhibits none of the slyness or irony of its subject. It is a broad survey of certain contemporary modes in fiction, historiography, the visual arts and cultural theory which, she convincingly shows, constitute a coherent movement based upon shared strategies and beliefs. Hutcheon repeatedly calls attention to the fact that what distinguishes postmodernism from other cultural critiques — for example Marxist or Freudian ones — is its self-awareness, and what it knows is that "it is ineradicably dependent upon the very assumptions it seeks to uncover." At the same time Hutcheon, true to post-modernist self-doubt, goes on to say that "it is perhaps liberal to believe that any subversion or undermining of a system is healthy and good, but it would also be naive to ignore the fact that art can just as easily confirm as trouble received codes, no matter how radical its surface transgressions." Although most of the book is an exposition of the central themes of postmodernism, Hutcheon's polemical aim is to defend it against the Marxist criticism that postmodernism is anti-historical and thus apolitical. But is there really a way to determine whether Jameson and Eagleton are more or less subversive than Hutcheon herself? And is it worth doing? Clearly not to the powers that be, who treat the opponents with equal tolerance. That Hutcheon does not need to stand up for truth against overtly repressive forces, but has the luxury of self-doubt, is a tribute to the freedom we enjoy. But one must not say that too often or too loudly. The main weakness of *A Poetics of Postmodernism* is that it is very, very repetitive. One can

only be told so many times that postmodernism acknowledges the fact that "it depends upon and draws its power from that which it contests." Still, this is a fair-minded, clear and pretty thorough account of postmodernism with a bibliography of about 600 items that I shall consult quite often.

Where postmodernism is playful in approach (if not in its final aim) Paul de Man is deadly serious. De Man believed, with some justification it now appears, that he was working a revolution in criticism. Christopher Norris wants to show 1) that at the center of de Man's project was an attack on what Norris calls "aesthetic ideology," "the high Romantic dream of a perfect, unimpeded communing of mind with nature or mind with mind," 2) how de Man managed this attack by opposing rhetoric — the unavoidable meanings of figures — to the unity derived from inspiration and authorial control, and 3) that this deep scepticism is not finally anti-political, though it was so in de Man's early formulations of his ideas. In this last endeavor Norris joins Hutcheon in worrying about leftist critics. The argument is that the aesthetic ideology is inherently political, and thus criticism of it is a deliberately political act. However, de Man remains suspicious of totalizing programs which are confident that they can go beyond deconstruction to make a new world. Once again, the political content of deconstruction seems empty. It opposes whoever tries to defend con-struction — left or right. Norris is a lucid expositor, but is a bit weaker when it comes to argument, and he, like many, is, I believe, overimpressed with the basic assumptions of deconstruction. In other words the book is not critical, but it is an excellent introduction to the connections between de Man's ideas and intellectual movements with which he has affinities and disagreements.

Terry Eagleton is, in stance if not in achievement, the Swift of our time — or so I think. He and Swift share a passionate hatred of oppression, are not unmindful of the complicity of the oppressed, and find that no excuse for oppressors. That leads to a characteristic irony, but both (Eagleton miraculously) retain a faith which makes the irony utterly uncynical. From the assurance of that noble faith both look down with pity, pathos, anger, impatience on both the oppressed and their oppressors. In *Saints and Scholars*, a longish parable on the nature of revolutionary action, Wittgenstein and Bakhtin are held captive by Irish rebels in the 20s. Bakhtin is the flesh, Wittgenstein pure mind, and the revolutionary James Connolly is the complex man who must act in the real world and so suffers its complexities. Neither carnivalism nor scepticism can compass the pathos of the need to act, so Connolly is the hero. While the book is, like all that Eagleton writes, intelligent, it did not work for me. The tension of the story gets lost in the debates, and the seriousness of the intellectual conflict is undermined by the coterie wit, but there are moving and eloquent moments.

ROGER SEAMON

FEMALE MOSAIC

JOANNE BLUM, *Transcending Gender: The Male/Female Double in Women's Fiction.* UMI Research, $34.95.

SANDRA BURT, LORRAINE CODE, AND LINDSAY DORNEY, eds. *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada.* McClelland and Stewart, $17.95.

ALICE A. CHOWN, *The Stairway.* With an introduction by Diana Chown. Toronto, $25.00.

THE VOLUME of published work written from the female point of view has so much increased in the past five years that this approach has moved from the marginal to the mainstream. What is particularly heartening about the three books under

discussion in this review is the variety of subjects they manifest.

From a strictly New Critical point of view, Joanne Blum's analyses in *Transcending Gender* are engaging. The title of her book, however, promises more than the text delivers. Or perhaps the vagueness of the title is misleading. Who transcends gender? The writers of women's fiction, or the characters therein? As it turns out, no one actually "transcends" anything. What Blum really studies — and this in itself is worthwhile — is a variation of the *doppelganger* motif in novels by women. The bulk of *Transcending Gender* cites examples to substantiate Blum's thesis that the works of women writers often manifest an

> image of male/female relation . . . in which the male and female selves overreach their culturally prescribed gender identities to relate to one another in such a way that the boundary between self and other becomes blurred . . . in defiance of the divisions of gender.

Furthermore, Blum suggests that women use this strategem as a way to burst the confines of the patriarchal culture.

Blum's focus on the motif of a male/female double in fiction is intriguing; as she points out, we have a wealth of studies on single-sex doubles. The strongest argument for her thesis is the chapter on the Brontes, who certainly lend themselves to an examination of male/female psychic bonding; however, Blum never satisfactorily proves that the characters transcend their gender. Similarly, the chapter on the connection between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is an interesting treatment of their parallelism in terms of manifesting a "transcendent consciousness," but Blum faces the impossible in attempting to prove that either of them moves away from his or her gender. The same point applies to her study of the book's only Canadian text, Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*: Blum convincingly demonstrates that Morag and Jules form a male/female double, but it seems doubtful that this doubling has anything to do with gender transcendence, unless Blum actually believes that women who choose to procreate and support those procreative projects without the help of a male are somehow transcending gender."

Changing Patterns: Women in Canada, is a textbook for Women's Studies courses. Such a text is long overdue, but this book makes the wait worthwhile. A selection of essays by eleven women, *Changing Patterns* deals with women's issues and roles in law, medicine, psychology, literature, reproduction, and family. The first three essays, which provide an introduction to feminist theory and the history of the women's movement in Canada, are particularly useful for newcomers to Women's Studies. What is most delightful about the book is its Canadian context; the editors of this text are to be applauded for their decision to provide Canadian women with information relevant to being female in Canada. Another laudable aspect of the book is the reading list which appears at the end of each essay. However, any selection of essays, no matter how well-conceived, is bound to be somewhat uneven, and *Changing Patterns* is no exception. Shelagh Wilkinson's chapter on women in Canadian literature, although it does an admirable job of circumventing the traditional canon, manifests some questionable emphases. On the other hand, Roxanna Ng's "Immigrant Women and Institutionalized Racism" is as compelling as it is shocking: she proves beyond a doubt and in graphic fashion that the particularly harmful conjunction of racism and sexism is flourishing in Canada. The only problem with this book, and it is a minor one, is the lack of an index, the inclusion of which would increase the text's usefulness.

Diana Chown, along with the Univers-

ity of Toronto Press, has made a very good decision in reprinting Alice A. Chown's 1921 memoir, *The Stairway*. Although it is heralded as a "feminist classic," the woman herself is more intriguing than the early feminist principles she supposedly advocates. Chown was a feminist, but only by accident, by way of her guiding belief in the necessity of freeing the love within us all. Her feminist principles, such as "the wisdom of unmarried women being free to have their own children," arise secondarily from her more general ideals of personal freedom. What is fascinating about this book is the climb toward enlightenment which it records with warmth and vivacity. Diana Chown, the great-great niece of the author, provides an informative and well-documented introductory essay which places Alice Chown in an historical context; the essay is helpful, but would be better placed as an afterword, allowing the reader to experience without preconceptions Alice Chown's delightful personality and prose.

These three books, which all appeared in 1988, form a well-rounded set: *The Stairway*, reappearing almost seventy years after its initial publication, provides an historical voice in contemporary women's texts; with Burt, Code, and Dorney's collection of sociological essays, and Blum's literary treatments, readers of all persuasions will be able to compile a full female mosaic — at least in terms of books.

KATHLEEN SCHERF

FREEDOM & OPENNESS

JANET TODD, *Feminist Literary History*. Routledge, $49.00/16.95.

NAN BOWMAN ALBINSKI, *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction*. Routledge, $74.00.

ELAINE SHOWALTER, ed., *Speaking of Gender*. Routledge, $51.00.

THREE RECENT WORKS of feminist criticism illustrate the intellectual diversity (and the continuing disputes) found within academic feminism today. In fact, Janet Todd's *Feminist Literary History* (1988) takes this diversity and these disputes as its subject. In an engaging, often dryly humorous voice, Todd guides her reader through the major developments of American and French feminism, beginning in the 1960s. Her not-so-hidden agenda here is to rescue American sociohistorical feminist criticism from the theoretical closet, where it has been banished as an unsightly skeleton, an embarrassment to both the French and American deconstructive and psychoanalytical families. Todd argues that American feminism suffers in the current, highly sophisticated theoretical context because it is "historical" criticism viewed ahistorically: "it is easy in the late 1980s to lay out the past in clear space for observation and comparison and ignore the obscured and shifting time in which it occurred." Her defense of the American enterprise rests largely on her own critical biases; as a British feminist, her theoretical viewpoint is heavily influenced by the historical, materialist grounding of Marxism. Indeed, one of Todd's major complaints about French feminist theory (both deconstructive and psychoanalytical) is that it is both ahistorical and apolitical; in her conclusion she praises recent Anglo-American work (combining the best qualities of British and American criticism) for its "political implications, its refusal to separate the project of feminist

criticism from the project of feminism."

To view *Feminist Literary History* solely as a one-sided defence of (Anglo-) American socio-historical criticism, however, would be a mistake. For although Todd shows a healthy distrust of *some* aspects of French theory (for example, its elitism, which works against feminist principles of accessibility), she nevertheless recognizes several important contributions it has made to the American historical project. Chief among these is an awareness of the role of ideology in all our endeavours, including current (as well as past) theoretical ones. Todd thus notes that while the unified subject of the enlightenment is a fiction, "so also is the dispersed subject of our own period."

Feminist Literary History is, of course, not devoid of imperfections. The very qualities that make it useful as an introductory text (its brevity, its accessibility, its wide-range of coverage) ultimately emerge as potential flaws; the brief, generalized summaries of both critical developments and major theorists can lead to distortion. Todd, for example, describes Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born* as "praising motherhood" — a rather dramatic oversimplification of a work in which Rich poignantly reveals how her children have both nourished and destroyed her. As well, the last two chapters, "Readings of Mary Wollstonecraft" and "Men in Feminist Criticism," seem to move away from, and, in consequence, detract from Todd's original and worthwhile comparative project.

Nan Bowman Albinski's *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* would certainly win Janet Todd's approval for its socio-historical grounding of material. In her introduction she notes that despite many similarities (the nature/culture debate, a focus on gender relations, the influence of the ecological movement), the works of British and American utopian writers differ because they grow out of "different social and political realit[ies]." Albinski traces the development not only of women's utopias, but also of their dystopias and anti-utopias, throughout three historical periods: pre-1920, 1920-1960, and 1960-1987. As the time-frame alone suggests, the scope of this project is enormous; Albinski's primary bibliography, which she claims is not "exhaustive," contains over 260 works. This bibliography, grouped by both nation and period, is itself an extraordinary resource for scholars and general readers alike. Unfortunately, the sense of richness associated with these works remains largely quantitative; individual novels rarely come to life as Albinski moves through them at a rapid pace, categorizing rather than analyzing them in any extended fashion.

There are other problems as well, and while they do not constitute major flaws, they are nonetheless annoying. Two are probably a result of the book's "previous life" as a doctoral thesis: a rather awkward handling of critics (usually in blind citations) and an occasionally confusing narrative stance that at times makes it difficult to tell if she is voicing her own or the writer's opinion. Another peculiarity is Albinski's expressed surprise about the increase in anti-utopian satires about the 1920s: "where one might have expected a spate of pacifist utopias in the post-war period, what erupted was scepticism about human nature and the meaning of utopia." Surely this skepticism is perfectly in keeping with other modernist tendencies.

One final complaint, which applies also to *Speaking of Gender*, concerns proofreading. The "bill" enclosed with my review copy of Albinski's book indicates that it normally sells in Canada for $74.00 (cloth); I don't know the price of Showalter's book, but I'm sure it's not cheap. Yet, despite rising prices, the quality of academic publications seems to be declining rapidly. This decline is due in part,

I suspect, to the extensive use of computerized spell-checking which allows for such errors as "to tread [treat] gender as sexual difference" (Showalter) and "a female H. G. Well's" (Albinski), although it doesn't account for typos like "knds" and "togetheer" (Albinski).

Typographical errors aside, *Speaking of Gender,* edited by Elaine Showalter, is an intellectually challenging and wide-ranging collection of essays that points to new directions for feminist criticism in the next decades. Divided into two sections, the book addresses both "theory" and "practice." The first series of essays looks at the ways in which gender ideology is inscribed in three contemporary critical movements: reader-response criticism, the Yale School, and Afro-American criticism. The second group of eleven essays amply illustrates how gender criticism can, according to Showalter, "illuminate a wide variety of literary issues and texts" — from metaphors of childbirth to "the masculine mode," from Tennyson and James to Wilkie Collins and women's war poetry. In her introductory essay, Showalter traces the rise of gender studies in the academy, while at the same time noting some of the most prominent objections of feminist scholars to this new mode of analysis (that it will be a watered-down, apolitical version of feminism; that a focus on gender will exclude a concern with the issues of race and class; that the "familiar male canon" will reappear with a vengeance). Showalter agrees that these are serious issues, worthy of our attention, but she nevertheless concludes that "gender theory *can* be a significant and radical expansion of our work," and one which can also expand the social and political awareness of the critical community itself by allowing its members ("male and female, black and white, gay, lesbian, and straight") to "explore a range of gendered subjectivities and literatures besides their own." Surely, as long as we remember the particularities of our own "subjectivity," we can only benefit from this kind of freedom, this openness.

SUE SCHENK

DYNAMIC ENERGY

SHERRILL E. GRACE: *Regression and Apocalypse. Studies in North American Literary Expressionism.* Toronto, $45.00 cloth.

LITERARY HISTORY and theory is littered with abortive attempts to define certain terms, such as "baroque," "classicism," "romanticism," the "novel," "irony," and "metaphor" — a list that can be extended as desired. "Expressionism" is one of these terms, with its long history of semantic changes. Initially this word was used in the context of abusive oratory aimed at certain trends in European painting around the turn of the century. In the following decades the meaning of the term, after its use as a label for a specific area in German cultural history (roughly 1905-1925) was established, became more and more universal. Today it also describes in a rather general way "a theory or practice in art of seeking to depict not objective reality but the subjective emotions and responses that objects and events arouse in the artist" (*Webster's*), that is "to subordinate realism to the symbolic or stylistic expression of the artist's or character's inner experience" (Oxford Dictionary). Of course, definitions such as these do not say very much, since they are applicable to a vast realm of modern artistic production, except perhaps, that any author who uses this term in an investigation faces a serious challenge regarding the analytical method and approach. And it is in this respect that Sherrill E. Grace's new book causes two responses in the reader, a somewhat critical, and a very positive one, which coincide with Part One and Parts Two through

Four, respectively, of her study. I will begin with the first.

Part One covers two chapters, "Expressionism: History, Definition, and Theory" and "German Expressionism in the Arts" (that is, painting, sculpture, film, drama, fiction, and poetry). Thus, chapter one deals with theoretical aspects of the expressionist movement, in other words, Grace attempts to forge the theoretical concepts and instruments — the "expressionist poetics" — which are to be applied later in the analytical and descriptive parts of her comparative study. In order to acquire the said set of workable concepts, the tools of the analysis, so to speak, Grace adapts a theory developed by the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) in his treatise *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1908), which she does for the following reason. Although of twentieth-century art in *Abstraction* Worringer, Grace states, "does not speak *and Empathy*, his synchronic paradigm identifies the conflicting impulses, the tension and ambiguity, as well as the dynamic, iconoclastic energy of Expressionism." Therefore, in "adaptation of Worringer's synchronic paradigm," Grace "changed the focus from his psychology of style and artistic volition to one of *Gestalt* and hermeneutics in order to suggest how expressionist art vacillates between extremes of regression and apocalypse, which are both formal and thematic codes for understanding these texts." On this basis and in the context of theorems by Derrida, Lacan, Bakhtin, and Kristeva the author identifies a set of categories, which characterize the expressionist mode of artistic production. And herein lies the problem, because seen from such a perspective, Expressionism seems to be far less complicated than its actual large and diverse volume of presentations might suggest. The difficulties can be observed, for example, in those eight distinguishing features that, in Grace's view, dominate expressionist fiction. They are rather sweeping, unspecific, and they seem to disregard the fact that many theories of Expressionism exist, not just one. This problem also leads one to question the value of discussing Expressionism by means of pre-arranged definitions. And is this necessary if not a specific question is raised or thesis pondered? Since details cannot be discussed in this limited space I would like at least to mention one publication which reflects upon these questions: Wilhelm Krull, *Prosa des Expressionismus*, Stuttgart 1984.

Fortunately, these few theoretical shortcomings have little impact on the major part of the study because it is possible to accept Grace's concepts for heuristic reasons when she outlines the considerable influences of Expressionism in Canada and the U.S. This seems to be her element, and Grace, excellently informed in this respect, makes sure that the reader never loses interest. In an admirable way, and with great sensitivity for detail, the author deals in a well thought-out and logical sequence with a vast amount of material, with many new and astonishing observations which are too numerous to be mentioned here. Especially the Canadian component of literary Expressionism in North America breaks new ground.

Furthermore, Grace dismantles the cliché that in North America mainly the dramatists have been affected by Expressionism, particularly Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice and Thornton Wilder, and to some extent T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood. From a European viewpoint, however, it is somewhat amusing to read that Eugene O'Neill is considered "The American Georg Kaiser," which is quite a compliment. Alas, the German reader must admit, Georg Kaiser in his many plays never attains the dramatic impact of O'Neill.

Of great interest also is "Part Three: Expressionism and the Modern Novel"

where four texts are analysed (Djuna Barne's *Nightwood*, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, Sheila Watson's *Double Hook*, and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*), and the final chapter "From Modernism to Postmodernism: Conclusions, Speculations, and Questions." In this part Grace outlines the tendencies and functions of Neo-expressionism in modern aesthetic discourse, and she succeeds with this quite complicated task, though at times her arguments seem to get lost in the extensive amounts of material which she uses in her presentation. Probably less would have been more. All in all, however, this book deserves a high recommendation, and in the ongoing discussion regarding the phenomenon of Expressionism it will take its rightful place.

HOLGER A. PAUSCH

SURVIVAL STORIES

SALLY CLARK, *Moo*. Playwrights Canada, $9.95.
JOAN MACLEOD, *Toronto, Mississippi & Jewel*. Playwrights Canada, $9.95.

JOAN MACLEOD AND SALLY CLARK are both Vancouver-born playwrights in their mid-thirties living and working in Toronto. For those of us who have felt that the most interesting dramatic writing of the 1990s is likely to come from women telling women's stories, these first published plays for both writers augur very well.

One of the characters in MacLeod's *Toronto, Mississippi* is a lecturer and published poet ("The Path of Despair") who tries to explain to a professional Elvis Presley imitator what he teaches in Canadian Studies:

> Animal as victim, environment as victim, women as victim. That sort of thing. Despair's more of a sideline. Not that they don't overlap. I love women's literature. And it's very despairing, for the most part. This is a very exciting time for female writers in this country.

The self-reflexive gag here is that the subject matter of this play and its companion piece, *Jewel*, and for that matter Clark's *Moo*, would on the face of it provide perfect grist for the literature-of-despair/woman-as-victim paradigm mill. But MacLeod and Clark are a generation removed from Atwood. Once the stuff of seemingly inevitable tragedy and defeat, the survival stories these women dramatize are affirmative and funny even as they acknowledge the difficulty of living in an imperfect world. Despair, where in sight at all, is kept successfully at bay by strong, smart, empathetic, if somewhat damaged women in these plays. It really *must* be a very exciting time for female playwrights.

Toronto, Mississippi is a naturalistic family drama centering on Jhana, a "moderately mentally handicapped" teenager who lives with her mother, Maddie, and a male boarder, Bill (the despair poet), but worships her estranged father, King (the Elvis imitator). Jhana lives with one foot in the real Toronto and the other in the heteroutopian world of the Elvis myth occupied by her father. In this she is no more dysfunctional than the people her father entertains, her father himself or, in their own ways, her mother and Bill.

Jhana attends a sheltered workshop, speaks with some difficulty and has trouble with her concentration and her budding sexuality. But despite the superficial similarities this play is a far cry from *Creeps*. Jhana's struggles to master the mundane demands of reality — riding a bus, dialing 911 — mirror the "normal" characters' attempts to attain equilibrium in their lives and relationships. In the series of triangles that comprise the plot — King and Bill competing for the affection and attention of Maddie and Jhana, Maddie and Jhana for King and Bill, King and Maddie for Jhana — Jhana competes on equal terms.

Despite some contrivances in these arrangements, *Toronto, Mississippi* is a rich, funny, emotionally satisfying play in which no one can be accused of not loving enough. Much the same can be said of its companion piece. *Jewel* is a theatrical love letter, a Valentine's Day monologue from a prairie farm woman to her late husband on the anniversary of his death in the Ocean Ranger oil rig disaster. After three years she has decided to begin living again and she needs to let him know. MacLeod handles difficult subjects — the enormity of grief and love, the necessity for life to go on — with such emotional honesty that we never feel manipulated or embarrassed. A powerful imagination and subtle humour are additional hallmarks of this fine little play.

Sally Clark's *Moo* offers yet another bravura role for an actress. The title character (short for Moragh) spends her life obsessed with a "rotter" who spends his time tormenting her. Shortly after their marriage, from the insane asylum where Harry has had Moo committed on the pretense that she suffers from the delusion that he is her husband, Moo tries to understand this preview of what will be a half-century of such behaviour:

> Harry has this compulsive desire to screw me around and I have this compulsive desire to be screwed. But not just by anyone. Any other Tom or Dick would not do. It has to be Harry.

The black comic tone of this passage is typical of the play as a whole: the genuine horror of an abusive relationship (earlier Harry shoots Moo) partially mitigated by the characters' own sense of its absurdity (later he torments her with postcards from tropical islands). Moo's obsession is also a strength with which, in the funniest scenes in the play, she resists her family and makes Harry as much her creature as she is his.

The feminist thematics, grotesque style and fragmented structure of *Moo* are characteristic features of Clark's dramaturgy seen in *The Trial of Judith K.*, *Jehanne of the Witches*, the excellent *Lost Souls and Missing Persons* and *Ten Ways to Abuse an Old Woman*. The latter could serve as the subtitle for act two of *Moo* which follows our heroine's fortunes after the age of sixty. Coherence problems surface in this act with the very late introduction of a couple of major new characters, and an awkward shift of focus to a great-niece of Moo's who seems clearly modelled on Clark herself. But Clark wins us back with a stunning finale. I finished the play wanting desperately to be able to see it.

JERRY WASSERMAN

COMMUNITY OF DREAMERS

TOMSON HIGHWAY, *The Rez Sisters*. Fifth House, $9.95.

LESLIE HALL PINDER, *On Double Tracks*. Lester and Orpen Dennys, $24.95.

IN *The Rez Sisters*, the first in Tomson Highway's announced cycle of seven plays about life on the *rez* (reservation), we see for a few days into the lives of seven women living on the Wasaychigan Hill Reserve on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. The play opens and closes with Pelajia Patchnose hammering shingles on her roof, a liminal space between heaven and earth that suggests the *rez* sisters' desire to escape their mundane existence. Pelajia dreams of escape to Toronto, and her sister, Philomena, of big winnings at bingo. Characters' falls and near falls from Pelajia's ladder, however, comically suggest humanity's precarious metaphysical footing in a universe where attempting to transcend the conditions of existence may leave a person with "dirt all over [her] backside." Indeed, each of the seven women characters wants something more

than what life has currently to offer, and so they plan a trip to Toronto — according to hearsay, the site of the "biggest bingo [game] in the world."

A silent but powerful presence amongst them is Nanabush, trickster and harbinger of death who comes to escort the dying Marie-Adele Starblanket into the spirit world. Visible only to those least grounded in ordinary reality (Marie-Adele and the retarded Zhaboonigan Peterson), Nanabush appears first as a seagull, later as a nighthawk, and finally as "Bingo Master" in a "bingo hall" universe, where one's fate may hang on a missing "B 14." Furious at the "fool of a being [who] goes and puts . . . Indians plunk down in the middle of this old earth, [and] dishes out this lot we got," the women storm the Bingo Master's stage and carry off his bingo machine. Nanabush the Bingo Master is not to be outwitted, however. He takes Marie-Adele away, and the other women find themselves back at Wasaychigan singing her funeral song.

Though they do not beat the odds against the Bingo Master, Highway's six remaining *rez* sisters face destiny with good humor and generosity. Veronique St. Pierre joyfully "adopts" Marie-Adele's fourteen children, and Zhaboonigan finds a new combination "mother" and sister in Emily Dictionary. Highway's play emphasizes the bonds of human kinship which are spiritually rather than biologically determined.

On Double Tracks also concerns psychic and spiritual connections between people. The novel shows how we live "on track" with others whom we might eventually meet, and who bear us gifts in the form of clues to our own self-discovery. Megan Striclan and Theodore Selbie are two such individuals. They are drawn together by a wounded swan whose appearance in Megan's life brings many profound changes beyond her acquaintance with Theodore. Megan's connections with Native people begin when she hits the swan with her car and seeks help from some Indians around a campfire down the road. She ends up as their attorney, presenting their case against the government before the narrow-minded, racist Judge Selbie, whose emotionally scarred psyche reveals so much in common with Megan's. A fascinating set of events ensues to disclose Megan's and Theodore's "double tracks" on the same life path.

Within the universe that Pinder's novel sustains, even an evil person on our "path" might bring us valuable knowledge of ourselves. The treacherous Carl Frank hypocritically befriends Chief Akwaw's band in order to write down their stories, which he believes Native people are now too degenerated as a culture to understand or appreciate. Frank plays the role of the trickster in Pinder's novel, for though he is ill-intentioned, he effects changes of great importance in the lives of the Natives as well as of Megan and Theodore.

Frank forges a "dream-story that he says is Steven's (Chief Akwaw's), and that speaks powerfully to several characters, despite its origins. Like Coyote, Nanabush, or any other persona of the trickster, Frank is an instrument in a larger, cosmic design whose actions bear consequences beyond his control. The forged dream-story helps Theodore confront his memories of an abusive father, and it helps Megan through her own emotional crisis to assist the Natives in reclaiming ancestral lands. Though the dream-story is forged, it is — like the wounded swan — a powerful force in the lives of people "sharing a root dream." Indeed, Pinder's novel defines humanity as a community of dreamers whose most profound experiences and interconnections go unacknowledged by Western metaphysics, though they are readily explained within American Indian cosmology.

CATHERINE RAINWATER

EARLY STAGES

COLLEEN CURRAN, *Sacred Hearts*. Playwrights Canada, n.p.

JOHN MIGHTON, *Scientific Americans*. Playwrights Canada, n.p.

DANIEL MCIVOR, *See Bob Run & Wild Abandon*. Playwrights Canada, n.p.

THREE RECENT PUBLICATIONS of Playwrights' Canada Press offer an interesting cross-section of recent Canadian drama. The playwrights represented, Colleen Curran, John Mighton and Daniel MacIvor, are all in the early stages of their careers, and collectively illustrate some of the difficulties still facing young Canadian dramatists.

Colleen Curran, born in Montreal in 1954, had to go farthest afield to secure a production of her work. Although *Sacred Hearts* was commissioned by the Centaur Theatre in Montreal, there is no record of it having been produced in her native city. The play was workshopped at the Blyth Festival Winter Writers' Retreat in December, 1987, and again at the Banff Playwrights' Colony in the Spring of 1988 before it was finally given its first professional production at Alberta Theatre Projects *playRites' 89* New Play Festival in January, 1989.

The resulting product of this rather lengthy gestation process is a competently structured work about the impact on a rural Catholic community of an apparent miracle at the local shrine of the Virgin Mary. The play raises interesting questions about the nature of faith in the modern world, and bemoans the trivialization of such matters by the media. But the issues are largely glossed over, submerged beneath a glittering surface of sit-com dialogue and comic exaggeration.

John Mighton, born in 1957 and educated in science and philosophy at the universities of Toronto and McMaster, has worked as writer-in-residence at both Theatre Passe Muraille and the Caribbean American Repertory Theatre in Toronto. *Scientific Americans* was written with the help of a Research and Development Award from the Toronto Arts Council, but was first produced in New York City in October, 1988, at the Home for Contemporary Theatre. The following month it was staged in Toronto at Theatre Passe Muraille by Stonz Theatre and Particle Zoo. In November, 1990, it was nominated for the Governor General's Award.

In form, the play is an intellectual farce, a sort of "John Polyani meets Wayne and Shuster." A slender story line recounting the adventures of a young post-graduate student working for the Department of Defense at Los Alamos and drawn into contributing to the development of a stealth bomber raises issues of profound concern. These relate to the control of research by the military, and the responsibility of scientists and the general public in a world driven by sex, greed, violence and international fear and suspicion. Those who like their philosophy tempered with generous admixtures of light entertainment will enjoy this treatment of a subject too rarely encountered in Canadian drama. But there are others who may find the half-penny worth of intellectual bread insufficient nourishment after an intolerable deal of broad comic sack.

Daniel MacIvor is the youngest of the playwrights represented here and the only one who came to his profession via the theatre. A graduate of the acting program at Dalhousie University, he has worked as actor and playwright-in-residence, and is currently co-artistic director of Da Da Kamera in Toronto. The two plays here published were both produced in Toronto, the first at the Poor Alex in 1987, and the second the following year at Theatre Passe Muraille.

See Bob Run and *Wild Abandon* are short works for one performer (the first

for an actress, the second for an actor). Through a series of discontinuous monologues and one-sided dialogues MacIvor explores the fears and fantasies of two young fugitives in the jungle of contemporary familial and sexual relationships. Roberta (Bob), hitch-hiking east to reach the water which she hopes will wash her clean, recounts to a series of imaginary drivers her childhood of sexual abuse and an adolescence of confusion and violence. Steve, alone on stage with a few props, reflects on his alienation from his family, and is drawn irresistibly to suicide as the ultimate act of control over a life and a "uniqueness" he has come to find intolerable.

MacIvor's work is powerful and unsettling, exploring as it does the feelings of alienation, self-loathing and hatred associated with sexual deviation. In their emphasis on violence (murder and suicide) the works verge on the melodramatic. What impresses, however, is the playwright's ability to create powerfully evocative stage images. Sometimes these are conveyed in the monologue — an amalgam of contemporary urban rhythms and traditional metaphors:

> So anyway, this fake mother bird feeds this jerk-off cuckoo. Feeds it and feeds it and feeds it until it's big enough to fly away . . . and then it just fucking takes off . . . nothing, not a howd'ya do, nothing. Gone. It's wild. Fucking abandonment man. Abandonment. Big stuff. Really big stuff. Like you know? Big time. Fuck man, the cuckoo's got no heart. The cuckoo's got no fucking heart!

At others the images are built up out of simple stage props — a large egg in a cage, a chain, a wooden chair. This latter is in turn a companion, an object to sit on, and finally the protagonist's "stairway to heaven," the elevation from which he drops to his death by hanging. Stevie's suicide, about which he has been thinking since childhood, is represented symbolically as a dance of death — the fourth and "best" kind of dancing.

MacIvor's is a painfully intense view of life and he has the ability to convey that vision in gripping stage images. He seems to me to have an authentic theatrical talent of a kind too rare in English Canadian drama. I hope that he will be able to find the support he needs to develop that talent, that he will outgrow his present rather solipsistic preoccupations and break out of the limited form of monodrama.

NEIL CARSON

DIVERSIONS

SEYMOUR MAYNE, *Diversions*. Noovo Masheen Press, n.p.

GRANT JOHNSTON, *Mirrors on Uncertain Mornings*. Talonbooks, n.p.

FRANCES ITANI, *A Season of Mourning*. Brick Books, $8.95.

SEYMOUR MAYNE'S PETULANT PAMPHLET is half cheap shots and half throwaways, with a trio of found poems added for variety. As the "lousy/little mutt" who has to review it, I will try quickly to "stop whining," since for the most part Mayne's crabby little poems are full of "Words [that] get on my words." (I quote from "Book Reviewer" and "Critic"). Noovo Masheen Press is known mainly for making fun of what it views as poetic pretension, and I wondered at first whether Mayne's diversions were a joke at someone else's expense. But no, I think not. The Da Vinci quotation concerning the beaver's purported habit of biting off his own balls in fear (a deep comment on Canadians, of course), the large supply of hot air of Ottawa, and the world-weary remarks about writer types are all gathered here at no one's expense save Mayne's, and none of it is in the least diverting, despite the title. And therefore

"without an apology/[I] put down the book."

Grant Johnston's *Mirrors On Uncertain Mornings* is a collection of light impressionistic poems that are mostly short and centred in a haiku-like instant of perception or insight:

INSOMNIA
i've fixed
the bathroom leak
  the seconds continue
to drip one
by one

This sort of writing has evolved from a characteristic emphasis in 20th-century poetry on the moment; but while that emphasis was once useful as an alternative to the more egregious strains of sentimental Victorian slush, it now sounds hackneyed and simplistic:

overnight
the autumn wind exposed
a nest i'd heard
though never seen

Such poems feel more like diary entries or notebook jottings towards something more elaborate. A whole book of them lacks freshness and substance, though I admit that I have never found the haiku to sound natural in English.

Frances Itani's *A Season of Mourning* is a more ambitious book, for all its slim 36 pages. The collection consists of two sequences in which Itani attempts to deal with the deaths by cancer of her sister and a close friend. Poetry no longer deals very easily with such material, and Itani chooses to write about death in a subdued, unhistrionic style. The poetry does not work very hard as poetry — there are no grand gestures, no railing, no huge tears — but oddly perhaps these meditations are the more effective for staying resolutely small-scale:

What are my daily functions now? Let us examine. These are the functions of a friend: to bend you over your pillows like a half-opened jackknife; to cup my hands over your dry flesh, clapping at your back. We have created new ropes of sound, you and I.
Each morning wide strands of sound echo from
your taut and boney frames.
I have made a silent song from our rhythms.
Each cough gives you one more day. Though you are mottled and weak and though you choke —
each cough extends your life by one day.
So cough, my friend, cough for the number of
days you desire.

At times Itani's language is so spare that it is barely articulated this side of speechlessness: "I want to say all of this; I want to say: */Listen Are you listening?/What did we learn?/What did we know?/What was it for?*" The heart is accurate here, but the poetry is, I think, not carrying it beyond anything save common inexpressible questions in the face of death. *A Season of Mourning* is too quiet, but Itani's subdued grief and the poems it has produced are certainly worth listening to.

BRUCE WHITEMAN

ABSENCE & PRESENCE

RHONA MCADAM, *Creating the Country*, Thistledown Press, pb $9.95.
KRISTJANA GUNNARS, *Carnival of Longing*. Turnstone Press, pb $8.95.
GEOFFREY URSELL, *The Look-Out Tower*, Turnstone Press, pb. $8.95.

"I TOLD YOU I did not want to live like a victim/The day there were silences left," writes Rhona McAdam in "Safety Notice" from her collection *Creating the Country*. She is very much concerned in this collection with the attempt to bridge silences, to rediscover 'brothers;' friends, and fellow artists who seem locked in various forms of autism, voicelessness or violation. Despite an acute awareness of the tendency of words to create absence and alienation, she also has faith that "they will find new forms in me" — and

that they can thus offer the possibility of relief from isolation. For Kristjana Gunnars, on the other hand, words "become knives"; they too easily macerate what they are intended to embody. The emotional centre of her new collection, a major departure for her, is the great tension created by the almost impossible endeavour to say "What cannot be said of desire/with desire." This sense of the inadequacy of words, of language, prompts her to give this collection of haunting and elegant muse and love poems the deceptive title *Carnival of Longing* — deceptive in that these poems are no mere sideshows or carousels; they are more than "marginal notes," even if the figure who inspires them is undisclosed and without a name. In different ways, McAdam and Gunnars (the latter particularly powerfully so) are poets of absence. Geoffrey Ursell, by contrast, is a very appealing poet of presence.

In his new collection *The Look-Out Tower*, a significant advance on the earlier *Trap Lines*, Ursell reveals himself as the poet of the familiar made unfamiliar. He has a special gift for seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary. The first section "Drowning" of his new collection groups together poems that look back to that most representative of Canadian 'pastoral' experiences, the family summer on a relatively isolated lake. In each of the poems, by a subtle disproportion, juxtaposition, superimposed metaphor, or sudden close-up, comfortably 'innocent' pictures are slightly distorted so that we recognize the family's happiness in a stronger and more threatened light. The mother's submarine moment is disturbed by a fishing boat, "a white spear," drifting under it "quivering lures"; the father's pinetop reverie is broken by a voice that "explodes in his ears," by "the black shape that flings itself into the air." And a maturing daughter is so enraptured by a pair of mating dragonflies that she neglects to slap the ravenous horsefly perched thirstily on her arm.

Images of water in this book are frequently ambivalent, particularly in the second section "Turning Turtle" (with its double meaning), which contains some of the most unforgettable and original of Ursell's poems. Here pools, hotsprings, artesian wells, underground watercourses become more unambiguously metaphoric — being identified with dream and imaginative and sexual fulfillment, but also with unconsciousness, oblivion, and the increasingly poisoned life's blood of the planet. These interweaving metaphoric patterns, and the thematic patterns they indirectly reflect, do not obscure the droll human foreground (which in such poems as "Well, Well, Well," "Dancing Waters," and "Turning Turtle" is particularly appealing). Mary di Michele has good reason to write of Geoffrey Ursell that he is "morally acute and compassionate," that his poetry "is the language of responsibility as much as sensibility," and I would add that his poetry is very funny at times.

Like Ursell's, Rhona McAdam's voice is one where empathy informs a lively sensibility. While McAdam may appear to be principally a lyric poet, writing in response to chance moods, encounters, and changes in relationships, there is more than a little of the modern-day Antigone in her outlook, so much so that what might be called a mythic pattern could be said to shape the pattern of her collection. A number of her poems, not just the 'Beirut' poems, express a strongly felt identity with 'brother,' 'sister,' or lover figures, whose lives in some way have been usurped or suppressed, or who are trying to rediscover themselves.

Seen from the Antigone perspective, the shape of the book takes on meaning, and each poem takes an additional strength from its place in the pattern. In this light, the opening sequence of 'locked-in' artist

poems is a particularly good way of introducing the theme of the usurped landscape. And it is not surprising that the collection's second and third sections with their girlhood and lover sequences, for all the innocence and music of individual poems, are curiously attenuated. The heart of the book lies in the last two sections where the focus is on the theme of dispossession. Here we find a gentle sequence about the voiceless anguish of the immigrant Domicila in her strange new world; and there is a diurnal cycle of light and dark poems, which juxtaposes a young woman's sleeping experience with her departed lover's waking experience on his exotic and faraway, but now alien, continent. McAdam's preoccupation with the beloved's being swallowed up and becoming a 'disappeared' person is most strongly reflected in her two Beirut poems about sisters sacrificing themselves and their families to search for brothers taken hostage, but it is (I think) central to her sensibility, and in touching ways affects many of the poems in this well designed collection.

For Kristjana Gunnars, absence is a metaphysical matter. She belongs to the number of those select poets in the record who have written about love and absence with finely honed poetic skills, emotional conviction, as well as a sophisticated awareness of the constraints that language throws in their way. Her intriguing and sometimes mind-teasing sequences deserve much more extended notice than can be given here. It will have to be sufficient to mention two points. The first is the pleasure to be derived from listening carefully to the sounds of syllable, word, phrase, line, cadence, and echo in her poems. The second is to remark on the fine effects and insights to be derived from the interplay of tones and aspects of the psyche in Gunnars' arrangement and juxtaposition of prose poems (of memory), lyrical poems (of longing and fear), and reflective poems (defining the limits of the poetically possible). I can't help thinking, though, that the reader will not so much remember Gunnars' harmonic effects and her reflections on language, as those poems which come pleasantly close to direct expression; for example the following:

> the night refuses to be cold
> deprives me of preparations
> steals in on the afternoon
> too gentle to be noticed
>
> time passes without my knowing
> I watch the numbers on the clock
> slip by without effort
>
> time is where you are
> your silent steps down the stairs
> your silent breath when you sleep
> your imperceptible touch
>
> when you are not you
> but I in another form

MARTIN WARE

LITERAL TRANSLATION

ANNE HÉBERT: SELECTED POEMS. Translated by A. Poulin, Jr. Stoddart. $12.95.

A. POULIN, JR. is the latest in a relatively long list of poets to translate a selection of Anne Hébert's poetry. His book is a well structured, attractively laid out volume with a selection of translated poems, a prefatory note and selected bibliography. In *Anne Hébert: Selected Poems* original poems and their translation in the target-language are juxtaposed. Differing from John Glassco's remarks in his introduction to *The Poetry of French Canada in Translation*, I tend to favour this presentation which makes a literary work of art in the target-language the origin of and reason for the translation without obliterating the source-text.

Poulin's own poetic concerns parallel Anne Hébert's. His selection, a choice approved by Hébert, retraces her initiatory quest started in absolute night, pursued in the unconscious labyrinth of the tomb

of the kings and opening on to the "square of the world" in full midday-light. There the "avènement de la parole" takes place over which Eve, the "coincidentia oppositorium," presides.

Poulin is at least the ninth poet trying to recreate in English Anne Hébert's poetry, and he chose a "literal" translation in blank verse of Anne Hébert's "vers libre." Poulin's use of the techniques of expanding and compressing lines, of alliteration and assonance contribute on the whole to successful translations, but one can still find mistranslations in his work.

Mistranslations are of several kinds: syntactical, lexical and stylistic. Hébert's particular syntax, her predilection for the inversion of the usual word order, has in a few cases misled the translator. In "The Tomb of Kings"

> Quelques tragédies patiemment travaillées
> Sur la poitrine des rois, couchées

is translated by

> A few patiently wrought tragedies
> On the breasts of reclining kings

whereas the tragedies are "lying on the breast of kings." In "Crown of Joy," the poem is not "at the summit of the hoisted head" but hoisted at the summit of the head. In some cases the translator changes the tenses of the verbs (e.g. in "The Alchemy of Day" where he uses the conditional instead of the future tense), thus changing the spatio-temporal frame of the poem. As regards the translation of the indefinite pronoun "on," the translator, in his need to interpret, seems too precise. In "La rose trémière n'a pas tant d'odeur qu'on croyait" is it really "as I thought" and in "La fille cria . . . qu'on l'avait trahie dès l'origine" has it to be translated by "we'd betrayed her from the start"? To keep the ambiguity and translate "on" by "one" seems more appropriate. A more disquieting problem is the translation of the possessive pronouns. Hébert's speaker, who is often "identifiably female," is rarely reflected in Poulin's English version. In "The Tomb of Kings" although Anne Hébert drew Scott's attention to the fact that the protagonist was female, Poulin does not acknowledge her as such. There are several lexical errors such as "des blessures en des noces excessives" translated by "sores at expensive weddings" instead of "wounds at immoderate wedding-nights," "en flagrant délit d'attention" translated by its contrary "in a flagrant break of attention" instead of "a flagrant act of attention."

One could question too the translation of several metaphors which are sometimes diluted, strained or altered. If one considers conventional metaphors, for example, "les lits clos" are not "walled-in beds." They are literally "box bedsteads" and can be translated by "closed beds." Among the private metaphors

> Chacun de tes gestes
> Pare d'effroi la mort enclose

cannot be translated by

> Each of your gestures
> A frightful ornament in a bezel of death

which is poetic but not accurate, death being actually enshrined. "Cet hôte coutumier/entre ses côtes déraciné" is not "its customary guest between its rooted ribs" but "its customary guest Torn from between its ribs." To translate "le jour . . . monte en paroles" by "day rises on the word" loses all the force of the comparison with the plant going to seed. Actually the day bursts its pod of words.

If finally one turns to stylistic mistranslations, it appears that in a few cases words from a specific stylistic sphere in French are not rendered by words from a matching stylistic sphere in English. This leads either to "overcoding" as when "le couvert" becomes "the silverware," "le lit de bois noir" "the ebony bed" or to "under-

coding" when "les équipages amers" becomes "bitter traffic."

Thanks to his creative talent Poulin has, however, added a valuable contribution to the translations of Anne Hébert's poetry. Paradoxically his work comes too soon after the "classic" but "functional" translations of Scott, and poems like "Manor Life" and "The Tomb of the Kings" still echo in one's memory.

EVELYNE VOLDENG

A STAND OF POETS

MILTON ACORN AND JAMES DEAHL, *A Stand of Jackpine*. Unfinished Monument. n.p.

MILTON ACORN, *The Uncollected Acorn*. ed. James Deahl. Deneau, n.p.

TOM WAYMAN, *In a Small House on the Outskirts of Heaven*. Harbour, $8.95.

PETER TROWER, *Unmarked Doorways*. Harbour, $7.95.

Split Shift: Songs and Poems of the Workplace. Fraser Union and the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union. n.p.

IT IS EASY to picture them — as Wayman in fact does — in a small house on the outskirts of heaven: Tom Wayman and Milton Acorn hotly disputing the meaning of God, the universe, and everything else, while Peter Trower hums tunelessly in the background. "I shout love," roars Acorn. "But what about Joseph Stalin?" counters Wayman. "I was never a Stalinist" Acorn protests. "I've tasted my blood too much." Wayman regards his companion in silence, moved to compassion by the sight of the long — too long — bedraggled wings pinned to the red-checked flannel lumberjack shirt by giant safety pins. Acorn points his cigar, dropping ashes. "Justice!" "The people!" "Destiny!" "The people!" he shouts.

Justice. The people. Inappropriate themes in these days of deconstruction and death. But perhaps we should remind ourselves that there is a revolutionary strain in English poetry running from Milton and Blake and Shelley to the present. In Canada that voice was all but silenced for a hundred years by the failure of the revolution of 1837 (demoted, like all failed revolutions, to the status of a rebellion. The socialism of Archibald Lampman was kept well hidden from students of Canadian literature until recently). It reemerged rather uncertainly in the documentary poems of the 1930s, then took a somewhat tortuous detour across the freeways of the United States before bursting into life with Acorn's first published volume, *Against a League of Liars* (1960). In "Letter to My Redheaded Son" Acorn expresses a theme that he will develop with increasingly complex variations until his death in 1986.

> A poet against a league of liars, I know
> you'll learn love and honesty from her
> who wouldn't learn scorn and left me.
> You'll learn, boy, to be as bitter as me
> against the men with conterfeit eyes,
> their graft and their words: "nigger";
> "people not like us" . . . and "bastard."

That poem is reprinted in the slim volume *A Stand of Jackpine*, sub-titled "Two Dozen Canadian Sonnets," (Unfinished Monument Press, 1987). Half the twenty-four poems in this chapbook are by Acorn; the remainder are by James Deahl, a "long-time friend" of Acorn. According to the dust jacket, these poems "belong to a Canadian tradition which stretches back to Lampman and forward to a new generation of poets." Perhaps. The volume is dedicated to Lampman and Isabella Valancy Crawford, "in honour of the Canadian poetry they established." Readers will look in vain, however, for "the grave poet with creative eye" "Wrapped round with thought, content to watch and dream," although they may find something of the "elemental joy" that marks Lampman's best poems. Deahl defines the "jackpine sonnet" as "irregular sonnet of 13 or 17 lines. The lines are about ten

syllables long and do not rhyme." The term was in fact coined by Acorn to describe "a short poem with a dialectical play of argument." In the "Tirade by Way of Introduction" that prefaces Acorn's *Jackpine Sonnets* (Steel Rail, 1977), Acorn goes into a lengthy and (one hopes) tongue-in-cheek justification of the tightly organised but usually unrhymed not-quite-sonnets that take up most of that volume. Deahl's sonnets are invariably thirteen lines with a single division; the lines are unmetred, and make frequent use of enjambment followed by variant cesura. The open ending — the *absence* of the sonnet's accustomed closure — adds a curious resonance to these poems, as in "Pittsburgh III":

> A memory comes of Homestead laced with smoke,
> flame extending jet stack tips among
> roving liquid clouds. What was it, that slab
> at Eight and West? What could it mean for a
> schoolboy romanced by bright mills? The river
> burned; a magic lantern in my wild nights.
>
> The men of the Amalgated had stood
> to contest Frick's lockout: thirty-five dead,
> hundreds wounded, in eighteen ninety-two.
> That single marker bears their pain. Dusk sweeps
> Eighth Avenue and a river with an
> Indian name come down from West Virginia
> forges real strength throughout this red brick town.

Like Acorn, Deahl combines a strong feeling for place with a sense of history. Lyric descriptions of landscape or season are linked to moments of human insight. A poem which begins "Ice rams into bridges: a scud and toss/of storm-wrought skies brought down to bond a/ragged fess to our protecting river" ends with these lines:

> City built
> of Allegheny rock, built by struggles
> against Mellon and Carnegie, I hear
> your winds buff an iron tone that will not fade
> and watch the Incline rise in winter light.

In the poem "To Jim Deahl: 1985," Acorn writes that " '*A poet at forty is a young poet.*' " At forty-five, Deahl is still a young poet, and in spite of occasional lapses ("the great stormbirds gather their burning wings") a good one. But the landscapes and the themes of his poems in *A Stand of Jackpine* are drawn exclusively from his experience as a young man growing up in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Whether James Deahl can be justly included among the "new generation of poets" who "belong to a Canadian tradition which stretches back to Lampman" is a question.

Of the poems by Milton Acorn in *A Stand of Jackpine*, all have been published elsewhere. Five are included in *The Uncollected Acorn* edited by James Deahl. According to the editor, the poems he has chosen to include are drawn chiefly from the Acorn Papers in the Public Archives of Canada and from copies given to him by Acorn over the years. They span a period of more than twenty-five years. The earliest were written in 1950 ("The Light Golden Days," "The Autumn Edgens and the Geese Go South"), the latest in 1986 ("It's All in Mother's Head"). Deahl has grouped the poems thematically in five sections he describes as "poems of love and lost love; elegies and occasional pieces; political and social comment; nature; and reflective or religious poems." The arrangement is somewhat artificial, as Acorn might have been the first to say had he lived to see the book published. He might also have questioned some of the editorial decisions; for although he claims to have taken "a non-interventionist approach," and to have had Acorn's personal permission to "edit where needed," Deahl also admits to having "combined parts of different drafts to form a new, and I hope better, version" of some poems. He gives two examples without identifying all the poems so treated. He has also, "in a very few in-

stances . . . reconstructed passages" (for example in "Myra on the Sand with Stars" and "Design for a Chessman").

The arrangement and the editorializing will give future critics of Acorn some small problems to solve, but perhaps this is nothing to complain about. Rather, readers should be grateful to James Deahl for making generally available many poems hitherto unpublished. For in Milton Acorn Canada has a poet who has awakened a response not only in those who knew him through the left political factions with which he aligned himself throughout most of his life, but also from readers who, like his fellow poet and friend Al Purdy, see him as "a man who, in a handful of poems, comes somewhere close to greatness." In, for instance, the first of the "Sonnets of Martin Dorion":

> When that star which rose soon after sunset
> Sets itself, it's getting near time for dawn,
> Although it's winter and that sickle thin
> That the mountain of the moon rides on.
> Hold hard to faith. That love is always
> there —
> One body or another complete with hair.
>
> Slip your hand, my love, onto my chest.
> You'll feel the wriggling of an animal
> Ever motile, never needing assurance
> As to the matter of its existence:
> Nor need you ever doubt my eyes' brilliant
> Image of you, when it's too dark to perceive
> What star they mimic now, double brimful.

In a lecture entitled "The Skin of the Earth: My Neruda" given to the Humanities Institute of Douglas College, New Westminster, B.C. and later published in *EVENT*, poet Tom Wayman describes Neruda as "a poet who could be simultaneously affirmative, political, and emotionally generous." The same can be said of Milton Acorn. Nor can there be any doubt that Acorn, like Pat Lowther and Wayman, was influenced by the Chilean poet. Much given to dedicating his poems to political figures, Acorn seems not to have addressed any specific poem to Neruda. But the combination of "Romantic effusions and politics" that Wayman finds in Neruda is unmistakable in Acorn. Even more noteworthy is the similarity in their use of language. Wayman quotes the American poet Robert Bly on Neruda;

> In Neruda's poems, the imagination drives forward, joining the entire poem in a rising flow of imaginative energy. . . . His imagination sees the hidden connections between conscious and unconscious substances with such assurance that he hardly bothers with metaphors — he links them by tying their hidden tails. . . . Neruda wishes to help humanity, and tells the truth for that reason.

Like Neruda, too, Acorn has little use for critics waving "archetypal symbols." In an interview quoted by Wayman, Neruda says, "I don't believe in symbols. . . . The word 'symbol' doesn't express my thought exactly. Some themes persist in my poetry, are constantly reappearing, but they are material entities." "*Doves, guitar — what do they mean?*" the interviewer persists. "A dove means a dove and a guitar is a musical instrument called a guitar," Neruda replies.

Tom Wayman, a founding member of the Vancouver Industrial Writers Union, has much in common with both Acorn and Neruda. The idea that a poet should "tell the truth in a century of liars" in order to help humanity seems "exactly right" to Wayman. A member of the I.W.W. — —the Industrial Workers of the World, or "Wobblies" as they came to be called shortly after they were organized in 1905 — Wayman is disturbed by what he describes in the "Afterword" to *A Small House on the Outskirts of Heaven* as the "almost pathological aversion to presenting an accurate portrayal of daily work" in our culture. "What I see as new in my poems," he writes, "is not experiments in poetic form but in content. . . . The new factor here is the pervasive consciousness that the conditions of daily work in our time is what shapes the world."

Wayman celebrates the quotidian. He finds poems in the telephone directory, in instructions for the treatment of hypothermia. Much of his writing is designed not for a literary audience, but for readers accustomed to the language of the daily newspapers, the adman, the billboard. Using repetition, cadence, and extended metaphors, Wayman is generally (though not always) able to achieve an authenticity of language that compensates for the absence of lyricism. If the poems are not memorable, it is because they are not meant to be committed to memory, but rather to be assimilated in a way that reshapes the reader's consciousness of the injustices and absurdities of daily life. But missing for the most part from this volume are the long, flowing lines and the sharply framed images, snap-shots of intense moments held in the retina of language, that mark Wayman's earlier work. He is evidently searching for a resolution to the contradiction that confronts any poet whose subject is working class politics. As he puts it in "Interview: 4. Audience" in *Free Time*, *"The people you are trying to reach don't usually read poetry. . . ."*

In *In a Small House on the Outskirts of Heaven*, the first person narrator of *Waiting for Wayman* and *Free Time* — the voice which at once recalls and interprets — is less evident. The poems address the reader directly, often in the imperative mood. This effacement of the narrator produces a kind of cold immediacy, but without the personal charm, the "controlled grave lyricism" (in George Woodcock's words) of earlier poems that recreate and reflect on the poet's own life. The intent seems to be to shift the focus away from the poem as artifact, to resist any device that permits language to act as a mediator or a screen:

> Day to day, we live in a false season.
> The sky overhead, the trees with their changing colours
> no less than the downtown streets and suburban shopping districts
> all are projections on a screen.
> . . . . . .
> And the presence of the screen itself
> is most evident when women and men, for a time,
> stop supporting the curtain
> on which a different reality is projected.
> ("Greed Suite: The False Season")

But language *is* a screen, and nothing a poet does can make it transparent.

Occasionally a good poet like Wayman or Trower can make what was seem to be what is, the words and lines accelerating across the page in a way that creates the illusion of real time. In some of his logging poems, Trower reenacts the scene of the old high-lead logging show — the chokers, the block, the spar-tree — with breathtaking immediacy:

> It was a block breaking
> with a spar-tree half raised —
> the tree smashing back into the swamp —
> part of the block whistling by your head
> with shrapnel force
> and in your mouth the rusty taste of death
> for the first time.
> ("Between the Sky and the Splinters")

A kind of aimless wandering through the "half-forgotten films" of a "fled yesterday": that is the dominant impression left by *Unmarked Doorways*. Trower is a skilled craftsman; he knows how to shape a line, to pull it taut or cut it off. But these poems are introspective, nostalgic — almost epitaphial. They are a reminder that language, poetry, no matter how engaged, can speak only of what has always already happened.

Split Shift: Songs and Poems of the Workplace takes a different approach to the problem. This audio tape, produced by Fraser Union with the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union, features a mixture of songs and poems read by their authors, Tom Wayman among them. Who will listen to this tape? The songs, which are about trolling and logging, mining, the fish cannery and the office, are in the folk

idiom. They are performed in a rough and lively manner by four male singers with guitar and mandolin accompaniment. Several are from the P. J. Thomas Collection: "Hard Rock Miner," "The Grand Hotel," and "Truck Driver's Song." One, "Bank Trollers," was adapted by Thomas from a longer poem by novelist Bertrand W. Sinclair which originally appeared in *The Fisherman* (April 21, 1953). "The Bosses Lament" by Terry Dash takes a satirical look at the plight of the boss whose secretaries are contemplating a strike: "Whatever will we do/Whatever on this earth/When all the secretaries Demand what they are worth?" Linda Chobotuk's "Canning Salmon" captures in a few verses set to a simple but ingenious tune the canning workers' miserable lot:

> High is the smell
> Low is the pay
> Long are the hours
> Why do we stay?
> Somewhere outside a whole summer slips away
> While we're stuck in here canning salmon.

Poems are certainly meant to be read aloud, heard rather than seen. But the readings on the tape are a little overwhelmed by the songs. Like the songs, the poems are about daily work, but there is little else to create a unity between the songs, with their familiar, repetitive forms, and the much more sophisticated and self-conscious poems. The multiple voices of the readings also create something of a problem. Each of the poets reads two poems. This is not enough, on the first few hearings, at least, to impress on the listener a sense of the individual style of any one poet, or even, unhappily, to spark an interest in seeking out more poems by the same author. But perhaps there is method in this mixture. Those who play the tape in order to enjoy or to learn the songs will find themselves willy nilly listening over and over to the poems — may even begin to learn their tunes: the rhythms, the sounds, the turns of phrase, and the subtle variations in tone. The poems, too, may begin to sing.

"Poetry makes nothing happen," says W. H. Auden, with the cunning modesty of a poet who has ceased to believe in the possibility of changing this world. But if nothing else, the work of Acorn, Deahl, Trower, and Wayman and the Industrial Writers' Union will certainly stimulate the writing of more poems to keep the fires of love and anger burning in Canadian poetry.

HILDA L. THOMAS

VARIETY

LORNA CROZIER, *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence*. McClelland & Stewart, $9.95.

PHIL HALL, *Old Enemy Juice*. Quarry, $10.95.

JOHN O'NEILL, *Animal Walk*. Turnstone, $8.85.

RAYMOND SOUSTER, *Asking for More*. Oberon, $25.95 hc, $12.05 sc.

ROD WILLMOT, *Sayings for the Invisible*. Black Moss, $9.95.

THE TITLE OF Raymond Souster's latest collection of poems suggests that his fans, in spite of the numerous volumes which Souster has already published, are still "Asking for More." His current volume, which contains several sequences, including one on kites and one on William Lyon Mackenzie, is easy, even pleasant reading, but the temptation inherent in Souster's type of poetry is the temptation to turn apparent ease into actual slackness. Too frequently Souster succumbs to this temptation. Although in one poem he laughs at himself, saying that he is determined to sit at the kitchen table until his next poem comes, "even if it takes a full ten minutes," one cannot help feeling that many of the poems were written in less than ten minutes, perhaps during commercial breaks while watching television. When Souster, apparently in all serious-

ness, compares the Jays' winning of the American League East in 1985 to the sack of York in 1813, one wonders if Souster hired Howard Cosell as a ghost writer. Although a few poems, such as "Again to Kensington Market," show something of Souster's ability to make us recognize the poetry inherent in ordinary life, there are too few of these poems and too many which rely on clichés both of thought and of expression.

Rod Willmot, the author of *Sayings for the Invisible*, is probably Canada's leading exponent and practitioner of haiku, yet his poems follow the traditional Japanese haiku only insofar as most of them consist of three lines. Ignoring the rigorous metrical requirements of formal haiku, Willmot favors an open or free form which frequently emphasizes the visual rather than the aural elements in poetry. For example, one poem consists of the words "between my palms a sliver of light" printed vertically without spaces between words.

In a number of his poems, Willmot captures if not the formal qualities at least the essence of haiku in the ability to suggest rather than state. Generally, his best poems rely on metaphorical images:

> flagpole clanging
> through the night —
> rereading boyhood verse

When Willmot's poems do not work (as many of them do not), they seem pretentious, presenting flat observations or, in the case of the haiku sequences, series of flat observations as though they were full of significance:

> sand spurts
> on her belly
> as he leaps for
> the frisbee

In a recent issue of *Poetry Canada*, Willmot stated that haiku readers must take a participatory role, must "plunge" into the poems to allow the poems to be more; Willmot in turn must first make sure that the readers have something to plunge into.

In *Animal Walk*, a generally impressive first volume of poetry, John O'Neill explores a variety of topics, ranging from our perception of the elderly to our need to capture our lives in photos to his major subject, the relationship between humans and animals and the wilderness. Instead of seeing animals in human terms, O'Neill tends to see humans and human situations in animal terms. In spite of some verbal tics, such as the frequent use of the word "slit" (in "slit-eyed" or "slit-winged"), as well as some failures in imagery and diction (a horse is a "black beauty," barometers "drop/easy as dominoes," a mountain goat becomes a "fugitive of the nether regions"), O'Neill does attempt to explore the richness of language, and at times his figures work very well. The inability of humans to understand the animal world is succinctly but evocatively stated:

> Even the loon's
> long rope of song
> is beyond us.

Most of O'Neill's poems entail strong closures, and while some of these closures seem inappropriate or too pat, as in "Fat Woman in Wapiti Campground" or "The Wishing Chair," many of the closures, as in "Nearly Born" and "Accident, Algonquin Park," reverberate, not closing off meaning but subtly suggesting new possibilities and thus bringing the reader back to the poem. Fortunately, a fair number of O'Neill's poems become stronger not weaker on rereading.

As in her earlier volumes, in *Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence* Lorna Crozier shows herself to be a clever, witty, frequently perceptive poet who refuses to apologize for being a woman. In poems such as "Eggs" and "Mother Tongue" she protests society's desire to keep women ignorant of their own bodies; in "Male Thrust" she satirizes the critical view that

equates literary quality with masculinity. "The Penis Poems," which unfortunately lack the charm and imagination of Crozier's earlier "Sex Lives of Vegetables," will probably disturb a number of readers — not because Crozier talks bluntly about sex but because Crozier frequently *laughs* at sex. For people who still take *Lady Chatterly's Lover* seriously, laughter, especially from women, is the cardinal sin.

In the volume, Crozier presents a variety of moods and tones, as well as an assortment of forms. Some poems are humorous, light-hearted, or whimsical; others are more serious. One of her most effective poems is her opening poem, "Fear of Snakes." She uses the same form in a later poem, "In Praise of Women," which is also about cruelty and violence, yet while the subject matter of the second poem — the suffering and endurance of women in Latin and South America — is inherently more significant than the account of a childhood bully, the snake poem is more successful because it convinces on an emotional level. And here perhaps is Crozier's major weakness. Although poems such as "Watching the Whales," "Domestic Scene," "Angel of Infinity," and "So This Is Love" work well, very few of Crozier's serious poems evoke a strong response from the reader. While we do not want less thought from Crozier, more passion, more emotional depth and intensity would be welcome.

Lack of passion is certainly not a problem in Phil Hall's eighth volume of poetry, *Old Enemy Juice*. Again and again, especially in the first two sections, the poems convey a sense of searing honesty as the speaker attempts to face what he actually feels, thinks, and is. In "Ted Bundy," the speaker forces himself to acknowledge the misogynist and mass murderer latent within him, even though this is a self which his other selves, the selves he wants to be, hate and repudiate. A number of poems in the closing section seem dated, derivative, or a bit too easy; unfortunately, the volume's title is taken from "1953," a weak variation on Dylan Thomas' "The Force That through the Green Fuse," in which the speaker, almost straight from the early seventies, joins himself through the spirit of protest with the Rosenbergs, William Carlos Williams, Dylan Thomas, and Hank Williams. Yet some of the closing poems, such as "Life Support System," are sensitive, tightly written, and evocative. Hall's style is at times cryptic, but at its best it is a lean style which uses poetic space as effectively as it uses words and, in spite of Hall's weakness for puns, it is a style which provides a welcome contrast to the wordiness and slackness of much contemporary poetry.

E. F. SHIELDS

CONJUNCTIONS

DAVID ANDRUS, *In the Beginning Was the Word.* Oberon Press, $19.95.

PETER BALTENSPERGER, *Arcana for a Silent Voice.* Aya Press/Mercury Press, $8.00.

BRUCE WHITEMAN, *The Invisible World Is in Decline.* Coach House Press, n.p.

———, *The Invisible World Is in Decline, Books II-IV.* Coach House Press, $12.95.

WHAT LINKS THESE VOLUMES of poetry is the authors' apparent interest in one of alchemy's basic concepts, the *coniunctio* or *chymical marriage.* All three poets refer to alchemy at least briefly and develop metaphoric marriages out of factual encounters: Andrus brings together typesetter and printing machine, exploring "the Tao of typesetting;" Baltensperger focuses on male-female love to concoct poetic *arcana* or secret elixirs; and Whiteman conjoins cunnilingus and language as if to create sperm-words from his "Tao of sex." Their shared aim is the articulation of the invisible world.

Guided by quotations from Jung on alchemy and McLuhan on technology, Andrus tells of his love-at-first-touch for the Linotype, his "dark *anima.*" Numerous working drawings (seductive views?) of the machine's anatomy complement his contemplating his place in the history of printing from the Gutenberg press to a computerized

> . . . new way of
> speaking
> electric throat
> mindchords of sudden light
> and silence
>
> thought drifting
> through landscapes of
> silicon
>
> language expressed
> in chemical visions
> . . . .

Gone is the "alchemist's delusion" of the Linotype men who, on occasion,

> mix in a letter,
> improve a stop
> a comma a quotation
>
> and often — in secrecy
> . . . polish a sentence,
> reduce a redundancy
> turn a phrase until it shines
> like gold.

Andrus' typesetter is clearly also a poet-typologist. He has "seen Shakespeare / appear beside the machine, / and Hopkins and Keats / even Jesus." Indeed, the title of his volume is the foundation of his quasi-alchemical power to listen to the voice of collective memory and to keep the now obsolete Linotype alive as a matrix whose arcane authority seems hidden in a recurring anagram: ETAOIN SHRDLU."

Andrus' love story holds together well in form and content. It should be of particular interest to those who prefer not to have true voice and identity disappear in the automated circuitry and boundless redundancy of contemporary *dead letter* printing.

Baltensperger's night thoughts offer *arcana* with which to transmit "a silent voice." By "orchestrated /indirection, / a symphony of /confusion," he tries to control "the sharp voice / of vengeance / and destruction, / slicing through the night," so that a new day can become another "embryo in time." The embryonic potential of light and, implicitly, words and speech depends on the love affair between the male speaker of the poems and a woman. The conjoining of masculine and feminine is seen metaphorically more so than literally, "like waves of / ecstasy / pulsating from a / shrine," for instance, or through "a crack in the universe / [that] leaks light: /flowers and butterflies."

Diurnal, nocturnal, seasonal and topographical contexts allow Baltensperger's poems to coalesce into a story that balances interpersonal relatedness with intrapsychic imagery for an erotic symbiosis of

body and word, of the concrete and the imaginal. The result is stimulating and calming, serious and playful; one might compare it to an elixir.

By contrast, *The Invisible World Is in Decline* appears a pressingly eroticized struggle to keep poetry "a possibility": "So you wrestle with your muse, you wrestle with your lover," trying to learn "from the book of her body." The prose paragraphs that make up Whiteman's two volumes resemble journal-entries and they are often didactic; as a result, the paragraphs amount to sexual variations on Emersonian conjunctions of *words* and *natural facts*. Whiteman emphasizes the body for "the imagination is the body's mirror image, burning like a casual fire at the end of the street." Joining "the body of language" with "the body of love," he has "words grow in the body like the beautiful obscene vocabulary of sex. They are cells that seek out like cells to propagate a syntax of earthly continuity, bodies fucking bodies subcutaneous and invisible." Such verbal thrusting is prone to pollute the invisible world no less than the broadcast signals Whiteman decries. If one accepts the idea that "the invisible world is in hopeless decline," one has to be prepared to put much of the blame on the proliferation of modern poetry that explores the invisible more chemically than alchemically through women's bodies. What Whiteman's poems lack, when compared with Andrus' and Baltensperger's, is poetic alchemy. Still, he does speak provocatively (and not exactly without Hermes' help) of "language explosions in the heart and genitals." One cannot help but sense his determination to make poetry in order to stop "the bleak rhetoric of decline" in our "polymorphous, promiscuous rattletrap universe."

K. P. STICH

UNMAPPED TERRITORY

TOM KONYVES, *Ex Perimeter*. The Caitlin Press, $8.95.

GAIL FOX, *The End of Innocence*. Selected Poems. Ed. Tom Marshall. Oberon, $14.95.

AS HIS TITLE SUGGESTS, in *Ex Perimeter* Tom Konyves explores boundaries — between poetry and prose, and between art and life. Like American poet Frank O'Hara, Konyves views the poem as a "temporary object," which must be "true / to the moment." In "Ten Poems Around the Block," a sequence about the act of writing, and about the limits to and of expression, he concludes:

> the poem is the step
> out of the arena
> into the real
> where we are separate
> mortal gristle

The economy of language here, the prose-like cadence, the focus on the "real" world, and on human mortality, are all features of Konyves' writing in this volume.

Many poems in *Ex Perimeter* are observations, some fleeting, like "Classics," which effectively stills an instant in a single, resonant image. Others — especially in the "Vancouver Poems" section — are clearly political, like the slightly acidic "Approaching Guerrillas," or the bitterly ironic "English Bay Vision": "There is no futility in commerce, not here / in the land of abundant symmetrical logs / on manicured beaches." Much of Konyves' work appears to be derived from personal experience; while this connection between life and art provides emotional depth in "The Last Days" and "The Funeral," it unfortunately obscures a series of four poems dedicated to fellow poets who are named by initials only. Konyves uses obscurity effectively, however, in another personal poem, "On Michael's 16th Birthday;" here the reader's puzzlement merges

with the confusion of the poem's speaker as he confronts a painful childhood memory: "a barbed wire school fence / I just can't remove."

Technically, the first section of *Ex Perimeter* is marred by a rather extensive use of similes, but this flaw is offset by Konyves' experimentation with non-linear narrative in poems like "Montreal Lane Vision" and "At the Pik-Nik," and by the pure, lyric reach of "Birds at Qualicum," in which the speaker yearns for "the ever-circling breeze of living / in the grace of space."

In contrast to the brief, intense glimpses of *Ex Perimeter*, Gail Fox's *The End of Innocence*, like its cover art, is a vivid and detailed self-portrait; to read this selected volume of her work is to participate fully in Fox's growth as an individual and as a poet.

This growth is most readily apparent in the numerous autobiographical poems that focus on family relationships. These personal narratives appear throughout virtually all of Fox's volumes, from *Dangerous Season* (1969) to *The Deepening of Colours* (1986). The poet's relationship with her mother is particularly interesting to chart over this time period. In "Family Dream," from Fox's first volume, the speaker sees "the pieces of Mother / arranged in a kind of Stonehenge, / bruised black and menacing;" though ordered to put them together, the speaker, "mindful of our old quarrel," refuses. In "Growing Up: A Three-Part Description" (*The Royal Collector of Dreams* 1970), Fox's mother remains a threatening figure: "My mother's eyes were the beginning of danger. / They didn't show anything but they intruded into every- / thing I was." By the time Fox writes "Puerto Rico, January 1985," however, she and her mother have "learned to look each other in the eyes" and "laugh like / schoolgirls"; they are able to "share the night with words as meaningful / as any we had ever shared — words of / friendship, words of a common language."

Another "common language" for Fox is the language of madness. Many of the poems in *The End of Innocence* focus on illness and recovery, and those from *God's Odd Look* (1976) specifically explore the poet's own experiences in an asylum, and her attempt to record "this / rich, unknowable world without / horizon." In "The Village Idiot," a sequence of twelve poems, Fox draws a vivid picture of insanity: "ruddiness, drool, / foul breath, hair, /glazed eyes, nose that / flares like a wet skirt." At the end of the final poem, however, this image turns inward as the speaker recognizes herself in the idiot woman: "this face in my / nightmares / / that swims to / meet me in the mirror's / dark." In all, these poems constitute a compelling re-evaluation of the stigma attached to mental illness in our culture.

Selections from Fox's later volumes (*Houses of God*, 1983 and *The Deepening of Colours*, 1986) are marked by a gentler tone as she writes of her reconciliation with the past, and her intense commitment to the present moment, where "the particular becomes / important." In "The Courage of Winter Proper," for example, the "particular" is a leafless tree and we are invited to climb it and "see as an eagle," to "be startled witless. Be lifted and struck, / mute and rapt and silent." This celebration of the spiritual in the commonplace continues in the poems from *The Deepening of Colours*, where Fox's speaker declares that she has "no maps for the territory I am entering. / It is the sacred in the every day." This willingness to enter unmapped territory, to see "the sacred in the every day," allows Fox to conclude that "however / Bad things are, we survive" and that "eventually, the finest things / come true." Collectively, the poems in *The End of Innocence* bear witness to these words.

SUSAN SCHENK

INDESTRUCTIBLE CORE

Northrop Frye, Myth and Metaphor: Selected Essays, 1974-1988, ed. Robert D. Denham. Virginia, n.p.

JUST HOW MUCH the world of letters lost when Northrop Frye died last January 23 is heavily underscored by the publication of this, his eighth collection of essays, *Myth and Metaphor*, which appeared just a few weeks before his death. For this anthology displays Frye at his imposingly intellectual, witty, far-ranging best. Of these twenty-four essays (fifteen of which — *not* fourteen, as miscounted by the editor in his introduction — have already been published in one form or another), almost all were written by Frye in his seventies. Yet, amazingly, they are dazzlingly young both in style and content, reminding us of the tremendous energy of Frye's beloved Blake at the same age.

The topics of the collection are standard Frye, here placed in a "somewhat arbitrary" five-fold arrangement by the editor, noted Frye scholar Robert D. Denham: Part One deals mostly with "the building blocks of literature," such as myth and metaphor; Part Two with the relationship between literature and social concerns; in Part Three the focus shifts to "literature itself"; Part Four deals with the Bible, and the final section focuses on four individual artists: Wagner, Castiglione, William Morris and Joyce.

As usual with vintage Frye, the essays are infused with glorious wit (*vide*: "The work of most middle-class people today consists mainly in the polluting of paper, or what is known as filling out forms"), dazzling learning (one essay, "Literature as a Critique of Pure Reason," contains *thirty-two* references, from Plato to "that remarkable Victorian . . . George MacDonald" [who??]) and Frye's unflagging optimism.

And it's that glowing warmth of optimism I find as irresistible here as I do rare elsewhere. Can we really afford to lose a voice that sees in "Anxiety, Absurdity, and Alienation" the modern equivalent to the muses of ancient Greece, whose power, reinvested in these new forms, "is as great as ever, and [whose] cultural achievements could be as impressive as ever"? A voice that held to the end that "the teaching of . . . literature . . . may foster and encourage . . . social change"? That it is possible to "attain . . . a divine and human identity whose creative powers are entirely without limits"? That "each of us . . . has a prince and a courtier within himself, a principle of will and a principle of 'grace' which . . . turns out to be love"? (A similar kind of metaphor which appears here in the previously unpublished public lecture "The Stage Is All the World" may have a more familiar ring to a modern Canadian reader:

> Each man carries inside him an entire Ottawa of politicians jockeying for power, civil servants struggling with routine, mass demonstrators organizing temper tantrums, secretaries trying to transcribe the inner turmoil into some kind of self-justifying narrative.)

Noticeable in this collection is one new and quite interesting focus in late Frye, one which grows out of, or at least is commensurate with, his opposition (often stated in this collection) to deconstructionism, which he calls "a birdshot critical technique [which] aims at a variety of targets and bags whatever it happens to hit accidentally." Against the deconstructionists, Frye maintains over and over that "the Logos [is] at the centre, which is inside the reader, and not hidden behind the text."

It is this conviction of a "Logos at the centre" which generates in these late essays a strong emphasis on *ideology* and consequently on the ultimate social power of art: "[Art] takes us into the world of social vision that informs our waking life, insists Frye in an address to the Victoria

University Alumni (also published here for the first time) — and how often does *that* need reconfirmation in a world defined primarily by economic and mechanistic constructs? And again:

> If we place the works of the human imagination in the centre of the community and make sure they stay there, we shall be able eventually to see that community itself as the total form of what human beings can bring forth, their own larger life that continues to live and move and possess its inward being.

For, as Frye (like Blake before him) insists, the idea of our freedom can never be based only on our relation to nature; it is rather "in the languages of words and numbers and arts" that we will find "the charter of our freedom."

This book is carefully proofread (although some problems word processors can't solve remain: hyphenation is simply weird at times, and the index attributes Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* to Samuel Butler!); and as far as I know, it concludes Frye's various editors' efforts to anthologize his major lectures and papers — with one important exception: the speech Frye gave in the fall of 1989 to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which was obviously too late for this collection (and out of its provenance). There, Frye said it all again, and we can only hope it has now been said often enough and loud enough that we can't forget it:

> *Culture . . . is the indestructible core of a human society, so far as it is a human society and not a mere aggregate of atoms in a human mass.*

That is the voice we have lost.

GRAHAM FORST

IMMIGRATION

TIZIANA BECCARELLI SAAD, *Vers l'Amérique.* Triptych, $11.95.

L'IMMIGRATION est presque toujours représentée dans le roman comme une aventure individuelle, la confrontation de l'individu et un destin qui se révélera rédemption ou tragédie. L'attirance "vers l'Amérique" dans ce récit prend plutôt la figure d'une fatalité collective et qui concerne surtout les femmes. Une première immigration au début du siècle sera un échec; l'expérience est reprise cinquante ans plus tard. Entre ces deux moments, la lutte d'une 'lignée' de femmes.

Ce court récit, appelée 'novella,' est divisé en plusieurs fragments racontant chacun un segment de l'histoire. Teresa est envoyée en Amérique quand elle a quatorze ans, parce que 'son frère a besoin d'elle' et parce qu'elle se laisse trop embrasser et les gens du village jasent. En Amérique elle souffre de voir son frère se détruire par une liaison avec une femme 'légère.' Son frère se suicide et elle se fait engager comme gouvernante dans une famille aisée. Plus tard elle rentrera dans son village, prendra possession de la maison paternelle, et se mariera uniquement afin de bloquer l'accès à la maison à ses frères. Sa fille se fera violer par un fasciste; sa petite-fille retournera en Amérique, appelée par le fasciste maintenant repenti. Serait-ce le salut enfin?

Ce résumé est loin de rendre justice à une écriture admirable, où la rudesse des émotions est traduite par une langue sculptée et dure. Cette prose toute poétique évoque un monde d'émotions vives et contenues: le désarroi du frère Giuseppe, le pathétique échec de son amante Maria, les profonds attachements d'Amedeo et les trahisons dont il est l'objet, la fragile dévotion de Mia, et surtout la volonté acharnée de Teresa. C'est elle qui, après avoir été rejetée par édict paternel,

reviendra prendre possession de la maison familiale; c'est encore elle qui sera la voie de la réconciliation possible.

Bien au-delà de sa thématique — qui interroge d'une manière tout à fait inédite l'histoire des femmes à la fois au village et dans le nouveau pays, qui revient sur la violence du fascisme mais aussi sur l'intolérance des moeurs villageois — ce beau récit est marqué par une écriture d'une rare intensité. Son langage se maintient toujours dans un espace extérieur aux personnages et leur intériorité, en-deça de la violence des sentiments. Il s'agit d'une contribution importante à cette littérature qui se crée sur l'expérience de l'immigration au Québec (et fait penser par plusieurs aspects au théâtre de Marco Micone et surtout à sa dernière pièce *Déjà l'Agonie*), mais c'est avant tout un texte formidablement puissant.

SHERRY SIMON

ASCÈSE ET ACTION

LIONEL GROULX, *Correspondance 1894-1967 — 1894-1906: Le Prêtre Éducateur*. Édition critique par Giselle Huot, Juliette Lalonde-Rémillard, Pierre Trépanier. Fides EDNS, n.p.

VOILÀ UN MONUMENT où, à tout le moins, la pierre angulaire d'un monument, le premier tome de 858 pages d'une série prévue de quinze. Celui-ci est constitué de 526 lettres, retrouvées et attestées, écrites alors que Groulx est collégien, séminariste et jeune prêtre-éducateur.

Ce grand maître de la pensée nationaliste canadienne-française a exercé et semble exercer encore une influence qui ne se dément pas, que l'on soit ou non d'accord avec ses aspirations. L'oeuvre va au-delà de l'homme. La correspondance qui nous est ici livrée jette les bases pour une connaissance approfondie de la doctrine et de l'action de Groulx, alors qu'il se dit directement dans un genre littéraire dont on n'apprécie pas toujours l'importance dans un siècle de téléphone et de fax. C'est 14,500 lettres qu'il a rédigées entre 1894 et 1967. Cette mine servira encore non seulement à une biographie future mais à une histoire intellectuelle du Québec qui tarde encore à s'élaborer.

Nous avons l'avantage, dans le premier tome, d'une judicieuse préface de Benoît Lacroix et d'une triple introduction: un historique de l'édition de la correspondance, en énoncé des principes de l'édition, car il s'agit ici d'une édition critique avec établissement contrôlé du texte de base, et enfin un essai biographique d'une cinquantaine de pages. Ce dernier porte un titre révélateur et significatif de l'ensemble du tome: "Ascèse et action. Les impatiences de Lionel Groulx (1899-1906)," par Pierre Trépanier. Les lettres sont en elle-mêmes éclairantes par leur contenu, mais aussi grâce aux importantes et minutieuses notes qui accompagnent chacune d'elles. On pourra comprendre, à la lecture de l'ouvrage, l'ampleur de la recherche. De plus, à la fin, les auteurs fournissent les notices biographiques des nombreux destinataires des lettres.

Dans la correspondance 1894-1906, nous découvrons le Groulx collégien, attaché à sa famille, le Groulx séminariste et prêtre-éducateur dans ses premières années. Une santé déficiente l'empêche de suivre des études théologiques régulières au Grand séminaire de Montréal. Alors, comme beaucoup d'ecclésiastiques du temps, il va les parfaire tout en enseignant dans un collège, dans l'occurrence celui de Valleyfield au Québec.

Les "impatiences" du jeune Lionel Groulx se font rapidement sentir. Il se lance aussitôt, en plus de l'enseignement, dans la formation d'académies et de cercles qui rassemblent des étudiants qu'il veut former à l'action catholique, qu'il veut initier à l'apostolat religieux et national. Pour lui, l'un ne va pas sans l'autre. Il déplore le catholicisme de convention

que pratique la jeunesse. Il dénonce en même temps l'enbourgeoisement d'un clergé satisfait, et aussi le manque de compétence professionnelle des enseignants collégiaux de l'époque qui sont orientés dans l'éducation sans préparation suffisante. Ce zèle ne va pas sans susciter dans la petite communauté du collège et du diocèse des réactions de méfiance et d'incompréhension. Certains le perçoivent comme un utopiste. Il met fortement l'accent sur la formation de la volonté dans l'éducation. Les lettres permettent aussi de découvrir les influences tant françaises que québécoises qui s'exercent sur lui. C'est le maître qui se dessine déjà en lui, avec des disciples.

Son intérêt pour le nationalisme se concrétise de différentes façons. En plus de son engagement dans les cercles de jeunes, il lutte pour un drapeau national Carillon-Sacré-Coeur, écrit des articles dans les journaux, prononce des discours et entreprend pour ses étudiants la rédaction d'un manuel d'histoire du Canada, premier jalon d'une carrière à venir où il brillera au niveau universitaire. Mais cet homme d'action prend conscience des lacunes de sa formation et il demande à son évêque la permission d'aller poursuivre ses études en Europe. Il partira en 1906, année qui marque la fin du premier tome de sa correspondance.

Ceux qui ont déjà pratiqué l'édition critique apprécieront doublement l'apparat critique, le nombre et la qualité des notes explicatives, la bibliographie, autant d'éléments qui apportent, sans faire d'interprétation, les bases essentielles pour fonder solidement les recherches ultérieures.

ANTOINE SIROIS

FEMMES CÉLÈBRES & ANONYMES

PEDNEAULT, HÉLÈNE et al. *Qui a peur de?* . . . VLB, $12.95.

LOUISE COTNOIR, *Les rendez-vous par correspondance suivi de les prenoms*, Editions du remue-ménage, s.p.

ANDRÉE LÉVESQUE, *La norme et les deviantes*, Editions du renue-ménage, s.p.

Qui a peur de? . . . Une idée du défunt magazine *La Vie en Rose* reprise avec bonheur par VLB Editeur. Des auteures-complices québécoises imaginent une rencontre avec leur auteure préférée ou en font le personnage principal d'une histoire écrite dans le style de cette auteure. Malgré les limites du jeu, les approches varient énormément. Certaines abordent directement le sujet et d'autres "braves" produisent un texte dans le style de . . . On découvre, entre autres, Simone de Beauvoir à travers l'oeil d'une photographe intriguée par la vieille femme au turban bleu, et la recluse Virginia Woolf en proie à des crises de folie racontées par l'excellente Aude. La narratrice de Monique Larouche-Thibault, gaffeuse et énervée, rate sa rencontre avec Anne Hébert. L'héroine d'Anne Dandurand racole un petit truand pour l'offrir à son amie Erica (Jong), mais elle en tombe follement amoureuse. (Après tout, il vient avec une provision de condoms et n'a-t-il pas promis, ô suprême stratège, de se réformer pour elle?) Et que penser d'une Colette à la mode de chez-nous qui purge ses amours blessées dans le Sud? Le caractère cinématographique de la majorité des approches renforce l'impression qu'on a de voir un film tiré d'un roman qu'on a beaucoup aimé. C'est à la fois une intrusion dans ce qu'il y a de plus intime et de plus précieux et une étonnante incursion dans le monde de la créativité. A lire à petites doses selon l'humeur et la couleur du temps.

Dans la première partie de *Les rendez-*

vous par correspondance, Louise Cotnoir présente de courts textes, pas plus d'une page, inspirés par l'art épistolaire. Lettres reçues, attendues ou expédiées, et collis sans destinataires hantent l'imaginaire de la narratrice qui avoue y trouver grand plaisir, car "cela n'engage que le temps de penser à vous, sur papier." La deuxième partie du recueil, *Les Prenoms*, comprend de courts poèmes qui dénoncent la condition de certaines femmes ou rendent hommage au génie d'autres femmes anonymes ou célèbres dont Colette, Gloria O'Keeffe, Marguerite Duras, Yollande Villemaire et Anaïs Nin. Danielle Péret a réalisé les photos de masques étranges qui contribuent à créer l'atmosphère propice à la lecture: des yeux phosphorescents de voyeur pour la correspondance et des masques de femmes mutilées ou de mortes habillées de dentelle de mariée pour les poèmes.

La norme et les deviantes est le rapport d'une enquëte menée par l'historienne Andrée Lévesque sur la sexualité et la fonction de reproduction des Québécoises pendant l'entre-deux-guerres. L'auteure dénonce le discours catholique et bourgeois d'une époque où les femmes étaient confrontées à une cruelle réalité socio-économique. La sacralisation de la maternité dans le but d'assurer la survie de la "race" au détriment de tout humanisme fut instituée grâce à des normes prescriptives articulées par des "définisseurs et des exécuteurs agréés." L'auteure soulève nombre de questions dont celle de la double-moralité du système judiciaire et des institutions religieuses chargés de récupérer les déviantes, ces "déchets sociaux." Par exemple, comment expliquer un taux de mortalité infantile de 37,7% due à des maladies évitables à la crèche de la Miséricorde, entre 1929 et 1939? Pauvreté, avortement, infanticide, abandon d'enfant, prostitution et leur affreux cortège de tuberculose, septicémie puerpérale et maladies vénériennes sont le lot des déviantes, souvent de très jeunes victimes, qui passaient leur vie à expier leur faute. Certains chapitres qu'on voudrait l'écho d'un temps révolu ont encore une résonance trop actuelle. 40 ans plus tard, en sommes-nous à réinventer la roue?

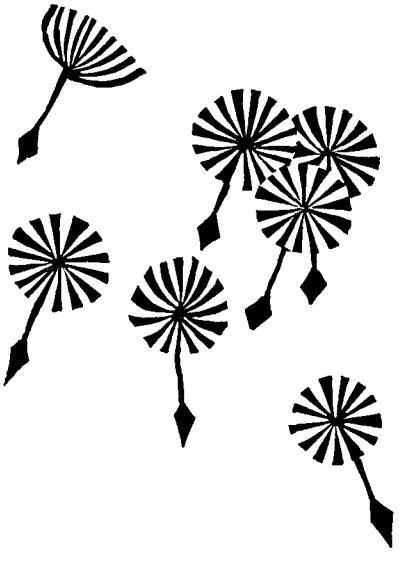
DANIELLE TRUDEL

ON THE COVER OF *Native Americans: Five Centuries of Changing Images*, eds. Patricia Trenton and Patrick T. Houlihan (Abrams, $67.00) there appears a remarkable portrait of Chief Blackhawk and his son, Whirling Thunder, probably painted by John Wesley Jarvis in 1833 when the two were incarcerated in Fort Monroe, Virginia. On President Jackson's order, Black Hawk is wearing "the white man's conventional dress," while his son, "for unknown reasons," as the book notes, is depicted "in native costume with elaborate ear wampums." The likeness between father and son is unsettling, and Whirling Thunder looks across his father's shoulder as if he were a projection of the older man's true self. While the editors explain the historical background of the painting in admirable detail, their comments on the picture itself remain descriptive and uninspired, a shortcoming which affects the book as a whole. Magnificently illustrated and painstakingly documented, it does not go far enough in exploring the politics of visual representation, although there is ample material for such commentary at every turn of the page. That quintessential Canadian painting, Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe*, for instance, contains a pensive Mohawk warrior whose clothing "combines the styles of several tribes — Delaware, Iroquois, and Northern Algonquian." A large number of images of Indians draw on the aesthetic formulae established by historical and religious painting and implicitly continue the ideological values implied in them. Particularly extensive are allusions to Roman grandeur, a pose often invoked to underline the noble aspirations of the new settlers. Rosario Rosaldo and others have questioned the harmlessness of nostalgia, and this volume would provide them with much ammunition. Thus Frederick Remington ignored the reality of turn-of-the-century native life in favour of nostalgic evocations of Plains lifeways, but not surprisingly he referred to the Indians as "a class of defeated antagonists who required occasional policing." The taking of pictures in itself may of course be an act of appropriation, but again, the authors make

little of their statement that "[the] strong sensitivities of Pueblo groups in this century against depicting images or recording the sounds of Kachina rituals prevent illustration here of either the visual or the Kachina dance costumes and masks." (Nevertheless, a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe of a Kachina doll is reproduced.) Despite its shortcomings, the book is indispensable for anyone interested in the visual representation of the native Indian. There is an extensive bibliography.

Guy McElroy's *Facing History: The Black Image in American Art 1710-1940* (Bedford Arts, $50.00) addresses a similar issue as *Native Americans*. Here, too, the author's ideological agenda are not always clear. McElroy praises William Sydney Mount's "Eel Spearing at Setauket" for depicting a black woman as "a monumental figure," when monumentalism is surely as problematic as some of the other stereotypes discussed here. But the book is still valuable and particularly good on isolating "icon[s] of abolitionist doctrine." Eastman Johnson's "The Ride for Liberty," for instance, evokes the flight of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph into Egypt, while Nathaniel Jocelyn's "Cinque" creates a parallel between abolition and "the ancient struggles for freedom by Greek and Roman peoples," as does John Quincy Adams Ward's *The Freedman*.

E.-M.K.



opinions and notes

HERBERT READ: THE CANADIAN CONNECTION

HERBERT READ, the English poet, critic of literature and the arts, author of that haunting romance, *The Green Child*, and — as his biographer has named him — "The Last Modern," was a personal friend and admirer of the great psychiatrist-philosopher, C. G. Jung. And it is Jung's haunting theory of synchronicity that comes into one's mind in considering that the important critical and scholarly work on Read since his death in 1968 has all emanated from Canada. The first symposium on Read after his death, the first serious critical study of him, and the first comprehensive biography of him have all been written in Canada.

The process began with George Woodcock's return to Canada in 1949. In England Woodcock had been a close friend of Read, largely through their shared interest in anarchism, though the relationship had its literary aspects, for Read was one of the regular contributors to the literary magazine — *NOW* — that Woodcock published in London between 1940 and 1947; as a director of Routledge and Kegan Paul, he was also responsible for the publication, in 1943, of Woodcock's second book of verse, *The Centre Cannot Hold*. When Woodcock came to Canada in 1949 and settled at Sooke on Vancouver Island, he and Read started up a correspondence; a minor product of the Canada-Read connection is a small volume entitled *Letters from Sooke* (between Woodcock and Read), handsomely handprinted, hand-bound, and published by the Victoria Book Arts Club in 1982.

Later Read made a couple of visits to Vancouver to lecture on the history of modern art and on his major subject at that time, the use of art to develop social sensibilities, as expounded in *Education through Art*. His first trip of this kind was in 1956, and when he came off the plane at Vancouver airport he carried in his hand an advance copy of Woodcock's *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, a biography of the great French anarchist that Routledge and Kegan Paul also published, under Read's editorship. Read and Woodcock continued their correspondence and met on the rare occasions when Woodcock returned to London.

Meanwhile, in 1963, another associate of Herbert Read had reached British Columbia. This was the English poet Robin Skelton, who arrived in 1963, took up teaching at the University of Victoria, and in 1965 founded the *Malahat Review*, an international journal and the only magazine in Canada that ever really rivalled its seniors, *Canadian Literature* and *Tamarack Review*. In its early issues Read's work appeared.

Meanwhile, in the same year, one of Skelton's colleagues at the University of Victoria and a fellow scholar of Anglo-Irish writing, Ann Saddlemyer, achieved a coup that notably furthered the possibilities of Read studies in Canada. Visiting England, she discovered that Herbert Read, embarrassed by the cost of maintaining the country house he had bought at Stonegrave in Yorkshire, was open to an offer to purchase his papers. They were days when money was still easily found by Canadian universities, and an offer was quickly made and accepted, so that in 1965 the largest group of Read's papers now in existence reached the McPherson Library at the University of Victoria and was installed there as the Herbert Read Archive.

Read died in 1968, and Skelton immediately set about preparing a special issue of *Malahat Review* to serve as a memorial symposium for the English writer. Woodcock provided one of the key essays, on Read's anarchism, and the other contributors included Walter Gropius, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, G. Wilson Knight, Stephen Spender, Kathleen Raine, George Barker and Denise Levertov; Howard Gerwing provided a checklist of the Herbert Read archive. The special issue of *Malahat Review* appeared in 1969, and it was republished as a book in 1970 by Methuen in London.

At this time George Woodcock was on the list of Faber & Faber, who were also Herbert Read's publishers — the publishers who brought out his books as distinct from the publishers where he worked — and in 1969 Fabers selected Woodcock as the writer they would like to prepare the book on Read which they felt was necessary. In the discussions that followed it was agreed that a real "life" would be premature, and that a bio-critical work of the kind Woodcock had already written on Orwell (*The Crystal Spirit*) and Aldous Huxley (*Dawn and the Darkest Hour*, published by Faber) would be more appropriate. Working with the Read Archive in Victoria, following up other material in England where he stayed for a while with the Read family at Stonegrave, and writing in Vancouver, Woodcock completed his book, *Herbert Read: The Stream and the Source*, in time for publication in 1972. It remained, until the need for an actual biography became evident a decade and a half later, the unchallenged standard work on Read.

When the biography was started, it too was by a Canadian, but no longer one who had been personally involved with Herbert Read, though James King, of McMaster University, had already ventured into appropriate territory by writing a Life of Read's friend, the painter Paul Nash (*Interior Landscapes*), which appeared in 1987. King inevitably used the material in Victoria's Read Archive as the core of his research, and George Woodcock entered the picture again by acting as one of his guides in following further leads and gaining access to people who had played their parts in Read's life.

King's book, *The Last Modern: A Life of Herbert Read*, was published in London by Weidenfeld & Nicholson in 1990. Though Piers Paul Read, Herbert's second son, found touchy grounds for objection, King's book was generally recognized as being extremely well researched and as setting Read admirably at the centre of his varied world of achievement as, to quote the simple words in his tombstone in the yard of an old Saxon church in the Yorkshire Dales, "Poet-Critic-Anarchist."

Perhaps that Yorkshire churchyard gives a clue to why Read has been so well appreciated and understood in Canada; there is in him, and in his friend Henry Moore (also loved in Canada), a resolute provinciality, tending to resist the rule of the metropolitan in the arts and always to seek their local roots, of poetry and fiction in the ancestral landscape, of art in the hinterland of childhood.

ANTHONY APPENZELL

THE SIGNIFYING ABSENCE

Reading *Kamouraska* Politically

AFTER SO MANY readings of theme and technique in Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska*, it is perhaps time to propose that this novel might be read politically and even invite a political reading. This suggestion may, at first consideration, appear both improbable and implausible, for Anne Hébert's work seems primarily to modulate personal obsessions with guilt, death, sexu-

ality, and regeneration, and to be more concerned with personal mythology than political ideology. *Kamouraska* in particular appears to privilege the Gothic and the poetic over the political. Moreover, we know that Hébert, a resident of Paris, has been careful to keep her distances from the politics of Québec. But a detachment from politics need not imply a detachment from the political order in a broader sense. It might be useful, at the outset, to recall the distinction made in French between *la politique* and *le politique*. The former simply refers to the politics of parties and their platforms. It is concerned with constituencies, strategies, and, above all, with winning elections. Clearly, Anne Hébert's work shows no interest in politics so defined. But there is also *le politique*, an expression difficult to translate into English, but which might be rendered as "the political." An interest in the political implies a concern for the structure of nationhood and its historical development, past, present, and future.[1] I would propose that some of Anne Hébert's work is political in this sense, that is, it is concerned with the broad societal structure of Québec. It might be argued, in fact, that her work, in which can be found a sharp critique of traditional Québec society, contributed to the social changes that Québec has experienced in the past three decades. My suggestion that *Kamouraska* might be read politically refers, then, to *le politique*, that is, the political in contrast to *la politique*, politics.

I am led to make this suggestion by an absence in the text of *Kamouraska*. We know that absence can be a powerful signifier if it evacuates an expected presence. In all types of discourse, exclusions, which are a result of choice, convey meaning. In fiction, silences and absences generate fictional space. Absence can signify. What is it, then, that is missing from this novel? What could we have expected to find in this text that is not there? Clearly, the rebellions of 1837 and 1838. The events leading up to these rebellions, the rebellions themselves, and their immediate aftermath overlap the story of Elisabeth d'Aulnières and Antoine Tassy. There are few dates mentioned in *Kamouraska*, but from those that are mentioned, it is possible to deduce that Elisabeth and Antoine were married in 1834 and that Elisabeth was back in Sorel with her two children in late 1837. Their story unfolds, therefore, at the same moment that one of the most significant chapters of French-Canadian nationalism also unfolds. The rebellions of 1837-1838 represent the only armed revolt against British rule in the history of Québec. These events are still prominent in the collective memory of the people of Québec today. In the past twenty-five years in particular, a significant number of books, articles, colloquia, plays, and films on the rebellions have been produced.[2] The memory of these events seems to be particularly acute during periods of heightened nationalism, such as in the late 1960s, when *Kamouraska* was being written.[3]

One would expect these events to figure somehow in the background of the novel, especially since the tradition of the historical novel established by Walter Scott (who is mentioned early in *Kamouraska*, incidentally), routinely presented personal drama as a function of historical events. It might be noted that the rebellions do form the background of a dozen or so French Canadian novels,[4] not to mention recent works such as Louis Caron's trilogy and Pierre Gravel's *La Fin de l'histoire*, and that a somewhat crude attempt to write a story of Joséphine d'Estimauville, Achille Taché, and George Holmes (the historical counterparts of the characters in Hébert's novel) within a historical context had been attempted in 1894 by Georges-Isidore Barthe in his now forgotten novel, *Drames de la vie réelle*. If Barthe's novel is clearly flawed — it is

more of a disconnected chronicle than a novel — he understood that the requirements of the genre called for the appropriate historical background. Anne Hébert's deliberate occultation of the politico-historical background should strike us as significant.

This is all the more the case because much of the action of *Kamouraska* takes place not in Kamouraska, where *patriote* activity was minimal though not nonexistent, but in Sorel.[5] Located at the mouth of the Richelieu valley, where most of the rebellious activity took place (particularly in the 1837 stage), Sorel was very near the action. In 1837, a mass demonstration, with Papineau present, was held in Saint-Ours, just 15 kilometres from Sorel. The "national convention" of the *patriotes* was held that Fall in Saint-Charles, only 40 kilometres away. All along the Richelieu, there were public meetings, demonstrations, and parades. And, it is in Saint-Denis, some 17 kilometres from Sorel, that the first battle (and the only *patriote* victory) took place. The British troops who were met by the rebels in Saint-Denis had arrived by steamer in Sorel, marching south from that point. When faced with defeat, the British retreated to Sorel. It is to Sorel as well that reinforcements came and from Sorel that the British marched on Saint-Denis, pillaged it, and then moved on to Saint-Charles where they inflicted a severe defeat on the *patriotes*. In 1838, the British feared an attack on Sorel itself and prepared to defend the town. The attack did not materialize, but bands of dispossessed or dispirited *habitants* did drift into Sorel. How is it possible to relate a story which took place largely in Sorel in this period and avoid references to the unprecedented tumult in the city? Such an absence is a signifying absence.

But let me not overstate the case for absence. For, if the rebellions do not appear overtly in the novel, this text does convey a politico-historical code containing politico-historical semes which evoke echoes of the events of 1837-1838. The clearest evocation of the events — it is the only direct reference — comes early in the book: "Elisabeth d'Aulnières, veuve Tassy, souvenez-vous de Saint-Denis et de Saint-Eustache."[6] The voice is assumed to be that of Elisabeth who is reminding herself of two of the major battles of the rebellions. She is clearly not recalling these events for patriotic reasons, however, since the text that immediately follows reads: "Que la reine pende tous les patriotes si tel est son bon plaisir. Que mon amour vive! Lui seul entre tous. Que je lui sois donnée à jamais" (44). This evocation of Saint-Denis and Saint-Eustache serves to stress that for Elisabeth private passion has primacy over national solidarity, but it may also be a way of signaling to the reader: "Souvenez-vous de Saint-Denis et de Saint-Eustache:" be reminded that the rebellions though absent from the narrative are historically contemporary to the narrative.

The only other allusion to the rebellions is found at the end of the book when Clermont Dufour, an innkeeper, is reported to have justified his silence about the strange behavior and appearance of his visitor (whom we know to be George Nelson) by saying: "peut-être bien qu'il est un officier anglais, il pourrait nous faire prendre; comme on est dans un mauvais règne, il pourrait y avoir quelque bataille en haut" (220). By early 1839, there were, of course, no more battles, but Clermont Dufour would not be expected to know that. We need to retain Elisabeth's evocation of Saint-Denis and Saint-Eustache at the beginning of the novel and Clermont Dufour's reference to a "mauvais règne" at the end of the novel. For, these two more or less explicit references frame a set of signifiers which have no direct politico-historical referents, but which operate nevertheless at two levels: at the

level of story and at the level of history. That is, these signifiers, whose primary meanings derive from their function in the narrative syntagm, contain semes certain to evoke associations relating to the rebellions in any reader familiar with their history.

Let us take, as an example, a sentence like "Burlington, Burlington. Il me semble que ce nom sonne dans ma tête comme une cloche grêle" (10). This syntagm inhabits both a fictional and a historical space. At the level of the story, the reference is clearly to the town in Vermont to which George Nelson fled. But to the reader familiar with the political history of the period, this sentence summons up other connotations as well, for Burlington was also a town to which a number of *patriotes* fled and where an important *patriote* press was located. The same semiotic process operates with the references to the Richelieu valley: "Elisabeth d'Aulnières, songe à la douceur du Richelieu" (74). Within the context of this novel, this is a reference to the happy days spent with George Nelson. Seen in the context of history, the sentence becomes ironic since the Richelieu valley was at that very time being devastated by the British in retaliation for the uprising. Elisabeth's statement to Dr. Nelson, "Toute la vallée du Richelieu visitée et sauvée par vous" (155), is equally ironic since in the context of history the Richelieu valley was condemned rather than saved. And why did Anne Hébert choose to call Elisabeth's lover George *Nelson*? Hébert has revealed that she originally called him George Wilson, but decided to choose another name when informed by her publisher in France that there was a French actor by that name. There were a number of Anglo-American names that she could have used, but, she says, "enfin je suis tombée sur un nom de la révolution de 1837, George Nelson."[7] The choice of Nelson, the name of two of the most prominent leaders of the revolt, Robert Nelson and Wolfred Nelson, serves to keep the memory of the rebellions in the minds of the readers. Robert Nelson, one of the most radical of the rebels, was, it might be noted, a physician and known as *le Dr. Nelson*, the same designation used throughout *Kamouraska* for George Nelson. It was *le Dr. Nelson* (the historical one) who signed a declaration creating the Republic of Canada on February 28, 1838. This Dr. Nelson, like the fictional one, fled to the United States when things got rough.

In this context, the signifier *libre* also has a dual connotation. Given that an organization named *Fils de la Liberté* was forming chapters in the region at the time of the action of the novel, there are political semes within the word *libre* that leap at a historically conscious reader, even if these semes are inoperative at the level of story. "Libres! Libres! Nous sommes libres!" (62): in *Kamouraska*, these words are first used by Elisabeth's servant girl, Aurélie, when she learns that the murder charges have been dropped against them. Their meaning is therefore purely personal. Yet, the reader might note that this is the very language that, historically, nationalist orators were using at *patriote* rallies. Similar words are later repeated by Elisabeth to George Nelson: "On dirait que nous sommes libres, tous les deux" (151), and again by George Nelson to Elisabeth after the murder: "Nous sommes libres, tous les deux" (239). While "tous les deux" signifies a privacy of concern, "nous sommes libres" remains an expression which, when combined with some of the other prominent signs in this text, reminds the reader that at that time there were people struggling for freedoms other than those of personal intimacy. This text exhibits signifiers, then, which have a different meaning within the larger discursive structure of history. This novel maintains a discourse potentially connotative of the rebellions while refusing their

presence at the surface of the novel. It is up to the reader, then, to unfold what is folded into the text, to confront the paradox and ask himself: why are the rebellions encoded hermeneutically rather than overtly?

There is yet another occult reference which may help us to answer that very question. I refer to the date of Antoine Tassy's murder: January 31, 1839. This date, which is the historical date of Achille Taché's murder, is mentioned several times in the text, accompanied once by the exclamation, "Ce jour-là entre tous" (205). Now, January 31, 1839 could be considered an important symbolic date in Canadian history, for it is on that date that Lord Durham signed his famous report consigning French Canadians to the trash heap of history. Arguing that French Canadians had no literature and no history, Durham advocated the union of Lower and Upper Canada with the explicit aim of assimilating the French Canadians into a larger and, to his mind, superior Anglo-Saxon culture. One British historian has questioned the influence of the report on British policy,[8] but there can be no doubt regarding its impact on the French Canadian consciousness. On January 31, 1839, Lord Durham signed a report meant to kill French Canada. On that date, George Nelson killed Antoine Tassy. There is a sense in which Elisabeth d'Aulnières and George Nelson were also killing French Canada by putting private passion above public action. "Que la reine pende tous les patriotes si tel est son bon plaisir. Que mon amour vive!" (44).

We arrive here at a possible significance of the absence. The hermeneutic encoding of the rebellions serves to remind the reader that a tragic national drama cannot be present in this text, must be absent from the surface of this text, because the characters who dominate the text, who create the story, are incapable of surpassing their own story, incapable of rising from story to history. Were personal passion the only impediment to political commitment, a political reading would have to stop at that very affirmation. But Hébert's text depicts a broader portrait of the upper classes of Québec society in the 1830s which permits us to broaden the significance of the absence and to suggest further that beyond personal passion other causes also explain the political inaction of the characters. Behind the private passions stands a society whose upper levels — the seigneurial class and the upper middle class particularly — comport themselves in ways that foster obliviousness to national concerns.

The portrait of the *seigneur* which Hébert paints is not flattering, to say the least. Brutal, degenerate, alcoholic, and probably mentally ill, Antoine Tassy makes no reference at all to the rebellions although historically, British troops were manoeuvring in Sorel at the same time that fictionally he is carousing in that city. This *seigneur* is incapable of political awareness. Interestingly, there has been some discussion as to whether Antoine's historical counterpart was a *seigneur* or not. Barthe in his novel and abbé Couillard-Després in his *Histoire de Sorel* both claim that Achille Taché was, like George Holmes, a doctor. In his review of *Kamouraska* in 1971, Jacques Ferron criticized Hébert for having altered the facts in making Antoine a *seigneur*. He attributed this change to an effort on Hébert's part to "faire Vieille — France," something which would be "rentable auprès du public français."[9] It is hardly necessary, though, to impugn Anne Hébert's motives to deal with this feature of the novel. The historical evidence is clear that Taché was indeed a *seigneur*,[10] but what is important is that in the novel this character's function is in part to depict seigneurial incapacity.

And the bourgeoisie? Those who represent the francophone upper middle class

in the novel are women: Elisabeth's mother and her three maiden aunts. Her mother, who has dressed as a grandmother since the age of 17, refuses to leave the house and is completely absorbed by personal melancholy. The aunts, on the other hand, are concerned primarily with proper decorum, good manners, and family reputation. Their pedagogical ideal with regard to Elisabeth is "lui apprendre l'anglais, le catéchisme et les bonnes manières" (53). The essentials, then, are the language of the conqueror, the elements of the Catholic faith, and good comportment. It might seem that this is also the order of their priorities, given the effort that they make to teach Elisabeth English (to the point of making sure that she has the correct pronunciation of *th*). They apparently succeeded rather well since Elisabeth was complimented by the governor on the quality of her English. It would not have been necessary at all for Elisabeth to speak to the governor in English since the historical Lord Gosford spoke excellent French and liked to use it. Elisabeth, in fact, seems to prefer that which is English. She cannot help but compare the *violoneux* and the dancers on her wedding night to those at the Governor's ball (which functions in this novel in a manner similar to the ball at La Vaubyessard in *Madame Bovary*). At the governor's ball, "les jeunes hommes ont des gants blancs et des mines confites. Le Gouverneur lui-même . . . Ses favoris sont roux, comme du poil de chat. Son air très british" (72). In comparison, the French Canadians appear vulgar: "Qu'est-ce que je fais ici? Je vous demande? . . . Ah! tous ces canayens-habitants-chiens-blancs! Ils sentent la sueur et la crasse. Ils se démènent en dansant et crient comme des bêtes qu'on égorge" (*ibid.*). It is not surprising (although most unusual given the period) that Elisabeth's two oldest sons were sent to Oxford. "Je me calque sur la reine d'Angleterre. Je suis fascinée par l'image de Victoria et de ses enfants" (34), she admits at one point. It could be argued that she is attracted to George Nelson in part because he is an anglophone. Of English, she says that "cette langue est celle de mon amour" (44).[11] The room in the Rolland home in Québec where Elisabeth is musing is "une chambre aux meubles anglais" (12). More evidence could be adduced from the text to stress that there is a decided streak of anglomania in the bourgeoisie depicted in this novel.

The French Canadian society of the 1830s depicted in *Kamouraska* is marked, then, by a degenerate seigneurial class and an anglophile upper bourgeoisie. The characters in the novel, who live during what Jacques Ferron has called "une époque primordiale, celle de la prise de conscience nationale,"[12] do not speak of one of the most momentous events in Québec history because they are impeded from doing so by their private passion, but also because their degeneracy or their anglomania has made them incapable of political speech and political action. I would conclude by noting that when all appears lost, Elisabeth's family has recourse to a lawyer named Lafontaine just as in Québec history, it was a lawyer named Lafontaine who emerged to lead the accommodation with the British after the failure of the rebellions.[13]

NOTES

1 Roland Barthes adopts a similar distinction between "politics" and "the political" to explain his abhorrence for the former and his adherence to the latter. See his *Le grain de la voix. Entretiens 1962-1980* (Paris: Seuil, 1981), 206.

2 For a survey of this activity, see Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rébellions de 1837-1838: Les patriotes du Bas-Canada dans la mémoire collective et chez les historiens* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983).

3 In 1970, the year of *Kamouraska*'s publication, 3,000 people attended a commemora-

tive rally at Saint-Denis. See Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rébellions de 1837-1838*, 12.

[4] For a survey of these novels, see Maurice Lemire, *Les Grands Thèmes nationalistes du roman historique canadien-français* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Univ. Laval, 1970), 197-220.

[5] In Pamphile Lemay's short story, "Patriotisme," the young men speak of Papineau "qui était descendu à Kamouraska avec Girouard, Lafontaine et Morin." *Contes vrais*, ed. Romain Légaré (Montréal: Fides, 1973), 257.

[6] Anne Hébert, *Kamouraska* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970), 44. All further quotations refer to this edition.

[7] "Anne Hébert: Entrevue," *Québec français* 32 (1978): 34.

[8] See Ged Martin, *The Durham Report and British Policy: A Critical Essay* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972).

[9] "Kamouraska ou l'invention du pays," *Magazine Maclean* (January, 1971): 44.

[10] See Sylvio Leblond, "Le drame de Kamouraska d'après les documents de l'époque," *Cahiers des Dix*, 37 (1972): 239-73 for a discussion of what is known about the historical characters.

[11] In Hébert's novel, Dr. Nelson is presented as the son of American Loyalists who could not tolerate American democracy and who sent their children to Québec so that they might remain loyal British subjects, even if this meant becoming Roman Catholic and learning French. There is no evidence that Nelson's historical model, George Holmes, had arch-loyalist parents (see Sylvio Leblond, "Le drame de Kamouraska . . .," 245-49) and, given the date at which he would have been sent to Québec, (several decades *after* the American Revolution) such sentiments on the part of a New Hampshire family appear historically implausible. The purpose of this detail, then, can only be to emphasize the anglophilia rampant in Elisabeth's family, for the reaction of Elisabeth's aunts to Nelson is the following: "Quel bel homme que ce docteur Nelson, si bien élevé et *de vieille famille loyaliste* américaine. Dommage que la petite ne l'ait pas rencontré le premier" (161; my italics).

[12] "Kamouraska ou l'invention du pays," 44.

[13] Historically, Joséphine d'Estimauville's lawyer was also named Lafontaine, although his given name is not known. Could this defense lawyer have been Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, the prime architect of political realism after the rebellions? On the possibility that he might have been, see Sylvio Leblond, "Le drame de Kamouraska . . .," 265. It was said that Lafontaine restored French honor. In this context, Elisabeth's reaction to the marriage of convenience to Jérôme Rolland which saved her honor emerges as a political reflection as well: "L'honneur est rétabli. L'honneur, quel idéal à avoir devant soi quand on a perdu l'amour" (9).

EMILE J. TALBOT

*** Jo O'Donoghue. *Brian Moore: A Critical Study*. McGill-Queens. $39.95. We maintain a sentimental attachment to our birds of passage — the Malcolm Lowrys, the Wyndham Lewises and the Brian Moores — even if we incessantly debate how far they have really been Canadian writers. Jo O'Donoghue's *Brian Moore: A Critical Study* ignores our anxieties with splendid insouciance, for it is an Irish book by an Irish critic about a novelist she considers Irish. Quite obviously for O'Donoghue the facts that Moore took out Canadian citizenship and that he has spent the second half of his life in the United States are irrelevant. He comes from Ireland, like so many expatriates to the North American continent, he writes about Irish people even if they are outside Eire, and his novels are all concerned with a central Irish obsession, the Catholic church with its concurrent problems of faith and obedience. *Brian Moore* is so Irish-centred that almost none of the considerable writing about Moore in Canada and the United States is even noticed, let alone being considered; what Dublin critics say is obviously much more important than what North American critics say, even though the novelist is a Belfast man with his own local problems. Still, it is a book to be read, for here without any kind of real diversion we are presented with the fact that Moore is a writer unwillingly obsessed with religion, and his obsession is duly studied. O'Donoghue's is a grand single-minded study, and leaves plenty of space for later, broader critics.

G.W.

ON THE VERGE

**** DOUGLAS FETHERLING, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper.* Oxford Univ. Press, $9.95. There has been something so resolutely philistine about Canadian newspapers, with a very few exceptions like Henri Bourassa's *La Presse,* that it is hard to consider them as having any real relationship to literature in this country. On the other hand their role in the country's political life has been enormous, dating from the colonial days when responsible government was still merely a spot on the horizon of the future. And it is this political connection that Doug Fetherling has made the central theme of his excellent little book, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper.* Newspapers in this country have served as a kind of political artillery, softening up the enemy before the grand infantry assaults at election times. Careers in newspapers and in politics interlock, as with George Brown and D'Arcy McGee, Henri Bourassa and Clifford Sifton, and hundreds of less celebrated individuals. In the late nineteenth century political parties actually raised the money to buy newspapers or establish new ones, and for many years the Press Gallery in Ottawa was the best-bribed institution in Canada. In telling this Fetherling does not neglect the other elements that are necessary in considering the nature of the daily press, such as methods of production and distribution, ways of gathering news, and he has an ear for the brief, revealing anecdotes that do so much to create the tone of a condensed but fluent history.

G.W.

*** W. A. PATTON, *Labrador Doctor: My Life with the Grenfell Mission.* James Lorimer, $16.95; cloth, $27.95. For me, as a child brought up in a Low Church missionary-oriented English background, Labrador had no connection with Canada, except geographical proximity. It was part of "the oldest dominion," Newfoundland; it was, above all, the home of the Grenfell Mission, whose publications introduced me to the landscape and people of that beautiful and forlorn land. These recollections were reactivated by W. A. Paddon's *Labrador Doctor: My Life with the Grenfell Mission.* A second-generation Grenfell doctor, Paddon spent all his life, with time off for training, on the Labrador coast. His story is an unusually engaging one, clearly and modestly told, which admirably evokes both the routine of an outpost doctor's life in an age of rapidly changing medical techniques, and the dramatic interludes. The book has two memorable highpoints: a vivid diary of two months of difficult sleighing in search of faroff people, and a fine setpiece description of a captain's skill in a storm that looked like being disastrous to a small ship trapped in a vulnerable harbour by a tempest of unprecedented strength. It will be regarded, I feel, as a small classic of Canadian regional life, though the people described do not yet have any idea of themselves as Canadian.

G.W.

*** MAX WYMAN, *Dance Canada.* Douglas & McIntyre, $60.00. Dance was an indispensable component of Canadian native cultures, but it had little place, after a brief early 16th century flurry at Port Royal, in the Jansenist cultures of French Canada and just as little in the puritan societies of early English Canada, where the theatre might be marginally acceptable (though not to Methodists) but the showing of nether limbs that the ballet involved was anathema to the respectable. Yet the pagan urges asserted themselves and, as Max Wyman shows in *Dance Canada: An Illustrated History*, a strong tradition did eventually emerge in Canada, both ballet and the less formal patterns that we rather uncritically lump together as "modern dance." But it came late, not much more than a generation ago. The whole period from 1504 to 1900 is covered by Wyman in five illustrated pages, one of which is devoted entirely to a coy image of Pavlova dancing *Bacchanale.* (What an exquisite ham she was!) Fortunately, it has not been entirely a history of such exotic migrants, though the fleeting visits of the various manifestations of the Ballet Russes played their stimulating parts. But they did so only because, *mirabile dictu*, Anglo-Saxons on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1930s discovered dance as an aesthetic and a hedonistic experience. How that encounter took place in Canada, how pagan beauty — in some modest way — conquered the Calvinist beast, is recorded with many intriguing illustrations in Max Wyman's book, the work of a realistic devotee of Terpsichore, who knows that Canada has produced some great dancers and choreographers, but realizes that there is a basic discordance between the Canadian psyche and the spirit of dance. *Dance Canada* is illustrated with good and ample photographs in black-and-white, which I have always thought reveals the subtleties of dance, that art of motion and form, much more effectively than colour.

G.W.

*** *Wolverine Myths and Visions. Dene Traditions from Northern Alberta.* Compiled by the Dene Wodih Society and edited by Pat Moore and Angela Wheelock. Univ. of Alberta Press, $24.95. Recently, in books like Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams* and Robin Ridington's *Trail to Heaven*, we have learnt a great deal, through first-hand accounts, of the prophets and dreamers who preserve and develop the beliefs of the Dene peoples of northern British Columbia and Alberta. A valuable supplement is provided in the present volume, which is a collection of translations of stories relating to Wolverine, the trickster figure of Dene myth. These are tales of the Dene Dhâa, also known as the Slave Indians, of northwestern Alberta, and the translations are supplemented with the Dene originals together with literal word-by-word English versions. A description of the Dene prophets and a general discussion of the Dene Dhâa language complete what is a very useful volume for those interested in native traditions, and, so far as the stories are concerned, some fascinating oral literature.

G.W.

** GEOFFREY BILSON, *The Guest Children.* Fifth House, $14.95. In terms of the vast and usually appalling events that shook the world in the 1940s, the episode of the few thousand children evacuated from England to Canada to escape the air raids must seem a minor one. But it is part of the story of Canada's involvement in World War II, and part of the biographies of many individuals, as the late Geoffrey Bilson's *The Guest Children* makes evident. Bilson, a social historian but probably best known for his historical novels for children, tracked down many of the people who as children took part in the exodus, and it is their words, with introductory passages, that he used to tell of their experience. Some suffered throughout their time in Canada; others enjoyed the change immensely, and some were so disappointed on returning to England that they came back to live out their lives in Canada. It is a moving, charmingly unpretentious history and certainly should be read by anyone interested in World War II Canada.

G.W.

*** PAUL RUTHERFORD, *When Television Was Young: Primetime Canada.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $65.00/24.95. Nowadays when we talk of the CBC, it is sometimes with anger at the waste of so many cultural possibilities, but often with an elegiac nostalgia for a better past. Turning dials to get the nearest PBS station, we remember the days when Americans would talk of the CBC with envy. We are always talking about a CBC "golden age"; all we can agree about the time of that golden age is that it was well in the past. My choice roughly covers the period of Paul Rutherford's *When Television Was Young*, from 1952 to 1967. It was the time when television was starting off and in some areas was intelligent and experimental enough to give high and unfilled hopes. It was the time when radio made its most notable contributions to the intellectual and

artistic life of Canada, developing interesting and creative programmes and intervening actively as a patron of writers, actors and musicians. Rutherford gives a good picture of what went on, though he consistently attacks as "highbrows" those who criticized the false populism that soon began to dominate television programming. Thus his book is useful in two ways; it is a good reminder of the factual history of the CBC during this era that began with promise and ended without it, and it reflects surprisingly faithfully the attitudes of those men (for they *were* almost all men) who ruined the CBC and destroyed it as a formative cultural force by trying to make it competitive with commercial networks in their own fields, a procedure that alienated its natural constituency, the intellegentsia, and brought it no new populist following.

G.W.

* *The Cambridge Encyclopedia.* Cambridge UP, n.p. Snatches of near-information characterize this work; in over 1300 pages, the contributors define, explain, and illustrate a multitude of topics. Yet cultural limits impose an obvious bias. *Angela Carter* is listed, but not *Emily Carr. Roger Fry* but not *Northrop Frye. H. H. Munro* but not *Alice. Ralph Lauren* but not *Margaret Laurence.* The entry on Captain *Cook* records his violent death but nowhere mentions the Nootka Convention. The 16-line entry on *Canadian literature* contains two spelling errors and at least one dubious proposition, and highlights *Mazo de la Roche.* The entry on Atwood says that "Her *Survival* (1972) is considered to be the best book on Canadian literature." It should not be thought ungenerous to ask: *says who*?

W.N.

**** JOY L. SANTINK, *Timothy Eaton and the Rise of his Department Store.* University of Toronto Press, $35.00. Cecil J. Houston and William J. Smyth. *Irish emigration and Canadian Settlement: Patterns, Links and Letters.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $45.00. These two books rather neatly complement each other, since Timothy Eaton was one of the best-known of Irish nineteenth-century emigrants, and an exemplarily successful one. But while *Irish Emigration* is essentially a history of settlement, *Timothy Eaton* is a study of commercial developments blended with a biography. A number of epigraphs to early chapters are taken from Daniel Defoe's 1745 book, *The Complete English Tradesman,* and I suspect that if Defoe were about today he would appreciate Joy Santink's easy, matter-of-fact narrative approach, in which impressions of Eaton and his contemporaries, information about the Victorian retail trade, and speculations about the reason for the way it developed, are put together in a clear and jargon-free English, almost as vigorously plain as Defoe's own. *Irish Emigration* owes its special interest and value to the fact that it is a collaboration between a Canadian (Houston) and an Irish (Smyth) scholar, using documents and information gathered on both sides of the Atlantic. It follows the travels and the Canadian adventures of a group of families from various parts of Ireland, and produces a very human and personal view — and incidentally a markedly less dismal one than many earlier accounts — of the emigration as it was in those days when Canada was being shaped by the people who came to its shores.

G.W.

** ARTHUR J. RAY, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age.* Univ. of Toronto Press, $45.00. The fur trade's history up to the time of Confederation has been well and widely told, though often in inappropriately epic tones. But what happened from the 1970s onward, as it fell behind land sales and retail merchandising even in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, is less attractive to historians and almost wholly neglected by popular ones. Arthur J. Ray fills the gap with a modestly competent book which will be useful to those concerned with northern history, and may be of help to those who wish to counter the arguments circulated by the fur trade that it is part of an aboriginal way of life.

G.W.

*** DON AKENSON, *At Face Value: The Life and Times of Eliza McCormack/John White.* McGill/Queen's, $24.95. Truth, they say, is stranger than fiction. But there are those of us who have always argued that the very need to shape the chaos of existence injects an element of fiction into all our so-called historical truths, and that historical writing, and its related forms, biography and autobiography, are necessarily hermaphroditic, half fact, half artifice shading into lies. In *At Face Value* Don Akenson, himself a historian, has plunged into the heart of the ambivalence. A series of curious facts led him to the conjecture that John White — an Orange-flavoured Tory M.P. of the 1870s and 1880s — was in fact his sister, a

transvestite prostitute who also went by the name of Eliza McCormack and assumed her brother's identity after his death of typhus in Ireland. Little of Akenson's evidence is firm, but in an ingenious first-person narrative he presents a fascinating account of how it may all have happened, how this respectable paterfamilias and legislator may in fact have been a lady in a Lesbian relationship; her companion, Akenson would have us believe in his rather Defoe-like narrative (all plain language and verisimilitude), went through all the pretences of pregnancy and populated the house with adopted newborn Mohawk children who grew up as John White's daughters. It reads like fiction, but who can tell? Rarely have I seen a better exemplification of the relationship between real fiction and the necessary fictions of history. The ancients in their wisdom had only a single muse for prose, Clio, the goddess of the historical imagination.

G.W.

*** PIERRE BERTON, *The Great Depression, 1929-1939*, $29.95. Pierre Burton is a member of the journalistic establishment and a widely read popular historian, five or six of whose books continue to command attention. Perhaps the best of them is still the first, *Klondike*, which appeared in 1958 and was the earliest book of any consequence that encompassed the subject, so that Berton had a free field to present a fresh and original view. Since then he has moved into already trodden areas, like the building of the CPR and the events leading up to the War of 1812. Here he has tended to be good in discovering fresh and new details, but to make general judgments that often safely echo those which earlier critics of the times have already made. His latest popular history, *The Great Depression: 1929-1939*, reflects both these tendencies. It is, of course, timely in two ways; the generation that lived through the Depression is at last dying out, and a new audience now waits to experience the events of that half-legendary age vicariously, while we are all quaking that history — in the 1990s — may repeat itself. But apart from these special considerations, *The Great Depression* is average Berton. It is not so daring in its general conclusions as the publicity has led us to believe. Time and again, already, the imperceptiveness and callousness of the Canadian ruling class of whatever party at this period have been exposed. What alone makes Berton's book worth reading is the assiduous way he and his researchers have gathered the circumstantial details, the anecdotes and memories, that bring the age together in memory. It is in this sense, by making the people speak, that *The Great Depression* is good popular history, though in his own way Barry Broadfoot had done it before in *Ten Lost Years*.

G.W.

** PETER STURSBERG, *Roland Michener: The Last Viceroy*. McGraw Hill-Ryerson, $27.50. Roland Michener earned his niche in Canadian history, for his unusual combination of a patrician sense of ceremony and protocol and a genial egalitarianism of behaviour made him the ideal occupant for the three high symbolic positions he held as a splendid kind of frontman for the Canadian state, a kind of one-man Potemkin village. He re-established the dignity of the Speaker's role in parliament after René Beaudoin's scandalous display of partisanship during the pipeline debate of 1956. He was the perfect amateur diplomat to act as Canadian High Commissioner in a country so dominated by the protocol of official and unofficial life as India. And as Governor General he gave the right illusion of substance to an insubstantial office. I still remember with delight a kind of Alice-in-Wonderland conversation with him at Rideau Hall when we solemnly and in detail discussed what might be done to bring Tibetan refugees to Canada, both of us knowing full well — and amused by the fact — that neither of us had any more real power than the other. Michener was probably less of an intellect than, say, Robert Stanfield, but he never fumbled a ball, in reality or in metaphor. And it is this apparent calm of a complacently successful life that has perhaps led Peter Stursberg to write such a dull book, at once flat and fulsome. True, the publicly displayed facts of a life are there; the surface of the smooth stream flows past us; it is singularly lacking in rapids. But what of the deep pools, of the whirls and monsters we can hardly doubt have lurked in their depths? Stursberg is clearly not the man to trouble their shadows. And perhaps we should be content to remember that Michener was that extraordinarily rare being, a decent man who strayed into politics and escaped unspoilt.

G.W.

*** ROBIN RIDINGTON, *Trail to Heaven*. Douglas & McIntyre, $29.95. *Trail to Heaven* is a book which, even admitting it is somewhat less eloquent, I would put in the same class as Hugh Brody's remarkable *Maps and Dreams*. By what appears to be sheer coincidence it also is about the Beaver Indians, their mental out-

look, their world of dreams and dreamers that controls the vital activity of hunting and illuminates their lives and their thoughts of death. Like *Maps and Dreams* it is a book that acknowledges the disciplines of anthropology yet follows its own path. For more than a quarter of a century Robin Ridington has been studying the Beaver, and I suspect he has been helped by the fact that so much of the material side of their traditional life has vanished. But though in many ways they dwell on the margins of the white man's world, and at times enter it completely, their beliefs are still there, and so are the Dreamers, who provide the link with the supernatural world and with the past, and whose songs and dances and drumbeat patterns convey a complex and self-consistent cosmology and a pattern of human destiny — history masquerading as myth — within it. Ridington learnt to think like the people he studied, even in his own way to dream like them; he allied himself with the Other rather than seeking to dominate it. The result is an extraordinary opening into the visions and perceptions of a culture that seems to link back to Lascaux and Altamira, the cave worlds with their hunting dreams and magical powers. *Trail to Heaven* breaks bravely away from orthodox ethnographical writing, which is usually so alien to its subject. It projects a surviving culture from the Old Stone Age, lived into by a modern white man.

G.W.

IN HIS PREFACE, Fredric Jameson calls Roberto Fernandez Retamar's *Caliban* (University of Minnesota, $35.00) the Latin-American counterpart to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. First published in 1971, Retamar's polemic has become, together with Fanon's *Damnés de la terre* and Mannoni's *Portrait du colonisé*, a classic of postcolonial criticism. "Caliban Revisited," also included in the volume, describes the historical context of the original and is every bit as fiery. Retamar's argument is notable for the wide-ranging literary evidence it is based upon, and for its self-ironic suggestion that "apart from a few professors of philology, who receive a salary for it, there is only one type of person who really knows in its entirety the literature of Europe: the colonial."

Not all the interviews in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (Routledge, $35.00, $13.95), are equally successful, but in the best, Spivak engages in dialogue with, and meets the challenges of, intellectual equals such as Sneja Gunew and Angela Ingram. Particularly illuminating to critics of Canadian multiculturalism will be "Postmarked Calcutta, India," a dialogue also published in the collection *Women's Writings in Exile*, eds. Mary Lynn Broe, Angela Ingram (North Carolina, n.p.).

In *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester University Press, US$74.95), Jeffrey Richards quotes George Orwell as follows: "England is perhaps the only great country whose intellectuals are ashamed of their own nationality. In left-wing circles it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman and that it is a duty to sneer at every English institution from horse-racing to suet pudding." The quotation might well be a preface to the entire book, although its authors do not so much "sneer" as critically and often brilliantly review various popular aspects of imperialism, including music-hall entertainment, children's books, feature films, radio, and the Boy Scouts. The result are some of the best essays published to date on the subject, occasionally presented with a spirit and conviction rare in cultural criticism. Particularly outstanding are J. A. Mangan's study of invented traditions, propaganda, and imperialism, and Jeffrey Richards' work on feature films and imperialism in the 1930s.

Considering the importance of its subject, one would expect Jeanette Greenfield's *The Return of Cultural Treasures* (Cambridge, US $44.50) to make fascinating reading, but instead this is largely turgid writing. Still, there is vital information here on subjects such as the return of the Icelandic manuscripts from Denmark to Iceland and the debate over the Elgin marbles. Canadian cases are also discussed, such as the repatriation of "the private Speyer collection of Canadian Indian Ethnography from West Germany." The illustrations are very good, and there are extensive appendices printed on microfiches including legal documents and transcripts.

E.-M.K.

From the Fires of Revolution to the Great War, ed. Michelle Perrot, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Harvard, n.p.) is volume IV of *A History of Private Life*, general eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby. The book is a rare feat, for it combines impeccable scholarship with enjoyable reading, not to mention the many lavish illustrations. Of the volumes of *A History of Private Life* published so far, this is probably the most useful to Canadianists, for it provides ample information on the France that post-Conquest French- (and English-) Canadians

mythologized in their novels and travel reports. Occasionally, the editors' efforts to cover every imaginable detail of their subject makes for tantalizing lists rather than fully developed analyses, but the extensive bibliography provides all the necessary further references.

Some of Charles Bernheimer's *Figures of Ill Repute: Representing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century France* (Harvard, US$29.95) suffers from an annoying mixture of pretentious and pedestrian discourse, but it is worth persevering for such chapters as "Degas's Brothels: Voyeurism and Ideology." Here the author presents a masterful analysis of Degas's choice of monotypes as a particularly appropriate medium to express his concerns: "The monotypes . . . present crude, scribbled, smudged, murky forms in what are frequently almost illegible juxtaposed masses of light and shadow." Degas's highly popular paintings of ballet dancers acquire an ominous subtext from Bernheimer's analysis of these alternative images. One of the monotypes appears on the cover of a related book, Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, transl. Alan Sheridan (Harvard, US$39.50), first published in 1978.

Among the essays in *Popular Fictions: Essays in Literature and History*, eds. Peter Humm, Paul Stigant, and Peter Widdowson (Methuen, $27.50), Graham Holderness's "Agincourt 1944: Readings in the Shakespeare Myth" is particularly valuable. Holderness focuses on the year 1944, when G. Wilson Knight published a patriotic essay *The Olive and the Sword*, Laurence Olivier's *Henry V* was released, and E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* appeared. Each of these works exemplifies how extensively "classics" have been used for propagandistic purposes. Thus Tillyard's book (reprinted eight times between 1948 and 1974) offered a pastoral vision of a bygone world worth going to war for; G. Wilson Knight evoked the national symbol, St. George, in urging his fellow countrymen to fight "the reptilian dragon-forces of unregenerate, and therefore unshaped and inhuman, instinct, energies breathing fire and slaughter across Europe," and Olivier celebrated Britain's advance, "heart, nerve and spirit steeled." Holderness's comments acquire special poignancy from the fact that Kenneth Branagh's recently released film version of *Henry V* has by some been understood as a propagandistic statement endorsed by the Thatcher regime.

The topic of David Glassberg's *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (North Carolina, US $14.95 pa.) seems quirky at first, but soon uncovers endlessly fascinating detail presented in a persuasive conceptual framework. Glassberg describes historical pageantry as a major "melting pot" strategy with all the attendant ironies. Native Indians and blacks for instance were rarely allowed to participate and if so, then only to entrench the stereotypes of racial inferiority. A particularly haunting photograph of black children impersonating Indians in a 1908 New York pageant shows a group of doubly disenfranchised people. Pre-World War I pageants often served as allegories displaying the virtues of the past believed to be useful also in the present, but later pageants projected the static image of history which has since become the blight of Disneyworld and other theme parks.

E.-M.K.

ROBERT A. ROSENSTONE'S *Mirror in the Shrine: American Encounters in Meiji Japan* (Harvard, US $25.00) is not the experimental "tour de force" that the cover blurb would have it to be, but it is an important book for researchers interested in cross-cultural interrelationships nevertheless. Using modest versions of "different voices; . . . montages and moving camera and quick takes; . . . direct address to readers and characters; and . . . self-reflexive moments," Rosenstone describes the encounters with Japan of the American missionary William Elliot Griffis, the scientist Edward S. Morse, and the writer Lafcadio Hearn, and through their experiences re-evaluates his own. The book is one of the first to apply the self-reflexive stance for which James Clifford *et al.* pleaded in *Writing Culture* (1985) to the criticism of travel literature, and more such work is needed.

Another aspect of orientalism is explored in Lucy Hughes-Hallett's *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions* (Bloomsbury, £16.95), a detailed investigation of the Cleopatra myth in literature, film, and advertisement. The author's non-academic, wide-eyed approach to the likes of Barthes, Bataille, Lacan, and Foucault can be irritating, but there remains much of interest here. While Hughes-Hallett frequently if not always successfully incorporates contemporary literary and cultural theory, Virginia Child's *Lady Hester Stanhope: Queen of the Desert* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £16.95) does no such thing, and apart from providing the facts of Lady Hester's life, the book has little to offer to the researcher. The statement that "Lady Hester felt an immediate and powerful affinity for the desert people which

was entirely reciprocated: she felt that their pride, self-respect and independence in the face of utter poverty was the antithesis of the rich and corrupt Europeans who so lazily condemned her way of life, and who dismissed these same Arabs as savages" would have gained much from some contextualization, but none is offered. The same problem afflicts Derek Hopwood's *Tales of Empire: The British in the Middle East* (Tauris, £29.50). The book is a collage of excerpts from diaries and letters, loosely held together by the author's commentary. Much of the time, the quotations speak for themselves, but occasionally their status and their relationship with the commentary becomes dubious. Harold Dickson for instance is introduced as "a prime example of a British 'Arabist' — one of those many devoted Britons who gave their life to the Arab world," followed by letters extolling Dickson's devotion to "the wildest tribes I can find, the wilder the better. They all are a great crowd and I am already in love with my lambs . . . I have got a wonderful hold of these fellows, and I fear as soon as I go they will begin to cause trouble." A fuller introduction and analysis would have been in place here.

E.-M. K.

CONSTANCE ROOKE'S *Fear of the Open Heart: Essays on Contemporary Canadian Writing* (Coach House, n.p.) features essays on Laurence, Munro, P. K. Page, Ondaatje, Metcalf, Sheila Watson, and Atwood, some new, some previously published. The most compelling is "Interpreting *The Handmaid's Tale*: Offred's name and 'The Arnolfini Marriage'," a virtuoso exercise in literary detective work. An essay on Atwood also appears in J. Brooks Bouson, *The Empathetic Reader: A Study of the Narcissistic Character and the Drama of the Self* (U. of Manchester, £16.75), a book otherwise devoted to applying the psychoanalytic theories of Heinz Kohut to such authors as Dostoevsky, Kafka, Conrad, Mann, Lessing, and Woolf. Atwood's *Surfacing* features in Marylin Yalom, *Maternity, Mortality, and the Literature of Madness* Penn State, US$20.00) together with Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Marie Cardinal's *La Sourcière* and *Les Mots pour le dire*; and *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle* make an appearance in Patricia Waugh's *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (Routledge, $49.95), in the company of Woolf, Drabble, Brookner, Plath, Tyler, Paley, and others. Of related interest are Josephine Donovan's *After the Fall: the Demeter-Persephone Myth in Wharton, Cather, and Glasgow* (Penn State, US$23.50), Deborah Kelly Kloepfer's *The Unspeakable Mother: Forbidden Discourse in Jean Rhys and H. D.* (Cornell, US$24.95), Christine Olivier's *Jocasta's Children: the Imprint of the Mother* transl. George Craig (Routledge, US$47.95). *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Harvard, $11.95 pa), features essays most of which have previously been published in *Poetics Today*. Suleiman's essay on French feminist criticism is one of the best compact introductions to the subject I have seen to date. Among many other noteworthy contributions, Ellen L. Bassak's essay on "The Rest Cure: Repetition or Resolution of Victorian Women's Conflicts" may be especially interesting to Canadianists for it provides much new medical detail about the appalling "therapy" to which Emily Carr was subjected. Similar in subject matter is *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (Routledge, $39.50 cl.; $12.95 pb.).

E.-M.K.

**** J. M. S. CARELESS, *Brown of the Globe*, Vols. I & II. Dundurn Press, $19.95 ea. The two volumes of J. M. S. Careless's *Brown of the Globe* appeared in 1959 and 1963 respectively. The present reprint differs in no way from the original. Not a page is revised, and there are no introductions or notes devoted to bringing the work up to date. Yet the reappearance of Careless's biography, even unchanged, merits attention because it is one of the best of Canadian political biographies, an indispensable tool for understanding the age of Confederation, and far from the hagiography that Canadian scholars so often produce.

G.W.

** P. ROY, J. L. GRANATSTEIN, H. TAKAMURA, M. IINO, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War*. Univ. of Toronto Press, $24.95. In *Mutual Hostages* Canadian and Japanese scholars come together to discuss the fate of Japanese in Canadian hands and Canadians in Japanese hands during World War II. Their argument is that in effect the Japanese in Canada became hostages who had to be treated reasonably well to prevent reprisals on Canadian internees in Japan. This means that, bad as the mass evacuation of Japanese from the British Columbian coast may have been, it was perhaps better than the reprisals prejudiced Canadians might have inflicted on them had they been allowed to remain. In any event, the Canadian govern-

ment's policy did no more than prevent the already bad conditions of Canadian internees from Japan from getting dramatically worse, since the Japanese armed forces mainly responsible for them were, surprisingly, much more decentralized than the Canadians in their actions, with individual commanders controlling according to their own caprice what happened to the prisoners. An interesting, not entirely convincing, piece of historical revision.

G.W.

THE "IMPRINT" SERIES of paperbacks, from Angus and Robertson (a HarperCollins division) reprints several Australian volumes and introduces some original ones. With over twenty volumes now available, readers are offered a range of writings, from Christina Stead's massive novel *For Love Alone* (with an introduction by Peter Craven) to the accomplished stories in Beverley Farmer's *Place of Birth*. *Come In Spinner* (a 1951 World War II novel about women at the Australian home front, by Dymphna Cusack and Florence James) appears to be the publishing by-product of a new TV series, just as Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* re-emerges in print after its film version. Two books by Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson) — *Wild Cat Falling* (1965) and the new *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (1991) — respectively record the tribulations of a young urban aboriginal and the efforts of a shaman to will his people (beset by a missionary culture) back to their own lands. The list also includes biographies of Crocodile Dundee prototypes, Neil Davis and Tom Cole; and a novel by George Johnston, *My Brother Jack*, which touches on the differences between this particular cultural mythology of manhood and the aspirations of other men for other kinds of power. Glenda Adams' novel *Longleg* is here, along with three apparently frank autobiographical volumes by the playwright Betty Roland, and a series of letters written in 1943 by the poet Gwen Harwood, *Blessed City*. Charmian Clift & George Johnston collaborated in 1948 on a historical romance about Tibet, *High Valley*; Inez Baranay's novel *Pagan* concerns the more recent history of Sydney in 1956; Marion Halligan's *Eat My Words* is a personal, and not particularly engaging, traveller's cookbook, or a gastronomic travel guide; Robyn Davidson's *Travelling Light* is a politically more pointed set of travel essays, reflecting on contemporary Australian culture. For Canadian readers, the best introductory volumes might well be the two edited by Garry Disher, *Personal Best* and *Personal Best 2*, in which sixty contemporary Australian writers choose their own "best" story. Finally, Paul Kavanagh and Peter Kuch interview such writers as David Malouf, Elizabeth Jolley, Les Murray, and Randolph Stow in *Conversations*. The volumes range from $12.95 to $16.99.

W.N.

Canadian Writers before 1890, ed. W. H. New (Bruccoli Clark, $103.00) is volume 99 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Like its predecessors, it includes essays on a wide range of novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists, historians, and clergymen writing in English and French, including such little known authors as Margaret Agnew Blennerhassett, Adam Hood Burwell, Nicholas Flood Davin, Burrows Wilcocks Arthur Sleigh, and others, but also canonical authors such as Octave Crémazie, Louis-Honoré Fréchette, and François-Xavier Garneau. The lion's share of the work for this volume appears to have been accomplished by Mary Lu MacDonald who contributed eight essays; as always, her work is thorough, lucid and sensible. Unlike comparable reference works, the *Penguin Guide to English Literature* (Viking, $39.95) contains a substantial "Essay Section," which amounts to a 300-page literary history. Canada is served with an entry on Margaret Atwood and inclusion in an entry on Commonwealth literature, where Atwood again features prominently. Women are given a commendably large amount of space, with entries on "Women, Education of," "Women, Status of," and the "Women's Movement," as well as substantial articles on female authors. The volume concludes with a useful chronology of "important dates, both literary and historical." *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Harvard, n.p.) is a "new history" indeed. Although arranged chronologically, the work abandons the "organic" concept of periods and movements; instead, the book proposes a model in which dozens of relatively short chapters present slices of synchronicity. Thus, a chapter authored by James Clifford is headed "1933, February. After Two Years of Ethnographic Research, the Mission Dakar Djibouti Returns to Paris" and bears the scathing subtitle "Negrophilia." The work of Cendrars, Tzara, Paulhan, and Leiris bears testimony to the considerable influence of the Mission on French letters, and Clifford admirably describes both the strengthening and the weakening of ethnocentricity that ensued. Québec makes a brief appearance in a chapter, written by Patrick Coleman, on "1976, 15 November. The Separatist Parti Québécois Captured the

Majority of Seats in the Provincial National Assembly, Comes to Power in Quebec. Hubert Aquin and Quebec." This chapter too combines clear information with inspiring speculation, and one would be glad to have more such chapters on other aspects of Québec literature. Here too women, both as contributors and as subjects, are well represented, and there is a provocative and self-assured tone in the essays by Susan Rubin Suleiman, Toril Moi, and Elaine Marks which is far from the self-effacing "objectivity" of earlier histories of literature.

E.-M.K.

** Stanley Brice Frost. *The Man in the Ivory Tower*. McGill-Queen's, $34.95 cl. In the modern western world one of the few refuges of hagiolatry has been the administrative level of university life. It is the deans — and not the famous scholars or writers who may teach in them — after whom university buildings are named, and perhaps there is some rough justice in this, since they have usually no other way to be remembered. And if the deans become the saints of edifices where they have officiated, the presidents tend to become the subjects of hagiographies. With a saving irony, Stanley Brice Frost steers a little to the leeward of reverence in his *The Man in the Ivory Tower*, a Life of F. Cyril James, the long-time principal of McGill. I have known rather well two university presidents, both men of notable charm and presence but with little to be perceived in the way of inner lives, and the type seems to run true. One observer of F. Cyril James remarked that he really had ice water in his veins rather than blood, and reading this book I conceived the image of a brilliant, personable and plausible automaton of well enamelled stainless steel with a heart of crumbling cement. James had a notable career of almost thirty years as a high priest of academia, at the price of a wretchedly malnourished marriage. In a few weeks a clique of resentful business men on McGill's Board of Governors quietly discarded him, with a gilt handshake. The world to which he had abandoned himself ejected him like an owl regurgitating the debris of its kill. It is a terrible, pathetic story of dedication, achievement, inner death, and ultimate defeat.

G.W.

**** James King. *William Blake: His Life*. St. James Press. US $24.95. I have often thought of Blake as the great inflatable; an artist who made a few paintings of marvellous beauty but who was also a wretched workman in his own craft of engraving; a *faux naif* poet of sometimes exceptional power whose pretentious and often incomprehensible "prophesies" have filled religious critics with wrong visions about the nature of literature; an irascible paranoiac who was poor out of choice and resented it, yet died singing. The grandiose books about him have never worked, because they have not been about Blake but about their authors' own notions. The formal literary and artistic studies have tended to pick out the best, and leave a vast area of difficult writing and incompetent print-making unconsidered. That is why James King's *William Blake: His Life*, is particularly welcome. King, who teaches at McMaster and has already written biographies of neo-Romantics like Paul Nash and Herbert Read, takes a kind of middle distance stand and recognizes that the role of the biographer is neither that of critic nor of literary hagiographer, and what he gives us is not a justification of the poems or the paintings, but a good, warty portrait of the man who created them and of his uneasy relationships in a world of grasping publishers and unreliable patrons (as they seemed to him) who failed to understand his visions and spiritual experiences and the Swedenborgian cast of his mind. King does not leapfrog beyond the life into the creation of fantasies beyond what Blake said or did, and so we have what has long been needed, a well-made study of Blake the man from which we can start out again in consideration of what he said or meant.

G.W.

The flood of books on postmodernism continues unabated. Of particular interest to Canadianists is Janet Paterson's *Moments postmodernes dans le roman québécois* (U. of Ottawa, $14.95), at 126 pages a modest but still useful study of four books, Aquin's *Trou de mémorie*, Ouellette-Michalska's *La Maison Trestler*, Bessette's *Le Semestre*, Villemaire's *Le Vie en prose*, and Godbout's *D'Amour P.Q.* In her Introduction, Paterson initiates an intriguing comparison between the uses of the term postmodernism in English and French, and one suspects that the author has the material for a more detailed study here. Comparable to each other in scope and design are Steven Connor's *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Blackwell) and Hugh J. Silverman, ed., *Postmodernism: Philosophy and the Arts* (Routledge, $19.50). Both books attempt to cover the entirety of postmodernism, with essays on architecture, literature, performance art, popular culture, feminism, post-coloniality, and (post) marxism. Connor's book largely

consists of summaries of major postmodernist theories accompanied by commentary (which can be awkward at times). The work is, however, more accessible than Silverman's volume, in which the obscure and the banal at times enter a strange union. Here the introduction repeats all the well-known "definitions" of modernism vs. postmodernism which have almost acquired the status of a liturgical chant: "Where modernism asserts centering, focusing, continuity . . . postmodernism decenters, enframes, discontinues, and fragments the prevalence of modernist ideals." A remarkable contribution making up for several weak ones is Donald Kuspit's "The Contradictory Character of Postmodernism," a spirited challenge of the blasé irresponsibility of much deconstructionist criticism. After the often turgid writing in these two books, one turns with relief and admiration to David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Blackwell), a beautifully written book which makes even the well-known newly interesting. But this is also a highly individual synthesis of the postmodernist phenomenon, with particularly strong sections on architecture, economy, and space perception and management. Toward the end, Harvey (like Kuspit) addresses the "cracks in the mirrors, fusions at the edges" and questions the ethical ambivalence of postmodernism. This chapter is regrettably brief, and one can only hope that Harvey will turn his attention to a fuller exploration of the topic in a later publication. Kuspit asserts the passionate *engagement* of some postmodernist works with history — literary and other. Walter Moser's admirable *Romantisme et crises de la modernité: poésie et encyclopédie dans* Le Brouillon *de Novalis* (Préambule) provides one of the few poetological analyses of encyclopedism in existence, a mode which has been central to both romanticism and its heir, postmodernism. Moser is particularly good on the metaphorical systems which help to "organize" encyclopedic systems and on the symptomatic modifications which they have undergone since the Enlightenment encyclopedism of d'Alembert and Diderot. By its very nature, deconstruction questions traditional pedagogy, and yet most university teaching coolly continues to endorse authoritarian structures and power discourse. Bruce Henricksen, Thais E. Morgan, eds., *Reorientations: Critical Theories and Pedagogies* (Illinois, $14.95) offers a number of meditations on the subject, not all equally inspiring. Very good are the two editors' introductory essays, which go well beyond the usual superfluous summaries of the subsequent contributions; Barbara C. Ewell's piece on feminism in the classroom offers practical suggestions embedded in a persuasive conceptual framework; and Reed Way Dasenbrock's essay on canons is a refreshing challenge to the high-handed but unrealistic pronouncements on canon revisions found elsewhere. Other contributions are not much more than "how-to" manuals (surprisingly, Robert Scholes produces one of these), and a piece on the uses of computers in the teaching of freshman literature makes some rather unconvincing claims. Also concerned with pedagogical issues, although not necessarily restricted to postmodernism, is Jean-Pierre Barricelli, Joseph Gibaldi, Estella Lauter, eds. *Teaching Literature and the Other Arts* (MLA, $18.95). The essays briefly draft content and objective of such courses as "Determining Valid Interart Analogies," "Adaptations of Literature into Other Arts," "The Year 1913: An Interdisciplinary Course," "Images of Women in Contemporary Arts," and also provides sample syllabi. One wonders if postmodernites would use the term "intertextuality" quite so glibly if they knew Thomas Mallon's *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism* (Penguin, $12.95). Besides a discussion of such canonized plagiarists as Laurence Sterne, Samuel Coleridge, and Charles Reade, Mallon includes chapters on Jacob Epstein's *Wild Oats* and the TV soap *Falcon Crest*, as well as an engrossing account of academic plagiarism as displayed in the Sokolow case. The book is impressively researched and comes with copious notes, a bibliography and detailed index, but this is no dry scholastic exercise. Rather, Mallon presents a passionate, often savagely funny indictment of a crime which its victims often liken to rape. There are even gestures towards a "theory" of plagiarism, in the careful analyses of the double-discourse established by the plagiarist's annotations to the original and his final product, an area where Mallon makes good use of his earlier work in *A Book of One's Own: People and Their Diaries.*

E.-M. K.

BOOKS RECEIVED

5) Fiction

MARGARET HOLLINGSWORTH, *Smiling Under Water*. Lazara, $12.00.
RESHARD GOOL, *Cape Town Coolie*. Tsar, $9.95.
PIERRE MORENCY, *L'Oeil americain*. Boreal, $27.95.
NEGOVAN RAJIC, *A Shady Business*. Oberon, n.p.
YVES THÉRIAULT, *Moi, Pierre Huneau*. Bibliothèque Québec, n.p.
DENYS CHABOT, *L'Eldorado dans les glaces*. Bibliothèque Québec, $8.95.
ANDRÉ CARPENTIER, *L'Aigle volera à travers le soleil*. Bibliothèque Québec, n.p.
DIVERS ÉCRIVAINS, *Contes d'amour & d'enchantement du Québec*. Mondia, n.p.
BYRNA BARCLAY, *Winter of the White Wolf*. NeWest, n.p.
ROBERT BAILLIE, *Soir de danse à Varennes*. Hexagone, $16.95.
PIERRE TURGEON, *Le Bateau d'Hitler*. Diffusion Dimedia, n.p.
JEAN-MARIE POUPART, *La Semaine du contrat*. Diffusion Dimedia, n.p.
CYNTHIA HOLZ, *Home Again*. Random House, $18.95.
NORMAND CHAURETTE, *Scènes d'enfants*. Leméac, $13.95.
TARA NANAYAKKARA, *To Wish Upon A Rainbow*. Creative, $9.95.
MARIE-ANGE DEPIERRE, *Une petite liberté*. Triptyque, n.p.
MARTIN AMIS, *London Fields*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $26.95.
AGNES GOULET, *Marie-Anne Gaboury*. Edns des Plaines, $7.95.
ANNE TYLER, *Breathing Lessons*. Penguin, $24.95.
L. R. WRIGHT, *A Chill Rain in January*. Macmillan, $19.95.
GLORIA KUPCHENKO-FROLICK, *The Chicken Man*. Williams-Wallace, n.p.
THERESA LEWIS, *Caribbean Folk Legends*. Williams-Wallace, n.p.
ALFRED SILVER, *Lord of the Plains*. Random House, $13.95.
ANITA BROOKNER, *Lewis Percy*. Lester & Orpen Dennys, $24.95.
ROBERT LALONDE, *Le Diable en personne*. Boreal, n.p.
ANDRÉ MAJOR, *The Winter of the Heart*. Oberon, n.p.
FRANCIS ITANI, *Pack Ice*. Oberon, n.p.
RAYMOND FILIP, *After the Fireworks*. Guernica, $12.00.
C. D. MINNI, *Ricordi: Things Remembered*. Guernica, $20.00.
IZAAK MANSK, *Forbidden to Grow Old*. Coach House, n.p.
COLLECTIF, *L'Atélier imaginaire*. L'Instant Même, n.p.
DUHAIME, ANDRÉ, *Clairs de nuit*. Triptyque, n.p.
FRANCINE D'AMOUR, *Les dimanches sont mortels*. Guerin, n.p.
DANY LAFERRIÈRE, *Eroshima*. VLB Editeur, n.p.
PAUL PARÉ, *Hotel des Grandes Ecoles*. NBJ, n.p.
STEPHEN GILL, *Immigrant*. Vesta, $5.00.
ROSELINE CARDINAL, *Juliette et les autres*. Hurtubise, $12.50.
CHARLOTTE LEMIEUX, *La Banlieue du vide*. Triptyque, $11.95.
MICHEL GOSSELIN, *Le Repos piège*. Triptyque, $13.95.
FRANCINE NOËL, *Myriam Première*. VLB Editeur, n.p.
DENIS COTÉ, *Nocturnes pour Jessie*. Québec/Amérique, $5.95.
GEORGE CARTIER, *Notre-Dame du colportage*. Guerin, n.p.
JEANNE D'ARC JUTRAS, *Plaxie Pilon*. VLB Editeur, n.p.
RENATO TRUJILLO, *Rooms: Milongas for Prince Arthur Street*. Goose Lane, $7.95.
KRISTJANA GUNNARS, *Unexpected Fictions*. Turnstone, $10.95.
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LAST PAGE

NUMEROUS RECENT BOOKS have been asking readers to rethink history, in some form or other. It's now become conventional (not to say fashionable) to regard history as a fiction, historical assumptions as questionable assertions about truth, and historiography as the angle of access (sometimes acute, sometimes obtuse, never straight) into understanding other people's understanding of the past. It's not surprising, then, that these numerous critical enquiries into the character of history should so seldom now declare faith in facts, and so often concentrate on uncertainty. Knowledge rather than history is substantially the subject here; the question being asked is less "what do we know" than "how do we know what we think we know." Jeffrey Hart's title, *Acts of Recovery* (University Press of New England, US $19.95) signals essay-writing as an activity of intellectual achievement, yet everywhere in his essays lies a dichotomy between his desire for value and his refusal to accept what he sees as a process of enquiry, essentially chaotic, as a value in its own right. Hence he attacks liberalism as base and shallow, desiring a coherent set of orderly values; yet he also recognizes, for example, that when "we use the term 'pornography,' we are not really talking about the specific object before us but about our often unanalyzed intentions towards it." The tension between absolutes and relatives informs every page. To understand culture, it seems, will be the natural consequence of reading better. There are some eloquent comments here on literature and social history, and a fascinating deconstruction of the image of the WASP Gentleman as an American social ideal. But that Belloc and Chesterton emerge as the Standards of Judgment here should also say something about what that phrase "reading better" in this context implies.

For Margaret Scanlan, in *Traces of Another Time* (Princeton, US$22.50), history means something else. When history and politics interact in postwar British fiction, the subject of this volume, then the result is violence, fragmentation, and apocalypse. The Irish question produces Murdoch's acerbic realism; the preoccupation with Philby and spies suggests the absence of cultural faith; the Raj Quartet and various science fiction series explore the attractions of revelatory disintegration. It's as possible to see these paradigms as religious notions as much as they are Marxist or social-realist — or perhaps that's the same thing, fundamentally. Systems in decay produce as much faith in system as they do doubt. This ironically self-contradictory conclusion suggests that the traces of another time that we readily recognize are those that look like the harnesses of our own.

Robert D'Amico's *Historicism and Knowledge* (Routledge, $45; pa. $17) traces ideas about historicism from Popper to Foucault, agreeing with both (that relativism makes sense, that objective knowledge is possible) in order to argue that simple distinctions between objective and subjective, or between absolute and relative, are fundamentally unproductive. Asserting that there is no intrinsically "right" method of classifying that which is, say, objective or subjective, he accepts this observation to mean that answers are merely categories, not conclusions; hence they in turn will become the objects of philosophical debate. Loss of faith in a cultural system, in other words, stirs some people to rush into another faith (whether religious or political), others to rush into the past in search of the Golden Age of Order (why is it that so many people nowadays accept the political sloganeering that identifies the 1950s, of all decades, as Golden? is it just a sign of truculent middle age?), still others to rush towards or away from an Armageddon they construct for themselves as the future consequence of whatever it is in the present they dislike in themselves and fear in their neighbours.

Rethinking Historicism, a collection of essays by Marjorie Levinson et al. (Basil Blackwell/Oxford, $52.50), tries to sort out the implications of canonical versions of literary history with respect to the Romantics, rereading Southey and reconstructing the idea of romance. John MacQueen's *The Rise of the Historical Novel* (Scottish Academic Press, $31.95) argues that the achievement of Scott, Galt, and Hogg was made possible by the work of the 18th century Scots philosophers, a version of history that is worked out more in contextual analysis than as a study in stimulus and response. Never-

theless, this volume constructs history as a line, and the authors named are given their place upon it. Someone is the first to do this or that; someone else is the last. It's a version of order that makes convincing sequential narrative; but it's also inevitably an argument, one governed by the terms of reference that determine the sequence that is deemed to be the answer in the (first) (or last) place.

Nineteenth-Century Lives, edited by Laurence Lockridge et al. (Cambridge, n.p.), a Festschrift for Jerome Hamilton Buckley, collects essays (Freudian and non-Freudian) on figures as diverse as Darwin and Lewis Carroll, but in with them are some essays on biography's facts and fictions. Margaret Atwood's "Biographobia," for example, reflects on the "multiple versions of our multiple selves" that "populate our lives"; it's a fine phrase, defensive as well as permissive. "We play Mr. Hyde, constantly," she writes, "to our various Dr. Jekylls; we supercede ourselves. We are our own broken puzzles, incomplete, scattered through time. It is up to the biographers, finally, painstakingly, imperfectly, to put us together again." Not for nothing is Humpty Dumpty looming over the wall-top here. That "imperfectly" quarrels with "together," and "again" already tells us that then and now are not the same. But, in personality, can they not be? Does identity not argue the possibility of difference as well as the declaration of sameness? Or is this a factitious logical loop, structured by words instead of, rather than in concert with, a notion of reality?

I. C. Campbell's *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Univ. Queensland, n.p.) casts these runes in another way: the title's indefinite article allows for this to be one of many versions of the facts; chapters on the "original" inhabitants and on linear changes in policy and rule argue for a neater arrangement of interpretations. Subsequent chapters on political *priorities* and the *politics* of annexation raise yet again the indeterminacy — the hydra-headedness — of the motivations and the relationships that go by the name of history. To then go on to declare this to be a useful work of scholarship is to recognize the effectiveness of the arguments being made here, but also to acknowledge that such arguments, based on statistical "evidence" and the power of "likelihood," are themselves part of the process that accords value and authority to a particular historical methodology.

To counter a single-minded version of cultural history is, of course, precisely the intent of several attempts to reclaim for the centre those issues and ideas that a received methodology surrenders to its own margins. It's one of the subjects of *Australian Society* (Cambridge, n.p.), ed. Keith Hancock, which probes the statistical revelations of social security systems and a distressed economy, though answers to questionnaires — one of the techniques used for statistical evidence here — notoriously depend on the structure of the questionnaires in the first place and the powers of interpretation of those people who take the time to fill them in. Alternative history is a subject raised in *Playing the State*, edited by Sophie Warren ($60; pa. $21.95); subtitled "Australian Feminist Interventions." It gathers essays on feminist efforts to effect law reform, to establish support centres, to deal with bias in advertising, to express alternative attitudes through theatre, to distinguish between the (male) "warfare state" and the (male illusion) "welfare state," and to report on and theorize about relations between gender, class, and (particularly with relevance to the status of Murri women) race. *Poetry and Gender*, ed. David Brooks and Brenda Walker (Univ. Queensland, n.p.), an anthology of essays on and by Australian women poets, adds more voices to these reformist impulses. The Politics of Gender and the reconstruction of History intersect, too, in a series of conference papers called *Crisis and Creativity in the New Literatures in English* (Rodopi, US$75); topics include the writings of black women, the literary reconstruction of colonial wars, the idea of Indianness, and the efficacy of multiculturalism in redefining power relationships.

Yet another glimpse of historical reconstruction is revealed in a series of thirteen books from the University of Queensland Press; once called "Portables" and now continued under author or subject names alone, the series represents the work of usually a single writer, each volume sampling the range of that writer's writing (both public and personal), edited with commentary and notes. Alan Brissenden's *Rolf Boldrewood* contains the whole of *Robbery Under Arms* but adds essays and tales to this work, modifying in the process the perception of the novelist as a purely escapist romance writer. John Barnes's *Joseph Furphy* adds letters and reviews to the reprint of *Such Is Life*. Michael Wilding provides a literary context for *Marcus Clarke*; Brian Kiernan adds poetry and fragments of autobiography to the characteristic sketches of *Henry Lawson*; Julian Croft provides exegetical commentary on the poems of *Robert D. Fitzgerald*; Leonie Kramer elucidates *James McAuley's* preoccupations with order, truth, and form (whether expressed through music, social comment, or autobiography); Mary Lord draws on *Hal Porter*'s in-

terest in film as well as his fiction; and Terry Sturm, representing *Christopher Brennan*'s letter-writing as well as his dense poetry, makes clear the extent of his reliance on symbolism. Just as Leon Cantrell's *Writing of the 1890s* tries to construct a composite picture of a decade, so does Gillian Whitlock's *Eight Voices of the Eighties*, except that in the latter case the decade is the 1980s, and the eight voices are all those of women: Kate Grenville, Olga Masters, Helen Garner, and others. The importance of this difference is not lost on the series editors. Three other volumes rescue female voices from the past, too: Sally Krimmer and Alan Lawson's *Barbara Baynton*, Vivian Smith's *Nettie Palmer*, and Elizabeth Webby's *Colonial Voices*. The emphasis on the "voice" stresses the divergence between official written versions of history and the "facts" of lived lives; the volumes representing Palmer's and Baynton's work emphasize the relevance of private letters and private journals. *Colonial Voices* assembles letters, diaries, journal entries, and speeches, in order to reconstruct the history that the present knows about the past — to recover the vitality and the biases, to retrace the desires and the relationships, to rethink the simple linearities of officially sanctioned inheritance.

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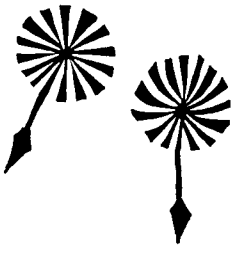

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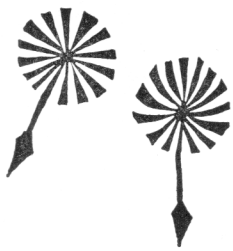

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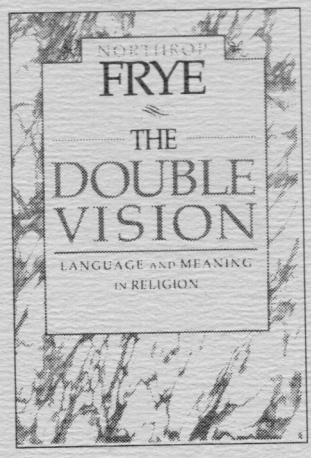

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