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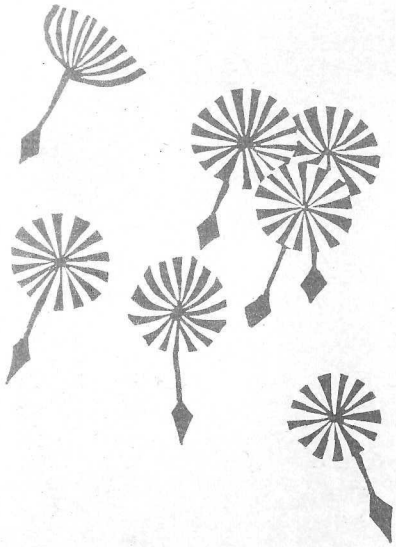

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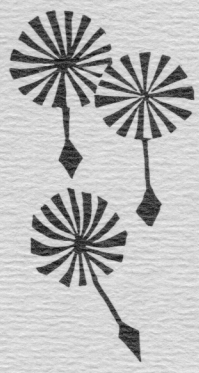
A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW



CANADIAN LITERATURE

A quarterly of Criticism and Review

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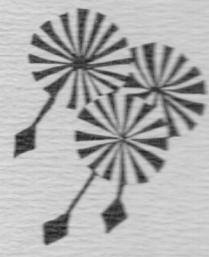

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contents

editorial

IS WINTER MY COUNTRY

My brother, who is married to a Québecoise woman and whose two children shift languages unconsciously, delightfully, in mid-sentence, reminds me that it's not necessary to speak *mon français limité* in the restaurant in Hull. But I keep on — still hoping, I suppose, for the personality change that comes when you can relax, even for a moment, into another language. It's always a temptation in Canadian life, like finishing a meal with a slice of *tarte aux pommes profondes*.

The bilingual dream needs reiterating when referendums loom, and too many voices sound merely indifferent. We need reminding, perhaps, that support for the right of self-determination (so long as the self-determination of one group is not achieved by ignoring the self-determination of another group) is implicit in the bilingual dream, in what this country has tried, falteringly, but intriguingly, to be. And it makes sense to raise the topic again in an issue of the journal whose essays are written, thanks to the efforts of Heather Murray and Germaine Warkentin, approximately half in French and half in English. Many of the writers in this issue extend the historical contexts for French-English comparative studies; reading the essays, I repeatedly noted the prominence of French in English discourse, particularly in George Lang's puzzling over the absence of a Canadian creole.

To get to Ottawa-Hull from Vancouver we cross a bridge which bears the sign Pont Arthur Laing Bridge, and before the plane takes off the flight attendants walk by handing out magazines in English while talking among themselves in French. Such streetscapes and soundscapes, repeated dozens of times each day for each of us, make a difference. The difference is that we live in a culture where alternatives of expression are a continuing public presence. The mythical cereal box, from this point of view, is not an irritant, the visible sign of something being shoved down throats. It's a sign that Canadians grow up in a country where, from the moment they begin to read, another language is interrogating their mother tongue. What sticks in the throat is another way of saying things — or the discomfort of not knowing how to say things another way.

A considerably more sophisticated investigation of this general subject is found in Sylvia Söderlind's excellent new book *MARGIN/ALIA(S): Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québecois Fiction* (Univ. Toronto Press, $45.00/$17.95). Söderlind begins with one of those familiar observations that needs re-stating and re-examining: "Canada's past is, as the ambivalence of its literatures often indicates, a double one: it has been colonized by the French and British but it is also a colonizer of its indigenous peoples." (3) The primary context Söderlind establishes for her reconsideration is the absence of language — while Canada is manifestly part of the "colonizing ... industrialized West," it is also "'colonized' in a specifically cultural and linguistic sense: the Canadian or Québecois writer has no other language than that of the perceived colonizer, whether English or French. No refuge is to be found outside the linguistic territory of the metropolis; no political gesture can be defiantly made by recourse to minority languages, and no common tribal or precolonial past can be conjured up as a challenge in the effort to establish a national cultural identity." (3-4) In her graceful and absorbing analysis, Söderlind pushes to their limits the possibilities of these political ambiguities, both through confident theorizing of the problematics of language and territorialization, and through attentive readings of language and intertext in Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, Hubert Aquin's *Trou de mémoire*, Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors*, Andre Langevin's *L'Élan d'Amérique*, and Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian*.

Söderlind's comparative methodology is not aimed, as has often been the case in Canadian-Québecois comparative studies, at homogenizing a common identity. Indeed she subtly defines the implicit (and unrecognized) cultural differences in ways that make this book essential reading for anyone interested in the literature that results from negotiating two languages. And, when she draws tentative conclusions — for example, Aquin's "active assumption and revisioning of the past" might be a cultural contrast to Cohen's sense of desirably necessary "memory-loss" (108) — she follows with another discerning reading — of Robert Kroetsch — to complicate and interrogate any possibility of neat dichotomy.

Throughout Söderlind's study I noticed the literary importance of a confusion, or blend, of French and English. The unintentionally bilingual sign "Ste. Catherine Street" prompts from Leonard Cohen an inquiry into place-naming "hybridized through French-English contagion." (46) Later, Söderlind patiently probes the bilingual puns in Aquin, and the bilingual wordplay in Godfrey. Cumulatively, such instances suggest that the difficulty of having no recourse to a minority language in which to make a political gesture is in some way resolved in Canadian and Québecois writing by a doubled language, or by relying on a hybridized language where one 'official' language is complicated by the second. The presence of this language we find, of course, in many writers not discussed in *Margin/Alia(s)*: in D. G. Jones, in Anne Hébert, in Daphne Marlatt, and in Michel Tremblay. And

the possibility is reflected in Söderlind's own text: the passages in French are never translated, while English continually illuminates French, and French English in the extraordinary sensitivity of her comparative methodology. The explicit double language is also implicit in a single language (again as Söderlind often points out). I think of George Bowering, for example, in *A Short Sad Book*, where "merde" is as English as "'Is winter my country she said'" is French.

Translation, not surprisingly, is a prominent concern in Söderlind's book. Although she recognizes that recent theorizing about translation extends to understanding verbal communication in the broadest sense, she also emphasizes that translation is an explicit theme in three of the novels she discusses. Moreover, she notes, "the problematics of translation . . . are clearly central to the discussion of territoriality as a measure of the closeness between a literary text and the culture and language to which it belongs. In very simple terms, the more territorial a text, the less translatable it would be." In the considerably more refined, and even wily terms through which this argument develops, one paradoxical possibility posed is that the more visible the problematics of translation, the more Canadian — ironically, deterritorialized — it would be.

I was reminded of this paradox recently, while discussing with a visiting Israeli scholar a model Canadian novel course. It must include, I said, *Pélagie-la-charette*, Anne Hébert, and Hubert Aquin. But, she protested, I'm determined not to teach anything in translation; that is reserved to the French department (which argument will sound familiar to Canadian academics). But, I insisted, you must, in a course on the 'Canadian novel,' include Québecois works, because the tension of translation is a tension which is functional, productive, symptomatic in our writing.

Living in an environment where, absurdly, we make linguistic alternatives, and questions about differences between languages a matter of legislation and the public text, we can not help, I hope, but be tempted, not only by the possibilities of expression in French or English, but also by those in Japanese and Punjabi, Tsimshian and Cree. As Söderlind quotes Leonard Cohen in *Beautiful Losers*: "Watch the words."

L.R.

COUSIN GIFTS

Brian Bartlett

The names of three dozen cousins shook
together in a hat. Our mothers always
chose the gifts, always wrapped them
neatly, with clean creases. Cousin gifts
were never revolved near lamps. Buried
under more promising packages, shoved aside,
they were the orphans under the tree.

One autumn your name wasn't put
in the hat, and you knew you were aging,
adrift in your teens.

Two decades later at Christmas, family news
gathers like darkness on shedding boughs:
Doris unemployed after ten years selling
railway tickets, Wheeler's bank account emptied
by his fleeing wife, a fatherless child
born to Brenda in grade eleven, Donald
tongue-tied on tranquilizers. . . .

My cousins have scattered to Corner Brook,
Mississauga, Burnaby, New Guinea.
Some are happy, says my mother,
but those who aren't
I try hardest to recall — voices
drifting across a picnic table, breaking
over a lake's calm; then only
their hands turning over and
over, eyes facing kitchen tiles.

My cousins . . .
I do not know what gifts to give them.

INTRODUCTION

Reading the Discourse of Early Canada

Germaine Warkentin and Heather Murray

IN THE ESSAY WHICH stands first in this issue of *Canadian Literature*, Christine Welsh writes of a legacy received on the death of her grandmother:

> My grandmother had very few possessions, but care was taken to distribute what little she had among her children and grandchildren. I received a child's sampler, embroidered by my grandmother's mother in 1890 when she was still a schoolgirl. There, woven into the cloth amongst the crucifixes and barnyard animals, was my greatgrandmother's name: Maggie Hogue. Ironically, my grandmother had bequeathed to me that which she had found so difficult to give to me while she was alive — the key to unlocking the mystery of who I was.

Welsh's discovery of her greatgrandmother's identity in the name woven into her sampler provides a unifying image for the project undertaken in the essays collected in this issue. As a group, they are drawn together by several shared assumptions. The first comes from the power of those two words embroidered by a child a century ago, which reminds us that discourse in a given society — the realm of stories and sense-making, power and persuasion — is a larger matter than whatever that society chooses to call "literature." This assumption may begin with the reading of a name or a fragment, but it can take us very far. In one direction it takes us into "literature" itself, and the question of how we define it — and how it defines us. In the academic world this has occasioned current challenges to lower the barriers between canonical and non-canonical works, and between the written and the oral. The assumption of a wide linguistic and symbolic world, worthy of study, can take us outward from our position as scholars of the purely or independently "literary," to a consideration of the way in which literature, and the larger category we will call "discourse," are constructed by society — by whom, for whom, to what ends.

If that is a general view shared by these authors — and, indeed, by many in the academy today — there is another assumption, and one more specific to these papers: that the consideration of the discursive in its broadest sense is what will best open to study Canadian texts from "Before 1860" and allow our sense of con-

nectivity to them. The discourse of Canadians who lived and wrote in the three and a half centuries between contact and Confederation is a subject to which very few Canadians (inside, as well as outside the academy) have ever paid much attention. For the most part, early Canadian writing has been the preserve of historical and antiquarian scholarship; problematically, however, this material has proven itself stubbornly unaccommodating to narrow "textual" scrutiny, and thus has remained largely unstudied and unread.

The problem of the canon, on the one hand, and of the silence of early Canadian literature, on the other, are intertwined. Most of us — and our critical forerunners, with some notable exceptions — were educated in a system which pays close attention to the traditional canon of literature and its authors and genres, and were taught that the highest or permanent values best reside in those novels, poems, and plays. And to this day, whether or not we consciously search for these "permanent values," the assumptions persist. This is in part because, as critics, we concentrate so intensely on the Canadian literatures since 1950, which are indeed full of novels, poems, and plays. Despite the agendas within which the early Canadian literatures were written and known in the past, we have been prone to read them through the lenses of these contemporary premises.

But — as Henry Hubert and Hélène Marcotte illustrate in this issue — such cultural classicizing (for French Canada) and educational idealism (for English Canada) have a history and a politics, and in both cases have replaced other forms of categorization and study in which the distinctions between high and low genres, oral and written, were blurred or not yet hardened. The development throughout the Canadas of "scientific and literary" or "historical and literary" societies is reason enough to beware of generic separations which may be anachronistic; as contributors Pierre Rajotte and Jennifer and J. T. H. Connor demonstrate, the realms of the scientific and literary (or political) existed not merely in parallel, but in situations of textual interdependency. It is worth remembering that for much of the last century, the term "literature" already denoted the "vernacular" in its widest sense — including scientific, practical, and political treatises — and that even where literary study was most aestheticized, its *raison d'être* remained preparation for civil life. And it is worth remembering too, as Carl Klinck has pointed out, that since the rediscovery and study of Canadian texts was first undertaken in just such "historical and literary" societies, the earliest criticism was historical in orientation.[1] Now, just as our finely-honed skills in contemporary textual study can assist with the examination of earlier texts, so will those earlier texts help to situate the genres and styles of the present day.

To make that connection is the objective of many of these essays. Christine Welsh, as a Metis woman and film-maker, conducts a dialogue with the past by searching for the silent figure of her foremother — a woman of historical significance, but erased from history, whose voice can only be reconstituted by a critical

act which reads the spaces between the lines. Hélène Marcotte examines Canadian poetry in the bilingual journals of the late 18th century and notes the different cultural agendas which each linguistic group reveals and the different codes in which they communicate; while Pierre Rajotte traces the same variations in the form of the popular lecture. Both he and Gilles Thérien draw our attention to the way the enunciation of a theme or a type creates the effect of the "real"; similarly, Denis Lafrenière describes the construction of the "Indian" as a particular template of spirituality within the schema of providential history animating the Jesuits' account of North America. In Denis Saint-Jacques' analysis of the reception of Du Calvet's *Appel à la justice de l'État* we meet a figure transfixed by cultural paradox: a French nationalist in an English nation, he is at the same time a Protestant in a Catholic community; what language of protest will he speak, and who will hear him? The speakers of Chinook Jargon and Mitchif, examined by George Lang, have disappeared into the same paradox: expert practitioners in a genuinely multilingual milieu, they have been erased from the linguistic map of Canada by the very success of the enterprise they served. Mary Lu MacDonald and Henry Hubert each look closely at literary values as they are projected in the texts of specific institutions — the newspaper and the academy — both of which remain central to the formation of discursive structures in Canada today; while Daniel Vaillancourt notes the subtle moment of transition from one kind of writer (an annotator speaking to a similar metropolitan mind elsewhere) to an *écrivain* (a writer who addresses in his own voice the audience he has evoked to listen to him). Suzanne Zeller studies the authority with which one man, a scientist, took charge of a particular kind of discourse and used it to serve his purposes (in turn co-opted to larger political ends); while Jennifer and J. T. H. Connor show how medical or scientific controversy can function as an encoded language of political and reformist debate.

In other words (quite literally), the contributors wish to query the silence to which the early Canadian literatures have been consigned, and to ask whether a realignment of agendas might bring into focus the discourse of those who gave birth to the communities we now inhabit, of Maggie Hogue and her daughters, of the anonymous scribes and notaries of Quebec, of the feuding medical practitioners of Upper Canada — the diarists and eulogists, journalists and letter-writers, chroniclers and rhymesters, the world of those once important and now forgotten, and those whose "texts" are to be found only in the words of others. We asume, of course, that such a realignment would have an effect on the study of "Canadian" discourse in general, and that it might make those of us who read and study contemporary literature more aware of the direct effect of non-canonical genres and institutional frameworks on the way we write today, on what we will permit to be said, and what we require not to be said. The essays which follow narrow and focus these issues, in order to provoke a dialogue with our discursive past.

This dialogue began in informal discussions that occurred at the 1987 meeting of the "Towards a History of the Literary Institution in Canada/Vers une histoire de l'institution littéraire au Canada" project in Edmonton, and it was carried forward in the working conference "Before 1860, Discourse/Language in Canada: Avant 1860, discours et langages au Canada," held at the University of Toronto in April, 1990; it is continued in this issue of *Canadian Literature* and, we hope, beyond it. Most of those involved have been academics occupied with the teaching of Canada's literatures, and most have had the experience of teaching early texts from tattered photocopies to students for whom the authors are unknown even by name. For students in English-Canada one fact that quickly emerges is that precisely the experience that they are undergoing in the classroom has been re-enacted over and over again in the past of Canadian literature. English-Canadian literature, having forgotten its past, is always "beginning": statements announcing its inception "at last" have been made in the 1820s, in the 1860s, in the 1880s, in the early twentieth century, in the 1920s, in the 1940s, and in the 1950s. Quebec, for reasons alluded to here by Mary Lu MacDonald, has had a stronger link with the beginnings of its own literary history; although (as Jack Warwick has demonstrated in another context)[2] the construction of such a sense of literary history can occlude the oral or "popular" contexts in which such texts were originally formed — a relationship which Daniel Vaillancourt here attempts to re-establish.

Whether, why, and how we should attempt to reconstruct these "beginnings" is, of course, problematic. Throughout the western world, many literary theorists of the mid-century reacted against the antiquarian, editorial, historical scholarship of the nineteenth century by concentrating criticism on the text and nowhere else. But at the present time we are seeing a return to historical scholarship in its various forms and schools: the "new literary history," "new historicism," "cultural materialism," "social archaeology." ("Discourse analysis," which has proven itself amenable to historical work, underpins all these critical forms, and provides a common methodology, explicit or implicit, for the papers in this volume.) Different as these approaches are, commonalities may be discerned. Such analysis requires that the critic cross-pollinate literary and social perspectives in analysing discourse of whatever sort. It requires a willingness to examine the use of genre and narrative structures in the most "factual" of historical accounts; to look at rhetoric and metaphor in the driest scientific tract; and, conversely, to consider the material determinants of the airily poetic. These material determinants would include the economic, cultural, and engendered circumstances of the writer, and the available conditions of textual production and reception. But it is quite possible to defend such cultural/historical analysis as a theoretical position, yet fail to consider why examination of earlier discourses in Canada is a compelling need. As Gilles Thérien points out at the end of his study of the captivity narrative in early Québecois literature: "Si on peut dénoncer le caractère fantasmatique de la

recherche de l'origine, on ne peut pour autant nier l'utilité de ce fantasme quand il s'agit d'écrire ce que nous sommes."

It was, of course, this question of "who we are" which emerged with full force as an ethical problem in the summer of 1990, while these papers were being prepared. Repeatedly in the months since then, the First Nations people have claimed their right to have a public voice: and it does not trivialize these concerns to see them as rhetorical — questions of representation, of speaking and "speaking for." Our current constitutional crises, after all, often take the form of public debates over the status of pieces of paper, signed — or not signed — generations ago. And in these painful rethinkings of confederation and nationhood, the question of "authority" — legislative, judicial, discursive — is posed in the most fundamental way. The insistence with which First Nations people draw attention to the discursive world and its "constitution" mandates careful reading and critique of discursive practices in Canada in both official languages, and at every level: federal, provincial, municipal, in organizations and the media — and in those poems and novels so responsible for defining who "we" are.

This examination demands analysis of linguistic and symbolic fields in their overlaps and mutual interdependencies: detection of the comparative, intergeneric, and intertextual. For the earlier literatures, this means that textual features need to be examined not only in terms of their relations "within" the text, but their relations to the political and social codes of a time long past, and possibly ill-recorded. The question of method, then, of necessity occurs, directly or by example, in all of these essays.

For Gilles Thérien, past narratives must be read in terms of the available genres, topoi and tropes of the discursive field of the day; Denis Lafrenière demonstrates how narrative and symbolic structures can be accommodated to the "grammar" of a colonialist project; both are attentive to the vanishing act accomplished through symbolizations of the Native "other." This textual situation requires the critic to learn to read what is not at the centre, what is not represented; this is the task undertaken by Christine Welsh, who queries the very definition of the "historical," and its cultural specificities. The problem of reading the absent is particularly acute for those who would recover oral discourses of the past, a dilemma which faces George Lang in reconstructing the geography of an oral and interlinguistic zone. The question of comparative work is also raised by a number of the writers in various ways (Hélène Marcotte, Mary Lu MacDonald, and Pierre Rajotte); they, along with Henry Hubert, initiate inquiry into the institutional — and para-institutional — settings of early discourse, and the relation of the "what is said" to social structures. This latter problem recurs in the papers of Jennifer and J. T. H. Connor and Suzanne Zeller, who bring together the seemingly-divergent discourses of an earlier day to show their mutual encoding.

Daniel Vaillancourt's paper concentrates these different angles of vision to focus on a specific moment in the development of "literacy" and the literary — a moment, he demonstrates, which is literally trans-scribed into the texts under consideration; in turn, the performance of that transcription creates the discursive position for the reader-to-be. If Christine Welsh's search for the voices of her foremothers models the project of creating a new account of the discourses of early Canada, Vaillancourt's image of the *écrivain* calling literacy into being provides a paradigm for its objectives. Here we see clearly the range of issues that need to be considered: the intersection of cultural worlds, the remaking of discourse which results as various forms of contact take place, the individual's situation within one or many institutional frameworks, the problematic choices of stylistic register and genre made by writers and audiences as they mould and break discursive forms.

There are, of course, absences from the essays here, which point to in-progress or possible work to come. Gender issues need to be considered, not only the different textual forms used by women and embodied in Maggie Hogue's sampler, but the interface between the discursive stances adopted by men and women. It should be noted, too, that with two exceptions all the papers deal with the discursive productions of Euro-Canadians; again, with these two exceptions, the languages treated are French and English. While the question of political discourse appears in many papers, there is no direct treatment of speeches, proceedings, or debates, nor of legislative or judicial constructions. Other areas where there is much to explore include the symbolics of cartoons, sketches, and topography, and the rhetoric of domestic, mercantile, military, and economic cultures.

To examine the past *as* discourse would be to turn upon those days the tools we currently find profitable for our own times. Some recent examples from the newspapers show current intersections of the socio-political and the rhetorical. Interestingly, the Spicer Commission, whose self-proclaimed search was for the poetry of a nation, was counted a failure primarily on stylistic grounds ("short on lyricism, long on bureaucratese")[3]; and financier Conrad Black's attack on the "socialist hordes" comprising the new Ontario government gained legitimacy by deploying the conventions of the classical invective.[4] A recent editorial in the *Globe and Mail* quoted two management specialists on the very questions we have been addressing here. "'Canadians in general have a unique outlook'," they observe: "'in many cases, they believe that the future will mirror the past, and they are reluctant to change. While Canadians currently enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, they have become used to the idea that their country should be able to sustain that standard of living indefinitely'."[5] What the speakers object to, it would at first appear, is an unthinking mimeticism, an inability to take a national future boldly into our own hands. The stakes of their argument become much clearer when we remember how compellingly the image of the mirror has functioned in the Canadian imaginary[6] in the interests of both "survival" and remembrance,

embodying the notion that our Canadian identities are formed through a reflective relationship to our surroundings and to our past — reflective in all the senses of that word.

These are thematic and generic issues taken from the standard repertoire of literary analysis and applied in unexpected areas. Those who pursue the project we advocate here will need to consider the constitutive power of discourse itself, its power to make and unmake writers and audiences, to permit or deny the discussion of issues. The writing and assembling of these essays is thus heuristic, rather than descriptive or prescriptive. It is an invitation to take up a thread from Maggie Hogue's sampler and follow it wherever it goes.

NOTES

[1] "Bookmen and Scholars," *Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Essays Presented to James J. Talman*, ed. F. H. Armstrong *et al.* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), 327-33.

[2] *The Long Journey: Literary Themes of French Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1968).

[3] "Spicer Report Is 'Short on Lyricism, Long on Bureaucratese'," *Globe and Mail*, 15 June 1991: A1.

[4] "Socialist Hordes Have Their Day," *Financial Post*, 10 September 1990: 11.

[5] Alan M. Rugman and Joseph R. D'Cruz of the Faculty of Management Studies at the University of Toronto, quoted in "Pushing Canada to Hone its Competitive Edge," editorial *Globe and Mail*, 16 April 1991: A14.

[6] See Margaret Atwood, *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972): 9, epigraph from Germaine Warkentin, "An Image in a Mirror," *Alphabet* 8 (June, 1964): 73-4.

THE FUNCTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Dale Zieroth

The function of the individual
he realizes as he travels through town
is to provide the lightning strike
to matter.
What God once did in beautiful
Biblical illustrations
he now must do.
The waterfront, for instance,
must be charged up, revved higher
until incandescent it shimmers and soothes
the men and women
who stumble mornings
out of the Seabus
and into time.

Loathsome are some of those bodies.
But he sees them now
as uncharged lumps
unable to grip
the time they have in this
configuration of weary mouth and heavy plunging step.
Up the escalator he rides with them,
careful not to step in front
of those who hurry, giving space
to those who wander
talking to their own demons.
The cruise ship out the window
has arrived at dawn
and now from its white sides
happy angels watch and watch
and are ignored in turn.

All the travellers move time
aside as they go, and as it is passed by
it changes, collects, leaps ahead again
so each travels through
what has been shucked off
and waits patiently
for the lightning eye to burn it up
to the cloudy thin-cloudy sky seen in the sea;
in the harbour's oil and white wave.

VOICES OF THE GRANDMOTHERS

Reclaiming a Metis Heritage

Christine Welsh

I HAVE SPENT THE PAST fifteen years making documentary films with, for and about native people. During that time I have listened to native people speak at length about almost every aspect of their lives, and I have been privileged to hear a great deal of native oral history from elders and tribal historians. Their words have not only convinced me of the validity of native oral history, but have also forced me to redefine my notions of the very nature of history. Through them I have come to see history as a continuum, and to view the native oral tradition as an ancient yet viable form of human discourse that encompasses the entire story of a people, both past and present.

But the native oral tradition is also a form of discourse that has been ignored and often deliberately suppressed by the dominant society. These attempts to silence the native voice have had far-reaching consequences, not the least of which has been the erosion of cultural identity among generations of native people, of whom I am one. Yet even among those of us who have been almost entirely cut off from our native heritage, remnants of the oral tradition survive. It is these cryptic messages from the past that have enabled me to recover my native heritage — to hear the voices of the native grandmothers I never knew, and to begin to understand how they were muted. For it was in working with the native oral tradition that I first discovered that we as native women have a unique history and discourse of our own, but being both women and native we have been doubly silenced.

This is the story of my search for the voices of my grandmothers. It is not a story which presumes to speak for all native people, for we come from many nations and we have many different stories, many different voices. I can only tell my own story, in my own voice. Leslie Marmon Silko, the Laguna poet and storyteller, puts it this way:

> As with any generation
> the oral tradition depends upon each person
> listening and remembering a portion

and it is together —
all of us remembering what we have heard together —
that creates the whole story
the long story of the people.

I remember only a small part,
But this is what I remember.[1]

I grew up in Saskatchewan, the great-granddaughter of Metis people who, in the late 1860s, migrated west from Red River in pursuit of the last great buffalo herds and eventually settled in the Qu'Appelle Valley of southern Saskatchewan. My great-grandparents were among the first Metis families to set up camp down on the flats beside Mission Lake where the village of Lebret now stands. As long as the buffalo were plentiful they continued to live from the hunt, wintering in the Cypress Hills and returning to Lebret each summer to sell their buffalo robes, meat and pemmican at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Qu'Appelle. With the disappearance of the buffalo they no longer wintered out on the plains, choosing to remain at Lebret and earn their living by trading, freighting, farming and ranching. They are buried there beside the lake among their kinfolk, and the names on the headstones in that little cemetery — Blondeau, Delorme, Desjarlais, Ouellette, Pelletier, Welsh and many more — bear silent witness to the diaspora of the Red River Metis.

I don't know when I first realized that amongst those ghostly relatives there was Indian blood. It was something that just seemed to seep into my consciousness through my pores. I remember my bewilderment when the other children in my predominantly white, middle-class school began to call me "nichi" on the playground. I had never heard the word before and was blissfully ignorant of its meaning, but it wasn't long before I understood that to them it meant "dirty Indian."

By the time I was in high school I had invented an exotic ethnicity to explain my black hair and brown skin and I successfully masqueraded as French or even Hawaiian, depending on who asked. But I still lived in mortal terror that the truth would get out. In 1969, when the province of Saskatchewan dedicated a monument to Louis Riel, all the other girls in my class took advantage of a perfect autumn day and skipped classes to attend the ceremonies. I decided not to go with them and afterward, much to my horror, was commended by the teacher in front of the whole class for behaviour which he deemed to be exemplary — given the fact, he said, that I was the only one who could claim a legitimate right to attend such an observance by virtue of my ancestry. This oblique reference went right over the heads of most of my classmates, but my cheeks still burned with the knowledge that I had been found out. It was no use: no matter how hard I tried to hide it, my native background seemed to be written all over me.

THE 1960s GAVE RISE to a new pride in native identity among native people across Canada, and even though I had no contact with other native people, I was swept up by the spirit of the times and began to feel that it was no longer necessary to try to hide who I was. But who was I? By the time I reached university in the early 1970s, denial of my native ancestry had given way to a burning need to know. My curiosity was fuelled by the discovery of a much-worn volume entitled *The Last Buffalo Hunter*, a biography of my great-grandfather, Norbert Welsh, which had been written in the 1930s and rescued by my mother from a second-hand bookshop. I revelled in the references to Norbert's Indian mother and his part-Indian wife, but I didn't really understand that I was reading about a distinctly Metis experience which was separate from that of the Indians — or that it was, in fact, one of the few existing memoirs to be left by a Red River Metis.

Though I was clearly interested in tearing away the shroud of mystery that seemed to surround our native ancestors, my attempts were largely futile. Whenever I tried to raise the subject, strenuous attempts were made, especially by my grandmother, to diminish and deny any connection we might have to native people. She actively discouraged my burgeoning interest in and involvement with "things Indian": "we" were very different from "them," she implied, and such associations would only bring me grief.

Despite my grandmother's dire predictions, I was increasingly drawn to Indian people by my desperate need to find out who I was and where I belonged. Though I made every effort to fit into Indian society I was continually made aware that here, too, I was an outsider — this time because I was too "white." Nevertheless, I spent much of the next fifteen years in "Indian country," travelling to Indian communities across Canada and making documentary films on issues of concern to native people, and eventually the pieces of my identity began to fall into place.

Though I didn't realize it at the time, the making of these films amounted to a "crash course" in understanding, appreciating and working with the native oral tradition. This experience proved invaluable when, in 1982, my husband and I began to work on what was, for us, the project of a lifetime — a film series that would depict the history of Canada from an aboriginal point of view. We knew that if such a series was to have any validity or authenticity it must accurately represent the experience of native people *as they perceived it*. We also knew that the only way to ensure such accuracy was to seek out the tribal historians, listen carefully to their stories, and accept their guidance and direction as to how those stories should be presented on the screen.

We spent three years recording oral history interviews with native elders across Canada. Despite our long association with native people, it took some time before we really understood that looking at history from the native perspective meant

much more than seeing historical events from a different point of view. It meant surrendering our pre-conceived notions of the very nature of history — that it is linear, progressive, date- and event-oriented — and adapting our thinking to a fundamentally different aboriginal world view which is cyclical and ultimately timeless. Asking people to talk about "history" as we understood it frequently led nowhere. Such history, they believed, was found only in books and was the private domain of white "experts." While we were told some historical recollections, for the most part it was their lives and their experience of the world both individually and collectively that the people wanted to talk about. They were always careful to distinguish between what they had experienced themselves — "what I know" — and what had been told to them by others, and under what circumstances. Attempts to talk about significant events and people prior to the speaker's own lifetime were usually met with stories which would commonly be described as myths or legends — stories of people, animals, spirits, and the worlds which they inhabit, stories which challenge our commonly accepted notions of both physical and temporal reality. Yet we came to understand that it is these stories that capture the very essence of the aboriginal world view, and that what others call "myth" is in fact the embodiment of history as native people perceive it.

The oral tradition has an acknowledged place and purpose in aboriginal society. Its practitioners have traditionally occupied a responsible and important position in the culture, supplying a moral code and taking the place of written history. Myths, prophesies, songs, dances, religious rituals, genealogies, personal testimonies — all of these are ancient and viable forms of record-keeping among aboriginal people, and it is through them that the collective memory of the people has been passed from one generation to the next. Native oral history begins with the act of creation, and is deeply rooted in the land; it provides a continuity that helps to nurture and sustain the people and their way of life. In it we find the expression of their cultural values and world view. In this respect native oral history is at least as accurate a version of native experience as that provided by the often biased accounts written by non-native observers. The fact that much native oral history cannot be substantiated by documentary evidence is not the most important consideration here: what is essential is the extent to which it is believed by the people themselves.

Native oral history is a living history. Much of its strength and meaning is derived from the relationship between the oral historian and the listener, and from a mutually understood social and cultural context in which language plays a crucial role. But there can be no doubt that the circumstances that nurtured and maintained the oral tradition were irrevocably altered by the coming of the Europeans, and most particularly by the removal of successive generations of native children from their families and communities so that they could be "educated." For native people, perhaps the most devastating consequence was the loss of their language,

for without their language the children were effectively placed beyond the reach of the storytellers — those who had, for all previous generations, passed on to the children the wisdom and the history of their people.

As a result, in some native communities the oral tradition is on the brink of extinction. Elders are passing away, and there are fewer and fewer young people who are able to speak their native language and thus carry on the oral tradition. While some elders still insist that their wisdom be passed on in the traditional way, from storyteller to listener in the language of its origin, many others emphasize the need to record and preserve this tradition before it is too late. There is no doubt that the process of recording, translating and transcribing native oral history alters it in profound ways, for it loses the interactive, highly personalized quality that is so essential to the transmission of collective memory. Yet for many native people — and especially for young people who, for one reason or another, have been cut off from their native heritage — cassette recorders and video cameras have become invaluable tools in helping to bridge the gulf between the generations, between elders raised in fishing camps and on traplines and young people reared on packaged food and television. Thus the recording of native oral history has an important role to play in preserving and indeed revitalizing the native oral tradition.

THIS EXPERIENCE RECORDING native oral history was largely responsible for rekindling my relationship with my own grandmother. This happened quite unexpectedly, because in most of the Indian communities we visited it was the men who were put forward as being the tribal historians, and as a consequence we spent most of our time interviewing men. Yet often, when my husband and I had finished interviewing an old man, his wife would manage to manoeuver me out to the kitchen so that she could speak to me alone. Over cups of strong tea, these women told me the stories of their lives — their experience of marriage and childbirth, their hopes and fears for their children, the work they did, the things that gave them pleasure, and the intricate workings of the communities in which they lived — all freely given, and deliberately so, well after the tape-recorder had been turned off and well out of ear-shot of the men in the next room. For the most part these women were reluctant to be "interviewed" in any formal sense, insisting that they knew nothing about history and that nobody would be interested in what they had to say. But I began to realize that, without their story, an "Indian history of Canada" would be shamefully incomplete, and so I painstakingly went about overcoming their reluctance to speak. In the process I was forced yet again to re-examine my conventional notions of what was historically important and to recognize that the everyday lives of women — the unique patterns and rhythms of female experience — are history, too. In the end, it was this revela-

tion — and the sense of kinship I felt to the native women who shared their life stories with me — that finally led me back to my own grandmother.

I had seen very little of my grandmother during the years I spent in "Indian country." I was living in Toronto, she was in Regina, and our contact consisted of occasional letters and brief visits once or twice a year. But the passage of time and my own changing perceptions of the value of native women's experience gradually led me to see her in a whole new light. Whereas in my youth I had felt nothing but contempt for the values that had led her to deny her native heritage, I now began to feel a genuine bond of compassion and respect for this formidable old lady who seemed to shrink visibly and grow more fragile with each passing season. I was acutely aware that just as we were getting to know each other we would soon be separated for good. She was my only living connection with the past, my only hope of finding out who I really was so, despite her reluctance to talk about the past, I kept on asking my questions. And while she continued to maintain steadfastly the distinctions between our family and other native people, she must have had some sense of how important this was for me because she began to try to give me some answers. We spent hours poring over old family photographs, putting names and faces to those ghostly ancestors who had haunted my childhood. And then, quite suddenly, she died.

My grandmother had very few possessions, but care was taken to distribute what little she had among her children and grandchildren. I received a child's sampler, embroidered by my grandmother's mother in 1890 when she was still a schoolgirl. There, woven into the cloth amongst the crucifixes and barnyard animals, was my great-grandmother's name: Maggie Hogue. Ironically, my grandmother had bequeathed to me that which she had found so difficult to give me while she was alive — the key to unlocking the mystery of who I was.

We had finished our fieldwork for the "Indian History of Canada," so I decided to pursue my deepening interest in native women's history by studying the work done by Sylvia Van Kirk on the role of native women in the North American fur-trade. I learned that, initially, very few white women were permitted to brave the perils of the "Indian country" so most fur-traders took Indian and mixed-blood women as "country wives." These "marriages à la façon du pays" were socially sanctioned unions, even though they were not formalized according to the laws of church or state. But with the establishment of the Red River settlement white women began to go west, and it soon became fashionable for the traders to legally marry white women and to try to sever their ties with their native country wives.

In the forefront of this trend was Sir George Simpson, governor of Rupert's Land and, by all accounts, the most important personage in the Canadian fur-trade, who had taken as his country wife a mixed-blood woman named Margaret Taylor. Though she bore him two sons, Margaret Taylor was abandoned by Simpson when he married his English cousin, a move which signalled the wide-

spread rejection of native women as marriage partners by "men of station" in fur-trade society and reflected the increasing racial and social prejudice against native women throughout pre-Confederation Canada. Clearly, Margaret Taylor's story epitomized a crucial chapter in the history of native women in Canada, but I was equally intrigued by its epilogue — her hastily arranged marriage to a French-Canadian voyageur whose name was startlingly familiar: Amable Hogue.

On the basis of my great-grandmother's faded sampler and a rather incidental footnote in a history book, I began a search that eventually verified my connection to my great-great-great-grandmother, Margaret Taylor. For me it was the beginning of a journey of self-discovery — of unravelling the thick web of denial, shame, bitterness and silence that had obscured my past and picking up the fragile threads that extended back across time, connecting me to the grandmothers I had never known and to a larger collective experience that is uniquely and undeniably Metis.

My search for my grandmothers was hampered both by the inadequacies of traditional historical sources with respect to women and by the code of silence that existed in my own family with respect to our native heritage. But, after venturing down a couple of blind alleys, I finally called my great-aunt Jeanne, who is my grandmother's youngest sister and the only surviving female relative on that side of my family. When I called Grandma Jeanne I hadn't seen or spoken to her in more than twenty years, yet she was surprised and touched that I remembered her and seemed eager to help me in any way she could. Grandma Jeanne knew about Margaret Taylor, and knew that she had some connection to George Simpson, but said that this had never been discussed because, in the words of Jeanne's mother, it had brought shame on the family. Nevertheless, Grandma Jeanne was able to tell me the names of Margaret Taylor's daughters and granddaughters, and in the act of naming them I finally had the sense of reaching back and grasping hands with all my grandmothers and great-grandmothers — right back to Margaret Taylor.

Like most native women of her time, Margaret Taylor left no diaries, no letters, no wills — no written record that might help us reconstruct her life as she perceived it. Her voice is not heard in the historical record. Instead, we must rely on the maddening snippets of journals, letters and trading post records written by the men of the fur-trade for the only factual information that exists about the life of Margaret Taylor.

MARGARET TAYLOR WAS BORN on Hudson Bay in 1805, the daughter of an Indian woman known only as Jane and the Hudson's Bay Company's sloopmaster at York Factory, George Taylor. It is impossible to know whether Jane approached her marriage to a white man with enthusiasm, indiffer-

ence or dread, but we do know that their union produced at least eight children, including Margaret. However, when George Taylor retired from service with the Hudson's Bay Company and returned to England in 1815, he left Jane and her children behind.[2] The family must have maintained their ties to the post, for by the early 1820s Jane's son Thomas had become the personal servant of George Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Company's governor in Rupert's Land, and it was probably through Thomas that his sister Margaret first came to the Governor's attention.

My great-great-great-grandmother was just twenty-one years old when she became the "country wife" of the Governor of Rupert's Land. Though George Simpson was notorious for indulging in short-lived liaisons with young native women, his relationship with Margaret Taylor appeared to be different. He relied on her companionship to an unusual degree, insisting that she accompany him on his historic cross-continental canoe journey from Hudson Bay to the Pacific in 1828. Not only did Simpson recognize and assume responsibility for their two sons, but he also provided financial support for Margaret's mother and referred to Thomas Taylor as his brother-in-law, thus giving Margaret and the rest of fur-trade society every reason to believe that their relationship constituted a legitimate "country marriage."[3] Nevertheless, while on furlough in England in 1830 — and with Margaret and their two sons anxiously awaiting his return at Fort Alexander — Simpson married his English cousin, Frances Simpson.

It is not hard to imagine Margaret's shock when she learned that the Governor was returning with a new wife. No doubt she and her children were kept well out of sight when Simpson and his new bride stopped at Fort Alexander during their triumphant journey from Lachine to Red River. Once the Simpsons were installed at Red River the Governor lost no time in arranging for Margaret's "disposal," and a few months later she was married to Amable Hogue, an event which drew this comment from one contemporary observer: "'The Gov[erno]rs little tit bit Peggy Taylor is also Married to Amable Hogue, what a downfall is here . . . from a Governess to Sow'."[4]

Amable Hogue, who had been among Simpson's elite crew of voyageurs, was hired as a stonemason on the construction of Simpson's new headquarters at Lower Fort Garry. From her vantage point in the Metis labourers' camp just outside the walls, Margaret would have been able to watch the Governor and his bride take up residence in their magnificent new home. For his service, the Hudson's Bay Company gave Hogue a riverfront lot on the Assiniboine River just west of the Forks, and it was there on the banks of the Assiniboine River that Margaret Taylor and her daughters and granddaughters spent most of the rest of their lives, raising their families and working beside their men-folk on the buffalo hunts and riverfront farms that were the mainstay of the Red River Metis.

MY GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDMOTHER'S life spanned the rise and fall of the Metis nation. By the time she died in December, 1885 — just a few weeks after the hanging of Louis Riel — the world that she and other Metis women had known had changed irrevocably. Rupert's Land had become part of the emerging Canadian nation, and immigrants from Eastern Canada and Europe were pouring into the old Northwest to lay claim to homesteads on land that had been the home of Indian and Metis people for generations. The Buffalo were gone, the fur-trade was no more, the Indians were confined to reserves, and the Metis had lost their land and their way of life. The Metis resistance that had begun at Red River in 1870 and that ended at Batoche in 1885 resulted in the final defeat, dispossession and marginalization of the Metis people. In the dark years that followed, very few Metis people spoke about being Metis and there was widespread denial of Metis identity among the generations of Metis who survived that troubled time and who grew up in its aftermath. While most of them were not subjected to the brutal suppression of language and identity that Indian people experienced in the residential school system at that time, their contact with the dominant society made them feel ashamed of their heritage and many of them came to see assimilation to the "white ideal" as the only way to escape desperate lives of oppression and grinding poverty.

It is impossible to know when the process of denial and assimilation began in my own family, but I feel in my heart that it goes right back to what happened to Margaret Taylor. Here, I believe, are the roots of our denial — denial of that fact of blood that was the cause of so much pain and suffering and uncertainty about the future. It it such a surprise that, many years later, Margaret's own son would choose to describe his mother as "a sturdy Scotswoman" rather than the halfbreed that she really was?[5] Perhaps Margaret herself perpetrated this myth, if not for her son's sake then certainly for her daughters', to try to spare them a fate similar to her own and that of her mother. I'll never know. But I do know that the denial of our native heritage, which has been passed on from generation to generation of my family, is explicable in light of those events that took place so long ago, and I am finally able to see it not as a betrayal but as the survival mechanism that it most certainly was. For we *did* survive — even though, for a time, we were cut off from our past and our people — and we did so largely because of the resourcefulness, adaptability and courage of my grandmothers.

Unlike those whose search for roots is prompted by obscure snatches of stories passed from one generation to the next, my search for my grandmothers was prompted by silence — the silence that is the legacy of assimilation. When I began, I assumed that no such fragments of the oral tradition, no messages from the past, had survived in my family. Yet in Grandma Jeanne I found incontrovertible evidence that this was not the case. For Grandma Jeanne, the answer to the question

"Do you remember?" was like coming up from very deep water, giving voice to things which had not been forgotten but which had been deliberately submerged in a process of alienation from her native heritage and assimilation into the dominant society which had become more firmly entrenched with each new generation. Yet it was Grandma Jeanne who allowed me to put the final pieces of the puzzle together — to match what I knew about my grandmothers from the historical record with the record of feelings, attitudes and beliefs that can only be found in the vaults of memory. Thus, for both Grandma Jeanne and me, reclaiming the oral tradition has been a process of affirmation — affirmation of the importance of women's experience; affirmation of the strength, courage and resilience of our grandmothers; affirmation of our ability to speak both our past and our present, and to make our voices heard.

Native women will be rendered historically voiceless no longer. We are engaged in creating a new history, our history, using our own voices and experiences. And as we raise our voices — as we write, sing, teach, make films — we do so with the certainty that we are speaking not only for ourselves but for those who came before us whom history has made mute. We have a responsibility to our children and our people to ensure that the voices of our grandmothers are no longer silent.

And so the voices of my grandmothers are alive today, for they speak through me.

NOTES

[1] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller* (New York: Seaver Books, 1981): 6-7.

[2] For information on the family of George Taylor, see H.B.C.A. biographical file on George Taylor; also H.B.C.A. D4/113, fo. 146-d.

[3] H.B.C.A. B239/c/2, fo.10; H.B.C.A. B239/c/1, fo.346.

[4] W. Sinclair to E. Ermatinger, 15 August 1831; quoted in John S. Galbraith, *The Little Emperor: Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canda, 1976): 109.

[5] "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hogue, Both Born in Manitoba, Wedded 60 Years Ago Today", *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 January 1919: 9.

MIDDLE CLASS

Deborah Eibel

I have begun to edit
A poetry anthology—
Of poems by
Women who edited
Poetry anthologies.

I have been inspired
By pictures
At an exhibition—
Ancient times in China.
Women of the
Lower middle class
Are helping scholars of the
Upper middle class
With poetry anthologies.

The pictures show
Their clothes, the way they sit.
They never try to hide
Their origins.

How did they live
Before they started
Helping with anthologies?

These pictures mean a lot
To art-lovers
Who have been divorced,
Or who have been displaced,
For many reasons.

Older people
Can collaborate
On poetry anthologies.

L'ÉLOGE DE L'INDIEN DANS LES RELATIONS DES JESUITES

Denis Lafrenière

Notre intérêt pour la question de la représentation des Indiens dans les écrits des Blancs d'Amérique s'inscrit dans une démarche amorcée depuis quelques années au sein du Groupe de l'Indien imaginaire. Une recherche bibliographique portant sur les ouvrages de fiction publiés au Québec nous indique que les personnages indiens se retrouvent en grand nombre dans la littérature québécoise du dix-neuvième et du vingtième siècle, mais il semble que les rôles joués par les Indiens dans ces écrits ont finalement peu de chose à voir avec les Indiens biens réels qui vivent sur le même territoire que nous. Si nous retournons aux sources c'est pour essayer de comprendre comment s'établit discursivement cette relation imaginaire entre Blancs et Indiens. Il appert que les traits de l'Indien générique sont fixés rapidement et d'une façon presque définitive dans la *Relation* de 1634 du jésuite Paul Le Jeune et dans celle de 1636 de Jean de Brébeuf (Thérien, 1987). Progressivement, cet aspect statique de la figure de l'Indien se double d'un aspect dynamique dans les discours des jésuites, en ce sens que certains personnages indiens mieux individualisés y jouent un rôle narratif important, qui consiste à être les témoins forcés de l'expérience française d'évangélisation, à servir de figurants dans une argumentation qui vise à attester le bien fondé de leur propre assimilation et, en dernière analyse, à justifier l'appropriation de leur territoire.

Dans un premier temps, c'est la figure de l'Indien consentant et prédisposé au baptême qui nous intéresse. Nous nous proposons, à partir d'une exemple concret, de montrer quels systèmes d'organisation sont mis en jeu pour construire ce type de figure et la faire servir dans le discours évangélisateur. Nous examinerons donc le récit de la conversion d'un Huron nommé Joseph Teondechoren dans les *Relations des jésuites*. Plus précisément, le corpus se trouve dans la *Relation des Hurons* de 1640-1641 du père Jérôme Lalemant, deuxième supérieur des missions huronnes, au chapitre trois qui s'intitule "De la Mission de la Conception." Nous essayerons de montrer que tout en esquissant un portait élogieux du converti, le rédacteur tente d'opérer un coup de force rhétorique, en faisant appel à certains procédés de

séduction qui, bien sûr, incitent les lecteurs à apprécier les bonnes dispositions de l'Indien, mais qui visent aussi à passer sous silence les circonstances et les motifs vraisemblablement opportunistes de son baptême.

Le contexte discursif du portrait

Parmi les quatre nations constituantes de la Ligue Huronne, les Attignaouantans, ou Nation des Ours, étaient les plus influents, parce que les plus nombreux et les plus anciens. Peut-être parce que les conseils généraux de la Ligue se tenaient à Ossossané, un village fortifié qui était comme la capitale de cette nation, Jean de Brébeuf choisit ce site en 1637 pour y fonder la mission de l'Immaculée-Conception. Teondechoren, sa femme et leurs deux enfants y vivaient dans une "longue maison" en compagnie de quatre autres ménages. On connaît surtout celui du chef de la maison, Joseph Chiouatenhoua, le frère cadet de Teondechoren, qui était actif dans le réseau de la traite des fourrures. Chiouatenhoua se lia rapidement d'amitié avec les pères jésuites et leur prêta un coin de l'habitation pour qu'ils en disposent à leur guise. Il fut baptisé le 16 août 1637 à l'occasion d'une maladie grave. Comme il recouvra la santé rapidement, Joseph attribua sa guérison à la magie du baptême. Son épouse Marie Aonetta, leurs enfants et Anne la femme de Teondechoren, furent eux-mêmes baptisés l'année suivante. Par la suite, Joseph Chiouatenhoua devint un Chrétien modèle et fit tout en son pouvoir pour aider les missionnaires jésuites pendant leurs travaux apostoliques.

A l'époque, Teondechoren refusait de se rendre aux raisons de son frère et à celles des missionnaires qui l'exhortaient à quitter son métier "diabolique" et à se convertir. Depuis une vingtaine d'années déjà l'Indien faisait office de guérisseur (chamane, "medecine-man") au sein de la confrérie dite "de l'Aoutaerohi." Jean de Brébeuf nous explique en 1636 que l'Aoutaerohi, ou danse et festin de feu, était recommandée pour guérir une maladie causée par un esprit malin "gros comme le poing" qui, au dire des Hurons, venait habiter le corps d'un humain (*Relations*, 1636:112). Le premier supérieur suspectait fortement les maîtres de cette confrérie d'entretenir un commerce criminel avec Satan lui-même. Dans les *Relations*, tous les observateurs directs de cette cérémonie diabolisent le sens de la scène qu'ils observent. Leurs discours représentent un malade "tourmenté" dont la tête "branle" comme celle d'un "démoniaque," des danseurs qui "soufflent à ses oreilles," qui "dansent et hurlent comme des diables" sur des chants et une musique qui ressemblent au bruit que font les démons et les damnés dans l'enfer (*Relations*, 1637:168). Bref, au plan de la rhétorique comme au plan théologique, la danse du feu est identifiée littéralement à un sabbat tandis que le malade est tout simplement comparé à un possédé.

Mais revenons à son frère. Pendant dix mois, Joseph Chiouatenhoua et les autres baptisés de cette maison constituèrent la première pierre de l'Eglise huronne.

Puis au printemps de 1639, le père Lalemant dénombra des convertis dans pas moins d'une dizaine de ménages en provenance de trois villages importants. Mais au cours de l'hiver 1639-1640, les jésuites assistèrent à la répétition d'un scénario qu'ils connaissaient bien: comme en 1637, les Hurons furent décimés par la contagion et les missionnaires, qui restaient en vie tandis que les Indiens mouraient, furent accusés de pratiquer la sorcellerie et chassés des villages. Les défections se firent sentir parmi les Chrétiens de fraîche date: à la fin du printemps de 1640, il subsistait moins d'une vingtaine de pratiquants dans toute la Huronie, soit un petit noyau d'adultes et quelques enfants réunis autour de Joseph Chiouatenhoua (*Relations*, 1640:69). Enfin, la série noire se poursuivit avec la nouvelle le 2 août 1640 que Joseph venait d'être assassiné dans son champ non loin du village. Selon le rapport des capitaines chargés de mener l'enquête, il aurait été tué par deux Iroquois de la Nation des Senécas. Les jésuites, qui ne voyaient sans doute pas comme une bonne publicité qu'un simple "sauvage" fut le premier martyr officiel de l'Eglise canadienne, endossèrent la version des capitaines; mais il est plus probable, comme le pense l'anthropologue Bruce G. Trigger, que la mort de Joseph ait résulté d'une exécution politique perpétrée par des Hurons, peut-être même avait-elle été commandée par le capitaine du village, en raison des activités religieuses de Joseph (Trigger, 600).

Or, tout de suite après les obsèques de son frère qui eurent lieu à Ossossané trois jours plus tard, Teondechoren vint précipitamment trouver les pères jésuites et demanda à être baptisé. Il promit d'accomplir les voeux du défunt, c'est-à-dire d'envoyer à Québec sa jeune nièce Thérèse pour qu'elle y soit éduquée par les mères ursulines, et, puisque le village devait changer de site, de réserver un espace pour la chapelle dans sa nouvelle demeure. Teondechoren se confessa et avoua qu'en l'espace de vingt ans il avait dansé souvent avec le feu de l'Aoutaerohi, parfois "deux à trois fois par jour," et il promit de renoncer à ses superstitions. Les pères qui le sondaient, le trouvant instruit des devoirs des Indiens christianisés, le baptisèrent le 8 septembre 1640, après seulement trente-quatre jours d'observation. (*Relations*, 1641:64). Ils lui donnèrent le nom de Joseph, dans l'espoir qu'il hérite des vertus du défunt, et qu'ainsi ne s'éteigne pas la lignée de "la première famille qui ait embrassé la foi en Huronie." (*Relations*, 1650:28)

Dans son rapport de 1641-1642, le père Lalemant attribue la conversion inespérée de Teondechoren à un "coup du Ciel." (*Relations* 1642:68) Mais pour nous qui ne partageons pas les présupposés religieux de ces hommes du dix-septième siècle, il apparaît légitime de s'interroger sur les motifs probables qui purent avoir poussé Teondechoren à changer d'idée après la mort de son frère. Ainsi, quand on prend en considération les impératifs socio-culturels qui prévalaient chez les Hurons à cette époque, il est plus vraisemblable de penser que Teondechoren voulait simplement hériter d'un droit de traite qui lui revenait en devenant le nouveau chef de famille. Chaque maison huronne possédait un avantage: une

qualité d'ancien, un titre de capitaine, une responsabilité de chef de guerre, un monopole de traite. Une maison ne s'en départissait pas. Advenant une mortalité, la succession était réservée aux proches du défunt qui avait détenu le bien avec honneur et à moins de démérite le village ne disputait pas à la maison le droit d'en disposer. (Campeau, 57) Ce genre de privilège était à l'avantage de la collectivité et on n'y accédait pas sans reconnaissance publique. C'est ainsi, selon nous, qu'il faut interpréter le fait que les capitaines et les "plus considérables" d'Ossossané ont accordé à Joseph Teondechoren une voix au conseil après son baptême. (*Relations*, 1641:65)

Il devait arriver par la suite que le vent tourne en faveur des jésuites. En effet, tout comme en 1637, la crise se résorba avec la fin des épidémies et une bonne récolte que firent les Hurons à la fin de l'automne acheva de calmer la plupart des esprits. De plus, les attaques répétées des Iroquois rappelèrent aux Hurons qu'ils devaient compter sur les mousquets des Français pour leur protection. Sans oublier que leurs relations privilégiées avec les marchands de Québec étaient conditionnelles au bon traitement qu'ils réservaient aux religieux. Par conséquent, entre novembre 1640 et mai 1641, les missionnaires purent reprendre leurs visites sans être trop rebutés et le nombre de Hurons faisant profession de foi, de vingt qu'il était, fut porté à une cinquantaine. (*Relations*, 1641:61) On constate cependant qu'aucun chef, aucun Indien important ne se trouve parmi les trente néophytes attestés par Jérôme Lalemant, car, de ce nombre, deux individus seulement sont identifiés dans son rapport: Joseph Teondechoren et sa femme Catherine, d'une seconde union, Anne étant morte deux jours après son baptême. En somme, en dépit du ton triomphant qu'adopte Lalemant en 1641, on constate que cette année là la récolte fut plutôt modeste. Examinons maintenant comment le rédacteur parvient par son discours à transformer dans l'esprit de ses lecteurs ce maigre butin en un véritable "trésor."

Le cadre argumentatif du portrait

Pour narrer les événements significatifs survenus à la Conception en 1640-1641, le supérieur Lalemant n'a qu'à suivre un "plan" tracé d'avance. Dans une lettre datée du 3 août 1640 dans laquelle il faisait part à ses supérieurs de l'assassinat de Joseph Chiouatenhoua, Jérôme Lalemant exprimait en effet le voeu que l'âme de Joseph, mort en odeur de sainteté, intercède auprès du ciel en faveur des missions huronnes (*Relations*, 1640:103). Or, pour les raisons que l'on sait, les missions connaissent effectivement un regain de vie par la suite. Dans sa narration, le rédacteur peut donc faire appel à une image discursive, l'âme de Joseph flottant au-dessus d'Ossossané, pour expliquer l'heureux dénouement. Mais puisque la conversion de Teondechoren est encore récente, Lalemant doit aussi faire preuve de prudence dans son rapport: sa stratégie rhétorique va consister à insinuer seulement que le

baptême de Teondechoren est un effet de la Providence divine, un parmi d'autres qui se sont produits à la Conception "depuis" la mort de Joseph Chiouatenhoua.

L'auteur sait que le grand public des *Relations*, composé de nobles oisifs et de bourgeois dévots, est peu porté à suivre de longs raisonnements. Il lui faut donc partir du probable et employer des arguments brefs étayés par des illustrations, par des portraits-exemplum. Sa démonstration est de la forme: thèse, antithèse, conclusion. Dans la première partie de son discours, le rédacteur suggère l'idée que, suite aux tribulations qui ont marqué la Conception en 1640-1641 (les épidémies, les apostasies et la mort de Joseph), il était prévisible que "tout l'édifice ne dût tomber en ruine." Mais plutôt, poursuit-il, "la foi semble s'être affermie dans le coeur des croyants." La conclusion à laquelle il parvient est que ces épreuves "ont enfin séparé le vrai d'avec le faux," par conséquent, qu'il n'y a plus de raison de douter de la sincérité de ceux qui restent. Le narrateur s'attache à décrire les réactions édifiantes des Indiens suite au décès de Chiouatenhoua: celles de la veuve, puis celles du reste de la famille et, enfin, les réactions des autres Chrétiens de la mission. La disparition de Joseph agit comme un repère temporel pour diviser la matière du chapitre en deux: tout ce qui survient avant le décès est connoté négativement, tandis que tous les événements survenus depuis sont connotés positivement.

Pour nous, le discours évangélisateur du père Lalemant apparaît comme une autre manifestation d'un schéma qui traverse tout le corpus des *Relations des jésuites*, voulant que l'Histoire sainte se répétait en Amérique. De toute évidence, le rédacteur voulait insinuer que le ciel avait provoqué ces fléaux mais cette fois chez les Hurons, dans le but de séparer le bon grain de l'ivraie. Finalement, la présence de Joseph Teondechoren sur la scène discursive, comme celle des autres protagonistes de l'histoire, trouve sa justification dans le fait que tous ces portraits servaient en dernière analyse à des fins de propagande: en effet, si Dieu aidait les missions cela signifiait qu'il approuvait le travail des jésuites au Canada, donc, que le public devait continuer de contribuer généreusement par ses dons et ses prières. Il reste encore à voir plus en détails quels systèmes discursifs sont utilisés pour construire la figure, centrale dans notre corpus, de Joseph Teondechoren. Par figure nous entendons cette forme cognitive que le lecteur garde en mémoire quand il referme la relation. Nous l'analyserons sous l'angle du portait moral et physique de l'Indien.

Le portrait moral

La reconstruction du portrait moral s'effectue en examinant la description de l'intentionnalité du personnage et les jeux de rôle qu'il assume dans le récit. Les jeux de rôle se développent conjointement avec les situations narratives au moyen d'unités de sens mobiles. Ces éléments constituent comme l'environnement sémantique du personnage, et cette description lui permet d'être le sujet des transforma-

tions engendrées par le récit. Les transformations sont assurées par l'action qui se présente comme la mise en question du personnage, le processus de sa précarisation. (Thérien, 1990) En parcourant un certain nombre de récits de conversion dans les écrits des jésuites, on constate que ce genre de situation narrative fait appel à un "script," c'est-à-dire à des séquences d'actions stéréotypées. (Schank et Abelson; Gervais) On peut représenter le script de la conversion de la façon suivante:

Etapes: 1 rencontre d'un missionnaire
2 confrontation polémique
3 révélation de Dieu: postulation
4 catéchuménat
5 baptême

Comme dans tout script, on retrouve dans le script de la conversion des conditions d'entrée générales ainsi que des résultats. Les conditions d'entrée sont: la monogamie, la sobriété en tout, une connaissance suffisante de la doctrine catholique, et une motivation d'ordre spirituel; quant aux résultats, ils s'identifient aux effets de la Grâce: le néophyte accomplit des actions dévotes, il fait publiquement profession de sa foi nouvelle, refuse de participer aux cérémonies païennes, et se met au service de Dieu et de l'Eglise. A cela s'ajoutent des accessoires (rarement mentionnés): un peu d'eau bénite, une croix portée au cou, quelques images saintes, et, plus important, des jeux de rôle: bien sûr, il y a ceux obligatoires du postulant et du missionnaire, mais aussi ceux facultatifs des Chrétiens et des Infidèles qui, respectivement, l'encouragent ou s'opposent à son baptême, que ce soit dans sa famille ou dans son village.

Le scénario développé par Jérôme Lalemant autour du personnage de Joseph Teondechoren se présente comme un variante de ce script. Il sera instructif de mettre en relief les convergences de même que les divergences avec la proto-script. Le portrait se constitue progressivement en trois actes. Dans le premier, le narrateur retrace les circonstances du baptême de Teondechoren en faisant commencer son récit au moment du décès de son frère. Dans la réalité, en se basant sur le contexte discursif, on sait que Teondechoren, qui n'était alors qu'un Indien anonyme dans les *Relations*, a fait la rencontre des missionnaires dès 1637, et que la confrontation polémique (le rejet du christianisme) s'est poursuivie jusqu'à la mort de Chiouatenhoua, c'est-à-dire, comme nous l'apprend le rédacteur, jusqu'au moment où "plusieurs dans la famille" se remémorant soudainement les discours qu'il prononçait souvent de son vivant, prirent spontanément la résolution de charger de vie. Par contre, dans le récit du père Lalemant les deux premières étapes du script ne sont pas exploitées narrativement, cela dans le but évident d'attribuer la conversion miraculeuse de Teondechoren à l'influence surnaturelle de feu son frère. Autrement dit, c'est de façon spontanée que Teondechoren aurait pris parti dans

l'alternative qui lui présentait son frère de son vivant: mourir païen et brûler en enfer ou se faire baptiser et aller au ciel.

On comprend que cette stratégie de description de la "prédisposition" de Teondechoren visait à justifier la décision des missionnaires d'accorder le baptême à un sorcier trente-quatre jours seulement après sa requête. Il semble que pour garder ensemble les restes de l'Eglise primitive, en élisant un nouveau chef autochtone, les jésuites aient été obligés de précipiter quelque peu la cérémonie de baptême de Teondechoren. De façon symptomatique, les quatres premières étapes du script sont d'ailleurs décrites de façon elliptique, et c'est la dernière, celle du baptême proprement dit, qui donne lieu à un développement narratif important. L'objectif du rédacteur est de fonder la vraisemblance de son discours en dotant le personnage de Joseph Teondechoren d'un caractère éthique élevé. Le procédé consiste à transférer certains traits sémantiques du personnage de Chiouatenhoua sur celui de son frère: "On lui donna le nom du défunt, Joseph, dans l'espérance que la vertu de feu son frère, aussi bien que son nom, ressusciterait en sa personne." (*Relations*, 1641:61) Ce transfert des valeurs d'un frère à l'autre correspond en rhétorique à un argument pragmatique: il consiste à établir une relation de cause vers l'effet, comme lorsqu'on valorise l'intelligence d'un enfant en raison de celle des parents. (Perelman, 479) Dans le discours de Lalemant, cette reconduction de l'essence est inversée puisqu'elle va du cadet vers l'aîné, mais elle rend plus plausible la transformation morale de Teondechoren après son baptême. Le personnage de Joseph Chiouatenhoua aura servi de matrice descriptive, et, en mettant un autre nom propre sur cette forme génératrice, un "nouveau Joseph," comme l'appelle le père Lalemant, est apparu dans les *Relations*.

Le premier acte a donc servi principalement à présenter Joseph Teondechoren au public et à le doter d'un caractère élevé, en le comparant avantageusement à feu son frère. Dans le deuxième acte, il est fait mention de son passé peu honorable. Cette fois, pour ne pas rompre la relation positive entre le personnage imaginaire du texte et les lecteurs bien réels, la représentation doit désamorcer les affects désagréables associés aux descriptions antérieures de la danse du feu, comparée par tous les observateurs Blancs à un sabbat. S'agissant de parler du métier ordinaire de l'Indien avant son baptême, la rhétorique argumentative du supérieur prend une coloration toute différente: d'abord la scène est seulement fictive, c'est-à-dire qu'elle n'est plus basée sur des événements réels, ensuite le cadre physique de l'action reste indéterminé, les accessoires sont réduits au minimum, et, finalement, un seul jeu de rôle est au rendez-vous, celui du maître du feu, tandis que le malade, les chanteurs et les autres danseurs brillent par leur absence. Quand on compare la version de Lalemant avec la description standard de l'Aoutaerohi, on voit bien que le rédacteur propose du rituel une version épurée de ses connotations diaboliques, en gommant pratiquement toutes les références à la véritable fonction de cette cérémonie, qui est de soulager les malades. Dans le discours, dirons-nous, Teonde-

choren est figuré sous les traits d'un jongleur habile et non plus en tant que suppôt de Satan.

La référence au passé peu reluisant du néophyte avait pour effet de faire ressortir en mieux les qualités acquises par Joseph Teondechoren depuis son baptême. Tout le troisième acte de la description ne fait qu'illustrer les résultats prévus par le script de la conversion, ceux-là mêmes que nous avons mentionnés plus haut. La narrateur se contente simplement d'en indiquer la présence et de donner quelques particularités, laissant aux lecteurs le soin de meubler à leur guise les situations. Le personnage se livre à des réflexions et à des activités dévotes que les lecteurs connaissent bien parce que ce sont celles de feu Joseph Chiouatenhoua et des autres Chrétiens de la mission. Les lecteurs sont censés connaître, même de façon rudimentaire, les jeux de rôle de l'Indien dévot, et seuls les noms des agents ainsi que des éléments du cadre spatio-temporel sont modifiés par l'auteur pour adapter les situations narratives aux circonstances historiques qui les ont inspirées.

Le portrait physique

Au plan de l'apparence physique du personnage de Joseph Teondechoren, on est forcé de constater le peu d'individuation. Le supérieur ne décrit ni ses traits individuels, ni ses traits ethniques, tels que la forme de son visage, la stature de son corps, la couleur de sa peau, ses peintures corporelles, ses tatouages, ou encore sa coiffure en forme de "heure" qui caractérisait les hommes de son pays. Seul trait distinctif, on apprend que pendant la rituel de l'Aoutaerohi ses mains, ses bras et l'intérieur de sa bouche devenaient insensibles au feu, mais il s'agit là d'une propriété typique de tous ces danseurs. Il suffit de lire quelques relations pour s'apercevoir que, le plus souvent, l'aspect visuel de l'Indien christianisé y fait défaut. Quand le corps d'un personnage indien fait l'objet d'une description dans les récits jésuites c'est soit sur un mode dépréciatif qui dénote son appartenance à la sphère du diabolique, soit sur un mode idéalisant qui compare le port noble d'un chef indien, par exemple, à celui d'un personnage illustre de l'Antiquité grecque et romaine.

Ce Chrétien imaginaire, il va sans dire, est un pur produit de la spiritualité ignacienne qui percevait le corps comme une réalité encombrante, une prison temporelle qu'il fallait s'efforcer de quitter graduellement par des mortifications et le renoncement aux biens terrestres. La rhétorique du discours évangélisateur commandait que les traits physiques de cet Indien soit passés sous silence: ce n'est pas avec les yeux du corps, mais plutôt avec "les yeux du coeur et de l'âme" (Fumaroli) que les supporteurs des missions étaient conviés à se le représenter, en refaisant par l'imagination le parcours de sa quête spirituelle à partir du moment où il était l'esclave des démons de la chair jusqu'à celui où il fut touché par la Grâce divine et qu'il se sentit libéré des entraves terrestres.

Conclusion

On sait que la publication des *Relations des jésuites* constituait un acte de propagande pour la politique de colonisation de l'Amérique française lancée par le cardinal de Richelieu en 1630. Il ne faut pas oublier pour autant que ces écrits poursuivaient aussi des buts d'édification. Or c'est dans la fiction, c'est-à-dire dans les ressources de l'intelligence narrative, que les rédacteurs puisaient les moyens de se conformer à ces buts, de manière à répondre aux attentes de leurs supérieurs comme à celles de leurs auditoires. Le père Lalemant savait que la fiction est utile, car elle enseigne le chemin à suivre en représentant des hommes en action, bons et mauvais. La fiction parle du bonheur et du malheur possible sen ancrant les vertus et les vices qui conduisent à l'une ou l'autre fin dans des actions contingentes, dans une représentation. On ne surprendra personne en disant que dans les *Relations des jésuites*, les caractères des personnages indiens relèvent toujours de ces deux types puisque selon l'opinion courante à l'époque, en matière de caractère, c'est la bassesse ou la noblesse qui fondent ces différences.

On dira que ces stratégies de représentation ne nous sont pas destinées, que les écrits de la Nouvelle-France s'adressaient à des Européens. La réalité est que ces textes n'ont jamais cessé d'être lus et réinterprétés ici en fonction des différentes idéologies qui ont servi à constituer notre identité. Pour prendre l'exemple de la société canadienne-française au XIXe siècle, on n'a qu'à voir le rôle joué par la figure de l'Indien cruel et sanguinaire dans le discours "martyrophile" des historiens et des littérateurs de cette époque. Dans la production littéraire des vingts dernières années, il semble que ce genre de portrait soit en régression, mais au lieu de dénoter chez les Blancs une compréhension meilleure de l'histoire et des cultures indiennes, on constate que les anciens stéréotypes ont fait place à de nouveaux stéréotypes qui, cette fois, donnent le beau rôle aux Indiens mais en les idéalisant. Tout se passe comme si les nouveaux personnages indiens qui apparaissent dans la littérature d'ici ne servaient, en dernière analyse, qu'à véhiculer des valeurs et des mythes qui font sens d'abord pour les Blancs: le retour à la nature, le contact direct avec le divin, l'esprit écologique.

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THE BIRD OF GREEDINESS

Sue Ann Johnston

Bones. Claws. The shudder of wings.

Forgetting can become a bird of greediness
which pecks out names. Images. Words.

It pecked out my mother's memory.

My mother forgot names.
First she forgot the names of her grandparents.
Her parents. Her brothers and sisters.

Then she forgot my name.

My mother called me a name.
But it wasn't my name.
It was someone else's name.

In some families
there might be an old woman,
a keeper of past and future,
a maker of bridges,
of stories and songs
of what is, was, and shall be.

My mother was our chronicler
Charged with the task of forgetting.

She forgot the names of places on maps,
then the names of places on street signs.

Now when I am driving,
My car goes round and round.
I can't remember the way I came.
I can't remember the way to go.
I drive.
I drive in circles.

Now when I am driving,
And the car stops at a light,
And a dark man pulls at my fingers,
I drive away. Fast.
Forget the tug of fingers.

Forgetting can become a bird of greediness
which pecks out names, images, words—
even those which adhere to the bottom of the bowl,
and have almost become the bowl.

Forgetting can become a way of life.
Forgetting can become a way of death.

LE TOPOS DE LA CAPTIVITÉ AU DIX-SEPTIÈME SIÈCLE

Gilles Thérien

L'INDIEN N'EST PAS UN MOTIF exotique ou folklorique. Nous faisons partie de façon permanente du territoire réel de l'Indien depuis le dix-septième siècle. Son destin est enchevêtré au nôtre, pour le meilleur mais surtout pour le pire. Cela n'a pas produit de fraternisation réelle bien importante, au contraire. Aujourd'hui les revendications territoriales des Amérindiens ont pris un tour violent. Et, pourtant, lorsque nous regardons notre littérature, tant celle du dix-neuvième que celle du vingtième siècle, l'Indien y est partout présent. Cette constatation s'accompagne d'une autre: leur présence est pour le moins ambiguë et ne correspond pas à une réalité externe que la littérature se serait donné la mission d'explorer. Notre rapport à l'Indien est imaginaire, c'est-à-dire qu'il prend place dans une construction symbolique d'origine blanche, qu'il n'a un rôle, toujours au plan symbolique, que pour les Blancs, pour les Québécois ou les Canadiens que nous sommes.[1] L'Indien réel n'a pas accès à cette symbolique et, de toutes les façons, il ne saurait qu'en faire, lui dont l'imaginaire est vraisemblablement constitué autrement.

Parmi tous les récits que le discours invente pour parler de cette relation imaginaire entre Indiens et Blancs, les récits de captivité ont attiré notre attention parce qu'ils semblent y jouer un rôle tout à fait particulier. Ils présentent la relation à l'Indien sous son angle problématique. Au lieu d'une rencontre parfaitement idyllique entre l'ancien et le nouveau monde, la rencontre des Indiens tourne parfois mal. On retrouve donc dans ces récits un sentiment d'horreur toujours prêt à se déployer, sentiment lié à la peur de la torture, du cannibalisme et de la mort. L'Indien est une menace qu'il faut savoir circonvenir.

Ce n'est pas la rencontre avec l'Indien qui a donné naissance au récit de captivité. On trouve les tout premiers récits dans la légende homérique, d'une part, le rapt d'Hélène et les conséquences de ce geste, d'autre part, Ulysse qui poursuit son Odyssée en franchissant tous les obstacles de diverses captivités. Dans le cadre biblique, la captivité joue aussi un rôle important. Le peuple d'Israël est captif des Egyptiens comme il l'est, par la suite, du désert pendant quarante ans. Les tribus

d'Israël sont menées en captivité à Babylone. Si le topos de la captivité est présent depuis les débuts de la civilisation, nous croyons qu'il ne conserve pas une identité constante à mesure qu'il traverse les siècles. Il se contextualise, il reflète les diverses situations qu'il illustre. Au-delà du récit d'une quelconque captivité, il y a toujours un topos en jeu, un topos dont les particularités sont parfois étonnantes. On peut donner comme exemple les camps de concentration et l'holocauste des Juifs qui s'appuient sur un topos bien précis et les prisonniers des asiles d'aliénés de nos sociétés modernes qui s'appuient sur un autre. Le topos de la captivité est une forme symbolique large qui s'actualise selon diverses règles dans divers contextes.

La captivité comme composante de la vie sur le nouveau continent a aussi des caractéristiques propres que nous cherchons à dégager. Mais ici aussi, il est important de préciser que, selon les aires culturelles où ces récits sont produits, le topos n'aura pas tout à fait le même sens puisqu'il viendra s'inscrire dans des imaginaires passablement différents. Les récits de captivité existent en Amérique latine mais pour des questions de distance tant intellectuelle que géographique, nous n'en tiendrons pas compte. Nous nous intéressons aux récits de captivité de l'Amérique du Nord, de ceux qui décrivent des situations que l'on retrouve en Nouvelle-France et en Nouvelle-Angleterre et ce, au dix-septième siècle, parce qu'il y a entre ces récits une situation commune, un territoire constamment traversé par les Indiens et un certain nombre de traits discursifs communs. Mais il existe aussi d'importantes différences qui peuvent être rapportées à des imaginaires en formation, imaginaires qui se trouveront à la fois semblables et différents.

Les Etats-Unis auront, comme nous, à leur origine, des récits de captivité. Le plus ancien, celui de la captivité de John Smith, remonte à 1607. Il sera suivi de récits de captivité de plus en plus nombreux à partir de la seconde moitié du dix-septième siècle. Mentionnons parmi les plus célèbres, la captivité de Mary Rowlandson en 1676, celle de John Gyles en 1689, ou encore celle d'Hannah Dustan en 1697. Le dix-huitième siècle les verra proliférer.[2] En général, ils ne sont pas très longs et racontent les horreurs de la captivité, toutes imputables aux "sauvages" contre lesquels s'illustrent des héros et surtout des héroïnes des premiers temps de la colonisation. En nombre, ces récits deviendront une forme insidieuse de propagande qui permettra d'accepter comme normal et nécessaire le génocide indien qui se poursuivra tout au long du dix-neuvième siècle. Ces récits, souvent pauvres en détails, bavards sur les vertus héroïques des Blancs, ont souvent l'air assez peu authentiques. Ils le sont pourtant si l'on veut réduire la notion d'authenticité au fait qu'ils sont bien là où on l'affirme et, en général dans des circonstances connues et vérifiables. Quant aux modalités des captivités, des analyses serrées des textes permettent parfois de douter de l'authenticité de leur relation. La rhétorique de la captivité est plus tournée vers la constitution d'un univers imaginaire que vers la consignation des faits.[3]

Ces récits connaîtront une seconde vie importante dans le développement de la culture américaine. Ils seront intégrés progressivement à la littérature romanesque et deviendront un des thèmes favoris des romans de la frontière, puis de la littérature populaire en même temps qu'on les retrouve au théâtre avant de les trouver au cinéma sous la forme du western.[4] Cette importance dans la littérature américaine ne peut être réduite uniquement à une importance thématique. Ce qui est en jeu, depuis Fenimore Cooper jusqu'à John Barth[5] ou William Burroughs,[6] c'est la mise en place d'un imaginaire spécifiquement américain, Leslie Fiedler parlera plus volontiers d'une mythologie américaine, qui a peu à voir avec les imaginaires ou les mythologies européennes. En changeant de continent, en s'emparant de la terre des Indiens, l'Européen devient Américain et développe en lui une nouvelle façon de percevoir les choses.

Les récits de captivité de la Nouvelle-France ont des traits communs avec les récits américains mais ils s'en écartent aussi parce que la façon même de pénétrer le continent et son intérieur, et les méthodes pour s'y installer, sont radicalement différentes. Nos relations avec les Indiens tiennent du mixte. Il y a une volonté de vivre avec eux, il y a même, au tout début, une volonté de métissage.[7] L'imaginaire développé de ce côté-ci de la frontière conserve des caractéristiques spécifiques que nous allons brièvement évoquer. La comparaison des récits de captivité au dix-septième siècle permet d'enrichir la perspective qui, de chaque côté, dépend fortement des idéologies de colonisation et des problèmes de l'établissement d'un peuple en terre nouvelle.

Disons d'abord que les récits de captivité de la Nouvelle-France sont plus variés que les récits de la Nouvelle-Angleterre. Ils nous permettent de dresser un meilleur éventail de l'ensemble des récits. Le premier de ces récits, le plus illustre et surtout le plus complet au plan des détails, est la capture de Donnacona et des siens au terme du second voyage de Jacques Cartier. On y retrouve les stratégies et les motivations du Français lors de cet épisode au goût plus que douteux. C'est le récit le plus complet sur la capture d'Indiens par des Blancs. Les *Relations des jésuites* nous fournissent aussi, avec des descriptions longues et attentives, divers récits de captivité d'Indiens par d'autres Indiens. Il s'agit chaque fois d'une captivité qui précède et accompagne la torture et finalement la mort. Le récit le plus détaillé est certes celui que fait le père Lemercier de la captivité, de la torture et de la mort d'un Iroquois ramené en pays Huron à la suite d'une expédition guerrière. On connaît en général beaucoup mieux les récits de captivité des missionnaires. Mentionnons celui d'Isaac Jogues pour mémoire mais aussi celui de Francisco Giuseppe Bressani. Les deux se sont tirés de captivité et ce n'est que plus tard et, dans d'autres circonstances, que Jogues trouvera la mort. Celui-ci, lors de sa première captivité,

a pu s'échapper et Bressani a été vendu. Mais chacun fournit un récit détaillé de son expérience aux mains des Iroquois. Nous connaissons aussi la captivité de Pierre-Esprit Radisson, toujours aux mains des Iroquois, captivité qui se transformera en adoption et dont Radisson fait lui-même le récit.[8] Enfin les *Relations* donnent aussi divers récits de captivité de Blancs parmi les Indiens. Il manque, toutefois, du côté français, pour la même période, des récits de captivité de Blancs par des Blancs, des Anglais ou des Hollandais capturés par les Français ou l'inverse. Ce type d'évènement se produit et les récits de captivité de la Nouvelle-Angleterre nous livrent leur version de ce genre d'affaire.

Si l'on veut proposer un topos de la captivité spécifique de la Nouvelle-France, il est important de faire l'étude des diverses caractéristiques de nos récits de captivité. Nous dirons en premier lieu que ce qui les caractérise tous, c'est l'abondance de détails. Les récits décrivent la façon dont les victimes sont capturées, le lieu de leur capture, ce que l'on fait d'eux au jour le jour. La capture du prisonnier se fait au moment d'une guerre, c'est-à-dire quand des bandes de diverses nations s'affrontent à la suite d'une déclaration de guerre formelle ou d'un geste qui équivaut à cette déclaration. La capture peut aussi survenir plus ou moins par hasard lorsqu'un groupe d'Indiens rencontre un groupe ennemi lors de la traite, de la chasse ou de la pêche. Certains captifs sont de toute évidence des guerriers, alors que d'autres semblent être plutôt des "commerçants," quand ils ne sont pas tout simplement des chasseurs ou des pêcheurs malchanceux.

La capture même est ritualisée. Lorsqu'un ennemi est cerné et qu'on veut le faire prisonnier, on lui ordonne de s'asseoir, ce qu'il fait en général pour éviter le pire faute de quoi il encourt une mort immédiate, ce que d'aucuns choisissent. Une fois arrêté, pour l'empêcher de se sauver, on le lie en lui attachant les bras derrière le dos au-dessus des coudes. Il doit subir alors une première torture qui tend à le rendre inefficace comme guerrier. On lui coupe ou arrache les trois doigts qui lui servent à tirer l'arc. Avant la venue des Européens, cette opération se faisait avec du silex, puis à la suite de la traite, on s'est généralement servi de couteau ou de hache. Autre technique en usage: broyer les doigts de la main avec des pierres.

Les captifs sont ensuite attribués. Un conseil s'assemble parmi les Indiens sur place afin de déterminer la destination des prisonniers en fonction des nations qui ont participé à l'expédition. Les prisonniers seront séparés entre les représentants des diverses nations qui devront par la suite s'occuper du transport du captif. Les distances à parcourir sont parfois énormes. Bressani, capturé à une trentaine de kilomètres de Trois-Rivières, est amené dans la région de Fort Orange, emplacement actuel d'Albany, capitale de l'État de New York. Le voyage constitue la phase suivante de la captivité. Le captif n'est pas choyé. Si on manque de nourriture, il devra s'en priver. Il lui arrivera de devoir faire, tout le long du trajet, des tâches dévolues aux esclaves ou aux femmes en plus de subir divers sévices. Bressani raconte qu'il devait porter des charges et, au moment du bivouac, faire la cuisine.

L'étape suivante a lieu au moment de l'entrée dans le territoire de la nation. À la première occasion, on réunit à nouveau un conseil qui doit décider à qui il faut attribuer le captif: à un village en particulier, à une famille ou à un capitaine. Le prisonnier pourrait être remis à une famille qui a perdu un membre important à la guerre. Cette attribution leur donne en principe le droit de vie et de mort sur le prisonnier. Il arrive que ce dernier doive alors circuler de village en village jusqu'au lieu de sa captivité ou de son exécution.

A l'arrivée dans un village, le captif est soumis à diverses tortures. S'il s'agit d'un guerrier, il doit chanter son chant de mort. Dans tous les cas, il est mis à nu et on le fait passer entre deux rangées de jeunes gens. On pourra lui faire une incision entre les doigts de la main, comme ce fut le cas pour Bressani chez les Iroquois. On le rouera de coups de bâton sur la tête et sur le corps, tout en prenant bien soin de ne pas le tuer. Ensuite, le captif est exposé à la vue de tous sur un échafaud. Là aussi, il devra subir des sévices qui lui viendront, entre autres, des femmes et des enfants. On le battra avec des ronces, on lui arrachera quelques ongles, on lui broiera des doigts. Il est ensuite conduit dans la cabane du capitaine de guerre et y subira d'autres tourments. On lui brûlera les doigts ou ce qui en reste, on lui arrachera les ongles qui se seront soulevés sous l'action du feu, on le forcera à mettre ses doigts dans le fourneau des pipes ou encore à ramasser les charbons ardents, on pourra aussi lui sectionner les doigts au niveau des phalanges. C'est ainsi que Bressani, par exemple, a eu huit doigts coupés en six jours. Si le lieu de destination du captif n'est pas ce village, il devra subir le même rituel dans tous les villages où il passera. Mais, nulle part, on n'ira plus loin que les sévices déjà décrits.

Lorsqu'il arrive au village choisi pour son exécution, la réception est la même. On réunit encore une fois le conseil du village pour savoir quoi faire du prisonnier. La famille ou le capitaine à qui il a été attribué pourrait décider de l'adopter. À ce moment, il recouvre sa liberté mais sait qu'il doit maintenant obéir de façon absolue à cette famille et que, en cas de désobéissance ou de tentative de fuite, il sera immédiatement tué. Il semble que, dans les cas de l'adoption, la famille qui en décide ainsi, doit payer une rançon au village pour conserver le captif. S'il n'a pas la chance d'être adopté, son sort est immédiatement scellé. Sa famille adoptive fournit ce qu'il faut de victuailles pour que le captif puisse offrir son festin d'adieu, son Athataion. À cette occasion, il chante son chant de mort personnel s'il est guerrier et danse pendant que les invités mangent. Il est prêt alors à entrer dans la phase finale de la torture et de la captivité. On le conduit à cabane du capitaine de guerre à la tombée de la nuit. Chez les Hurons, cette cabane s'appelle "la maison des têtes coupées." Plusieurs feux ont été allumés dans la cabane. La foule s'y presse, mais il semble que c'est surtout les jeunes guerriers qui prendront ici part au rituel. Le captif est dénudé. On lui attache les mains. Le captif fait un premier tour de la cabane en chantant son chant de mort sans que personne ne le touche. Le chef du village annonce alors quelles parties de son corps seront distribuées après sa mort. Il

exhorte ensuite les guerriers à faire souffrir la victime en prenant bien soin de ne le brûler qu'aux jambes, des pieds aux cuisses. Les participants sont aussi avertis d'éviter, pendant la nuit, les activités sexuelles. La victime doit maintenant courir autour des feux de la cabane pendant que la foule, formant cercle, lui applique tisons et fers chauds. De temps en temps, on l'arrête au bout de la cabane pour lui briser les os des mains avec des pierres on lui percer les oreilles avec des morceaux de bois qu'on laissera dans la plaie. On pourra aussi lui déchirer les poignets avec des cordes. Lorsque le captif semble se fatiguer, on le fait s'asseoir sur de la cendre chaude ou de la braise. Mais durant tout ce temps, on s'occupe surtout de lui rôtir les chairs des jambes et des pieds. Quand la victime s'évanouit, on cesse immédiatement la torture. On lui donne de l'eau et de la nourriture jusqu'à ce qu'il ait repris ses forces et qu'il soit capable d'entonner à nouveau son chant de mort. Puis la torture reprend de plus belle en cherchant à brûler toujours de plus en plus profondément les pieds et les jambes jusqu'à ce que le malheureux ne soit plus capable de marcher.

À l'aube, des feux sont allumés autour du village. On installe la victime sur un échafaud. Il y est attaché à un poteau ou à un arbre qui se trouve au centre de l'échafaud. À partir de ce moment, il échappe à la fureur de tout le village et est confié à une équipe de bourreaux. Ces derniers vont continuer le supplice du feu, mais en passant de l'extérieur à l'intérieur. On lui brûle la gorge, les yeux, le rectum. On lui met des haches brûlantes autour du cou et sur les épaules. On entoure son corps d'un pseudo-costume en écorce auquel on met le feu. À partir de ce moment, la torture ne connaît plus de répit. On s'attaque au torse de l'individu, à ses organes vitaux. S'il n'a pas été scalpé, on pourrait le faire alors. La seule consigne qui subsiste, semble-t-il, est de lui couper les membres, la tête et de lui enlever le coeur avant qu'il ne meure lui-même. Ceci suppose donc un certain savoir faire de la part de ses tortionnaires. Selon certains textes, le corps dépecé est ensuite mangé. La captivité n'est certes pas un état que l'on recherche et les nombreux récits racontent plus souvent comment les Blancs réussissent à s'évader ou à y échapper en étant adopté, comme c'est le cas de Radisson. Dans le cas d'Indiens ou de Français pris à la guerre, la captivité racontée mène presqu'inexorablement à la mort selon le rituel que nous venons de décrire. Dans les autres cas, le récit de captivité se transforme en observations sur les tâches de la vie quotidienne et, inévitablement, sur tout ce qui pourrait permettre une évasion ou encourager une libération.

Ces récits font en même temps la preuve d'une bonne connaissance des Indiens, de leurs modes de vie, de leurs rituels guerriers et de ce qui peut se passer dans le cadre des captures de Blancs. En cela, le récit de Radisson ne le cède en rien à celui des jésuites missionnaires. On y trouve aussi un autre

élément important: la connaissance de la géographie et du territoire. Les captifs savent où ils sont et savent où ils vont. Lorsqu'ils arrivent chez les Iroquois, ils savent aussi qu'ils ne sont jamais très loin des autres Blancs, Anglais ou Hollandais qui, de fait, auront souvent un rôle à jouer dans leur libération.[9] Dans les récits de capture d'Indiens par des Indiens, les missionnaires, très au fait du rituel qui normalement suit la capture, ne s'interposent pas dans le rituel de la torture et de la mort. Ils se contentent de tenter de baptiser les captifs avant que le rituel ne soit rendu trop loin. Malgré l'horreur, ils prennent pour acquis qu'il ne saurait en être autrement.

Selon qu'il s'agit d'un Indien, d'un missionnaire ou d'un laïc, la rhétorique argumentative prend des colorations différentes et pointe vers des sens aussi différents et pas nécessairement compatibles. L'Indien captif, guerrier, qui subit sa captivité avec courage soulève l'admiration des jésuites. Le récit met en évidence le courage, la patience, la fierté de celui qui sait qu'il va mourir d'une mort horrible, mort qu'il ne redoute pas mais, bien au contraire, au devant de laquelle il se dirige avec bravoure. Mais l'admiration des jésuites est teintée de satisfaction puisque, dans plusieurs cas, ils ont réussi à baptiser le captif avant sa mort. Il nous est difficile de comprendre l'acceptation du baptême par les captifs dans pareils cas, incapables que nous sommes de savoir s'il s'agit d'un geste d'espoir de la part du captif qui pourrait croire qu'un tel geste pourrait l'aider à demeurer en vie. Pour les jésuites, le baptême permet au captif de quitter sa prison temporelle pour accéder au ciel, les souffrances étant un bien petit prix à payer pour un tel avenir. Dans les cas où le baptême n'est pas conféré, la captivité et la torture deviennent véritablement l'antichambre de l'Enfer, la torture par le feu a ici une fonction analogique que les jésuites ne se privent guère d'interpréter. Mais au-delà des convictions chrétiennes des missionnaires, ils démontrent un respect très net pour la force et la bravoure de ces guerriers dont l'attitude face à la mort est admirable.

Les récits de captivité des missionnaires obéissent à une autre argumentation. Deux données de départ modifient le récit. Les missionnaires ont déjà sacrifié leur vie en venant s'occuper des Indiens sur le nouveau continent. La captivité ne saurait alors qu'être l'annonce de la réalisation la plus immédiate de leurs voeux. Ensuite, les missionnaires, de par leur spiritualité, considèrent qu'ils sont déjà, ici-bas, dans la condition humaine, en état de captivité et que le passage sur terre n'est qu'un progressif dépouillement de la prison du corps. Ces deux aspects méritent toute notre attention. C'est d'ailleurs comme cela que ces récits ont été compris puisqu'ils font partie de "l'épopée des martyrs canadiens." Les récits autographes de captivité relatent des faits que leur auteur s'empresse d'inclure dans une économie divine plus large. Jogues qui a été battu et qui a eu un pouce coupé écrit à son supérieur du lieu de sa captivité et parsème son texte de références bibliques qui tentent à montrer à la fois le réconfort qui lui vient de Dieu dans ces temps difficile et en même temps la volonté de Dieu qui l'oblige à passer par l'épreuve de la souffrance et de la

captivité. La présence partout de la mort est envisagée avec une certaine distance comme la manifestation toujours possible de cette même volonté de Dieu. Même attitude chez Bressani qui écrit au Général des jésuites: "Je ne sais si Votre Paternité reconnaîtra la lettre d'un pauvre infirme qui autrefois vous était bien connu lorsqu'il était en bonne santé. La lettre est mal écrite et toute tachée, parce que, outre les autres difficultés, celui qui l'écrit n'a plus qu'un doigt de la main droite et qu'il est difficile d'éviter de souiller le papier avec le sang qui coule de ses plaies encore ouvertes. Il utilise de la poudre d'arquebuse comme encre et le sol pour table. Il écrit du pays des Iroquois où il est actuellement prisonnier. Il désire ici faire un bref compte rendu des dernières manifestations de la divine Providence."[10] et le texte décrit sa capture, les tortures dont il a été l'objet et où il a perdu neuf doigts. Comme cette relation est publiée au moment où son auteur est revenu en Europe, elle se poursuit en racontant son retour en Nouvelle-France malgré l'état de sa personne, reprenant ainsi le même parcours matériel et spirituel de Jogues qui, moins ou plus chanceux selon les points de vue, sera tué par les Iroquois en 1646.[11] On le voit le récit de captivité du missionnaire consiste à placer les évènements parfois affreux qu'il décrit dans le cadre plus large des desseins de la Providence. Sa souffrance finit même par se retourner contre ses bourreaux puisqu'il lui arrive d'en convertir durant sa captivité. L'héroïsme n'est pas une qualité personnelle dont il pourrait se vanter mais un don de Dieu qui l'aide à traverser cette expérience. L'argumentation de ces récits reflète cette position en appuyant la description sur une interprétation constante de tous les événements par des citations bibliques. Le récit traduit pour le monde extérieur moins des péripéties effroyables que la volonté de Dieu qu'il faut constamment lire dans les moindres gestes de tous et chacun.

Dans les récits de captivité de laïcs, on trouve une argumentation différente. Dans notre échantillon, c'est Radisson qui sert de modèle. Ici, il s'agit d'individus n'appartenant pas nécessairement à une institution précise. Lorsque Radisson est fait prisonnier, c'est un jeune homme, un adolescent vraisemblablement qui s'identifie tout simplement aux Blancs dont il est issu. Il ne représente personne d'autre que lui. Si sa captivité comporte certaines tortures, il est important de noter que, dans son cas, comme dans d'autres cas où les individus sont capturés sourtout parce qu'ils étaient au mauvais endroit au mauvais moment, il est dès le départ, relativement bien traité. En fait le récit de captivité du genre de celui de Radisson se transforme tranquillement en récit d'adoption d'un Blanc par des Indiens, adoption bien réelle où de nouveaux liens de parenté sont affirmés, puis au passage insensible d'un mode de vie européen à un mode de vie indien. Ces récits sont le lieu de naissance des coureurs des bois, des "Indiens blancs" comme on s'est plu à les appeler. La tentation de demeurer chez les Indiens, de vivre comme eux, de s'identifier à la culture de l'autre est grande. Et même lorsque ces captifs rejoignent leurs compagnons d'origine, ils gardent des traits hérités de leur vie auprès des Indiens. Dans ces récits,

il s'agit de raconter un destin individuel. Le héros est grand parce que sa victoire sur les évènements se traduit par la formation d'un homme nouveau aux expériences uniques qui ne peuvent faire que l'objet d'autres récits. Il n'y a pas là de grands desseins providentiels mais plutôt la démonstration de l'exigence d'adaptation à des réalités absolument nouvelles, la possibilité de se créer une identité nouvelle.

Nous ajoutons à ces récits de la Nouvelle-France, certains récits de captivité de la Nouvelle-Angleterre qui introduisent une nouvelle composante, le troisième pouvoir, c'est-à-dire le militaire, français on anglais, qui se sert des Indiens comme des intermédiaires dans le cas des captivités. Plusieurs récits racontent, c'est le cas de ceux de John Gyles et de Joseph Bartlett par exemple, que la capture est faite au nom de l'armée française et que la véritable captivité, celle qui fait le plus peur, est celle qui a lieu en territoire français, aux mains des Français et des papistes. Dans cette série de récits, il faut mentionner le cas du pasteur protestant John Williams mené en captivité à Québec qui, au jour de sa libération, doit retourner en Nouvelle-Angleterre sans une des ses filles convertie au catholicisme et devenue religieuse. La nouvelle composante de ces récits s'articule sur la haine entre Français et Anglais, pire parfois que la crainte des Indiens, sur la haine aussi et les interdictions posées sur les religions de l'autre et sur les éventuels déchirements des familles qui accompagnent des captivités parfois très longues.

CES RÉCITS EXEMPLAIRES NOUS permettent, dans un premier temps, d'explorer le topos de la captivité dans toute sa richesse sémantique et narrative. Si la captivité apparaît d'abord comme une épreuve, elle n'est pas identique d'une fois à l'autre. Il faut donc tracer les grandes lignes du topos en regardant qui est le prisonnier, qui est celui qui le capture, si l'évènement prend place dans le cadre d'une guerre rituelle entre les Indiens ou dans une guerre territoriale entre les Iroquois et les Français par exemple. La captivité vient-elle marquer un rapport de force? Dans ce cas, le captif est un otage qu'il s'agira de monnayer le temps venu. Quelle est la réaction du prisonnier? Se soumet-il à son sort? Tente-t-il de s'évader? Comment voit-il sa propre situation de prisonnier? Peut-il pactiser avec ses ravisseurs ou est-il condamné à se maintenir dans une position de domination même dans sa condition de prisonnier? Dans le cas des Indiens, il semble que la captivité fasse partie du destin et qu'elle entraîne avec elle un cortège de malheurs tous assez prévisibles. Dans le cas des Blancs, deux modèles sont exposés: la tentative de se faire le plus semblable possible à ses ravisseurs, c'est le cas de Radisson qui n'a rien de spécial à défendre sauf sa vie, et la tentative de comprendre la captivité comme une motion divine qui, à la limite, jouera même contre les ravisseurs en ce qu'elle pourra servir à leur conversion et donc à l'abandon de leurs modes de vie habituels.

Les enjeux argumentatifs du topos de la captivité pourront donc se contruire autour de la figure de l'Indien, de celle du Blanc, de l'acculturation ou de l'adaptation. La captivité est un processus d'apprentissage, elle agit comme révélateur. Les sujets sont transformés ou non par la captivité, ils deviennent autres et il est parfois possible de saisir ce changement même s'il faut passer par le discours mystique chez les jésuites ou par les tentatives d'indianisation chez Radisson.

Le topos de la captivité met aussi en jeu le territoire. Or, dans le cas de la Nouvelle-France et de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, le territoire prend une signification importante selon qu'il est celui des Indiens, premiers occupants et propriétaires, ou celui des colonisateurs qui, tout au long du dix-septième siècle, n'ont pas encore une idée bien précise des limites de leurs territoires, des frontières, puisque tout finit par se perdre dans une épaisse forêt ou dans des chaînes de montagnes. Les territoires où le colonisateur se sent en sécurité sont bien plus petits que ceux dont il réclame en fait la propriété et ce sont les voies maritimes qui priment sur les voies terrestres. D'une certaine façon, les Blancs sont prisonniers de leurs propres territoires, à la merci des incursions des Indiens qui connaissent le pays beaucoup mieux qu'eux. D'où l'usage de figures de rhétorique qui transforment les habitations rustiques de la colonie en forteresses dont il ne fait pas toujours bon sortir.

Sur le plan de la forme, les récits de captivité sont intéressants parce qu'ils abondent en détails qui dénotent une très bonne connaissance du territoire et, souvent, de l'une ou l'autre langue indienne. Si on les compare aux récits américains, on est tout de suite frappé par une certaine pauvreté des descriptions de ces derniers. Les captifs de la Nouvelle-Angleterre ne connaissent pas bien le pays et encore moins ses habitants autochtones. Aussi leurs descriptions sont-elles parfois bien vagues et ressemblent-elles le plus souvent à un long catalogue de lamentations, ce qui n'est pas parfaitement incompatible avec certains récits en français qui utilisent abondamment la citation religieuse, mais cela tient autant à la rhétorique du temps qu'à la mise en récit de captivités bien concrètes.

Même quand les récits sont authentiques, ils s'appuient souvent sur une bonne part de fiction, ce qui pose alors une question bien importante sur la mesure de l'authenticité de chaque récit. Jusqu'à quel point les récits ne déforment-ils pas la réalité pour la rendre plus odieuse, pour grandir l'épreuve et, par voie de conséquence, grandir l'éprouvé? Aussi, plus on avance dans le temps, et surtout après les grands traités de paix avec les Indiens du début du dix-huitième siècle, faut-il faire de plus en plus attention à l'authenticité des récits. Ils prennent une qualité plus romantique et les récits eux-mêmes s'orientent plus du côté du discours de la fiction. Il nous semble donc essentiel de pouvoir, au-delà même des récits de captivité, examiner le topos lui-même. La captivité est plus large, plus englobante que les récits qui en décrivent des cas concrets. Elle est liée tout autant à la découverte du Nouveau Monde, à sa colonisation par les personnes qui n'avaient pas le loisir de retourner en Europe et étaient de fait captifs du nouveau continent, prisonniers de leur nouveau

mode de vie qui doit tenir compte de la présence de l'autochtone pour qui le continent est le lieu d'expression de sa liberté. Libéré des contraintes de la société européenne, le colon fait dans un même temps l'expérience de cette liberté et celle de la captivité. La captivité apparaîtra alors comme le lieu où sa nouvelle identité se forge progressivement par confrontation, par contraste et par adaptation. Aussi n'est-il-pas étonnant de voir la littérature américaine émergente s'emparer de ce topos particulièrement riche. Des travaux comme *The return of the vanishing American* de Leslie Fiedler (1968), *The Indians and their Captives* de James Levernier (1977), *The White Man's Indian* de Robert F. Berkhofer (1979), *The European and the Indian* de James Axtell (1981) et *Narratives of North American Indian Captivity, A Selective Bibliography,* de Alden T. Vaughan (1983) établissent un lien entre les récits de captivité qui paraissent en Nouvelle-Angleterre à partir du milieu du dix-septième siècle et l'apparition du roman de la frontière dont Cooper et ses disciples sont les principaux représentants. Le topos de la captivité chez les Indiens permet l'exploitation d'un topos romanesque important. Pourquoi n'en serait-il pas ainsi de ce côté-ci de la frontière?

CETTE ARTICULATION DE DISCOURS référentiels et de discours fictionnels dans la littérature américaine peut avoir un équivalent dans les questionnements sur notre propre littérature, sur son mode particulier d'émergence et sur les thèmes dont elle traite volontiers. Nous avons généralement, comme beaucoup d'études américaines d'ailleurs, tenté d'examiner la question de l'émergence de notre littérature soit en fonction d'une sorte de développement interne plus ou moins spontané, lié à l'apparition d'une culture de plus en plus autonome, soit dans une perspective comparatiste avec la France ou l'Angleterre de façon à montrer, si possible, comment les littératures d'ici pouvaient parvenir à s'articuler aux grandes traditions littéraires des métropoles d'origine et les refléter à partir d'un point de vue régional. Cette perspective est certes valable mais elle ne nous paraît pas complète. Nous tentons donc ici de déployer une autre réflexion, complémentaire, qui devrait permettre de jeter une toute nouvelle lumière sur la continuité possible entre certaines des expériences décrites par les Ecrits de la Nouvelle-France [nous entendons ici les récits du régime français] et le choix d'un certain nombre et topoi des premiers écrits littéraires francophones. Si nous retenons le topos de la captivité, c'est qu'il pose, à travers son exploitation, la question de la poursuite des rapports du nouveau Français canadien avec l'Indien comme avec l'étranger.

Il ne nous semble pas du tout étonnant de retrouver dans la littérature canadienne-française naissante une utilisation importante de ce topos de la captivité. On connaît les principales oeuvres où le topos tient un rôle important, *L'Iroquoise, Une de perdue, deux de trouvées, Felluna* d'Odet d'Orsonnens, *Gazida* de Marmier —

mais il est d'autres oeuvres qui peuvent être classées dans la même catégorie: *Les révélations du crime* de François-Réal Angers, *Louise Chawinikisique* et *La tour de Trafalgar* de Boucher de Boucherville, *Le rebelle* de Trobriand, *Les fiancés de 1812* de Joseph Doutre, *La fille du brigand* d'Eugène L'Ecuyer, *La Huronne de Lorette*, *L'île de Sable* et *La jolie fille du faubourg Québec* de Henri-Emile Chevalier.

On peut certes se contenter de retrouver dans certains de ces romans les topoi romanesques de la captivité liés à un genre comme le gothique ou encore à des motifs obligatoires du roman d'aventure ou du roman historique. Il nous semble qu'il est tout aussi intéressant d'ajouter à cette lecture une lecture qui tienne compte de la tradition "vécue" des récits de captivité que l'intérêt qui se développe à la même époque pour les Ecrits de la Nouvelle-France ne peut que venir renforcer. La littérature émergente cherche à tramer son histoire, elle cherche à se donner des airs d'épopée. Où peut-elle trouver ses sources sinon dans ces récits qui décrivent les épreuves de la conquête de ce territoire au-delà de l'identification des régimes politiques qui y ont présidé puisqu'ils ne sont déjà plus là? Il existe une continuité recherchée entre les textes fondateurs et l'émergence d'une littérature d'ici. L'importance de l'historique, de la référence au passé glorieux des origines, l'évocation des gestes des découvreurs, des missionnaires, leurs peines, leurs martyrs, forment la trame d'un imaginaire spécifique auquel puisera notre littérature. Si on peut dénoncer le caractère fantasmatique de la recherche de l'origine, on ne peut pour autant nier l'utilité de ce fantasme quand il s'agit d'écrire ce que nous sommes.

NOTES

[1] cf. *Les figures de l'Indien*, Cahiers d'études littéraires, (Montréal: Presses de l'Univ. du Québec à Montréal, 1988). Le problème nous semble avoir aussi sa contrepartie chez nos collègues anglophones, cf. Margaret Atwood, *Essai sur la littérature canadienne* (Montréal: Boréal, 1987 [1972 en anglais]).

[2] cf. sur des divers récits *Narratives of North American Indian Captivity, A Selective Bibliography* de Alden T. Vaughan (New York: Garland Publications, 1983).

[3] cf. Sacvan Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad* (Madison: Wisconsin Univ. Press, 1978) et *Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975).

[4] cf. Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968) et Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986).

[5] John Barth, *The Sot-Weed Factor* (New York: Doubleday, 1960).

[6] *The Place of Dead Roads* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984).

[7] Tour à tour à cause de l'absence de femmes, Champlain puis Brébeuf font des projets concrets de métissage mais ces derniers seront abandonnés lorsqu'il deviendra évident que cela n'est possible que si c'est la culture indienne qui domine.

[8] La question de savoir si le texte anglais que nous avons des aventures de Radisson est une traduction d'un texte français perdu ou si c'est une version anglaise de Radisson lui-même ne change en rien le propos.

[9] Par exemple, Jogues et Radisson se réfugient chez les Hollandais.

[10] *Relation de Bressani* 1653, Thwaites, vol. 39, p. 54 et suivantes.

[11] "Dans le billet qu'il écrivit à un jésuite avant ce dernier départ, il pouvait écrire: *Ibo et non redibo*, j'irai et je ne reviendrai pas. Ce n'est là, écrit le P. Campeau, "ni une prophétie ni un pressentiment, c'est une conclusion que Jogues tire de son expérience. Il a la certitude morale de mourir dans cet acte d'obéissance." Il avait trouvé la mort qu'il souhaitait, Dieu lui évitant cette fois de nouvelles tortures." *Jésuites de la Nouvelle-France*, ed. Francois Roustang (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1961): 176. Les jésuites, même aujourd'hui, cadrent mort et captivité dans une "réalité supérieure."

APPLES/HE'S THE SAME

Gordon Turner

following Jack yonder
        into
the wild I don't know
when I'll see him again. Coyote
loping   fading
into the dappled undergrowth in search of
        the elusive—
furtive glances always ahead to
        the possible
surprises. One moment he's content
beside me drum-rolling berries into
his pail   the next he's in
                        a thicket
                        far below
                        near the incessant
                        creek rumble
or focused
high
on the mountain—
side
where the canopy gives way for
                        a spot
of sunlight. Apples

he's the same, rambling
from abandoned orchard
to scattered
derelict renegades forever
seeking the fabled
Thompson kings or maybe
luscious red-veined
Gravensteins
nobody's stumbled upon. Never stops
to chatter like the
squirrels along the way — busy
moving picking filling
bag or pail long
before steady me. Fishing he's into

the river and disappearing. Try to keep
up and he'll say, "This hole's good. Let
your fly drift
along that current." Turn
and he's gone. See the slim
shadow of a man flicking
rainbows
rounding
a bend
far up the white
flash of the river

VOYAGEUR DISCOURSE AND THE ABSENCE OF FUR TRADE PIDGIN

George Lang

LIKE OTHER CULTURAL renegades, the *coureur de bois* or voyageur is an often neglected figure, in part because he falls between stools.[1] His transgression of civilized values, plus his willingness to adapt and/or to be adopted into native cultures, inspired both the contempt of his fellow whites and the mistrust of French and British colonial authorities. Within a generation or two the voyageur was as likely as not to be blood relative with natives. Yet his objectives remained distinct. Surviving, indeed prospering along an interface, he did not fit into either of the worlds he wedded. When the relative autonomy of those worlds ceased, the voyageur himself vanished.

In one regard, though, the voyageur is unlike other *Uberläufer* (cultural turncoats, like the Dunbar of the recent American film, *Dances with Wolves*): he has had the misfortune to be co-opted retrospectively into the very roles he fled. "[L]es Québécois, en quête de racines françaises, effacent dans le personnage tout ce qui peut rappeler l'amiguïté du coureur de bois, ils le transforment en pionnier d'une colonisation civilisatrice et catholique." (Jacquin 240) So sanitized, the voyageur is expunged of the function that best defined and sustained him economically for over two centuries — that as intermediary between cultures, not forerunner of a single one.

English-language writers have also tended to focus softly on the voyageur, though differently. Popular images proliferate of the sturdy but irrepressibly Gallic sidekicks of the dour Scots factors who laid the foundations of Canada, their "little French chansons . . . and quaint old ditties" (in Washington Irving's words [29]) echoing across the lakes as they paddled off into history. It is easy to disparage Irving's remarks. Canadians know this Yankee booster was a hired apologist for John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Trade Company, and wrote *Astoria* to buttress support for Astor's attempt to ban British trade from the U.S. Pacific Northwest. His image is nonetheless familiar to us too.

The increasing scholarly corpus of writing on the fur trade has sharpened those images, presenting the voyageur in more than two dimensions and bringing back into the picture the native and *métisse* women who were his partners and accomplices. The voyageur already knew from his Québécois background the advantages of using Indian women as more than sexual receptacles and/or the factotums they often had been. "Mixed marriages" were the rule there from the moment the French hit the ground. Yet it took a while for trading and other official institutions to follow suit, and even longer, until the last decade, for Canadian historians to force our attention upon the sexual politics of the fur trade.

Even revisionist histories of the fur trade nonetheless neglect its linguistic underpinnings. It is as if native and white cultures fell into contact and conflict without the mediation of language; as if the language in which most official fur trade records survive and in which we now write its history was the language in which it occurred; as if, in fact, language learning, in particular that of the indigenous ones which were the voyageur's stock-in-trade, were not an essential component of the "many tender ties" that bound him, his family, and the trade together.

It is in this context that I would like to address a question raised by the Dutch linguist Peter Bakker, one which perhaps sheds light on Canadian ethnohistorical research — and on certain troubling dilemmas of Canadian history itself. Why, Bakker asks, was there never a pidgin or creole associated with the Canadian fur trade, since similar conditions around the world did lead to various jargons and pidgins, and even, in the right circumstances, to creoles (1988). Why, in other words, was there no *Canadian*, only English and French? Various *Uberlaüfer* were in fact associated with the early stages of a pidgin: the Barbary pirate with the Mediterranean Lingua Franca; the *tangomau* of the West African coast with the Portuguese pidgin that became today's Cape-Verdean *crioulo*; the beachcomber with the South Seas Pidgin English which at least participated in the rise of Tok Pisin ("Talk Pidgin"), the national language of Papua-New-Guinea. Such is not the case in Canada, where our national renegade, the *coureur de bois*, instead seized the discursive territory a hypothetical fur trade pidgin might have occupied. Perhaps it is a typically Canadian tragedy that the voyageur, whose economic status was founded on his skill as a linguist, faded away once other linguistic arrangements superseded his, and the multilingual milieux in which he found his identity were consolidated into a more monolingual state.

"Discourse" has become, if not a dirty word, then at least a slippery one. Hereafter it is intended in the neutral sense of the multilingual repertoire of rhetorical and semiotic devices which were an integral part of the fur trade — much closer to Saussure's *parole* than *langue* — that interconnected set of inherently interpretative speech strategies that had currency for over two centuries along the branching waterways of North America down which the pelt was conveyed.

At various times there were actual contact pidgins within this vast hydraulic network: the Basque-Algonkian pre-pidgin that sprang from the first white-native contacts in the New World (Bakker 1990), the Delaware jargon spoken in the seventeenth century between the Algonquian Lenape people and the Swedes, Dutch and English who came into contact with them (Holm, 601); the Mobilian Jargon spoken in the Lower Mississippi and in eastern Texas to almost this day (Crawford); and Chinook Jargon (Thomas; Thomason). This last, Chinook Jargon, haunts this study, since it was a fur trade pidgin, at least in part, and drew copiously upon voyageur discourse. One indication of its connection to the voyageurs is its high percentage of French lexical items at mid-nineteenth century (Silverstein, 617), proof that as long as the socioeconomic conditions of the fur trade prevailed, voyageur French was the operative mediative language on the ground in northern North America.

At the turtle mountain Reservation in North Dakota and in pockets in the Canadian West, there subsists yet another example of a contact language, a very special one, Michif (*Métif* in French). The origin of Michif is lost in the mists of history, maybe those same into which our voyageurs paddled so vigorously (the weight of French in Michif suggests an origin further east than its present distribution, somewhere north of the Great Lakes and prior to Conquest). To some extent Michif is candidate for the ultimate Canadian jargon, or at least a missing link thereof. As one linguist has it, Michif is the *ne plus ultra* of contact languages. (Papen 1987) Cree rules its verbal system. French, more precisely the Québécois-related dialect of French spoken sporadically in Western Canada, controls the nouns. Michif was thus at least originally shared by speakers "perfectly bilingual in both source languages, otherwise they could not have produced without errors its Cree and French components." (Thomason and Kaufman, 232). This last claim is disputed by Peter Bakker, who observed that "[m]any ... speakers do not speak Cree or French, [though] almost all are bilingual in English and Métif." (1989: 340) His radical view supposes an even greater autonomy of Michif, since a Michif speaker would in this case be capable or producing sentence parts in either Cree or French without full knowledge of either or both of them. Whether Michif arose through the relexification of Cree, *per* Bakker, or if it came about more arbitrarily, for example as in-group game jargon a bit like pig-Latin, but on a vaster scale, it presents one of the great conundrums of contemporary creolists. One feature it does share with other North American contact languages, in particular Chinook Jargon and Mobilian Jargon, is its role as "insider's language" (Rhodes, 288), as auxiliary tongue spoken by multilinguals who recognize each others' capacities in the jargon, but who possess other shared codes.

Until his demise, I am arguing, the voyageur was the master of a discursive realm which ran strangely parallel to Michif, and which was tantamount to but never spawned a jargon like the Chinook.

There is every reason linguistics must be brought to bear against the somewhat nebulous notion of a voyageur discourse. The first *coureur de bois* was Etienne Brûlé, the young boy Champlain sent off to the Algonquin in 1610 as a future informant. A number of other apprentices soon followed: Nicolas de Vignau, Nicolas Marsolet, Jean Nicolet, Jean Godefroy. (Delisle, 52) Very soon these stalwarts began to turn coat. Hanzeli, in his *Missionary Linguistics in New France*, noted that the Quebec City Jesuits considered themselves lucky to find a *truchement*, an interpreter, in the person of the Nicolas Marsolet previously cited. (47) The way Bruce Trigger has it, however, this same Marsolet was so protective of the Algonquin that he refused to reveal details about their tongue, and only gave in when his pay cheque was threatened. (Trigger, 405) From the beginning, the refusal to share, or to insist on being paid to share, was part of voyageur strategy.

Despite such blackmail and perhaps to some extent because of it, the call of life (and language-learning) among the "Savages" was such that numerous immigrants from Old France, where life was not particularly comfortable, "cherch[ai]ent à apprendre une langue indigène et à se lancer dans le commerce." (Jacquin, 79) Fifty years later there were at least 800 unattached men living in the woods between Ottawa and Michilimakinac. These were not language teachers, but fur traders. Yet some facility in native languages was prerequisite to accede to the profits and accrue the benefits such nomad lives conferred. (Eccles, 110) A slow spread westward ensued. By 1680 Lake Nipigon was a meeting-ground for voyageurs. Though temporarily abandoned by French authorities, who strategically fell back below Lake Superior 1695-1713, the *Pays d'en-haut* was already host to over a hundred French-speaking voyageurs. They were obviously envied by many, even in Europe. To take one example, the Ojibway vocabulary the Baron Lahontan inserted into his 1703 *Voyages*, a best-seller which quickly ran into numerous editions in various languages, attests to the European interest in native languages, though illiterate voyageurs would hardly have availed themselves of it. However and whysoever Lahontan amassed his lexicon, it remains a significant source for study of Algonkian philology. (Gille)

A hundred years after Champlain designated Etienne Brûlé as his apprentice interpreter, La Vérendrye sent two of his sons among the Cree, sowing the seeds of the Métis nation according to Marcel Giraud, and establishing the ethnolinguistic superiority of French-speakers in the West, a state of affairs which lasted more than a century and survived long after the Conquest. It was with no small jealousy that the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company complained, according to Anthony Henday, "The French speak the language of the natives with the same ease as they themselves do."

GERMAN COMPARATIST János Riesz has defined a paradigm for the cultural renegade: that he (though why not she?) accidentally enter into and embrace a radically foreign culture; that he recognize the importance of its language to his integration, and have something to exchange against that language; and that he undergo assimilation to the extent that there is no going back to his original culture, be this for economic, emotional or "cosmetic" reasons. (147) Doubtless, each of these factors applies to some extent to the sum total of voyageurs, including the irreversibility of the voyageur option. It was not easy to go back, once a man had sunk roots in native society, married and had children. The "Freeman" Gabriel Franchère wrote of those "qui ont pris femme dans l'Ouest et se sont attachés à leur famille comme n'osant regagner le Bas-Pays, où leur conduite soulèverait une vive réprobation." (Giraud, 340) Yet from the beginning, in New France at least, many *voluntarily* went over to native culture. Nor did all voyageurs necessarily stay in that camp. The constant shuttle between Amerindian and colonial societies, both of which were in transition, continued after the westward shift of the fur trade, in part due to contacts between those who wintered over in the *Pays d'en haut*, and the *mangeurs de lard* who came up from the *Bas-Pays* in the summer. A number of prominent voyageurs did remain loyal to Laurentian civilization, for example, J. B. Lagimodière, who brought the first white woman to the West and whose sincere "attachement aux habitudes et à la religion du Bas-Pays . . . le [retenait] plus près des Blancs." (Giraud, 377) It was also possible to switch allegiance several times in the course of a life. For example, having lived at length among the Indians and passing for a master in their languages, Louis Primeur (also known as Primeau, Primault and Primo [Van Kirk, 647]) wearied of the life in the wilderness and proposed his services to the Hudson's Bay Company. (Giraud, 256) This example, among many others, suggests that voyageurs did not break all connection with colonial society, nor with French, their common bond whatever the seat of their commercial allegiance. For economic reasons the majority of Canadian renegades continued to deal with the more conventional Euro-Americans whose mores they had rejected, some of whom were themselves also drawn towards the personal freedom life in the northern forest offered, despite manifest hardships. Voyageurs were no slim majority of *Canadiens*. Some estimations have it that by 1680, before the French penetrated beyond the Great Lakes, a third of the population had embraced voyageur life, and this despite the laws Colbert declared precisely in order to discourage such behaviour. (Kohl, 95)

Given the importance that interpretation played in the life and the economic activity of the voyageur, it is appropriate to open here a parenthesis treating the general history of native-white lingustic contact in northern North America, to sweep back from Michilimakinac to the Atlantic coast.

Peter Bakker has shown that the first instrument of communication between native and white was a Basque-Algonkian pidgin which arose out of contact between Basque fishermen and the Micmacs and Montagnais. (1990: 4) This is apparently the same contact language Marc Lescarbot referred to in 1612 and that some have incorrectly taken for a French-related pidgin. Though some words of French origin can be found in the documents, words of Basque origin abound. Known as Souriquoien, this pidgin must be distinguished from Souriquois, a name often given to Micmac. Many Micmac spoke Souriquoien, but certainly not all those who spoke Souriquoien were Micmac. Thus, a century after Cartier, Père Le Jeune collected several Basque expressions from the lips of Montagnais at Tadoussac, ignorant though he was of their Basque derivations (e.g. *ania* 'brother'); and in 1633, the Flemish writer Ioannes de Laet mentioned "Basque" words in addition to French in use in the Iroquois communities at Hochelaga — evidence that Souriquoien extended across several native language boundaries. The Huron, however, never used it, according to Bruce Trigger. (364)

This pidgin was apparently the main instrument of contact between the French and the natives they encountered until Champlain thought to establish a corps of interpreters. As is often the case in contact pidgins, those who spoke Souriquoien pidgin suffered from the illusion that they spoke the other group's actual language. Also typical of contact pidgin is the abrupt disappearance of Souriquoien as soon as more regular and better structured contacts develop. Unless it becomes the basis for a creole, that is becomes the native language of a population with no other means of communication — a pidgin lasts no longer than the tentative contacts which engender and sustain it. Neither *québécois* nor *acadien*, the two main French dialects spoken in North America, bear any trace of creolization properly speaking. (Vintila-Radulescu, 25) The same holds for the languages which came into contact with French, and later English: with the exception of the anomalous cases mentioned above (Souriquoien, Delaware, Mobilian, and Chinook jargons, and Michif), and one out of reckoning here (the Inuktituk-based Eskimo Trade Jargon spoken at the mouth of the Mackenzie), there was no pidginization or creolization of native Amerindian tongues. Plotted on a map of North America, these contact pidgins fall along the fringes of the broad area of North America which the voyageur plied, circumscribing his domain and perhaps defining his presence.

THIS MAP BRINGS US to the crux of the matter. Conditions *were* ripe for the creation of a fur trade pidgin, one which would have filled in the map, so to speak. On the one hand, there was a great diversity of native languages, which reduced the appeal of learning any particular trade language already present on the ground; on the other hand, there was a long period of sporadic economic

interaction necessitating rudimentary communication. Peter Bakker's hypothesis in 1988 was that in Canada *métissage* or racial mixing produced a bilingual population who assumed the role of interpreters, short-circuiting pidginization, an operation which required a number of multilingual natives as well. The gist of his observations seem correct, but his hypothesis needs further refining, and should be inserted more carefully into the contexts of fur trade history, that of the Métis nation, and that of Amerindian language contacts as a whole. The sensitive reader will also have understood that I am speaking about not only ethnolinguistic history, but the historical grounds for a Canada.

There remains a yawning gap between the demise of Souriquoien in the east and the rise of the Métis nation in the west, a large one during which numerous commercial and other contacts occurred and a considerable sum of geographical and ecological knowledge changed hands, without most of the native population having acquired French, nor, conversely, most in the trade having learned any Amerindian tongues. Folklorists, moreover, have attested to tales of French origin across the continent, especially where voyageurs were active, which shows that cultural exchange was reciprocal. (Jacquin, 213-215) No one is likely to chart with any degree of precision the path of transmission taken by the French tale Melville Jacobs recorded in Chinook Jargon in 1932 in the Pacific Northwest. ("*Lasup*" "Soup Man"; 1936: 15) Such exchange of cultural material must be attributed to bilinguals of some kind, and have occurred before French disappeared from the Pacific Northwest with the withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company to Victoria. This and similar phenomena across the continent down into Missouri and as far south as the territory of Mobilian Jargon in fact suggests that the racially-mixed bilinguals in question were not strictly speaking Métis, in the national or social sense, rather the free-floating agents we call the voyageurs. In fact, the rise of a Métis distinct nation marked their demise.

It would be futile to finger the precise moment at which voyageur "society" gave way to the Métis "nation." Marcel Giraud, for one, attributes the shift from the voyageur towards the more stable culture which supplanted his to the consolidation of the Métis family — "élément d'attachement indispensable au milieu primitif" — which in turn can be measured by the extension of the fur trade into the West by the two great Companies which introduced, he says, "un personnel assez nombreux pour répandre, sur une échelle appréciable, la coutume des mariages mixtes." (365) As a historical marker, 1812 has the advantage of setting off two centuries and of coinciding with the establishment of Selkirk's Red River colony, the beginning of the end for the voyageur. This proposed date is arbitrary. French remained the language of the fur trade until the 1840s, as its testified prominence in native-white relations in the Pacific Northwest until then demonstrates. To some degree, those who spoke it were still voyageurs. 1840 is in any event the date George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, lamented

that "Voyaging seems to be getting into disuse or out of fashion among the French Canadians." (Williams, 56)

There is little doubt that however far he strayed from mainstream Laurentian society, the voyageur never lost touch with his French roots. What remains a matter of some speculation is the nature of the other, native facet of his bilingualism. There is, of course, no doubt where his immediate knowledge of Amerindian languages was obtained — the native women the earliest *coureur de bois* took as country wives, and quickly had as mothers. In Sylvia Van Kirk's words: "Because of her intimate contact with the traders, the Indian woman also played an important role as an interpreter and teacher of language. As least some understanding of the languages was required to be an effective 'Indian trader'." (65) This intimate familiarity with local languages initially was of great importance, but as the fur trade spread across the continent, mastery of any given one would have been of no more use to a single voyageur than it would to a native. The linguistic map of North America is complex. It is hard to imagine that any given voyageur, for that matter the voyageurs collectively, picked up more than a smattering of the languages spoken in the immense swath at hand, in particular the Central Algonquian and Iroquoian languages which would have been of the most use. The manifold grammatical categories within even contemporary Ojibway offer grounds for skepticism about easy mastery of any of these tongues (see Pentland and Wolfart [1982] for some indications). Louis Primeur ("traiteur illettré et hâbleur, mais passé maître dans les dialectes indigènes" [Giraud 210]) was perhaps an exceptionally gifted individual, as was Toussaint Charbonneau, whom Lewis and Clark encountered in 1804 among the Sioux, and who spoke the gamut of languages along the Missouri River (Jacquin, 238). But languages and intercultural communication do not depend on gifted individuals. The polyglottism of the voyageur can therefore be best explained not by the genius of any particular one of them, but rather by their acquisition of the mutual linguistic accommodations natives themselves had always used.

NEITHER IN THE *Bas-Pays* nor in the *Pays d'en-haut* was there a contact jargon similar to those attested elsewhere in North America. This does not mean there were no *native* lingua francas. In the 1600s and 1700s, those in use in the area of fur trading were sequential in time and contiguous in space: Huron, in the Ottawa Valley and on the banks of Lake Huron; Ojibway, throughout the Great Lakes; and Cree, in its variety of dialects, across the Prairies (the famous prairie Sign Language did not make it to Canada until the 1900s [Trigger, 65; Taylor, 178]). Inevitably, the use of these lingua francas was as approximate on the part of natives not born into them as it was on that of the voyageurs. Marcel

Giraud claims that the voyageur was "habitué dès l'enfance [aux] intonations [des langues amérindiennes] et en a acquis la pratique sans avoir à s'astreindre à une étude suivie." (149) Native fluency in one Amerindian tongue was doubtless a help in acquiring another, yet it was probably a behavioral model rather than a particular linguistic code learned lock-stock-and-barrel that was the voyageur's secret weapon in the language wars of the 1700s and 1800s — the direct experience of improvised language contact within the Amerindian world. In others words, the facility of the voyageur was not based on the European intellectual model of hermetic and autonomous tongues which one learns serially, but rather on the experience of a multilingual milieu in which accommodation was a matter of habit, and comprehension confirmed by trade. The voyageur inhabited a Forest of Symbols through which he moved as gracefully as in a canoe, another talent, in this case linguistic, he owed his Amerindian relatives, one crucial to mastery of his boreal, riparian environment.

To judge by the distrust the Agents of the Hudson's Bay Company held towards them, the voyageurs never broke off relations with the French-speaking employees of the North West Company: "La fréquentation inévitable de l'homme du Bas-Pays, la sympathie qui naissait de la communauté de langue exposaient bien vite les Canadiens aux intrigues de leurs compatriotes et rendaient douteuse leur fidélité envers la Compagnie britannique." (Giraud, 256) This propensity for French is further corroborated by the high percentage of French words in early nineteenth century Chinook Jargon.

We know precious few details about the French actually spoken by the voyageurs, though it is tempting to extrapolate what we do know about contemporary Métis French. Peter Bakker remarks that "the French spoken by the Métis [is] markedly different from other North American French dialects." (1989b: 339; cf. 1989b: 341) Given that Métis French is not creolized (and that the French component of Michif conforms *grosso modo* to North American French norms), his point is a matter of emphasis. Métis is less eccentric than one might think: "la plupart des mots et des expressions employés en métis sont également employés en français du Canada" (Papen 1984: 133), the rest coming, as one might expect, from English: such as *polisher, railleder* (<ride), *brîder* ('to raise animals' <to breed); or from Cree: like *tansi* 'hello,' *megwetch* 'thanks,' *awapou* instead of *nourriture*, *kiskapatew* for *fumée*. (Papen 1984; Bakker, p.c.) Nor is Métis French phonologically odd compared to other French dialects, though it is recognizable. This is readily confirmed by comparing it with a genuine French creole, Louisiana creole (as opposed to Acadian Cajun, which is relatively easy for a francophone). Let us note in passing that nowhere in North America did aboriginal languages effect a like transmogrification of French. The extent to which North American French remained impermeable to Amerindian linguistic influence points, I am suggesting, to some kind of buffer, one incarnate in the person of the voyageur.

As interpretation became more and more institutionalized in the Canadian West, the voyageur was reduced increasingly to the purely physical functions of trapper. By 1804 the North West Company had over sixty-eight paid interpreters, most of whom were of course francophone. (Delisle, 58) Many had been voyageurs and were of mixed-blood (as English forces us to say), but the role of interpreter and mere trapper were already diverging. Accordingly, the cultural record shows a shift from the perhaps exaggerated reputation of the voyageurs in linguistic matters (for example, Giraud, who cites York Factory factors in the 1790s [343]), to descriptions like those of Washington Irving in *Astoria*: "their language is of the same pyebald character, being a French patois, embroidered with Indian and English words and phrases." (28)

EXPUNGING, AS ETHNOLINGUISTS ought, any negative connotations of "patois," let us try to imagine what Irving was describing, keeping in mind that he may have been referring to the French-oriented dialect of Chinook Jargon, the main one accessible to Europeans in the 1830s. Bilingual, at the very least, the voyageur was accustomed to linguistic *bricolage* — handiwork. He did not suffer from the illusion that any tongue held a monopoly over communcation, and probably would not have understood what linguistic "contamination" might mean. In the company of fellow bilinguals he doubtless was prone to code-switching and, like some Canadian bilinguals today, could not resist the temptation. There is, however, no indication that the voyageur ever forgot which codes were which. Nor was there any, and this is my point, mediate jargon to bridge those codes. Code-switching even in today's Montreal requires good knowledge of both French and English.

The voyageur was neither a learned primitivist, nor even literate — the only voyageur "autobiography" we have is Radisson's. He had issued from the impoverished classes of Europe and, matrilineally, Amerindian societies undergoing profound and anomic transformation. In the *Pays d'en-haut* he found freedom and pleasures that would have been refused him both in distant France and along the banks of the St. Lawrence, from which he was increasingly alienated. *Patois* or not, his speech was in some sense liberating. The empty spaces to which the voyageur fled were mirrored by an unknown but ever-expanding semiotic realm fed by a surprising freedom of speech and languages, and he was paid to partake of them.

It is commonly suggested that French, in the West, has been sullied by contact with English. There have been of course numerous lexical and phonological influences, but it is sociolinguistically, not structurally, that English came to dominate from the 1840s on. Languages do not die because they are contaminated or erode

internally, but because they lose their socioeconomic power and prestige. Be it in the mouth of *francos* in the West or in that of the Métis, French in Western Canada bears only relatively minimal traces of English influence — the definitive proof of which is to ask any unilingual anglophone to understand the French he hears in passing in Edmonton, or for that matter on French TV. There was, to repeat, no creolization of French in Canada nor, even among the voyageurs, any abrupt rupture in transmission from one generation to the next, but only the shift over lifetimes from one language to the next. The voyageur was but the first of agents insuring that such mutations have been part and parcel of Canadian history.

Rather than a contact language which many would come to share, the voyageur established a contact discourse which he used to negotiate between cultures he shared, but which twain never met. There is no need to be romantic about the perished historic destiny of the theoretically possible syncretic culture which might have sprung from unmediated contact among the peoples *and* the invaders of northern North America. Chinook Jargon, which actually was one such synthesis, itself expired by the end of the nineteenth century, smothered by the massive arrival of Oregon settlers. We would have smothered it ourselves.

As for Michif, the other implicit term of this meditation, only subsequent research will confirm if its roots did grow out of the voyageur discourse here hypothesized. But Michif does share one telling feature of voyageur discourse, that of "asserting a social identity distinct from that of speakers of either French or Cree" (Holm, 11), though speaking at least parts of both. To this day Michif remains autonomous, though marginal.

Other examples of pidginization and creolization one might have expected in Canada were cut off by the versatile and even virtuoso bilingualism of the voyageur, who prepared his own demise.

NOTE

[1] The original French version of this text, presented at the *Avant 1860: Discours et langages au Canada* conference at Victoria College, Toronto, in April, 1990, used *coureur de bois* instead of voyageur. Though these terms are not strictly synonymous, the awkwardness of the former in English persuades me to adopt *voyageur*. A second version was presented in English at the *American Society for Ethnohistory* meeting in Toronto, November, 1990. I am indebted to consultations with Peter Bakker of the University of Amsterdam, who bears no responsibility for any errors upon which I may have insisted.

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THE VISITING WIND

Russell Thornton

The visiting wind is spinning itself
out through the shuttles of the tree branches:

spinning the living blanket of the leaves;
spinning subtle flesh — two dazzling, blissful,

lit, serene spheres, which move in a pattern
among the branches, one round the other —

bodies of turning and turning lovers.
And already the wind is distant, free:

the whole leaf-air hushes, waiting: the wind
passes and passes through, and almost sees.

FONCTIONS ET STATUT DISCURSIF DE "L'APPEL À LA JUSTICE DE L'ÉTAT"

Denis Saint-Jacques

DANS LA PRÉPARATION DE l'histoire littéraire du Canada français et du Québec[1] dont Hélène Marcotte et Pierre Rajotte traitent aussi dans ce numéro, j'ai été chargé de rendre compte de ce qu'on peut considérer comme l'ouvrage le plus important des jeunes lettres canadiennes au dix-huitième siècle, *l'Appel à la justice de l'État* de Pierre Du Calvet. La page de titre permet de se faire une idée assez précise de la matière du livre en question.[2] On remarquera la mention du lieu d'édition, Londres, sans nom d'éditeur.

Les premières questions que cet ouvrage soulève pour nous sont celle de son ou de ses rôles historiques et celle de son statut exact dans la production lettrée de cette époque. Quelles fonctions a-t-il jouées dans l'histoire de la colonie? Comment caractériser au juste un pareil document?

Nous disposons heureusement d'excellentes mises au point dues à la plume de Pierre Tousignant et de Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, sur l'auteur dans le *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*[3] et sur le livre dans le *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*.[4] À défaut d'une réédition moderne intégrale, la large sélection d'*Extraits* présentés par Jean-Paul De Lagrave et Jacques G. Ruelland permet d'avoir un bon aperçu du texte.[5] Cette nouvelle édition comporte par ailleurs une présentation dont le ton polémique laisse bien sentir que les cendres de Pierre du Calvet ne sont pas encore refroidies aujourd'hui. Il y est question de réhabiliter la mémoire d'un "patriote," revendicateur des "libertés," accusé injustement de trahison par des historiens qui ne veulent pas admettre que le gouverneur Haldimand se soit conduit à son endroit en "despote" dans l'affaire de son emprisonnement sans procès. Ce contentieux appelle quelques commentaires.

En effet, il semble impossible d'étudier l'œuvre de Du Calvet sans avoir à régler le cas de sa problématique trahison, au point que tout le sens qu'on veut accorder au message qu'elle propose semble parfois se réduire à celui de la manifestation exemplaire du discours que peut tenir dans un cas un traître ou dans l'autre un patriote. Je n'ai aucune nouvelle pièce à apporter à ce dossier dont je pense qu'il

oriente parfois de façon excessive la lecture qu'on peut faire du texte de l'*Appel*. On pourra consulter la discussion mesurée du point en litige, celui de la trahison de Du Calvet au profit des rebelles américains, dans l'article du *DBC* évoqué plus haut; je n'ai pour ma part rien à y redire. Ce jugement me semble prudent dans son refus d'une part de conclure au vu de preuves insuffisantes. On ne saurait cependant prétendre d'autre part que toute présomption de culpabilité est effectivement levée en ce qui concerne la conduite de Du Calvet durant la période où les Américains ont occupé Montréal.

Cette relative incertitude ne saurait pourtant empêcher qu'on s'interroge sur le sens à donner à "trahison" en l'occurence. Il reste bien possible que Du Calvet ait "trahi" une monarchie anglaise qu'il n'avait pas choisie même s'il l'a servie comme juge de paix avant les troubles résultants de la guerre d'Indépendance américaine et a tenté sans succès d'en obtenir justice par la suite; on peut certes aussi ne pas en être convaincu. Il est de même possible de croire que Du Calvet ait été un "patriote canadien," d'une patrie qu'il n'avait pas davantage choisie puisqu'il avait immigré en 1758, donc dans une colonie française, mais il existe des indices qui permettent de penser que c'est là le fruit d'une récupération très discutable. Que veut dire ici "patriote"? Le terme prête à de mystifiantes confusions et ce n'est pas sous ce qualificatif que se présente lui-même Du Calvet.

Si l'on y réfléchit, Du Calvet, d'abord sujet protestant d'un roi catholique, Louis XV, qui persécute ses coreligionnaires, puis sujet conquis d'un roi, George III, qui ne donne pas aux habitants de la colonie canadienne où il s'est établi les droits qu'il a concédés aux citoyens de la métropole, et dont le représentant dans la colonie lui a retiré sa commission de juge de paix, ne semble obligé à aucune espèce de loyauté particulière à l'endroit d'un régime ou de l'autre. On peut penser que la révolution des colonies américaines a trouvé de sa part un accueil favorable; il en partageait les idées libérales. Quel motif aurait-il eu de s'y opposer? Un seul sans doute, celui de la prescience historique: il allait vite se retrouver du mauvais côté de la frontière du pays émancipé. Mais en quoi autrement doit-on le trouver plus coupable que Franklin ou Washington? Que devait-il de plus à l'Angleterre? Si Pierre Du Calvet a vraiment "trahi" le gouvernement britannique, ne lui reprochons alors que son manque d'opportunisme. Vae victis!

Pour éclairer maintenant la question de son "patriotisme," il faut envisager les choses à deux moments où la situation est si différente que ce patriotisme doit nécessairement changer: d'abord, durant l'occupation de Montréal par les troupes américaines, ensuite, durant la période qui a suivi son emprisonnement et où il rédige en particulier *l'Appel à la justice de l'État*. Pour ce qui est du premier cas, on voit mal ce que Du Calvet aurait fait en la conjoncture qui lui mérite un pareil titre; à moins que l'on ne veuille ici entendre "patriote canadien" comme équivalent de "patriote américain." Pour ce qui est du deuxième cas, une lecture un peu attentive de *l'Appel* rappelle la prudence à garder dans la manipulation de termes

dont les aceptions évoluent. Dès l'adresse du recueil, on peut lire: "Eh mais! il n'y a plus aujourd'hui en *Canada*, par le droit & par les intérêts, qu'un seul genre d'habitants, c'est-à-dire des sujets de la *Grande-Bretagne*; réunissez-vous, tout vous en dicte la loi; & parlez comme doivent le faire des *Anglois*." (v) Tout au long de son discours, Du Calvet parle effectivement d'une patrie canadienne, qu'il désigne comme "province de Québec," mais il voit les Canadiens, sujets du roi de Grande Bretagne, comme membres de la "nation" anglaise. Il suffira de se rapporter aux sixième et onzième points des réformes qu'il propose pour corriger le "système de gouvernement pour le Canada," articles touchant "[*l*]a *nomination de six Membres, pour représenter le* Canada *dans le Sénat* Britannique" (211 et suivantes) et la "*naturalisation nationale des* Canadiens *dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire* Britannique" (230 et suivantes) pour voir comment il l'entend. Pour lui, patrie a le sens commun à cette époque de communauté géographique d'appartenance sans coïncidence nécessaire avec la population générale d'un État et nation vaut pour l'ensemble des sujets d'un monarque toutes classes confondues; Du Calvet se voit en patriote canadien membre de la nation anglaise. Ce sont là des usages courants à l'époque et en tout cas assez différents des sens modernes que les termes prendront à l'occasion des événements de 1837 au Bas-Canada.

C'est par une opération aussi discutable que celle qui accole au nom de Du Calvet le qualificatif de "traître" qu'on peut parler à son propos de patriotisme et de nationalisme: ces effets anachroniques servent à réinterpréter le donné historique pour lui conférer une signification qui satisfasse des conflits idéologiques ultérieurs. Les libéraux du dix-neuvième siècle feront de sa protestation une base fondatrice de leur mouvement et les historiens conservateurs du tournant du vingtième siècle croiront ruiner cette position en attaquant une trahison déshonorante. Sur cette base polémique, ils s'inventeront qui un héros, qui un vilain. La fortune de *l'Appel à la justice de l'État* reste fondée sur ce différend.

Voilà qui nous permet déjà de répondre en partie à notre première question sur les usages sociaux de cet ouvrage. *L'Appel* a servi d'enjeu dans ce qu'on peut considérer comme le conflit idéologique fondamental du dix-neuvième et du début du vingtième siècle au Canada-français entre libéraux et conservateurs pour la conquête d'une hégémonie nationale. François-Xavier Garneau et Louis Fréchette érigeront d'abord la statue du héros que renverseront Douglas Brymner et Benjamin Sulte.[6] Je cite Fréchette et Sulte pour qu'on sente bien l'opposition entre les partis:

> Alors on vit, devant le spectre [Haldimand] au front hideux,
> Un homme se lever et crier: — À nous deux!
>
> C'était toi, Du Calvet, qui, méprisant la rage
> Du despote, osait seul tenir tête à l'orage,
> Et brandir, au-dessus de tous ces fronts étroits,
> À ton bras indigné la charte [*L'Appel*] de nos droits.[7]

> Notre devoir, en conscience, est d'examiner les pièces officielles du temps qui forment cent volumes de manuscrits et d'en extraire ce qui concerne non seulement Du Calvet, mais toute la *bande des agitateurs* avec laquelle il était lié. Cette page d'histoire une fois mise au jour, on fera bon marché de ce qu'on a dit ou publié pour soutenir la *cause véreuse* de Du Calvet et, au lieu d'avoir des *historiens avenglés* ou plutôt qui ne voient que par les lunettes de ce *vilain brouillon,* on saura en fin de compte ce qui s'est passé [. . .]. [souligné par D.S.J.][8]

Et à notre époque, on croirait entendre se poursuivre le même débat quand de Lagrave et Ruelland écrivent leur "Biographie de Pierre Du Calvet. Profil d'un vrai patriote":

> Son action et ses écrits permirent le rétablissement des libertés fondamentales et le fonctionnement d'une chambre d'assemblée comme l'avaient souhaité les Fils de la Liberté en 1775-76. C'est le désir d'obtenir des pouvoirs plus grands pour cette assemblée qui conduira les Fils de la Liberté de 1837-38 à épauler leurs fusils après les appels de Louis-Joseph Papineau. Celui-ci reprendra à l'Institut canadien de Montréal les combats de Pierre Du Calvet. "Le bien le plus précieux des hommes est la liberté" rappelait Voltaire dans *L'Ingénu* en 1767. C'était aussi l'opinion de Du Calvet: toute sa vie le confirme. Peut-être cette liberté est-elle figurée dans ses armoiries par ce soleil dardant ses rayons dans le jardin du bonheur?[9]

TOUT CE BRUIT NE PIQUE-T-IL pas un peu votre curiosité? Voulez-vous vous procurer quelque exemplaire de cette œuvre si célébrée? Vous constaterez alors que l'édition londonnienne de 1784 n'a jamais été intégralement reprise, ni ici, ni ailleurs. *L'Appel* est un des ces écrits dont on cause, mais qu'on ne lit guère et surtout pas pour le situer dans sa conjoncture propre.

Sans aller très loin sur ce terrain, cherchons à éclairer les objectifs principaux de l'entreprise. Si, d'une part, l'ex-détenu poursuit le pouvoir qui l'aurait injustement contraint — la réclamation d'un procès contre le gouverneur Haldimand matérialise cette visée — d'autre part, le réformateur politique propose des transformations à l'exercice du pouvoir dans la colonie. Bien que l'on puisse lier sans solution de continuité une démarche à l'autre: la justice personnelle serait protégée par les réformes publiques, il y a lieu de s'interroger sur l'engagement politique de Du Calvet. D'où lui viennent donc ses idées? Qui est avec lui en cette affaire? Qui sert-il au juste?

L'auteur ne le cache pas, ses idées reprennent celles de Francis Maseres, juriste britannique qui le soutient dans ses démarches à Londres. Entre autres, il le cite in extenso des pages 253 à 259 sur les questions de l'habeas corpus et de la restriction des pouvoirs du gouverneur. Ce Francis Maseres a été procureur-général de la province et intervient régulièrement à Londres pour favoriser les représentations des marchands anglophones de la colonie auprès du gouvernement. Nous sommes

à l'époque où ceux-ci exigent une chambre d'essemblée élective alors que la clergé et les seigneurs francophones satisfaits de leur position au Conseil législatif s'y opposent. Aidant Du Calvet dans sa cause personnelle, payant l'édition du livre et le faisant distribuer au Canada, car l'auteur à peu près ruiné n'en a pas les moyens, nul doute que l'ex-procureur-général de la province de Québec y trouve l'occasion de faire intervenir publiquement un "nouveau sujet" dans le sens des positions qu'il soutient avec les marchands "anciens subjets." En ce sens, Du Calvet devient le porte-parole francophone des intérêts de Canadiens anglophones. Comme ces autres grands libéraux Laurier et Trudeau, penseraient aujourd'hui cyniquement les "patriotes nationalistes québécois"! On voit ici que le patriotisme s'évalue diversement suivant les points de vue. Mais cette collaboration tactique donnera des résultats concrets sur le terrain et conduira à des alliances de sujets canadiens des deux langues dont les interventions orienteront les dispositions de l'Acte constitutionnel de 1791. En fin le compte, il n'y aura pas de procès contre Haldimand, sur ce plan, Du Calvet aura donc échoué; mais la chambre d'assemblée verra le jour, sur cet autre plan, Du Calvet, Maseres et bien d'autres auront eu gain de cause. Cette victoire vaut bien la vengeance perdue d'un acteur de l'histoire dont l'hypothétique trahison reste sans effet alors que son patriotisme sert la démocratie.

Face à un pareil document, on pouvait aussi se poser un autre type de question: où le classer? Au rayon des plaidoiries célèbres? Pourquoi non? Parmi les discours politiques? Cela paraît évident. Avec les premières histoires du Canada? Certains passages l'autorisent. Mais dans le corpus canonique de la littérature nationale? Voilà qui ne s'impose pas aussi facilement. Comme notre équipe écrit une histoire littéraire, c'est pourtant la question à résoudre. Et du simple fait de l'existence de cet article, on peut aisément soupçonner la solution que nous y avons apporté. Nous croyons que *L'Appel à la justice de l'État* de Pierre Du Calvet doit être reçu comme "texte" de littérature. Il reste à expliquer sur quelles caractéristiques on peut se fonder pour conférer ainsi la valeur littéraire à un ouvrage que les histoires littéraires canadiennes ou québécoises ont largement négligé.

Je vous fait grâce de l'énumération des auteurs de traités et manuels qui ignorent l'œuvre de Du Calvet, convaincus par Mgr. Camille Roy, fondateur de l'historiographie littéraire au Québec, de l'inexistence à toutes fins utiles d'un écrit qui ne cadrait pas avec l'interprétation hégémonique des lettres canadiennes que ce héraut du conservatisme littéraire est arrivé à imposer même à des critiques qui ne partageaient pas ses positions. Je vous donne une citation tirée de l'*Histoire de la littérature française du Québec* de Pierre de Grandpré, ouvrage le plus ample, 4 tomes, à ce jour en ce domaine:

> Étienne Gilson, pour sa part, indique, comme premier monument des lettres canadiennes d'expression française l'*Appel à la justice de l'État*, de Pierre Du Calvet (Londres, 1784). En fait, l'*Appel* et le *Discours [à l'occasion de la victoire remportée par les forces navales de Sa Majesté britannique dans la Méditerannée le 1 et le 2 août 1798, sur la flotte françoise* de Joseph Octave Plessis], importants comme documents d'histoire générale, ne le sont guère pour l'histoire littéraire.[10]

Nous n'en saurons pas plus, la cause est jugée sans que les motifs de la condamnation soient portés à notre connaissance. J'ai préféré y voir de plus près moi-même: le résultat de ce réexamen se trouve dans le premier volume de notre histoire littéraire.

Je donne ici en extrait la démonstration de littérarité de *l'Appel à la justice de l'État* qu'on pourra y lire. La reconnaissance critique fonde normalement la valeur littéraire d'une œuvre, mais, à la fin du dix-huitième siècle au Canada, les instances appropriées, critique dans les périodiques, académie, université, n'existent pas encore. Il faut donc se fonder sur une sanction ultérieure pour pouvoir trancher. Je viens d'évoquer plus haut cette sanction largement défavorable mais résultant d'un conflit idéologique où une œuvre inquiétante a été censurée pour la postérité. Le *Dictionnaire des œuvres littéraires du Québec*[11] a rétabli *l'Appel* dans le corpus légitime, mais sans particulièrement motiver les raisons de cette récupération.

Certains caractères spécifiques du discours doivent orienter les critiques dans leur évaluation et en se basant sur les critères qui manifestent la littérarité à une époque donnée le chercheur peut tenter d'établir la plausibilité de reconnaissance pour une œuvre dans sa conjoncture propre quand les instances légitimes n'ont pu se prononcer de fait. C'est ce que nous avons voulu faire pour *l'Appel à la justice de l'État*. La forme, genre et style, et l'intertextualité, fondée sur la citation, nous ont fourni les critères utiles.[12]

L'idée de publier des réquisitoires n'a rien d'inédit à ce moment, la pratique en est plutôt fréquente; Du Calvet lui-même a déjà fait paraître chez Fleury Mesplet à propos d'une autre chicane un *Mémoire en réponse à l'écrit public de Maître Panet* en 1779. Ces plaidoiries, malgré l'exemple illustre des *Verrines*, du *Pro Murena* et du *Pro Milone* de Cicéron, tendent cependant à constituer un champ propre des discours juridiques particuliers et échappent au champ littéraire, qui se désintéresse de ces discours trop spécialisés. Aussi n'est-ce pas sous cet aspect que l'ouvrage retient ici l'attention.

L'étude d'un cas individuel scandaleux pour en tirer des conclusions générales à portée politique est au contraire l'une des voies privilégiées du combat philosophique, Voltaire l'a empruntée de façon éclatante pour l'affaires Calas ou celle du Chevalier de la Barre. Elle situe l'*Appel à la justice de l'État* au coeur d'un grands courants littéraires du 18e siècle. La forme choisie, celle du recueil de lettres, n'a dans cette perspective rien d'étonnant; les *Provinciales* de Pascal ou les *Lettres philosophiques sur l'Angleterre* de Voltaire en fournissaient des exemples célèbres.

La "lettre ouverte" était largement pratiquée, même si l'appellation n'existait pas encore: on peut penser à la *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* de Rousseau et à tant d'autres.

Du Calvet parle lui-même d'"épître," de "dissertation" et d'"essai" à propos de différentes parties de son livre, qui contient des récits, de l'histoire, un pamphlet, et jusqu'à un petit traité, tout cela dans un cadre général de lettres, au sens courant de missives personnelles envoyées à des particuliers par la poste pour la plupart, mais éditées ensuite justement pour les rendre publiques. D'ailleurs, l'auteur parle à leur propos de "publicité"; cela doit s'entendre au sens que le terme prend dans la littérature d'idées de l'époque. Il s'agit ici de faire passer dans la sphère de l'opinion commune aux personnes aptes à se former une idée éclairée de la chose politique une requête d'abord faite privément au pouvoir exécutif. C'est bien une "lettre ouverte" à ceci près qu'elle n'aurait pas été écrite d'emblée pour être rendue publique. La "nation," dit Du Calvet, doit maintenant en juger et non le seul gouvernement. Il se trouve cependant aussi dans le livre une "lettre" d'un genre différent adressée aux "Canadiens" en général, le plus long texte, et que l'auteur intitule "épître," envoi d'un particulier à une collectivité. Le recueil de lettres, on le constate, n'a rien d'une forme fixe. Et si les autres parties de l'ouvrage passent à la publicité sans avoir été conçues pour elle, il en va différemment de cette épître entièrement machinée pour une stratégie de combat mené au grand jour.

De l'essai, l'*Appel* a ce côté prose d'idées personnelles et, de la dissertation, le souci scientifique de bien couvrir un sujet sérieux de façon argumentative. La forme n'a ainsi rien de très contraignant, mais il s'agit là d'un domaine discursif où la liberté de composer reste grande. Elle facilite l'accès à la littérature d'un auteur d'occasion qui peut s'y servir de sa compétence à pratiquer le genre d'écriture le plus répandu dans la sphère privée, celui de la correspondance. Nous nous trouvons ici en présence d'un type de discours où les contraintes formelles autonomes ne sauraient gêner les nécessités pragmatiques de l'exposition, de la démonstration et de l'argumentation.

La langue écrite, savante, bienséante dans les adresses, formules d'usage et conclusions, marquée enfin d'une érudition de bon aloi sert à établir que son auteur a de la littérature. L'intertextualité avouée établit la formation d'honnête homme de l'écrivain. On trouvera des références explicites à Cicéron, grand orateur du fond commun classique, à Voltaire, nombreuses, dont une ancedote renvoyant au roi de Prusse comme "despote éclairé" et cela dans un écrit politique qui revendique la démocratie, ou encore au "masque de fer," personnage popularisé par *le Siècle de Louis XIV*, et encore à Gresset, poète important dans la France du dix-huitième siècle.

Toutefois l'oeuvre a une spécificité juridique à la fois comme dénonciation d'une exaction légale, commise par Haldimand, comme "appel à la justice de l'État," en faveur de l'auteur lui-même, et comme proposition constitutionnelle de régime gouvernemental, pour le Canada. Elle renvoie ainsi à la grande tradition récente des écrits "littéraires" de ce genre: d'un côté, par exemple, aux nombreux libelles de Voltaire; de l'autre, aux traités et essais de science politique comme *L'Esprit des lois* de Montesquieu, *Des délits et des peines* de Beccaria, *Le Contrat social* de Rousseau ou les écrits des révolutionnaires américains. À cete époque, la littérature occidentale, en particulier dans les domaines français et anglais, intègre ce genre d'écrits, comme l'a montré Habermas dans son étude sur *l'Espace public.*[13]

Ainsi, *l'Appel* se voit réinstauré dans le groupe des œuvres canoniques de la littérature nationale et, oserai-je dire, patriotique. Pas plus qu'Haldimand, Camille Roy n'a réussi à mâter un aussi bouillant sujet et à étouffer son discours. Si Du Calvet a "trahi" la vérité dans l'emportement de son réquisitoire, comme il semble probable, tant pis pour la sûreté du verdict, tant mieux pour la vie de la littérature.

NOTES

[1] Subventions: FCAR et CRSHC. Lemire, Maurice (sous la direction de). *La Vie littéraire au Québec. 1764-1805. La Voix française des nouveaux sujets britanniques.* (Québec, Presses de l'univ. Laval, 1991).

[2] Appel à la Justice de l'Etat; ou Recueil de Lettres, au Roi, au Prince de Galles, et aux Ministres; avec Une Lettre, a Messieurs les Canadiens, où font fidèlement exposés les actes horribles de la violence qui a régné dans la Colonie, durant les derniers troubles, & les vrais sentiments du *Canada* sur le Bill de *Quebec*, & sur la forme de Gouvernement la plus propre à y faire renaître la paix & le bonheur public; Une Lettre au General Haldimand Lui-meme. Enfin une Derniere Lettre a Milord Sidney; où on lit un précis des nouvelles du 4 & 10 de Mai dernier, sur ce qui s'est passé en Avril dans le Conseil Législatif de *Quebec*, avec les Protêts de six Conseillers, le Lieutenant Gouverneur *Henri Hamilton* à leur tête, contre la nouvelle Inquisition d'Etat établie par le Gouverneur & son parti. Par *Pierre du Calvet, Ecuyer*, ancien juge a paix, de la Ville de Montreal.

[3] *Volume IV. De 1771 à 1800*, (Québec: Presses de l'univ. Laval, 1980), 246-51.

[4] *Tome Ier. Des origines à 1900*, (Montréal, Fides, 1980), p. 35-7.

[5] Québec: le Griffon d'argile, 1986, 64 p.

[6] Voir la bibliographie de l'article "Pierre Du Calvet" du *DBC*, cité plus haut.

[7] Fréchette, Louis. "Du Calvet," *La Légende d'un peuple* (Québec: C. Darveau, 1890), 223.

[8] Sulte, Benjamin. "Pierre du Calvet," dans *Mémoires et Comptes Rendus de la Société Royale du Canada, Troisième série. Tome XIII. Séance de mai 1919* (1920): 11.

[9] *Appel à la justice de l'État. Extraits*, 2.

[10] *Tome I*, (Montréal, Beauchemin, 1967) 42, n. 2.

[11] Voir note 4.

[12] Les paragraphes qui suivent reprennent le texte d'un passage consacré à *l'Appel à la justice de l'État* dans *La Vie littéraire au Québec* p. 291-293.

[13] Fin du passage indiqué dans la note précédente.

RESULTS OF ONE'S RESEARCH

A. F. Moritz

There are times when one is wholly confused with the voices
paid homage to so carefully and so long. It's then
they say least of all: they simply fly with the sparrows,
shine in the sparks where the streetcar enjoys its wire.
And then they stop, there's nothing left. In silence
some old puddles open up with sudden sun
on a sharp sky far underneath the streets:
among the buildings that hang in that blue sphere,
someone is peering, down or up, from a bridgelike
path in the air, a city below him, the same above.
And space is lovely, bright and deep, but memory
is only the dead sound of his last step,
there is no history here but the natural one
that shines all around in blue houses and gold trees.

CONTRIBUTION À L'ÉTUDE COMPARÉE DES POÉSIES CANADIENNES (1764-1806)

Hélène Marcotte

Les années 1764 et 1806 marquent des étapes importantes dans les lettres canadiennes. En 1764, l'imprimerie et la presse font leur apparition dans la colonie, donnant ainsi un support à une éventuelle littérature. À partir de cette date jusqu'en 1806, malgré les divers événements socio-politiques, aucune rupture majeure ne se produit en poésie. En 1805, la querelle des prisons exacerbe les tensions entre les deux ethnies. Avec la fondation du *Quebec Mercury* (1805) et du *Canadien* (1806), le fossé entre les anglophones et les francophones se creuse: le discours se radicalise, la poésie se politise et les poètes canadiens-français cherchent à définir leur identité.

Jusqu'à ce jour, outre Mary Lucinda MacDonald, peu de chercheurs se sont intéressés à l'étude comparée des poésies canadiennes de langue anglaise et de langue française des origines. Et pourtant, il est important de mettre en relief les convergences de même que les différences de ces littératures dans leurs premières manifestations, tant pour parvenir à une meilleure compréhension des codes auxquels elles se réfèrent, que pour bien saisir de quelle façon, si elles ne se sont pas ignorées, ces deux littératures se sont influencées mutuellement. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'analyser en profondeur la production poétique de l'époque, mais plutôt de suggérer, de façon schématique, quelques perspectives d'analyse qui répondraient au vœu de Clément Moisan: "La méthodologie des études comparées canadiennes devrait reposer sur une *histoire littéraire* complète, la plus exhaustive possible de chacun des deux corpus—permettant d'élaborer une histoire comparée des auteurs et des œuvres," une histoire littéraire qui "cherche à rendre compte de tout ce qui est à l'origine de l'*écriture* et de la *lecture*," de "tout ce qui touche à la production textuelle, à sa diffusion, à sa consommation.[1]" C'est dans ce dessein que nous nous sommes d'abord penchée sur les modèles littéraires offerts aux écrivains canadiens, pour ensuite préciser les principales tendances de la poésie tant chez les anglophones que chez les francophones et finalement rendre compte de la réception des poèmes dans les journaux.[2]

Constitution du corpus

De la Conquête à la fondation du *Canadien*, la poésie demeure le genre littéraire le plus répandu et, conséquemment, elle se retrouve dans presque tous les journaux de l'époque. *The Quebec Gazette/la Gazette de Québec* et, plus tard, *The Montreal Gazette/la Gazette de Montréal* lui réservent une rubrique sous le titre "Poets' corner," *The Quebec Herald, Miscellany and Advertiser* intitule pour sa part la rubrique attribuée à la poésie: "Mont Parnassus," *The British American Register*, "Poetry," tandis que la littérature contenue dans *la Gazette du commerce et littéraire de Montréal* (1778-1779) relève presque exclusivement du genre poétique. Au total, cent quatre-vingt-dix-huit textes de langue française recensés dans *les Textes poétiques du Canada français 1606-1867*, tome I[3] et quelque cent vingt textes de langue anglaise répertoriés dans *A chronological index of locally written verse* [...][4] et identifiés comme autochtones — soit par une indication dans le texte, soit par le contenu — composent notre corpus. Quatre poèmes sont publiés en brochure: en 1789, une pièce de Thomas Cary: *Abram's Plains: A Poem*; en 1799, *The Union of Science and Taste. A Poem* de l'Irlandais Stephen Dickson; en 1803, un poème de langue française: *l'Aéropage* de Ross Cuthbert et, finalement, à la fin de la période à l'étude, *Canada. A Descriptive Poem* de Cornwall Bayley.[5]

Parmi les poètes francophones connus qui écrivent entre 1764 et 1806, plusieurs ont fait leurs études en France. Ce sont d'ailleurs deux Français qui marquent le plus la production de cette époque, soit Joseph Quesnel et Valentin Jautard. Du côté anglophone, bien que les chercheurs s'entendent pour dire que: "verse in Lower Canada [...] was more often composed by members of the military or by the professional journalists,"[6] seuls trois noms nous sont parvenus: Thomas Cary, Stephen Dickson et Cornwall Bayley. Les trois auteurs ont étudié en Europe, respectivement en Angleterre, à l'Université de Dublin et au Christ College, à Cambrige. Ce sont donc les Européens récemment arrivés au Canada qui dominent la scène littéraire. Les interventions des Canadiens sur ce plan sont rares et, outre celles de Louis Labadie et de Henry-Antoine Mézière, elles se limitent à la composition de quelques "poésies fugitives."

Des modèles littéraires

Afin de bien saisir les normes auxquelles les écrivains se réfèrent et d'après lesquelles les productions littéraires sont alors jugées au Canada, il est nécessaire de recréer l'horizon d'attente de l'époque. Après la Conquête, l'éducation traverse une crise, de sorte que seule une faible proportion de la population s'intéresse aux choses de l'esprit. Elle connaît néanmoins la plupart des auteurs en vogue en France et en Angleterre. Deux collèges classiques dispensent l'enseignement aux francophones: le Petit Séminaire de Québec et le Collège de Montréal. L'enseignement du latin occupe la première place et les étudiants se penchent sur les textes de

Virgile, d'Horace, d'Ovide, de Sénèque et de Cicéron. Cependant, pour l'année scolaire 1769-1770, l'abbé Urbain Boiret intègre au cours de rhétorique du Séminaire de Québec nombre d'extraits des principaux écrivains français dont Bossuet, La Fontaine, Boileau (*Art poétique*), Corneille (*Horace, le Cid*), Racine (*Esther*), Voltaire (*la Henriade*) et Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Puis, en 1783, le Séminaire de Québec se procure le cours de l'abbé Charles Batteux et l'intègre au programme des Belles-Lettres. Pour Batteux, l'art de composer des poèmes devait reposer sur l'imitation des Anciens: la littérature française demeurait ainsi dépendante de la littérature latine.

Du côté anglophone, plusieurs écoles privées sont annoncées dans les journaux, mais il s'agit d'écoles élémentaires. Ce n'est qu'en 1801 qu'est adoptée l'Institution royale (Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning) qui met sur pied un système public d'enseignement, encore que ce système ne remportera pas le succès escompté. Le premier *grammar school* ouvre ses portes en 1798 à Montréal, ce qui n'empêche pas certains anglophones de se rendre en Nouvelle-Angleterre pour compléter leur formation. Plusieurs collèges et universités existent déjà chez nos voisins du sud: Harvard, the College of William and Mary en Virginie, Yale, Princeton pour ne nommer que eaux-là. L'enseignement gréco-latin demeure à la base de la formation dans ces institutions et les auteurs anglais en vogue sont les mêmes qu'au Canada. Ajoutons que, selon certains témoignages, dont celui de Philippe Aubert de Gaspé dans ses *Mémoires*, quelques anglophones suivent l'enseignement du Petit Séminaire de Québec.

En plus des ouvrages mis à l'étude dans les collèges, les journaux publient certains extraits d'auteurs français et anglais et plusieurs livres circulent dans la colonie. La plupart des poètes français qui sont reproduits appartiennent au dix-septième siècle et à la première moitié du dix-huitième siècle. En 1778, l'imprimeur Fleury Mesplet fait paraître *l'Abrégé des règles de la versification française* par Mr. [Pierre] Restaut. Divisé en trois articles respectivement intitulés: "De la structure des vers," "De la rime," "Du mélange et de la combinaison des vers les uns avec autres," le volume, qui semble avoir connu une assez large diffusion, propose comme normes les règles du classicisme. Restaut termine d'ailleurs son ouvrage en recommandant aux lecteurs les préceptes de Boileau: "Au reste nous renvoyons à l'Art Poétique de M. Despreaux, ceux qui voudront avoir une connaissance plus exacte et plus étendue de la Poésie Française."[7] Si le modèle littéraire français soumis aux auteurs canadiens est celui du classicisme, les livres anglais importés au Canada de même que les poèmes reproduits dans les journaux relèvent plutôt du préromantisme: Young, Milton, Goldsmith, Pope, Gray, Thomson, et Collins. Ces deux courants s'actualisent dans la production canadienne de l'époque qui oscille essentiellement entre une poésie de célébration marquée par le classicisme, et une poésie lyrique aux accents préromantiques.

Poésie canadienne

Les formes utilisées par les poètes sont fort variées et attestent la popularité de la poésie de circonstance: églogue, élégie, épigramme, épitaphe, épître, étrennes, fable, madrigal, ode, et stance. On remarque que les fables sont plus à la mode chez les anglophones (l'imprimeur montréalais Edward Edwards publie d'ailleurs les *Fables* d'Ésope en anglais en 1800), qui, par contre, composent très peu de chansons comparativement aux francophones. De plus, alors que les énigmes et les logogriphes de langue française trouvent leur pendant anglais dans les acrostiches, les "étrennes," d'abord de tradition française, deviennent très populaires auprès des auteurs anglophones. Il ne faut toutefois pas croire qu'il s'agisse là d'un bon exemple d'interaction des cultures au Canada puisque cette coutume était courante en Angleterre à l'époque. *La Gazette de Québec* reproduit même une "Ode for the New-year" composée par William Whitehead, poète lauréat en Angleterre, dès l'année 1776.[8]

Les premières étrennes écrites en français paraissent dans *la Gazette de Québec* du 1er janvier 1767, soit onze ans plus tôt que les premières étrennes en anglais, ou "New-Year's verses," publiées le 1er janvier 1778. On appelait ainsi les poésies distribuées aux abonnés, ou pratiques, en guise d'étrennes le matin du Nouvel An. Le livreur de journaux récitait ou chantait les vers, publiés sur feuille volante, espérant recevoir des présents. "Cette coutume trouve ses racines en France vers la fin du dix-septième siècle. La mode était, en ce temps-là, "de vendre, au nouvel an, en guise d'almanachs, des recueils d'ariettes, de chansons plus ou moins légères, et de poésies plus ou moins fugitives." Ces almanachs paraissaient sous le titre Étrennes."[9] Le contenu des étrennes, durant la période qui nous occupe, s'organise de façon semblable d'une année à l'autre: les auteurs se prononcent sur l'actualité politique, célèbrent les dirigeants de la colonie, chantent les louanges de l'Angleterre, en prenant soin, au début ou à la fin du poème, de présenter leurs souhaits aux abonnés et de réclamer leurs étrennes.

Curieusement, loin de déplorer la Conquête, les poètes canadiens-français proclament leur fidélité envers l'Angleterre. On retrouve même sous la plume d'un chansonnier du Club Loyal, en 1797, la thèse de la Conquête providentielle:

> Bénis la providence,
> Qui, voulant, par le doux lien,
> Fixer à jamais ton destin,
> T'a soustrait à la France:
> Sans le fortuné changement,
> Ce jour te verroit-il chantant?[10]

Il faut se rappeler qu'à la suite du Traité de Paris, les Canadiens français doivent établir de nouveaux rapports avec le pouvoir et ils cherchent tout naturellement à obtenir les faveurs des dirigeants. Louis Labadie, par exemple, publie plusieurs

poèmes dans lesquels il loue les Britanniques afin d'obtenir un poste plus lucratif que celui d'enseignant. "Misant sur ses aveux de loyauté hyperboliques il sollicita en 1798 du secrétaire civil Herman Witsius Ryland 'une place au secrétariat du gouvernement ou autres équivalentes: pour [se] retirer du misérable emploi de maître d'école qui dépend un peu trop du caprice [du] clergé'."[11] Sa tentative échoue et, par la suite, n'ayant plus rien à espérer, Labadie ne publie qu'une chanson antinapoléonienne dans *la Gazette de Québec* du 24 janvier 1799. Pour les anglophones, la situation est différente mais guère plus réjouissante. Minoritaires au sein de la colonie, menacés au sud par les Américains, ils ne peuvent assurer leur défense sans l'aide et le soutien de l'Angleterre. "In these circumstances, poems of praise for the mother country take on the aura of political acts, however miniscule, and of psychological necessities for dealing with a very insecure existence."[12]

De 1764 à 1806, la poésie canadienne-française garde les marques du classicisme. Les poètes s'appuient sur l'héritage de l'Antiquité de sorte que leurs textes regorgent de références à la mythologie et à l'histoire ancienne. Plus qu'une preuve de culture, cette pratique trahissait la formation de l'auteur. Les poèmes d'Henry-Antoine Mézière, par exemple, illustrent bien l'influence de la formation littéraire reçue dans le cours d'humanités. Dans son poème "[Quel vaste champ, ma muse, allez vous parcourir],"[13] Mézière célèbre l'amour de la patrie en paraphrasant un épisode de l'histoire de l'Antiquité: la libération de Thèbes par le général Epaminondas. Dans une deuxième pièce, le jeune poète illustre l'amour filial en évoquant encore une fois l'histoire ancienne.[14] Il met alors en scène le héros Coriolan qui, par amour pour sa mère, renonce à se venger de Rome. Bien que Mézière soit un cas typique de ce phénomène, plusieurs poètes francophones recourent à des procédés similaires et révèlent ainsi leur dépendance envers la formation scolaire. La plupart des poésies adressées aux divers gouverneurs demeurent d'ailleurs en grande partie tributaires des lieux communs ou *topoï* de la rhétorique et se déploient selon un schéma semblable: on célèbre les biens extérieurs, les biens du corps et les biens de l'âme.[15]

Alors que la poésie des Canadiens français reste dépendante de la rhétorique apprise à l'école et relève de la tradition latine, les textes poétiques écrits par les Canadiens anglais suivent davantage les modèles anglais, et les marques du préromantisme s'y décèlent déjà. Il faut dire que si les francophones se réclament de *l'Art poétique* de Nicolas Boileau, les anglophones lisent des auteurs plus contemporains et ils organisent même, en juillet 1789, une souscription: "Proposals for Printing by Subscription, The POEMS of that celebrated Scots Ploughman, Robert Burns."[16] De plus, bien que les sujets choisis par les francophones aient trait essentiellement à l'histoire et à la politique, les textes de langue anglaise s'inspirent davantage des sentiments intimes. En fait, les anglophones publient plus de vers galants que les francophones et sont moins empressés que ces derniers à rendre hommage aux autorités politiques en place.

La mise en relief des principales caractéristiques de la poésie canadienne-anglaise accentue les différences entre les deux poésies. Plusieurs poèmes publiés entre 1764 et 1806 s'inscrivent dans le courant que l'on a appelé "topographical poetry." Les descriptions de la nature abondent et les auteurs se complaisent à nommer les lieux qui les entourent, adoptant parfois le ton du récit de voyage. Leurs descriptions sont toutefois relevées par une langue imagée. Alors que les poètes francophones préfèrent l'inversion et la périphrase, les auteurs anglophones se servent fréquemment de la métaphore: "oblivion's flood,"[17] "Death's cold hand,"[18] et un auteur, sous le pseudonyme d'"Asmodeus,' utilise systématiquement l'anaphore dans ses écrits.[19] En plus d'être descriptive, la poésie canadienne-anglaise est morale et didactique, mais sans être religieuse. Les poètes canadiens-anglais se réfèrent à Dieu et à la Bible pour illustrer leurs propos (parabole du bon samaritain, anges, enfer, Adam et Eve, etc.), mais la religion n'intervient pas pour imposer une règle de vie. Les anglophones se réfèrent aussi à la mythologie grecque et romaine, se contentant, dans la plupart des cas, d'invoquer les Muses au début de leur poème: "My Muse assist me [...],"[20] "Come Inspiration! Come each smiling Muse!"[21] Leur poésie tend parfois vers la satire, surtout lorsqu'il est question de la gent féminine. Les femmes, le mariage, l'amour occupent d'ailleurs une place importante dans leurs vers. On retrouve même, à vingt ans d'intervalle, "The Maids Petition."[22] De plus, à plusieurs reprises, des poèmes sont écrits "by a lady," tandis qu'en français, durant la même période, il semble qu'une seule femme ait publié des vers sous le pseudonyme de "J.D.H.R."

À la lueur de ce qui précède, on pourrait croire que la poésie canadienne-française se réduit à un exercice scolaire, ou du moins en adopte le style, et accuse un certain retard, voire un retard certain, par rapport à la poésie canadienne-anglaise. Affirmer une telle chose serait caricaturer la réalité, négliger le classicisme de certains poèmes écrits en anglais, et méconnaître le courant élégiaque et préromantique qui naît, de façon fort modeste, chez les francophones. Ce courant donne naissance à une vingtaine de poèmes et illustre l'influence des auteurs anglais sur la culture française. Ainsi, "le Canadien curieux" [pseudonyme attribué à Pierre-Louis Panet] compose un poème après avoir lu l'œuvre de Young:

> Je lisois un soir les pensées nocturnes d'Young; si vous sçavez la Langue Anglaise, vous n'êtes pas sans avoir lu cet admirable Poeme, où la foiblesse de l'homme est mise dans un jour si apparent. Une longue suite d'infortunes avoit instruit ce Poete du faux des grandeurs humaines. La gravité du sujet, la douce mélancholie qui regnoit dans le passage que je lisois, le silence & l'obscurité de ma chambre, tout cela me jetta dans une rêverie dont je ne fus pas le maître.[23]

Selon A.J.M. Smith, la différence essentielle entre les deux poésies réside en ce que les francophones cherchent à créer une littérature qui soit principalement "canadienne," tandis que les anglophones tendraient à rattacher la leur au courant universel:

> From earliest times Canadian poets, both French and English, have held, consciously or unconsciously, to one of two distinct and sometimes divergent aims. One group has made an effort to express whatever is unique or local in Canadian life, while the other has concentrated on what it has in common with left everywhere. The poets of the first group sought to discover something distinctively and essentially 'Canadian' and thus come to terms with what was new in the natural, social, and political environment in which they found themselves or which they helped to create; the others made an effort to escape the limitations of provincialism or colonialism by entering into the universal civilizing culture of ideas.[24]

Ce jugement appelle certaines nuances. Smith ne semble pas tenir compte ici de la production poétique contenue dans *la Gazette littéraire de Montréal*, production qui cherche à se rattacher à la philosophie des Lumières, et ignore la poésie "topographique" des anglophones. De plus, comme le souligne Milan V. Dimic, "il est difficle de résister à la tentation de se demander ce qui est uniquement canadien dans les polarités du local et de l'universel."[25]

La réception

En se pliant aux règles du classicisme et en s'inspirant principalement des événements politiques et historiques, les poètes francophones perpétuent la tradition. C'est pourquoi la critique de l'époque se contente de souligner certaines licences poétiques, sans plus. Valentin Jautard, sous le pseudonyme du 'Spectateur tranquille,' peut être considéré comme le premier critique littéraire francophone. Il anime presque à lui seul *la Gazette littéraire de Montréal* et favorise le commerce d'idées entre les lettrés en alimentant certains débats. Ses remarques aux jeunes auteurs portent surtout sur la nécessité de l'instruction, la qualité de la langue française, le choix des sujets et des formes poétiques et les dangers du plagiat.

Si les critiques citent souvent en exemple les auteurs grecs et latins, Boileau demeure le maître à penser et les préceptes de son *Art poétique* servent de référence. Les remarques de l'époque concernent principalement les règles de la versification: "Pourquoi avez-vous fait de *tien* dans le mot *impatience* deux syllabes, & que dans le 2 Vers suivant, dans le mot *conscience*, avez-vous fait de *science* une seule sillable; cela m'a paru opposé aux règles de l'Art poétique"[26] ou encore: "vous y avez donné à la Bergere le nom de *Julie*, que ne lui en donniez-vous un de deux syllabes, ou que ne faisiez-vous élider l'*e* de Julie avec une autre voyelle; mais vous vouliez absolument que votre Maîtresse se reconnût sous le nom de Julie, sans vous mettre en peine si vous rendiez deux vers informes."[27]

Chez les anglophones, la critique ne s'est pas exercée aussi systématiquement et se limite dans la plupart des cas à un échange d'invectives. On retrouve toutefois quelques remarques concernant la poésie à travers les diverses polémiques que suscite la publication de certaines pièces. La principale polémique se déroule

dans *la Gazette de Québec* du 20 janvier au 3 mars 1785 entre "Derry-down" et Tweedle-dum, tweedle-dee." Après que "Derry-down" ait publié un poème intitulé "For the Queen's Birthday," 'T.D.' lui reproche de faire de la politique plutôt que de la poésie:

> Done at *Quebec*, Jan. Eighty-five,
> Whilst *Derry-Down* was yet alive,
> But *Poet* left for *Politician*
> By *Recipe* of *sage Physician.*[28]

Un poète écrivant sur un sujet semblable voit son poème qualifié de "vile Adulation."[29] Comme on peut le constater, chez les anglophones le fond importe plus que la forme: on insiste sur le sujet de l'écrit, et plus encore sur le traitement du sujet, plutôt que sur le style du poète. La fonction morale des textes a d'ailleurs une importance primordiale et c'est l'argument qu'utilise "Derry-down" pour se justifier:

> In my mind's eye nought's worth the printing,
> Without some moral or good hint in:
> The test of sense, in this view lies, Sir,
> To make men better or the wiser.[30]

Il est à remarquer que la critique chez les anglophones s'exerce toujours par le truchement de poèmes. Le commentateur acquiert alors simultanément le statut de poète et assure sa crédibilité: la critique s'exerce entre pairs.

Conclusion

Avec la querelle des prisons et la fondation du *Canadien*, les journaux bilingues disparaissent presque complètement mais, curieusement, le dialogue — même s'il ne s'agit que d'un dialogue de sourds — s'amorce. Les auteurs s'intéressent davantage à la production de leurs vis-à-vis, ne serait-ce que pour mieux les attaquer. Par exemple, le 20 décembre 1806 paraît dans *le Canadien* "Les Moissonneurs" de Joseph Quesnel et, dès le 22 décembre, un auteur du *Quebec Mercury* parodie le poème.

S'il nous fallait adopter quelque métaphore ou figure géométrique pour caractériser les rapports entre les auteurs anglophones et francophones du Canada au cours de la période 1764-1806, nous n'irions peut-être pas jusqu'aux escaliers du château de Chambort comme l'a fait Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, ou aux "deux solitudes" de Hugh McLennan, encore que la tentation soit grande. Nous nous rangerions plutôt du côté de Philip Stratford qui opte pour la figure "the double helix," figure dont le parallélisme a l'avantage de permettre aux poètes de jeter un regard en coin à leurs vis-à-vis, de temps à autre du moins.

NOTES

[1] Moisan, Clément. "Études comparées: un champ de recherche," *Comparaison et raison. Essais sur l'histoire et l'institution des littératures canadienne et québécoise* (Québec: Édition Hurtubise HMH, 1986) : 118, 111.

[2] Les considérations qui suivent sur la poésie canadienne-française reprennent, en condensé, les propos d'un texte paru dans un ouvrage élaboré sous la direction de Maurice Lemire et intitulé *La vie littéraire au Québec, tome 1 (1764-1805).*

[3] Lortie, Jeanne d'Arc, avec la collaboration de Pierre Savard et de Paul Wyczynski. *Les Textes poétiques du Canada français (1606-1867), tome 1 (1606-1805)* (Montréal: Fides, 1987), 613 p.

[4] Stuart, Ross et Vincent, Thomas B. *A chronological index of locally written verse published in the newspapers and magazines of Upper and Lower Canada, Maritime Canada, and Newfoundland through 1815* (Kingston: Loyal Colonies Press, 1979), 386 p.

[5] Cary, Thomas. *Abram's Plains: A Poem* (Quebec: William Brown, 1789), 20 p; Dickson, Stephen. *The Union of Taste and Science. A Poem* (Québec: Neilson, 1799), 17 p. Notons que J. Mackay publie à Londres, en 1797, un poème de 592 vers: *Quebec hill or Canadian scenery. A poem. In two parts;* Cuthbert, Ross. *L'Aéropage* (Quebec: John Neilson, 1803), 13 p. Ce poème est toutefois répertorié dans Jeanne d'Arc Lortie, *Textes* 497-503; Bayley, Cornwall, *Canada. A Descriptive Poem* (Québec: Neilson, [1806?]). Les chercheurs ne s'entendent pas sur la date de publication: alors que certains la fixent en 1805, d'autres optent pour le début de 1806. D'une manière ou d'une autre, il est justifié d'intégrer le poème au corpus, puisqu'il a été rédigé en 1805.

[6] Steele, Charles R. "Canadian Poetry in English: the Beginnings." Ph.D. thesis (London: The Univ. of Western Ontario, 1974) : 69.

[7] Restaut, Pierre. *Abrégé des regles de la versification française* (Montréal: Fleury Mesplet Imprimeur et Libraire, [1778]) : 76.

[8] Whitehead, William. "Ode for the New-year," *la Gazette de Québec* (22 août 1776) : 4.

[9] Lortie, Jeanne d'Arc. *La Poésie nationaliste au Canada français (1606-1867)* (Québec: les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1975), 89, note 4.

[10] "Un Canadian, Membre du Club Loyal." "Chanson d'un Canadian [. . .]," *la Gazette de Québec* (5 janvier 1797) : 3-4.

[11] *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada, tome VI, 1821-1835*, 418. Louis Labadie joignit à sa requête le poème intitulé "Avis salutaires aux Français. Pour prévenir leur folle entreprise de vouloir débarquer en Angleterre."

[12] Steele, Charles R., 71.

[13] Mézière, Henry-Antoine. "[Quel vaste champ, ma muse, allez vous parcourir]," *la Gazette de Montréal* (27 mars 1788) : 3-4.

[14] Mézière, Henry-Antoine. "Sur l'amour filial," *la Gazette de Montréal* (18 et 25 septembre 1788) : 4.

[15] Voir à ce sujet Marrou, Irénée. *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 274-275 de même que Batteux, Charles. *Principes de littérature, tome 6*, 19-25.

[16] *La Gazette de Québec* (2 juillet 1789), 4.

[17] "Ode for the New-year," *la Gazette de Québec* (1er janvier 1778) ; 4.

[18] M. "On the Perfidy of a Friend," *la Gazette de Montréal* (16 août 1787) : 4.

[19] Voir "A town eclogue" et "Evening," *la Gazette de Québec* (23 et 30 janvier 1783) : 4.

[20] R. H. "To the two Poetical Friends," *la Gazette de Montréal* (11 mai 1786) : 4.

[21] "On the arrival of Lady Dorchester," *la Gazette de Québec* (14 juin 1787) : 4.

[22] Anonyme, "The Maids Petition," *la Gazette de Québec* (2 avril 1767) : 4 et *la Gazette de Montréal* (17 janvier 1788) : 4.

[23] "Le Canadien curieux." "[En vains projets le mortel se consume]," *la Gazette littéraire de Montréal* (21 octobre 1778) : 77.

[24] Smith, A[rthur] J[ames] M[arshall]. *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English and French* (Toronto: the Oxford Univ. Press, 1960) : xxiv.

[25] Dimic, Milan V. "Littératures canadiennes comparées: modèles d'études proposés," in *L'Histoire littéraire. Théories, méthodes, pratiques,* sous la direction de Clément Moisan (Québec: les Presses de l'Univ. Laval, 1989) : 183.

[26] 'V. J. R. D.' *La Gazette littéraire de Montréal* (13 janvier 1779) : 6.

[27] "J'entre en lice MOI." *La Gazette littéraire de Montréal* (3 mars 1779) : 34.

[28] ['T.D.'] "Being a new Song to the Tune of 'You're welcome to our Town'," *La Gazette de Québec* (27 janvier 1785) : 4.

[29] *La Gazette de Québec* (22 août 1776) : 4.

[30] "To T. D." *La Gazette de Québec* (24 février 1785) : 4.

TH FEVR PEOPUL

bill bissett

aftr assuring all
theyr frends on th phone
that theyul not go out n will stay
inside theyr blankits n take theyr
pills n try 2 keep theyr
fevr down will wuns nowun mor
will call or if thers no wun mor 2
call will get theyr clothes back on
n sneek out n rage with an
atlantik tossing romanticism
edgar alan poe in th driving rain
or whatevr n feel xcellent for
an hour strangrs passing saying
yu look so gud
thn th limbs tirud uv
plodding plodding feel suddnlee like
collapsing find theyr way home n
fall sweting in th bed
wondr
abt life n romanticism n
sentimentalitee th long journees
we take 2 b with sum wun we love
n so cleerlee undrstand th psychik
necessitees uv theyr own life
like broadcast news th xplanaysyuns
keep cumming speeding byond
comprehensyun
STOP yr going
2 fast

A VERY LAUDABLE EFFORT

Standards of Literary Excellence in Early Nineteenth Century Canada

Mary Lu MacDonald

ONE OF THE KEYS TO an appreciation of the print legacy of eighteenth and nineteenth century Canada is an understanding of the critical standards and terminology which residents of British North America applied to their reading material. Unfortunately for twentieth-century scholars, critical theory was not enunciated in any single text of the period. Although some basic rules for composition can be found in surviving elementary school books and in the texts from which Latin, Greek, and the classics of French and English were taught, more extended ideas of what was acceptable and unacceptable must be derived from an analysis of critical writing by a variety of individuals, published in the newspapers and periodicals of the time.

"Literature," as perceived by early nineteenth century Canadians included everything in print, as well as speeches and sermons. As an academic study, it excluded works written in modern languages. The definition of literature as "creative writing," with an accompanying body of "creative criticism," came about gradually in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and has been more fully developed in the twentieth. In the early period, criticism was as amorphous and undefined as was its literary subject. Neither was part of a developed intellectual institution. Both were in a state of becoming. The process of literary education varied from the eclectic reading of the auto-didact to the highly structured transmission of Latin and Greek classics in secondary schools and colleges attended by the children of the well-to-do. The literary world of 1840 was very different from that of 1990.

Twentieth century critics have taught readers to value innovation in both form and content. By contrast, in the earlier period, innovation was unacceptable since it was assumed that all possible forms had been established and all proper subjects outlined. The merit of a work thus resided in the author's skill at working within

the rules. An understanding of the reasons for their importance, as well as familiarity with the texts of Shakespeare and the classical giants of Latin and Greek was required of any writer in English; of Corneille, Boileau and, to a lesser extent, Latin authors, from writers in French. In both language groups writers were expected to be acquainted, as well, with aesthetic theories of the sublime and the picturesque. Just as twentieth century writers strive to produce the innovative works valued by their society, nineteenth century writers strove to satisfy the structured expectations of theirs.

In order to interpret the criticism of indigenous literature in the period before 1860 it is necessary to understand the context in which it appeared. In newspapers it was most often written by the editor, and usually consisted of a brief mention in the column devoted to local matters. A few sentences or a paragraph would announce that the work had been received and was recommended to readers. Occasionally criticism took the form of letters-to-the-editor contributed by anonymous subscribers, to which, if the comment was unfavourable, the author often replied. Reviews in literary periodicals were usually only a paragraph or two, although they were frequently padded by lengthy quotations from the work under consideration. Sometimes a work, or an author, was considered important enough to merit fuller treatment, but the grounds for this perceived importance were more often political or denominational, rather than purely literary.

Both newspapers and periodicals were basically regional in their circulation, with the result that works tended to be "noticed" only in the geographical areas in which they were produced. Because publishing was an entrepreneurial activity in which authors of books and publishers of new periodicals launched their enterprises at their own expense, few could afford the additional cost of distributing review copies beyond the market served by the newspapers and periodicals of their immediate district. Consequently — as with our present system — no free copy, no review.

Except where proprietors functioned as their own editors, we usually do not know with any certainty who wrote much of the literary criticism of the early period. Hired editors were most often completely anonymous, and because they were not generally well-paid they rarely stayed long in any job. No one individual stands out as a literary critic, and only S. H. Wilcocke in *The Scribbler* and John Gibson in the *Literary Garland* are known to have written criticism over a period of more than two years.

Just as there were no professional editors, there were also no professional writers. Before 1850, no person made his or her living by creative writing. As amateurs, they were almost all fully-integrated members of the society in which and for which they wrote. They accepted the prevailing literary values of the community, just as they accepted the prevailing social values.

Critics were principally concerned with the subject matter of a work. Questions of form were discussed only if the author had made serious errors in composition.

The critical vocabulary in which the content was discussed was limited, non-specialized, and easily understood by the general reader. The most common words to appear in laudatory criticism were "tasteful," "chaste" and "elegant." "Harmonious" and "sublime" were often applied to poetry. In two cases there are very positive usages unfamiliar to a twentieth century reader: "chaste" meant that a work was pure in style and without ornament, as well as free from indecency and offense; and "nervous" meant vigorous, powerful, and without weakness or diffuseness.

Before 1860, the goal of the Enlightenment to better mankind through refinement and moral education combined with the theological assumption that human being were inherently bad and must be conditioned to follow the paths of righteousness to ensure that the objective of literature must be social good, rather than private pleasure. The content must "please and instruct," "plaire et instruire" — with primary emphasis on instruction. "Le Bon" was the first quality of "le Beau." Not only were individuals believed to be responsible for ensuring that their own virtue qualified them for salvation, they were also considered to be responsible for the moral atmosphere in which others lived. When reading and writing were skills possessed only by the upper and middle classes, who could be relied on to understand and obey both literary and social rules, the effect of literature on individuals did not pose any threat to society. However, as literacy expanded in the nineteenth century the moral and intellectual instruction of a new class of readers was perceived to be of urgent social importance. Literature was now expected to enlighten and indoctrinate the newly-literate agricultural and industrial working classes.

Social and literary values thus came together in the first question of all literary critics. Was the content of a work morally correct? Regardless of date or location, it was assumed that virtue must be depicted in a positive manner and rewarded with happiness, contentment, or life everlasting. Vice and evil must be depicted negatively and punishment must be meted out. Virtue tended to mean Christian piety, honesty, devotion to family, and the acceptance of God and the state as the source of all order. Vice meant atheism, alcoholism, brutality, sexual or economic profligacy, and excessive individualism. Beyond these general categories there might be some minor disagreement within Canadian society as to specific details of individual or collective behaviour, the interpretation of which could vary according to nationality or religious denomination, but the broad outlines did not vary. Thus, a review of John Richardson's *The Canadian Brothers* in the Kingston *Chronicle* (February 15, 1840) begins by assuring prospective readers that the novel is morally correct:

> ... the Characters, from the chivalrous and ever to be lamented *Brock*, to the detestable and guilty murderer and traitor *Desborough*, are appropriate and in keeping with their profession and spheres in life; and, while the clever *author* was

> "adorning a tale" he did not neglect to "point a moral." The brave, loyal, and virtuous, though often surrounded with dangers, are supported under their trials, and end their days in the paths of glory, — whilst the guilty reap the reward of their crimes, in disgrace and misery.

These criteria applied in French as well as in English. Although we are accustomed to thinking of Catholic literary censorship in Lower Canada as being particularly oppressive, almost all criticism published there would, if translated, not have appeared out of the ordinary in an English-language periodical of the same date.

There was also general agreement in Canadian society that "imagination" was not something to be encouraged. Even Shakespeare was not above criticism on the grounds that his over-heated imagination sometimes resulted in bad taste. The account of a lecture on the subject of imagination, printed in the Montreal *Transcript* on January 17, 1850, ends:

> The lecture was concluded by a few remarks on the propriety of curbing the imagination and keeping it in due bounds, the lecturer observing that although the possession of a refined and sensitive imagination was of infinite value as an intellectual gift, it was liable to be mistaken and to be abused.

One of the points on which there was some disagreement within the broad community was whether or not all fiction, regardless of subject-matter, was immoral. Because the well-being of society was the principal concern, those who felt that salvation was the reward for a life of piety believed that putting novels into the hands of the people meant putting temptation in their path, and possibly condemning them to perdition. Many devout Protestants, in particular, felt this way about even the most moral fiction. As the editor of the *Christian Guardian*, reprinting an article by an American cleric from the Cincinnati *Ladies Repository*, wrote on March 31, 1841:

> We finish the novel, lay it aside, and the charm being broken, the first labour of the mind is the recollection that this is a fancy-piece. All the circumstances wrought into the thread of the story are fabulous; and the issue, in which vice suffers defeat and virtue is made to appear triumphant and honourable, is understood to be equally unfounded.

Consequently critics always commented on the morality of any work of fiction they reviewed and novelists were careful to ensure that they did not give offence. Where a writer was sure that there would be objections to his or her work, the customary tactic was to claim to be more moral than the moralists, as Joseph Doutre did in his preface to *Les Fiancés de 1812*. Another authorial defence was to claim that the novel was not a work of imagination, but was "founded on fact."

Those who did not object to fiction claimed that it was the most effective vehicle for conveying moral instruction, particularly to the lower classes who were perceived to best receive their morals with a sugar-coating. Consequently, many reli-

gious tracts were written in story form, and the popular press published many tales promoting the temperance cause.

One of the most fundamental of literary conventions was that poetry was considered to be inherently moral and uplifting. Thus, whatever the subject, the final stanza of almost every poem written in early nineteenth-century Canada routinely thanked the deity for gifts of love, or hope, or nature, or expressed Christian resignation in the face of death, despair and loss.

IN THE WAKE OF THE French Revolution a second social factor, the concept of nation and nationality, had entered the vocabulary of literary criticism. A national literature was the concomitant of a national identity. To residents of British North America this meant that their dawning sense of nationhood must be accompanied by the development of a national literature. Whether written in French or English, it was not necessary that this literature be unique, it was sufficient that it be written here and that it do as well or better the things which were done internationally. Preferably it would describe the society, landscape, and history of Upper and Lower Canada in positive terms so that non-Canadians would recognize the greatness of the nation and the high quality of its citizens.

The question of morality in literature spilled over into the idea of nationalism as well, since no country could be considered worthy in which correct morality and refinement did not dominate its cultural productions. In all countries influenced by European civilization the question of whether or not a literary work was good, simply because it was written in that country, was a thorny one. If a work showed that young writers were developing their literary skills and adding to the corpus of national literature, thus showing that the residents were intelligent and capable, then the work could be considered good. In Canada East there were moral objections to Joseph Doutre's, *Les Fiancées de 1812*; nonetheless, a critic in *Le Castor* wrote (12 novembre 1844):

> . . . il nous semble bien écrit et nous croyons devoir recommander à ceux qui ont à coeur l'avancement des talents canadiens, de donner quelqu'attention à cette première oeuvre d'un jeune homme dont le début dans les lettres possède certainement du mérite, de l'attrait, et promet pour l'avenir un écrivain distingué.

Of the many parallel comments which appeared in the English press, the following, from the Montreal *Gazette* (May 21, 1835), referring to Robert Sweeny's recently published volume of poetry, is perhaps one of the most outspoken:

> We would earnestly recommend every person in the free unincumbered [*sic*] enjoyment of a half crown, to apply it in purchasing a copy of the "Remnants". In addition to the actual value of the article, it has other important claims to consideration. It is written, printed and published in this city. Authors are scarce

> commodities in this matter-of-fact country, and it is the duty of our citizens to use them well when they do make their appearance.

On the other hand, if the quality of the work was very evidently bad, thus implying a lack of education, ability and standards in the Canadas, then it could be severely critcized. This criticism showed that Canadians were sophisticated enough to make judgments, and also instructed the next generation in proper writing techniques.

Subject matter, in particular, was expected to serve national objectives. If Canada was described as a beautiful and fertile land with a glorious history, where one could achieve success through one's own endeavours, its residents would share in some of that positive description, outsiders would envy them, and new settlers would be encouraged to join them.

While French and English were as unanimous in their setting of national objectives for literature as they had been on the subject of morality, the nature of the two national objectives differed considerably where content was concerned. All French writers and critics were born in Canada, and saw themselves as part of a nation, which, if it had lost control of its space, nonetheless remained a spiritual unity with a distinct language of expression. For them Canada was an old country where their ancestors were buried. It was "la patrie." In defence of literature written in French they referred frequently to the heritage given them by their connection with France. In contrast, most of the writers, and all but one of the critics, in English were not native-born. For them, Canada was a new land where the boundaries were legal and geographic, and where the language and literary tradition was English. It had no past worth mentioning, but a great future, to which they had consciously committed themselves. The family graves were elsewhere. For the English immigrants, "progress" was almost a magic word, since the advancement of Canada was such an integral part of their own self-esteem. Progress in literature was linked to the progress of the entire society:

> ... the progress of literature has been co-equal with that of the settlement of the wilderness; and if the latter has been made to bloom and blossom as the rose, the literature of Canada likewise blooms and blossoms beauteously.
>
> (*Literary Garland*, January 1843: 2)

The native-born English, a minority in literature if not, according to the 1851 census, an overall minority, saw things somewhat differently. As with their French-speaking compatriots, Canada was their country, they knew no other, and saw no reason why they should apologize for this fact. They were less concerned with progress and much more likely to write about the past and present than the immigrants.

Another factor, also national in its import, was mentioned in reviews of almost every book and periodical printed in the Canadas before 1860—a comment on the physical production itself. The quality of the paper, of the printing, and of the repro-

ductions, if any, was as much a suitable subject for review as the quality of the literary content. Here are two comments on the "New Series" of the *Literary Garland*, begun in December 1842, as examples, chosen from many such printed in the following year: ". . . let it suffice for us to say, that, in quality of paper and excellence of typographical execution, this favorite literary miscellany has not degenerated. . . ." (Brockville *Statesman*, October 18); "Elle peut rivaliser avec les ouvrages de ce genre publiés en Europe et aux Etats-Unis, sous le rapport du goût dans l'exécution typographique et du choix des matières" (*La Minerve*, February 9).

ALL THESE HIGH-MINDED CRITERIA for judging the quality of early Canadian literature frequently became subordinate to questions of personality, politics, or denominational religion. In what appears to have been a personal dispute, John Breakenridge and Dr. James Haskins criticized each other's poetry and called each other names in rival Kingston newspapers throughout the early 1840s. Haskins was allied with his medical colleague Dr. Barker, editor and proprietor of the *British Whig* and *Barker's Canadian Monthly Magazine*. After Haskins' death in 1845 Barker continued the vendetta against Breakenridge. As a result, there is a particularly venomous review of Breakenridge's *The Crusades and other Poems* in the July 1846 number of *Barker's Magazine*.

Matters of morality often degenerated into denominational prejudices, as when *The Church*, a weekly publication of the Church of England, criticized the first number of *The Calliopean*, a "literary periodical" published by the students of a Methodist school for young ladies:

> . . . we should regret anything which might injuriously affect the education of so many young persons. We hope that the addition of newspaper writing to the ordinary duties of the Female School, will not exert any prejudicial influence of the kind; yet we feel that it is an experiment which we should by no means recommend as being altogether safe, or worthy of imitation. Every one knows that some women have excelled in authorship; but they were remarkable women; and if their position in life was peculiar, we have reason to believe that God — who endowed them with their unusual talents — gave them also a counterbalancing strength and stability of mind. But whether, from their example, we are justified in concluding that our young women should be encouraged — as a general principle of education — to walk in the public and conspicuous paths of literature; this, we think, is a point which admits of reasonable doubt. (November 26, 1847)

Similarly, in politics, John Richardson's Tory sympathies earned him and his publications the enmity of the editor-critics of reform newspapers like the Toronto *Examiner*, the St. Catharines *Journal*, and the Quebec *Gazette*. The editor of the Montreal *Morning Courier*, commenting on Richardson's new newspaper, wrote: "The conductor of the *Loyalist* on the strength of having written several Tales or

Novels, trashy in style and disgusting in morals, sets up for a Literary Lion in Canada." (January 21, 1843)

Before Confederation the future political direction of British North America was not seen as a settled fact, but rather as a matter for intense debate — which debate frequently carried over into the literary sphere. Each one of these critics would have defended his comments on the grounds that the works savaged were injurious to public morality and to the good name of Canada because each sincerely believed that "their kind of people" — whether for personal, political, or denominational reasons — were the best for Canada, while their opponents were not. A modern reader of early Canadian literary criticism must always bear in mind the interests and prejudices of early critics, before taking them at their high-minded word.

To illustrate, I will elaborate upon three literary controversies of the early 1800s involving poets and critics. The first deals with the interrelated reviews of W. F. Hawley's *Quebec, The Harp and other Poems*, published in Montreal in September 1829, and Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief, and other Poems*, published in the same city in February 1830. The second is concerned with the response to Isidore Lebrun's review of Michel Bibaud's *Epîtres, satires, chansons, épigrammes et autres pièces de vers*, published in *La Revue encyclopédique de Paris* in 1831, and the last is a letters-to-the-editor duel between the young poet Holmes Mair and one, "John Goodmeaning," published in the *Bathurst Courier* of Perth, Canada West, in 1848.

In the case of Hawley's *Quebec*, the brief notices printed in most newspapers were generally quite favourable. On October 31, 1829, the Kingston *Chronicle*, for example, praised "an originality of conception and design," mentioned that most Canadian literature had hitherto appeared only in "perishable" newspapers and magazines, and concluded by urging public support in order to "encourage the growth of native genius, and foster every effort likely to give us a literary character and literary taste." However, two articles in the Montreal *Vindicator*, on September 29 and October 13 of 1829, after conferring some hollow praise on the work, set out to hold it up to ridicule. Since the *Vindicator*'s resident poet and expert on all things literary at that time was Adam Kidd, there is a strong suspicion that he was the writer of the two critiques. The style is certainly similar to that of Kidd's various letters-to-the-editor on other subjects.

The anonymous critic of Hawley's book claims to be a disinterested reviewer, writing only for the poet's instruction. His first article deals with the 15-page poem, "Quebec" and the second with "The Harp," a work of similar length. The critic

finds fault with "Quebec" because the description of the city is merely "what might be said of any village, where any two or three great illustrious men had perished." Strangers could not learn from his poem about the "fame and honors" of Quebec City. He concludes that "Mr. Hawley's mind is not expansive enough for a great subject" and that "when every schoolboy writes verses, more is required than the inditing [sic] a few stanzas to gain the character and reputation of a poet." In the second critique, where "The Harp" is described as "not of that species of poetry, which requires great depth of thought so much as a fanciful and elegant imagination," Hawley is accused of sacrificing sense to rhyme and of using words in the wrong context so that metaphors are jumbled and meanings misdirected.

> The expression of this part of the stanza must be considered conspicuously bad, and out of the power of all criticism to forgive; the poet was led away by his ear, and lost himself in the harmony of the versification. It is the worst contrived of the whole poem, wanting clearness and being without meaning according to the true acceptation of the words; for even figurative language, tho' there should be a transition from the strict sense, should be within the limits of the comprehension, and contain no particular violation of diction.

Among other 'minor faults of composition" are "puerile repetition and alliteration." Thus Hawley is faulted for both technical lapses and personal inadequacy.

With such a critique of Hawley's book almost certainly written by Kidd, Hawley's friends would have been waiting for Kidd's own book to appear. At the time, Kidd accused his critics of political bias, and there may indeed have been some of that involved since the two poets differed in their religious and political affiliations, but the long critique of *The Huron Chief* by "Q" in the Montreal *Gazette* on June 7, 1830 follows along the lines of the ones devoted to *Quebec*, published in the rival *Vindicator*, just closely enough to make it seem that literary revenge was the principal motive. A positive initial notice of *The Huron Chief* in the *Gazette* on March 4, had mentioned all the customary national reasons for buying a book about Canada by a Canadian, and similar notices appeared in other newspapers. "Q," however, launches immediately in to charges of plagiarism, especially from the works of the Irish poet, Thomas Moore, to whom Kidd's book is dedicated. The poet is also accused of too much alliteration, bad rhymes, lack of originality, and of "pure nonsense" in some of his images. On June 15 and June 18 Kidd published two lengthy defences in the *Vindicator*, condemning his opponent's lack of taste and education, and justifying his own poem because of the national importance of the subject. The whole affair is more amusing than edifying to a modern reader, since it is so evident that personalities, rather than literary merit, were at the bottom of the exchange. No one questioned the morality of either work and the idea of national value seems to have been more a rhetorical device than a sincere critical factor.

PERSONALITIES PLAYED AN equal part in discussion of the value of Michel Bibaud's volume of poetry, *Epîtres, satires, chansons, épigrammes et autres pièces de vers.* When the book first appeared in February 1830 it received brief laudatory mentions in several English-language newspapers, and *La Minerve* (February 11, 1830) commented: "L'auteur y montre partout beaucoup de patriotisme; cela seul suffirait pour le recommander. . . . C'est la première fois qu'un auteur Canadien se présente devant le public avec ses oeuvres. Ses compatriotes, n'en doutons point, lui feront l'accueil qu'il mérite." The book itself then seemed to drop unnoticed into limbo. A brief exchange between "B" and Bibaud, having to do with the quality of poetry written by each, appeared in *La Minerve* on the 10th of May and the 10th of June that year, but *Epîtres* is not specifically mentioned and it seems, as in the case of Hawley and Kidd, to have been a question of a poetic slanging-match between two individuals who were known to each other.

Sometime in 1830, Bibaud, who had been editor of *La Minerve*, and Ludger Duvernay, the proprietor, fell out both personally and politically. Isidore Lebrun's review, reprinted in *La Minerve*, October 20, 1831, was the starting point for the attack on Bibaud. The review is a curious one in a number of ways. Lebrun wrote a number of complimentary comments about *Epîtres*, and gave it the ultimate accolade of pronouncing it better than similar productions of provincial France. However, with metropolitan condescension, he objects to Bibaud's choice of subjects. Anyone can write of human nature: what Lebrun wants is something exotically *canadien*. What he means by *canadien* seems to be the following:

> Il existe encore des peuplades d'aborigènes, restes des tribus belliqueuses, aimantes et féroces, qui conviées à la civilisation par des moines, et non par des agronomes et des William Penn, ont préféré la vie indépendante. Leurs énergiques harangues, leurs assemblées, leurs chasses et leurs amours n'ont pas encore été traitées par la poésie. Combien d'épopées lui procurerait le Canada!

None of the self-appointed critics who then joined in the anti-Bibaud chorus responded to this prescription for French-Canadian subject matter; they all stuck to criticizing Bibaud's competence as a poet.

First in the field, on November 17, 1831, was 'W.V.', whose poem, beginning with personal insults, reproached Bibaud ". . . dont la muse inhabile/Emet en des nonsens la fadeur et la bile," for not writing anonymously, for insistently seeking signatures for his prospectus, and for producing the periodical *L'Observateur*. Bibaud's reply was printed in the same journal four days later. He asserts that 'W.V.''s poem neither rhymes nor makes sense, that his opponent can't even get the number of syllables right, and that Lebrun would have criticized 'W.V.' far more harshly than he had Bibaud.

'W.V.' returned to the charge (November 28), calling Bibaud a pedant who

"Affrontant le pays par ton chétif recueil." The insult to Bibaud's nationalism brought another rapid response (December 5).

> Car je m'y moque un peu des sots écrivailleurs,
> Des censeurs maladroits, des ignorants brailleurs,
> Dont le plat verbiage ou l'aveugle cririe,
> En les déshonorant, fait honte à la patrie.

He recommends reading, study, and a knowledge of the rules of poetry to 'W.V.'

The "so's your old man" level of this poetic debate brought the intervention of 'Parnassi Abortivus' on December 15. This critic suggested that they should both be "ramener à des sentimens plus dignes de la Muse Canadienne, qui, jeune encore, s'effraie de marcher dans des sentiers si opposés à ses goûts et à ses habitudes qui jusqu'ici m'ont paru pacifiques." He tells them that there are better subjects for their talents.

> Ses fastes déroulés présentent à vos yeux
> Des sujets abondans, grands, nobles, merveilleux.
> Regardez à la voix de notre illustre Chambre
> L'iniquité pâlir, la justice se rendre
> Ce sont nos citoyens de vrais *Canadiens*,
> Qui sont de tous nos droits les plus fermes soutiens.
> Voyez, voyez les flots de leur mâle éloquence,
> Repousser les abus, reprimer la licence.
> Passez de là les mers. . . . C'est un *Canadien*
> Placé par notre choix auprès du souverain.
> Il parle, et aussitôt à sa voix la justice
> Nous apparait brillante et se montre propice.
> Voilà de quoi chanter:

This chastisement seems to have been effective. Bibaud never did reply, at least in the pages of *La Minerve*, and 'W.V.,' claiming that he had only been doing his civic duty in bringing Bibaud's defects to light, wrote on December 19 that he would suspend his comments if Bibaud would admit that Lebrun was right. A long poem by 'Z,' published on December 29, seems to have ended the dispute. 'Z' does not approve of Bibaud or of Parisian critics. He writes of the beauties and genius of Canada and ends, with these lines, which he places in the mouth of "la patrie":

> S'il faut des orateurs pour maintenir mes lois,
> Des guerriers valeureux pour défendre mes droits;
> Il ne me faut pas moins encore des poètes,
> Pour chanter mes succès et publier mes fêtes!
> Sans eux, je ne saurais, dans mes prétensions,
> M'asseoir, à juste droit, parmi les nations!

At the beginning of January *La Minerve* published a complimentary review of Bibaud's new periodical, *Le Magasin du Bas-Canada*, and the matter came to an end, at least in print. Bibaud used the first number of *Le Magasin* to make a

detailed reply to Lebrun in which he states that he was writing for French-Canadians, not for Parisians, so that what the latter might find obscure, the former did not, and also that *canadiens*, being familiar with native peoples, did not find the subject to be of literary interest.

In the poetic squabble about the quality of *Epîtres*, the national identity of French Canadians was one of the dominating factors — to be called a disgrace to one's country was an insult of th highest order. Suitable subject matter, glorifying French-Canadian history and customs, was assumed by all to be an important element in acceptable literature. That Bibaud's satires — against avarice, envy, sloth, and other sins — had been critical of French-Canadian society was probably a contributing factor in producing opposition to his work.

ANOTHER FORM OF NATIONALISM entered into the dispute between Holmes Mair and 'John Goodmeaning.' Mair, an older brother of Charles Mair, had been publishing poetry over his own name in the *Bathurst Courier* for some months when John Goodmeaning decided that it was time he was taught a few lessons about writing poetry. The specific poem which triggered Goodmeaning's first outburst was "The Two Roses" published on May 26, 1848. Before launching on the lessons, Goodmeaning pointed out that other poets, familiar to readers of the *Courier*, like Mrs. J.P. Grant and 'J.S.M.,' although residents of the area, were not, because they had been raised elsewhere, poets of the Bathurst District.

> To "H.Mair" alone, of all that largely contribute for the "Poet's Corner" of the Bathurst Courier, belongs the honour of being a *native* of the District. Of him we say, *"he belongs to us";* and *because* he belongs to us, and we are convinced that he possesses poetic talent of which the Bathurst District may yet be proud, we intend a little liberty with him . . . for the purpose of shewing wherein he may excel as a poet. (June 2, 1848)

He then goes on, after faint praise, to damn the young poet with the accusation of an uncultivated mind:

> Some sentiments in the piece, though ill-expressed, are really of the first order. Others, and they predominate, are so unnatural, inapposite, unreasonable, improbable, and so utterly destitute of meaning and connexion that some would say . . . that he who wrote them is no poet.

Most of the commentary, however, is taken up with what can only be described as nit-picking. "Poetry must be true to nature." asserts the critic, having queried the image of the poet reclining on grass "moistened with dew." Because he himself "would have dreaded an attack of Ague or rheumatism too much to be guilty of such egregious folly" the poet is perceived to be at fault, not the critic. Sympathy

for Mair arises, not because his poetry is great, but because the criticism misses the mark so completely.

It is not, therefore, surprising that Holmes Mair replied a week later (June 9) accusing John Goodmeaning of having a prosaic mind which did not understand poetry. In the same manner as Goodmeaning had recommended study and maturity for Mair as a poet of the Bathurst District, the poet also recommended study for his critic if he wished to become the critic of the District:

> . . . so that he can view things in the simple and in the abstract, judge of a line of prose from a line of poetry, draw a line of demarcation between sense and nonsense, imbibe the chivalry of the art, so that he may know how to be honourable in his strictures and moderate in his nervous system, so that in a reply he can bridle his imagination and keep it from flying off into absurdity.

A temporary lull, in which Mair had the temerity to publish another poem, "A Picture of Indian Times," was ended when John Goodmeaning indignantly entered the lists again on August 4. Returning to the "The Two Roses" he complains that the poet has actually listed seven roses. He also disapproves of the use of the word "picture" in the title of the latest Mair poem and devotes a few paragraphs to ridiculing the concept of a poem as a picture, but most of the more than two columns is taken up with discussions of when rose-buds open and close, and whether that phenomenon can be linked to a human life.

Mair, of course, replied (August 11) that there were only two roses, the "rose of life" and the "natural rose," and that the other five were metaphorical extensions of the two basic ones. "Too much learning" had made his adversary "mad." Goodmeaning is more interested in "the idea of a man's learning" than in what he actually writes.

Nothing daunted, Goodmeaning returned to the attack in the next number of the newspaper, a week later. He states categorically that juvenalia should not be published; says he will not be personal, but is; quotes Horace (to prove his education); repeats that seven roses are not the same as two; and concludes that Mair's "understanding is not competent." Mair's reply, a week later, admits that he has made errors, but says that Goodmeaning is prosaic and not a critic, nor does he show any good will. He defends himself against the accusation of being ignorant.

The following week, on September 1, John Goodmeaning states that Mair has demonstrated his ignorance by being unaware of his errors. Goodmeaning then goes on to make political statements about the importance of quality in local education, and says that Mair discredits the District as well as himself. A new Mair poem "The Last of the Mohecans" give him a chance to state that "squaws" cannot be "fair," and similar quibbles. Mair's reply, on September 8, is that he would rather give up writing than have the public subjected to another long prose criticism from John Goodmeaning. He will not reply further because his critic is not worth the effort.

Others began to intervene and suggest that the dispute had gone on long enough. The critic, however, attacked again on September 15 and 22. The first letter objected to Mair's next poem; the second analyzed a perfectly dreadful poem, not by Mair or anyone else in the Bathurst District, but which Goodmeaning managed to imply Mair was somehow responsible for.

By the end of the dispute, Mair was implying that he knew the name of his pseudonymous critic, and that the purpose of the attacks was personal, rather than poetic. In a small community like Perth it would certainly have been difficult to preserve anonymity, so personalties would be bound to enter into any disagreement. The morality of Mair's work was not in question, but his perceived errors as a poet were ascribed, in a political comment, to the poor quality of local education, and Mair himself was condemned for bringing disgrace to the Bathurst District and, by extension, Canada, in publishing his poems.

LITERARY CRITICISM, AS IT appeared in early nineteenth century Canadian newspapers and periodicals, was generally both laudatory and perfunctory. These examples are unusual in both their length and their negative intent. On these three occasions, aspects of the book or poem which were acceptable were mentioned in passing, if at all, since the purpose of the critique was to hold the author up to ridicule. What was "good" was less the converse of what was "bad," than an unexplored category of investigation. National objectives figure in the rhetoric of all three, but the morality of the works being acceptable, that particular criterion is not under discussion. Personalities, and political or religious differences did, however, enter into the background to each example, despite the critics' claim to impartiality. Since the authors were perceived to have committed errors of form and diction these points were discussed at length, showing the erudition of the critic at the same time as the poet's shortcomings were brought to light. National pride is used as an excuse to berate each writer — since they are all said to have described Canada inadequately, and to have disgraced the nation by producing inferior work.

Just as there is no "typical" early nineteenth century book, so there can be no "typical" review. But, taking them all into account, it can be said that in most cases, since author and audience were part of the same society, the writer's objectives and the reader's expectations were inextricably mixed. Whether they expressed themselves in English or French, writers and readers saw themselves as part of a long and glorious literary tradition, stretching back through the history of their linguistic mother countries, and pointing forward into the future. Both author and audience, whether self-taught or university educated, had learned the classical rules of form and style and did their best to uphold and follow them. They also conformed without question to the accepted moral standards of their day and were aware that they

had obligations to the country in which they lived — although the manner in which they perceived it varied according to the language in which they wrote and the country in which they were born.

A society does not normally subject to public appraisal those conventions which it takes for granted. Thus, the critics, who were as much a part of the everyday life of the Canadas as were the writers, accepted these tenets and used them as criteria when commenting on Canadian writing. They did not see their public function as one of setting new standards, and their relationship to the writers of the period was seen to be that of a schoolmaster transmitting the wisdom of the past, not that of a cultural seer spurring authors to move in new directions. However, to use the correct classical form, to be morally and nationally correct, still left a great deal of room for individual creative expression on a wide range of subjects — a whole spectrum of investigation rarely addressed by critics of the time. Critics were also sufficiently well-integrated into society to be part of the complex interplay of personalities, politics, and denominational rivalries in British North America. Before we sneer at their lack of impartiality, cloaked in objective comment, we should consider some of the critical disputes of our own day, where, in some instances, different political visions of the nation's future and, in others, straightforward personal animosity — all expressed in the best and most disinterested post-modern terminology — have determined the critical evaluations of particular works by particular critics. The early nineteenth century agendas may not have been the same as ours, but they were no less influential in their own day.

The writers and critics of pre-Confederation Canada held considerably different attitudes and objectives from those of today. They were not, as our present "Whig interpretation" of literature implies, shadowy and imperfect forerunners of our present selves, but lively, committed Canadian individuals, who lived in a very different world from ours. Nineteenth century Canadian authors, as writers have always done, and always will do, sought to communicate with their fellow citizens. They did so by bringing their creative energies to the accepted literary forms and social objectives of the time. They produced, as the *British Colonist* (December 26, 1848) said of the *Maple Leaf for 1849*, "a very laudable effort." They should be judged first, as the early writers of other nations are, by the standards of their own day.

FEAST

Brian Bartlett

One cob dropped into steaming water;
  then a thousand. Where sun, butter, corn
    were one another, countless cousins

flocked to the great tables, reaching
  for a third or fourth. It was August
    1989 . . . 1898 . . . 1719. . . .

Collapsed into tall grass with eyes
  closed, we dreamed we punted
  around a pond thick with spatterdock

bobbing above yellow perch. On our raft
  a sulfur-shaded caterpillar slowly
    ate the leaf of a yellow birch

while grosbeaks dipped overhead
  and the smell of goldenrod blew our way.
    A dying, rabid fox in a cove

rolled in buttercups, smeared with waxy dust.
  When our dwindled vessel sank
    we found ourselves back in the grass,

the scattered cobs nude and old.
  At home, the beginning redawned in us:
    silky strands clinging to fingers,

empty husks tossed into a wooden box,
  and answering too long a hunger
  rhythms of a tough green tearing.

ENCRE, SON ET SCRIBES

Des premiers romans Québécois

Daniel Vaillancourt

LE PASSAGE D'UNE CULTURE oralisante à une culture écrite est le produit d'un ensemble de paramètres, autant nombreux que complexes. Des mémoires fuyantes qui déambulent au gré des conteurs à la surface cloîtrée de la page imprimée, subsistent un réseau de transitions, adviennent de nouvelles nécessités. Dans le cadre de cet article, nous traiterons de certains éléments qui témoignent de cette mutation qui prend place dans la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle, à un moment où les institutions québécoises prennent leur envol, surmontant les effets tant de la conquête que de la rébellion de 1837. Afin de mener à bien la description d'une société qui tend à se lettrer, nous prendrons appui sur deux des premiers romans de la littérature québécoise. L'émergence de la fiction imprimée et les conditions de réception qui entourent la forme romanesque sont des signaux qui témoignent d'un changement important dans la constitution de l'identité québécoise. En proposant une interprétation de *L'influence d'un livre* (1837) et de *La terre paternelle* (1846), nous nous situons en annexe d'une histoire savante du livre et des pratiques de lecture au dix-neuvième siècle (Galarneau & Lemire; Lamonde). Nous mettons en place des paramètres qui serviront à cerner, dans le corps du texte, les traces du passage de l'oral à l'écrit.

Pour ce faire, nous mettrons en scène l'Autre asymétrique de la figure du conteur, à savoir le scribe. Personnage majeur du processus de "literacy,"[1] la figure du scribe dépasse le cadre de notre propos puisqu'elle fait appel à la totalité des textes écrits et imprimés. Nous décrypterons certains éléments de sa figure au travers de deux cribles romanesques. Dans l'un des cas, afin de rendre saillant le scribe, sera reconstituée la scène d'écriture du texte. Tandis que dans l'autre, sa figure sera inscrite tant dans la représentation narrative que dans la mise en représentation.

La culture de l'écrit prend le relais d'une situation où c'est la parole qui gère les pratiques culturelles et sociales. Les formes romanesques sont rendues possibles par

un réseau silencieux d'avancées et de recul, de fantasmes et d'assertions qui prend place à un moment où les Français d'Amérique doivent s'habituer à un nouveau régime politique, à de nouvelles alliances, à une autre culture étrangère — alors qu'ils avaient plus ou moins appris à se développer à rebours de la culture métropolitaine française et à l'écoute des cultures amérindiennes. Ainsi ceux qui prennent la plume pour poser, inconsciemment, les jalons d'une "république des lettres" font des choix, façonnent des possibles à l'intérieur d'un univers en situation de restructuration.

Entre les deux premiers écrivants, soit Philippe Aubert de Gaspé jr et François-Réal Angers, et des écrivains comme P. J. O. Chauveau ou A. Gérin-Lajoie, il existe une différence de perspective de laquelle on peut déduire que, pour les derniers, les choix s'orientent vers un usage "didactique" de la forme romanesque. Dans le court espace de dix ans, de 1840 à 1850, la société québécoise semble s'être munie d'une nouvelle conscience de soi et a réalisé l'importance d'une culture institutionalisée et de l'appareil éducatif. La naissance de formes romanesques, s'inscrivant dans l'histoire de la "literacy," fait partie de cet "usage de soi" qui s'affiche et s'exprime dans les prétentions littéraires des scribes. C'est comme si le territoire public du conteur, figure du social, s'était dépeuplé au profit du silence et de l'intimité de la lecture.[2]

Un peu d'histoire

Les premiers romans, ou les premières nouvelles, en dépit de la marginalité du genre, marque le début d'une importante période dans l'histoire culturelle du Québec. Nous ne traitons pas ici le cas des nouvelles parce que le cadre de la nouvelle, son format et son mode de diffusion (par les journaux) appelle une situation de lecture différente de celle du roman malgré le fait qu'un des romans à l'étude, ici, *La terre paternelle*, a été premièrement diffusé sous forme de feuilleton dans une revue; le format feuilleton l'apparentant à la nouvelle. Le primat de la forme romanesque, ainsi que les structures de mémoire qui sont appelées dans la lecture, orientent différemment la lecture; le volume de l'information n'appelant pas le même type de "literacy."

Cette période intervient après 1830; elle sera marquée par la rébellion de 1837 et par le rapport Durham. Ce rapport a joué un rôle de premier plan dans la constitution d'un public de lecteurs et dans la formation culturelle du peuple québécois. En décrivant la situation crûment, Durham a peut-être entraîné de la part de ceux qui sont dans les réseaux éducatifs après 1839 une réaction de l'intérieur, réaction à des propos sévères mais qui décrivent à juste titre l'état de l'éducation et des institutions en Nouvelle-France. Il écrit:

> The institutions of France, during the period of the colonization of Canada, were, perhaps, more than those of any other European nation, calculated to repress the

> intelligence and freedom of the great mass of the people. . . . No general provision was made for education; and, as its necessity was not appreciated, the colonist made no attempt to repair the negligence of his government. It need not surprise us that, under such circumstances, a race of men habituated to the incessant labour of a rude and unskilled agriculture, and habitually fond of social enjoyments, congregated together in rural communities, occupying portions of the wholly unappropriated soil, sufficient to provide each family with material comforts, far beyond their ancient means, or almost their conceptions; that they made little advance beyond the first progress in comfort, which the bounty of the soil absolutely forced upon them; that under the same institutions they remained the same uninstructed, inactive, unprogressive people (Craig, ed., 27).

La longue période qui précède ce constat ne doit pas être considérée comme une masse homogène; en fait on ne doit pas la considérer comme une période. Mais, dans l'ensemble, ce qui s'écrit avant le régime anglais et pendant les premières décennies de la conquête est consacré à consigner le territoire, à le définir et à en faire un inventaire au moyen de correspondances, de relations, de récits de voyage. L'écriture est destinée à un autre métropolitain à qui il faut expliquer et décrire le contenu du territoire. Le scribe n'est que le lieu de la signature métropolitaine, la marque du fonctionnaire royal.

De cette masse documentaire de diverses natures, allant du mémoire destiné au roi à la lettre d'amour, il faut retenir que les écrits de la Nouvelle-France constituent le fondement discursif de la culture québécoise. Un grand nombre de postures culturelles, de tics de mentalité, de rapports d'altérité, de solutions à l'égard des problèmes (empirique et symbolique) que pose un territoire, seront pris et vaguement résolus dans ces textes tout autant que dans la lecture qui en sera faite au fil des siècles. En effet, ils mettent en place un certain type de rapport à l'espace et à l'autre.

On retrouve en partie des mêmes fonctions culturelles dans les discours d'une courte période qui s'échelonne des lendemains de la conquête à la rébellion de 1837. A ceci près que certains discours (traité juridique, somme géographique) sont plutôt destinés à renseigner les Anglais sur les façons de faire des Français d'Amérique. Ce qui est consigné dans l'écrit sert à définir, non pas seulement un territoire, mais bien des savoirs pratiques sur celui-ci. De plus, ils servent aussi à consolider des positions politiques et des situations d'alliance (par exemple, entre l'église et le pouvoir monarchique britannique). La plupart de ces textes n'ont qu'un intérêt archéologique et montrent deux choses: d'une part, que le destinataire a changé: certains textes de cette "littérature" utilitaire sont publiés en langue anglaise et les autres servent à négocier auprès des Français la présence effective mais aussi symbolique des Anglais. D'autre part, que se dessine à ce moment-là l'esquisse d'une identité proprement continentale, nord-américaine, pour les Français qui demeurent dans la Nouvelle-France conquise.

Dans ce contexte, l'émergence de la fiction est significative. Si la période précédente avait servi à décrire le territoire et à en disposer culturellement et politiquement, celle qui suit vise à le définir et par le fait même à donner la possibilité une culture de s'approprier discursivement le territoire. A la mise en discours, la mise en fiction offre une surenchère sur le plan symbolique et imaginaire. La marginalité du genre n'est que ponctuelle: la forme romanesque porte en creux une autre économie de l'individu. Par son entremise, on peut faire vivre selon une durée étendue (le temps d'un roman) des personnages, des consciences sur un territoire. On comparera les personnages dans les *Relations des jésuites* et dans les premiers romans. Dans les relations, le "personnage" est inséré dans un discours de vérité, cautionné par l'autorité de l'écrivant-jésuite, témoin de ce qu'il raconte. Que le discours soit reconnu vrai ou faux importe peu ici, ce qui importe est la situation de communication que le texte engage entre les intervenants. L'autrui métropolitain sait qu'il ne lit pas un voyage fantastique même s'il retrouve, par exemple, la figure du diable chez l'Indien. Quand apparaissent au dix-neuvième siècle les premiers romans québécois, la situation de communication, la différence des intervenants modifient le statut discursif du texte. La forme romanesque fonde un cadre fictionnel, qui devient la mise en abîme du régime identitaire. A la description du jésuite qui avait servi à fixer des éléments d'ordre référentiel servant une connaissance encyclopédique, une description romanesque sera utile pour générer des conduites, instaurer des rapports nouveaux par rapport à ce qu'était le contenu référentiel du territoire. C'est le grand avantage du roman et de son acte de lecture qui permet, par le jeu de l'identification, la construction d'une identité. Pour que ce travail soit possible doit être inévitablement présupposée une instance de recéption, un public de lecteurs.

C'est le fondement à partir duquel il devient intéressant de dégager les éléments d'une "literacy" au dix-neuvième siècle. L'acte de lecture engagé par la lecture des formes romanesques n'est pas le même que celui nécessaire pour un discours orienté sur des savoirs pratiques. Le scribe est celui qui délaisse les nomenclatures des savoirs pratiques pour s'adresser à un public de lecteurs. Il inscrit, par l'énonciation d'une forme romanesque, la nécessité de la "literacy." L'acte de lecture "littéraire" suppose l'adjonction d'une compétence culturelle qui n'est pas recouverte par la compétence linguistique au sens strict.[3] L'émergence de la fiction suppose la fabrication de nouvelles situations de communication, de nouveaux modes de lecture, des "scènes de lecture" qui, sur du long terme, ont un effet retentissant sur le régime identitaire. Pour qu'il y ait mise en discours des univers fictionnels, il a fallu que l'état de société dans lequel se trouvait le Québec comporte en son sein des "lettrés" et que ceux-ci aient ressenti le désir d'utiliser l'écriture à d'autres fins que celles qui prévalaient jusqu'alors. Ces individus, tout autant que leurs désirs, ne sont pas issus d'une génération spontanée. Ils doivent, tant dans les univers où ils évoluent

que dans les univers qu'ils construisent, localiser des aires où la voix et la lettre sont problématisées, des univers où sont figurés des "êtres de la lettre."

Le scribe est celui qui fait transiter le discours oral en discours écrit, celui aussi qui double le réel en ordonnant ses effets discursifs par le manuscrit et le livre. Il note, liste, inventorie. Le scribe écrit le réel des institutions, il crée par l'écrit une dimension juridique aux objets qui l'entourent. Il découpe dans la fluidité des paroles des signes qui instaurent et consignent des éléments de la "prose du monde." C'est dans le silence de son écriture que nous réentendrons la relation entre l'oralité et l'écriture, que nous entendons muer une voix de papier.

Les scribes sans emploi

Du scribe à l'écrivain, les relations causales sont diffuses et incertaines et ne s'organisent pas selon une logique rectiligne de la cause et de l'effet, même si certaines conditions socio-historiques créent une situation favorable à la reconfiguration sociale du scribe. Il y a au Québec avant la rébellion de 1837 une situation économique difficile et des luttes sectorielles sur le plan politique entre une élite lettrée canadienne et les fonctionnaires de la couronne britannique. Cette lutte politique entraîne un formidable effort de "literacy," au sens où, sous l'impulsion des leaders du parti patriote et des journaux *La Minerve* et *Le Canadien*, ceux qui peuvent lire sont appelés à s'investir dans la lecture et l'usage des outils législatifs anglo-saxons afin de se donner des instruments politiques efficaces pour étayer leurs revendications (Gallichan). Il y a donc un usage sérieux des compétences lettrées qui consiste à relayer un savoir-lire dans un savoir-dire politique.[4]

Dans la même période (qui s'étend de 1816 à 1836), l'agriculture est en crise et provoque un appauvrissement généralisé, notamment chez les professionnels (avocat, notaire, médecin) qui n'ont plus la même clientèle que dans les années relativement fastes du début du dix-neuvième. Il faut ajouter que leur nombre s'accroît au fur et à mesure que le réseau éducatif prend une expansion (qui demeure tout de même restreinte).[5] Les scribes sont condamnés à une sorte de chômage partiel. Cette étroitesse du marché est accentuée du fait que ceux qui veulent tenir la plume n'en ont pas beaucoup l'occasion. Cette situation est exposée dès le début de l'argument narratif de *Charles Guérin*:

> . . . [C]hacun sait que dans notre pays, il faut se décider entre quatre mots qui, chose épouvantable, se réduisent à un seul, et se résumeraient en Europe dans le terme générique de *doctorat*. Il faut devenir docteur en loi, en médecine, ou en théologie, il faut être médecin, prêtre, notaire, ou avocat. En dehors de ces quatre professions, pour le jeune Canadien instruit, il semble *qu'il n'y a pas de salut.* (8)

On peut lire des propos qui vont dans le même sens dans le rapport Durham quoique Durham, lui, y voit une explication de la rébellion de 1837:

> These young men [ceux qui peuvent étudier] possessing a degree of information immeasurably superior to that of their families, are naturally averse to what they regard as descending to the humble occupations of their parents. A few become priests; but as the military and naval professions are closed against the colonist, the greater part can only find a position suited to their notions of their own qualifications in the learned professions of advocate, notary and surgeon. As from this cause these professions are greatly overstocked, we find every village in Lower Canada filled with notaries and surgeons, with little practice to occupy their attention, and living among their own families, or at any rate among exactly the same class. Thus the persons of most education in every village belong to the same families, and the same original station in life, as the illiterate habitants whom I have described. (...) The most perfect equality always marks their intercourse, and the superior in education is separated by no barrier of manners, or pride, or distinct interests, from the singularly ignorant peasantry by which he is surrounded. (29-30)

Comme la philosophie grecque née dans l'oisiveté des fils des propriétaires terriens qui avaient les moyens économiques pour perdre leur journée à deviser avec Socrate, il semble que le passage du scribe à l'écrivain se soit fait à cause d'un certain désoeuvrement. En suivant la logique de Durham, ce désoeuvrement semble avoir pris la forme du fusil plutôt que celle de la plume mais il semble bien qu'aux lendemains de la défaite, la plume et ses atours soient revenus dans le décor. Les scribes ne trouvant pas de métiers se sont mis à se chercher des muses et la forme romanesque est apparue sous le couvert du divertissement. C'est aussi une façon de mobiliser différemment la plume et de la détourner de son utilité, présente ou absente: une perversion.

Les scribes de la Chambre d'Assemblée

Quinconque s'intéresse à la question des traditions orales et de l'avènement de l'écriture dans des sociétés données ne peut rester insensible au titre du premier roman québécois, soit *L'influence d'un livre*. C'est comme si le romancier avait affiché un programme culturel. L'abbé Casgrain, en censurant le texte et en donnant au sous-titre la fonction titulaire, s'est empressé de réfracter un tel programme culturel qui allouait à la lecture une grande importance. Cela cadrait plutôt mal avec la logique de l'Index et connotait une conception protestante du Livre (la Bible).[6] Au niveau du récit, le roman fait le portrait d'un lecteur non-lettré qui lit tous les livres comme s'ils étaient des discours d'usage, c'est-à-dire des écrits orientés sur les pratiques. En effet, Charles Amand est un lecteur qui se laisse "influencer" par ses lectures du fait, implicite, qu'il n'a pas les compétences culturelles voulues pour départager un univers fictionnel d'un référentiel. Ce premier roman met en scène une histoire de lecture comme pour marquer le pas, amorcer le passage de l'auditeur au lecteur, du conteur au scribe, enfin du scribe à l'écrivain. La question de la "literacy," par l'entremise de ce lecteur aberrant, venait d'être soulevée.

De plus, il est aussi curieux de constater que les deux premiers romanciers du Québec, P. Aubert de Gaspé et F. R. Angers, partagent le même métier, soit sténographe. Ce sont des scribes dont l'essentiel de la tâche d'écriture est de faire passer les paroles des députés à l'écrit. Une fois acheminée l'immédiateté des mots parlés à la durée d'une pensée écrite, la parole devient par là un événement marqué par la logique de l'écriture. François-Réal Angers, le plus méconnu des deux (Imbert), avant de rédiger un récit romancé d'une affaire criminelle, a même publié un manuel de sténographie afin d'enseigner son "art" à ses éventuels collègues de la Chambre d'assemblée. Philippe Aubert de Gaspé était rapporteur des débats pour le compte des journaux *La Minerve* et *Quebec Mercury*. Dans son cas, sa fonction était plus journalistique que celle d'Angers, mais, comme on le verra, il ne s'agissait pas d'un journalisme d'opinions mais bien de ramener fidèlement les propos tenus dans l'Assemblée; l'écriture étant asservie, voire réduite à sa fonction instrumentale de matérialisation des traces phoniques.

A l'écoute du scribe, nous nous intéresserons à la scène d'écriture qui préside à la rédaction et à la publication de *L'influence d'un livre*. Ce qui semble une anecdote prend une valeur particulière quand elle est placée sous le registre de l'oralité et de l'écriture. Le roman a été rédigé au moment où le jeune écrivain était en réclusion sur la seigneurie de son père. Aubert de Gaspé avait dû quitter abruptement Québec et son emploi de rapporteur. Après qu'un député d'origine écossaise du parti des patriotes l'eût accusé sans le nommer de rapporter malhonnêtement les débats de la chambre d'assemblée, celui-ci chercha querelle à celui-là. Cet incident le conduisit à passer un mois à la prison de Québec. Aussitôt sorti, afin de mener à bien sa vengeance, il jeta une bombe puante (de l'*assa foetida*) sur le poêle situé dans le vestibule de l'Assemblée, provoquant une évacuation des lieux et sa fuite sur la seigneurie de St-Jean-Port-Joli. C'est au cours de ce séjour forcé qu'il écrivit son roman. A chaque soirée, le père, le fils et son compagnon, l'écrivain Napoléon Aubin se racontaient des histoires. C'est de ce tissu discursif et parlé qu'est né *L'influence d'un livre*. Il y a un transfert de l'oral des paroles vers l'écrit journalistique, puis de l'oral des contes et anecotes à l'écriture de la première forme romanesque. D'une pratique où l'écriture est utilitaire, asservie à des contenus parlés, où l'écriture n'est que transcription, se met en place l'écriture de fiction. Entre rapporter des propos et écouter des histoires, se métisse un lien qui culmine dans la geste de l'écriture. Mais cette scène d'écriture, se situant en périphérie, loin de l'urbanité et du centre qu'est Québec, loin en somme de la civilisation et de ceux qui savent lire, aura aussi une valeur utilitaire. L'écriture devient ici pour Aubert de Gaspé un passeport pour revenir vers le centre. Il veut se servir du livre pour faire un "coup d'éclat," plus réussi que le premier afin de faciliter sa réintégration. Ceci donne au titre une nouvelle coloration pragmatique: *L'influence d'un livre*, de ce livre-là. Mais ce sera l'histoire d'un échec: la rébellion de 1837 prendra le devant de la scène, l'écrivain ne recommencera pas et redeviendra rapporteur à

Halifax, redonnant au scribe le mandat de l'écriture utilitaire. Nous demeurerons sur les confins du discours, nous contentant de décrire la scène d'écriture mais si on pénètre à l'intérieur de l'univers fictionnel, les figures du lettré, du conteur, du lecteur et du livre, sont aussi les signes qui manifestent sans équivoque le problème de la "literacy"; la citation d'un grand nombre de pièces de théâtres et de poèmes témoigne aussi de l'accointance entre la parole et l'écriture dans le format romanesque. Cette lecture à venir ne fait que prouver la nécessité de produire de ce texte une édition sinon critique au moins commentée.

Le roman du notaire

Notre deuxième exemple est d'une nature différente puisque le scribe est partie intégrante du discours fictionnel. Il est à la fois hybridé dans la voix du narrateur et représenté fictivement. Déjà cette position marque autre étape dans l'évolution du "personnel" imaginaire de la fiction. Si le premier roman avait été celui du sténographe, celui-ci est le roman du notaire. Si dans le premier cas, le sténographe n'intervenait pas dans l'univers fictionnel, dans le second, le notaire renvoie à la fois à l'auteur, au lexique juridique consigné dans le texte et à un personnage. La relation entre l'oralité et la culture écrite se joue dans *La terre paternelle* à un second niveau et n'est pas suturée de la même façon. Le scribe fictif, avant que d'être le romancier qu'A. Belleau nous a fait connaître, est une figure de l'écrit et de la distanciation: il se détache de son rôle en se mettant lui-même en abîme. Voyons un peu comment s'articulent les sphères de l'auteur, du lexique et du personnage quant à notre propos.

Les réflexions sur l'auteur qui sont en général inintéressantes deviennent nodales dans notre perspective parce que nous écoutons dans le silence de l'écrit la voix du scribe, manipulant ainsi avec précaution une écriture qui est déviée de sa trajectoire fictionnelle et littéraire. Ainsi Patrice Lacombe est notaire, c'est-à-dire que son emploi du temps consiste à écrire et réécrire des textes juridiques qui délimitent et organisent les rapports du monde. C'est un scribe. Le notaire fait transiter lui aussi une réalité orale dans un univers d'écriture qui acquiert par le fait même de sa transcription une valeur juridique. Patrice Lacombe aurait vécu dans notre siècle et nul n'aurait songé à interroger sa profession mais le poids d'une plume en 1846 n'est pas le même qu'en 1990. La main qui marque ces actes notariés est une main priviligiée. Ainsi quand le notaire délaisse les pages destinées à la greffe afin d'écrire un roman, naît un geste particulier et singulier. L'écriture romanesque n'est pas du même ordre que l'écriture utilitaire. La gratuité qui préside à sa manifestation, la logique de son existence dans une société qui parle plus qu'elle n'écrit sont des traits qui font que le notaire prend une place singulière dans l'histoire culturelle du Québec.

Mais peut-on se défaire de ces écritures utilitaires? Peut-on cesser d'être notaire

et vivre dans l'imagination de la fiction? La transition n'est pas aisée et des restes de l'écriture du scribe vont subsister.

Ainsi, *La terre paternelle* est le roman d'un notaire et on en trouve des preuves dans l'usage d'une terminologie appartenant à un lexique juridique. Ce lexique se manifeste par des termes plus ou moins communs tels que "héritage (41), faire signer l'acte (49), l'acte de donation (61), contrat de mariage (66), articles (69), clauses (69), résilier (75), saisie (81)" et par des termes plus spécialisés comme "terrier du seigneur (41), reddition de comptes (42), rente viagère (58), ventes par autorité de justice (59), les ordres du grand-voyer, des sous voyers (59), créancier (74), débiteur (74), clause de l'incompatibilité d'humeur (69, 74), résilier l'acte à la satisfaction mutuelle des parties (75), vente par décret forcé (81)." Ces termes peuvent être motivés diégétiquement par la présence du notaire fictif, mais ils sont souvent le fait du discours narratif. La première manifestation de ce lexique apparaît dans les premières pages au détour d'une généalogie:

> La famille qui était propriétaire de cette terre ... appartenait à une des plus anciennes du pays. Jean Chauvin, sergent dans un des premiers régiments français envoyés en ce pays ... en avait été le premier concessionnaire, le 20 février, 1670, comme on peut le constater par le terrier des seigneurs; puis il l'avait léguée. (40-41)

Ces renseignements ressemblent à s'y méprendre à un registre. La généalogie est de l'ordre de la chronique et le fait du scribe qui conscrit des suites de dates et de noms pour construire un terrier. C'est une forme primitive d'histoire et de récit. Se donne à lire aussi dans cet extrait un lecteur "impersonnalisé" (celui qui "peut le constater dans le terrier") plus proche des greffes de notaires que des cabinets de lecture.

Dans la même page, le narrateur décrit les qualités de la fille de la maison qui est la seule à savoir écrire. "Les petites transactions, les états de recette et de dépense, les lettres à écrire et les réponses à faire, tout cela était de son ressort et lui passait par les mains." (41) Tant au niveau du lexique pour décrire ses activités qu'au niveau des activités elle-même, le bureau du notaire est manifeste. Dans un univers rural où l'essentiel de la culture est orale, il est difficile d'imaginer en quoi consiste "les lettres à écrire et les réponses à faire." On encore au détour d'un énoncé qui consiste à décrire le résultat d'une journée de vente, soit faire le calcul des actifs et des passifs de la journée, le narrateur dit: "De retour à la maison, il y avait reddition de comptes en règle" (42), laissant pointer derrière ce terme la "voix" du notaire. La description de la quotidienneté est ainsi saturée par la quotidienneté du notaire.

Mais l'exemple le plus patent survient quand le père Chauvin, un paysan censé être sans éducation, dit à sa femme: "Ce serait de lui faire une donation de tous nos biens moyennant une rente viagère qu'il nous paierait." Dans cette représentation discursive de parole, le personnage adopte la langue du notaire pour proposer

à sa femme qu'ils "se donnent" à son fils. L'usage d'une expression québécoise comme "se donner" aurait été plus neutre et plus vraisemblable. Cette langue du notaire que parle le père Chauvin en situation privée avec son épouse laisse à penser que le notaire n'est pas capable de parler la langue des protagonistes et se contente de faire parler son jargon;[7] les personnages devenant des prosopopées malhabiles. Cet exemple met en évidence avec plus d'acuité la prégnance du lexique juridique dans le tissu romanesque.

Un deuxième élément de ce roman du notaire est la présence fictionnelle d'un personnage de notaire, qui va thématiser les relations entre l'oral et l'écrit. Il est tout d'abord introduit dans le récit par un des scribes de la culture orale, à savoir le crieur dont le rôle équivaut pour les cultivateurs à "la gazette officielle" (59). Le texte précise que le crieur "sait lire quelquefois, et bien souvent ne le sait pas du tout" mais "il rachète ce défaut par le l'aplomb (. . .), et une mémoire heureuse qui lui a permis de se former un petit vocabulaire de termes consacrés par l'usage" (59). Il est un scribe inversé: plutôt que d'organiser le discours oral selon une terminologie régulatrice dans la conscription de l'écrit, il redistribue oralement les termes en les dénaturant de façon à ce qu'ils soient audibles pour son public. Par exemple, en annonçant le travail du notaire, le terme de donation se métamorphose dans la bouche du crieur en "damnation." Cette déformation est évocatrice au sens où, à l'opposé du notaire qui d'office encourage les Chauvin à aller à leur perte, le crieur fait une double annonce: la donation se dit damnation et en est une. Comme si le scribe de la culture orale est celui qui donne les informations justes. Le crieur, qui dans le récit annonce l'arrivée du notaire au village, représente sa contrepartie culturelle — l'autre de la société lettrée qui oralise l'écrit. Il est aussi celui par lequel le narrateur fait de l'ironie à propos du notaire.

Dans le chapitre qui suit, le notaire établit l'acte de donation. D'entrée de jeu, il établit une connivence partielle avec l'autre personnage éduqué, à savoir la fille Chauvin — connivence fondée à la fois sur la séduction et sur le rapport à l'écriture. Le lecteur de ce segment est confronté à une écriture en direct: le texte qui est écrit est celui que le notaire écrit au fur et à mesure dans la diégèse. Cette situation syncrétique se complique quand le notaire fait intervenir le père Chauvin qui doit lui dicter les conditions de la rente viagère. Le lecteur a sous les yeux une liste de termes qui sont des quantités de substances (par exemple, "24 minots d'avoine"), mais pour ce qui nous intéresse, ces termes sont le transfert par écrit des mots proférés par le paysan analphabète. Plus la liste s'allonge, plus intervient la régulation du notaire qui organise la pensée verbale du paysan — ce qui donne lieu à des formulations ironiques (par exemple "une vache qui ne meurt point" ou "un cochon raisonnable" (68)). Il existe ici un noeud où l'oralité et l'écriture se confondent et se suivent entre un dit hors-textuel et un écrit intra-textuel. Le scribe s'accapare d'une parole et en fictionnalise le processus.

Le notaire est une mise en abîme de la scène de lecture qui est en train de s'effectuer. De l'intérieur du livre, par le processus de culturation véhiculé par l'imprimé, est mis en scène le passage de l'oral à l'écrit; tout comme auparavant le crieur représentait la mise en équivalence de l'oral et de l'écrit. La fictionnalisation du notaire, l'usage du lexique juridique, les traces concrètes de la greffe du notaire (par la présence dans la fiction de l'acte de donation) sont chacun des éléments qui témoignent de la figure du scribe, cet écrivant public qui ne peut se défaire de la valeur utilitaire de son écriture.

Conclusion

Du scribe qui avait mal rapporté les paroles au scribe fictionnel, il y a un parcours qui tend à rendre autonome le monde des textes. Ces scribes sont des voix réduites au silence du papier et de la trace. Le scribe, historique ou fictionnel, est un point de capiton par lequel se figurent les transitions, de l'oral à l'écrit, de l'écrit à l'écriture de fiction.

D son écriture utilitaire qui décrit le territoire pour des usagers dont la portée procède de la relation entre la colonie et la métropole à cette même écriture engagée dans le processus symbolique de la forme romanesque, il y a une société qui apprend à inscrire son identité par le territoire de papier. Entre ces deux écritures se dessine une nouvelle adresse et le désir de s'ancrer dans une matérialité symbolique. La mesure de la page, son cadre, les lettres sont les indices d'une cartographie qui prend pied dans la configuration du territoire identitaire que les Québécois ont voulu se donner. Le scribe est celui qui détourne l'écrit utilitaire parce qu'il est celui qui possède la plume. Il est une condition de possibilité de l'identité.

Dans le même geste qui aboutit à écrire de la fiction, le scribe tend à inscrire différemment la fugacité des paroles envolées. Le scribe du dix-neuvième siècle fait taire les voix des conteurs afin de mener à bien la prise en charge des espaces à cartographier. A la limite, il les fera résonner mais il ne restera, dans l'ordonnancement du discours narratif, que des traces à peine audibles. Le scribe vit dans la nécessité de passer outre l'oralité afin de pouvoir mesurer avec des outils plus efficaces la taille de son identité.

Les enjeux d'écrire des romans sont multiples et renvoient à la table de travail du scribe. La forme romanesque, avec son ouverture sur l'imaginaire, avec l'acte de lecture qu'elle nécessite, avec cette solidarité idéale et différée, est l'outil idéal qui lui permet d'appréhender les limites et les bornes de son individualité parce qu'elle instaure des rapports imaginaires qui ne demandent qu'à se suffire à eux-mêmes. C'est dans cette autosuffisance que le scribe est amené à construire, au fur et à mesure que l'institution littéraire s'épanouit, une nouvelle altérité: celle du lecteur. "S'imaginer pour se connaître, s'imaginer autre pour se libérer."

NOTES

[1] Il n'existe pas à l'heure actuelle de traduction satisfaisante du terme anglais "literacy." Il recouvre une réalité culturelle qui déborde l'alphabétisation. Faute de mieux, nous utiliserons ce terme en anglais.

[2] Ceci n'est que partiellement vrai car il existe toutes sortes de contamination entre l'oral et l'écrit: que ce soit par la présence des contes et la représentation des conteurs dans le corps romanesque ou par la voix de celui ou de celle qui fait la lecture du journal ou du feuilleton pour ceux qui ne savent pas lire.

[3] Ainsi savoir signer son nom sur une pétition est un élément de preuve qui peut s'avérér bien mince en fonction de la "literacy"; le lettré ne se réduisant pas à cette unique compétence. L'historien doit pourtant inférer des taux d'alphabétisme à partir de cette signature. Sur ces problèmes on pourra consulter l'algarade entre Greer (1978 & 1979) et Graff.

[4] Ce savoir-dire, qu'il soit écrit ou oral, est fonction de la figure du tribun, celui qui parle à la foule, celui qui dit. La figure du tribun n'est pas du même ordre que celle du scribe.

[5] D. Monière mentionne qu'"en 1836, on dénombre 373 notaires et 208 avocats." (116-17)

[6] C'est ce qu'évoque la figure du livre pour le lecteur contemporain qu'est R. Campagnoli: "Absence de lecture qui, opposée au thème du livre unique, évoque la connotation protestante de la révolution industrielle, contre l'immobilisme et la censure catholique. En effet, le *Petit Albert* est consulté dans un halo biblique." (107)

[7] Si la question de la parole écrite au Québec semble problématique au dix-neuvième siècle, elle est tout autant au vingtième siècle: on n'a qu'à penser à la question du joual dans les années soixante.

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THE GRINDING OF TEETH

Heather Spears

wakes me, your little
personal mill, I'm surprised
by your energy, something's going on
you are oblivious of
and I'm reluctantly attending—

The streetlights wash down the curtains
and one car
extends a yellow arc diminishing
across the ceiling
and you continue, gnawing at
some cupboard problem
ro/dent/al
at best, the sound chirps
tiny and persistent
it's called *gnashing* in the Bible
which implies a more violent regret
grinding does less harm but is similar

Mild man, poet who can recite
word for word not poems but old reviews
(some of which were bad)
where do you go
nights, what inframatic eye
peers at what insurmountable
wainscot? What is your intent?
And if you do get through
what awful
mousy crumby heaven
will be (as I now seem to have to be)
"there for you"?

THE VERNACULAR IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY ANGLOPHONE COLLEGES

Henry Hubert

In the spring of 1860, a special hearing in Canada's House of Assembly in Quebec heard Egerton Ryerson hurl impassioned accusations against Toronto's University College. Ryerson, former president of Victoria College, former editor of the Methodists' *Christian Guardian*, and, since 1844, superintendent of education for Canada West, attacked University College leaders as "advocates of a reduction, of a puerile system which has never invigorated the mind, or raised up great men in any Country." He charged University College with following the "proceedings of the educational Institutions of the new and Western States of the neighbouring Republic" (Hodgins XV, 264).

The chief spokesman for University College was Daniel Wilson, a Scot from the University of Edinburgh, since 1853 the Professor of History and English Literature in Toronto. Wilson's journal records the Scot's affront at Ryerson's attacks: "A more annoying and distasteful controversy could not well be conceived, conducted as it was with an amount of vulgar personality inconceivable to educated men at home. At first I was simply disgusted with the whole business, but being compelled to go into it I plucked up heart of grace and found some grim satisfaction in mauling the unscrupulous assailants of our College militant." (Langton 80)

The bitterness of the 1860 hearings was sown in the birth of the first Anglophone colleges in the post-revolutionary colonies of British North America. Ironically, that bitterness masked a deep philosophical agreement between both Ryerson and Wilson, an agreement that would develop openly in the decades after 1860, eventually producing a narrow but hardy English studies curriculum in Anglo-Canadian liberal college education. But intense passion separated English from Scottish values generally in higher education prior to 1860.

By the eighteenth century, Oxford and Cambridge had rejected the formal study of English language and literature, turning their backs on England's renaissance affirmation of the vernacular. Richard Altick's history of reading in England argues that after the restoration of the British monarchy an upper class consensus kept the masses "ignorant of their letters" to insure national stability. (31) Such a policy led not only to control of the press but also to a perpetual supply of cheap labour in an expanding industrial economy. This attitude was formally implemented at Oxford and Cambridge by the 1662 Act of Uniformity, which restricted college education to Church of England members. Soon political influence of the wealthy helped them gain access to the reduced number of church livings for their sons. This situation, combined with the inability of the poor to afford adequate classical schooling for their sons, led Oxford and Cambridge to become not centres of academic excellence but finishing schools for Anglican gentlemen (Stone 36-40). This upper-class attitud toward education in the last decade of the seventeenth century is reflected in the views of John Locke, philosopher and member of the Royal Society:

> For who expects that, under a tutor a young gentleman should be an accomplished critic, orator, or logician; go to the bottom of metaphysics, natural philosophy, or mathematics; or be a master in history or chronology? Though something of each is to be taught him, it is only to open the door that he may look in, and, as it were, begin an acquaintance, but not to dwell there. ... But of good breeding, knowledge of the world, virtue, industry, and a love of reputation, he cannot have too much; and, if he leaves these, he will not long want what he needs or desires of the other. (qtd. in Meiklejohn 29)

The upper-class fear of mass literacy burgeoned after the French Revolution. Even S. T. Coleridge held that majority view in 1816. Though everyone might be taught to read the Scriptures, he held, that was sufficient for the labouring masses: "more than this is not perhaps generally desirable. They are *not sought for in public counsel*, nor need they be found where politic sentences are spoken. It is enough if everyone is wise in the working of his own craft: so best *will they maintain the state of the world*" (qtd. in Altick, 144n). For Locke, a gentleman need not have a thoroughly trained mind or a ready tongue or pen; for Coleridge, education of the masses, especially education in traditional rhetorical skills, posed a positive danger.

Oxford and Cambridge continued to reject the study of English through most of the nineteenth century. Bishop Richard Whately's famous *Elements of Rhetoric*, first published in 1828, was written to help floundering young clerics who had not learned to preach while at Oxford (Ehninger ix-x). Formal rhetoric belonged to the study of Classics, in which composition was studied in Greek and Latin. English composition was thus incidental to classical studies; Engilsh literature, distinct from rhetoric, was simply not a part of the curriculum. The study of English, both in

language and literature, was considered utilitarian and middle-class, a view reinforced when English literature was first introduced in English Mechanics' Institutes, where it developed as "the poor man's Classics." (Palmer 78)

After the American Revolution, English colonial leaders in British North America infected higher education with England's sectarian elitism. Anglo-Canada's first two colleges, both founded by the Church of England, reflected the upper-class prejudices of the homeland. Both colleges were established not by governors from London but at the prodding of newly arrived United Empire Loyalists. Especially in Halifax, the elitist attitude of the English ruling body reflected contempt for the colonists. In 1790, Bishop Charles Inglis, a Loyalist, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury about Governor Parr:

> He holds literature in great contempt, and often hints that it does great hurt to mankind. . . . It is with difficulty that I can get him and the other Governors [of the proposed college] to meet on any business relative to [the College] and when met, the business goes on heavily. At present I seem to roll a Sisyphean stone.
> (Vroom 25)

King's College finally opened at Windsor, Nova Scotia in 1802. Statutes passed the following year reflect the fearful, exclusivist mentality of the college governors:

> No member of the University shall frequent the Romish mass, or the meeting Houses of Presbyterians, Baptists, or Methodists, or the Conventicles or places of Worship, or any other dissenters from the Church of England, or shall be present at any seditions, or rebellious meetings. (11.4)

Though not explicitly named, the principles of the new "revolted colonies" to the south were equally as dangerous as dissenting worship:

> No member of the University shall hold, maintain, or teach, any atheistical, deistical, or democratical doctrine, or any principles contrary to the Christian faith, or to good morals, or subversive of the British Constitution as by Law established. (11.3)

Given Tacitus' observation that oratory does not flourish in autocratic societies, it is not surprising that King's College had no formal course in rhetoric in the vernacular.

The King's College curriculum reflected the Oxford emphasis on classical learning. The 1803 statutes provided for five professorships: Divinity and Hebrew, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy and Astronomy, Moral Sciences and Metaphysics, and Classics (Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic). In Classics, first-year students studied Rhetoric and Logic daily. The statutes did not prescribe the authors for Rhetoric, but standard authors were Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, read in the original language. The vernacular was not totally ignored, of course; it was studied as a by-product of this classical curriculum. Weekly themes alternating between Latin and English were required, as were declamations in both languages, and recitations in Latin, Greek and English. The statutes, however, reflect that an

Oxford patina, not excellence in classical knowledge, drove the curriculum of King's College: "In these Declamations, Recitations, and in all other exercises, in which the Students read aloud or speak in public, great attention shall be paid to their pronunciation, that they shall avoid all Provincial accents, and other improprieties, and shall deliver themselves with correctness, and with proper emphasis" ("Exercises" 4). King's historian, F. W. Vroom notes that Alexander Croke, one of the college governors, even insisted that the lecture in Logic be given in Latin, as was customary at Oxford. Vroom notes, however, that "the folly of it was soon apparent" (50). The curriculum at the other early Anglican colleges was also heavily classical, like that at Windsor.

THE SOCIAL AND CURRICULAR restrictions of the Anglican colleges produced a predictable reaction among non-Anglicans. In the Maritimes, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists opened their own schools, and in Upper Canada the Presbyterians established Queen's College at Kingston and the Methodists, Victoria College at Cobourg in 1842, a year before King's in Toronto matriculated its first students in 1843. Methodist and Presbyterian opposition to the Anglican position was strong from early in the century right through to the 1860 hearings. The Presbyterian traditions were rooted in Scotland, and the Methodists' traditions, in middle-class England and America, but the Methodists also had strong Scottish ties. Methodist and Presbyterian curricular interests and attitudes toward the use of the vernacular, therefore, had roots in the Reformation, especially in sixteenth-century Scotland.

Universal education marked John Knox's reformation in Scotland, for Knox held that all citizens should be educated to read and discuss the Scriptures in the vernacular. Unlike the liturgically-oriented worship of the Church of England, Scottish Presbyterianism affirmed strong preaching, which itself educated the Scottish masses. This Scottish emphasis on a practical education led to repeated attacks on the southern universities from the beginning of the nineteenth century onward. In 1809, *The Edinburgh Review* reflected, "What ought the term University to mean, but a place where every science is taught which is liberal, and at the same time useful to mankind. Nothing would so much tend to bring classical literature within proper bounds, as a steady and invariable appeal to utility in our appreciation of all human knowledge" (qtd. in Sanderson 37-38). Emphasizing the democratic nature of the Scottish system as late as 1889, Lyon Playfair, reformer and University Member of Parliament, scorned the elitism of the southern university systems: "The English Universities ... teach men how to spend £1,000 a year with dignity and intelligence while the Scotch Universities teach them how to make £1,000 a year with dignity and intelligence." (qtd. in Anderson 35)

The University of Edinburgh acknowledged the importance of studying the vernacular when it established a Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in 1762. From 1759 onward, Hugh Blair, minister of St. Giles Church, had lectured on rhetoric in English. When finally published, his lectures were printed in over one hundred full or abridged editions and sold throughout Britain and North America. Not Blair, however, but Adam Smith, was the first to use the vernacular to teach rhetoric. Smith gave a series of public lectures on the subject beginning in 1746, before moving on to Glasgow in 1851 to teach Logic, also in the vernacular. In succeeding years, it became common to teach English composition as part of the Logic class, with rhetoric and belles lettres tending to focus on oratory and literary analysis, both matters focusing on "style," especially on "taste." Also highly influential in Scotland were three books on the philosophy of rhetoric and on pulpit oratory by George Campbell, Principal of Marischal College. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) was published in twenty-one major editions and, like Blair's lectures, was also widely read in American and Canadian colleges in the nineteenth century.

As mentioned, Methodist attitudes toward rhetoric and poetics in the vernacular also had both indirect and direct roots in Scottish traditions. In England, when the religious non-conformists or insufficiently wealthy were barred from Oxford and Cambridge, they turned for higher education to academies, known as dissenting colleges, established first by Puritans after the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Quite naturally, the predominantly Calvinist dissenting colleges, cut off from English learning, fostered close ties with Scottish universities, especially in rhetoric. It was common for eighteenth-century students of dissenting academies to go to Scotland for the last year of their M.A. studies to gain Scottish degrees (Miller 54). By the late eighteenth century, however, many of the dissenting academy students were Anglicans, perhaps without sufficient funds to be comfortable at Oxford or Cambridge, or perhaps preferring the practical education in law, medicine, business, or the liberal arts taught in the vernacular. Joseph Priestley, who began teaching Language and Belles Lettres at Warrington College in 1762, for instance, emphasized the utilitarian value of college education. Dissenting colleges, for Priestley, filled the gap between the universities as they existed, and the "education for the counting-house, consisting of writing, arithmetic, and merchants' accounts" (qtd. in Miller 58-59). The utilitarian nature of Priestley's vision later influenced Jeremy Bentham, who "attributed his basic political ideal of the greatest good to the greatest number to his reading of Priestley." (Miller 59)

American Methodism also influenced the Wesleyan assembly in Canada. But American rhetorical traditions at the end of the eighteenth century also derived largely from the dissenting academies and from Scotland. The first native American rhetoric text was that of John Witherspoon, an Edinburgh graduate and the first president of Princeton University. Under Witherspoon, students studied English

in all four years, culminating with Witherspoon's own lectures on rhetoric and moral philosophy. This Scottish practicality meshed well with the philosophy of the dissenting academies, which also found its way into the American college curriculum. One of the most popular rhetoric texts in pre-revolutionary America was *A System of Oratory*, by John Ward or Gresham College in London. While Gresham College itself was a foundation for public lectures (Miller 51), the classical theory of rhetoric presented in English in Ward's system paralleled closely the rhetoric taught in many dissenting colleges.

Given their emphasis on an education that combined liberal concerns with practical matters, Presbyterians and Methodists in British North America rejected the Anglicans' emphasis on the classical languages in both poetics and rhetoric. Under the leadership of Glasgow-educated Thomas McCulloch, the Scots established their first school at Pictou, Nova Scotia, in 1816. This too was an academy, since the legislative council in Halifax refused permission for a degree-granting college, thereby forcing Pictou graduates to sail to Scotland to write graduating examinations. In 1838, McCulloch left Pictou to become the first president of Dalhousie College in Halifax, an institution founded twenty years earlier by George Ramsay, ninth Earl of Dalhousie. Affronted by the English exclusiveness of King's College, Ramsay, a Scot, chartered a college modeled on the system of democratic access and practical learning in his native land. Unfortunately, his college had not yet opened when Ramsay was called from Halifax. Given the Council of Twelve's opposition, the college languished for two decades. When the college finally did open, President McCulloch strongly affirmed the Scottish position in learning generally, and in language specifically:

> But that boys should in Halifax or elsewhere spend six or seven years upon Latin and Greek and then four more in college partly occupied with the same languages is a waste of human life adapted neither to the circumstances or the prosperity of Nova Scotia. . . . If Dalhousie College acquire usefulness and eminence it will be not by an imitation of Oxford, but as an institution of science and practical intelligence.
>
> (qtd. in Harris 33)

In his 1855 inaugural address as president at McGill College in Montreal, J. W. Dawson, a graduate of Pictou Academy and of the University of Edinburgh, agreed with McCulloch. Though Dawson considered the classics important, they were not to displace English language and literature:

> The philosophical study of its grammar and philological relations, the principles of style and composition, the critical examination of its highest literary productions, and the history of its literature, are of paramount importance to men in any profession or occupation that may at any time require them to speak in public, or to write their mother tongue. (17)

The Scottish tradition in British North America, therefore, emphasized learning in English and about English. From mid-century on, this curriculum included both

English literature and rhetoric. The classics were important for culture and for developing the mind, but insufficient in themselves for an education suited for colonial realities.

The strongest reaction to the classical Anglican curriculum came from Egerton Ryerson, the first president of the Methodists' Victoria College. Also in an inaugural speech, in 1842, Ryerson addressed the curricular question relating to rhetoric and the vernacular:

> After much reflection on the subject, it is my strong conviction that the absence of an English Department in our Collegiate Institutions of Learning in this Province, would be a defect of an injurious character. Why there should be provision for the teaching of dead and foreign languages, and none for the teaching of our own vernacular tongue, is a phenomenon for which I can assign no reason but custom and prejudice. To teach the English Language through the medium of a Latin Grammar, appears to me to be little less rational, than to teach Latin through the medium of a Greek or Hebrew Grammar. (10)

Ryerson then extolled the virtues of rhetorical study. "The art of speaking and writing with purity, propriety, and elegance is of the highest importance," he stated. "Knowledge itself cannot properly be said to be power, without the appropriate power to communicate it." (18)

In the politics of early Canada, therefore, differences in culture between the ruling Anglicans and other English-speaking settlers included differences in attitude toward a study of the vernacular. Hence the issue of language inevitably erupted in the 1860 hearings about University College, even though those hearings ostensibly focused on lack of state funding for denominational colleges. The funding differences themselves were a legacy of the founding of King's College in Toronto in a time when the Anglicans viewed their institutions not only as religious but as part of the secular state as well. As representative of the successor of King's College, Daniel Wilson thus represented the privilege of the erstwhile Anglican elite, notwithstanding the fact that Wilson was a Scot, with decidedly Scottish attitudes toward education and the vernacular. The two chief adversaries in the hearings thus opposed each other as a result of history rather than educational philosophy.

In an attempt to gain the upper hand in the debate, and undoubtedly as the result of his position among Upper Canada's elite by virtue of his position as superintendent of education since 1844, Ryerson took a much more traditional position than he had at the inauguration of Victoria College in 1842. He chastised Wilson and University College for a flexible attitude toward options in the curriculum, as well as for including English literature in the course of studies. He then praised

the method that had produced famous Anglican-educated men of England. A professor of the English language, argued Ryerson, should "teach Greek and Latin . . . in the spirit of a sound philology, exhibiting the words, the imagery, the Philosophy, the Literature, the very spirit of Greece and Rome in most that is refined, noble, elegant and beautiful in our own Language and Literature." The Burkes, Peels, Macaulays and Gladstones studied language and literature this way, blustered Ryerson, "and not by attending such Lectures as Doctor Wilson's, or studying his chosen Text-book, Spaulding's English Literature, — the standard Text-book of Seminaries for young ladies as well as of Grammar Schools." (Hodgins XV, 292). Ryerson conveniently ignored the fact that Spaulding had written his textbook while in the famous Edinburgh chair of rhetoric, first occupied by Hugh Blair, whom Ryerson had praised in his 1842 inaugural. Wilson, in turn, vilified the Oxford system upon which the original King's College, the predecessor of his own University College, had been modeled: "The English Universities under their old rigid system turned out a class of educated men; but the Scottish system . . . has made an educated people; and the latter I conceive is what Canada desires." (Hodgins XV, 297) In the exigencies of debate, both Ryerson and Wilson found themselves forced to extremes that undercut their own institutional histories, and passion often overruled reason.

The 1860 clash turned emotional partly because a rational argument would have shown agreement on most issues between Wilson and Ryerson, especially on the importance of training in the vernacular. A stronger tie than attitude toward the vernacular, however, also united Ryerson and Wilson. That bond was Victorian Protestant Christianity, a bond which also included the Anglican church. The decades to follow would affirm this common bond between the Victorian Protestant churches, thereby leading to a common curriculum, especially strong in its attitudes toward the vernacular. The precipitating factor for this unity was a growing secularism that in 1850 had led to the Anglican's loss of King's College in Toronto, and in 1859, the loss of King's College in Fredericton. In the early and mid-Victorian period, this growing secularization was fueled by nineteenth-century geological findings and supported by German higher criticism of the Bible. Growing doubts about the traditional Christian faith were then brought to intense focus by Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. The resulting cultural ferment threatened the Christian philosophy common to all Anglo-Canadian institutions, church-sponsored as well as independent. In Victorian Canada the fight against secularized science and skepticism would not be won by an assault on geology, higher criticism or Darwinism, however, but by a redefinition of the Christian faith. This redefined faith would merge with a new vision of English culture to produce a revolutionary college curriculum in the vernacular. This curriculum would appeal so powerfully to the Anglo-Canadian psyche developed in the turmoil of the nineteenth century

that it would influence Anglo-Canadian higher education throughout the next century.

The new philosophy that Protestant Victorians in Canada accepted as the answer to skepticism derived from the University of Glasgow, where Edward Caird developed a neo-Hegelianism that dissolved the conflicts of science versus scripture into an all-energizing Being, encompassing both reason and traditional concepts of God. Caird's principle of a spiritual immanence in all existence was broad enough to embrace even Darwin's theories of evolution. The leading neo-Hegelian in Canada was John Watson, a Glasgow graduate, who brought Caird's philosophy to Queen's University in 1872. Watson soon gained both national and international fame. Historian A. B. McKillop argues, however, that Watson's impact in Canada was not due to his brilliance alone: Watson's "career was simply part of a larger reorientation of the Canadian academic community towards idealism as the philosophical creed most acceptable as an antidote for scepticism and as a social ethic adequate to suit the needs of the late nineteenth century." (195-6)

THIS TURNING FROM TRADITIONAL Christian dogma toward a secularized philosophical idealism in Canada coincided powerfully with a refocusing of the English studies curriculum that had developed in Canada by Confederation. Though Anglicans still clung to their classical curriculum through most of the 1870s, after Confederation the Scottish influence had led to English programs that balanced rhetoric with the study of English literary texts in all the major non-Anglican colleges. However, both the Scottish and Anglican programs ended abruptly in the 1880s, beginning with the arrival of the first generation of English specialists in Canadian colleges. The reason for the change was not English as a specialty, however, but the intellectual conditions in society that gave impetus to English as a specialty.

The emerging emphasis on philosophical idealism was now reinforced by the work of Matthew Arnold. In an attempt to deal with "the melancholy, long withdrawing roar" of England's Sea of Faith ("Dover Beach"), Matthew Arnold offered England its own historical literature as a new "spiritual standard of perfection" that could be fostered in the vernacular as well as in the classics. Arnold praised Shakespeare and the English poets as men of genius who offered "the best that has been thought and known in the world" (*Culture and Anarchy* 475). Arnold's affirmation of English literature quickly caught the imagination of the public. Though Oxford and Cambridge initially resisted teaching either composition or literature in the vernacular, by century's end that attitude had changed. Terry Eagleton finds the perspective of Victorian England reflected in the inaugural speech of George Gordon, an early Professor of English literature at

Oxford: "England is sick, and . . . English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State." (qtd. in Eagleton 23)

Gordon's focus is instructive, not only for Oxford, but for Canada as well. In the 1880s, the new curriculum in all Anglo-Canadian colleges, both Scottish and English, turned sharply to English literature alone, placing rhetoric in a decidedly secondary position. This curriculum sought the ideal in literature, just as Watson's philosophy sought the ideal in life. So powerful was this idealist emphasis, and so deeply rooted in the historic Protestant psyche, that the survey of British literature "from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf" (Frye xi) remained the backbone of English studies in all Anglo-Canadian colleges for over a century, extending even to the present. The new curriculum in English, of course, affirmed the historic non-utilitarian philosophy of the English university system, so with the new curriculum came England's elitism. In establishing literature as a guarantee against "philistinism," associated with materialism, Arnold elevated literature above the rest of the curriculum. Rhetorical theory and practice became associated not with the mind and spirit but with philistine pursuits. In 1904, Queen's Professor of English, James Cappon, like John Watson, a student of Edward Caird, stated baldly that students could become good speakers and debaters, and even good writers, "without more than the A B C of a literary education" (195). Cappon scorned the rhetorical theory of Alexander Bain, a leading Scottish thinker whose rhetorical philosophy focused on psychology relating to the senses. Cappon charged that Bain's rhetoric derived from "the point of view of the narrow and materialistic school of philosophy . . . a point of view utterly discarded by all great literary men, Ruskin, Arnold, Carlyle, Emerson" (1890, 9). This anti-philistine attitude toward the practical, rhetorical aspects of study in English carried forward into the twentieth century. A reluctance to teach speech and composition, apart from marginal comments on student papers in literary criticism, thus characterized English programs in Canada from the 1890s through to the 1970s, and it still dominates English offerings in many programs today.

The battle between English and Scottish attitudes toward the vernacular, therefore, strongly fought in the first half of the nineteenth century, was dissolved in the attempts of Protestantism to meet the forces of secularism and materialism in the second half of the nineteenth century. In that battle, the Scottish emphasis on the practical advantages of the vernacular over the classical languages initially won the field, as, first rhetoric alone, and then both literature and rhetoric in the vernacular entered the curriculum. But the Arnoldian emphasis on poetic and belletristic literature, supported by an all-embracing neo-Hegelian idealism, returned Oxford's historic emphasis on ideal liberal culture to prominence, thereby eclipsing the emphasis on rhetoric so strongly affirmed by Scots and Methodists

alike prior to 1880. The result was a century of English studies that privileged poetics and the belles lettres over rhetoric in both oral and written forms. In a great Canadian compromise, the Scots won the right to the vernacular, but the English kept their elite emphasis on liberal culture unrelated to the practical exigencies of life.

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'LECTURES' PUBLIQUES À QUÉBEC AU DIX-NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE

Pierre Rajotte

"CHAQUE ÉPOQUE," ESTIME Tzvetan Todorov, "a son propre système de genres, qui est en rapport avec l'idéologie dominante . . . une société," ajoute-t-il, "choisit et codifie les actes qui correspondent au plus près à son idéologie; c'est pourquoi l'existence de certains genres dans une société, leur absence dans une autre, sont révélatrices de cette idéologie." Ainsi, au dix-neuvième siècle, dans une société où la préservation de la nationalité canadienne-française renforce la thèse de l'utilitarisme moral et économique au détriment de la littérature "légère," il n'est pas étonnant que les genres dits "sérieux" et "utiles" soient préférés à d'autres, comme le roman, jugés "futiles," voire "nuisibles." Le cas de la conférence publique, mieux connue à l'époque sous le terme anglais de "lecture" publique, l'illustre on ne peut mieux. Pour l'ensemble du Québec, une recherche sommaire nous a permis de relever plus de mille conférences au dix-neuvième siècle, dont près de quatre cents publiées *in extenso*. L'ampleur que connaît cette pratique au Québec pendant le dix-neuvième siècle nous a conduit à nous interroger sur sa signification.

Les dimensions restreintes de cet article ne nous permettant pas de reconstituer les contextes de production, de diffusion et de réception de la pratique, pas plus d'ailleurs que d'analyser en détail l'inscription du littéraire dans les conférences, nous nous limiterons à en rappeler brièvement l'origine, à proposer quelques notes pour une typologie de la conférence et à signaler quelques traits qui distinguent la pratique dans la ville de Québec au cours de la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle. Mentionnons qu'il ne s'agit que d'un travail de défrichement et que nos recherches à venir nous obligeront soit à nuancer soit à poursuivre encore plus loin certaines de nos hypothèses.

On peut distinguer au moins trois causes essentielles qui ont favorisé le développement de la pratique de la conférence. D'abord une cause sociale liée au divertisse-

ment. Avec la croissance des villes et du commerce à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, on voit apparaître au Bas-Canada une bourgeoisie de marchands et de professions libérales, qui prend sa place aux côtés de l'administration coloniale et des anciennes familles seigneuriales. Peu à peu, le climat culturel et intellectuel va se ressentir de ce gonflement des classes aisées; notamment on assiste au cours de la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle à la fondation de nombreux journaux, de bibliothèques publiques, de librairies, et les premières sociétés culturelles où sont prononcées de "lectures" publiques.

On aurait tort cependant de voir uniquement dans la conférence l'occasion d'un divertissement pour une bourgeoisie qui s'ennuie l'hiver. Si quelques conférences de la Société littéraire et historique de Québec (1824) et de la Natural History Society of Montreal (1825) par exemple ne sont que d'aimables divertissements, plusieurs présentent un intérêt scientifique incontestable et font connaître des aspects nouveaux de la géologie ou de l'histoire naturelle du Canada. De là, selon nous, la seconde cause que l'on pourrait qualifier de "heuristique." En ce dix-neuvième siècle, riche en découvertes scientifiques déterminantes, les chercheurs ont bientôt ressenti le besoin de se grouper en sociétés savantes pour partager et faire connaître leurs recherches sous la forme d'exposés oraux. C'est dans ce contexte qu'il faut replacer la fondation d'associations comme la Société d'agriculture du Canada (1789), la Société littéraire et historique de Québec (1824), la Société médicale de Québec (1826) et la Société pour l'encouragement des sciences et des arts (1827).

Enfin une cause politique: en effet, l'expansion considérable de la pratique de la conférence publique, en tant qu'activité propre à de nombreuses associations volontaires au cours du dix-neuvième siècle, ne peut être saisie que si on la replace dans une nouvelle perspective d'accès au pouvoir. L'importance accordée à l'exercice pratique de la parole en public apparaît en fait comme un corollaire de la promotion de l'éloquence en tant que facteur déterminant de la représentation publique. Depuis l'Acte constitutionnel de 1791, la richesse et la noblesse ne sont plus les seuls discriminants pour accéder au pouvoir. Un cens fixé suffisamment bas permet à chaque citoyen, quels que soient sa fortune et son rang, de siéger à l'Assemblée. En principe, à peu près n'importe qui peut briguer les suffrages des électeurs. En pratique cependant, n'est pas élu qui veut. Depuis que l'on a admis que la vérité surgit de la discussion et que l'on a conçu la Chambre comme une enceinte pour la discussion, il va de soi que les meilleurs "debaters" sont ceux qui détiennent le plus de connaissances et manient le mieux les ressources de la parole. C'est dans cette perspective que sont fondées de nombreuses associations volontaires et qu'est pratiquée la conférence publique au cours du dix-neuvième siècle. Il s'agit à une époque où la maîtrise de la parole, comme de l'écriture, peut mener aux premières places de l'Etat, d'en organiser l'exercice et de répondre ainsi aux besoins de jeunes hommes instruits et avides des succès qu'assurent l'éloquence et la rhétorique, soit les élé-

ments constituants des pratiques constitutives de l'opinion publique au sens défini par Jürgen Habermas dans *l'Espace public* (1986).

En fait, bien que dès la Conquête, les Britanniques forment des associations et s'adonnent aux "publics lectures," les Canadiens tardent à en faire autant. C'est qu'ils trouvent dans la Chambre d'assemblée, auquelle ils ont accès depuis l'Acte constitutionnel de 1791, le moyen ultime d'établir un rapport de force avec le gouvernement et de défendre leur nationalité. Ce n'est cependant plus le cas au lendemain de l'Union en 1840; qui les oblige à trouver un nouveau lieu où la nationalité canadienne-française puisse se définir et se développer. À l'exemple des Britanniques, on décide alors de se regrouper en associations pour former des bibliothèques publiques et organiser des conférences grâce auxquelles on tente de définir la spécificité de la nationalité canadienne-française et on propose différents moyens —l'agriculture, l'économie, l'industrie, l'éducation, l'histoire, etc.—de la soustraire à la menace de l'assimilation. Jamais avant 1840 la pratique n'a été promue avec autant d'insistance. Aussi les résultats sont-ils à la mesure de la promotion. Au cours des décennies 1840, 1850 et 1860, le phénomène associatif — tout comme les activités qui y correspondent, en l'occurrence les conférences — connaît un succès sans précédent, à telle enseigne qu'il entraîne en 1851 la promulgation de la loi des "associations de bibliothèques" qui prévoit des subventions pour les associations qui s'en prévalent. Dès lors, sont fondées dans l'ensemble du Québec, des associations dites "littéraires" qui visent à favoriser l'instruction mutuelle et à créer une culture publique à l'aide des deux médias caractéristiques du dix-neuvième siècle: la presse et la tribune.

Note pour une typologie de la conférence publique

Préalablement au travail typologique, il est utile de faire brièvement le tour des lieux communs à travers lesquels la notion de conférence publique se dessine, dans la commentaire ordinaire. Les rares travaux auxquels nous pouvons nous référer situent la conférence dans ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la "prose d'idées," et le discours réflexif. Dans les *Archives des Lettres canadiennes*, David Hayne définit "les conférences, les causeries ou lectures publiques" comme des discours,

> dont les titres varient ("Considérations sur . . .", "Observations sur . . .", "De l'importance de . . ."), mais dont les préoccupations sont constantes: présenter dans un contexte personnel, quoique souvent devant une assistance, une réflexion sur une question précise, avec l'intention de persuader l'auditeur ou le lecteur éventuel de la valeur d'une thèse ou de l'utilité d'une conduite quelconque. (13)

La conférence relève également de la "littérature orale: nous avons affaire à des essais oraux." (13) Il importe toutefois de la distinguer d'une "littérature orale" liée à la mentalité populaire et à un substrat folklorique, et dont les genres principaux sont la chanson folklorique et le conte populaire. La conférence ressortit

plutôt à l'éloquence (politique, académique, sacrée ou libre). Elle participe, estime Yvan Lamonde, de "la culture rhétoricienne du dix-neuvième siècle." (49) Les conférenciers visent non seulement à disserter sur une question précise, mais à le faire dans une certaine forme qui peut aller jusqu'à la parade d'érudition. Leur discours est d'abord un texte écrit destiné à être lu ou déclamé devant un auditoire initié ou non, un peu comme du théâtre. Selon Marcel Lajeunesse, "la conférence publique du Cabinet de lecture était préparée à l'avance, était rédigée dans un texte suivi et était lue devant un auditoire. Les mots de présentation ou de remerciement d'un conférencier pouvaient être improvisés, mais jamais la conférence elle-même." (87) D'ailleurs, il n'est pas rare que les conférences fassent l'objet d'une publication, confirmant ainsi l'hypothèse du texte écrit.

La conférence fait également partie de la "littérature scientifique." Pour une part, elle prétend à la simple expression, à la froide démonstration de ce qui est, et se réclame d'un parti-pris de scientificité. Enfin, un autre terme générique qu'on pourrait retenir est celui de la "littérature de combat." Comme la plupart des autres genres à l'époque, mais souvent de façon plus explicite parce qu'elle s'y prête quand même mieux, la conférence quitte rarement les allées de l'engagement social et politique. Qu'il suffise de rappeler l'emploi qu'en ont fait les ultramontains et les libéraux dans la lutte qui les opposait au cours de la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle.

Ces différentes caractéristiques de la conférence publique, qu'il faudrait évidemment approfondir, préciser et compléter, soulèvent au moins trois types de question: la question topique de son organisation (quelle forme ?), la question économique de ses énoncés (quel sujet ?), et enfin la dynamique de son efficace (quel type d'effets?). Or, le problème qui se pose *a priori*, c'est la difficulté de résoudre les deux premières. Tant par sa diversité formelle que par son hétérogénéité thématique, la conférence constitue en effet un genre "atopique" sous lequel il est pratiquement impossible de subsumer un type déterminé et unique de texte.

Ce qui d'une part crée la confusion, c'est qu'elle n'a pas de forme reconnue et reconnaissable. Même si on la retrouve le plus souvent sous une économie dialectique qui lui est propre, elle peut venir à l'occasion se fixer à l'intérieur de formes discursives fort diverses. On sait par exemple que quelques conférences se présentent sous la forme de récits, en particulier de récits historiques ou de voyage, certaines sous la forme de biographies, d'autres empruntent au genre didactique, certaines enfin représentent ni plus ni moins que des traités scientifiques. Mais ce qui ajoute à la confusion, c'est qu'en même temps qu'elle semble flirter avec diverses formes sans jamais se fixer, la conférence donne également lieu à des discours d'origine fort variée: les discours de l'historien, du naturaliste, de l'économiste, du philosophe, du médecin, de l'astrologue et du littéraire, chacun recourant à son propre lexique et réitérant le préconstruit de son idéologie. Or devant cette disparité de formes et de sujets, force est de reconnaître à première vue l'extrême

difficulté de considérer et de décrire la conférence en termes de genre constitué, faisant l'objet de règles et de contraintes *a priori*.

Malgré tout, pour peu qu'on s'y intéresse, il est possible de restreindre la dynamique du genre à une double tangente et par là même à une double postulation: celle du discours doxologique (discours d'opinions) et celle du discours scientifique (discours du savoir). Rares sont les conférenciers, en effet, qui, pour traiter leur sujet, ne se prononcent pas dans un sens ou dans l'autre. Tout en particularisant la conférence, cette double virtualité en définit le profil à la fois théorique et problématique.

La pratique de la conférence publique à Québec

La pratique de la conférence publique à Québec pendant la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle se situe au confluent du discours scientifique et doxologique. Dans la situation d'énonciation qui est la sienne, elle se présente comme un discours du savoir. C'est effectivement le cas de certaines conférences scientifiques données dans les sociétés savantes dont nous avons déjà parlé. D'autres conférences en revanche, participent du discours doxologique en ce qu'elles constituent, comme le dit Jean Térasse au sujet de l'essai, "le produit d'une tension entre deux désirs apparemment contradictoires: décrire la réalité telle qu'elle est en elle-même et imposer un point de vue sur elle." (129) Il n'est pas rare en effet que les conférenciers cherchent à susciter une prise de position sur la réalité qu'ils dévoilent. Ils font participer leurs auditeurs à une expérience globale dans laquelle la réalité est perçue comme littéraire, ils les intègrent au contexte à propos duquel ils ont décidé de dire quelque chose, tout en y étant eux-mêmes engagés. Si bien qu'ils recourent, autant dans l'ordre de leur discours que dans leur discours même, à des procédés qui agissent non seulement sur leur public, mais sur la réalité qu'ils décrivent. À la limite, leur discours vise à constituer les faits plutôt qu'à les constater. L'important n'est pas tant de dire ce qui est vrai que de rendre vrai ce qui est dit. Ainsi, quand l'abbé Jean Holmes (*Conférences de Notre-Dame de Québec*, 1850), ou l'abbé Jean Langevin ("Aperçu de l'histoire de Québec sous la domination française de 1535 à 1659 et de 1659 à 1759," dans *Le Journal de Québec*, du 10 et 13 février 1849, du 2, 4, 6 et 9 avril 1850), tout comme Charles Thibault, Hyacinthe Rouxel, François-Xavier Trudel et d'autres encore à Montréal, définissent la nation canadienne-française comme un regroupement de catholiques chargés par la Providence d'une mission spirituelle en Amérique, ils ne constatent pas un fait qui a préexisté à leur intervention discursive. Ils énoncent avant tout la volonté qu'il en soit ainsi. Par là ils réalisent la synthèse projective de la connaissance sociale ou, pour reprendre les termes de Roland Barthes, ils réussissent à "donner le réel sous sa forme jugée." (21)

On ne saurait par ailleurs faire fi de l'inscription du littéraire dans le texte des conférenciers. Même si la visée de ces derniers est en principe de saisir l'extra-texte et de représenter objectivement une des vérités du monde, il n'est pas rare que leur discours renvoie à d'autres discours et que, partant, entrent en jeu des référents textuels. En fait, puisque le réel ne se dit pas, la représentation qu'on en fait doit le céder à la reproduction d'un savoir déjà acquis, d'un imaginaire social, d'un récit des événements du monde. Il y a alors absence de référent dans le sens où l'entend Todorov quand il souligne que les mots employés par l'écrivain "n'ont pas de référent (dénotatum) mais uniquement une référence qui est imaginaire." (*Littérature*, 117) Ainsi, lorsque dans sa conférence intitulée "De l'intelligence dans ses rapports avec la société," Étienne Parent déclare que "l'avenir" est un "vrai labyrinthe où l'on court risque de se perdre, si comme Thésée, l'on ne se munit du fil d'Ariane," ou que Marc-Aurèle Plamondon compare l'éducation à un "nouveau Prométhée" qui "sut réveiller, dans tous les états de la société, des milliers d'intelligences," (*La Minerve* 20 février 1852, 2;) nous avons affaire à des formulations qui relèvent de l'imaginaire, c'est-à-dire à des signifiés où vient se refléter la marque d'une intertextualité mythologique. Ainsi conçu, le référent, qu'il soit allusif, citationnel ou analogique, affiche ostensiblement sa nature littéraire.

Enfin, on aurait tort de soutenir que les conférenciers, sacrifiant tout à l'information exacte et utile, aient négligé pour autant le plaisir de l'auditeur. Force est de reconnaître, en effet, que l'*a priori* de véridicité qui caractérise la majorité des conférences s'accompagne souvent d'un effet de lecture qui est aussi un effet d'agrément. Qui plus est, l'emploi de procédés rhétoriques montre que certains conférenciers ne sont pas de simples observateurs; contrairement aux scientifiques, ils tirent parti de la richesse des mots. Ils ne récusent pas la fonction poétique du langage, ils cherchent plutôt à l'utiliser. Si bien que sans cesser d'informer et d'instruire, leur discours vise également à divertir, voire à séduire, alliant ainsi "l'utile à l'agréable" — soit la formule restrictive dont on se servira longtemps au dix-neuvième siècle pour définir le statut de la "bonne" littérature.

Outre sa nature doxologique, la conférence à Québec se distingue nettement par sa dimension cognitive et sa thématique historique. L'influence de la Société littéraire et historique de Québec, de l'*Histoire du Canada* de François-Xavier Garneau et des conférences de l'abbé Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Ferland, de même que l'absence de véritable antagonisme idéologique, auraient aiguillé la pratique dans une voie plus didactique que polémique.

Fondée en 1824, la Société littéraire et historique de Québec inaugure sur une base régulière la pratique de la conférence à Québec. Un aperçu des sujets traités de 1827 à 1891 révèle un intérêt marqué pour les questions scientifiques et historiques. Si l'on s'en tient aux chiffres de Ginette Bernatchez (184), sur 374 conférences, 167 (44.9%) vont aux Sciences (70 aux sciences naturelles) et 114 (30.6%) à l'Histoire (66 à l'histoire profane). Au cours de la période 1829-50,

soit celle qui précède la fondation des associations proprement francophones, 113 conférences y sont prononcées (111 en anglais et 2 en français), 71 sont publiées (69 en anglais et 2 en français). Plus de la moitié portent sur des questions de science naturelle, de mathématique et de physique, ce qui est peu dire sur le caractère scientifique dont se réclame la société. Qu'elle ait contribué à orienter la pratique de Québec dans une voie scientifique et "cognitive," on peut certes le supposer. En tant que pionnière, elle fut longtemps considérée comme un modèle de société culturelle. Les associations canadiennes-françaises qu'on voit surgir après 1840 dans la vieille capitale, en sont des repliques plus ou moins fidèles. Dans l'ensemble, elles poursuivent les mêmes buts soit de répandre les connaissances utiles sur l'histoire naturelle, civile et littéraire, et emploient à cette fin les mêmes moyens: bibliothèque, salle de lecture, musée et "lectures" publiques.

L'absence d'antagonisme réel aurait également largement jouée en faveur d'un pratique plus didactique. Si à Montréal, diverses circonstances, notamment la rivalité grandissante entre libéraux et ultramontains, favorisent les débats autour de sujets d'actualité et accentuent le caractère polémique et dialogique des conférences, il en va tout autrement à Québec. D'abord la plupart des associations "littéraires" se défendent bien d'être hostiles à la religion et de favoriser les discussions politiques. D'un autre côté, le clergé de Québec, plus local et plus modéré que celui de Montréal, a moins tendance à recourir systématiquement à des schèmes européens extrêmes pour illustrer des réalités autochtones tout à fait différentes. Autrement dit, il a moins tendance à voir partout des ennemis de l'Église et, du coup à provoquer la riposte libérale. Il n'hésite pas cependant à intervenir quand la situation l'impose. C'est ainsi que l'Institut canadien de Québec, ayant annoncé en 1886 une conférence par Arthur Buies, a dû finalement sacrifier le polémiste, après que le cardinal Taschereau eut cru bon de rappeler aux directeurs la récente condamnation de *la Lanterne*.

À défaut de discuter de sujets politiques, religieux, philosophiques, bref contentieux, on se rabat alors sur les questions historiques. En fait, au moment où sont fondées des associations francophones comme la Société canadienne d'études littéraires et scientifiques (1843), la Société de discussion de Québec (1844 ?), l'Association des instituteurs de Québec (1846), l'Institut des artisans de Québec (1848), l'Institut canadien de Québec (1848), la Chambre de lecture de Saint Roch (1850), l'Institut catholique de Saint Roch (1852), et l'Académie canadienne de Québec (1857), l'histoire, et en particulier l'histoire nationale, connaît une vogue sans précédent au pays. À ce chapitre, la parution de l'*Histoire du Canada* de François-Xavier Garneau, et *a fortiori* la valorisation de la nationalité qu'elle suscita, fut une véritable révélation pour la plupart des Canadiens. Jusqu'alors, ces derniers avaient ignoré presque complètement leur passé et se tenaient pour des vaincus. Pour la première fois, ils se voyaient dans un rôle différent de celui dans lequel on avait bien voulu les confiner. Depuis la Conquête, les rapports

entre Anglais et Canadiens contribuaient à entretenir un sentiment d'humiliation chez les vaincus. Dans les faits, la suprématie de plus en plus absolue des premiers sur le commerce, l'industrie et le haut fonctionnarisme accentuait d'autant le sentiment d'infériorité des seconds. En outre, la seule perception que les Canadiens avaient d'eux-mêmes, de leur histoire leur venait de certains chroniqueurs anglophones, comme William Smith (*History of Canada,* 1815), John Fleming (*Political Annals of Lower Canada* [...], 1828), ou John MacGregor (*British America,* 1832), qui, plus souvent qu'autrement, confortaient la position des Britanniques. L'échec de la Rébellion de 1837-1838, la répression et qui plus est le rapport Durham, loin de remédier à la situation, la révélaient aux yeux de tous.

Désormais, la vérité historique allait donc servir d'exutoire et permettre de se défaire d'une véritable tunique de Nessus, l'humiliation collective. Non seulement espérait-on retirer du passé une forme de fierté nationale, mais aussi un enseignement sur les façons d'assurer l'avenir de la nation.

> L'histoire est peut-être encore plus la maîtresse de la vie pour les peuples à qui elle apprend comment se fondent et se soutiennent les empires, comment ils arrivent à un haut degré de prospérité, ou comment ils en déchoient, les remèdes héroïques qui les empêchent de périr, ou les fautes qui précipitent leur ruine.
>
> (Chouinard, 3)

Comme on le sait, l'impact à Québec de l'*Histoire du Canada* de Garneau, et un peu plus tard des conférences de l'abbé Ferland, a été le ferment d'une véritable mode dans la production littéraire. Au cours de la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle, les ouvrages, études et articles qui font référence à l'histoire se multiplient, les uns reprenant la thèse de Garneau, les autres la contestant. La poésie, le roman, le conte, le théâtre, tous les genres littéraires enfin, rappellent chacun à sa façon, les exploits des ancêtres et les desseins spéciaux de la Providence sur la nation canadienne. La conférence publique n'y échappe pas et l'histoire devient un sujet de prédilection. À l'Institut canadien de Québec notamment, sur 274 conférences prononcées entre 1848 et 1914, l'histoire ressort nettement avec 166 conférences, soit 61% du corpus global. De ces 166 conférences, la part du lion va surtout à l'histoire moderne, de même qu'aux mémoires et aux biographies avec respectivement 40 et 35 mentions (voir la thèse de Daniel Gauvin, "L'Institut canadien de Québec et la vie culturelle à Québec 1848-1914," Université Laval, 1984, 162). L'importance accordée à l'histoire ne s'arrête cependant pas là, car dans la conférence, comme dans la plupart des autres pratiques à l'époque, se manifeste ce que Henri-Irénée Marrou a appelé "une véritable inflation des valeurs historiques." (13) Non seulement les sujets traités ressortissent à l'histoire, mais plus encore peut-être la façon de les traiter. Nombreux en effet sont les conférenciers qui, pour étayer leur propos, empruntent au passé des précédents, des exemples et des arguments. À leurs yeux, l'Histoire enseigne que les mêmes causes engendrent les mêmes effets. Aussi tient-elle lieu d'explication suprême, de référent spontané.

La prédominance du discours historique dans les conférences, et par le fait même d'une certaine revendication scientifique, ne constitue cependant pas en soi un obstacle au discours littéraire. C'est que la plupart des conférences s'inscrivent dans une longue tradition d'indistinction entre les deux genres. Jusqu'au dix-neuvième siècle, les œuvres des historiens ont tenu dans la littérature française une place aussi importante que dans celle de l'Antiquité: Montesquieu et Michelet comptent parmi les plus grands écrivains de leur temps, au même titre qu'Hérodote ou Thucydide, Tite Live ou Tacite. Beaucoup d'écrivains, en pratiquant comme Voltaire, avec un égal succès, en même temps que le genre historique bien d'autres genres littéraires, avaient donné l'impression de les rendre consubstantiels. De plus au dix-neuvième siècle, l'histoire participe d'un discours mis à la mode par le romantisme. Certains historiens écrivent en fonction d'un objectif précis: celui de montrer le rôle de leur nation dans l'évolution de la civilisation. À cette fin, ils font reposer leur interprétation sur des qualités propres à leur race. "Si, d'une part," dira Maurice Lemire, "il[s]tend[ent] à démythifier l'histoire en fondant [leurs] explications sur des documents, d'autre part, il[s] concour[en]t accréditer scientifiquement les légendes particulières à [leur] peuple." (5) En cela, l'histoire au dix-neuvième siècle, loin de travailler en sens contraire de la littérature, l'épaule et souvent la nourrit. Plus encore au Canada, l'histoire aurait pour ainsi dire servi de catalyseur à la production littéraire. N'est-ce pas Octave Crémazie qui voyait dans les historiens Garneau et Ferland les deux seuls véritables écrivains canadiens? (Voir "Lettre à l'abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain, 10 avril 1866," dans Octave Crémazie *Œuvres*, Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1979, 75).

La question qui se pose alors est de savoir quelle forme de contenu prend le littéraire dans la conférence, et comment on peut le saisir au fil du texte. À ce chapitre deux points paraissent devoir retenir notre attention: l'échange d'une culture littéraire commune (forme fixe) et la manifestation d'une certaine individualité de l'écriture (subjectivité).

D'abord, dans l'ensemble, la pratique a ceci de particulier qu'elle participe pour une bonne part de la culture ancienne. Phénomène bien explicable quand on songe à la formation que reçoivent les conférenciers dans les collèges classiques. De fait, l'enseignement au séminaire de Québec et au collège de Montréal, de même que dans les autres collèges s'inscrit dans un plan dominé par la culture latine. "En principe," souligne Claude Galarneau, "les écoliers devaient apprendre la rhétorique latine par l'explication des auteurs." (172-3) Même l'enseignement du français demeure "jusqu'en 1850" fortement médiatisé par la littérature latine et la culture ancienne.

Cette dépendance à la culture ancienne se manifeste de diverses façons chez les conférenciers. La plupart structurent leur discours conformément au *De dispositione* (exorde, proposition, division, narration, argumentation, péroraison), trouvent leurs axiomes dans les *Topiques* et fondent leur argumentation sur la forme syllogistique, reconue depuis Aristote pour sa grande rigueur. Mais c'est avant tout par le recours aux allusions mythologiques, aux citations latines et aux figures de rhétorique comme principe d'argumentation et d'ornementation que l'influence latine se manifeste le plus explicitement. Pour le bénéfice de leur auditoire, certains conférenciers se livrent même à un véritable étalage d'érudition. On ne peut s'empêcher de remarquer une certaine coquetterie littéraire chez Étienne Parent quand il compare les agitateurs publics à de "nouveau Géants, [qui pour circonvenir les masses] entasseront un Ossa de déclamations inflammatoires sur un Pélion d'utopies prestigieuses," (*La Minerve*, 6 février 1852, 2) ou chez le docteur Joseph Painchaud quanl il affirme que comme "Hercule retira Alceste de la Tartare pour la rendre à son époux . . . la vigueur invincible de l'âme qui, inspirant la confiance en nos forces, triomphe de Pluton et restitue la santé." (1)

Dans l'esprit même des études classiques, la culture latine présente une valeur archétypale non seulement au plan esthétique, mais également sur la vision du monde, comme si elle représentait le monde idéal des origines auquel il faut sans cesse se reporter pour donner un sens au monde présent. Qui plus est, c'est en s'y référant que les conférenciers parviennent à marquer leur appartenance au monde littéraire et sapientiel. Aussi, nombreux sont ceux qui émaillent leur discours d'allusions mythologiques, de références à l'histoire ancienne et de citations latines, même s'il s'agit le plus souvent que de réminiscences de collège:

> Qui de nous peut, sans être attendri, répéter des vers de Virgile qui nous sont si familiers et que nous avons appris par cœur dans notre heureux temps de collège? "Nos patria fines, et dulcia linquimus arva; Nos patriam fugimus . . . Et dulcis moriens, reminiscitur A gos." (Painchaud, 1)

Si elle sert d'argument d'autorité, la citation latine est plus encore un moyen de faire parade d'érudition et de signaler à ses pairs qu'on partage leur culture. En invoquant Cicéron, Marc-Aurèle Plamondon entend davantage situer le niveau de son discours que de spécifier les effets des belles-lettres:

> Les belles-lettres enfin, dit Cicéron, adoucissent les mœurs, délassent l'esprit; elles répandent un grand charme sur la société, forment l'esprit des jeunes gens, et recréent celui des vieillards (*Le Canadien* 2).

J. B. B. Chouinard en fait autant pour justifier l'importance de l'étude de l'histoire: "L'histoire, a dit Cicéron, est le temoin des temps, la lumière de la vérité, la vie de la mémoire, la messagère de l'antiquité, la maîtresse de la vie." (3)

Outre l'allusion mythologique et la citation latine, c'est peut-être par le biais de l'histoire que la pensée antique influence le plus directement la réflexion des con-

férenciers. Beaucoup d'entre eux invoquent les situations archétypales de l'histoire ancienne pour fixer les grandes lignes de l'action qu'ils proposent à leur auditoire. C'est à l'histoire de Rome, par exemple, que fait appel Henri Taschereau pour indiquer la voie à suivre à ses compatriotes.

> Notre victoire enfin, si éclatante, que nous sommes aujourd'hui le peuple le plus libre de la terre, que nos institutions sont le mieux protégées, et que notre nationalité, est si forte et si vivace, qu'elle n'a plus de combat à soutenir, qu'elle n'a plus que des luttes à empêcher entre ses propres enfants, heureuse, si comme Véturie arrêtant Coriolan au seuil de Rome, elle pouvait réussir plus souvent à désarmer ou à faire taire un compatriote menaçant ou dénigrant ses frères ! (118)

Parallèlement à l'histoire romaine, certains exemples empruntés à la Bible s'imposent par leur fréquence. J. O. Fontaine illustre les malheurs des Acadiens de la déportation en les assimilant au peuple élu.

> Quels devaient donc être les sentiments de ces pauvres bannis, si heureux naguère dans ce beau pays dont la violence seule les avait arrachés. Comme les Hébreux sur les bords de l'Euphrate, ils pleuraient au souvenir de leur Acadie, et nourrissaient l'espoir d'y mourir. (35).

Dans un discours prononcé devant la Chambre de lecture de Saint Roch, Étienne Parent recourt également aux pérégrinations des Hébreux dans le désert pour mettre en garde le père Chiniquy qui incite les Canadiens à s'expatrier.

> Ne répandez pas parmi nous par vos écrits, votre exemple était certes déjà trop, l'idée qu'on ne doit rien à son pays, à sa nation; qu'on peut abandonner au milieu de l'épreuve pour aller ailleurs chercher un peu de bien-être pour soi et les siens. Soyez le seul à imiter parmi nous la conduite de ces lâches Israélites, à qui la peur de l'ennemi et la rude vie du désert faisaient regretter les oignons d'Egypte, et qui excitaient le peuple hébreux à y retourner; cessez vos invitations anti-patriotiques. (26)

Bref, la manifestation dans une conférence de la rhétorique privilégiée par la formation collégiale contribue à en faire un texte légitime. Même si certains conférenciers, au cours de leur cléricature par exemple, ont accès à des bibliothèques privées et parviennent à s'initier à la culture française contemporaine, on peut supposer que l'inscription du littéraire dans le texte qui se veut une façon de partager une culture avec ses pairs, les incitent à s'en tenir au modèle traditionnel issu de leur formation classique. Les conférences apparaissent d'autant plus littéraires que leurs auteurs ont réussi à les préformer en fonction des idées reçues sur la valeur littéraire. Dans la mesure où les *recentiores* ne correspondent pas à la canonique, à la culture littéraire légitimée par l'instance didactique, il n'est pas toujours évident que leur présence ajouterait à la valeur littéraire des conférences. Particulièrement à Québec, il faudra pour ainsi dire attendre le mouvement littéraire de 1860 avant que ne se manifeste un réel intérêt pour la culture contemporaine. Il en va autrement à Montréal, où des jeunes se réunissent à l'Institut canadien précisément pour

parfaire leur éducation littéraire et ainsi se soustraire à l'emprise de la culture latine. Les jeunes libéraux théorisent leur idéologie en puisant aux sources du savoir contemporain. C'est dans cette optique qu'ils établissent leur bibliothèque. Leur action ne se fait toutefois pas sans heurts, en particulier avec le clergé qui y voit une remise en question de sa tutelle sur la formation littéraire.

Par ailleurs, contrairement à de nombreuses conférences de Montréal, où l'ampleur de l'effet de lecture constitue avant tout un moyen argumentatif de rationalisation idéologique, dans la plupart des conférences de Québec, l'inscription du littéraire, toute limitée soit-elle, tend plutôt à une finalité proprement littéraire et esthétique. Même s'ils n'expriment pas toujours des vérités, c'est-à-dire des thèses admises par tout le monde, les conférenciers défendent des valeurs qui ne sont pas, dans le milieu qui les a délégué, sujettes à controverses. Si bien que leurs conférences visent moins à un changement dans les croyances qu'à une augmentation de l'adhésion à ce qui est déjà admis. Dès lors elles peuvent tourner à la déclamation et à la rhétorique dans le sens péjoratif du mot. Dans un discours, une figure est considérée comme argumentative si son emploi, entraînant un changement de perspective, paraît normal par rapport à la nouvelle situation suggérée. Dans la mesure où son effet direct de persuasion est secondaire, elle est considérée comme ornement, comme figure de style. À la limite, elle témoigne d'une forme d'éloquence qui ne cherche qu'à rehausser, en les ornant, des faits certains ou, du mois incontestés au sein même de l'association. Dans sa "Lecture sur l'éducation," James Smith, par exemple, s'éloigne de propos délibéré de la définition stricte au profit de métaphores et de procédés plus oratoires que scientifiques:

> L'éducation, c'est l'aurore qui chasse les ténèbres de la nuit, et dévoile à l'intelligence humaine les merveilles de la création; c'est le soleil qui réchauffe et vivifie les entrailles engourdies de la terre, en fait sortir les verdures et les moissons; c'est l'astre qui dissipe les nuages des préjugés qui obscurscissent l'esprit humain; c'est le flambeau qui nous éclaire dans les sombres sinuosités de cette vie. . . . c'est l'astre luminneau qui doit guider notre vaisseau sur la mer orageuse des nations, à travers les écueils que l'orgueil et l'intérêt des hommes sèment de toutes parts. (1)

Ce genre de discours forme d'ailleurs une attraction de choix aux fêtes qui réunissent périodiquement les membres d'une association. Certaines conférences d'Étienne Parent, de Marc-Aurèle Plamondon, de Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, du Dr Joseph Painchaud, du juge Adolphe-Basile Routhier, et d'autres encore, sont appréciées commes des œuvres d'artiste, de virtuose, mais on voit dans cette appréciation flatteuse une fin, et non la conséquence de ce que les conférenciers ont atteint un certain but. On parle alors de spectacles oratoires, dont le but semble être la mise en vedette des participants. On parle également d'une éloquence gratuite qui brille pour le plaisir de briller.

Néanmoins un problème demeure, celui d'isoler le caractère proprement subjectif des conférences. Comme dans la plupart des "essais" de l'époque, le glissement

du "je" au "nous," des préoccupations individuelles aux préoccupations collectives est y presque systématique. Au fond, la pratique suivait en cela, note David Hayne, "la même pente que les autres genres qui tous assumaient dans les années 1860 un caractère national où le public lecteur trouvait matière à ses aspirations communes, fussent-ils patriotiques, religieuses, littéraires, socio-économiques ou politiques." (27)

Il va sans dire en terminant que pour être représentative d'une époque donnée, l'histoire littéraire doit rendre compte de l'ensemble des pratiques littéraires de cette période. "Nos ancêtres ont beaucoup écrit au dix-neuvième siècle, et nous avons l'obligation de les lire partout où ils nous ont précédés, sans nous limiter à des genres ou à des formes traditionnels, écrit David Hayne. ("Problèmes," 48) C'est en ce sens que nous poursuivons notre recherche. Dans la mesure où elle permettra de montrer comment s'est développée la pratique de la conférence publique et comment elles s'inscrit dans le champ littéraire de l'époque, notre étude atteindra son objectif: celui d'une meilleure compréhension, voire d'une reconsidération, du corpus littéraire québécois au dix-neuvième siècle.

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THOMSONIAN MEDICAL LITERATURE AND REFORMIST DISCOURSE IN UPPER CANADA

Jennifer J. Connor and J. T. H. Connor

FROM THE 1830s TO THE 1850s, the political scene in Upper Canada was dominated by issues of reform. Reinforcing this trend were the activities of reform-minded medical practitioners, including various medical sects. In particular, sectarian practitioners known as Thomsonians were especially active during this period, both to promote their form of medicine and to effect change in the practice of medicine in the province. (Connor) A significant aspect of this sect was its published discourse, which preempted the mainstream medical doctors in its appearance. Remarkably, three separate editions of this American sect's main medical manual, Samuel Thomson's *New Guide to Health, or Botanic Family Physician*, appeared in Upper Canada in Brockville (1831), Hamilton (1832), and Hallowell (now Picton) (1833), respectively. (Fleming) And beginning in 1849, indigenous Thomsonian publications appeared, notably the shortlived journal, *The Unfettered Canadian*. These works constitute the first medical literature published in the province.

Analysis of Thomsonian literature reveals that it represented much more than the advocacy of a single medical sect. As this article will show, much of the republican rhetoric of the American founder of the sect, Samuel Thomson, and his followers, was transplanted wholesale to the province of Upper Canada, where it reflected, supported, and disseminated reformist ideology in general.

The brief flurry of publishing activity in Upper Canada resembled that of the United States, where Thomsonianism had its origins and a wide popular following since about the 1820s. Briefly, Samuel Thomson (1769-1843), a New Hampshire farmer, devised a system of medical treatment to overcome the coldness which he believed was the cause of disease. His system was a reaction against the perceived harsh medical treatments of his day, treatments which could include excessive and debilitating measures such as bleeding and purging the patient. Thomson advocated

Nature's medicines to cure a variety of ailments, and he based his system on two main botanical remedies: lobelia (Indian tobacco) and cayenne pepper. Believing that all ailments derive from the body's loss of life-giving heat, he used these remedies primarily to increase the heat and thereby restore health. (Thomson, *Narrative*; Kett)

Thomson practised his system in New England during the first few decades of the 1800s. By the 1820s he had published several items to outline his system for ordinary Americans, whom he believed should treat themselves in a gentle manner and not be beholden — or indebted financially — to mainstream doctors. His *A Narrative of the Life and Medical Discoveries of Samuel Thomson* was often printed and bound with his *New Guide to Health*, and both were issued together in Upper Canada in the Brockville edition of 1831.

Thomson's publications in general reflect a fundamentally republican outlook. In the opening statement of his *New Guide to Health*, Thomson observes:

> There are three things which have in a greater or less degree called the attention of men, viz: Religion, Government and Medicine. In ages past, these things were thought by millions to belong to three classes of men, Priests, Lawyers and Physicians. ... Government was once considered as belonging to a few, who thought themselves 'born only to rule.' The common people have now become acquainted with the great secret of government; and know that 'all men are born free and equal,' and that Magistrates are put in authority, or out by the voice of the people who choose them for their public servants. (1831 ed. [5])

For Thomson, physicians held similar views, but were really "ignorant pretenders" who wrote in a dead language "to deceive and keep the world ignorant of their doings, that they may the better impose upon the credulity of the people." (*Narrative*, 1831 ed., 41-42)

Time and again Thomson aligns himself with his intended audience of common folk. He explains how he frequently sought recourse under the law, including acquiring a patent, to protect himself and, purportedly, the people. His avowed efforts for "the people," however, were sometimes opposed by "the people" as well as mainstream doctors. Yet he managed to portray such popular opposition within his own belief in the people's oppressed condition,

> for they have so long been in the habit of being gulled by designing men, and the ostentatious show of pompious [*sic*] declarations and high sounding words, backed by the recommendations of those they have flattered and deceived, that nothing brought forward in a plain and simple dress seems worthy of notice.
>
> (*Narrative*, 1831 ed., 165)

Thomson was nevertheless heartened in knowing that he had at the very least "been the cause of awakening a spirit of enquiry among the people of this country," which challenged the "interested and monopolizing schemes of the medical faculty" in some states. (*Narrative*, 1831 ed., 165; 170)

Buttressing the view of oppression in his major publications were poetic commentaries originally circulated by Thomson in pamphlet or broadsheet form and later gathered together in a pamphlet called *Learned Quackery Exposed*. His doggerel (Thomson's term) includes verses like the following:

> Now we'll defend each privilege,
> Our liberty we'll hold,
> The medicine of our country prize
> Above the finest gold.
>
> . . .
>
> In spite of slander we'll attend;
> No monarchy is here;
> Some information we shall gain,
> While others stand in fear. (*Learned*, 12)
>
> * * *
>
> TEN miles from Boston is a town,
> Where tyrants bear the sway;
> Law, Physic, and Divinity,
> Blind subjects must obey. (*Learned*, 16)

These republican ideas are explored further in a poem entitled "Three Crafts," which Thomson wrote following "the Hartford Convention, at which time the result was doubtful whether we should remain a Republic or become a Monarchy":

> The nests of college-birds are three,
> *Law, Physic,* and *Divinity;*
> And while these three remain combined,
> They keep the world oppressed and blind.
>
> . . .
>
> Come freemen all unveil your eyes,
> If you this slavish yoke despise:
> Now is the time to be set free,
> From Priests' and Doctors' slavery.
>
> The craft is three in every stage,
> On tory limbs these monarch's [*sic*] rage;
> Their power is lost, we've spoil'ed the tree,
> Of *Hartford* tory monarchy. (*Learned*, 18; 20)

As all these statements show, then, Thomson deliberately likened the medical profession to tyrannical monarchy, as an artificially elevated elite who oppressed the people and interfered with their liberty. This belief was perhaps so ingrained that Thomson also presented it metaphorically in his own theory of disease. In both his *New Guide to Health* and his poetry, Thomson describes the unseating of the

cause of disease — coldness — by the application of heat, and the induction of fever in more than simple republican terms:

> If the heat gains the victory, the cold will be disinherited, and health will be restored: but on the other hand, if cold gains the ascendancy, heat will be dispossessed of its empire, and death will follow of course. . . . When the power of cold is nearly equal to that of heat, the fever or strife between the two parties, may continue. . . . The battle between cold and heat will take place periodically. . . . [W]e must consider whether the fever is a friend or an enemy; if it is a friend, which I hold to be the fact, when the fever fit is on, increase the power of heat, in order to drive off the cold, and life will bear the rule; but, on the contrary, should cold be considered a friend, when the cold fit is on, by increasing its power, you drive off the heat, and death must ensue. (1831 ed., 15)

This war metaphor appears also in his poetry. (Thomson, *Learned*, 13) More significantly, Thomson's metaphor of conflict has definite revolutionary overtones, whether intended by Thomson or not. In an address "To the Public," Thomson's metaphoric understanding of disease becomes more clear:

> Instruct the people, and the cause is removed. . . . But should we spend all our time and money to cure the sick, while the cause still continues, — that is, while others are still making sickness, or sowing the seeds of future sickness, in what respect will generations a hundred years hence be benefitted by all our exertions? In no respect whatever. For unless the cause is removed, the effect will not cease. All my discoveries will be bought up and kept from the people, and the whole system revert back into the fashionable mode of doctoring. 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?' No, no, there is no physician; but there are doctors without number!!!! This is the reason why the sons and daughters of this boasted free country are not healed. Nor can they be thoroughly healed, until the cause of their being made sick, is removed. (*Learned*, 43)

Together these passages show that Thomson, perhaps unwittingly, characterized disease in a traditional literary manner that would be familiar to his popular audience: that is, individual ills could reflect the underlying sickness of the body politic. In keeping with this long literary tradition, and for Thomson, individual sickness symbolized an ailing (cold) society oppressed by rulers (doctors) and needing violent means (fever) to remove the cause and restore equilibrium (life and liberty).

In addition, Thomson's semantic choices themselves — liberty, freedom, tyranny, oppression, slavery — were part and parcel of the political vocabulary used in revolutionary times. Moreover, they had resonances in earlier religious (Puritan) discourse in the United States. During Thomson's lifetime, this politically charged vocabulary had suffused almost every genre of American writing, from sermons and poetry to scientific reports. (Stout; Weber; Batschelet) By his later writing in the 1830s, such implicit references to war and revolution became explicit in Thomsonian discourse: he hoped "the learned, as well as the unlearned, shall join to

revolutionize the medical world" (*Narrative*, 1832 ed., 216); while his followers A. Curtis referred to "we *Revolutionists*" (186), and Horton Howard anointed Thomson as "the first individual who commenced the present revolution in medicine." (468)

In sum, Thomsonian discourse in the United States during the 1820s and 1830s drew a sharp contrast between the learned and lay cultures. In this respect, Thomson was merely following the well established tradition of self-help medical manuals, written for the people in simplified, direct language. But his writings were infused with calls for freedom from oppression, and ultimately for active resistance to tyrants, both medical and civil. Moreover, Thomson's views were grounded in the contemporaneous American context of Jacksonian democracy, which emphasized the right of the individual to challenge authority. (Kett, 110-11)

THOMSONIAN LITERATURE WAS VERY much at home in the United States, where it reached a populace already attuned to revolutionary and pulpit rhetoric, and already convinced about the rights of the individual and the democratic will of the people. In Upper Canada, a province having political control centred in the hands of a few appointed elite, the so-called Family Compact, with the ultimate authority vested in a distant monarch; where religious power was seen to be monopolized by the church of an elite minority, the Church of England; and where physicians seemed to cater to the upper classes and align themselves with the ruling Family Compact, Thomsonian literature would be more than a little out of keeping with the norm. Indeed, the three separate editions of Thomson's *New Guide to Health*, with its criticism of government "belonging to a few," are remarkable not only in their number, but in their very existence.

The fact that Thomson's book was brought out by three particular publishers in Upper Canada between 1831 and 1833 is significant, however. In effect, it may have provided those seeking moderate reform in the government — wanting more accountability to the people — with a covert means for raising public awareness. The three editions appeared in the period of unrest which culminated in the 1837 Rebellion against the Family Compact by radical Upper Canadians, and they were published by known populists and reformers. Joseph Wilson, who printed the Hallowell 1833 edition, published almanacs and a few religious works (Fleming, 553), all intended for the common reader. The other two printers, William Smith for the Hamilton edition, and William Buell, Jr., for the Brockville edition, were particularly outspoken members of the Reform movement in Upper Canada. Smith edited the Reformist *Hamilton Free Press* newspaper from 1831 to 1837. ("Smith," 184) Smith's partner, an American printer, George H. Hackstaff, also helped print the *Hamilton Free Press*, and later moved to Toronto where he published the

Commercial Herald from 1837 to 1839; the *Herald* was the organ of the Orange body in Toronto, and during the Sydenham years, it was the only Toronto newspaper to criticize the government. (Hulse, 114; Firth, 13; Fleming, 427, 443) William Buell, Jr. was in fact a Reform member of parliament from 1828 to 1836, as well as the owner and editor of the Reformist *Brockville Recorder* newspaper, in which he advertised Thomson's *New Guide to Health* for sale. (MacPherson, *Matters*; Fleming, 153) Finally, Buell's edition of Thomson was actually published for "W. Willes," whose reformist leaning can be surmised from circumstantial evidence. For it is not unlikely that "Willes" is William A. Welles, publisher/printer of the *Anglo-Canadian* in Belleville in 1831: this paper had as its motto "Faction is the combination of a few to insult the privileges 'of many'." Just before this, Welles was briefly the editor for the *Hallowell Free Press*, under Joseph Wilson as publisher. (Fleming, 421; 436) Thus the two editions of Thomson's work in eastern Ontario — Brockville and Hallowell — relate directly to reformist editor/printer/publishers who not only knew one another, but who had worked together.

That the political overtones of Thomsonianism and related botanical practices were recognized at the time supports the inference that Upper Canadian publishers must have had some motive, other than an economic one, for completely reprinting an American sectarian medical book. As early as 1816 the Kingston *Gazette* had published a letter decrying the presence of "quack spies who . . . go from house to house . . . dealing out their poisonous pills and herbs, and holding out to the gaping ignorant the advantages of a republican government." (qtd. in Gibson, 699) Similarly, an 1838 editorial of the Toronto *Patriot* related how "Yankee Doctors" preached republicanism at the "bedsides of their patients"; and when the province's reform movement was strengthening, Lieutenant-Governor Maitland implicated "American Quack Doctors." (Craig, 295-96; 194)

Perhaps epitomizing the reform motives of the publishers were the beliefs of William Buell, Jr., for as local historian Ian MacPherson has shown, Buell grounded his reformist ideas in the British aristocratic tradition and monarchy; in the Puritan ethic's emphasis on worldly success; in the Enlightenment's emphasis on intellectual attainments; and in the Christian's emphasis on a moral code. ("Code," 17-18) Buell had a sense of obligation for the unfortunate, greatly revered the home and family, and supported various organizations including temperance, botanical, agricultural and natural history societies. (MacPherson, *Matters*, 23; 28) In his newspaper, the *Brockville Recorder*, Buell published items which supported farmers while they denigrated the learned professions:

> in Upper Canada, . . . the owner and producer descends to a secondary station, while the Lawyer, Doctor and other professional men, presuming upon the ignorance of the farmer, take the lead in making or mending laws, ostensibly for his benefit, but always bearing in mind that their own interests and the fancied dignity and importance of their several professions stands first, and his second; thus keeping the social

> structure tottering to its fall, by striving to make it stand on its smallest end; hence laws are framed to incorporate the members of these several professions into monopolizing associations, whose enormous charges thus legalised drain the farmer's pockets, and not infrequently ruin those who have the misfortune to require their services. (Wiltse et al., 17 October 1839, 3)

These sentiments of John G. Booth (who would later become prominent in local Thomsonian activities) and others demonstrate the affinity between reformist and Thomsonian thinking in spite of the otherwise wide political and cultural differences between Upper Canadians and Thomson. Buell not only endorsed Booth's views, but wished to publish more from such men of practical experience.

In sum then, the publication in Upper Canada of three editions of Thomson's *New Guide to Health*, including one of his *Narrative*, probably resulted from a confluence of various reform movements in the province in the 1830s. Moderate reformers like William Buell, Jr. would have found in Thomson's books the desired emphasis on the common people, the family, self-help, religious and educational self-reliance, and responsible government. Thus, Thomson's republican discourse in the 1830s provided an additional avenue for disseminating reformist views to a popular readership in Upper Canada.

THE DECADE FOLLOWING PUBLICATION of Thomson's books saw many changes in the province: the Rebellion of 1837 by radical reformers, Lord Durham's Report, the Act of Union of 1841, the development of responsible government, the disassembling of the Family Compact, and the erosion of Tory power. (Careless) Ultimately, there was less fear of Yankee or republican influence than in earlier years. All these changes meant a new province, Canada West, in which Thomsonians could more easily become established. Organized activities did indeed take place, such as submission of petitions to the Legislative Assembly to modify or repeal the laws regulating the medical profession. Although their main goal was for Thomsonian practitioners to achieve legal status, petitioners firmly believed that the province's legislation interfered with the rights and liberties of its citizens in choosing their own form of medical treatment. Their petitions were unsuccessful, but with thousands of signatures, they attest to the popularity of the aims of Thomsonian medicine in the province.

Part of the organization of the sect involved serialized publications. In 1847 the Cobourg *Canada Christian Advocate* published a prospectus for a new (Thomsonian) journal entitled *Canada Botanic Medical Examiner*. ("Canada") This journal does not seem to have appeared; but in 1849, *The Unfettered Canadian*, edited by Rev. Robert Dick, did appear, first (perhaps significantly) in Brockville, later moving to Toronto with its editor.[1] At first glance, this journal presents a

curious mélange of disparate topics, focusing on Thomsonian activities, but also ranging from items on tight lacing, bathing and alcohol, to monarchy, duelling, war and universal brotherhood. Yet, when viewed from the reformist perspective of earlier Thomsonian literature and its supporters, the seemingly disconnected topics of the *Unfettered Canadian* form a remarkably consistent and coherent whole. Together these items show that the editor sought social reform in general. In fact, as the unusual title implies, the journal basically opposed fetters in every sphere of human existence; medical, as well as physical, intellectual, civil or political, spiritual/religious, or legal fetters. This sweeping reformist approach is not unique for Thomsonians, for at least one Thomsonian publication in the United States contained similarly disparate topics. Indeed, there are sufficient resonances between Reuben Chambers' *The Thomsonian Practice of Medicine* and the content of the *Unfettered Canadian* as to suggest that Robert Dick was familiar with it. For instance, Chambers discusses tight lacing, claiming that "The unfettered Indian, and even our country girls in the interior, are strangers to that deformity of figure and flaccidity of flesh, so common among the females of our cities. . . ." (170) Chambers also describes the problems of drinking tea and coffee in terms of tyranny and reform:

> The habit of drinking hot, strong tea and coffee, which has been acquired by the people of this country, experience hath abundantly shown to be an evil which calls loudly for a reform. . . . [For] tyrant *Fashion* steps forward and bears rule in so many families, at the expense of health and happiness. (70)

The allusions in the *Unfettered Canadian*'s various reprinted items to forms of tyranny — including something as abstract as fashion — are made more explicit by Dick in his own writing in the journal. In one of the many articles on temperance and its organization in the province, Dick enjoined his readers

> In the midst of reproaches, let us continue to increase our exertions against the thraldom of Alcohol, till the last chain of the Tyrant is broken — till every man can see in his brother the Free — the Unfettered Canadian, emancipated *forever* from the brutalizing influences of men, who shout for temperance, as they stone her ministers — who bow at her shrine, as they qualify [*sic*, quaff?] the pollutions of Bacchus. (19)

He also wrote poetry espousing these same views, adopting Thomsonian metaphors and style. (19)

For Dick, as with other Thomsonians, alcohol was a tyrant; so too was the group of medical practitioners who threatened to oppress the people. Dick opened his Introduction and Prospectus to the journal, this "Banner of Liberty and Reform," by appealing to the "Freemen of Canada" (compare Thomson's "Come freemen all unveil your eyes"):

> Can we be pronounced rash or precipitate in sounding the alarm, when we see the chains of an infamous bondage already forged, and waiting only the sanction of

> Parliament, to entwine, shackle, and gall the limbs of freemen? Can you believe it, Freemen of Canada! that a portion of our M.D.'s., embodying the selfishness and arrogance of the sect, are laboring indefatigably to urge through the present House of Parliament, a bill of such appalling atrocity . . . ! (iii)

The first of eight aims of his journal, therefore, was to obtain for every man "the liberty of selecting his own physician . . . to carry out his *own* views of the philosophy and means of health, without subjecting himself, or his assistants to the slavish dread of a Medical Inquisition." (iv) Although a proposed medical bill, which would effectively outlaw Thomsonian practitioners, provided the impetus for the journal, Dick declared his seventh aim was "To advocate, and promote, social, intellectual and moral Reforms in general"; and he concludes his introduction by suggesting the journal would hold up to "universal execration, the loathsome fetters of ignorance, of arrogance, of error and of vice." (v)

In the opening pages of the first issue, Dick gave an outraged explication of the proposed medical bill, comparing the oppression of this medical sect with that of non-Anglican churches in Upper Canada. Letter writers to the *Unfettered Canadian* also attacked the bill, and a similar one in Lower Canada, in typically Thomsonian style: "I pray that we may never see that day, when this atrocious law shall be in force, but shall ever pray to have religious liberty, political liberty, and medical liberty, for each and every inhabitant" (28); "*Medical Reform* and *Freedom* are as necessary to the people's welfare as is political and religious liberty." This last writer further suggested that if reason and argument fail to convince the "aristocratical loving members of the Legislature" of this fact, the people would through their votes and public lectures; but until this is done, "the great favored Medical class, will, as heretofore, be more distinguished for their proficiency in the science of *Haughty culture than in that of any other science." (57) These writers not only drew on Thomson's own metaphorical style, but on that of other American Thomsonians as well. In fact, they show some indebtedness to Samuel Robinson, a fervently enthusiastic disciple of Thomson who published rousing lectures on Thomson's system. Emphasizing the familiar theme of oppression and revolt, Robinson refers to the "voice of the people," who were "dear to every land of liberty." (19) The human soul, he wrote, "cannot be trampled down forever. . . . Religious liberty, civil liberty[,] the diffusion of science, the equity of laws, and the amelioration of the condition of the miserable, all, all, proclaim her [the soul's] bright and rapid progress to the uncreated splendors of the eternal day!" (Robinson 39) Alluding to the fight for various liberties Robinson concludes

> The tyranny of medicine is running the same career, and usurping the same authority over the rights, and privileges, and understandings of men; or why so much mystery and disguise in the composition of pills, and medicines, and forms of practice? Why has the strong arm of the law been called in to aid the faculty, as if they were a

> privileged order, before whom the discoveries, the experience, the common sense, and the understanding of the people must bow, as to a Dagon. (121)

Robinson, perhaps more strongly than Thomson, presented medicine as the last hold out of an oppressive, tyrannical elite ("a privileged order") that held the people in its complete power.

Clearly, then, Thomsonians in Canada felt as driven to rail against perceived infringements of the rights and freedoms of ordinary people by the elite as did their predecessors and counterparts in the United States: "Being of the people we stand for the people's rights," declared Dick, and he later exclaimed, echoing Robinson, "[t]he voice of the people will be heard" (*Unfettered Canadian*, 11; 92). Moreover, the scope of Thomsonian concerns encompassed freedom from alcohol and its effects on society. As one Upper Canadian doctor noted, "Teetotalism, Radicalism, and Thompsonianism [*sic*], all run in the same channel"; although this was probably intended as sarcastic, the Thomsonian who quoted him felt this was "Not a bad compliment indeed, paid to the Botanic." (*Unfettered Canadian*, 62)

To convey the combined messages of freedom and toleration to readers, Dick often wrote colourfully, evidently drawing on his experience both as Baptist preacher and teacher (at the Brockville Academy). (Dyster) Although he did use rhetorical schemes in his writing such as anaphora and other forms of repetition and parallelism (*Unfettered Canadian*, 11), Dick's preference lay in the dramatic use of concrete tropes. Dick portrays the mainstream medical profession as various sorts of creatures. First, he compares the doctors to a generic predator, then to an eagle, addressing them directly:

> Have you already forgotten the sensations of shame, with which our Queen's Royal refusal, compelled you to drop from your *too hasty* fangs, the prey [unlicensed practitioners] which writhed convulsively in your detested grasp? That shame was a feast for the freeman! — as when he sees the prowling eagle, spreading his wings and bearing upward a lamb from the fold, suddenly arrested by the swift arrow of the herdsman, he sees the haughty bird compelled to release his quivering victim, and with fallen crest sneak away to hide in the clefts of the mountain! Be assured, gentlemen, another such attempt at oppression and outrage on your part will see you like the wounded eagle, lashing a barbed arrow through the vitals of your present power. (*Unfettered Canadian*, 8)

Then he uses the metaphor of a pygmy to cast further derision on the doctors' proposed law:

> Let them have a law . . . rejecting every man from their fraternity whose stature exceeds four feet nine inches and *three lines*; the capacity of whose cranium exceeds that of *Great Grandma's China tea cup*. . . . All we ask is, that they be not empowered to *doctor* all men *down* to their pigma [*sic*] standard, nor to whittle our heads down to their China model. (*Unfettered Canadian*, 10)

Later, he develops an extended metaphor of the proposed bill as a patient — in fact, a monster undergoing excision of its horns (i.e., undergoing amendments) by a House committee. That this "hornless elk[?]" would supplant its older progeny "now stretching its neck over the whole of Upper Canada, and tossing on high a splendid set of antlers, designed to terrify all aspiring competitors of our monopoly-loving Drs." (*Unfettered Canadian*, 50), would not be endured by mainstream doctors.

Brief commentaries by other Canadians in the *Unfettered Canadian* were also vividly metaphoric. One writer characterized the mainstream doctors variously as Medical Hamans who had prepared gallows (that is, bills) in Montreal and Toronto to hang the "little Mordecai's [*sic*] of Medical Reform" (the Thomsonians); as medical pharisees, who "frequently claim the right to persecute and destroy every other system of physic, or class of physicians but their own"; and as Medical Watchmakers, "capable of controlling, mending, taking apart, and setting up the human system." (55-56) Frequently referring to the doctors as a "corporation," this writer echoes the extended commercial metaphor developed by another Canadian Thomsonian, Thomas Clark. Clark saw the mainstream doctors as factory-produced commodities, especially in Montreal, "where machines can be made for the purpose of manufacturing scientific Doctors." Moreover, if legislators were to "loose the manacles, and unfetter the Thomsonian system," it would be vain for them to support mainstream medicine by voting money to the McGill medical school, for "That factory of Allopathic [mainstream] physicians, as such commodities . . . would be so far below par in the market of public sentiment, that it would be a loosing [*sic*] business." (*Unfettered Canadian*, 51)

As both these writers quote Samuel Robinson, the American who wrote so fervently of Thomsonianism, they thereby provide clear evidence that publications other than Thomson's circulated in Upper Canada. Perhaps to ensure even wider dissemination, however, Thomas Clark suggested that the *Unfettered Canadian* re-publish Robinson's lectures. The editor agreed with pleasure to do so, and Robinson's lectures I to VI were reprinted in their entirety in the remaining issues of the journal. (52; 50) These particular lectures were the ones pertaining to various liberties and the voice of the people, which clearly influenced the writing of both Dick and the readers of his journal.

As these features of the Thomsonian discourse illustrate, the *Unfettered Canadian* was only in part a medical journal concerned with the treatment of disease, as it has been classified. (Roland and Potter) More than this, it was a type of serialized pamphlet advocating social reform for a popular readership, for which the proposed medical monopoly provided the stimulus (and

for which the recent reformist election sweep gave added timeliness). Its editor, a preacher, used this medium to communicate, in his words, to the "backwoods of Canada! . . . by the light of a *log-fire*! in the meanest *log cabin*!" (iv) How effective the journal was in disseminating its reformist views, however, can only be guessed. Dick noted in the April issue (92) that more than 400 subscribers had been added in one month, a fairly large number even by today's standards. During the summer of 1849, Dick travelled extensively in the province to spread the word, presumably both religious and political, and perhaps distributed copies of the *Unfettered Canadian* along the way; he also indicated that agents had submitted 30 and 41 subscriptions each in one day. (96) Even so, in "The Unfettered Canadian Extra," an announcement printed on the back of a Thomsonian "Anti-Monopoly Petition," Dick wrote that he had 1,000 sets of back issues for sale and needed 1,000 more subscribers to "raise the work above embarrassment."

For his popular audience Robert Dick marshalled a barrage of information — anecdotes, insights and commentaries — in his own attempt to follow Samuel Thomson's goal of awakening a spirit of enquiry among the people. In so doing, he offered the reader a philosophy of living, one that eschews a fettered existence of any kind. His belief in toleration underlay his sense of outrage at the attempts of a few to control the many. Adapting Thomsonian ideology to the situation in Upper Canada in 1849, these few were for him the elitist doctors (not *all* doctors), members of that haughty culture who sought to monopolize their domain for their own gains, just as their religious counterparts had before them. Although he and many others in the province managed to form themselves into a medical group having its own constitution, when the proposed bill fuelling Dick's indignation did not become law, the *Unfettered Canadian* stopped appearing. Born of one kind of necessity, it may have died owing to different needs — money and the sustenance gained through adversity.

Following the passing of the *Unfettered Canadian* in 1849, only one other Thomsonian publication appeared in Upper Canada: *The Canadian Herbal* by Rev. Schuyler Stewart. Published in Hamilton in 1851, this book incorporated the Thomsonian concerns with religion, temperance and unfettered dress. However, despite this similarity to earlier Thomsonian literature, Stewart's book dwells more on anatomy, dietary advice, medicines and plants than on politically charged discourse. Nevertheless, his diction frequently shows its indebtedness to Thomson: "And whenever there is confusion or want of healthy action, *friction* is necessary, by simple remedial agents selected from the Vegetable World, and prepared by the infinite wisdom of God for this purpose." (Stewart 19) Stewart's aim throughout is to communicate medical knowledge directly to the general public, and to achieve this end he both limits any editorial comments and relegates discussion of Thomson's practice to an appendix.

The downplaying of Thomsonian ideology in *The Canadian Herbal* reflects the declining status of the sect in the province during the 1850s. After the 1850s, some of the more active Thomsonians aligned themselves with another sect, the new, reformed group of trained medical practitioners known as the Eclectics. (Connor) This direction had actually been foreshadowed in the closing pages of the last issue of the *Unfettered Canadian*, which presented the constitution of the Canadian Eclectic Medical Society. (190-92) The only other notable literary reference to the Thomsonians in this period originated outside the sect itself in the *Anglo-American Magazine*, a periodical aimed at the rising, literate middle class of the province. Its editor, Rev. Robert Macgeorge, sarcastically lampooned the Thomsonian practitioner, describing him as "Dr. Shark . . . one of those herb or yarb empirics, who, like locusts, infest this poor credulous Canada." Moreover, Shark looked like a "broken-doon field-preacher . . . [and] spoke through his nose, wi' a twang savouring unwholesomely o' Dollardom." ("Editor's Shanty") In this caricature, Macgeorge alludes to the features of Thomsonianism portrayed in its literature; that is, Thomsonians, poor themselves, appealed to the common people, they often preached the gospel, and they represented American ways. In a newer, more consolidated province, the Thomsonians were thus out of date, "broken-doon," and no longer to be feared but pitied by those more "enlightened."

DESPITE SUCH CRITICISM IN the 1850s, Thomsonian medical literature had served an important function in earlier decades in Upper Canada. Before the change to responsible government in 1841, Thomson's books *New Guide to Health* and *Narrative* offered moderate provincial reformists another medium for disseminating their views. The pursuit of several kinds of reform — medical, political, religious, and social — is perhaps exemplified best in the publisher of the first edition of Thomson's book to appear here, William Buell, Jr. In advocating moderate reform, within the framework of the British monarchy and aristocratic tradition, Buell's ideas clearly contrast with those of American Thomsonians who pursued anti-monarchist, republican goals — and who were prone to using revolutionary discourse. Yet, while pointing up the differences between American and Canadian culture, Buell's approach parallels Thomson's in its emphasis on a larger philosophy for living. As MacPherson has discussed, the Buell family represented a way of life; Buell's main publishing enterprise, the *Brockville Recorder*, shows the "totality of the Buell approach," by "its continuous examination of the activities — religious, social, economic and political — in which the family members were active." (*Matters*, 153)

This philosophy for living also framed the Canadian-produced Thomsonian medical literature in 1849. Spurred by the need for medical reform, the preacher-

editor of the *Unfettered Canadian* used this vehicle to disseminate reformist views in general to the people of the province. Against elitism of any kind, he exemplified the Thomsonian contrast between lay and learned cultures, while advocating total freedom of choice and lack of human interference in the private act of conscience "between man and his God." (92) His philosophy therefore encompassed universal tolerance and brotherhood, conscientious objection, and a concomitant conviction that alcohol was the "universal destroyer" of all these things. In reflecting this philosophy, the *Unfettered Canadian* thus represents more than a typical, though partisan, medical journal and becomes a manifesto for an improved, healthful society.

It is impossible to gauge the true impact of Thomsonian medical literature on its readers in Upper Canada. Indeed, as Lucien Febvre has observed, perhaps a book on its own is insufficient to change anybody's mind; yet a book does provide "tangible evidence of convictions held because it embodies and symbolizes them." (288) A similar argument may be made for Thomsonian medical literature in Upper Canada in the 1830s and 1840s, which embodies and symbolizes the reformist convictions of its producers, and to some extent, its readers. Intent on reform of all kinds, Thomsonian discourse, to paraphrase Febvre, furnished arguments to those who were already converts, let them develop and refine their reformist views, and perhaps encouraged the hesitant.

NOTES

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[1] *The Unfettered Canadian* exists today in one extant copy only; however, it has been reproduced on microfiche and made available in Canada by the Hannah Institute for the History of Medicine in Toronto. Analysis of *The Unfettered Canadian* for this article was based on both the microfiche copy (which is poor in places) and the original document housed at the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland.

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THE OBSERVABLE UNIVERSE

Kerry Slavens

My freshly-painted room is blue again,
true colour of the largest stars
in the universe

At night, the humming silence of walls in my room
could be the sound the universe makes
as if in sleep, rolling over,
but it cannot sleep.

Soundly now, my room is for sleeping
on nubby sheets that feel like burlap
or brittle edges of paper stars.
Once I was an infant here, swaddled in a rash
in the world my mother created.

Soundly now, sleeping is for felines. They purr:
the sound the universe makes when making.
A white cat sits in a basket in my room
sucking her fur for fleas, crushing them on her tongue,
savouring their navy spice like stardust.

Once I was a child here under a blue ceiling—
nebulae exploded and nothing so small seemed possible.
Once, before me, there was nothing to imagine,
no one to interpret silence.

Soundly now, the universe expands
while the walls of my room contract,
smelling of oil paint, turpentine,
the true-iris odour of blue,
new and mysterious with a hidden sun.

MAPPING THE CANADIAN MIND

Reports of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1863

Suzanne Zeller

AMONG THE EARLY TEXTS available to students of Canadiana, the scientific reports penned by Sir William Edmond Logan, founding director of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), rank at first glance among the least likely to illuminate some aspect of Canadian culture. These reports, submitted annually to the governor of the province and appended to the House of Assembly's published *Journals*, seem to comprise a tedious catalogue of rock formations ensconced in the incomprehensible technical jargon of another century: "The next formation," Logan typically described a section of the province in his Report of Progress for 1843,

> consists of a group of rocks of more or less arenaceous quality. The lowest of these is a greenish argillaceous shale, which is followed by a development of green and black arenaceous shales, interstratified with thin beds of sandstone, yielding excellent durable flags, and forming a passage into a mass of thick-bedded sandstone above. Ripplemark and the casts of shrinkage cracks are common on the surfaces of some of the strata, but the fossils of the group are scarce. Fucoids, indeed, are frequently met with, and one species is found penetrating the beds in a vertical position. Some characteristic shells occur in the lower shales, and others in the centre of the group. The total thickness of the formation is estimated at 1,000 feet. (*J* 1844-45)

On the surface it is difficult to believe that Logan could have expected even an educated reader of his own day to decipher the messages he encoded in lengthy reports of this type. Yet closer inspection reveals a deliberate strategy on his part not simply to apprise Canadians of the geological and mineral realities of the land they inhabited, but also to confirm the credibility of his scientific method when it produced verdicts contrary to those he set out to attain. Logan's twin goals required nothing less than a fundamental reorientation of Canadians' perceptions and

expectations of their destiny in British North America, and his reports constitute a remarkable contribution to that achievement.

The establishment in September 1841 of the GSC itself reflected Canadians' faith in the power of science to locate valuable minerals in the province. In so doing they followed the lead of several American states which had initiated government-supported surveys during the 1820s, as well as of Great Britain in 1835 and the fellow colonies of New Brunswick in 1838 and Newfoundland in 1839. Members of the Canadian business and professional classes in urban centres like Toronto and Montreal had been calling for similar surveys of both Upper and Lower Canada in a growing chorus since the 1820s. But it was only after the Rebellions of 1837, with the relative stability that accompanied the Act of Union in 1841 and British bank loans to develop the St. Lawrence waterway, that the Canadian government turned to the science of geology to help develop the colonial economy along industrial lines. The need to locate and identify useful mineral resources such as coal and iron ore in Canada had found support in the famous *Report* of Lord Durham, whose own experience as a coal magnate in northeastern England underlined the importance of the fossil fuel to economic development. The enticing examples of enormous coal deposits nearby in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the northeastern United States gave Canadians reason to expect that coal would be found within their own province; and the intellectual impact of the Scottish Enlightenment in turn instilled faith that this discovery would enable them to replicate the British industrial experience.[1]

In this experience, 'King' Coal represented the basis of modern civilization: it provided the power to modify the extremes and even to control the forces of nature. Coal had revived the British metal trades after 1750, and sustained them through unprecedented growth ever since. By the early nineteenth century the history of Britain's material greatness had become virtually identified with the history of coal. This connection rang especially true in Scotland, whose meteoric rise as a result of coal-based industrialization had been so dramatic. The University of Edinburgh, in particular, educated countless medical and natural history students, many of whom eventually made their way across the Atlantic, in geological fieldwork emphasizing the ordered sequence and characteristic fossils of the strata that made up the earth's crust.[2] British, and especially Scottish, coal-based values and ambitions spread to British North America during the early decades of the nineteenth century also through Scotland's public educational system, which imbued Scottish immigrants with a sense of geological knowledge as useful knowledge. As a result, the persistent hope of duplicating the British industrial experience influenced the subsequent course of Canadian history. When the Canadian government created the GSC to map the mineral resources of the province, its intention was to assess the province's industrial potential, and thereby to define a basis for the material improvement of the lives of its inhabitants.

Not long before, geology had itself undergone a conceptual transformation which endowed the earth science with the means to participate in this inventory process. Only a decade earlier the British geologist Charles Lyell had published his *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), a synthesis of the mass of information that had accumulated since the late eighteenth century. Lyell eliminated the older dichotomy between aqueous and igneous explanations of the formation of the earth's crust to elaborate instead a "uniformitarian" theory of the earth which postulated geological change over far longer periods of time than had previously been imagined. He supported an actualistic approach to the study of geological processes, as products of forces that still continued to operate. Among these processes he included the "metamorphic," in which heat and pressure transformed the constitution of formations like those that comprised the Canadian Shield.[3]

THE ENTHUSIASTIC RECEPTION of Lyell's *Principles* signalled a growing consensus among geologists, and formed a new interpretive context for geological investigation. Perhaps the best example was William Logan, an admirer of Lyell who applied uniformitarian principles to confirm his theory of the origins of coal formations. Logan (1798-1875) was a native Montrealer who studied natural history at the University of Edinburgh before moving to Swansea, South Wales, to manage his uncle's copper works in 1831. There he forged a professional knowledge of coal seams and earned a reputation among British geologists for the accuracy of his topographical maps and cross-sections. Seeking to facilitate the practical search for fuel to smelt the copper, Logan recognized the *in situ* origins of local coal seams. In an important paper presented to the Geological Society of London "On the Characters of the Beds of Clay Lying Immediately Below the Coal Seams of South Wales" in 1840 and published in the society's *Proceedings*, he postulated a direct relationship between the seams and rootlike formations, or *Stigmaria ficoides*, found invariably in the underclay below the coal. (275-77) From this evidence Logan concluded that the plants actually formed coal when heat and pressure were applied to their remains over time. Upon his uncle's death that same year, Logan left the copper works for North America to test his theory on the massive carboniferous formations of Pennsylvania and Nova Scotia. There he met Charles Lyell on his first North American geological tour. Lyell's confirmation of the correlation of coal and the *Stigmaria* in both places attracted widespread attention and earned Logan the approbation of eminent members of the British geological community who had sought the key to the origins of coal unsuccessfully for many years.

Logan's timing could not have been better calculated in yet another sense, because the Legislative Assembly of the newly united province of Canada voted funds for its geological survey just as he arrived to visit his brother in Montreal.

He garnered the appointment as provincial geologist in 1842 not only because of his international reputation in scientific circles, but also because members of the Montreal business and professional classes believed him capable of furthering their interests as an incipient industrial community. Logan became the beneficiary of the popular assumption that coal would surely be located in Canada by the foremost expert on the origins of the precious fossil fuel. By the same token, in his reports for both 1842 and 1843 he fully accepted the need to ascertain the presence or absence of coal and iron ore in the province as one of the first priorities of his survey. (*J* 1844-45)

In preparation Logan undertook a preliminary sweep of the geological information already available from maps and published reports. As a dedicated uniformitarian he attributed particular importance to the geology of territories along Canada's borders, where outcrops of desirable mineral deposits might likely strike into the province. Logan focused his attention on "a gigantic trough of transition deposits, conformable from the carboniferous era downwards," stretching in length from just below Quebec down to Alabama, and in width from the north shore of Lake Huron across to the Atlantic Ocean. This area housed the "nucleus" of the eastern American coal-bearing measures, outliers of which he believed ran into Canada, and to which Logan turned his search. He judged the most readily identifiable "leading feature" of the province to be an enormous limestone "basin" occupying nearly half of its settled confines, in particular the southern peninsula of Canada West. "This well-marked zone of limestone," Logan recognized, abounded mainly in useful building materials, mineral springs, and fertile soils. More to the immediate point, he read the limestone as a geological signpost to the valuable minerals he sought, since it "at once determine[d] the direction in which to search for metals, and that in which to look for coal."

Two important stratigraphical premises underlay Logan's reasoning: first, that geological strata were ordered in reliable sequence even in territories yet unexplored; and second, that coal deposits occupied only strata dating from the carboniferous era within that sequence. An indiscriminate search for coal "in districts which are now ascertained to be composed of noncarboniferous strata" would therefore no longer be considered "desirable and proper" or at all justified. "Geological experience," he explained, "teaches that the metalliferous rocks are below [the limestone], the carboniferous above." The most efficient procedure, he continued, was to pursue the logic of the science by mapping out the limestone expanse; then, he felt assured, "it will be by transverse sections in the direction of its dip that we shall gradually approach to coal" which overlay the limestone at some undetermined point. Logan admitted his concern that such a point might not rest within the province, but for the time being he chose to deliver his caveat in code: "in consequence of the small removal from horizontality the limestone in so many places exhibits, the lineal superficial distance between the two formations will

probably be very considerable." He appreciated the futility of taking transverse sections where the near-horizontal limestone offered no obvious "dip" from which to take directions, as was the case in what is now southwestern Ontario. In his preliminary report of 1842 Logan nevertheless anticipated that at least at Gaspé, where the limestone dipped to about 25 degrees below the horizon, the northern outcrop of New Brunswick coal reached Canada with "space enough" to "hold the total thickness of the various formations that may occupy the interval, even should they measure as much as their equivalents in Pennsylvania." (*J* 1844-45)

Logan played out his rational plan of action during his first season in the field in 1843, which he duly reported in November 1844. Accompanied by only one assistant, Alexander Murray, he divided the province into three geological districts: a Western Division from Georgian Bay and along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River to Quebec City; an Eastern Division along the south shore of the St. Lawrence to Gaspé; and a Northern Division across the top of the entire province. As planned, Logan and Murray began with the Western Division, orienting their search by the relation of its dominant limestone basin to formations already explored south of the border, the uppermost of which was the coal of Pennsylvania. Considering the intermediary nature of the strata in the entire division, Logan cautioned:

> taking into consideration the extremely moderate dip and undisturbed condition of the strata, and the general even geographical surface of the country, that no deposit higher in the series than the gray sandstone will be found in any part of Canada between that line [from Collingwood to Oakville] and Quebec. There are still to be interposed between the gray sandstone and the true coal measures, a mass of strata equal at the lowest computation to between 4000 and 5000 feet; and we are not warranted reasonably to anticipate the occurrence of any part of those true measures in the district in question.

He carefully coupled his negative verdict with the positive note that geology had the power to eliminate wasteful effort. It could prevent many "adventurers . . . ready to expend their money in search of coal by boring in that district" from being "deceived . . . by the dark colour and the mineralogical character of the deposit of bituminous shales overlying the great limestone formation" simply because they remained "unacquainted with true geological inferences." Coal echoes, he recognized, reverberated throughout the Western Division in the form of these black inflammable shales, as well as fossil plants coated with crystallized coal which gave strata other than the carboniferous "very much the semblance of coal measures." "Even practical miners might be deceived by the appearances" of these carbonaceous [as opposed to carboniferous] substances, Logan admitted, "but no workable coal seams are found associated with the deposit, while its organic contents, agreeing with its stratigraphical position, point out that its age is anterior to the true carboniferous era."

Logan lingered just long enough to offer evidence that iron and copper ores might well be found in the Western Division, but preferred to move on to the Eastern Division in the hope of answering the coal question more optimistically. His attempts to "ascertain the north limit of the coal deposit" which underlay much of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, as well as parts of New Brunswick and Newfoundland, led Logan to fear that "there is a large portion of it lost beneath the gulph of St. Lawrence." Moreover, his search was often thwarted by the complexity of the region's geological structures. Unlike the uniformity exhibited by the great limestone basin farther west, these eastern formations consisted in "the violent contortions of the strata, the altered nature of some of the rocks, and the want of conformability in probably more than one member of the series of formations." The utter disarray in which these strata had come to rest, sometimes at right angles to one another, also affected the location of any coal measures that might be present. Logan believed that the normal "carboniferous perimeter" in these circumstances offered "no guide to the geographical range of any thing coming from beneath." The bewildering confusion of these formations permitted Logan to postpone his verdict for yet another season, but the writing was on the wall: those deposits which he had managed to unravel were, he confessed in the Report of Progress for 1843, "too low down to contain any of the profitable beds of coal." (*J* 1844-45).

LOGAN'S FIRST REPORT OF PROGRESS initiated a longterm dialogue between his science and members of the Canadian public who held "the winning and getting of Coal" as an immediate goal of "great importance" to the province. (*Statutes* 1843, 7 Vic., c. 45) Many insisted that Canada *must* contain workable coal deposits, and they did not wish to be told otherwise. Logan was well aware of this fact, and he understood only too well one of the major ironies of his position as provincial geologist: the very power of predictability afforded by his scientific method could easily foster public disillusionment. A measure of this possibility reflected in the reaction of William Dunlop (1792-1848), the elected representative of Huron County and one of the GSC's earliest, most ardent supporters, in the House of Assembly debates. Dunlop had studied natural history at the University of Edinburgh, and as Warden of the Woods and Forests for the Canada Land Company he had surveyed its enormous Huron Tract during the 1820s, but he refused to accept Logan's geological conclusions. To predict the absence of coal in Canada, he insisted, was "a statement of theoretical reasoners" which he thought ridiculous and lacking foundation. Dunlop charged sarcastically that he "could not see because the coal vein in Pennsylvania dipped upward that therefore there should be coal up in the moon." He contended instead, the *Montreal*

Gazette reported, that "he himself had seen coal on the banks of the Ottawa" during his rambles. (23 Jan. 1845)

Yet even while Dunlop protested so bitterly, Logan was once again busy in the field checking his facts. His Report of Progress for 1844, submitted in May 1845, summed up the evidence from a more thorough examination of the Gaspé region. Confronted by numerous claims of actual coal sightings from fishermen, businessmen, and even the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, he now patiently and confidently deflated each hope by reiterating the rational basis for his judgments. "Now none of the material where it has come before me *in situ*," he explained,

> bears any analogy in the mode of its occurrence to workable coal. This is always found in extensively continuous beds conformable with the stratification; where as the mineral in question occurs in cracks cutting the strata across for greater or less distances. It is true that where faults or dislocations exist among coal seams, there is often met with running across the stratification what by Scotch miners is termed a *vise*, and by Welsh a *leader* of coal, which in general is a thin, confused, irregular black more or less carbonaceous sheet, conducting up or down as the case may be, in the plane of dislocation, from the termination of a coal-bed on one side to that on the other; and there is no doubt it is the result of the grinding of the terminal edges of the strata against one another, when the slip producing the dislocation occurred. Without a slip or displacement, therefore, no leader would be found, and none in any case would hold true coaly matter extending beyond the distance between the separated edges of the coal-bed. Now in the case of the bituminous mineral, the cracks in which it occurs are, in many instances, unaccompanied by any displacement of the strata, and in others, where the extent of the dislocation (that is the upthrow or downthrow, as it is called) is visible, no layer holding any of it occurs among the beds. Independent of all this, the formation in which the mineral is found, is an inferior member of a group of rocks, whose place is in all probability a very considerable distance below the position of the true workable coal-bearing measures, and we are, therefore, not warranted in expecting coal seams to exist in it.

Numerous examples later, Logan finally uttered the dreaded conclusion that

> The conglomerate rocks with which they are associated appear to be the very base of the coal series, in so far as Gaspé is concerned, and their distribution in Canada is just sufficient to shew that a very narrow margin on the north shore of the Bay Chaleur may be considered the limit in that direction of the great coal-field of North America. (*J* 1846)

Geology, in other words, precluded any expectation of ever finding workable deposits of coal in the province of Canada.

Logan had learned from the experience of the short-lived geological surveys of New Brunswick and Newfoundland that if he hoped to be able to justify continued public support for the GSC, he had to be seen as accomplishing something positive. During the following season he left both the monotony of the Western and the violence of the Eastern Divisions to pursue the promise of metallic mineral wealth in the Northern. In this field he was once again a pioneer, since these oldest

"Precambrian" formations of the earth's crust lacked both the stratigraphic and the fossil keys that had enabled geologists to unlock the Cambrian series above them during the 1830s. In addition, the region remained a *terra incognita* even geographically, and Logan was pleased to be able to fill numerous blanks on the official map of Canada being constructed by Joseph Bouchette. Largely for commercial reasons, he chose the Ottawa River over the Saguenay as a starting point for his analysis of the Northern Division, but after only one season he remained convinced that the "general relations" of the vast metamorphic series would not reveal their geological and mineralogical secrets "until a great collection of facts shall have been accumulated beyond the northern bounds of the Province." In the meantime, he hinted at the existence of workable deposits of both iron and copper ores on the fringes of settlement. Logan's hints instigated a mining rush to the shores of the upper Great Lakes, where he had alluded to successful searches in the same formations in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. (*J* 1847) As a result, he spent the seasons from 1846 to 1849 surveying mining locations and mineral veins on the shores of Lakes Huron and Superior. (*J* 1849, 1850) Yet despite discoveries of the ores, his own Swansea experience taught Logan that the location of coal determined that of metal works, and not vice versa; in his report for 1846-47 he warned that until new technological developments, fuelled perhaps by electricity, changed the impersonal "fiscal laws," Canadian ores would end up in the United States for processing. (*J* 1847)

For obvious reasons the Canadian public had not surrendered its hopes on the issue of coal. By 1849 Logan and Murray were both pursuing the question once again in the Eastern Townships, an area of transition between the Western and Eastern Divisions, where bituminous limestones had once again deceived "several persons worthy of credit," including the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Logan expended great efforts to quash such false hopes, and replied bluntly that "Among the economic minerals . . . it is a matter of regret that I have it not in my power to include the coal reported to have been discovered" in the region:

> Wherever workable seams of coal have yet been found on the face of the globe, the evidences connected with them prove beyond a doubt, that their origin is due to great accumulations of vegetable matter, which has been converted into a mineral condition. The vegetable structure is detected in the mineral by microscopic examination, and as might be expected, the strata associated with coal beds are profusely stored with fossil plants; even where the seams are too thin to be workable, . . . the vegetable remains disseminated in the masses of rock dividing the seams, are still in vast abundance. . . . There being not the remotest doubt whatsoever of the geological age of the limestones of [this region], supposing the specimens were really derived from the strata, and that the species of plants should at the same time be ascertained to be identical with those of the carboniferous period, it would prove that all evidence up to the present time has been imperfect, and that the flora of this period is of hitherto unsuspected antiquity. (*J* 1850)

Nor did Logan see any reason to alter his hardearned geological assumptions to accommodate rumours of coal discoveries that were time and again unsubstantiated by evidence of actual workable deposits.

LOGAN SPENT THE REMAINDER of his career fending off persistent challenges to his credibility, but he did so by reinforcing his meticulous geological work with international recognition of its accuracy and value. His Canadian mineral exhibit for the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 won lavish praise (*J* 1852), and helped the GSC to survive a parliamentary inquiry in 1854 which completely accepted his defence of geology as a guard against pointless searches for coal in the province (*J* 1854). A repeat performance at the Paris Exposition of 1855 earned him a knighthood, the Wollaston Medal of the Geological Society of London, and induction into the French Legion of Honour. Logan continually emphasized Canada's wealth in ores that required only charcoals to produce first-rate metal products and did not threaten British manufacturers. (*J* 1857, 1858) But his most far-reaching contribution continued to be conceptual, as exemplified in his impressive geological map, unveiled at Paris, of Canada in relation to the contiguous formations surrounding the province, including the coal of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. By 1857 Logan had also unravelled the Precambrian series he now termed "Laurentian" and "Huronian," making the Canadian Shield the international prototype of these formations and integrating the region into the province to a degree that had not been done before, and which the expansionist Department of Crown Lands adopted almost immediately. (*J* 1857)

Even so, part of Logan's continuing task was to monitor discoveries of "carbonaceous combustibles" which, "if not scientific coal," were claimed to be "coal nevertheless." The worst examples were cases of fraud in which samples of real coal were imported and planted in wells on private land; in Bowmanville in 1858 a cheese sandwich came up with the last such bucket lowered to extract coal. But by then Logan commanded the utmost scientific respect and while he continued to reiterate his explanations, those who questioned his authority risked ridicule from his many supporters both in science and in government. In 1863 he synthesized all of his previous reports in his masterful *Geology of Canada*, which pronounced the final word on Canada's coal predicament in declaring that the only representatives in the province of the true coal-bearing series afforded nothing but a few carbonized plants. When Premier John Sandfield Macdonald dared to suggest that the GSC had failed to locate even the mines that did exist in the province, his own party joined in lampooning him for objecting to Logan's fossil studies because that was "carrying personalities too far." In 1858 it was Logan's

colleague at McGill University, the geologist J. W. Dawson, who articulated in *The Canadian Naturalist* the expansionist vision that uniformitarian geology had brought to Canada through the work of the GSC:

> Physically considered, British America is a noble territory, grand in its natural features, rich in its varied resources. Politically, it is a loosely united aggregate of petty states, separated by barriers of race, local interest, distance, and insufficient means of communication. As naturalists, we hold its natural features as fixing its future destiny, and indicating its present interests, and regard its local subdivisions as arbitrary and artificial. (392-93)

Logan's annual geological reports record the growth of uniformitarian geology as a powerful ideological force in Canadian culture, in encouraging Canadians to look beyond their traditional political boundaries for the resources which they believed were crucial to their material future, and which their own province was shown to lack. In Logan's view, Confederation was but a natural outgrowth of his uniformitarian outlook, and he had prepared for it by expanding his survey informally to most of the other British North American colonies well before 1867. In an address Dawson wrote in 1868 "On Some Characteristics of the British American Mind," Dawson could look back with satisfaction to declare that nature, indeed, had "already taken hold of the mind of young Canada," and was "moulding it in its own image." Logan's reports had, indeed, gone a long way to ensure it.

NOTES

[1] Roy Porter, "The Industrial Revolution and the Rise of the Science of Geology," in Mikuláš Teich & Robert Young, eds., *Changing Perspectives in the History of Science: Essays in Honour of Joseph Needham* (London: Heinemann 1973), 320-43; David Daiches, Peter Jones, & Jean Jones, eds., *A Hotbed of Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment, 1730-1790* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press 1986); Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: Univ. Toronto Press 1987): chap. 2.

[2] Roy Porter, *The Making of Geology: Earth Science in Britain 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1977): 152, 171-73; see also Martin J. S. Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Palaeontology* rev. ed. (New York: Science History Publications 1976).

[3] Stephen Jay Gould, *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time*, The Jerusalem-Harvard Lectures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1987): chap. 4.

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GSC. "Report of Progress 1844" in *Journals* (1846) App. GGG.

GSC. "Report of Progress 1846-47" in *Journals* (1847) App. C.

GSC. "Report of Progress 1847-48" in *Journals* (1849) App. G.

GCS. "Report of Progress 1849-50" in *Journals* (1850) App. V.

GSC. "Report of Progress 1850-51" in *Journals* (1852) App. O and OOO.

GSC. "Report of Progress 1853-54-55-56" in *Journals* (1857) App. 52.

GSC. "Report of Progress 1857" in *Journals* (1858) App. 32.

Logan, Sir W. E. "On the Character of the Beds of Clay Lying Immediately Below the Coal Seams of South Wales," Geological Society of London *Proceedings* 3/69 (1840): 275-77; full text in Geological Survey of Canada *Transactions*, ser. 2, 6 (1842): 491-97.

Montreal Gazette, 23 Jan. 1845.

Select Committee on the Geological Survey of Canada. "Report" in *Journals* (1854) App. L.

LONG WEEKEND

Derk Wynand

By Monday, the calls were repeating themselves,
the dogs outside howling for one another
or their owners and finding no answer,
grownups barking their names, while children
with nothing much to say, shouted it, testing
their voices, more than passing the test,
and an autumn gale summoned the dry leaves back
to their source, wooden matches flaring
across denim or nail to make their appeals
to kindling or straw, and inside, the telephone rang
a long time before I made up my mind to answer,
to work perfecting our familiar arguments
over how long the distance had become,
each echo on the line another irrefutable proof,
each long split-second delay, our voices
bouncing off the moon or some other satellite
to say Pardon, Pardon, the two of us leaping
from one hope to another, carefully,
as if something might break in the process,
a constant static washing over every word
and hesitation, like a rain to make the dry leaves
slouch on their branches and snails revive beneath,
and holy mother of all, I said, or thought,
is the long summer finally over, and by the time
you answered, the true rain was already pelting
against both our windows, its patter there
and on the line finally making our voices softer.

books in review

POSTMODERN IRONIES

LINDA HUTCHEON, *Splitting Images: Contemporary Canadian Ironies.* Oxford University Press, $14.95.

Splitting Images, like so many of Linda Hutcheon's books, is a tour-de-force. With clarity she reapproaches critically, rather than theoretically, what has become her recurrent topic: the ubiquitous ironies of contemporary cultural practices. In six chapters overflowing with examples she examines the prevalence, in Canadian writing and visual art, of oppositional ironies. Chapter 2 focuses on the ironies of ethnicity and race (converging on the elegiac nature of much immigrant writing); chapter 3 places the Canadian scene in a postcolonial context; chapter 4 is devoted to specifically feminist ironies of gender construction; and chapter 5 concentrates on photography, painting, and installation pieces devoted to class and sexual preference (offering perceptive reading of works by Dave Buchan, Brian Condron, Geoff Miles, Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge, Evergon, and such collectives as N.E. Thing Co., Fastwürms, and General Idea.)

Hutcheon is concerned throughout with the "important political dimensions to this particular manner of saying two things at once, of pretending to speak a dominant 'language' while subverting it at the same time." *Splitting Images* emerges as a "necessary book," the space-clearing study Hutcheon *needed* to write before tackling directly the real agenda of her own project: the full blown theory of Canadian ironizing mentioned in her preface. The result is a work dazzling in its vast perspective and witty revelations, but occasionally suffering from minor inconsistencies and repetitive argument.

One problem — one that also mars *The Canadian Postmodern* (1988) — is that *Splitting Images* is a collection of revised essays joined by similar interests, rather than a meticulously developed, slowly unfolding critical thesis. Minor consequences include overwhelming numbers of footnotes, inconsistent "house styles" between chapters (multiple *ibids* in ch. 5, integrated references in ch. 6), as well as awkward cross-referencing throughout. As an inexpensive book, moreover, it reproduces very few of the paintings and installations Hutcheon discusses, an exclusion that necessitates monotonous descriptive paraphrase.

More debatable is Hutcheon's re-navigation of the waters charted in *A Theory of Parody* (1985), where she argued so persuasively that parodic forms gain much of their power by the simultaneous exercise of affectionate mimicry and critical distance. Arguing in *Splitting Images* that Canada seems a uniquely fertile ground for this kind of ironic double-ta(l)king, Hutcheon views each of her myriad Canadian examples through a theoretical prism similar to the earlier formulation for parody. "Canadian" ironies of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation are all continually referenced back to the same "ur-explanation." We are told repeatedly (and in very different contexts) that the irony under current consideration is "a mode of 'speech' ... that allows speakers to address and at the same time slyly confront an 'official' discourse: that is, to work *within* a dominant tradition but also to challenge it — without being utterly co-opted by it."

The question begs to be asked: how are Evergon's gay visual ironies distinct (strategically or otherwise) from Tostevin's feminist literary ones? More pressing, how are both different, if at all, from *non-Canadian* ironies — for example, the post-

colonial filmic strategies of Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Noir et blanc en couleur* (1976)? Especially since heterogeneous ironizations, it would seem, can all be explained by the same totalizing principle of a politicized defamiliarization? The problem does not lie with the formula *per se*, but with the ahistorical and homogeneous application of the same working definition over 150 pages.

Given these criticisms, however, I want to emphasize that *Splitting Images* is also an exceptionally generous and inspiring work of criticism. Hutcheon's ability to orchestrate a far-reaching variety of critical and theoretical voices into a coherent and accessible polylogue is continually directed toward a variety of issues, each of which suddenly appears in a new light. She then foregrounds hitherto unnoticed points of contact or overlappings—how some feminisms, for instance, intersect with post-colonial or gay strategies of ironic resistance.

One example will suffice. In her excellent third chapter, "'Circling the Downspout of Empire': Post-Colonial and Postmodern Ironies," Hutcheon carefully works through the specific complexities of the *Canadian* postcolonial, arguing rightly that to equate "the primarily white Canadian historical *experience* of colonialism . . . with that of the West Indies or Africa or India" is "both trivializing of the Third World experience and exaggerated regarding the (white) Canadian." She rightly foregrounds the often overlooked fact that English (and French) language white writers are part of the re-colonizing cultures of settlement, and suggests that perhaps native Canadian voices "should be considered the resisting, post-colonial voice of Canada." Within this scenario, Hutcheon's portrait of irony as "the trope of the unsaid . . . the trope of the redeployable and the refracted" offers an exciting perspective from which to re-read not only resistant native voices like Tomson Highway or Jeanette Armstrong, but also resistant writers like Cyril Dabydeen and Bharati Mukherjee, "other" points within the downspout of empire.

The real contribution of *Splitting Images* is that irony ceases to be simply a straightforward mechanism of parody, but is developed into a complex, demystificatory political mechanism. As the first step in theorizing the complexities of contemporary ironizations, in exploring how and why irony is so often the chosen mode of resistance amongst so many different marginalized groups, and in its challenges placed toward the reader, *Splitting Images* demands a serious double-take.

GARY BOIRE

COHERENT CONTEXT

M. BROOK TAYLOR, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada*, Toronto, $40.00 cloth, $17.95 paper.

TRUE TO THE SPIRIT of historic Canadian idealism, M. Brook Taylor's study of nineteenth-century historiography steps back from the details of political and economic reviews to present an intellectual history of Canada. As a result of strong organization and excellent pacing, this book is not the "tedious and inexorable forced belly-crawl" of some of the histories that Taylor has reviewed for this study. His study is accessible to the lay reader who has but a high-school outline of Canadian history, but its comprehensive and meticulous scholarship also make it an important resource for professional Canadianists.

Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans examines the motivations of nineteenth-century Canadian historians, none of them writing for supposedly disinterested academic scholarship, as twentieth-century scholars pretend to do. The histories examined grow out of the social milieu of the

authors; as a result, the historians examined advance the concerns of various nineteenth-century Canadian constituencies. In spite of this regionalism, the writings develop in the same pattern. The earliest tend to exaggeration, distortion and outright falsehood. Able to control the flow of information to a foreign audience, writers such as Nova Scotia historian Otis Little (1748), and John Stewart, of Prince Edward Island (1806), willingly sacrifice, for personal gain, the welfare of the territory they write about. The next generation of historians, the patriots, often native-born, like T. C. Haliburton in Nova Scotia (1823, 1829), determine to set the record straight. Convinced of the merits of their colonies, they strive to establish confidence in the future. Though these patriots often write for foreign readers, their fellow colonists become their most important audience, and the second-generation historians develop a strong regional patriotism consistent with strong British ties. When Confederation later fails to bring its promised success, many writers become partisans, using biography to review and defend past actions. Such historians include prominent politicians such as Francis Hincks (*The Political History of Canada*, 1877, and *Reminiscences*, 1884) and Alexander Mackenzie (*The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown*, 1882).

Within the framework of promoter-patriot-partisan, Taylor skilfully weaves the influential histories of each area. Maritime historians, for example, emphasize their own region and see little benefit in Confederation. Even within this narrow context, however, Taylor is careful not to let his design shape his evidence, and he differentiates the work of Nova Scotia from that of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Québecois histories (Charlevoix, 1744; Laterrière, 1830) emphasize the extended Canadian roots of the French settlers, but anglophone treatments of the French (Heriot, 1804, 1807; Smith, 1815; Fleming, 1828) focus on the "unprogressive" and "illiberal" legacy of the old French order, and they call for necessary acculturation. Overriding regional concerns, the Central Canadian Nationalist school, given birth by the Durham Report, develops the concept of a unified nation in British North America, but ignores both the West and aboriginal Canadians. Post-Confederation tensions between the regions and central Canada are thus driven by the differences between nationalist and regional histories.

By offering a coherent context for nineteenth-century writers, Taylor succeeds admirably in introducing the reader to the discourse of Canadian history, providing an especially valuable background for contemporary constitutional debates. At the same time, Taylor's detailed and comprehensive scholarship, extending far beyond the few authors mentioned in this review, makes a valuable contribution to professional discourse in nineteenth-century Canadian history. By focusing not only on history but on concepts of history, Taylor brings his analysis into the field of semiotics, thus tying the writing of history to cultural criticism and metadiscourse both of which extend far beyond national boundaries in twentieth century scholarship in the humanities. Because of its clarity, scope, and depth, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans* should become an important resource in public, undergraduate and graduate libraries.

HENRY HUBERT

PIONEERING POEMS

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, *The Rising Village*. Ed. Gerald Lynch. Canadian Poetry Press, n.p.

JOSEPH HOWE, *Acadia*. Ed. M. G. Parks. Canadian Poetry Press, n.p.

STANDISH O'GRADY, *The Emigrant*. Ed. Brian Trehearne. Canadian Poetry Press, n.p.

STANDISH O'GRADY'S poet-speaker in *The Emigrant* (1841) modestly anticipates the reception of his literary efforts:

> Some future critic yet may kindly say
> He never sought to crowd his brows with bay.
> Yet still the muse may spare one sprig for me.

The Canadian Poetry Press edition of *The Emigrant* does a great deal more than O'Grady's speaker predicted. The reproduction of this nineteenth-century long poem in a modern critical edition in some sense retroactively doles out the laurels. In so doing it also participates in an ongoing critical project involving the construction and evaluation not only of the canon of Canadian poetry, but of Canadian literary history itself. The volume is one of a series of editions of early Canadian long poems whose aim at its inception was, as general editor D. M. R. Bentley explains in a recent issue of *Canadian Poetry*, to "bring home" selected texts in a form accessible to undergraduates and advanced researchers alike, and "in a manner which gave readers the 'documents' necessary to make [early Canadian poetry] come alive in its literary, historical, and critical contexts."

The editors of each of the volumes reviewed here bring home their respective texts to readers in a number of useful ways. In addition to its textual apparatus and notes, each edition includes an extended critical introduction that "places" the poem in terms of generic, historical, biographical and aesthetic concerns. The focus in each case, however, is different. For example, Trehearne dwells at great length on the biographical research project of discovering "one of the most intriguing, albeit painfully obscure, lives in Canadian letters," and comments on the significance of biographical study to the interpretation of O'Grady's narrative of commentary on an Irishman's emigration to Canada. Gerald Lynch's introduction to parallel texts of *The Rising Village* (1825, 1834), on the other hand, is much more heavily thematic in its orientation, expanding on Goldsmith's extended narrative treatment of nature and its control: "From beginning to end the poem describes cyclical movements wherein control is gained, the pioneer settlers relax, control is lost, regained and tenuously maintained." The essay by M. G. Parks that precedes Joseph Howe's *Acadia* (1833) is most eclectic in its approach and may thus be most useful to readers who need a general survey of pertinent issues surrounding the poem. Its lucid discussion moves methodically through an examination of the poem's publication history, the history of its criticism, the date of the text, and matters of genre, style and influence.

In one way or another, each of the editors seems compelled to confront the explicit or implicit charge that these poems are somehow subliterary, or primitive and outdated in relation to the British literary tradition. A suggestive approach to such recurring anxieties of evaluation is the way each introduction insists that its poem must be considered in not one but several generic contexts, and the recognition in each case of the permeability of the boundaries between poetry and prose, literature and rhetoric. Trehearne, for example, identifies in *The Emigrant* the often contentious relationships between the emigrant guide book, travel narrative, personal confession, and pastoral elegy. Trehearne sees the disintegrating structure of *The Emigrant*, in which digres-

sions and interruptions eventually overwhelm the emigration narrative, as the pathological symptom of a tension between contending aesthetic, cultural, and political forces. He reads the poem as an ambivalent, contradictory "drama of creative agony" in which O'Grady is finally unable to come to terms with the conflicts the poem admits.

Gerald Lynch deals evocatively with the tension between an emergent Canadian tradition of poetry and its British ancestry in his treatment of a potentially analogous relationship between the Canadian Oliver Goldsmith's *The Rising Village* and its (in Goldsmith's terms) "predecessor-model," his Anglo-Irish great-uncle's poem *The Deserted Village* (1770). Park's reading of *Acadia* as a revision of the neoclassical topographical poem suggests both a literal and literary New World landscape; the poem might be seen as a prospective lay of the land. Parks helpfully asserts that the poem is best understood in terms of neoclassical aesthetic standards, rather than the more historically "consistent" (in terms of the British tradition) Romantic norms that tend to condition contemporary readings; this assertion should be extended to *The Rising Village* and *The Emigrant*.

The Rising Village, *The Emigrant* and *Acadia* are pioneering poems, each both describes and is an act of exploration and settlement that also, paradoxically, dwells on the past. The current editions of these poems are likewise part of a constructive, pioneering project that breaks promising ground for the study of early Canadian writing.

MANINA JONES

REVISIONS

PATRICIA MONK, *The Gilded Beaver. An Introduction to the Life and Work of James De Mille*. ECW Press, $25.00 paper.

CATHERINE SHELDRICK ROSS (ed.), *Recovering Canada's First Novelist. Proceedings from the John Richardson Conference*. Porcupine's Quill, $10.95 paper.

BOTH THESE BOOKS are solid contributions to scholarship in the field of nineteenth-century Canadian literature. The Richardson book suffers less than usual from the difficulties inherent in published collections of papers presented to a conference. While the papers are by no means comprehensive in their examination of all aspects of Richardson's life and work, they are all uniformly well written and pertinent to their particular topic. They all, also, spark the reader's interest. Despite the fact that the book was published in 1984, and was based on a conference that took place in 1977, it would be difficult to put it down today and not think that some rereading and reevaluating of Richardson was in order.

In many ways the most fascinating of the essays is Douglas Cronk's "The Americanization of *Wacousta*," which traces the textual history of the novel and details the changes made by Adam Waldie in his pirated, heavily edited, 1833, American edition — changes which came to be accepted as authentic text. "For one hundred years critics have been commenting on the Americanized version; much, if not all, of what they have been saying is erroneous, and surely would not have been said if they had been reading the real thing." The questions Cronk raises about the source of some reprints and modern editions of our early authors are surely the justification for the work of Carleton University's Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts and the University of Western Ontario's Canadian Poetry Press.

The essays of I. S. MacLaren, Jay Macpherson and Michael Hurley overlap to a certain extent, but in a positive way, complementing each other and sending a reader back and forth between them following up ideas. All contribute to our understanding of Richardson's novels as part of the gothic and romantic genres of his day. The late Carl Klinck's opening essay explaining why John Norton could not have been the model for the character of Wacousta is itself a model of demythologizing scholarship.

Patricia Monk's book on James De Mille confronts a different set of problems. Both the man and the work have been the subject of many studies, of varying scholarly quality. Monk attempts, with exhaustive research, to set the record straight about both the individual and his literary production, all the while taking care to treat her predecessors in the field with respect. De Mille experts will understand that in some cases, when she seems to belabour a particular point, what she is really doing is arguing that a detail, previously accepted, is wrong. Similarly, her description of various works seems to depend on extant critical analysis—either agreeing, disagreeing, or amplifying. The non-specialist may wonder occasionally why so much attention is being paid to what seem to be minor points.

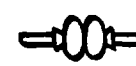
On the whole it is an admirable book. Monk rarely strays from the provable into the hypothetical in order to fill in gaps. She uses diaries and other sources from the period to give an impression of her subject's life, and she produces as much information about James De Mille as can be discovered at this time. Where the works are concerned, she carefully produces what is, in effect, an extended annotated bibliography (although questions of textual authenticity are relegated to footnotes). Making the information available, she has cleared the way for others to follow with critical reevaluations. Only in the case of *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* has she entered into a critical study, arguing that the book, as we know it, was unfinished.

Only one area of De Mille's life is left unexplored—his Baptist religion. While Monk goes into great detail about school curricula, trying to give some impression of the type of education he received, she says nothing about the Baptist value system that governed much of his life. Surely, if the Baptist church had been as strong a part of his life as she implies, he would not have left the church over the Halifax congregation's treatment of his father-in-law.

The book's greatest flaw is an overly rigid structure. Part I, the first 150 pages, discusses the life; Part II, about the same length, discusses the works. Never the twain shall meet. It is frustrating to be reading the biographical section and have no idea that De Mille was doing any writing at all, and then to be reading about the works and having to refer back to the life. Surely these two sections could have been better integrated.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing of all is the title of the book. "The Gilded Beaver" was the name of the ship in which James De Mille's ancestor came to North America. Monk sees the name as suggesting "... Not only his dyed-in-the-wool Canadian personality (the beaver), but also the layers of misinformation (the gilding) that envelop him and almost hide the real man from view." The title may have seemed heaven-sent to an author looking for an attractive title for an academic book, but it tells the reader nothing at all about the subject. Thank heaven for good old-fashioned descriptive subtitles!

MARY LU MACDONALD



GHOSTS COME BACK

The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts, ed. Laurel Boone. Goose Lane Editions, $39.95.

FEW CANADIAN WRITERS have received more scholarly and critical attention than Charles G. D. Roberts. In the early nineteen eighties, he was the subject, not of one, but of two academic conferences. Before that there had been a biography, two monographs, many articles and parts of books, and several selections of his poetry and prose. In the mid-to-late eighties, the articles and parts of books continued to appear, and there was also a second biography and a critical edition of his *Collected Poems*. Conspicuous by their absence from the lengthening shelf of Robertsiana were two things needful for a full assessment of Roberts's thought and work: a collection of his critical writings (reviews, essays, introductions, and the like) and a collection of his letters. Thanks to Laurel Boone and her colleagues at the University of New Brunswick and elsewhere, the latter gap has been filled with *The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts* from Goose Lane Editions in Fredericton. Handsomely printed, durably bound, and attractively illustrated with black and white photographs of Roberts, Bliss Carman, and others, *The Collected Letters* is a credit to Boone, Goose Lane Editions, and the "Old Man" himself, who appears on the dustcover and titlepage with pencil, paper, and book in hand — very much a man of letters.

In a brief Preface entitled "Editorial Policies & Acknowledgements," Boone traces the provenance of the project that she has ably brought to completion. The brainchild of Desmond Pacey and the adopted son and godson of Fred Cogswell and Robert Gibbs, it has been a communal undertaking that has changed and grown down the years, involving in the process most Roberts scholars and critics, including Jogesh Mahanti, Graham Adams, Margo Dunn, Margaret Jarvie, and John C. Adams. To all these people and others, then, as well as to Boone herself, must go — in the words of Roberts's *Orion* — "Thanksgiving . . . clear, far, and fine . . ." for bringing to completion a project which is certain to advance our understanding of Roberts in particular and post-Confederation poetry in general.

Given the controversial content of some of Roberts's letters, it is reassuring to know that "This volume is as complete a collection as the editor was able to make it; no letters have been knowingly omitted, and no letters have been abridged." No doubt, there are Roberts letters in private hands that will surface in due course, but in the meantime *The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts* is what it purports to be — a warts and all compilation that permits us to see Roberts in his many roles and seasons, from home-body to bohemian, joker to sage. It is a little disappointing that "Lists, poems, and other enclosures that are still with the original letters are [merely] noted but not included" in *The Collected Letters*, but perhaps limitations of space and funds necessitated this decision. With its "Introduction" by Fred Cogswell, its useful "Key to [the] Location of Letters," its description of the "Major Collections of Roberts Letters," and its fine "Index," *The Collected Letters* runs to 664 pages — nearly three hundred more than the volume with which it immediately invites comparison, H. Pearson Gundy's *Letters of Bliss Carman*.

In addition to her Preface, Boone's contributions to *The Collected Letters* presumably include the headnotes to the six phases into which the volume divides Roberts's life, from "Beginnings: 1868-1885" to "The Last Decade: 1933-1943." (*Presumably* because, unlike Boone's Pre-

face and Cogswell's "Introduction," these headnotes are not signed.) Some critics might balk at the arbitrary and even novelistic quality of these divisions, but to most readers they will surely provide useful contexts for the letters that surround them — valuable sources of information about changes in residence, shifts of employment, and similar matters which would otherwise be buried in a general Introduction or packed into unwieldy footnotes. As they stand, the footnotes are, for the most part, brief and factual. Their function is explained by Boone at some length: "footnote references are made to all identified correspondents and people mentioned, and their connection with Roberts is noted. . . . Works by other writers are identified when such information is important in the context of the letter. Events in Roberts's life and world affairs are noted when this is necessary for clarity of meaning." By and large, the footnotes fulfil these functions well, although, inevitably, there are omissions and oversights that provide grist for a reviewer's mill; for example, the "Mary Morgan" who appears in "A Partial List of Canadian Verse Writers" in a letter of July 7, 1888 to W. D. Lighthall is not identified, and, in an otherwise very thorough note to a letter of November 28, 1884 to Carman, "'La Belle jaune Giroflée'" is not disclosed as a reference to William Morris's "The Gulliflower of Gold," a lapse that leads to a failure to recognize that the "curious . . . thing concerning Geoffrey [illeg.] [illeg.]" in the same paragraph refers to another poem in *The Defence of Guenevere* volume: "Concerning Geffray Teste Noire." Throughout *The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts*, the identification of articles in periodicals and other fugitive items is patchy. This being so, there is some compromising of Boone's claim that "Works by other writers are identified when such information is important in the context of [a] letter."

But insights rather than oversights are what *The Collected Letters* really yields in abundance. Time and time again, Roberts's correspondence enlarges our understanding of his life and work, bringing into sharper focus matters dimly glimpsed or not seen at all. It is fascinating to read of the genesis of Roberts's contribution on New Brunswick to *Picturesque Canada* and to hear his thoughts on his *History of Canada*. It is intriguing to know that he regarded *Saul* as Charles Heavysege's "one great poem," to hear him raving about Sidney Lanier, to find him proclaiming Keats "one of [his] *gods*," and to learn that he wrote all but the last three paragraphs of an article entitled "My Religion" by Mrs. Grace Dean McLeod Rogers in a May, 1926 issue of *The Star Weekly*. A passing reference to Francis B. Gummare's *Handbook of Poetics for Students* (1885) reveals what may have been a vital influence on Roberts's poetics (and perhaps Carman's too). "The one condition of descriptive poetry," writes Gummare at one point, "is that it shall have distinctively *human connections and human interest*; else it becomes a *catalogue*"; and at another: "The words *elegy* and *elegiac* must be used with caution. The classical lament was written in alternate hexameter and pentameter. It came to be used for any reflective poetry; hence 'elegiac' refers more to the metre than the subject." Did Roberts have these passages in mind when he wrote of "Nature-poetry" as "no mere description of landscape in metrical form, but an expression . . . of . . . vital relationships between external nature and 'the deep heart of man'" and described the form of "Tantramar Revisited" and "The Pipes of Pan" as "Ovidian elegiac metre" (*Selected Poetry* and *Critical Prose*, ed. W. J. Keith [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974], and "Prefatory Note," *Selected*

Poems [Toronto: Ryerson, 1936])? Was he perhaps thinking of Gummare's comments on elegiac metre when he told Carman on October 29, 1892 that "Ave" is "not an elegy, but a Commemoration Ode for Shelley's Centenary. *Not* in hexameters & pentameters, but in 10 line iambic pentameter stanzas of mine own invention, very simple & direct." Not only for what *The Collected Letters* contains but also for what it points towards must we be grateful to Boone and her colleagues.

If there is one major disappointment in *The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts* it is Cogswell's "Introduction." An "attempt," in Cogswell's own words, "to give [his] reaction to reading Roberts's letters," the "Introduction" seldom rises either in style or insight above the banal. In its early pages, it includes long passages from the correspondence with little or no commentary. In its later pages, it becomes awkward and repetitive. In between, it seeks to demonstrate that "the letters of Roberts are all of a piece and display those qualities of personality which evidently coloured his actions throughout his life." Despite Roberts's characterization of himself in 1882 as a "Canadian Republican," Cogswell insists that he was "consistently a Tory democrat . . . [and] a Canadian nationalist." Despite his boast about his sexual conquests ("our Lady Cytherea hath smiled benignly & diversely this year . . . One day this summer I scored three new & undreamed of points between sundown & sundown!"), Roberts's dominant qualities, in Cogswell's eyes, are "politeness . . . courtesy . . . [and] modesty." The touchy question of Roberts's canine sexual proclivities is addressed by Cogswell defensively and unconvincingly: "It may come as a surprise to those who have long accepted — and sometimes enhanced — Roberts's reputation as a 'free spirit' in his dealings with women to find that of all his correspondence his letters to only three women may be truly classed as 'love letters.' . . . To put the matter succinctly, Constance Davies Woodrow and Eleanor Williams-Moore are treated as loved objects, whereas Joan Montgomery [the future Lady Roberts] is treated as a loved person." Since Cogswell has for many years been concerned to protect Robert's reputation, it is not surprising to find him doing so here, partly by stressing the poet's "mysticism, his belief that the underlying enigmatic spiritual essence of existence worked through the instrumentality of the material . . ." Was Roberts, then, a "'free spirit'" whose search for the "spiritual essence" took him from bed to bed and country to country? Such a hypothesis is suggested by several of Cogswell's comments and, like much else about his "Introduction," it leaves the reader regretting that our senior Roberts scholar did not use the opportunity of *The Collected Letters* to offer a more rigorous and penetrating analysis of Roberts's life and work.

The Collected Letters of Charles G. D. Roberts will be in any library, public or private, which claims to concentrate on Canadian writing. Its central attraction — Roberts himself — renders its strengths apt and its weaknesses merely regrettable.

D. M. R. BENTLEY

QUÉBEC: EPIC & MELODRAMA

PHILIP LAWSON, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution.* McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, $32.95.

JACQUELINE NUGENT, *The Glass Treehouse.* Viking, $24.95.

QUÉBEC PROVIDES the central site of action in these two books. In one, this action is nothing less than epic. In the other, this action is little more than melodrama.

Philip Lawson focuses on the epic gesture of the British conquest of Québec and the subsequent problems attendant to reigning over the vanquished population, who were not only French but also Roman Catholics. Once scepticism about Canada's economic value to Britain was overcome and the fact of France's lack of interest in the return of Québec was acknowledged, difficulties immediately mounted concerning how an English-speaking, Protestant minority were to govern this society of about seventy thousand "aliens."

Lawson's painstaking research and sensitive sifting through extant scholarship disclose that official British bureaucratic decisions after this conquest did not at all mirror the confidence of the general public, especially as expressed in newspapers, about the Anglicization of Québec. The general public anticipated the continued exclusion of all papists from social and political life, in accord with British custom, but with the memory of the Irish imbroglio and with their backs to a wall of Québecois resistance government officials increasingly found it necessary to create a breach in standard practices. In short, a steadily widening fissure emerged in ministerial thinking and in the rigid British constitutional structure, both of which eventually accommodated (at least in theory) religious and racial toleration in order to gain the loyalty of the Quebecois and to make the investment in Canada economically viable.

Lawson's excellent study is a work of history, but its epic subject invites a brief literary observation. In epic there often occurs a curse, pronounced by the vanquished victim against the imperialist conqueror. This curse calls for vengeance, but in structural terms it implies a lingering voice of defiance and a challenge to closure in the epic itself. As the circumstances of post-Meech Lake Accord Canada today suggest, there has been no formal closure to the epic conquest of Québec. In fact, as Lawson's book intimates, in every act of imperialism the nominally colonized denizens intrinsically engage in a reverse invasion. When the British ministers allowed the wall of their longstanding constitutional structure to be breached, they in turn became colonized. And so, as if life does indeed sometimes imitate art, today the epic of the conquest of Québec continues to resist closure.

Closure is so important to Jacqueline Nugent, on the other hand, that the final pages of her novel hurtle her heroine (Jenny Braun) into unconvincing reconciliations, one after another in rapid succession, with her mother, father, stepfather, former adolescent gay lover, and herself. There are so many problems with this novel that it is painful to enumerate them, especially since the author seems well-intentioned.

There is, for example, trouble with narration, which alternates unsuccessfully from the unlikely articulateness of Thérèse Lacoste's thoughts, to the self-indulgent diarylike letters of Jenny, to an intrusive unidentified third-person voice which violates the reader's intimacy with the two womens' personal revelations. There is trouble about the function of the past (the 1960s) and the setting (La Chaudière) in the novel; neither is convincing, for the few references to lyrics from pop songs and the few sketches of scenes along the St. Lawrence River are so superficial that the reader senses not only a lack of depth in the characters for whom these are supposed to be important "real" matters but also a lack of interest or of genuine knowledge for the author. Worst of all, perhaps, are the themes of the book; that "chaos" comprises the "backyard" of our seemingly orderly lives, that "nothing can live unless something else dies," that "there was friendship," but "if you love someone pain is inevitable" and sometimes "you're too close" are all monumental clichés. This particular fail-

ing might possibly have been redeemed somewhat had these tired themes not been served up in a melodrama which lacks the resonances of literary art and finally borders on mere authorial self-absorption.

As a reader I kept sensing, rightly or wrongly, that Nugent could not concentrate on narrative management, on structural pace, on credible resolutions, on external details, or on plausible behaviour because her entire book was for her a very interior attempt at a therapeutic working out of something authorially personal. The principal concern, perhaps for Nugent as much as for her heroine, seems to be how "time . . . drags out for me in boredom." Except for the relationship between handicapped Yves Lacoste and his retarded daughter Marie-Hélène, and for the last page of the novel (which is indeed well-crafted), the time it took me to read this long novel dragged out in boredom too. I wish it had been otherwise, and I wish Nugent better fortune as a writer now that she has probably worked out some personal matter for herself.

WILLIAM J. SCHEICK

CONSTRUCT OF LITERATURE

W. H. NEW, *A History of Canadian Literature*. Macmillan, $26.75.

CAN ANY HISTORY of literature be written in this generally post-historic time? For not only has history been called into question, but so, too, has the construct of literature. As Hans Gumbrecht has recently argued in a *New Literary History* essay, "since the metahistorical concept of literature (in dominant use to this day) arose against the background of a relatively precise concept of historical totality, it follows that, after the disappearance of the totality 'history,' the equally precise pattern of the fragment 'literature' can likewise no longer persist." Nor can literature be propped up with a national adjective, which merely adds its own self-referential emptiness. Thus Sacvan Bercovitch, in *Critical Inquiry*, notes the risk that his *American Literary History* will be seen "as being neither history nor literary nor American." Yet none of these considerations kept W. H. New from writing a magisterial *History of Canadian Literature*. How, one well may ask, did he do it?

He does it partly, to answer partly that last question, through an obviously massive reading of most everything Canadian but a reading guided by a keen eye for the telling detail combined with the tact to let the detail speak mostly for itself. Thus he early quotes Robert Hayman's seventeenth-century and thoroughly conventional paean on the prospective pleasures of settling "Newfound-land" where "the Aire . . . is wholesome, goode;/the Fire as sweet as any made of wood;" and then, for political and poetic balance, juxtaposes a later poem by Irish-born Donnach Ruah MacConmara in which English lines proclaim the same standard patriotic and pro-settlement sentiments but alternating Gaelic Irish lines flatly deny them, acknowledging, for example, that Ireland is the much more attractive island, that the boasts of new world life are lies, and that the king just praised is wished to perdition. New need not point out how this intertext brilliantly counters what one Canadian theorist of the *Literary Text and the Immigrant Imaginary* (Arnold Itwaru's subtitle) has termed "the hegemonic pressures at work in anglophone domination." We know that MacConmara knew his English readers would assume that the Gaelic simply parroted the English and never dream that it might voice quite different sentiments beyond their ken. Who would have thought that a poem written in Canada in the 1740s

could so effectively resist "hegemonic discourse"?

New's achievement also partly derives from his thorough understanding of the historical, social, and technological groundings of literature and his ability to draw illuminating connections and/or parallels between cultural facts and texts as cultural productions. One section, for example, discusses how "the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Canada were instrumental in changing literary form." Or in a different vein, New can juxtapose Emile Nelligan and Mackenzie King as "embodiments of shared cultural predicaments, representations of cultural value" (and slyly not find it necessary to note that Mackenzie King is more the predicament and Nelligan the value). Or he can conjoin a cartoonist and a quiltmaker to explore the emerging politics of women's art in Canada in the 1960s and the 1970s. Literary facts are regularly placed in illuminating social contexts. In this context I would compare New's study to another that I recently reviewed in which history and literature were conjoined mostly in what I termed the Chinese metaphysical mode, as if the author had read up on history, had read up on literature, and then, simply put the products of his two studies together. Suffice it to say that when it comes to the history of Canadian literature, Professor New obviously knows his Chinese metaphysics. I would also note that an appended and very detailed chronological table listing in one column "author and title" and in another "event" enables anyone to construct his or her own Chinese metaphysics of Canadian literary history.

But mostly New knows Canadian literature. He dispenses that knowledge partly in the form of a wealth of information. In fact, my one criticism is the book's excess of detail and documentation that sometimes verges on what seems a catalogue of names (but then, including virtually everything is one way to solve the problem of canonization). He also provides possible perspectives, suggestive ways of looking at particular writers and works. These observations, often a single sentence that someone else would have expanded into a note or article, illustrate most of the concerns of contemporary theory but are not in the service of any one critical approach nor are they attempts at definitive evaluations. The voice of authority is invoked only so far as to deliver "current estimates." Still from a suggestion how early exploration narratives can be read across a double grid of changing European social expectations and emerging Canadian ones, to a final observation that the very codes he employs in his last chapter to categorize contemporary literature are also unwritten by the same texts they inform, New serves up convincing formulation after convincing formulation. Indeed, his final observation (derived from *The Handmaid's Tale*) that literature always "resists current systems of enclosure and categorization," appropriately prompts New to suggest that it might be "well to regard [his own study] as a history in progress."

The book, having answered — as I have not — the question of how to write literary history in this post-historical time and having answered it with the book itself, then half denies that answer. "Behold, I have done it" is the proper Zen response to any "how do you . . ." impossible query. It becomes, "Well, maybe . . ." But that is not the whole story either. A recent review in *Canadian Literature* quoted Foucault's "dream" of "a kind of criticism that would not try to judge, but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life." Granting the tenuous reality of dreams, of nations (especially, it more and more seems, Canada) and of narrative (literature and history), New has come about as close to that dream as one is likely to come, in that, with *A History of Cana-*

dian Literature, he has brought the nation's oeuvre to life.

ARNOLD DAVIDSON

CLIMATE OF CHANGE

W. H. NEW, ed., *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*, Second Edition, Volume IV. Univ. of Toronto Press, $60; pa. $24.95.

SINCE ITS FIRST APPEARANCE in 1965, the *Literary History of Canada* has been of immense value to students and scholars of Canadian writing, both at home and abroad. This new volume extends the second edition of the work (published in three parts in 1976) by surveying the years from 1972 to 1984. In his admirable introduction to the volume, W. H. New gives a wide-ranging and stimulating account of the complex relations between contemporary Canadian literature and the society in which it was written. The years under review witnessed some profound changes in domestic and foreign policy, including constitutional upheaval, the growing political involvement of the women's movement and native rights groups, shifting economic relations with the United States and changes in the ethnic character of Canada. While the 1970s and 1980s were undoubtedly years of artistic innovation and scholarly achievement, the culture as a whole was severely marked by unemployment and recession.

The political and social change of the past two decades have, nevertheless, given rise to some of the most remarkable experiments in literary form and technique. In its own distinctive way, Canadian literature has responded to the appeal of postmodernist and poststructuralist theory. Such a turning has not, however, led to an evasion of political and historical commitments. The language of play has frquently been the language of protest. As Professor New points out, the use of postmodernist techniques is one way of disrupting a reader's passive acceptance of conventional rhetoric and its implicit social values. "Discourse" and "ideology" are common currency in Canadian literary criticism, but are nearly always fraught with related questions of colonialism, regionalism and nationalism. One obvious consequence of Canada's changing intellectual context is that "literature" and "history" (and their relationships) have come to be regarded in a much more intense and problematic way than they were in 1965 or even 1976. This is clearly evident in the structure of the new volume. In addition to the expected surveys of conventional literary genres (poetry, fiction, drama), there are chapters on writing for radio, television and film, children's literature, folklore and "life-writing," as well as chapters on the literature of anthropology, political science, history and psychology. The volume aims for "a plural series of readings, not a single monolithic version of literary accomplishment"; it acknowledges "a literature-in-progress" and avoids any fixed conclusions about the state of the art.

Laurie Ricou's fine opening chapter on Canadian poetry registers the impact of non-referential or self-reflexive techniques in recent literature, but goes on to claim that such writing need not be at odds with a poetry of place and history. Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Satalogue* (1977) is frequently cited as a model of achievement in this respect. Ricou very deftly combines a survey of broad, formal categories such as "The Metaphysical Lyric" and "The Documentary Long Poem" with a detailed account of several individual works. His approach is properly critical, both lauding the achievements of Canadian poetry and lamenting its deficiencies. His objections are tactful, good humoured and thoroughly disarming, as with his complaint that Irving Layton "never seems to realize that the curse, no matter how incantatory, is a genre necessarily limited in

duration." With an earnestness that leaves little room for self congratulation, Ricou concludes his chapter by asking "What kind of culture publishes so many books, so many decent, sincere, informative books of poetry which are destined to go unread?"

The great value of this new volume is that its constituent chapters exceed the boundaries of the usual survey and offer a lively intervention in the current critical debate. The best chapters are argumentative as well as descriptive. David Jackel's chapter on short fiction, for instance, is comprehensive and well informed, but it also raises some crucial questions about judgment and evaluation. Should stories be anthologized according to a perceived Canadian subject matter or according to the formal (and supposedly universal) criteria of stylistic excellence? Jackel regrets the homogenizing tendency of international modernism and insists that "awareness of literary trends outside Canada does not mean that an attention to Canadian distinctiveness must be abandoned." In a neatly polemical retort he goes on to claim that "International standards are not truly international, since like dominant economic theories, or the price of gold, they are established by imperial powers." In practice, Canadian short fiction has retained a sense of place, though not in the strict terms of empirical realism. As in the stories of Alice Munro, region and nation are more likely to manifest themselves in the subtle modulations of consciousness and experience than in the obvious devices of naming and describing.

For Linda Hutcheon, in her excellent chapter on the Canadian novel, there is an obvious parallel between the current literary critical debate and the shifting ideological climate of the past two decades. These were years in which the "supposedly universal culture and values" on which "tradition" was thought to rest were severely challenged by the perspectives of region, class and gender. Canadian national discontinuities found an appropriate form in the discontinuities of postmodernism. Even so, there has been a reluctance among Canadian novelists to abandon completely the forms and techniques of conventional realism, a tendency that might well be attributed to Canada's "late post-colonial need to reclaim the past." This has given rise to a distinctive narrative structure that Linda Hutcheon has termed "historiographic metafiction." Paradoxically, this kind of writing is both self-reflexive and yet responsive to political and historical processes. A widespread experimentation in novel writing has subsequently led to the breakdown of traditional boundaries between fiction and history, biography and autobiography, and some of the most impressive works are those that have challenged and reconstituted different genres of literature. While reviewing an astonishing range of contemporary Canadian fiction with skill and insight, Linda Hutcheon usefully selects a handful of "technically significant works," including Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words*, Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear*, Audrey Thomas's *Intertidal Life* and Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*.

Many of Linda Hutcheon's observations are borne out by Barry Cameron's substantial account of recent theory and criticism, and her own outstanding work on postmodernism and parody features largely in this chapter and elsewhere in the volume. One of the most noticeable developments in Canadian literary criticism has been the move away from the "mythosymbolic" and thematic modes of Northrop Frye, Margaret Atwood, D. G. Jones and others towards a grounding of critical practice in post-Saussurean linguistics. Cameron acknowledges the challenge to received definitions of "centre"

and "mainstream" from various cultural margins, and very quickly and astutely establishes the problematic issues of nationality, identity and language:

> Conventionally, 'nation' equates with the area where the national language is used. But when the nation is linguistically and geographically fragmented, and when the (plural) languages are at once 'our own' and those of other quite different and powerful cultures, then such terms as 'place,' 'speech,' and 'identity' carry ambivalent meanings.

One of the clearest signs of Canada's growing confidence and independence in matters of literary theory is the strong assertion of cultural difference and its continuing challenge to universal categories. Cameron, like Jackel, claims that "International criteria are not ideologically neutral, and some readers even see them as evidence of colonial-mindedness."

It is symptomatic of the current widespread disagreement over the future of literary studies that Cameron's survey should be followed by a separate chapter in which Balachandra Rajan concentrates on "scholarship" rather than "theory." Rajan gives a very different impression of the humanities in Canada, implying that scholarly endeavour is still largely editorial and preoccupied with "the canon." The tone of his article is wary and defensive, and his attitude to theory is deeply ambivalent; while in some ways wishing to protect "the state of the academy," he is also concerned to rebuke it for its institutional inertia.

The contradictions in Canadian literary history are apparent in nearly every one of the sixteen chapters in this volume. More plays were written between 1972 and 1984 than in the whole of Canada's previous history and yet financial restraints threaten the future of the theatre. Children's literature discovered "a self-generating creative vitality of its own" and yet there are still fears of American cultural dominance. Writings in Canadian history flourished but what was largely recorded was a diminishing sense of any coherent national past. The book trade made tremendous advances in the face of recession and yet Canadian books still occupy only 25-29 per cent of the home market. It is in the writings on anthropology and political science that the most confident forecasts appear. Here, we encounter a culture that seems hopeful, optimistic, and politically alert. The energy and commitment within this volume are fuelled by a shared desire for humane and democratic values at all levels of Canadian society. Perhaps the warmest tribute that can be paid to Professor New and his colleagues is to say that the *Literary History of Canada* will, in its own special way, encourage and inform the climate of change.

STEPHEN REGAN

GIRLS AND WOMEN

MARGARET CONRAD, TONI LAIDLAW, and DONNA SMYTH, eds., *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938*. Formac, $19.95.

JOAN GIVNER, *Mazo de la Roche: The Hidden Life*. Oxford, $26.95.

ROSANNA LEPROHON, *Antoinette De Mirecourt, or, Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing*. Ed. John C. Stockdale, CEECT Edition, $12.95.

FICTION, BIOGRAPHY, diaries and letters: each is a genre with its own claim on "truth" and each, by virtue of its very mode of composition, constructs a different strategy of intervention into the experience of its subjects. In fiction and biography the presence of the author/narrator is overt: the book begins from a purpose defined by its creator, not by the characters who act out their lives between the covers of the text. At yet another level editors intervene, choosing which texts to

publish and in which version. On the other hand, the fifteen women whose words are published — for the first time, in most cases — in *No Place Like Home* wrote privately, for themselves or their families and friends. Yet as Margaret Atwood asked upon discovering her own grandmother's diary, "Why do people write diaries, if they don't want people to read them, ever?" Should we regard the privacy in which women have historically conducted their lives as a choice, or as an imposition?

The editors of *No Place Like Home*, conscious of this problem of choice, present their selection in good faith, noting that "Many of our diarists and letter writers would be surprised to find that their daily activities were of interest to modern readers and a few might be horrified to think that their awkward prose was actually committed to the printed page. We recall the lives of these Nova Scotia women not to pry or even to judge." This book, which arises from an earlier project to locate Maritime women's diaries, celebrates a wide range of women's self-articulated experience over a 150-year period when some of the conditions governing women's lives changed and many did not. The selections range from the astute observations of a delightfully articulate eighteenth-century schoolgirl to a terse log of the daily chores of a successful independent farmwoman. Whether at home in Nova Scotia or abroad (at sea with a captain husband or on a missionary station in Asia), one of the constant themes is persistence in the face of hardship and loss, particularly the deaths of children. We see women at work, whether employed outside the home or within, and also share their social relationships and cultural activities that provided pleasure. In their excellent introduction, the editors situate the selections within the context of the history and demography of Nova Scotia. While its perspective is essentially historical, *No Place Like Home* should also appeal to literary scholars interested in the different ways women have used language in relation to their purpose, class, historical era, audience, and level of education.

John C. Stockdale's new edition of *Antoinette de Mirecourt* also situates the book within its historical context, although with less awareness of the history of women in Quebec than some readers might expect (especially as that history is now becoming accessible). First published in 1864, Rosanna Leprohon's novel received little attention in English-speaking Canada until it was reprinted by the New Canadian Library in 1973. Now it has earned the status of a belated classic, its issues of women's social roles and English-French relations having acquired new relevance. Stockdale's extensive research into the era of the book's composition has brought forward elements that further illuminate Leprohon's text and context, namely that of the American Civil War. Although Leprohon set her narrative a century earlier (Stockdale identifies her "176–" as 1763), she was employing the "aesthetic distance" of historical romance to discuss a very current problem: the sudden influx of thousands of British troops sent to Montreal in 1861 posed a threat to the city's social equilibrium, in particular to its vulnerable young women. Thus Antoinette's misalliance with a British military adventurer would have been read, in 1864, as a serious caution to Leprohon's female readership; indeed one can now even see Antoinette herself as a projection of the author's own young daughters. While many of the episodes in *Antoinette*, such as the sleighing accident and the duel, are stock devices of the romance mode within which Leprohon wrote, Stockdale's assiduous research adds resonance to her choice of conventions. It is certainly interesting to learn that at the time she was working on *Antoinette*, Le-

prohon was living in a house formerly occupied by a participant in a notorious duel well known to Montrealers.

Details such as these, found in Stockdale's introduction and ample notes, enhance our reading of *Antoinette de Mirecourt* and contribute to our understanding of Leprohon's own research and allusions. Having opened this review with the topic of choice, I could query the decision to bring out a new edition of this novel in view of the availability of the NCL version which is based on the only previous edition (Lovell 1864), a text which, in Stockdale's own words, "contains relatively few obvious errors." However, I will turn instead to a different matter — the book's cover. All previous CEECT publications are bound in muted shades of pink, orange or tan. *Antoinette*, in contrast, is encased in such brilliant vermilion that the cover begs to be read as an extension of the text, underscoring the heroine's integration into the dominant power structure once she has finally married the right red-coated British officer.

Mazo de la Roche: The Hidden Life returns us to the problem of privacy mentioned earlier. Joan Givner's major accomplishment is to have disentangled some of the matted knots of de la Roche's biography, and to present a coherent linear narrative where she left a deliberately tangled web. De la Roche's autobiography, *Ringing the Changes*, published at the very end of a long and complicated life, is a collection of intriguing anecdotes lacking dates, consistency, and explanations. During the course of her research Givner uncovered some important new material, in particular family history from 1905 to 1910, when de la Roche's improvident father attempted to run a respectable residential hotel in Acton, Ontario, and a batch of correspondence with her editors at *The Atlantic Monthly*. These letters, now housed at the University of Texas, seem to have escaped the attention of de la Roche's earlier biographers. Her correspondence with Ellery Sedgewick graphically demonstrates that one of the significant traits of de la Roche's personality was a childishness unnaturally prolonged into middle age. As well, Givner reveals that de la Roche's identity was not entirely unknown to *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1927, when *Jalna* won the $10,000 prize that sent her career skyrocketing. As Givner shows a certain sleuthing ability, it is disappointing that she was unable to persuade Ontario's custodians of vital statistics to disclose a few facts that would dispell more of the puzzles that continue to enshroud de la Roche's life, such as the birth date of her life-long companion, her cousin Caroline Clement, and the fate of Caroline's mother, who fades rather mysteriously from the scene. One of the most tantalizing enigmas, the origin of Mazo's two adopted children, seems destined to remain unsolved, although Givner's suggestion that they may have come from New York rather than Europe opens new avenues to explore.

I have begun with Givner's facts rather than her interpretation because the facts (and factual discrepancies) of Mazo's life speak for themselves in implying the complexity of her history and personality. Her evasiveness about dates and her fabrication of romantic ancestors, her delayed maturity and her retreat into the imaginative world of "The Play" that she shared with Caroline even when the pair were well past middle age, her occasional breakdowns and her compulsive moving from one residence to another after she acquired wealth and status, all indicate that Mazo was a troubled soul who projected some of her conflicts about selfhood and sexuality into her writing. But so were (and are) many (perhaps most) other novelists, men as well as women. Interpretation is not Givner's strong point, and her rather facile gen-

eralizations about patriarchy and creativity simplify problematic issues. Feminism and psychological analysis could (and should) be applied to de la Roche, but with more dexterity than we find here. Givner, to her credit, does not mask her method of imposing interpretation onto her subject. Her insistence that de la Roche "encoded" her "gender confusion," complicated psyche" and naive eroticism into her writings produces pages doted with speculative words and phrases: reiteration of "perhaps," "might well have," "apparently," "all the more likely," "it is possible to see," "her readers must wonder," "suggests," "may have been," "undoutedly" and so forth fails to inspire confidence in Givner's symbolic readings. De la Roche and Caroline Clement did their best to frustrate biographical detectives by destroying personal papers and withholding or fabricating details of their lives; in the absence of diaries and other self-revealing documents, the inner world of a woman who once listed "privacy" as her hobby should perhaps be allowed to rest in peace.

This story would have been enriched if better placed in the context of other female authors. "The Play" invites comparison with the intense fantasy world of the young Brontes. Moreover, de la Roche's career developed in parallel with those of many other Canadian women writers; while Katherine Hale's personal friendship is discussed and both Dorothy Livesay and Ethel Wilson make brief appearances, no mention is made of any of the Canadian women authors who also enjoyed great popular success during the first half of this century, such as Marshall Saunders, L. M. Montgomery, Marjorie Pickthall or Madge Macbeth. They too led difficult lives, which could be used by de la Roche's biographers as frames and foils for her—as revealed in Montgomery's diaries, for example, and Macbeth's likewise evasive memoirs. These women shared the struggle for acceptance that is well described in Givner's account of the condescension cast on de la Roche by the paternalistic publishing and critical establishment in both Canada and the United States.

While on the subject of publishing, I cannot conclude without mentioning the surprising number of errors in a book from a reputable press. Those that leapt to my attention include "palimsestically," "they" for "then," "in in," "Canadian Library series" for "New Canadian Library," "the difference . . . are," "Kind Alfred" for "King Alfred"; "proceeding" for "preceeding." We all make such slips when we write — that's why publishers employ editors.

CAROLE GERSON

MEDITATION

MIRIAM WADDINGTON, *Apartment Seven: Essays Selected and New*. Oxford Univ. Press, $16.95.

"I BELIEVE THAT human imagination and its language are inexhaustible and can transcend sexual bias and domination," Miriam Waddington writes in, "Bias," the final essay of her collection, *Apartment Seven*. While the essay speaks of bias against women as individuals and women as writers, it also affirms the fundamental bias of the writer's imaginative life: love of and faith in the power of language. This commitment to language serves as the unifying motif for her explorations of life as experience, and life as literature.

As twelve books of poetry amply demonstrate, the focus for Waddington is the range and resonance of the art of writing, as well as an investigation of its technical resources. Metaphor defined in "Bias," is perceived as the "vital essence of language" by which the inarticulate is given form and substance through the alchemy of words. "Form and Ideology in Poetry" and, "Poetry as Communication," two essays devoted to language as art examine the complexities behind the apparent simplicities of poetic language. Poetry is for Waddington the supreme synthesis, an amalgam of all the resources of language, "physiological, emotional, and intellectual." This amalgam is "Poetry as Communication," an essay concerned with the process which transforms raw experience, articulates it as literature.

Waddington's investigation of language as poetry continues in her luminously sympathetic analysis of A. M. Klein in "Alone: Klein's Rocking Chair." Klein, whose poetic career was tragically interrupted by an untimely and incapacitating illness remains one of the most brilliantly accomplished Canadian poets. Waddington's assessment is strengthened by a shared cultural and aesthetic perspective, her empathy for and awareness of the Jewish roots of Klein's work enlarges and illuminates her understanding. Klein's growth and poetic development result from "the task of enlarging tradition," which leads to a heightened nationalism, empathy with the culture of Quebec, the solidifying of individuality by acknowledging the richness of geography. Virtuosity of language is disciplined by selective maturity, a maturity which turns away from archaism toward metaphor. Archaism serves as ironic comment or judgment on the past, while metaphor is non-historical, spatial and illuminates meaning. A companion essay, "The Cloudless Day: Klein's Radical Poems," makes a claim for the literary excellence of these pieces and argues they are neglected because of ideology, their marxist economics and calls to revolution causing them to be an embarrassment to critics of liberal persuasion.

As a collection, *Apartment Seven* testifies to the breadth and variety of Miriam Waddington's interests. Her pre-occupations as a woman writer, her strong historical sense of who and what she is, and what most profoundly shaped and nourished her imaginative and intellectual life are each vividly present. They are, moreover, written in a style whose ease and lucidity owes much to the absence of pretentious critical jargon, respect for the intelligence of her readers, and a cool reasoned argument.

Centred in a secular Judaism with a consuming interest in Yiddish literature Miriam Waddington cannot recall "a time when I didn't know Jewish history or was unconscious of my Jewishness." A plurality of cultural experience forces the question of where is she most at home? Is it Jerusalem, the wintry Manitoba prairie or Eastern Europe? In the end she opts for all three, to live spiritually and culturally in Eastern Europe and Jerusalem,

physically in Manitoba. Obviously, for Waddington there is no claustrophobia, no sense of an enclosed world, no need for the liberation of a wider milieu felt by some immigrant minorities. Rather there is celebration, affirmation of Jewishness and subsequent feelings of alienation from the main stream Canadian life.

"Memoirs of a Jewish Farmer: Edenbridge" brings memoir and autobiography into focus. Memoir is a "remembering," autobiography a "reflecting upon." Her own informal memoir pieces do both. They reflect the flavour of the external, yet also imply the subtle patinas of the inner life as in the personal, but factual title essay, "Apartment Seven" in which we read what life, specifically literary life was like in the 1940's. It was neither romantic, nor self-conscious, nor historically aware; merely alive and vitally committed to the life of the mind.

"Every Real Thing: Hugh Garner's Cabbagetown" and "Canadian Tradition and Canadian Literature," argue for two views of literature: the historical-social and apocalyptic-mythic. Waddington espouses the historical-social and realism. John Sutherland, Carl Klinck and A. M. Klein are included in the historical-social position, while Roy Daniells, Northrop Frye and James Reaney are among those placed in the apocalyptic-mythic contingent which Waddington judges intrinsically colonial and culturally subservient. These categories are relevant in a very general sense but are no more definitive than A. J. M. Smith's earlier distinction between the "native" and "cosmopolitan" dichotomy among Canadian writers also discussed by Waddington. It is, moreover, difficult to accommodate the idea of James Reaney much of whose work mythologizes southern Ontario as colonial and culturally subservient.

Waddington is at her pungent best when writing on feminist issues and women writers. She reminds us that the feminist perspective is not a recent innovation. Women as diverse in time and place as Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone De Beauvoir, Anais Nin and Hannah Arendt have contributed to it. Waddington keeps a cool distance from the fashionable currents of the contemporary feminist "party line." There is no mention of Nicole Brossard. There is, however, a strong delineation of the hard practicalities which limit women's lives, "the paralyzing anonymity," "the domestic trivialities." Her view of De Beauvoir is of a woman cheated, a woman isolated from the concerns of ordinary humanity, thus reduced as a woman and writer.

To read *Apartment Seven* is to enjoy a meditation on two literatures: Canadian and Yiddish; to meet the remarkable poet, Rachel Korn for whom Waddington felt a revitalizing affinity and whom she translated from Yiddish into English; to be made aware of the significant contribution to Canadian Letters made by John Sutherland; to contemplate the bias and the triumph of women who reject, "the dull, the brown, the faded winterberry," to choose "the red,/the Passionate dictionary."

This is a book to read for pleasure; and to reread for profit.

MARYA FIAMENGO

CONSPICUOUS DISPLAY

TONI ONLEY, *Onley's Arctic: Diaries and Paintings of the High Arctic.* Douglas & McIntyre, $60.00.

THADDEUS HOLOWNIA and DOUGLAS LOCHEAD, *Dykelands,* McGill-Queen's, $75.00.

THESE ARE GRAND BOOKS to look at and touch and put seriously on display (a coffee table will do, if you must, but I prefer them propped up open against a

wall in the studio; it has the same effect as the coffee table, if these things matter to you, but without the middlebrow vibes). I don't think conspicuous display diminishes them at all. Their matter is conspicuously on display from cover graphics to the mugshots on the back flap, and, by the way, if you want quick character sketches of the three artists in question, check their hats.

Toni Onley's baseball cum Wehrmacht foraging cap needs no introduction. *Onley's Arctic* is an important and wonderful book. It records in image and word his several voyages to the high Arctic. Onley's, like Harris's, is precisely the kind of glacial imagination that can come to grips with large Arctic spaces. The muted colours, the serene play of big volumes, their generally planar representation, the elemental gigantism of abstracted landscapes, are the artist's visual and formal idiolect. Of course Arctic places are more than the magniloquent emptiness of big forms, more than Adolph Appia or Wieland Wagner stage sets. There is a place in the Arctic for the microscopic imagination as well, down on its hand and knees observing and noting the little lichens, the tiny white flowers, the minute glacial scratchings on stones, the spiny traces of fossils, that sort of thing. But this is not Onley's terrain.

Onley fans will love the images in this book. My favorites? "Arctic Ocean," a 1975 serigraph, is one of Onley's most inventive works in the play of forms and implied recessions; "Blue Passage/Island Suite," another serigraph, from 1975, contains a blue whose blueness your visual memory will not soon forget. The voyages in the 1970s show Onley at his best. He is fully engaged imaginatively with the landscapes he found in the North. One can sense the excitement of discovery, the rejuvenating shock of the new in his colours, compositional geometry, and the tautness of vision. Look at the 1976 serigraph "Franklin's Last Winter Camp," for example, there you see it best, the Arctic revery awing.

By 1986, the latest voyage to Greenland and Baffin Island with the Québecois poet Claude Pèloquin, a marked slackening enters the work. Colour, form, and the increasing representationalizing of the landscape lead toward images of the Arctic that we have seen before from lesser talents. Of course the 1986 voyage had other than artistic aims. Partly, as Onley explains in his text, the voyage represented a cultural and political rebuff to the challenge of American warships in the Northwest Passage in 1985. So the pieces from this voyage must be seen not just simply as the work of an artist, but the work of a cultural warrior as well, with CBC TV News team in tow.

The book also contains Onley's various diaries from his voyages. First thing to note is that the writing is not why one might buy the book. A good deal of it is prolix, banal, and slack.

> June 29: One reads of the joys of an early morning departure — of preflighting the aircraft in the wet grass to the sounds of awakening birds, of climbing out into clear, still air as though the plane were on rails. Richard Bach can make it sound very convincing; however, in reality everything conspires to prevent the pilot from getting underway, and my departure today was considerably delayed by an anxious wife whose vivid imagination conjured up all manner of misadventure for me. After promising to call at every stopover, at least until I get into the Arctic, and giving a good-bye hug to my eight-year-old son Jamie, I was off into a mid-morning sun.

Well, thank God. For a diary this is too studied and self-conscious, obviously written with publication in mind, to have the vigour and roughness of the real thing. And the 'poetic' cliches, which are Onley's stab at writerly sophistication, make one wince. Sounds of awakening birds? Clear, still air? Everything conspires? My word, Richard Bach, yes? On most days Onley

is a wonderfully agile painter, but as a writer he's generally a clodhopper.

Dykelands, which is an astonishing 19 inches wide when closed and over a yard wide when lying open, brings together two Maritimers, the photographer Thaddeus Holownia, in emphatic beret, and the poet Douglas Lochhead, in stolid yorkshire headgear. This is a grand book to handle, although it poses some problems for the conventional bookcase. Don't despair, it is cryingly a book that demands permanent display.

The dykelands referred to are the areas "built up and taken from the sea" around Chignecto Bay in the Bay of Fundy tidal system. Chignecto Bay cleaves into Shepody Bay and Cumberland Basin, with Sackville as the gateway to the area. This is rich in history, including literary history: after all Charles G. D. Roberts made the Tantramar Marshes one of the holy places of the Canadian imagination several generations ago.

The book contains Holownia's wide-angle photographs of the land accompanied *en face* by Lochhead's lyrics. The physical dimensions of the book enhance Holownia's work by emphasizing the horizontal, the horizonly, in the monochrome photographs. The play of lines, planes, and textures (planes of clean white snow against spiky tufts of grass) is exquisite and the immense emptiness which disperses vision along limitless horizons teaches us how impressed we still are by our geography as unpeopled artefact. Both books share a common tilt, the almost total absence of the human as figure and trace. Even Lochhead's poems — little things in unrhymed couplets — through which one might expect the possibly tentative entrance of the human or, less hopefully, the barest traces left by some human project, obsessively celebrate the heroism of "heavy and brooding skies," wedding "presence with silence," while the "the steady faces" turn out to be "the sentry barns" not people. People have very little place in "such distances." Canadian art will no doubt come into its own on the world scene now that humanism as the philosophical focus of Western thought is in its death throes everywhere.

Tooled images, alert rhythms and well-struck sound effects make a clean, uncluttered lyricism. The literary allusiveness is kept deftly lowkey, though it's there, as in the fine homage to T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages" ("The sea has many voices") in Lochhead's "what is left from the warm and wine-dark sea?" More "stubborn questions," it turns out.

JOHN XIROS COOPER

MISCELLANIES

ELIZABETH W. MCGAHAN, ed. *Whispers from the Past*. Goose Lane, $9.95.

B. J. GRANT, ed., *Fit to Print*. Goose Lane, $12.95.

REAVLEY GAIR, ed., *A Literary and Linguistic History of New Brunswick*. Goose Lane, $14.95.

JAY MACPHERSON'S PHRASE "to make a cosmos of miscellany" runs through the mind as one goes over three books from New Brunswick, *Whispers from the Past*, *Fit to Print*, and *A Literary and Linguistic History of New Brunswick*. Elizabeth McGahan's *Whispers from the Past*, a collection of nineteenth century New Brunswick women is the most personal of the books, and, I think, most successfully makes a cosmos of the diverse items which it includes. The editor draws on private letters, diaries, journals, essays, minutes, and on school girl stories and poems; and the writers are as diverse as the forms in which they express themselves. One is an impoverished mother enraged at the treatment endured by her son, an indentured servant; another is a stern and hard-

working spinster-midwife; a third is a materfamilias, wife of an outstanding cabinet-maker; yet another is the fifteen-year-old sea-captain's daughter on an ocean voyage; a fifth is a rather sullen and lonely backwoods girl pining and hungering for a certain young man; and the sixth is a buoyant and outgoing twenty-year-old in love with society, and "the very, very fine" weather of foggy Saint John.

The experiences and relationships which the writers reflect are as various as their characters and backgrounds, but in almost all their writings there emerges their sense of the inescapable reality of social hierarchy, and their compassion for individuals in the large class of the nearly destitute. The primary interest, however, of Elizabeth McGahan's book is not the interest of the sociological pattern which it reveals, but the almost novelistic way in which it brings us close to such very different women, and enables us to hear their own distinctive voices. In this way the book makes up for the near non-existence of credible human voices in most nineteenth-century New Brunswick fiction. The stern self castigations of Elizabeth Innes the midwife, the hot outbursts of Emma Forrester on behalf of her exploited son, and the intoxicating superlatives of the ever so sociable Ida Harding seem to me to be particularly appealing. It is much to Elizabeth McGahan's credit that she has recognized the human importance of these dusty documents, and made them accessible to us in such an attractive form.

A sense of the human importance of passages written long ago, and with it the awakening of fellow feeling, comes more slowly, but does come, in B. J. Grant's *Fit to Print*, a collection of clippings from newspapers and comparable sources for roughly the years 1785-1935. The editor refers in his subtitle to the extracts touching on "the comic, the sad, the odd, and the forgotten," and mentions in his introduction that "history between the lines" could well have been the book's title. I am not persuaded that it is history (the pastness of the past) that constitutes the main interest of this sometimes very funny book. The editor makes no attempt to superimpose a chronological organization on the chosen extracts, but rather allows an extraordinarily diverse miscellany of pieces to rudely elbow one another. For example, the story of an innocent backwoods maiden who got into all kinds of trouble because she did not know the meaning of the word "nightwalker" is followed by an account of the gruesome punishment meted out by the New Brunswick Supreme Court in 1785 — burning in the hand and three months imprisonment for minor theft, thirty-nine lashes for a misdemeanour. Perhaps the best way of describing this strange miscellany of items is to call it a record of New Brunswick's collective shadow, of its dreads, hidden desires, longings and loyalties, admirations; its sense of the disproportionate, the grotesque, the funny — and, as such, it will be of continuing and not merely historic interest.

There is a surprisingly large amount of the curiously historic in the collection of essays entitled *A Literary and Linguistic History of New Brunswick* (edited by Reavley Gair and others). The book does not attempt to offer a co-ordinated, interconnected, and discriminating literary history of New Brunswick of the kind that Patrick O'Flaherty has offered for Newfoundland up to the year 1960 in his *The Rock Observed*. Rather the editors in their ambitious and wide-ranging selection have sought to throw light on particular facets of New Brunswick's literary and linguistic history in themselves and not, or not very often, for their significance and value in the larger picture. We find articles on such topics as the dialects of the Micmac language, Maliseet narrative technique, Acadian French's origins in

various forms of regional French, the intellectual perspectives brought to the study of Acadian folklore, and the "rhetoric" of the essay and public speech in Acadia — as well as very detailed, if not particularly critical, discussions of the evolution of poetry and prose in both French and English in the province. The essays are not only extremely diverse in subject matter, but very varied in the level of treatment.

Apart from A. M. Kinloch's admirably lucid piece on the New Brunswick dialect of English, much of the most valuable feature of the book is the treatment of Acadian literature and drama. It will have to suffice to mention Yves Bolduc's essay on poetry with his fetching accounts in particular of the 'octopus' dream poem of Ronald Despres and the tender surrealistics of Rose Despres, and Hans Runte's illuminating account of the continuity of the oral tradition with the techniques of the Acadian novel. These essays, and Laurent Lavoie's surprising essay on the burgeoning of the Acadian theatre, seem to me to be essential reading. On the English side, one is heartened by Fred Cogswell's praise of Allan Donaldson, Beth Harvor, and David Adams Richards, though one wishes that he and his colleagues had devoted more energy and space to the quality and achievement of the very fecund literature which they have done so much to nurture. The detail of the book means readers with any New Brunswick connections will almost certainly find personal association in its miscellaneous and kaleidoscopic pattern.

MARTIN WARE

LITERARY INSTITUTIONS

CLÉMENT MOISAN, *Comparaison et raison: Essais sur l'histoire et l'institution des littératures canadienne et québécoise.* Hurtubise, n.p.

PIERRE MILOT, *La camera obscura du postmodernisme: essais.* L'Hexagone, n.p.

HANS-JÜRGEN GREIF, ed., *Le risque de lire.* Nuit Blanche, n.p.

WHATEVER THE POSTMODERNIST catchwords "La mort du genre" may mean, they certainly don't refer to the death of that hardiest of genres, the collection of critical essays. Here are three Québec collections from the mid-to-late eighties, two the works, largely re-published, of individual authors, one a newly-printed collection of essays by various hands, all, in varying degrees, contextualizing the Québec literary scene. Milot and Moisan largely share both matter and method. Indeed reading Moisan is a useful foundation, both historically and methodologically, for reading Milot, who assumes some knowledge of the "family quarrels" of the Quebec intelligentsia, as well as of the debates of their more dignified Parisian role models.

Moisan's title is a little misleading, for only two of his four groups of essays deal comparatively with Anglo-Canadian and Quebec literature, while two deal with Quebec literature alone. His essays run from 1968 to 1984 (three from the late sixties, four from the late seventies, six from the early eighties), while Milot's are more clustered both in time and venue: four of his six essays appeared in *Voix et images*, 1985 to 1987. The two books share not only a strong sense that the way to Québec's literature is through a study of its literary institutions, but also a particular interest in the new poetry of the Quebec avant-garde of the seventies. But while Moisan is largely concerned with the

theory and practice of Anglo-Québec comparisons, Milot might be unaware of the very existence of Anglo-Canadian literature: his "context" is that of the Paris journals, *Tel Quel* in particular, and of the Parisian intellectuals whom the Quebec writers Milot is critiquing have, in his view, slavishly imitated. "Parisianisme" — manifested in the polemical essays of the cluster of journals concerned with "la nouvelle écriture," *la Barre du jour*, *la Nouvelle Barre du jour*, and *les Herbes rouges* — has resulted, by Milot's argument, in the institutionalizing of the avant-garde *as Québec "postmodernism"* itself. One of the best essays in Moisan's book is an acute rhetorical reading of some Québec literary manifestoes (bracketing in time those Milot discusses); their two approaches are splendidly complementary.

Greif's collection, on the other hand, is unabashedly miscellaneous, seeking to show ways of reading appropriate to as many *kinds* of texts as possible, perhaps unified only by the auspices of the Literature Department of l'Université Laval and justified by the individual merit and interest of the essays. Two of the seven are on Québec texts; the others include Québec examples in their choice of material. The two most general essays, "L'humour: ni transparence ni opacité," by Denise Jardon, and "Théâtre sapiens — Théâtre demens," by Irène Perelli-Contos, are, while readable, less challenging than the others; the former stresses the demand of humorous texts for special readerly competence and the latter mentions, with tantalizing sketchiness, examples of the Québec avant-garde "open" theatre (e.g. Robert Lepage's *Vinci* of 1986). There are two very full and useful articles, in relatively traditional modes. Maurice Émond writes, thematically, on Anne Hébert's use of the fantastic, claiming her poem, "le Tombeau des rois," as an ur-text for her later use of necrophilia, vampirism, the deathly double, "le regard fantastique," "la frontière entre morts et vivants," and other Gothic themes, especially in *Héloïse, les Enfants du sabbat*, and *les Chambres de bois*, but also in *Kamouraska*. André Daviault's essay on Petronius, author of the *Satyricon*, is a meticulous close reading of individual words ("perscripsit" = "annotated"), of the sort long familiar among classical scholars, suggesting a reinterpretation of the Roman historian Tacitus' comment on Petronius, his work, and their relation to the Emperor Nero. The subtitle, "les mille et une nuits d'un agent double," hints at Daviault's Scheherazadean metaphor of Petronius as a teller of tales whose "roman à clef," the *Satyricon*, contributed to his death, rather than to his survival.

Three essays combine interesting material with more methodological adventurous "ways of reading." The Greif-Moore joint essay, "Pour une lecture picturale," "reads" two very "literary" paintings, "Le théâtre imaginaire" (unfortunately not reproduced here) and "Kaléidoscope des signatures" (on the front cover of this collection), by the German painter Hasso Bruse, exhibited in 1987 at the Université Laval art gallery. "Comment lire un texte de fiction?" by Louise Milot, after a slow and slightly picky start, goes on to excellent narratological readings, first, and most ingenious, of the Miracle of the Woman cured on the Sabbath, from the New Testament, then on a punning "shaggy dog" story paraphrased from the comic strip, *Astérix*, and finally on the well-known Québec film, *le Déclin de l'empire américain*. The third essay, Denis Saint-Jacques' "Ce que racontent les best-sellers," puts into practice some of the theoretical concern with literary sociology and institutions shared by Moisan and Milot, for best sellers are, democratically chosen, "les oeuvres géniales de la grande consommation." That best sellers in Qué-

bec between 1970 and 1982 were half American, that the few best sellers of Québec origin were all "literary," as opposed to mass-market formula fiction (although *Le Matou* is the most formulaic of the group, *Kamouraska* was the biggest seller), that not only the *choice* of American and foreign-language texts, but also the *translations* of them were made by *French* publishing houses, thus doubly distancing this overwhelming majority of best-sellers from their eventual Québec audience, all this is noted; that *not one* of the ninety books listed in the appendix, or (it follows) of the twenty-four selected for comment, are Anglo-Canadian, while perhaps not surprising in itself (though discomfiting to this parochial, but comparatist, reviewer) does not even rate a mention from the (perhaps differently parochial) author; this constitutes a kind of "gap" of which Moisan and his fellow comparatists need to take note.

The time is past, Moisan declared in 1972 — by coincidence at the start of the period surveyed for these best sellers — for relying on external validation, specifically that of France, for the identity of what it was still, but only just, permissible to call "French Canadian literature." Neither the mass market, by Saint-Jacques' account, nor the polemicists of the literary reviews, by Milot's account, were going to pay any attention to the substance of this exhortation for at least a decade. Only Moisan is concerned at all with the place of Anglo-Canadian literature and, even he, only at times. His four early essays (1968-72) are valuable witnesses to the shifting parameters of the uneasy relationship between what it is no longer politic to call "two literatures in one country," or, still less, "one literature in two languages." Moisan's place as one of the clearest and calmest of the relatively few francophone voices in the *still* uncrowded field of CompCan fully entitles him to mount this retrospective of his early contributions to the field and its theory. In 1968 he considered the parallel development, away from provincialism, of the two poetries: the vibrant adventurousness of the younger poets, crossers of intellectual frontiers, whose poetry is "aggression" rather than "love," anticipates the political, as well as the literary, future. A parallel essay on the novel (1969) follows, interesting for the very early date (1947) of Robert Charbonneau's suggestion that Québec novelists look to South America for inspiration, and for a vigorous defense of Morley Callaghan as an underrated moral, and modernist, novelist. Godbout and Cohen share touches of the "nouveau roman," e.g. "l'émiettement du récit," as does Scott Symons, who has perhaps not lived up to the early promise attested to here. In 1969, again, Moisan urged upon (the newly founded) OISE in Toronto the comparative teaching of the two literatures, in the context of a mutually reciprocal ignorance (Hugh MacLennan he notes as an honourable exception) of the "other" literature and culture, to achieve "une vision du pays," literature being an essential source of, as one said in those days, "national identity."

The four essays on the reception of Québec literature, three from the late seventies, one from 1984, are clear and useful accounts of such matters as the dialectic between joual and "hexagonal" (i.e. metropolitan) French: linguistic questions *are* political ones, he asserts. The 1978 essay, "La poésie québécoise contemporaine," is of extraordinary interest, not only for its quite different angle on the era also central to Milot's argument or for its dual interest in "moyens stylistiques" and "objectifs idéologiques," but particularly for the influence, mediated by Philippe Sollers, of all the French "textes-limites," those of Sade, Lautréamont, Artaud, Bataille, and others, on the "poésie sauvage' of the decade 1966-1976, marked by the counter-

cultural, esoteric, post-surrealist, "terrorist" elements promulgated by the Parisian intelligentsia. Moisan comes very close to noting here — "la profanation de la femme mais également sa libération érotique" — the "highbrow pornography" of the Sade tradition in France, which culminates, in its Québec manifestation, in the novels of Hubert Aquin (whose almost total absence from all three of these books is another teasing "gap").

The most recent essay, on the institutional reception of Marie José Thériault's five volumes of poetry (1973-1984) is a fine practical analysis of both "reception" and "institution," deploying the literary sociology dear to both Moisan and Milot. Reviewers dealt unfairly with Thériault's work in two ways: some stressed pejoratively, her heavy indebtedness to Saint-John Perse and Claudel; other criticised her harshly for "reactionary achetypes" which constitute a betrayal of by now current feminist precepts. Moisan responds that the former is "intertextuality" and "formal convention," both much prized in other contexts, and that the latter smacks of a kind of ideological censorship, which would prevent her writing about "love" with fidelity to her "own" poetic responses.

This section concludes with a report on the "present" (1978) state of Québec studies; it is inevitably dated, in a way the other essays are not. Oh, innocent, lost days! Québec is still pre-post structural: Mauron, Bachelard, Goldmann, are names to conjure with, even formalism structuralism has scarcely raised its hyphenated head. And Moisan asks for more critical editions and literary histories, to lay the foundation (he lacks, or does not wish to make, Milot's sort of astringent critique of such "institutional" foundations), for Québec literary study.

The third section attempts a methodology of comparison, leaning heavily on the (to my eyes) Utopian scheme of two parallel literary histories which (the builder's metaphor surfaces again) will put comparative studies on a firmer footing. The field lacks methodological awareness, he said in 1982, while noting with approval the sharp increase in comparative studies. The dual approach of the literary and the sociological offers the best system (or "polysystem," perhaps along the lines of the current study of Canadian literary institutions at the University of Alberta), which he then subdivides into several "sous-systèmes." That this apparatus appears to be ideologically neutral, indeed virtually "scientific," is rather surprising, nay, self-defeating, in Milot's critical world, or even in mine. And the setting out of this system forestalls all but a brief return, at the end of the essay, to the problems of comparison of these actual literatures ... However, the 1980 essay on the two poetries, in their (comparably) double aspect of metropolitan and regional, provides a very palatable sampling of "literary history," or perhaps literary sociology, as Moisan, having finished thinking about it for the moment, actually writes it. The conflicting interests of vanity publishers and the large commercial houses; of what would now be the "desktop publishing" of the regional "little presses," publishing merely poetry—no *telquelisme* at Trois Rivières! — and the critical journals in Montreal knocking themselves out being theoretical, in the sort of jockeying for institutional power that Milot, too, finds riddling the literary world. This analysis culminates in Moisan's puzzling over how to legitimise the poetry of the regions, when legitimisation seems to be the prerogative of the metropolis. In Motreal the avant-garde is all too visible, but visitors are never sent to Trois-Rivières to check out the poetry. He sees the relationship between Coach House in Toronto and BlewOintment or Talonbooks in the West, between bp Nichol, theorising, and Bill Bissett, just

experimenting, in the same antithetical terms; the outward signs of systematic objectivity cannot quite conceal his nostalgia for the idyllic (almost pastoral) poetic life of the provinces, or his chivalrous inclination to do right by those institutionally neglected poets.

Two further practical analyses, one (1983) of the little-known literary review, *Regards* (1940-42), and another (1980) on the rhetoric of eight literary manifestoes, five from Montreal, three from Paris, provide the fascination of knowledgeably well-argued specific cases, the sociological approach to literary criticism at its best. The military metaphors, the programmatic collective assertions, the language of the will to power and of writing as an instrument of power, and the manifesto as a literary rite of passage: all these elements can be found in the texts upon which Milot, in turn, builds his argument about the paradoxical process by which the (marginal, subversive) avant-garde becomes the (centralized, legitimate) "establishment" of Québec postmodernism.

Milot's introductory essay is a sharp, witty, beautifully argued account of the first stages in the Québec avant-garde's journey towards respectability, involving an initial "complicity" between the established "tradition" and the subversive newcomers. It is at first a "consensus tranquille," compared to the explosive arrival of *Tel Quel* on the Paris scene. (Milot, so aware of the reflexive implications of this sort of argument, must surely see his own meticulous, albeit polemical, literary history as itself a final stage of this "legitimisation.") But in 1972, as Milot's next essay informs us, things hotted up; new, more aggressive journals emerged; reviewers began to line up on one side or the other and jockey for position. The publication of collections and theoretical articles, the strategic "placing" of poems (François Charron and Roger Des Roches are the exemplary poets here), and assorted "investissements polémiques dans la lutte symbolique contre l'institution littéraire," amount to strategies, and their rhetorical expression, very like those found in the manifestoes Moisan discusses. In his third essay, Milot gets to grips with the "livres fétiches," where "structuro-marxisme althussérien" and Barthesian structural semiology give way to various combinations of Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Lyotard. And because students (avant-garde by definition) eventually become professors (institutionalized by definition), especially in the rapidly expanding academic world of 1970s Québec, they, once metamorphosed, gain the power to institutionalize, themselves as well as others. The reviews capture the departments of literature; the professors have an "interest" in their own reproduction. I oversimplify, but Milot's argument at this point seems markedly less subtle than what precedes it. The concluding section, "Le nom de Larose" (!), pillories its eponymous hero for an article, *very* well received by the literary establishment, demonstrating "la possibilité de l'indigence théorique des indigènes peripheriques face aux maîtres penseurs de la métropole." Thus intellectual fashions shift in Québec according to the ads for the "prêt-à-penser parisien." Milot's next essay vigorously takes apart three books, by André Beaudet, Michel Muir, and Claude Beausoleil, for various "impostures": of denying "social space," of pretending to scapegoat status, of "ressentiment érigé en méthode," while in his fourth and fifth essays another book by Beaudet (who must be a most kindly and long-suffering person: he seems to be the editor of the series in which Milot's book is published) and books or essays by Pierre Bertrand and Hughes Corriveau, among others, serve as stalking-horses and whipping boys for the further, quasi-chronological, development of Milot's

argument. So the central third of this ninety-page book consists of a series of essays, chiefly counter-attacks on other texts, published in the course of polemical exchanges in *Voix et images*. Milot mentioned earlier the great dispute between Barthes and Picard over the long-dead body of Racine; the very form of these exchanges suggests another oblique debt to Paris. He introduces here the debate between "modernité" and "le retour du sacré," "objets de transgression sur le marché de la postmodernité parisienne" and drops a few more Parisian names to conjure with, like Guy Scarpetta and Bernard-Henri Lévy, all clearly distinct figures whom his opponents, being less philosophically rigorous than Milot himself, persist in muddling together. All this is richly entertaining, although after the brilliant introductory essay, one feels the argument running into the sands of local (and perhaps more personal than Milot allows) disputes. One hopes for the final essay to round out, and clinch, the socio-historical argument of his opening essay. But, bizarrely, he shifts perspective entirely; for most of it we are no longer considering the relationship of Montreal to Paris, but, instead, working through the history of the French avant-garde, to the moment when *Tel Quel* became *l'Infini*, with the shifts in attitude that change represents, and then, at considerable length, the positions of Scarpetta, Lyotard, and Jürgen Habermas in the great debate on "la condition postmoderne." Only in the last two pages does he return to Québec for a hasty, reproachful, but uncharacteristically vague conclusion about the "*fashion victims*" (the phrase is italicized, and in English) of Montreal, who have sacrificed philosophical rigour to rhetorical flashiness. So, after a vigorous, informative, and entertaining settling of scores (albeit family quarrels at which I occasionally felt like something of an eavesdropper), the book trails off into an explication of material readily available elsewhere, and the argument so trenchantly begun is never quite concluded.

PATRICIA MERIVALE

POLYPHONY

ARNOLD KRUPAT, *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*. Univ. of California Press. US$9.95 pa.

KRUPAT ANALYZES THE RELATIONSHIP between the canon of American Literature and the works of Indian authors. Following Roy Harvey Pearce's theoretical premise, he argues that American culture has been informed by both European and Native American cultures, but that the dominant mainstream has obliterated the voice of the marginalized Other. In the field of literature Krupat calls for a refuting of imperial domination and for a polyphony that includes the voices of Natives, Blacks and Women. He scrutinizes the theoretical precepts underlying the canon's composition and contrasts the traditional "hermeneutics of faith," as exemplified by T. S. Eliot's call for orthodoxy, to a critical "hermeneutics of suspicion," which includes the element of heterodoxy in the canon, not as a "commitment ... to revolution ... but to resistance," as "a permanent condition of existence." Today the inclusion of Native American authors in courses on American Literature seems particularly important because most texts "derive from an ecosystemic, nonanthropocentric perspective on the world that we may at last be coming to see ... as being centrally rather than marginally important to human survival." Having been dominated for so long by the eurocentric (better: "anglocentric,") bias which saturates New Criticism, literary theory in America has largely failed to develop "an effective historical criticism" and has consistently overlooked

what is "actually there." *A priori* American literary criticism considered only European *literate* modes of expression, and while Romanticism's interest in "folk" opened literature for stereotyped Indian characters and oratory, Natives appeared only as objects of non-Native authors, never as producers of texts. Krupat follows this development through the appearance of first Native anthologies before WWI until the breakthrough of Momaday and Welch, whose success came almost simultaneously with French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss's critique of eurocentrism, the "fourth blow" delivered to "Western humanist narcissism" after Galileo, Darwin and Freud.

Krupat's discussion of these developments in the philosophy of criticism is both enlightened and enlightening. His analysis of Native American Autobiographies (regrettably making no use of Bataille/Silet's superior terminology) contrasts Native "dialogic" or collective models of "Self," expressing *personalité* rather than *moi*, with Western concepts of (bourgeois) individualism. The dominant American discourse, according to Krupat, moved from "salvationism" (Puritan religion) through "evolutionism" (Darwin) to anthropology (20th century social science). The author exemplifies this development by following and contrasting selected Native Autobiographies ranging from William Apes' writings to the contemporary works of Silko and Momaday. His observations about genre and realism in Native writing and his critique of Momaday's "bookish" use of Mooney and Catlin as sources will stay in one's mind, and his attack, *en passant*, on James Clifford and postmodern deconstructionist analyses of polyphony will delight all readers committed to exploring the social reality underlying literary texts — and not vice versa. I am particularly impressed — and in agreement — with Krupat's insistence that a cosmopolitan view in literature, entailing both ortho- and heterodoxy, must also include specific local perspectives — in North America they are Native.

Krupat is not striving for stringent comprehensiveness. Indeed, there are reiterations and omissions in the book. It does not address sufficiently the interrelatedness, within the hegemonic structure, of Native Literatures with other literatures produced by (visible) minority authors, especially Chicanas/-os, or — in the Northern context — Inuit and Métis. The book makes little reference to differences between Native national/tribal cultures and literatures, and there is scant information about contemporary Native publications (mainly in Canada) of oral traditions, both in English and in Native languages. While some of Krupat's neologistic definitions of "literatures" need further clarification, his study is altogether a thought-provoking and successful contribution to opening Native American literature to theorizing and critical reflection equal to mainstream scholarship. At the same time, the book does not lose sight of the historic and eocnomic conditions which influence the selves of those who engage in the discourse as authors or critics.

HARTMUT LUTZ

SEEING GREVE/ GROVE WHOLE

AXEL KNÖNAGEL, *Nietzschean Philosophy in the Works of Frederick Philip Grove*. European University Studies. Peter Lang, $47.80.

EVER SINCE DOUGLAS O. SPETTIGUE revealed the early secret life of Frederick Philip Grove in 1970, Canadian criticism has approached his work with a pronounced unease. Clearly, our view of the man and his writings was in urgent need of radical reinterpretation, but few scholars had either the linguistic experience or the freedom of geographical movement to attempt the necessary reassessment. The special interest of this book resides in the fact that its author is a German scholar capable of moving easily and expertly between the physical and intellectual worlds of Greve and Grove.

His principal contributions are of two kinds. First (and this is inadequately indicated by the book's narrow academic title), in an early chapter he writes with intelligence and authority on Greve's poetry, fiction, and criticism. He throws much useful light on Greve's connection with the Stefan George circle, and provides a valuable cultural context with which most Canadian readers will be unfamiliar. Knönagel therefore adds valuably to our understanding of 'the European years.'

More centrally, he argues with persuasiveness for Greve/Grove's considerable but by no means uncritical interest in Nietzsche and Nietzscheanism, and argues for its unifying function in providing a philosophical superstructure for his work. Knönagel traces this interest systematically through both the German and the Canadian writings, and thus presents a more coherent account of his intellectual development than any we yet possess. Although his enthusiasm for his subject occasionally runs away with him, in the main Knönagel makes no extravagant claims. He knows that Grove is primarily a writer rather than a thinker, and that he explores Nietzcheanism empirically and imaginatively without the intellectual rigour of a professional philosopher. He demonstrates convincingly that Grove writes within a continually developing context of Nietzschean thought; however conscious or unconscious the process may have been, it is clear that to read Grove's fiction against a Nietzschean background is always illuminating. Ultimately, Knönagel shows, Grove rejects Nietzsche's excesses, but throughout his work he explores the religious, philosophic, and political issues that Nietzsche addressed.

This study began as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Alberta, a task completed as recently as 1989. Publication has followed with impressive speed; unfortunately, however, a price has been paid. References to "this thesis" and "my dissertation" within the text give the impression that it has been published without any of the revision that normally takes place between thesis and book. This is a pity, since even some modest alterations would have improved the quality of the study. Various references to previous scholarship, seemingly present to show that the doctoral candidate has done his literary-critical homework, could have been removed to advantage, and certain repetition of details might have been weeded out in the interests of a less specialized readership. The absence of any index is unfortunate (though there is a helpful bibliography, especially useful for the German connections). The double-spaced printing also suggests thesis rather than book, and the whole design of the volume looks dryly academic.

There are doubtless hard economic facts behind all this. (Can it be, I wonder, that Knönagel's German citizenship stood in the way of a grant in aid of publication?) I labour the point because I be-

lieve this book to be the most substantial contribution to Grove studies since Spettigue's work twenty years ago, and it is unfortunate that it lacks the advantage of a more attractive presentation. Serious students of Canadian literature need this book; let us hope that it will become readily accessible.

W. J. KEITH

A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

DAVID M. HALPERIN, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love*. Routledge, $39.95/13.95.

RICHARD DELLAMORA, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*. University of North Carolina Press, US $29.95/12.95.

WAYNE KOESTENBAUM, *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration*. Routledge, $39.50/13.95.

MUCH WORK IN gay and gender studies now concentrates upon two seminal periods: Classical Greece, illuminated by Michel Foucault as possessing an alternative system of sexuality, and the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, immediately before and after the construction and "medicalisation" of homosexuality, theorised by Eve Sedgwick as a period of "male homosexual panic."

One Hundred Years of Homosexuality is a careful exploration of territory already outlined in Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. Homosexuality, and heterosexuality, Halperin argues, are cultural constructs: the "taxonomy of sexual behaviour" in Classical Greece was profoundly different. The expression of sexuality was not seen as giving entrance to the "inner workings of human personality" but as a public confirmation of a citizen's power.

Halperin's schema, he emphasises, refers only to "the moral codes governing sexual relations," which, like any moral conventions, might be sidestepped. It does not represent an assault upon the construction of gay identity; Halperin does not claim that it is wrong to create a taxonomy of the self based upon sexual object choice, only that it is "not natural or necessary to do so." A frustratingly brief interview with a defender of an "essentialist" view of homosexuality expands this point. Gay liberation, Halperin feels, need not produce a discourse of innateness merely to gain social acceptance. This conclusion begs a further question: what freedom does an individual have to reconstruct his or her sexuality outside societal codings? Halperin, to his credit, foregrounds the difficulty of such a question, but does not answer it.

Further essays enlarge our knowledge of "Greek love." "Heroes and their Pals" illustrates the difficulty Classical Greeks had in interpreting pre-Classical sexuality. An essay on prostitution in Athens investigates the relationship between demonstrated ability to penetrate and public power. Halperin's final essay examines the figure of Diotima, Plato's instructress in *eros* in the *Symposium*. Plato's confession that his instructor was a woman, Halperin argues, is intended as a marker of his effort to move away from the received sexual politics of Athens. Yet in bringing her into the story he appropriates women's experience for male use, just as Halperin himself, in self-reflexive admission, appropriates Diotima for the purposes of explicating male sexuality. Such reflexiveness may not produce easy answers, but it does press provokingly at the boundary where male gay studies and feminism meet.

Masculine Desire shares the Foucauldian foundation of *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, while moving into the temporal realm of Sedgwick. Reading nineteenth century writers from the point of view of a gay male, Dellamora explores

their "production of revisionary masculine discourses." Sedgwick's female-centered analysis concentrates upon homophobia as a mechanism regulating male and hence female sexuality; this procedure may be strategically necessary, Dellamore feels, but it results in a "typology" of homosexuality, and denies strategies of self-realisation employed by gay male writers.

Centering his thesis on Pater's increasingly articulated resistance to homophobia, Dellamora examines debate about the nature of masculinity by scholars at Oxford in the 1860s. Peripheral chapters deal successfully, if briefly, with Tennyson's awareness of homosexuality, homoerotic coding for a private audience in Hopkins' poetry, and the significance of the series of homosexual scandals in the 1890s. Discussion of responses by male writers to "the Whitmanian signifier" and the purportedly Leonardian "head of the Medusa" illustrates the presence of cultural nexi around which debates upon the construction of male sexual orientation, and of gender, might coalesce. Dellamora's discussion of Pater and his conclusion, that Pater developed a theory and critique of homophobia in the stories "Denys L'Auxerrois" and "Apollo in Picardy" are persuasive but contentious. Homophobia is certainly present in the texts, but it is imperfectly theorized; if we see such texts as sites of struggle between homophobia and a desire to express "difference," it is by no means clear that the latter wins out. Dellamora, in a coherent, synthetic work, shows the possibilities gained by affiliative reading, foregrounding male strategies of resistance to homophobia in texts we might otherwise read straight.

The introduction of Wayne Koestenbaum's *Double Talk* reads like a *Who's Who* of contemporary gender theory. Koestenbaum's intention is to develop a theory of male literary collaboration, an "anxiously homosocial act" which results in "double talk," a process of both expression and repression of desire. The text, for Koestenbaum, becomes both a child of the collaborators' union and a "shared woman" which they exchange.

Seductive in abstraction, *Double Talk*'s theory collapses, under an embarrassment of riches, in application. Koestenbaum presents Freud and Breuer as privileging anal intercourse in their collaboration over the text/body of Anna O. This is his paradigm of male literary collaboration, yet ensuing discussion of Eliot and Pound represents Eliot as the patient and Pound as the analyst, performing upon the hysterical text of *The Waste Land* an analysis which follows a very different paradigm. Given Koestenbaum's written committment to one historical period, and his discussion of the effects upon gay self-fashioning of the 1885 Labouchère amendment, it is surprising that the most extended essay in the book shoots off on another tangent to *Lyrical Ballads*, a text produced nearly a century before the amendment's adoption by Parliament.

Details in *Double Talk* are irritating. Symonds' contribution to *Sexual Inversion* was insufficiently acknowledged after his death not so much because Havelock Ellis wished to "make their joint venture his property," but because Horatio Brown, Symonds' executor, claimed that Symonds' dying wish was to remove his name from the title page. Koestenbaum acknowledges a debt to Roland Barthes, but his clumsy *jouissance* leads to imperfect enjoyment: Havelock Ellis' first name, we learn, "suggests his sympathy for locks." Such playfulness sits uneasily with frequent reference to intentionality and use of biographical material. Unlike Dellamora, Koestenbaum's readings do not finally explore resistance to homophobia; he may write, in conclusion, of "double talk" as "revolt against monolithic male authority," but his textual

analysis repeatedly demonstrates acquiescence to that authority. Reduced finally to a breathless listing of collaborative texts, *Double Talk* serves to remind us, as do all these works, of just how much more work there is to be done in this field.

PHILIP HOLDEN

TEXTUAL REPLACING

BILL ASHCROFT, GARETH GRIFFITHS, and HELEN TIFFIN, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures.* New Accent Series. Routledge. $15.95 pa.

MUCH EUROPEAN CONCERN for post-colonial worlds is white guilt. Thus the title of this book, taken from a comment by Salman Rushdie. A witty assertion of the power bubbling in the ex-colonies, it suggests that the most important aspect of the post-colonial literatures is its anti-imperialism. This seems to me a specifically white-guilt perspective: the most important thing about you is your response to me oppressing you. It allows little space for assertion rather than resistance.

It also tends to deny the value of the white settler literatures, such as Canadian texts by other than native peoples. But then Canadian is well-suited to another element of post-colonialism, its prefix. We live in an era of posts: post-modernism, poststructuralism, and so on: many, such as these two, have a strong theoretical dimension. They take the assertion that they come after something, and the implication that they are somehow in opposition to that thing, and become something new in themselves. They share a faith in polyphony, that the concept or philosophy which they are post- was somehow too totalizing, too assured of its own mastery in a world which cannot be mastered.

"Post-colonial" is a word of a similar order. The colonial period was a time in which a unity of vision was possible. Macaulay's famous claim of the innate aesthetic and moral superiority of English over any Indian literatures is but one example. Today, every time an American or European preaches of the evils of nationalism it sounds like a contemporary Macaulay failing to notice how the hegemony of his own culture makes "small-nationalism" a threat and "big-nationalism" unnecessary. As *The Empire Writes Back* shows, hegemonic mastery remains potent but no longer acceptable.

The language of this study places it firmly within contemporary critical theory. Words such as "essentialist," "epistemology" and "syncretism" are common and there is the usual play, such as the hyphen in the title of one chapter: "Re-placing language: textual strategies in post-colonial writing." The book's central observation is similar: "Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturality as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation justified by the myth of group 'purity,' and as the basis on which the post-colonial world can be creatively stabilized."

The obviously loaded words there might be "re-placing" and "cross-culturality" but I would choose an adjective, "textual," and an adverb, "creatively." "Textual" reflects the tendency in contemporary criticism to avoid the author. Following Foucault, the author is no more than an "author-function," part of the discursive formation. Thus, the theorist refers not to "the work," which emphasizes the author's creation, but rather "the text," which emphasizes that which is read. "Creatively stabilized" is at one level the hidden conflict seen often in theoretical phrases, as the stasis implied in "stabilized" is disrupted by the dynamism of "creatively." Yet this combination might trace a more central implication, of "creative writing."

Few studies are as invested in "textuality" as *Empire* while so afraid of theory usurping what used to be referred to as "the primary sources." *Empire* echoes Benita Parry's question whether acclaimed decolonization critiques "are not in fact only a sophisticated mask over the face of a continued, neo-colonial domination. *Empire* states that "deconstructive critics like [Gayatri] Spivak and [Homi] Bhabha" are guilty but there is an alternative: "the more complex model of syncretic post-colonial culture proposed by West Indian and settler colony critics." *Empire* suggests that while much theory is Eurocentric, "the same condition of hybridity as exists in the production of the post-colonial text also exists in the production of theory."

This is a key to the program of *Empire*. It attempts to move from the colonialist critique of Bhabha, which emphasizes the failure of the imperial text to present the colonial subject, to the post-colonial text which, according to *Empire*, succeeds, through hybridity. The strength of this claim can be seen in comments on the work of Wilson Harris: "Harris's earliest novel, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), predates Derrida's translation of Husserl by two years and the French publication of *Of Grammatology* (Derrida 1967a) and *Writing and Difference* (1967b) by seven years. The relation between the two is therefore not one of influence but of a separate, similar, though finally diverging approach to the problem of language and meaning."

It is reasonable to interpret *Palace* as such a critique but it doesn't justify privileging Harris or post-colonial literature in general. Similar observations about "language and meaning" could be made about earlier writers, such as Joyce — or Nietzsche — or Plato. The many depictions of the latter as the first great post-structuralist thinker show nothing if not how reading shapes the text. *Empire* seems to be claiming not "textual strategies" but "authorial strategies." It has an old-fashioned faith in its own interpretive power: this is the true meaning of the text, the correct reading which simply says what is there in the work. This appears to be the implication of all of its claims for philosophical statements made by various novels.

Empire asserts that something inherent in post-colonial literature performs the theoretical task before the theory. Or the postmodern task before the postmodern. *Empire* argues "Assimilation of these texts into 'postmodernism,' or of their insights into the importance of text and word as a means of control into European poststructuralism invokes a neo-universalism which reinforces the very European hegemony which these works have been undermining or circumventing." This could be a general fear of the master narrative, of how theorists such as Riffaterre or Hillis Miller can make the theoretical system cover all. But the same could be said for anything which sees all of a certain body of material as deconstructionist, as marxist, as feminist — or as post-colonial.

Empire desires to defeat the power of European theory and support the power of post-colonial literature. The first temptation is evident to any of us who suspects that to be a great theorist you must be a male with a French classical education. The temptation of the latter is clear to the many of us who have spent years trying to establish first "commonwealth literature" and now "post-colonial literature" in universities. But desire can create blinders. *Empire* does not recognize the breadth and depth of studies like *Of Grammatology*, as suggested by the comparion to Harris. While Foucault's *The Order of Things* has flaws, such as its failure to note the gendering of this universal "Man" and assumption that the "civilized" world thought as did France, few recent texts from any culture have so

changed the "Western" intellectual world. These two facets of *Empire*, the limited view of the accomplishments of European theory and the claim that post-colonial fiction in itself provides many of the philosophical insights associated with post-structuralism, harm the value of the study.

Still, there should be no question that it is valuable. *Empire* would be an important book if only for its discussion of the relation between the hegemonic standard English and the various alternatives, which *Empire* subsumes under the name english. The search for an at least partly de-imperialized form of the language is fascinating. No other text to date has accomplished such a coherent overview of the critical problems of post-colonial literature, although the approach has led to some slighting of critics from the American context (there is little reference except for Spivak to those who have informed the "third world debate" in the United States, such as Chandra Mohanty and Trinh T. Minh-ha). No other text has done such a clear job of situating canonical texts from the post-colonial cultures within a useful theoretical framework. Add to these an excellent bibliography. I would never accept *Empire* as the last word on post-colonial theory but for many it will be a good first. This will be a superb start to the "textual" "replacing" the field needs. I hope more Canadians — and more important, Canadianists — will join.

TERRY GOLDIE

BEAUTIFUL BOOKS

Canadian Childhoods, May Cutler, ed. Tundra, $24.95.

DAYAL KAUR KHALSA, *Julian*. Tundra, $17.95.

BONNIE SHEMIE, *Houses of Snow, Skin and Bones*. Tundra, $12.95.

THOSE OF US WHO rediscovered children's books as we became parents during the 1980s found such an array of beautiful publications that we quickly took it for granted that because our children deserve the best, this is the way things naturally are. Tundra's new anthology, *Canadian Childhoods*, reminds us that the abundance of wonderful artwork in Canadian children's books is a recent innovation, nurtured by dedicated editors and artists who remember their own childhoods and share a commitment to future generations. This book celebrates Tundra's first twenty years with selections from seventeen previously published books, many of them prizewinners, by some of the country's foremost artist/illustrators: William Kurelek, Warabe Aska, Miyuki Tanobe, Arthur Shilling, Gordon Roache, Ted Harrison, Guy Bailey, Carlo Italiano, and Allan Moak.

And as this list of names suggests, the result is a very multicultural mosaic, spanning the country from west to east and south to north. In effect, this anthology de-centres the usual Canadian norm, with Ontario receiving no more attention than other regions, and with a strong focus on experiences other than those of the English-speaking Caucasian middle-class urban child who is the most likely recipient of the book. The extracts, some drawn from works that are now landmarks in Canadian cultural history, commemorate more childhoods from the past than from the present. The range is broad: from a rather celebratory account of the early years of Sir John A. Macdonald (thankfully, the only "great man" to appear), to Shizuye Takashima's unforgettable memoir of internment in a Canadian prison camp. Included are immigrants and Natives, Catholics and Jews. It is interesting that nostalgia figures most strongly in the four Quebec selections; whereas artists in Vancouver, Toronto, Halifax and the Yukon have depicted their current environments in attractive books for children, all the

residents of Quebec hearken back to an era of sleighs, seminaries and unchanging traditions.

In the press release that accompanies *Canadian Childhoods*, May Cutler, founder and president of Tundra Books, discusses the problem of choosing the selections to target a consistent age level. Coming from different sources, the pieces do indeed address varying groups; although Cutler settled on "ages 10 and up," I think that the illustrations in at least half the texts would appeal to younger children, whereas even a bookish 11-year-old might stumble on the phrase "business vicissitudes" (from the Macdonald entry). Perhaps this should be regarded as a family book, to be shared with children by parents; it is certainly a fine treasury of Canadian experience as shaped and created in Canadian writing and art.

Bonnie Shemie's *Houses of snow, skin and bones*, subtitled "Native Dwellings: The Far North," is the first in Tundra's new series of architecture books for children, ages 8-12. Its clear illustrations and uncluttered text expand on the thesis that survival in the North depends upon "'the most complete union' of human beings with the environment." In addition to the predictable information about igloos, Shemie describes Alaskan sod-houses and various kinds of tent structures once in use across the North. This is the sort of book that often sits ignored on a child's bookshelf until the night before a homework assignment is due, when it suddenly proves indispensable. Its diagrams can be easily understood and copied, and its maps and illustrations, whose style resembles the work of a talented twelve-year-old, are quite unintimidating. Every school library should have a copy.

My daughter's favourite in this group of Tundra books is *Julian* — which would be mine too, if I were eight years old. In her view, it is a good book for ages 4-10 (the publisher says 6 and up) and day-care workers. This, I infer, derives from the power of the illustrations, whose strong, contrasting colours would render them highly visible to children being read to as a group. Much of the action occurs in Khalsa's vibrant brushwork, which communicates the energy of the canine title character. The story itself is simple and soothing. The narrator, a woman living alone in the country, acquires a dog to rid her garden of groundhogs. The unruly Julian chases everything else as well, but after he locates a missing kitten he settles down, and the final picture shows the narrator and her pets cozily ensconced in their living room as the evening fire dies down, "a happy, peaceful, little family" — the perfect ending to a bedtime story.

CAROLE GERSON

NOSCE TE IPSUM

PIERRE FILION, *Lux*. Leméac, $19.95.

RENCONTRE FATIDIQUE au Lux, restaurant du boulevard Saint-Laurent au centre-ville de Montréal et fréquenté par les adeptes de tout ce qui est à la mode: événement qui déclenche dans la vie de Bob — trente-trois ans et professeur d'informatique en congé de maladie pour cause de surdité partielle — des péripéties qui le mèneront, non sans évoquer le fameux "Nosce te ipsum" de Montaigne, à scruter les profondeurs de son être grâce à ses conversations périodiques avec quatre femmes. Toute lumière qu'il arrive à jeter sur son passé comme sur son présent illumine un acheminement qui s'affirme peu à peu, et débouche sur la leçon la plus difficile et à la fois la plus significative de sa vie. L'homme est vanité, mais malgré toutes les vicissitudes il doit tôt ou tard être confronté à sa propre mortalité à travers le passage du temps. Cherchant à tâtons à se connaître par l'intermédiaire de son journal intime, qui porte successivement le titre "Journal du Malaise," "Journal du Sourd," "Journal de L'Habitation," "Journal du Cristal," "Journal du Mort-vivant," Bob, naïf et tendu, passe en revue les commentaires des autres à son égard, tentant d'y puiser la vérité de sa vie. *Lux* présente ainsi deux tranches de vie entremêlées: celle de Bob aussi bien que celle collective des quatre femmes dont l'une qui narre le récit.

Si Bob est le seul personnage important du sexe masculin et que la trame de *Lux* se tisse autour de sa présence, il ne faut surtout pas passer sous silence l'apport des belles protagonistes grâce à un discours que d'aucuns diraient féministe et d'autres branché. A l'instar de Mireille et de Mariette dans *D'Amour, P.Q.*, ZaZa, Francine, Haline et Monique — les "divas gnostiques" — l'assaillent de leurs "déclarations de papesse" et, il faut le remarquer, avec un certain succès comme le note Bob:

> Parfois, lorsque F. parle, ou quand Z. m'explique des petites choses qui me font entrevoir la grande confusion de ma vie, j'ai l'impression que le monde à l'endroit existe quelque part, et je trouve alors que toute l'activité humaine est à l'envers. Pas juste à l'envers du bon sens; à l'envers complètement. Nous vivons de ce côté-ci du mur, et l'on dirait que la vie se joue de l'autre bord.

Bob souffre énormément du néant qu'est à son avis sa vie. Et pourtant, seul il n'est pas à même d'y porter remède. Après s'être donc lié d'amitié avec ces femmes, et à la suite d'une liaison amoureuse avec ZaZa, il n'en peut plus:

> Le petit matin se lève. J'ai des frissons dans le dos juste à écrire à propos du précipice. J'ai le sentiment d'être rendu à la dernière page du journal de ma vie, dans laquelle je suis toujours emprisonné à double tour. Z. m'appelait souvent le beau ténébreux, en riant de mois, parce qu'elle le disait au sens propre. Je suis complètement dans les ténèbres, dans la grande noirceur, voilà pourquoi j'aime le Lux, resplendissant de lumière la nuit. Je suis un oiseau de nuit. Un jour, je vais passer par l'ombre et affronter la lumière en douceur. Je cherche un moyen de me suicider sans mourir. Je suis au bout de mon sang et je sais que personne ne va venir me sauver.

S'anéantir sans pour autant mettre fin à sa vie, ce n'est qu'un rêve de poète dans le contexte socio-historique contemporain. Et Bob, s'avérant finalement conscient de l'impossibilité de continuer sa descente, s'aperçoit de l'importance de changer de perspective, ne serait-ce que pour s'assurer un avenir supportable.

Ce roman touche et fâche à la fois. Touchant, *Lux* raconte à divers niveaux les conséquences de l'épuisement professionnel et du vide affectif chez un homme qui ne se connaît pas ou du moins qu ne connaît que des angoisses et des doutes. Et fâchant à cause des conversations par trop anodines et diffuses. La subtilité dans le

portrait de Bob, de ses chagrins comme de de ses moments tranquilles, atteste le talent de Filion qui a su capter dans toute sa minutie l'individu qui se scrute inlassablement devant le miroir que sont les autres.

KENNETH W. MEADWELL

WORKS OF LONG DURATION

DAVID ADAMS RICHARDS, *Nights Below Station Street*. McClelland and Stewart, $22.95.

THIS IS THE NOVEL that finally won Richards the much deserved Governor General's Award for fiction in 1988. Richards has been slow to gain recognition in this country, partly because of the centralist tendency of Canadian literary criticism, which relegates "regional" authors to the margins (which is as good as saying to oblivion) and partly because his style of social realism has not captured the interest of the trendy post-modernist critics who are in the ascendancy in Canada, and who are inclined toward more self-reflexive and deconstructionist writing styles. One cannot help speculating also that Richards' decision with *Nights* to switch from Oberon, with whom he had published from the beginning, to the more central (in terms of geography and importance) McClelland and Stewart, helped to open the doors of arrival into mainstream literary Canada.

Whatever the reasons for Richards' recognition, it is good that he has attracted national attention and honour at last. I would not have chosen *Nights* as Richards' most deserving novel for the Governor General's Award, preferring as I do the intense, poetic, tragic *Road to the Stilt House* (1985) and the epically, even cosmically structured *Lives of Short Duration* (1981). But *Nights* is classic Richards, bringing to life yet another working class family in the Miramichi, this time Joe Walsh, undervalued by society for his lack of social consequence, unemployed, an alcoholic, but struggling to reform and earn the respect of his wife Rita and his daughter, fifteen-year-old Adele. As with all Richards' novels the style is relentlessly realistic, and dignity is achieved by the characters, not by what they say (Richards' characters are, as a result of their social origins, verbally inarticulate), but through their actions. (Richards hates the description of his novels as "articulating the inarticulate," a phrase of which several of us who have reviewed and taught his books have been guilty. Richards would say that there are other ways of articulating than through language, and that in fact language can serve to cover up or disguise truth, which is only measurable through action. Similarly, he does not consider his characters to be "dispossessed," another frequently used term, employed to describe their economic status; Richards considers them to be possessed of honesty, stripped of middle class artifice, fashion, verbal cleverness and pretension). Indeed, through their actions, which are often violent gestures against society's injustice, the central characters in most of Richards' novels (Joe in *Nights*, Arnold in *Road to the Stilt House*, Packet in *Lives of Short Duration*, Cecil in *Blood Ties* [1977], and John in *The Coming of Winter* [1974]), achieve moments of spirituality denied the more economically and socially successful characters. Another method Richards employs to lend dignity to his verbally inarticulate characters is to compare them implicitly with the more conventionally successful and hollow characters, such as Vye in *Nights*, who belongs to the curling club, dresses well, and is spiritually empty.

Nights Below Station Street is not as bleak as some of Richards' novels, notably *Road to the Stilt House*, in which the central character, Arnold, finally succumbs

to a world of poverty, illness, cruelty and evil, although not before there are powerful moments of epiphany. In *Nights*, Joe struggles successfully to gain his family's respect, giving up the alcohol that has disabled him for years (although it also numbed the pain of a serious back injury) and, in the final scene of the book, achieving near heroic stature when he rescues Vye, who has become lost in the woods during a blizzard. The portraits of Joe and his daughter Adele are the two strongest in the novel, Adele often depicted with a fine, absurdist, black humour which becomes her confused, adolescent stage in life, and her lack of social skills and confidence. In the end, *Nights* confirms the family's strength, the triumph of blood ties over social position.

Nights is a worthy addition to Richards' ongoing saga of the Miramichi. In this novel, as in the others, Richards strips the human animal of all artifice and pretension, making elemental and poignant observations about the human condition. Those readers who know Richards' work will detect in *Nights* a more focussed, disciplined approach to structure, obvious as well in the preceding novel, *Road to the Stilt House*. But the central characteristics of Richards' novels, the strong compassion for his characters, the spiritual intimations and the integrity of his vision, remain unchanged.

CARRIE MACMILLAN

A DEUX NIVEAUX

GABRIELLE POULIN, *La couronne d'oubli*. Prise de parole, $19.95.

FRANCINE OUELLETTE, *Sire Gaby du Lac*. Les Quinze, $27.95.

UNE DES VERTUS du modernisme littéraire, cette "ère du soupçon" dont parle Nathalie Sarraute, est de nous avoir accoutumés à une lecture à deux niveaux: tout en enregistrant le déroulement d'une "histoire" aux facettes multiples, nous prêtons attention au "discours" romanesque (et surtout au point de vue d'où est racontée cette histoire), ce niveau de l'oeuvre littéraire où se fait la transformation de l'histoire en récit, et où le lecteur peut lui-même devenir créateur en participant à cette transformation.

Dans l'optique d'un éventail typologique, allant du roman fortement dominé par l'histoire racontée elle-même, vers celui dominé par la manière de raconter, on tendrait à considérer les oeuvres de Gabrielle Poulin et de Francine Ouellette comme des antipodes dans l'espace romanesque: *La couronne d'oubli* raconte une histoire plutôt banale, mais transformée par un discours très original qui en fait un récit saisissant, alors que *Sire Gaby du Lac* est une histoire qui foisonne d'événements émouvants et dramatiques, mais portée par un discours parfois malhabile et pathéthique jusqu'à la limite de la parodie.

Cependant, pour être banale, l'histoire que nous raconte Gabrielle Poulin dans *La couronne d'oubli*, n'est nullement dépourvue d'intérêt, et ce qui frappe un lecteur étranger, qui suit de loin l'évolution de la société québécoise, c'est qu'elle semble bien enracinée dans l'histoire socio-culturelle du pays.

Ayant fait un mariage de raison à l'âge de 17 ans (pour sauver l'Auberge familiale), Florence suit la carrière de bien des femmes québécoises en donnant naissance à de nombreux enfants qui l'attachent au rôle social et familial traditionnel de la femme: celui de mère dévouée. Comme elle est en même temps gérante de l'Auberge, elle n'a guère de vie individuelle avant la venue de l'amant de sa 40ème année, l'artiste Barberousse qui descend à l'Auberge et lui donne une seconde jeunesse, hélas de brève durée. Car, délaissée par un mari négligent et absent le plus souvent, elle est aussi aban-

donnée par son amant, et reprend sa vie antérieure, conforme à l'attente sociale, jusqu'au jour où elle a un infarctus qui la rend à la fois amnésique et aphasique. Lucide, mais incapable de s'exprimer, elle s'opposera désormais aux efforts que font ses enfants pour lui rappeler son rôle passé. Ce faisant, elle refuse de se réintégrer dans la sphère de sa famille encombrante, et vers la fin de son séjour à l'hôpital, nous apprenons qu'elle a décidé de s'installer dans un endroit lointain où elle aurait la possibilité de devenir cette autre femme dont elle a toujours rêvé.

Ce parcours chronologique de l'histoire ne dit cependant pas grand chose de l'originalité du roman. Car, c'est la façon dont nous prenons connaissance de l'histoire de Florence qui lui donne toute sa valeur. Cette histoire est racontée à la première personne, et le récit commence là où Florence ouvre ses yeux pour la première fois après son choc cardiaque. Dès le début s'établit donc une double perspective: d'une part, celle des enfants qui s'assemblent autour du lit pour rappeler à leur mère tous les souvenirs susceptibles de pouvoir la rétablir dans son rôle social évident de mère et de grand-mère, et de l'autre, celle de Florence la neuve qui refuse de se reconnaître en cette madame Duchesne dont on ne cesse de lui vanter les vertus maternelles.

Dans un premier temps, Florence n'a qu'un refus à opposer à l'action de ses enfants, mais peu à peu commencent à se dessiner chez la malade les contours d'une autre femme, celle qu'elle aurait voulu être, libérée des entraves socio-familiales. Et la fascination de ce grand petit roman vient surtout de la découverte qu'il fait faire aux lecteurs de cette autre femme qui relègue petit à petit la femme-mère à l'arrière-plan. Car cette expérience ne nous est pas présentée de façon très ordonnée. A l'instar de bien des grands romans modernes qui rompent avec la tradition logico-psychologique, *La couronne d'oubli* s'adresse à un lecteur qui soit désireux de participer activement à la gestation hésitante de cet être nouveau. Gabrielle Poulin procède par l'art difficile des associations, des images spontanées, par petites touches, méthode qui nous semble parfaitement en accord avec la nature même de l'expérience de Florence: c'est en mettant ensemble des petits bouts de réalité, des bribes de mémoire qu'elle arrive elle-même à sa propre émancipation.

Si *La couronne d'oubli* est un roman délicatement suggestif, obligeant le lecteur à combler les lacunes pour devenir lui-même créateur à son tour, *Sire Gaby du Lac* est lourdement explicatif. Cependant, l'auteure ne fait rien pour cacher ses intentions didactiques. Elle donne au début du livre une liste d'une quinzaine de personnalités — pour la plupart des spécialistes en matière d'environnement — auprès de qui elle a pris des renseignements d'ordre technique et scientifique. Et tout au long de ce roman volumineux, qui met en scène un grand choix de personnages fascinants, sont insérés de petits cours d'écologie soulignant la gravité des problèmes soulevés.

Le récit s'organise selon deux axes. D'abord, c'est l'histoire de la lutte que mènent Marjolaine et ses alliés contre son beau-frère, propriétaire de l'usine, pour l'empêcher de détruire l'équilibre organique du lac par ses projets industriels. Se trouve mêlée à ce récit québécois l'histoire de Zaouditou, la petite Ethiopienne qui, avec sa famille mourant littéralement de faim et de soif, fuit la sécheresse à la recherche de l'eau salvatrice. Ainsi, les deux récits servent, à un niveau idéologique, à valoriser l'eau comme symbole de la vie et de la survie, et l'importance du récit québécois, organisé comme une lutte acharnée entre les verts, protecteurs de l'eau, et les partisans de l'aménagement, destructeurs de l'eau, est augmentée par la juxtaposition avec le récit éthiopien qui montre les

conséquences tragiques de la surexploitation occidentale des ressources naturelles.

Bien sûr, ce roman n'a pas de grandes prétentions littéraires. C'est un roman engagé, plein de bonnes intentions, et qui, prenant la défense d'une cause importante, mérite pleinement notre sympathie. Mais, comme Ouellette profite de tous les avantages qu'il y a à présenter son livre comme appartenant au genre "roman," il faut bien que celui-ci soit jugé selon les critères de qualité et d'efficacité qui se dégagent de la production romanesque de notre époque. Et le grand défaut de *Sire Gaby du lac* dans cette perspective, c'est l'absence d'un point de vue au niveau de l'histoire racontée. Ce qui est bien dommage, car avec la grande diversité de personnages-types, caractéristiques, sans doute, du Québec post-référendaire, cela aurait pu donner un récit efficace et haut en couleur dans la tradition des *Plouffe*.

Mais Ouellette n'arrive jamais à nous convaincre de l'indépendance psychologique de ses personnages. Malgré tous les signes distribués tout le long du récit, destinés à nous convaincre qu'il s'agit d'une "vision avec" les personnages, nous avons toujours la forte impression d'écouter la voix de Francine Ouellette elle-même défendant sa bonne cause. Qu'il s'agisse du député, de l'éleveur de porcs, de Marjolaine, de Mike — son "soldat" converti, de Gaby l'enfant autiste (ou même de Zaouditou demi-morte de soif!), ils sont tous prêts, en toute situation, à entamer de longues réflexions sur la vulnérabilité de l'environnement, qui frisent le cours d'écologie pour débutants.

A voir tous ces personnages (si prometteurs au début du récit) se transformer en marionnettes et prendre place dans le schéma manichéen de leur auteure, on finit par regretter que Francine Ouellette n'ait pas fait deux livres au lieu d'un seul: d'une part, un poème engagé qui lui permette de s'épancher librement en tant qu'écologiste engagée (voir les passages où la mise en page traduit déjà une prétention poétique, et les cas d'animation de la nature, où l'eau et le lac prennent eux-mêmes la parole), et d'autre part un thriller écologique où l'auteure ferait taire sa voix de commentatrice, pour faire évoluer ses personnages selon des mobiles plus vraisemblables.

JOHN KRISTIAN SANAKER

FAITH AND ICONOCLASM

ELLA TANNER, *Tay John and the Cyclical Quest: The Shape of Art and Vision in Howard O'Hagan*. ECW Press, $25.00 cl; $15.00 pa.

ALICE STORY, *Phoebs: A Picaresque Novel*. Breakwater Books, $14.95 pa.

IN 1939 HOWARD O'HAGAN'S B.C. wilderness novel, *Tay John*, appeared depicting as its mountain-man hero a legendary yellow-haired half-breed. Tay John (Tête Jaune) miraculously sprang from his mother's grave, slew a bear, left his tribe to wander alone, amputated his hand for a horse, and, in the end, disappeared into the snowy ground pulling behind him the white woman who had been carrying his child. On one level, the novel has been described as belonging to a mountain-man genre which includes the following traits: orality, violence, misogyny, nostalgia, a native element, questing, the conflict between civilization and nature, and a philosophical vision (David Stouck). On other levels — language, structure, and mythology — the novel has drawn the attention of critics interested in self-reflexiveness and mytho-poetic vision. In *Tay John and the Cyclical Quest*, the first full-length study of this novel, Ella Tanner attempts to take such interests further and to defend O'Hagan's novel as a source of spiritual instruction rather than mere

entertainment. Proposing to take us deeper into the mytho-religious poetic aspects of the work to decode the "significant form" behind its silences, Tanner attempts to show that, by virtue of its fundamental spiritual sagacity, the novel echoes (albeit largely unconsciously) Jungian, Taoist, Biblical, romantic, and classical myths.

According to Tanner, the main cyclical myth underlying the novel is one of *birth/life/death* or *primitivism/civilization/reunion with the earth.* According to this cyclical myth, one of the sources of strength which we have lost in our move away from "primitivism" is the ability to commune with nature. Tanner therefore postulates that because we can no longer articulate the oneness we feel with the earth and the universe in any way but a fragmented fashion — we need to interpret the only partially disclosed wisdom of O'Hagan's mytho-religious poetic language ("depth language," "plurisignative") through a reading of silences, echoes, and suggestive patterns.

One limitation of the study, often endemic to the mytho-poetic style of reading itself, is the failure to look outside of romantically induced abstracts. Rather than contextualizing O'Hagan's white rendition of native myth firmly in terms of region, actual landscape, native people, and the impact of European contact, Tanner contextualizes his work primarily in terms of universals, abstracts, personal history, and the Romantic tradition. This angle of vision creates a lop-sided mental landscape of dominant philosophical and artistic traditions which turn Indians, women, and wilderness into symbols in the white male's experience of self encounter. Determined at all costs to defend O'Hagan's "expansive" vision, Tanner will not countenance observations that aspects of the story are misogynist and nihilistic (Stouck), but is equally unable to refute them convincingly.

Tanner's stylistic analysis of metatextuality is compelling even for skeptics who may pull back from the broader claims she makes for the meaning and vision reflected in mythopoetic language. Since a number of different decodings of this metatextuality have already emerged, however, it would have been more enlightening to see Tanner confront previous interpretations by Michael Ondaatje, Margery Fee, and Arnold Davidson squarely, rather than try to transcend them or absorb them piecemeal. Also, more cogent use of material from the critic's personal interviews with the author could have been made. We hear little about O'Hagan's attitude toward his craft and are presented instead with a mythologized author, a gnomic figure, "prophet in ecology and social politics."

Phoebs: A Picaresque Novel is indeed picaresque in that it moves us at an ever increasing speed through the episodes of Phoebe Beebe's life and simultaneously satirizes the traditional story of the virtuous heroine. Starting from Phoebe's earliest childhood memories, which include being orphaned, the novel moves quickly through the death of other key figures until Phoebe strikes out alone from small town Ontario at fifteen. The protagonist's young adulthood includes a stretch of working for a living which eventually blossoms into a sparkling career in entertainment. Her personal life includes seduction, manipulation, rape, a love marriage, and numerous romantic entanglements which she survives. These episodes are held together by Phoebe's irrepressible spirit and her growing determination to author her own story.

To undo the strangle hold of conventional heroism in her book, Alice Story employs word play, twists of plot, and direct allusion to traditional scripts and heroines, Joan of Arc, Snow White, Gretel, Desdemona among them. Previously both student and author of children's litera-

ture, Story integrates fairy tales, Mother Goose rhymes, classical myth, and literature to create her iconoclastic but oddly composite heroine. As a baby Phoebe's first spoken word is "more" and in her pre-schooler fantasy, she imagines herself in the unlady-like role of a native huntress who slays a bear. In reality she is unable to drown a bee without compassion and remorse — which reveals the gap often existing between Phoebe's heroic aspirations and her reality. Much later, when turning down the marriage proposal of a favorite lover, she avows: "Milton, my love, I want to do big things, something great. I want to conquer the world and travel the seven seas. I want to kill a dragon or two before breakfast."

In this novel the reader may be sure of experiencing a heroine's story which is very new, but which demands a breathless pace in response to Phoebe's many challenges, one of which is: "Catch me if you can!"

ROXANNE RIMSTEAD

TEMPORAL INTERPLAY

THOMAS KING, *Medicine River*. Viking, $24.95.

DAVID HELWIG, *Of Desire*. Viking. $24.95.

ONE OF THE great literary obsessions of the twentieth century is time. As Tom King's *Medicine River* and David Helwig's *Of Desire* amply demonstrate, this preoccupation has not diminished.

King is well known for his criticism, poetry, and short stories; *Medicine River* is his first novel. It is a marvelous work which effortlessly presents snapshots of life as seen through the eyes of its half-native narrator, Will a photographer who flees Toronto and returns home to Medicine River, Alberta. Through him we meet other members of the town's native community — Harlen Bigbear, who has a hand in almost everything going on; Louise Heavyman, the independent minded accountant with whom Will has a relationship; Floyd, Elwood, and the other players on the Medicine River Friendship Centre Warriors basketball team; and Martha Oldcrow, the marriage doctor; January Pretty Weasel, a battered wife who may have played a part in her husband's apparent suicide; David Plume, a native activist who was at Wounded Knee, and others. Will tells us bits of their stories and from them a strong sense of place, of person, of a way of life emerges. King does not use the novel as a platform from which he can lecture non-natives about native Canadians; he chooses the harder, and more effective, route of drawing the reader into the daily lives of Louise, Harlen and Will. He succeeds where polemics would surely fail.

At the novel's heart is Will who needs to reconcile his upbringing as an outsider in both white and native worlds with his current standing in Medicine River. A seamless blend of past and present occur; each contributes to our portrait of Will. He is haunted by many memories: of his mother, Rose Horse Capture, who lost her treaty status when she married Will's father Bob, a white rodeo cowboy whom he cannot remember; of his younger brother James, an artist whom he has not seen since his mother died; of Susan, the married, white lover he leaves behind in Toronto; and of childhood recollections which counterpoint and illuminate his adult life. Will finds a place in Medicine River's native community as an adult, but his past dictates to him that he remain apart from it. His profession is symbolic of his position in both white and native communities — apart, observing and recording both worlds with the acute lens of his camera. By weaving together past and present, native and non-native, humourous and insightful accounts, King creates a subtle and rich novel. Its loose episodic structure serves the narrative well

well for it imparts a reflective mood to the work and it allows him the scope necessary to present a vivid and varied photo of Will's world.

Helwig's latest novel, *Of Desire*, depicts the world of human relationships with his customary insight and compassion. The novel centres on two brothers, Arnold and Donald Riggs, and their attempts to come to grips with their pasts, their current lives, and their relationship with each other. On the surface, neither man is particularly appealing; Arnold, a widower, is a high ranking, Ontario civil servant who lives a cold, grey existence, while Donald is a real estate speculator, a Toronto slum landlord who jeopardizes his marriage through his affair with the tenant who lives above the tattoo parlour he owns and runs. But it is in the novel's pervasive undercurrents that Helwig vests the powerful revelations of human nature that make it compelling to read. These undercurrents have a subversive quality that prevents us from reading the novel as a conventionally gritty realism, yet at the same time they force us to see in the novel's gaps and holes those things which make its world fascinating, and richly real.

The novel opens with the news of the death of Ross Riggs. The brother's father has wandered away from his Victoria home and is feared dead. Only much later in the novel, after Arnold has made one trip out to the coast, does the drowned body of Ross surface. This incident stands as the novel's central paradigm since each event flows from it and follows a similar pattern. Each starts with an incident which dredges up the past, this provokes a more diffuse, but perhaps more fundamental, examination of the past, which in turn lead to a revaluation of the present. And like ripples of water, the novel flows outwards from Ross's death revealing more and more of his sons as memory unlocks memory.

Though King and Helwig write about different worlds, thereby presenting very different portraits of Canadian life, they nonetheless share the century's obsession with the past. Will, Donald, and Arnold all must examine their pasts for their pasts help define who they are. *Medicine River* and *Of Desire* are wonderful additions to Canadian literature. Their shared examination of the past is timely for it should remind us that we do not possess a single monolithic past; it is in the sharing of Canada's many pasts — the lives of Will, Harlen, and Louise as well as Arnold, and Donald — that our present is defined.

M. A. GILLIES

PASSIONATE RELATIONSHIPS

MARIE LABERGE, *Juillet*. Boréal. $16.95.

MADELEINE OUELLETTE-MICHALSKA, *La Fête du désir*. Québec/Amérique. $16.95.

MADELEINE FERRON, *Le grand théâtre*. Boréal. $15.95.

PASSIONATE RELATIONSHIPS between men and women, which for a time seemed relegated to the realm of the Harlequin romance, have again become a possible subject of women's writing. At least, this is the conclusion suggested by the recent publications of several well-known women writers in Quebec. Both Marie Laberge and Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska present a reality dominated by intense erotic relationships. Laberge's *Juillet* and Ouellette-Michalska's *La Fête du désir* place their action in a vacation setting, as if to imply that only here, in a space removed from the routine of daily life, can the workings of desire become visible. Despite the strange similarity of their subject matter, the two novels approach passion from widely differing perspectives, as might have been expected from such dissimilar

writers. Laberge's drama of family violence successfully transposes the world of her theatre into the novel, while Ouellette-Michalska continues her experimentation with postmodern fictional form.

In the course of the last decade, Marie Laberge has established herself as one of Quebec's most gifted dramatists, as well as one of the most frequently-produced. As actress and director, as well as playwright, she is clearly at home on the stage, and it is because of her long experience in the theatre that I was initially led to wonder how she could adapt herself to the wholly different demands of the novel. It took only one intense reading of *Juillet* to convince me that Laberge not only succeeds in making the transition, she succeeds admirably. The rising tide of emotion that possesses the spectator in a play such as *Oublier* or *Aurélie ma soeur* is felt with equal force in *Juillet*. The uncontrollable passion that magnetically attracts a father and his son's wife is almost palpable from beginning to end. Most of Laberge's plays involve the destructive emotions at work in the closed world of the family, but, strangely enough, it is this, her only novel, that most closely approximates Greek tragedy. From the opening page, the conflicting forces are unleashed, and the text follows their inexorable progress toward a tragic dénouement.

While *Juillet* retains the dramatic intensity of Laberge's theatre, it also draws on the resources of the novelistic form. As is to be expected, central scenes are played out in dialogue, but Laberge is able to explore the psychology of individual characters through narration and interior monologue without having, at every moment, to invent occasions for conversation. It is perhaps because of these greater opportunities for nuanced analysis that the interplay of characters in *Juillet* seems more subtle, less melodramatic than those of some of Laberge's plays. Each of the four conflicting personalities is clearly delineated, as mother, father, son and daughter-in-law take out their emotional needs on one another. The family situation is more complex than that of certain of Laberge's plays, where the role of villain is assigned to an abusive or even incestuous parent (as in *Oublier, l'Homme gris*, or *Aurélie ma soeur*). In *Juillet* responsibility for the tragedy is shared. A feminist might object to the casting of Charlotte, a middle-aged wife and professional woman as the "heavy," the person whose need for propriety and power has shackled both husband and son. But the charmingly irresponsible Simon bears more than his share of responsibility for the disaster of his son's marriage, and the most positive element in the infernal quadrangle is a woman, the daughter-in-law Catherine, who embodies freedom and desire, as well as a positive form of maternal caring.

Laberge uses the resources of the novel with surprising ease, but she is concerned with exploring the depths of human emotion rather than the horizons of fictional form. Ouellette-Michalska, on the other hand, has made evident her preoccupation with questions of literary theory in her essays as well as in her fiction. Her 1984 novel, *La Maison Trestler*, has been praised as a work of historical metafiction, to use Linda Hutcheon's phrase, and claimed as a major example of postmodernism in Quebec. *La Fête du désir* is an equally adventurous exploration, this time not of history but of desire. Like *La Maison Trestler*, it is a story within a story, an affair within an affair. At the resort where the woman narrator is spending her vacation, she meets G., a male writer, who playfully proposes that they both produce texts with the title, "La Fête du désir," in which the word "night" must appear in the first lines. Although she is herself a painter, the narrator immediately sets to work on the project and

produces a detailed account of an intense erotic relationship with a mysterious man who had embarked them both on a ultimately doomed erotic quest to give birth to themselves. The relationship, which stresses the erotic to the exclusion of other elements, has a quality similar to those found in the work of Marguerite Duras, although Ouellette-Michalska does not seem to possess Duras's ability to force the reader to share in the hypnotic enchantment.

As Ouellette-Michalska's narrator becomes more and more absorbed in recreating this relationship in writing, her repeated encounters with G. suggest another response to sensual experience. In reaction to a childhood of deprivation, G. has consecrated himself to the direct experience of pleasure. A connaisseur of fine wine, he approaches women with the same sensual expectations: loving a woman, he tells the narrator, is, first of all, knowing how she tastes. While the narrator spends hours filling her notebooks, G. organizes the other vacationers into an orgy of food and sex and falls in love with a young woman who has been more responsive to his sexual overtures. As G. and the narrator meet for the last time to exchange their versions of *La fête du désir*, G. responds to her carefully-filled pages by talking about his summer's experience. The interplay of frame and embedded narrative, handled with Ouellette-Michalska's characteristic skill, suggests a Proustian meditation on the opposition of life and art, sensuality and intellect, in which the analysis of desire remains forever in conflict with the experience itself.

The erotic intensity of Laberge or Ouellette Michalska is absent from Madeleine Ferron's carefully-constructed short stories in *Le grand théâtre*, despite the dramatic title. Many of her characters find themselves past the age of passion, and this in itself constitutes their personal drama. Only in the title story, which takes place in the Grand Théâtre in Quebec City, is there a continuing relationship between man and woman. But the happy ending occurs only after the narrator is forced to mediate on the disturbing question inscribed on the theatre's imposing murals: "You're not fed up with dying, you fools?" Her response, which transforms a provocative political statement into an admission of personal defeat through aging and death, sums up the experience common to many of Ferron's characters. Yet they often attain a calm denied to the more passionate protagonists of Laberge and Ouellette-Michalska.

Of the three works, Laberge's *Juillet* offers the most interesting departure from the writer's previously published material, but each brings a new perspective to bear on the complexities of human passion.

MARY JEAN GREEN

L'HETEROGENE DISCURSIF

BILLY BOB DUTRISAC, *Kafka Kalmar: une crucifiction.* Québec/Amérique, $24.95.

GILLES MARCOTTE, *La vie réelle.* Boréal, $19.95.

SYLVAIN TRUDEL, *Le souffle de l'harmattan.* Quinze, $15.95.

VALORISER L'HÉTÉROGÈNE est devenu acceptable, même indispensable. Il n'y a pas si longtemps nous cherchions l'unité d'une littérature, le centre commun; aujourd'hui les composantes hétéroclites d'une culture percent les marges pour la nourrir et l'enrichir, les voix diverses et les expériences variées résonnent et se multiplient. Pour certains, cette tendance se manifeste dans la littérature québécoise surtout par les voix féminines et ethniques émergentes. Pour d'autres, elle se révèle par les choix surabondants de sujet, de genre, d'idéologie.

Dans les trois oeuvres de fiction discutées ici, l'écart évident dans les perspectives choisies par chaque auteur annonce en quelque sorte les expériences variées dont goûtera le lecteur: Sylvain Trudel l'oblige à pénétrer dans le monde évoqué par un enfant marginalisé; Billy Bob Dutrisac donne la parole à un journaliste branché et ambitieux qui décode la réalité selon les paroles de la musique rock; et Gilles Marcotte raconte les aventures d'hommes mûrs déroutés par l'imaginaire. Voilà matières à exploiter pour régaler le lecteur.

Caractérisé par une écriture *macho* à rythme vibrant, une philosophie de rocker, une culture et un lexique branchés, *Kafka Kalmar*, le deuxième roman de Billy Bob Dutrisac, est peuplé de caricatures. Pour inventer son roman noir, Dutrisac pige dans l'actualité: l'hypocrisie et la corruption des héros culturels (dans ce cas-ci les télévangélistes), l'intolérance et l'homophobie précipitées par la croissance du sida, les excès aveugles de la culture nord-américaine des années 80, et l'influence implacable des média. Le narrateur, Kafka Kalmar, est journaliste à l'hebdomadaire *Le RIFF* qui bientôt lance une enquête liant les émissions animées par le révérend Walter Warhead et le monstrueux carnage d'homosexuels dans le Village montréalais. Le bain de sang impitoyable est mené par Samuel (alias Günter), "un Oliver North dans l'uniforme bleu marine des facteurs canadiens" (225), "le mercenaire du Seigneur" et fidèle disciple du télévangéliste. Il y a là intrigue de polar ou scénario de film noir.

Délices, non horreurs, nous offre le recueil de nouvelles de Gilles Marcotte, *La vie réelle*. Héritier d'une vision de la réalité retrouvée chez Julio Cortázar, par exemple, Marcotte révèle dans ses histoires que le désarroi et l'angoisse seraient des émotions suscitées par notre façon de voir le "réel." Les événements les plus ordinaires de la vie — partir en vacances, rester chez soi, prendre une chambre d'hôtel, se rendre chez des amis, recevoir son frère et sa famille — peuvent faire ressortir le dépaysement, la paranoia ou au contraire le plus grand plaisir.

Les narrateurs de ces récits se ressemblent tous par leur sensibilité d'hommes cultivés à réflexion mûre, par leur métier d'écrivain ou de fonctionnaire. Nonobstant cette conscience uniforme d'un sujet parlant, chaque histoire offre au lecteur une perception nouvelle. Dans "La réception," un invité se rend à contrecoeur chez des amis; une timidité excessive le pousse à retarder son arrivée en errant dans les rues et se "souvenant" d'autres soirées semblables, passées et futures. Les réflexions de cet homme inquiet sont transposées par un discours filé qui traduit à merveille ses pensées. Des hommes qui savent à peine mener des négociations sociales ("Il s'appelle Théodore") ou familiales ("Tigre au salon," "S."), des

hommes qui reconnaissent l'extraordinaire dans l'ordinaire ("Bonheur de voyager," "Ce qu'il y a"), chacun traduit par son fragment d'expériences l'abondance de l'existence.

Conformes aux tendances littéraires actuelles, ces histoires ne manquent pas de références intertextuelles; certaines dépendent même entièrement d'un autre texte pour leur sens. "La lettre à Octave Crémazie" propose répondre à la lettre écrite par le poète exilé à l'abbé Casgrain, "ce touche-à-tout ensoutané." C'est cependant le portrait d'une genèse littéraire offert dans "La tête de Patrice Lacombe" qui séduit; Marcotte fait du notaire/romancier un homme discret qui écrira *La terre paternelle* pour "inciter à la prudence. Il bouchera soigneusement, une à une, toutes les issues par lesquelles des émotions trop vives pourraient envahir l'édifice de la démonstration morale." Qui connait mieux les univers de la littérature et de la critique que Gilles Marcotte? Dans ses récits, il sait en obscurcir les frontières pour le plus grand plaisir du lecteur.

Premier roman du jeune écrivain Sylvain Trudel, *Le souffle de l'harmattan* comprend certaines de mêmes qualités que nous trouvons dans les histoires de Marcotte: thèmes exploités d'une perspective nouvelle, narration conforme au sujet et souci de reproduire un discours vraisemblable et distinct. Enfants dépossédés de leur pays et/ou de leur famille, Habéké Axoum et Hugues Francoeur vivent pleinement la splendeur sans limites de l'imagination enfantine. Ils possèdent une vision si fortement optimiste de ce pouvoir imaginaire qu'ils poursuivent leurs rêves quoi qu'en soient les conséquences: creuser un tunnel à la Chine, s'envoler dans l'air par moyens d'ailes de plumes, rouler sur des pneux gonflés d'hélium, écrire à Soljenitsyne, soustraire une malade aux soins de sa famille pour la guérir eux-mêmes, et construire un sous-marin pour "aller au fond des choses voir ce qui se cache sous la surface." Rêves amplement répétés au cours de l'histoire, certes, mais recréés ici pour susciter un partage atemporel. Rien ne leur est impossible . . . jusqu'à ce que survienne la réalité adulte.

Le vent sec du titre s'explique par les forces incontrôlables qui surgissent pour gâter l'imaginaire. La sécheresse (climatique et affective) est juxtaposée à l'abondance créatrice et discursive des jeunes. D'abord, c'est Habéké qui assume l'expression et la continuité des histoires reçues de son Afrique natale, puis Hugues qui héritera de leur pouvoir pour transformer son monde. La voix du narrateur correspond à la voix de l'"orphelin," Hugues, qui transmet ses rêves et ses déceptions avec toute la franchise et la simplicité d'un enfant. Trudel sait exprimer la trahison ressentie péniblement par le délaissé. Dans ce roman qui lui a mérité les prix Canada-Suisse et Molson de l'Académie canadienne-française, Sylvain Trudel démontre son talent d'écrivain capable d'imaginer et de reconstruire un monde latent dans l'esprit de chacun.

ESTELLE DANSEREAU

RISING STARS

GUY VANDERHAEGHE, *Homesick*. McClelland & Stewart, $26.95.

BILL GASTON, *Tall Lives*. Macmillan of Canada, $19.95.

Tall Lives IS BILL GASTON'S first novel. His heroes are two young athletes, Del and Frank Baal, identical Siamese twins joined at birth by the toe. From the day they are surgically separated by their veterinarian father, their lives begin to diverge. Del becomes an idealistic football referee and loving husband. His dream is to ref the perfect game, sacrificing the game's excitement by calling virtually every infrac-

tion. Del risks becoming a monster of rectitude. His brother Frank, Del's moral opposite, becomes a lout, layabout, petty criminal who loves to set violently in motion all the chaos his Brother Del wants to abolish from the game of life.

Del's life runs to boredom in work and marriage; Frank runs amok. It takes a calamity to bring these two together again, but Gaston brings it off with a series of Shakespearean plot twists and motifs (the calamities of mistaken identity, the delusions of romantic love, the impulse of one brother to usurp the other, etc.) In his penultimate chapter, "As You Like It," the two brothers, like Shakespeare's warring brothers in Arden, change places in the cause of brotherly love. When Del and Frank do so, they begin once more to see through each other's eyes.

This is an engagingly funny novel with a wildly adventurous plot. With Gaston's affectionate look at the world of jocks, his flare for grotesque comedy, and his full rendering of character, this novel is reminiscent of the early John Irving. And like the early Irving, Gaston is neither ingratiating to his readers nor on a safe road to political correctness. He is not easy on Egyptian basketball players, middle class Vancouverites, Americans with money, or feminists. His only flaws are stylistic. Gaston has still not quite learned when to cork his cornucopia, and his language occasionally takes off into realms of cosmic uncertainty. His similes, for example, occasionally short-circuit on their own verbal energy when a more direct comparison is called for. Del's whiskers "were growing out at various lengths like a scatter of anarchic dogs let loose in an unfamiliar park, fast dogs, small dogs, dogs curling around on themselves, dogs in snarling packs, dogs alone and gray." When Gaston's style begins to call attention to itself, it works against his plot's fluency.

But *Tall Lives* deserves to be remembered for its strentghs. The relationship between the brothers occupies the centre. When we read about Del, we live in a witty comedy of manners complete with clowns, madmen, lovers, and fools; when we read the Frank sections, we are in a raunchy piccaresque. When the brothers' lives begin to converge, these two forms blend with lively and touching results. Gaston is a novelist to watch.

So was Guy Vanderhaeghe almost a decade ago when he was finishing his first book, *Man Descending*. It won the Governor General's medal, the Faber Memorial prize in England, and was translated (along with *My Present Age*) into many languages. *Homesick* is his fourth book of fiction. Gone is the wit that impelled *My Present Age*. Back again is the desolation born of brooding in a land of guarded hopes that we saw in such stories as "Reunion" and "How the Story Ends." *Homesick* begins with an old man's nightmare of drowning under the ice of a frozen lake. It ends with his death. In between, Alex Monkman tries to scrape together a vestige of meaning to his life by opening up his home to his estranged daughter, Vera, and her twelve-year-old son. His home is in the little town of Connaught, Saskatchewan, which Vera fled when she was eighteen.

Love is the only thing that gives meaning to the lives of these people, but love keeps evaporating on them. Death take away Monkman's wife, and later, his son; death takes away Vera's husband after a short happy marriage. Vera, the headstrong daughter, 11 years a widow, has always been leery of the old man's love. It is her son who bridges this enormous gap between the old man, who loves by possessing, and his daughter, for whom father-love is nigh impossible. Daniel takes to the old man and the feeling is mutual.

Homesick is a love story about people who never learned enough about how to express love. Fate has dealt them a parsimonious hand, and they play out their resentments and their need for love on a sparse stage amid sparser hopes for the future. And yet they love one another with a crankiness that often seems, in its gestures, more like annoyance. Vanderhaeghe captures these gestures masterfully.

The Toronto sequences, however brief, were the backdrop for Vera's brief happy marriage to Stanley Miller. Vanderhaeghe's account of it was even briefer, but it gives the novel a hopeful, bittersweet glow to warm up the frosty corners of the Monkmans' world. From Sinclair Ross's Bentleys to Vanderhaeghe's Ed and Victoria, marriage has not exactly bloomed in Saskatchewan fiction. It seems that in order to portray the luxury of a happy marriage, Vanderhaeghe has to take his lovers all the way to Toronto. An amusing footnote: this novel recently won the City of Toronto Book award.

DAVID CARPENTER

MULTIPLICITY OF PERSONAE

YOLANDE VILLEMAIRE, *VAVA*. L'Hexagone, $24.95.

LOUISE ANNE BOUCHARD, *CETTE FOIS, JEANNE*. n.p.

IF WE LOOK AT THESE two novels in the light of Agnès Whitfield's *Le je(u) illocutoire* we find that the lucid element of the *je(u)* is confined to *Cette fois, Jeanne* . . . (which we might have guessed from the playful pun in the title: Jeanne appears *sept fois* in relation to seven different men) whereas the narrator of *Vava* remains relentlessly and unplayfully *je* for the novel's 707 pages (the repetition in the name giving us some clue of what is to come).

In both books the heroine is brimming with urgent self-awareness and an energy too powerful to be contained in a single identity: each therefore has to invent a multiplicity of personae to accommodate this force. Jeanne has an imaginary twin, a *double intégrale*, a *parthénogénèse réalisée*. Vava evokes various incarnations of herself from previous existences, mainly the Parisian Jewess Liliane Katz who died at Auschwitz. Each lives in the *milieu des arts* in Montreal and moves among literati and film-makers and theatre people and photographers and artists. It is a world remote from conventional social forms, and both heroines perceive such forms from a great distance. Vava pays occasional visits to her grandmother who has lived a modest, steadfast life surrounded by her garden; it is not simply the years and the miles that separate these two women, however, but rather the grandmother's conviction that men are superior to women. For Jeanne the remoteness of a conventional married life is expressed by the conditional mood, in a hypothetical future spent with the last of the seven men in her life.

It is odd that both of these fiercely independent heroines define themselves in relation to men. We see different aspects of Jeanne in her encounters with the seven men — the most striking moment being when she bares her breasts against the window of a restaurant as her lover passes by in the street, and the most exotic a scene in a tatooist's parlour. The brief episodes are quite separate and the novel is elusive, elliptical, ephemeral.

The endless affairs conducted by Vava are diversionary tactics in the quest for union with the shadowy Michel Saint-Jacques, who is her holy grail; between his brief and inconclusive appearances sexual union is achieved in apartments in Montreal, Vancouver, New York, in

hotels in Paris and Egypt, on a beach in Mexico, in a canoe in Quebec with men whose presence in Vava's life may be fleeting or of long duration. The randomness of the encounters is emphasised by the fact that the one time she becomes pregnant it is by someone whose name she does not even know.

All this provides the filling between the interstices of the creative life of the narrator whose literary output resembles closely that of Yolande Villemaire: the Liliane Katz topos has an independent form in *la Constellation du Cygne*, which also has in common with *Vava* a preoccupation with heavenly bodies and even references to an Egyptian blue porcelain hippopotamus; *Ange amazone* foregrounds Hawaii, shamanic powers, reincarnation.

This novel deals with the circumstances around the creative act rather than the product; Vava recounts in detail the parties after the plays, the socializing around the presentations made at conferences, but is less fulsome about the plays and the presentations themselves. And in spite of celebrity and world travelling she remains naive and childlike. Her story is told in the present tense and in short sentences; she is surprised to find herself in certain situations, and feels that this is not her true self. In order to find this true self she enrols in course after course of self-realisation techniques and is constantly driven to tears by any set-back or rejection — as, for example, when she is expelled from one workship for being 'too weird.' In the turbulent late 1960s she seeks self in alcohol; recognizing this has gone too far — she turns up to teach a class one day in a drink-sodden stupor, and has no recollection of what she has been saying to the students — she swears off and turns to other drugs in the 70's and 80's. Like a child she needs the reassurance of contact with certain family members and older, wiser mentors.

Whether her chaotic search ends with the finding of the grail and inner tranquillity is something I will not reveal; but I must say that I cannot forgive Vava for what she did (and as the homonym with her previous incarnation exists only in English, I really don't think there's a pun intended) to her cats.

VIVIEN BOSLEY

COMING TO TERMS

FRANK KERMODE, *An Appetite for Poetry*. Harvard. Cloth $27.00.

RAYMOND WILLIAMS, *The Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*. Ed. and Intro. by Tony Pinkney. Verso. Paper $20.50.

TO HAVE BEGUN literary studies in the last two decades has meant, whether one liked it or not, coming to terms with theory. But, more importantly, it meant also coming to terms with an institutional 'resistance to theory." There was the Walter Jackson Bate way of resisting theory; the Bate way was the classic stonewall, "no way Charlie!" not here, not anytime, resistance at all costs. The conflicts which this general attitude excited in various professional bodies in the seventies, not excluding the MLA itself, have now passed into the lore of the profession. Luckily the Bate way was not the only way; there were a whole series of styles (the Searle way, the Graff way, and so on) of resisting theory which did not make it sound as if every morning after breakfast you opened your front door and walked out into the eighteenth century. Frank Kermode, certainly one of yesterday's men, resisted theory, not by Bating it, but by reading it, acknowledging what seemed important and valid in it, and exposing what did not to counterargument and refutation.

In his most recent book, *An Appetite for Poetry* — a gathering of recent essays on divers topics originally written for particular academic and/or journalistic occasions — Kermode recalls some of the critical history of the past two decades and continues his always interesting, always informative interrogation of theory, maintaining through it all, as one might expect from a former King Edward Professor, the proper decencies of tone, intelligibility, and respect for one's opponents. He demonstrates the fatuity of some brusque comments about canons by Jonathan Culler in the first essay of the book. Anyone interested in canons, what they are and how they are formed, ought to listen in to Kermode's brief lesson and the more interesting later essay (Chapter 9) on biblical canons, "The Argument about Canons," where Kermode rehearses and expands the recent loud punch-up between two biblical scholars, Yale's Brevard S. Childs and Oxford's James Barr, over issues of the establishment of the scriptural canon, historical scholarship, and the role of hermeneutics. One is less inclined to slump into easy postures about canons — like the dubious current assumption that canons are necessarily politically oppressive — after reading Kermode on the subject.

Of the essays on a number of other topics, the role of intuition in textual bibliography, relation of the literal to the symbolic in reading, story and plot in the Bible, and of the essays on individual writers, Milton, T. S. Eliot, William Empson, Freud, and Wallace Stevens, this last, called "Dwelling Poetically in Connecticut," is by far the best. In it Kermode not only sends one back to Stevens with a renewed avidity, but also, as his title urges, to Martin Heidegger, and especially Heidegger's canonic 1946 essay on Rainer Maria Rilke called "Wozu Dichter?"—what are poets for (in a time of destitution)? That Kermode associates Stevens and Heidegger in the making of an answer—poets effect the "unconcealment" of a destitute and occluded earth—is, if not definitive, wonderfully fertile.

Raymond Williams never resisted theory. He was, in England at least, one of the institutional sponsors (at Cambridge) of younger writers (Terry Eagleton for example) whose careers have been defined by their engagements with theory. *The Politics of Modernism* is a series of essays, conference talks, fragments, works in progress, and an interview with Edward Said all circling the large theme of modernism, its advent, nature, and history. Williams died before he was able to give the material a final form. This is a shame because the completed work would have been his most important contribution to the cultural history of modernity to date. I think it would have rivalled his classic *Culture and Society* of the 1950s. As it stands, edited and introduced by Tony Pinkney, the current volume is still required reading for anyone interested in the birth and evolution of modernism.

The essays read either like preliminary formulations which would have been fleshed out with apt illustration and detailed argument in a revised text or like extensions and updates of previous positions, not requiring illustration, because they are continuations of fully developed arguments from other books. His "Afterword to *Modern Tragedy*" is a case in point. This remarkable book of the mid 1960s remains one of the most important studies of modern drama we have and his comments in the "Afterword" rehearse the principal argument in the light of contemporary history. This recent history is characterized, he writes, by a pervasive, despairing sense that the future has somehow been lost. The notion of tragedy takes on new colouring in the pastel surrealisms of a history without time, and, therefore, a history that no longer implies a future,

that maroons us in a present emptied of hope.

The generalizations are so well formulated and carry the authority of fifty years or more of formal thought, reading and writing about modern times, that they are worth paying attention to. Best though to know something of Williams's previous work or to use the present volume as an introduction to his earlier writings. If you know even a little, you will be able to see how he would have illustrated and anchored his overviews. The crucial essay which is included as Chapter 2, "Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism," really comes to life if read with *The Country and the City* (1973) in mind. His various essays on the politics of the relation of culture and technology (Chapters 7 and 8 especially) also benefit from a knowledge of his extensive previous work in this area. These later essays are, I think, particularly important for Canadian readers, as they address issues of culture in the public sphere, which are now the subject of pressingly important debate.

His newest work in the collection occurs in the two essays on the politics and language of the avant garde. He has tackled some of these themes before, but not so explicitly. Here one feels most acutely the finality of his death; it would have been most instructive to listen to Williams's extended lessons on these themes. In any case, we still have plenty to learn from him.

JOHN XIROS COOPER

L'ÉDITION LITTÉRAIRE AU QUÉBEC

L'Édition du livre populaire, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Jacques Michon. Ex Libris, n.p.

L'Édition de poésie, ouvrage collectif sous la direction de Richard Giguère, avec la collaboration d'André Marquis. Ex Libris, n.p.

DANS LE DOMAINE des études littéraires, le phénomène de l'édition a souvent fait figure de parent pauvre. Selon le discours critique à la mode, on a privilégié tantôt l'auteur et l'écriture, tantôt l'oeuvre et ses lectures. Mais rares sont les critiques qui se sont penchés sur tous ces processus intermédiaires qui font qu'un manuscrit devient un livre, et certains livres, des "oeuvres." Le choix des textes à éditer, les positions esthétiques et idéologiques des éditeurs, les techniques de reproduction et les stratégies de distribution, voici justement quelques-uns des aspects de l'édition québécoise qui font l'objet des études réunies par Jacques Michon et Richard Giguère dans *L'Édition du livre populaire* et *L'Édition de poésie*.

C'est au tournant du siècle que la littérature populaire commence vraiment à se développer au Québec. L'introduction de nouvelles techniques de reproduction, la scolarisation des masses ouvrières et la croissance rapide des centres urbains favorisent alors la production et la distribution de livres susceptibles de toucher un vaste public. Dans l'introduction à *L'Édition du livre populaire*, Jacques Michon brosse un tableau rapide mais compréhensif des principales étapes de l'évolution de la littérature populaire au Québec. Au début du siècle, en l'absence d'une politique gouvernementale ferme en matière de droit d'auteur, le marché du livre populaire s'alimente surtout à l'étranger. Comme le souligne Michon, "c'est l'ère du feuilleton plagié, piraté, transposé,

fictions sur mesure pour lecteurs pressés et peu exigeants." Après la Première Guerre mondiale, l'adoption de la Loi sur le droit d'auteur en 1921, le triomphe du régionalisme en littérature et la montée du nationalisme, contribuent au développement d'une production locale. C'est l'époque des séries "typiquement" canadiennes, comme la collection "Le Roman canadien" publiée chez Édouard Garand. Il faut attendre les années 1940, cependant, pour voir une véritable spécialisation des maisons d'édition dans le domaine du livre populaire et "l'émergence d'une industrie d'édition populaire autonome." Les années 1960 marqueraient encore un tournant important, avec le renouveau d'intérêt pour l'essai et le succès de nouvelles séries populaires provenant de l'étranger.

Les études réunies par Michon touchent surtout à la période de 1920 à 1960. La première, intitulée "Les Éditions Édouard Garand et les années 20" et signée par François Landry, réunit une quantité importante de renseignements tant sur l'éditeur lui-même et ses antécédents, que sur les conditions socio-économiques de l'édition à l'époque. Le succès de Garand semble dû, laisse entendre Landry, à une heureuse combinaison de talent commercial et d'ardeur patriotique, l'éditeur offrant à la petite bourgeoisie urbaine des intrigues palpitantes qui exalteant les vertus du peuple et les exploits légendaires des héros locaux. Sans doute les illustrations, dont quelques-unes sont reproduites dans cet ouvrage, contribuaient-elles aussi à la réussite de la collection "Le Roman canadien." C'est du moins ce qui ressort de l'article de Sylvie Bernier qui analyse avec beaucoup de finesse le rôle et la composition des illustrations et des images publicitaires qui ornent la collection. Par-d'édition basées sur un modèle de fonctant du cas des Éditions de l'Étoile (1939-1947), l'étude de Sylvie Faure rend bien compte de la fragilité des petites maisons tionnement artisanal. Les dernières études de l'ouvrage portent sur deux entreprises à orientation nettement commerciale. Dans "Un imprimeur régional: les éditions Marquis," François Landry examine le défi particulier que représente l'édition en dehors de la région montréalaise. Dominique Garand se penche sur la réussite commerciale de la maison Granger Frères pour faire ressortir l'importance comme les aléas de la distribution du livre au Québec.

L'Édition de poésie réunit une interview et des études sur six éditeurs de poésie des années 50 et 60. Menée par Richard Giguère et André Marquis, l'interview avec Alain Horic, directeur des éditions de l'Hexagone, offre un aperçu fort intéressant du milieu littéraire montréalais, surtout des années 50, et des renseignements utiles sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement des éditions de l'Hexagone de sa création en 1953 jusqu'à nos jours. Dans l'étude suivante, intitulée "Un surréalisme sans frontières: les éditions Erta," Richard Giguère analyse, avec l'aide d'informations que lui a fournies l'éditeur, l'histoire de cette maison d'édition fondée en 1949 par Roland Giguère. Tout en s'intéressant surtout aux positions idéologiques et esthétiques de l'éditeur, l'auteur offre aussi un bilan de la réception critique des auteurs et des textes publiés chez Erta.

Les Éditions d'Orphée et les Éditions Atys font l'objet de deux études signées par André Marquis. Fondées en 1951 par André Goulet, alors qu'il était étudiant à l'École des arts graphiques, les Éditions d'Orphée comptent, surtout de 1955 à 1959, parmi les principaux éditeurs de poésie au Québec. Créées par Gilbert Langevin en 1957, les Éditions Atys se caractérisent par l'éclectisme des choix éditoriaux et la philosophie "fraternaliste" de leur fondateur. Deux autres aventures éditoriales, tout aussi fascinantes, sont présentées par Carole Hamelin. L'Union

des jeunes écrivains et des Editions Nocturne représentent une expérience d'autoédition; les poètes assument les frais d'impression alors que l'Union, par le biais des Éditions Nocturne, se charge du travail d'édition (mise en page, montage, correction d'épreuves et distribution). Se donnant essentiellement pour tâche de publier des oeuvres de jeunes poétes non reconnus, les Éditions Nocturne devaient se heurter à la difficulté de faire reconnaître une production éphémère, d'inspiration assez traditionnelle. La spécificité de l'autre maison d'édition examinée par Hamelin, les Éditions Quartz fondées en 1958 par Diane Pelletier et Micheline Sainte-Marie, tient au fait que celles-ci avaient l'honneur d'être les premières femmes éditrices de poésie au Québec. Une étude importante de Richard Giguère sur "La réception critique de l'Hexagone dans les revues, 1954-1970" complète le volume.

L'intérêt de ces deux ouvrages tient non seulement à la quantité de renseignements qu'ils réunissent sur le monde de l'édition au Québec, mais aussi à la qualité des analyses. Attentifs aux détails historiques, les auteurs tentent néanmoins de dépasser l'aspect inévitablement anecdotique de l'aventure de chaque éditeur pour situer celle-ci dans le contexte plus général des conditions socio-économiques de l'édition québécoise. Chaque étude comporte une liste des ouvrages publiés par l'éditeur examiné; un index facilite la consultation ponctuelle du volume. Ces deux ouvrages s'inscrivent dans le cadre d'un projet plus vaste entrepris par le Groupe de recherche sur l'édition littéraire au Québec (GRÉLQ). Créé en 1982 à l'Université de Sherbrooke sous la direction de Jacques Michon et de Richard Giguère, le GRÉLQ a déjà fait paraître un premier volume d'études consacrées aux maisons d'édition littéraire des années 40 et 50 (*L'Édition littéraire au Québec de 1940 à 1960*) ainsi que quelques numéros spéciaux de revues savantes (*Voix et images* (hiver 1989), *Présence francophone* (1986)). D'autres publications sont prévues dans le cadre de ce projet important et fascinant qui consiste à reconstruire, à partir de documents souvent épars, l'histoire de l'édition au Québec.

AGNES WHITFIELD

MINIATURES & MANDRAKES

JUDITH POND, *An Early Day*. Oberon Press, n.p.

ANN DIAMOND, *A Nun's Diary*. Vehicule Press, $9.95.

ERIN MOURÉ, *WSW (West South West)*. Vehicule Press, $9.95.

An Early Day, Judith Pond's first book of poems, is structured around miniatures from various mediaeval manuscripts that illustrate fruits and vegetables. The collection comprises a kind of updating of a herbal, with its typical combination of description, medical advice, and traditional saws. So, for example, the unillustrated "Vinum Ctrinum:"

> For an increase in sperm, eat
> the bright garden
> nasturtium first thing
> in the morning.
>
> This, followed by leaves
> of fresh watercress,
> should augment the desire
> for coitus by evening, at which time
> a glass of old wine
> can do no harm.

A whole book of this sort of poeticized nostrum would cloy even the dedicated mediaevalist with his or her brass rubbing or antiphonal on the wall. Fortunately Pond's fancy is more ambitious at times, and an entry in her herbal becomes the pretext for a more penetrating meditation. So "Coytus," which ends thus:

> This is the place where all the rules
> fail before that which is
> feral (I know your smell, I feel
> your need, I am inside
> your breathing, which to me
> is flowers, is grass, is
> an old song)
>
> and where, for this lost hour
> in the dead of winter,
> we are awash and dreaming
> in the pale green fields
> of spring.

All the same, *An Early Day* includes too few of such nicely articulated and beautifully paced pieces where the surface mediaevalism all but disappears, and too many of the type quoted first above. The overall form of the book follows a garden through the seasons (dormancy, spring, summer, fall), and many of the individual poems are closely linked with the miniatures, which are reproduced generously in colour. But this linking is sometimes insufficient. One wonders, for example, about the miniature depicting the mandrake. Pond's poem has a little of the terror associated with the uprooting of this plant that screams ("Now you will know the unspeakable / horror of being / aware"), but the illustration is infinitely richer iconographically and leaves one to wonder, for example, about the dog whose rope leash is tied around the mandrake's woman-shaped root (her neck, in fact). *An Early Day* as a whole seems rather unsatisfying, then, though it does demonstrate that Judith Pond has talent.

A Nun's Diary is a revised version of a book first published in 1984, and is here reissued to coincide with the work's production as a play by Robert Lepage, the *wunderkind* of Quebec theatre. (The rehearsal process was also filmed by Don Winkler, the NFB filmmaker who has made a specialty of films about poets). Diamond's prose poem sequence is on the obvious level about a nun's marriage with God (G.), though it becomes evident immediately that this is no ordinary nun nor an ordinary symbolic marriage with the divine. The central metaphor is the marriage (Diamond herself says so in a brief introduction), and this functions to allow the poet to explore the complexities of relationships in the context of a witty revision of the old virgin-whore syndrome, to which is added a parallel God-syphilitic-old-man complex:

> But it's impossible that this buffoon should be the One! Not this bungler. Not this pathetic hasbeen.
>
> [...]
>
> It is obvious he cannot even achieve an erection anymore. He's a dead letter, a burnt-out case, no longer able to award our interest.

No wonder she "did not like being married to God." This is a clever book of poems with more than a modicum of wisdom, and I look forward to Ann Diamond's next collection.

Erin Mouré's *WSW (West South West)* is a difficult book, full of a kind of writing that is patently informed by theory and yet so close to the body as sometimes barely to articulate any subject. Subject, story and description are evidently all under suspicion as ostensible instances of betrayal:

> [...] The description itself, even if questioned, portrays the arrogance of the author. In all claims to the story, there is muteness. The writer as witness, speaking the stories, is a lie, a liberal bourgeois lie. Because the speech is the writer's speech, and each word of the writer robs the witnessed of their own voice, muting them.

Certainly I disagree profoundly with such a take on what might possibly be said, though my or anyone's disagreement is scarcely an issue here. But this rejection of point of view has far-reaching effects on Mouré's language; with it comes a reduction to sensual impression, as she says quite openly:

> [...] The truest things, if spoken here, would sound like nonsense. So the woman running

to the car is preemptively sufficient, ducking
the sky's water
Clicking the car door open

And yet, curiously, that resistance to the judgements and understandings of the ego, the mind, result in a language that can be puzzling, even impenetrable at times. Body writing predicates its own obscurities, "A world where 'this,' & 'this' / come together" by accident and without explication, providing a poetry of unmediated registration, or almost. Moure's risk, then, is that the voicing of what is private (and *WSW* is a far more private book than *Furious* was) will give the reader no ingress at all. In-jokes ("Neurasthenic glamour is everywhere, wobbling on / 'dude' knees") and baited personal reference ("The woman opens the car door, brown car / *Valiant* they say. / Now everyone in the know knows whose car / I'm talking of") scarcely add to a text that, for all its being informed by desire, is highly resistant to any readerly enticement. Perhaps in Mouré's next collection she will be able to combine the writing from inside of this book with the lyrical and public concerns of her earlier writing.

BRUCE WHITEMAN

PRIVATE & PUBLIC

MARY DI MICHELE, *Luminous Emergencies*. McClelland & Stewart, $9.95.

ELIZABETH PHILIPS, *Time in a Green Country*. Coteau, $8.

THELMA POIRIER, *Grasslands: The Private Hearings*. Coteau, $8.

FOR A MALE CRITIC, the task of reviewing poetry by woman is challenging, especially when two of the works reviewed, Elizabeth Philips' *Time in a Green Country*, and Mary di Michele's *Luminous Emergencies*, are written from a consciously feminist perspective. When dealing with poetry that investigates women's private consciousness, the only road in for this reader as well as any other reader — male or not — must be provided by the poetics of the work. This process, however, can be daunting when some of the poems are erotic — not that I'm a prude — but the way I see it other person's intimacies are really none of my business, unless, of course, the erotic is a necessary vehicle for the artist's message. In di Michele's case, I find this conclusion questionable, her attitude toward sex and eroticism being more at what Peter O'Brien aptly identifies as an attempt "to exorcise a variety of personal demons."

Luminous Emergencies is to a large part a dialogue between the writer/narrator and an alter-ego trapped in/behind the text. Taking her cues from both Freud and Rilke, di Michele focuses on the problem of "fulfilment" and the impossibility for her of the "realization of complete satisfaction." Relying on a voice that is quasi-autobiographical, di Michele takes the reader on a journey whose purpose seems to be the working out of a vengeance on the part of the speaker as she seeks some form of catharsis and absolution from the sins of the fathers, and the inability of language to provide it ("The Primer").

For di Michele, sex is death; an inversion of union: an unbridgeable gulf. For her, the natural is deformed, "Corrupted": vaginas stink "like the open gutters," and penises smell of the "sweetness / of overripe bananas." Men — especially former husbands — are either "unrecognizable," or, like new lovers, devils in disguise. Sex is always the promise of new wine; the morning after, however, is for di Michele, the hangover of reality, a reality driven by the "hunger of the imagination" in conflict with itself:

Such is memory
it darkens what it seems
to illuminate in time

whatever is preserved
must also alter.

Unfortunately this conflict extends to and *interferes* with the political poems whose politics is more sexual and angst-ridden than political and committed. Two poems, however, which successfully marry the sexual and political are "The Afterlife of Shoes," and "The Light from the Stars." On a positive note, di Michele shines when she writes about Motherhood and the mystical relationship between mother and child, as in "How to Pray," where birth is an immaculate conception, an epiphany, and the bond between mother and child has the intimacy of prayer.

While for di Michele sex and the body are alienating, for Elizabeth Philips the body and sex carry positive, joyful connotations. And whereas for di Michele language fails as a mediating device, Philips' autobiographical narrator views language and poetry as successful mediators. *Time in a Green Country* is permeated by a positive vision of humanity, a fusion of the natural and the human, rather than a conflict, and is expressed through a masterful use of rhythm, which in the context of her poems could be called organic. As well, both Philips' lyric and prose poems evidence good control, attention to detail and lush diction:

The sweetpeas
at the bottom of the garden are a smudge of pink
and red. She hears nothing but intimate sounds,
her breath like the flap of a sail
. . .
Inside the dark draughty house nothing changes.
The sun leaks thinly in the windows, she can't
get her hands on it.

For Philips, as well as di Michele and Elizabeth Brewster, the woman/poet is an island, a "country," "Her entire language / borne inside her, untranslatable." And yet the tension created by the poet's "almost remembering, almost knowing," is for Philips an erotic experience in the classical sense in that it leads her into self-understanding and fulfilment, rather than denial, and seems to bridge that "irrevocable distance." Her poetry is "a laugh beating somewhere near her heart."

The poems of *Time in a Green Country* are concerned with such themes as the simple beauty of nature, travel, childhood memories, menstruation and lesbian love. In "Consider the Sea" and "The First and Only Lesson is Breathing" Philips has treated this male reader to a tender *and* erotic introduction to lesbian lovemaking. Yet both poems are quite different, "Consider the Sea" is more mystical, while "The First and Only" relying heavily on word-play, portrays lesbian lovemaking as an act of religious initiation and instruction:

Their priests detest and fear me — the women
miss church on my account.
Lying late in my bed they sing and sweat,
anointing my face with their juices.
They are so easily instructed — they eat me up,
my body so like their own.

Although there is an undercurrent of eroticism in some of the poems in *Time in a Green Country*, it in no way interferes with or undermines the works in which it is present. For Philips there are other things that are much more important: "Regeneration," flowers, "the seasons," "the physical world," and grass which like the sun is "come down / to root in the earth."

Grasslands, by Thelma Poirier, while not "erotic," shares with di Michele's and Philips' works in its concern over recapturing the past and the role of memory and language as mediators. Written as a reaction to the proposed establishment of a National Park in southern Saskatchewan, the poems in *Grasslands* are snapshots that recount the history of the region and

the ghosts that lived/live there. The voice of the grasslands is the voice of its inhabitants. Poirier traces the changes in this geographical area from its earliest inhabitants, Assiniboine, Cree, Sioux, to the present, presenting lively vignettes of prairie life from coyote to Sitting Bull, from sodbuster to modern Métis cowboy.

Written from the perspective of a modern Métis ranching woman, the poems provide insight into the nature of the life of both Indian and White Man: written by a woman, *Grasslands* gives a refreshing portrait of a woman's place in the history of the region. Again the focus is on a lack of connection — on boundaries:

> Sioux offer earth to wind
> when they cross the Medicine Line
>
> and Métis bow
> before American revenue officers
>
> ranchers put up fences
>
> boundaries become
> the lies we tell ourselves.

My favourites are "one Texas cowboy," where the responsive reader will learn to love cows and cowboys, "Madame Caillier," where the tragedy of loneliness and madness among the sodbusters is played out, and "at the branding," where the joys of women castrating bulls is effectively communicated — *without* angst.

C. D. MAZOFF

LES MOTS DE LA TRIBU

GASTON MIRON/CLAUDE HAEFFELY, *A bout portant*. Coll. Documents, Leméac, $12.95.

GÉRALD GODIN, *Ils ne demandaient qu'à brûler*. Coll. Rétrospectives, L'Hexagone, $19.95.

DENISE DESAUTELS, *Mais la menace est une belle extravagance* suivi de *Le Signe discret*, avec huit photographies d'Ariane Thézé. Noroît.

IN THE WEEK of the failure of Meech Lake, it is interesting to reflect on the role of the poets in Quebec's quest for 'les mots de la tribu.' Post-symbolism, post-surrealism (the title of the journal *Liberté* comes from an Eluard poem) and post-structuralism have all made their distinct contribution. Beyond the 'âge de la parole' and the 'thème du pays,' beyond the atavistic howl of the neo-nationalists, dawned the *Barre du jour* and the realisation that language is a system whose own problematics are the real pursuit of poetry.

Gaston Miron is the living legend of the impossibility of poetry in a land where words were rare or flawed. Those who admire him regret that he has written little and published even less and will fall avidly on these letters to Claude Haeffely. They will not be disappointed. 'Québec owes Miron so much, the least we can do is to publish what we can of his,' says Pierre Filion in presenting the 53 letters of *A bout portant*. The French-born Haeffely, whose replies are not printed, supplies the briefest of commentaries sketching in the background. The two met in 1954 at the party to launch the heroic career of the Hexagone publishing house and *Deux sangs*, poems by Gaston Miron and Olivier Marchand. These letters cover the 12 years from 1954 to 1965 (the bulk are from 1958 to 1960). After 1965, the two writers were close neighbours in Montreal and no longer needed to write.

In spite of the claims of the press release, this collection of letters does not

allow us to relive these important years. There are fleeting references to the literary scene in Québec, to the fortunes of the Hexagone publishing venture, to the rise of conservatism which made Miron twice stand as a CCF candidate, to Hungary and Suez in 1956 and to the near collapse of France in 1958, but, principally, these letters are deeply personal confessions pouring from the generous heart of Miron and the more valuable for that. He talks repeatedly of his disastrous state of health. He takes periods of enforced rest. The slightest intellectual exertion brings on appalling feelings of stress. He writes of his successive unhappy love-affairs and of his conviction that he is ugly and physically repellant (shades of Albert Memmi: 'Le colonisé n'est pas beau!'). He struggles constantly with sizeable debts and with the associated depression, mentioning the temptation of suicide at one point. He makes strenuous efforts to disclaim his legend as a poet and to shed the responsibilities of his legend, paying warm tributes to Jean-Guy Pilon and Roland Giguère and other prominent Québec poets.

He throws light on his reasons for not publishing more extensively. He claims to have started writing because of an unhappy love-affair. Once this episode in his life was past, his inspiration seemed to dry up. Writing of *L'amour et le militant*, sub-titled significantly *Le Poème inachevé*, he says he finds it, like all his other writing, 'awkward, confused, in a word, not yet ready for publication.' Most valuably, Miron accepts that he speaks here for all who have tried to write in Québec. 'L'effort inoui, inimaginable, que nous avons dû fournir pour nous mettre au monde. Cela nous a tout pompé, jusqu'à notre ombre (...) Nous devons chercher nos mots à quatre pattes dans le trou-vide.' This brief extract provides, incidentally, a good example of the eloquent, testy, gritty prose of these letters which deserve to stand alongside the valuable texts in prose of *L'Homme rapaillé*.

One of the glories of Miron's publishing house, L'Hexagone, is the *Rétrospectives* collection. Laurent Mailhot and Pierre Nepveu point out in their Anthology that this series really begins not with the first title, *Poèmes* by Alain Grandbois, published in 1963 to salute this father of Québec poetry, but with Roland Giguère's *L'Age de la parole*, in 1964. By its title, by its author, by the elegance of the material production and design of that book, by its cultural significance, by its insistence that Quebec poetry had not only quality but substance and continuity, it marked an important date in Canadian literary history. Twenty-five years and as many titles later, the series has not deviated from its intentions. As with the publishing house, supporting and encouraging young poets and defining its strategy of action through publishing, in manifesto after manifesto, all from the pen of Miron, the *Rétrospectives* have collected the work of the principal contemporary poets of Québec. The fine print, the spacious layout, the flawless production, the faint trace of colour on virginal paper of high quality, honoured the poets, honoured poetry, were a manifesto in themselves. Glossy card covers have replaced the white ones, the paper has changed, but the same scrupulous concern for standards governs the presentation of the latest, Gérald Godin's *Ils ne demandaient qu'à brûler*, his collected poems, including a few previously unpublished, from 1960 to 1986.

The *Rétrospectives* are not critical editions. Apart from a brief biographical note and a short bibliography, we have simply the poems and we are grateful for this. The poems follow Godin's fascinating career, as one of the leading members of the *parti pris* generation and director of its publishing house, a journalist in his

native Trois-Rivières, and, following a spell with the short-lived but innovative *Nouveau Journal*, director of the lively *Québec-Presse*, one of the Québec intellectuals imprisoned under the War Measures Act, successful PQ candidate in 1976, defeating no less an opponent than Prime Minister Robert Bourassa, and Deputy-Minister of Cultural Affairs under René Lévesque. But the poems are only very discreetly autobiographical. Instead, they reflect the changing taste of Québec poetry, the stab at high art with the mock-medieval, mannered verse of the 'ancien séminariste' redolent of Verlaine and Nelligan, the powerful invective of the *Cantouques* in the militant years, and then the playful, sensual, cosmopolitan writing of the mature Godin. Godin is the Jacques Prévert of Québec and I mean this as a strong compliment. His originality lies in a genuine and natural, unaffected solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged, expressed by his flair for the vernacular which becomes part of his distinctive voice. He shares with Gaston Miron a love of the Québec language, that 'merveilleuse langue à jurons' and the influence is unmistakable The *cantouque*, named for the logger's gaff, is not a fixed verse-form though there is in Godin's poetry a constant concern for form. It is a complaint(e) which puts us strongly in mind of the Villon *ballade* (see particularly the *Cantouque testamentaire*). Godin has Villon's mixture of bitterness and celebration and popular 'gouaille.' And perhaps the term has more than a suggestion of 'cantique' in it, a vituperative 'hymn' to life. The finest tribute to Godin I have seen was 'A Song for Québec,' part of a four-film series on Canada produced by the Detroit Public Broadcasting Service, an hour-long interview with Godin and his singer-companion Pauline Julien, showing incidentally how fully he had recovered from an operation for brain tumour in the mid-eighties. It is to be hoped that that film, and indeed the whole series, will remain readily available.

Denise Desautels deserves her place alongside those two prophets of Québec, a Miriam to their Moses and Aaron, just as vital in the march to the Promised Land. As Miron belongs to the generation of L'Hexagone and Godin to the generation of *parti pris*, very roughly speaking, Desautels belongs to the generation of *La Barre du jour* and *La Nouvelle Barre du jour*. Desautels has been part of the movement to recentre feminine sensitivity and to fictionalise it. Like others in the NBJ, she is skillful in writing the poetics of her experience and her poetry is frequently a poetry of the word. Here is her answer to the question 'Why write poetry?' in 1985:

> Pour questionner les mots et me questionner à travers eux. Hors de la norme et de l'usage quotidien, hors du piège, associer mot et mouvement.

To question the sense and function of words is a means of self-discovery for the poet. Poetry gives us the freedom to use words which are not trapped in the complacent clichés of the everyday. The reality poetry seeks to capture is not solid, substantial, familiar, but is characterised by movement. Gone are any easy assumptions about the links between signified and signifier. Signs are discreet, says the title of one of the two collections bound in *Mais la menace est une belle extravagance*.

> La réserve convient au mystère

says Desautels. No excess of confidence here. She does find a refuge for

> nos tenaces raisons de vivre

but this turns out to be something as heady and unreassuring as 'l'infini.'

> nous rassemblons les restes
> nous persévérons et les livres nous
> accompagnent

Desautels lists the poets whose books accompany her as she gathers the relics of her experience. Amongst these are Arthur Rimbaud, Julie Kristeva, Leonard Cohen, Peter Handke, Louise Desjardins, Anne-Marie Alonzo. Her poetics are akin to those of Anne Hébert's sense of the 'longue habitation secrète' of things in us which is the source of poetry.

In the second of the two collections, *Le signe discret*, previously published separately, Denise Desautels questions the word 'septembre.' The casual acquaintances, the fleeting passions, the memories detached from the normal and the everyday, the stimulus of images half-glimpsed as we rush past, the farewells of September, fit perfectly Desautels's desire to verbalise a fluid and free perception of reality. Pleasing, tantalisingly enigmatic black and white photographs of draped limbs accompany the poems.

CEDRIC MAY

TRIPPED OUT

DAVID MCFADDEN, *A Trip Around Lake Ontario*. Coach House, $14.95.

> "'In all my extensive travels over the years I've never encountered a place like this before,' I confessed truthfully."

ONE OF THE OLDEST plots in literature is the return trip — the circular tour, the literary closed circuit — the journey whose end is in its beginning. Such trips are best understood in the tradition of what might be called the humanist journey: the representative hero travels into a wilderness — into a desert, up a mountain, beneath the surface of water, or, if a twentieth-century tourist, into the dark depths of the self — and returns with knowledge of benefit to his community. The other sort of trip moves ever outward, the setting out without thought of return that describes the eternally unfolding explorations of the fascinating individual. Huck Finn lights out for the individualist's necessary frontier. The narrator of Stephen Leacock's "L'Envoi: The Train to Mariposa" returns from his journey with knowledge of "Mariposa," returns companionably to the Mausoleum Club and the world of men. Whatever the destination of their characters, all writers of published books have chosen to return with the good news. In life only ascetics, the marooned, and extreme individualists have absolutely no truck with mankind.

Canadian literature has a long tradition of poets and prose writers who took to the road. Bliss Carman did so to shake from his heels the dust of domesticity and the sick city; Frederick Philip Grove did so to find himself and America; Norman Levine did so to expose the Canadian underbelly that made him; Al Purdy did so to commune with his country's northern spirit (and crapping huskies). And in three "trip" books over the past decade — *A Trip Around Lake Erie* (1979), *A Trip Around Lake Huron* (1980), and *A Trip Around Lake Ontario* (1988) — David McFadden has been touring the Great Lakes. Why? Perhaps to possess them wholly. Maybe to make them into a post-modern Walden. Perhaps because they're there. Judging from the most recent trip book, it is difficult to say why. McFadden conflates, or confuses, the two kinds of trip (the conservatively circular and the liberally outward-bound), and returns with little of lasting interest, let alone of use, while his prose goes on and on.

He frames this book with statements of purpose and imbeds another about midway through. The first is loudly ironic: "I wanted to create an archaeological document that would freeze our sensibilities and the environments that created them in a way that somehow would be full of meaning far into the future." But as

would-be scholar Demeter Proudfoot of Robert Kroetsch's *The Studhorse Man* learned some twenty years ago, that way waits post-modern madness. The middle statement of purpose suggests the mystical, Thoreauvian bent of the author: "I was on a quest, trying to find the soul of the lakes, and to find it would be to find my own soul, not just in flashes but complete." Uh-huh. *Bon voyage*. And the third reason is a (supposedly) self-revelatory confession of the mawkishly personal or pathetically post-modernist sort that relies heavily on the trope of revised honesty: "But each little chapter in this book was a goodbye to you. And none was sincere." "You" is a nun, one Sister Marie-Thérèse, resident of a Montreal convent. *A Trip Around Lake Ontario* arrives home as a Dear Sister Jane letter. Just when you thought the Catholic clergy was having a hard enough time, this.

Male, adolescent, Catholic, *circa* 1962. But there has always been something of interminable adolescent male fantasy in the very form of the open-road book, in, for instance, its episodic narrative that seems itself to occasion the ribaldry of the picaresque male hero. Male bonding (McFadden makes this trip with a film crew of three interchangeable guys) is as distastefully there in this book as it was in Carman's chumming vagabondage with Richard Hovey. Moreover, plot development in a picaresque narrative, whether *Joseph Andrews*, *The Studhorse Man*, or Richard Wright's *Farthing's Fortunes*, depends on coincidence, and *A Trip Around Lake Ontario* is full of it. McFadden repeatedly styles himself as a sort of Mr. Synchronicity: "But I was the guy who was continually having bizarre coincidences blow up in his life. . . . I thought there was some principle involved that it was my duty to express." Blend with this gee-whizz view of coincidence the enabling sense of timelessness and irresponsibility (McFadden notes at the beginning that he is divorced and living alone), the sexual fantasies (compassionate meetings with strippers, nights in wayside motels with *two* acrobatic stewardesses), the free-wheeling mind-set of an easy rider with a spare tire, and the inspiring muse herself, Sister Marie-Thérèse —

> And somewhere along the line, after she decided she wanted to leave the sisterhood, and about the time she discovered she had a bit of a foot fetish (harmless really, but she loved it when I tickled the soles of her feet or when I let her tickle mine), we fell in love. It was kind of insane.
>
> 'I know you're a nun but how about showing me your tits,' I said as we sat across from each other . .

— and you get the picture (as, regarding his titillating request, does our aging boy-hero).

In the end Sister Marie-Thérèse doesn't leave her order, but like Amélie in William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* (1877), she retreats "into the solemn dungeon depths of the order," thank God. (Does McFadden mean "convent"?) She may or may not have reality only in this book, and McFadden desires to forestall questions about the veracity of his episodes: "It always bothered me when people who had read the previous trips books asked me if certain things were true or invented, for whatever we write becomes real, whatever we don't get around to writing disappears forever. Apart from the silly unreasonableness of this statement (what of individual and collective memory?), I am struck by its blatant self-serving: 'Golly, writers must be just about the most important people in the whole world. And you, David, you're a . . . ? Oh yeah.' (McFadden does spend time cataloguing what he has sacrificed for literature.) More important, who reading a "literary" book from Coach House Press cares about which scenes in the book are real or imagined? Come off it. It's the enervated invention that gives us repeated

pause, the dialogue that depends on a facile minimalism, the trying, tired stance.

With regard to shopworn attitudes: why, for instance, upon finding friendly harbour in Port Hope, must despairing McFadden tar its good citizens in this adolescent fashion: "they were all inside their softly illuminated and recently renovated and sandblasted nineteenth-century homes, sipping dry autumn sherry in front of the television set and trying to pretend everything was all right in their lives, reminding themselves the emptiness of their lives was the norm, bargaining for contentment." But of course: softly illuminated homes are bad, garishly lighted strip bars are good; sherry is bad, beer is good. Contentment, normality: these are two of McFadden's least favourite things, things he has sacrificed for literature. And like the essential adolescent, McFadden casually distorts the achievement of his elders and (in the following case) betters, such as "that old Canadian poet Duncan Campbell Scott who all the time he was running the ministry of Indian affairs and stabbing Indians in the back (metaphorically) was writing sentimental neo-Longfellowian poems about the noble savages." Hmm, now let me see: McFadden is on the side of justice and native rights (and motherhood, no doubt); and those who admire that old Canadian poet Duncan Campbell Scott? ... But has McFadden ever mis-read anything of Scott other than "The Forsaken"? This sort of attitude was inexcusable in the first wave of ignorant modernists sixty years ago; today it is justification for dumping the offending book.

Though it would be impossible to be as impressed by McFadden's voice as he is, there are qualities in his style that I enjoyed: the quick takes on characters who are never minor, sometimes the irony and the quieter coincidences, the few examples of an unthreatened stance in a riddling universe. At times McFadden's voice reminds me of what I like best in Bliss Carman, Kurt Vonnegut, and other gentle literary personae who have something to teach us latter-day aggressors on a sensitive earth. Also, McFadden can put an admirable aphorism: "Becoming rich means you can afford to get out of the mess you made becoming rich." Then tag it cleverly but carelessly: "At least you expect you'll be able to." (At least you think you can?) Unfortunately, there is far too much cute parrying to pass itself off as wit, the sort of thing Neil Simon does so poorly well. In short, the book is overwritten, so much so that McFadden's virtues are lost. Someone at Coach House Press should have cut this book by at least a third. "Just talking to myself here, of course," mumbles McFadden in the concluding one-sentence paragraph of chapter four, inadvertently exposing the root of the problem with length and exemplifying the sort of thing that should have been cut.

GERALD LYNCH

A GIFT

BP NICOL, *Selected Organs: Parts of an Autobiography*. Black Moss Press, n.p.

Selected Organs is a wonderfully alive book, which makes its position as the last book to be published in bp Nichol's lifetime all the more sadly ironic. From the first time I heard these pieces I loved them, and such enjoyment and, yes, even love, appeared to be the general response to Nichol's performances of them. For although they represent a typical — for him — research project on a form replete with already taken-for-granted conventions, they are among the most accessible of his writings, and a thorough delight for all who encounter them. It is difficult to write about any of Nichol's work so soon after his tragic death, and the unutterable loss

to Canadian writing it represents, yet *Selected Organs* is a wonderful last gift to accompany *The Martyrology's* various books and one which may bring Nichol even more readers than before.

The question of autobiography is a thorny one, and it is becoming more and more complicated with every passing day. Whatever the naiveté of certain innocents who practice the most conventional versions of it, promulgating their political or business 'expertise' and 'wisdom' through a review of their own exemplary lives, most concerned writers and theorists of the genre are ever increasingly aware of the many pitfalls awaiting the hardy venturer who dares to try to say 'I' in a life-text today. It was Nichol's delighted and delightful experiment to, as he put it, "come at the issue of autobiography from another direction i.e. through anecdotes which had their origin in the various parts of the body." Typically, then, he began with "The Vagina," in which he tells us first that "I never had one" and then proceeds to discover in that absence a fullness of possibilities for exploration and delight which translate from anecdotal evidence into a desiring tongue.

As Nichol explains, the exact tone had to be caught for each of these pieces, based "in a specific style borrowed from the oral story-telling methods of my Grandma Workman (Leigh) and her brothers & sisters." Yet, although these are gorgeous read-aloud pieces, they are also, as is typical of Nichol's work, craftily textual, extremely writerly works. This is *writing* first and foremost. Nichol's intertextual play engages both the outrageous pun and the most banal of clichés, often in the same phrase, thus renewing a discourse too often left for dead, and exploring a conventional sense of life-narrative the better to let the feel of a life break through.

One of the ways Nichol evades a too-singular 'I' is through the pronomial shifts he makes from piece to piece, and sometimes even within a single piece. If, as he says, "all stories are true," nevertheless the perspectives change, and with each change the sense of self enlarges. Moreover, I am willing to bet that most readers will find something in these story-essays to identify with, something that lets them know that on some level it is their own story they are reading; it always is. Yet it is most specifically Nichol's story, especially in the naming that accompanies the anecdotal bio-evidence. Friends, lovers, parents, and siblings all enter the discourse, taking their own places as parts of a lived life. Yet, further, they are all ikons, signs of everyone's life, the signal figures who reflect upon us all and help us define our place in 'the world.' And if Nichol's presentation of them is both more linguistically playful than usual and more casually private than we might at first expect, this too is part of the graphic aspect of auto-biography: as writing it expands as the words allow or even urge it to.

> I was staying at Bob and Smaro's place in Winnipeg. I was sleeping on the floor in Smaro's study. I was getting up early in the morning, like I tend to do, getting up early and going into the livingroom. I was sitting down in a chair and reading a copy of a new book on literary theory or literary criticism Smaro had brought back from some recent trip as she tends to do. I was just turning the page, just beginning to get into the book when Bob appeared at the top of the stairs, when Bob came down the stairs from the upper floor, not really awake, came down the stairs anyway, Bob, muttering to himself, 'life, the great tyrant that makes you go on breathing.' And I thought about breathing. I thought about life. I thought about those great tyrants the lungs, about the lung poems I've tried to perfect in various ways, the lung poems Bob's written, written about, lung forms. And I thought about the lungs sitting there, inside the chest — inhaling — exhaling. And I thought to myself, to myself because Bob was in no mood to hear it, I thought 'life's about going the lung distance.' Just that. And it is.

You can hear the voice there, I say, but

what I really mean to say is that *I* can hear barrie's voice in this, as in everything he wrote. Equally, I can point to everything that makes this a marvelously borderline text, crossing back and forth across the 'line' we are sometimes told separates the written from the oral: the repetition almost too strong for simple speaking, the specific gesture to books(and books of literary theory or criticism, to boot), the naming of other authors, the casual 'aw shucks' storytelling of an ordinary visit with friends. I know 'who' "Bob" and "Smaro" are, of course, as does any reader conversant with contemporary Canadian writing. Or do we. These are signs, craftily linked with lungs and repeated tendencies: they are parts of a linguistic (or is it, in this case at any rate, 'lunguistic') pattern on a page of Nichol's text. They are part of his playful "graphy," the writing of a life in small notations of the moment.

Nichol has always noted the importance of Gertrude Stein to his own art. It was she who told us that there is no such thing as repetition, just insistence. These are texts of a generously personal insistence, which simultaneously reminds us of the way words work on their own in their own place, and of our irredeemable desire to have those words represent us to ourselves. We read (or we listen) and what we read tells us something of a life. It was, as it turns out, a life of humour, love, and generosity, and we can feel them all present in this text we are reading, that life we knew or might only know from these texts. It is perhaps necessary to draw back, to theorize such texts because they are so clearly writerly. Yet, as is so often the case with his texts, these too subvert both the humanist and the purely textual response. I read the parts of *Selected Organs* in as duplicitous a manner as bpNichol wrote them: they are like those Necker cubes in which the drawn cube keeps shifting its back and front as we look at it. So I can read them as *autobio*graphical or as auto-bio*graphical*. Really, and simultaneously, as both. I expect that these apparently 'simple' stories will eventually receive a great deal of very complex critical commentary; and they will deserve every bit of it. But it is also important to state that they are among the most thoroughly delightful and moving pieces of writing you are likely to encounter. They are a gift.

DOUGLAS BARBOUR

HOME & ABROAD

MAVIS GALLANT, *In Transit*. Viking, n.p.

BARRY DEMPSTER, *Writing Home*. Oberon, n.p.

MAVIS GALLANT'S *In Transit* and Barry Dempster's *Writing Home* evoke a contrasting sense of place. The stories in *In Transit*, all previously published in *The New Yorker* in the 1950s and 60s, are set against a European background. Dempster's focus on *Writing Home*, in contrast, is on life in a suburban neighbourhood in Scarborough, and might, if the term were not usually reserved for writing from outside central Canada, be described as a kind of regionalism.

Because of the expatriates, foreign residents and travellers who make up such a large portion of Gallant's cast, one of the more consistent impressions conveyed by this relatively varied collection is a sense of dislocation or lack of belonging. This dislocation is sometimes mundane and circumstantial, as in the title story, in which a couple on their wedding trip discuss the husband's previous marriage and the future of their own as they wait for a flight in Helsinki airport. In "An Emergency Case," on the other hand the dislocation is central to the story, as a young boy recovers in hospital from a car accident in which both his parents have been killed, unable to grasp his situation or

fathom why his aunt is coming to take him away. In many of the stories the sense of dislocation is a product of the alien cultural contexts in which Gallant's characters find themselves (such as the English woman married to a French farmer in "Careless Talk"); sometimes it stems from strained relations between the sexes or between family members; and often it is the result of both: the longing for England of the young wives in "Better Times" and "In Italy" that accompanies disillusionment with their marriages to older men. The stories often formally reflect this sense of transit, as the characters are caught in passage, in brief episodes in their lives, giving an impression of incompletion which is sustained by the lack of narrative closure.

Gallant establishes the shape and tone of these situations efficiently and effectively, to suggest the personal and social codes underlying the interaction between characters and to convey the tensions of that interaction. The opening story, "By the Sea," in which a British matron resident in Spain condescends to her beachfront companions while her presuppositions about them prove incorrect and her attempts to manipulate them are frustrated, is a good example of Gallant at work. While the stories are sustained by the sophisticated nuances of the interaction between characters and by a current of subtle irony which runs through the whole collection, some stories are less engaging than others (the merits of "Vacances Pax," for instance, I found to be elusive). And, although the presence of some first-person narratives lends variety to the collection, there is a general lack of modulation of narrative voice and an occasionally heavy reliance (in "The Captive Niece," for instance) on the mediation of characters by the narrator. This interference, added to the fact that most of the stories concern somewhat bourgeois and dramatically limited situations, blunts the final impact of *In Transit*.

As the title of his book suggests, Dempster is 'writing home,' trying to depict "the pioneers of his childhood," trying to inscribe home in writing — a combination of representational and reflective impulses which defines Dempster's attitude toward place in *Writing Home*. 'Book' is perhaps the best description for *Writing Home*, because the stories within it are both self-contained and linked to give the cumulative structure of the novel, though in Dempster's book it is place more than character that serves to unify its 'chapters'. *Writing Home* consists of a series of sketches of, as the blurb on the back cover confesses, "the ordinary men and women who live on Cliff Park Road in a typical suburb — which happens to be Scarborough": June Evans, adjusting to a divorce and the reappearance of her son, a budding writer; Marlon Palmer, an alcoholic driven to sleep outside by his wife's snoring and nocturnal kicks; Tammy Wallace, confined to a wheelchair by multiple sclerosis; Dash Ainslie, who makes a misinterpreted turn to Christ after his release from a mental health centre; Walt Apple, a policeman whose hedonistic wife frustrates his desire for a child; and Jo Wynters, who finds in light a source of renewal for her painting. Although the stories tend to focus on these figures and their families, Dempster tries to provide a sense of continuity by linking the stories temporally and by having the various characters make brief appearances in each other's stories. The third-person narratives which make up the bulk of *Writing Home* are framed by the title story, in which Jeffrey Evans relates his decision to become a writer and his move from downtown Toronto back to Cliff Park Road, and by the final chapter, which gathers all the characters for a neighbourhood party and allows each of them (except Jeffrey) a short segment of

first-person narrative to put the neighborhood in her/his own perspective.

Dempster does not altogether succeed at establishing his characters and animating their ordinary lives. His characterizations reflect a certain amount of sympathy, and there are some welcome flashes of humour: despite his desire for verisimilitude, Dempster does end up constructing types (the apprentice writer, the lonely widow, the alcoholic). Also of questionable success is *Writing Home*'s desire to give a sense of home. The attempt to evoke a feeling of community through the neighborhood party in the final chapter is contrived. The characters seem to know and, ultimately, to care little about each other and have few common points of reference which come out of place: Lake Ontario, the Scarborough Bluffs, the story of a man who committed suicide by throwing himself from "The Rocky Heights," Cliff Park (a.k.a. Petter's Park). As Jo Wynters looks at the tableau of gathered neighbors, trying to decide whether to paint them — with the Scarborough Bluffs behind — in a light pastoral mode as an "extended family" or in dark tones as a "community feeding off itself, non-existant except as a whole," neither option seems, to this reader, particularly appropriate. Ironically, Dempster's characters ultimately do not provide much more of a sense of home than do those in Gallant's *In Transit.*

HERB WYILE

HEART & CORE OF LOVE

IRENA FRIEDMAN KARAFILLY, *Night Cries,* Oberon, $12.95 pa.

ELLEN STAFFORD, *Was That You at the Guggenheim?* MacMillan/Gage, $12.95 pa.

Night Cries AND *Was That You at the Guggenheim?* deftly reveal humans' instinct to travel to 'the heart and core of love' in the hope of finding there a metaphysical home. But fiction often bravely and squarely can face — as these fictions do — what people cannot; in this case, how difficult it is to accept and live through, once having travelled to 'the heart and core of love,' what actually lies there.

The most remarkable protagonists of *Night Cries,* who, with open eyes, "walk into love's heart and core" (Thomas Wolfe, as quoted in *Was That You . . .*), find estrangement and alienation, a discovery which is evident in the "black-eyed horror" that often results. Physical proximity between those who remain essentially foreigners causes love to be distorted. The protagonist of *Was That You at the Guggenheim?* rather inadvertently wanders into love's heart and core and finds too late her metaphysical home, her "bridge of survival." This discovery unfolds as "a comedy . . . of fumbled cues, missed connections and highly ridiculous errors, compounded by . . . infallibly bad timing," and results in the pain of permanent separation.

But the simple style in which *Was That You . . . ?* is written is as illusory as Marie's self-conscious amusement at her own woe: this is not a light and "ludicrous" tale of a "Humpty-Dumpty break-up," but a retrospective exploration of the magic and transformative power of love. Marie's amusement masks the perpetual homesickness for the perfection of love.

"The opposite of to love is not to hate but to separate": "Love aims to close all distance" writes John Berger in *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos.* Marie initially perceives her affair with Jay as casual and comfortable, as Jay wanders in and out of her life, periodically 'shipping out' for months at a time, and as she wanders between Toronto, New York, and England in search of a home and in the self-protective assumption that they remain foreigners to one another. Only after they wander into permanent separation and lose track of each other for years, does Marie experience "glowing moments" of recognition of the joy and tenderness they found with each other. She finally determines that Jay died, friendless, of Parkinson's disease in a St. Petersburg nursing home, and pays in perpetual remorse for their carelessness with love.

In the stories of *Night Cries,* distance between individuals — not all of them lovers — remains unclosed, despite attempts to close it. The stories, taken together, offer varying configurations of the concept of foreignness, a word which gains great metaphorical significance as it is woven through all of the stories. Set in various Greek isles and villages, the stories most obviously expose the potential 'foreignness" to each other of Greeks and North Americans. From the native Greeks' perspective, the foreigners, both fascinating and appalling, complicate their lives, and the traditional Mediterranean perspective is also thrown into relief by a narrative voice frequently sympathetic to the foreigner's experience. Neither native nor foreigner, in these stories, finds a figurative home in the other, and Friedman Karafilly shows how destructive fascination with foreignness can be, as it is particularly to the American girl in "Strays," to Sultana in "Sultana in the Sun," and to Willie in the story "Willie."

In the powerfully crafted title story of *Night Cries,* the relationship between native and foreigner is convoluted to highlight the abstract concept of 'foreignness': the foreigner, in this case, is Helen, a first generation Greek Canadian, who travels to Greece to the house in which her grandmother spent her life and in which her mother was conceived. In the house she finds Martin, a bitter English writer who has fled from a crumbled marriage to the village and who, promptly losing himself in the local ways, represents the native. Helen and Martin's love only heightens their experience of alienation. At home in the village and house of Helen's family, Martin remains a foreigner in marriage and fatherhood, while Helen, at home in her role of mother and wife, remains a foreigner in the village and in the house.

Both these works of fiction ably testify to the tragedy of glimpsing a metaphysical home at the 'heart and core of love,' but of being unable to dwell in it. This loss can mean wonder at love's power of transcendence, as it does for Marie, or horror because its original promise has been violated, as it is for Helen, Martin, and their fictional kin.

DIANE WATSON

GENRE DISTINCTIONS

JOAN CLARK, *Swimming Toward the Light.* Macmillan, $16.95.

DOROTHY LIVESAY, *The Husband: A Novella.* Ragweed Press, n.p.

POSTMODERNIST WRITING has severely altered our notions of genre distinctions, even between works which are not, strictly speaking, postmodernist. What, for instance, makes a collection of pieces linked by character and point of view, such as Joan Clark's *Swimming Toward the Light,* a book of short stories, as it is designated on the title page, rather than a novel? How is it any less a novel than

another recent Maritime narrative, David Adams Richards' *Nights Below Station Street* which, more than *Swimming Toward the Light*, includes a disrupted narrative, frequent and abrupt shifts in time and tense, and altering centres of consciousness? Or, along similar lines, what makes Dorothy Livesay's new work, *The Husband*, a "novella" rather than a collection of epistolary stories or vignettes?

Of course, collections of linked short stories have long been in vogue, especially in Canadian literature with the works of such masters of the short story as Stephen Leacock, Margaret Laurence, and Alice Munro. Joan Clark's *Swimming Toward the Light* falls into this category certainly. While the stories are not all set in one locale, they do trace the experiences and thoughts of a central character, Madge, a young Cape Breton girl at the beginning of the collection who has matured into a middle-aged and successful artist living in Victoria by the close.

In essence, the book outlines Madge's various attempts — in wartime Nova Scotia, at Acadia University, as a young mother and estranged wife, as a lover, as an artist — to "swim toward the light," an image based on a nocturnal swimming lesson at the age of 13 which becomes, in retrospect (since "Swimming Toward the Light" is the concluding piece in the book), a symbol for Madge's attempts to take initiative in her life, to realize and explore her potential for independence and artistic creativity. This, despite the many moments of loss and disillusionment, is the positive and largely feminist message that comes through in the book.

The similarities with Munro, however, go beyond the mere structural element. Like Munro's, Clark's stories are highly lyrical and erotic, often concerned with various aspects of female adolescence and sexuality. Her treatment of Madge as a beautifully sexual being — Madge with her children, Madge with her husband and later numerous lovers — is sensitive and convincing:

> I had come to see my body as something ripe and fecund. Medium boned, with full breasts and heavy thighs, I maintained an unhurried, unflappable pace. I moved slowly, languidly. I was incapable of quick, darting movements, trim, economical gestures. I wasn't athletic. I couldn't imagine myself playing strenuous games like tennis or golf. . . . I took to wearing loose-fitting clothes: Doug's old shirts, baggy pants. . . . Beneath these clothes my body felt generous and flourishing.

This, I think, is where Clark triumphs.

Without doubt, these stories work best in relation to one another. While the stories often outline unpleasant experiences, there is usually an ambiguous twist at the end, a vague this-has-been-all-for-the-good note, which becomes affirmed when the story is considered in connection with the others. If there is one problem with the book it is that some of the early stories lose their impact because the reader has not invested sufficient interest in the characters at that point. When read as a whole (as a novel?), each piece forms a chapter in Madge's life story, in her growth towards self-reliance.

Dorothy Livesay has also published a collection of linked short stories: *A Winnipeg Childhood* (1973). Her latest work, *The Husband*, also composed of interconnected sections, claims to be exploring new terrain — that of the novella (as the book is subtitled), or, more precisely, the epistolary novella.

Less overtly sexual than Clark's book, this work is also set in the Maritimes and tells a story of estranged marriage and personal and artistic fulfillment. Set in Fredericton in the late 1960's, Livesay stirringly evokes the atmosphere and beauty of New Brunswick's capital city, a city marked by geographical (there is no railway line to Fredericton) and spiritual

isolation. And isolation is precisely the predicament of the book's main character, Celia, at the outset, a state heightened not only by her unresponsive husband, but also by the turn-of-the-century surroundings of Georgian houses and ladies' tea parties.

The epistolary form is ideal for this tale of Celia's growing self-awareness. Through conversations, mainly about the connections between poetry and painting (like Madge, Celia is an artist), and an eventual love affair with the young border and poet, John, and through a recording and confession of these experiences in her letters, Celia comes to realize her own creative potential. The character of John and the nature of their affair unfold slowly in Celia's letters as we see her perceptions filtered through the restrictions of her relationships with various correspondents — her stepson, her art teacher, her sister. Towards the end of the affair, she also composes miscellaneous "notations" for her own therapeutic perusal. Gardually we find her writing almost solely to her sister (her only female correspondent) to whom, woman to woman, she can most freely express her thoughts on her deteriorating marriage, her glorious physical and spiritual awakening and, through an unforeseen event, her eventual recognition of the true source of satisfaction and inspiration in her life.

For avid Livesay fans, *The Husband* has immediate biographical interest as well. Written in 1967 while Livesay was writer-in-residence at UNB, some years after the death of her husband, this book is an acute record of Livesay's impressions of Fredericton and the surrounding area. More importantly, says Livesay in the preface, it was meant to explore a long overdue theme in Canadian literature, the theme of an older woman's "intense love affair with a younger man."

CYNTHIA SUGARS

ON A RAINY AFTERNOON

THE LAND OF GRAWS, *performed by Robert Stelmach.* First Avenue Press, n.p.

MOON TALES, *performed by Nan Gregory and Melanie Ray; music by Huang Ji Rong.* First Avenue Press, n.p.

MUD AND GOLD, *performed by Sarah Ellis and Bill Richardson.* First Avenue Press, n.p.

POBBLES & PORRIDGE POTS, *performed by Sarah Ellis and Bill Richardson.* First Avenue Press, n.p.

ALL FOUR TAPES FROM *The Storytellers' Series* have traditional rhymes or stories on them. They are all for different age groups but are really good for the whole family as well. Many of the stories on the tapes have backgrounds other than Canadian, such as Chinese, Romanian, Welsh, Scottish, and English, and therefore give children a knowledge of the cultures of different ethnic groups. Some of the stories are silly but catchy. They pop up in your head when you least expect them to!

Pobbles & Porridge Pots, performed by Sarah Ellis and Bill Richardson, is a mixture of traditional verse and stories, all for younger children. There is also one of Ellis' own stories. It was nice to recognize some stories that I knew from before, like "The Great Big Enormous Turnip" in which a farmer has trouble pulling up a turnip and so calls his whole family to help him. The story is told through the repetition of sounds and actions. The two readers change their voices and add sound effects. You can hear the grunts and groans of everyone pulling at the turnip.

Ellis and Richardson also recorded the four stories on *Mud and Gold.* I knew two of the stories already, "The Tin Soldier" by Hans Christian Andersen and "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde. The other two stories are "The Swineherd," also by Andersen, and a Romanian folktale called

"Stan Bollivan." The stories are all read with expression and feeling, but my favourite is "The Happy Prince" because it is a story of love and sadness and giving.

The Land of Graws, well-read, if a bit over-acted, by Robert Stelmach, is a tape of short, contemporary, nonsense poems, such as "Love Song By a Microwave" and "Dragon with a Flagon." Many of the poems remind me of Dennis Lee's verses in *Jelly Belly* or *Alligator Pie*, but those in *The Land of Graws* are not specifically Canadian; they are rather international ("Mud puddle pudding / Mud puddle jam / Mud puddles everywhere / Splash me if you can.") In "Ned the Thing" a monster made of books, bits of string, and elastics that lives in a child's school desk ends up by "gobbling poor teacher" when the teacher makes the fatal mistake of trying to tidy up the desk. *The Land of Graws* is framed by a pretty, four-line poem "Icicle," read at the beginning and almost whispered at the end, which makes for a nice change of pace.

My favourite of the four tapes is *Moon Tales* because it tells about another ethnic group's traditions, and I like learning about other people's stories and traditions. *Moon Tales*, performed by Nan Gregory and Melanie Ray, presents six traditional Chinese stories with appropriate musical accompaniment by Huang Ji Rong. *Moon Tales* is a very serious tape of stories, unlike many of the stories on the other tapes. Several of the tales tell either about the moon or the people and animals that, in Chinese tradition, live on the moon. One tells about how Buddha put a rabbit on the moon, while another is about how Chang'E, the goddess of the moon, got there. All but one of the stories involve magic, but the magic is mysterious rather than tricky. The stories are read in voices that are both hushed and excited. I was captivated.

SARAH MUNTON

SHORT-LONG

DOUGLAS BARBOUR, *Story for a Saskatchewan Night*. Red Deer College Press, $8.95.

FOR MANY READERS of Canadian literature, the name Douglas Barbour is known through his numerous book reviews and articles on Canadian poets and writers, but unfortunately this public signature may have obscured his accomplishments as a poet. To date he has published seven volumes, and for sound poetry enthusiasts he has carved a North American and European reputation for his performances with Stephen Scobie in the ensemble "Re-Sounding." Barbour's latest book, its title evoking his prairie connections, is part of Red Deer College Press' innovative "Writing West" series. Companion current releases include Barry McKinnon's *I Wanted to Say Something* and Monty Reid's *These Lawns*, and earlier we've had Fred Wah's *Music at the Heart of Thinking* and Dennis Cooley's *Soul Searching*. In just a few years, this press has made a name for itself by consistently producing important books with visually attractive cover designs and typography.

The same holds for Barbour's *Stories for a Saskatchewan Night*, a collection covering a ten-year period. The diverse and expansive forms reveal Barbour's interest in poems that resist that "ferocious" (borrowing a Kroetschean term) will to closure in those lyrics (Canadian poetry journals abound with them) where the subjective poetic "I" effects words but is never affected by them. Barbour works at the boundaries of the lyric mode and this results in compelled poems that make for compelling reading.

A front flap blurb playfully describes the poems as "short-long (or long-short)," which I suppose is to say indecisively that they are short "long poems" or long "short poems"; or perhaps, they fall somewhere in between the cracks of terminological

exactitudes. Still, in appearance at least — with only two exceptions, two "short-long" poems — the poems were composed in sequential forms. We begin with the title poem, a series addressed to fellow prairie writer Robert Kroetsch on the absence of story in western (prairie) life, its impossibility in an origin-less site.

"Listen" then, or listen *then*, the poet says, listen to the self/story's absence and another telling may come to be told on its own. This trust in the compositional process aligns Barbour to the writing of bpNichol whose death is evoked in the dedication: "a sharpness in the air // inscribes his departure." The inscription of Nichol's departure and absence suggests an intertextuality on Barbour's part that acknowledges listening as the basis for a reading mode which generates the text of writing. In such a mode the signifying process takes precedence over the fixing of a signified, so that the textual "I" can inscribe itself through a network of interactions with (literal) material from other artists and writers. There are letters drawn by Barbara Caruso in "An Alphabet" that work in a dialogic relationship to a poem sequence structured on the alphabet. There are single lines from poems by American poets Robert Duncan, Charles Olson and Denise Levertov, which begin the poems in "Earth Song / Body Song." And there is the even more complicated "These for Those from Whom" that combines a reading of Canadian poets and SF & F writers, for example, "Margaret Avison & Brian Aldiss," and "Daphne Marlatt & Samuel R. Delany."

These are poems of a writer who listens to the works of others, and whose listening makes possible poetic structures that are remarkable for their intellectual vitality and immediacy. The title poem to Kroetsch, for instance, speaks to an entry from Kroetsch's *The Crow Journals* (1980), which Barbour himself edited, cited (with ellipses signifying absent words) as an epigraph. At "Picnic in a coulee in a cow pasture . . ." in Qu'Appelle Valley, Saskatchewan, some writers gather around a fire to tell stories, and ironically the novelist Kroetsch cannot tell a story, haunted as he is by the ghost of his father, the story-teller. Barbour talks to Kroetsch with a shared sense of absences — of silences that initiate the poem into a desire or/for words, for a means of inscribing the "no thing" that the inability to story tell conjures.

As the sequence continues, the poem — and this is the power of the poetic act for Barbour (and for the reader too) — suddenly splits into two precisely at the moment the words begin to double outward: "& we re telling them," the "re" caught between the "we" and the "telling." The section following enacts that doubleness on the left and right side of the page as two poems materialize and simultaneously criss-cross, creating a text that is framed by the page itself. The space of the page becomes an absence with two interacting poems, sometimes down parallel paths, sometimes connected horizontally on a line, sometimes both ways simultaneously, and then meeting at the centre.

A similar care with language and form is evident in "Maybe the Language Sings," a long sequence in two parts that is described in the poet's note as "I. homolinguistic translation (one word per line) of W. B. Yeats' 'Words for Music Perhaps.' II. homolinguistic translation (metonymic) of W. B. Yeats' 'Words for Music Perhaps'." The poems have the densest language in the book, difficult to interpret, but working with an opacity that resists the transparency of consumable meaning makes for a Zukofskyan sound-before-sense syntax and syllabic music — and stunningly the absent rhythm, syntax and image of Yeats' poem is translated into a new linguistic appearance. Homolinguistic translation, i.e. translation within the same language, is another version of inter-

textuality; both affirm a post-lyric recognition that poetic texts are always speaking to/through other texts and that the "I" speaking is conditioned by what has been written. So listening is a way of/to speaking. So reading is a way of/to writing.

In "Earth Son / Body Song" Barbour's language enters that projective space (the intertexts from Olson, Duncan and Levertov) where the spaces between words become actual on the page itself —

that first you listen
then begin to speak

love & touch are
speaking here language

will languish
lost to yr coming
if you refuse it recognition

Story for a Saskatchewan Night ends with "A Baghdad Journal," a sequence that juxtaposes prose journal-like entries with poems, an interplay of prose and poetry that resembles the Japanese *utanikki* form used by bpNichol and Fred Wah, and which traces its history back to the well-known Japanese "journey" poet Basho. Far from his home place in the Canadian prairies, the poet/tourist enters yet another absence, this one imposed by patriarchic military rule, in a country he naively thought could give him access to an archaic poetic origin. Here in the "east" of his west, as the sword replaces the word, his own desire to "snap-shot" the ancient past is prohibited by a political space in which the perceptions and desires of strangers are flatly censored and controlled. His own doubled relationship to the "foreign" place is reflected in the doubled form: prose texts of words flowing one into another into a terrifying syntactic stream, as in "Who" —

Sad man sad man whos saying whos sane
when the sad man
whos saying those things about us is saying
them again & again
to applause on streets & walls above the
people everywhere
that sad man whos saying this is what you
must do . . .

The prose hype is then set again a poetic text that struggles for some sense and clarity:

A sustained litany
shazam this atman
is the breath of life

& the sad man whos saying that is
the madman whose
sane objectives
reign over every satisfaction

"A Baghdad Journal," constructed on the five categories of journalistic reporting ("who," "what," "where," "when," "why," "how") is eery and haunting, all the more so in the wake of the recent invasion of Kuwait by Iran's Saddam Hussein.

The poet's estrangement in Iraq gives us an extreme paradigm for the inauthenticity of lyric power in a world where violence and death is ever-threatening. There is no central "I" that can make it all cohere.

taking it in
& home

just like a bloody tourist
yeah

— so the poet says at the end of the book. Minus the assurance of aesthetic closure, the "yeah" leaves him as "tourist" (and potential victim), so that commodity called "reality" lies up a road that divides and subdivides, each of many self(s) carrying its own baggage, at his own risk, across the border. Up against this (the critic Barbour might say) postmodern frame, the lyric telling is willy-nilly transformed or translated by its limits.

As a bridge with no beginning or end (a metonymic passage?) the poem assumes its compositional form, word by tentative word, through the music of syn-

tax. *Story for a Saskatchewan Night* is such a pleasure to read because Barbour composes with the trained ear of a musician who's got something to say before the lights go out forever.

there is too much dark
space
for words to cross
clearly
its lost in such translation

& yet 'i' speak the poem 'speaks'
to 'you'

ROY MIKI

WRITING & POWER

JO-ANN CANNING-DEW, ed., *Hastings and Main: Stories from an Inner City Neighbourhood.* Portraits by James K. Stewart. New Star Books, n.p.

JOHN HARRIS. *Small Rain.* New Star Books, $12.95, pa.

ROBIN SKELTON. *Portrait of My Father.* Sono Nis Press, n.p.

Hastings and Main, like the two other offerings by British Columbian presses reviewed here, speaks about the relationship between writing and empowerment. "Cocaine corner" and "Vancouver's cocaine supermarket" are names which sign the intersection of Hastings and Main streets in an April 1990 article in *The Vancouver Sun*. In this collection of 20 interviews with residents of Vancouver's downtown eastside, the area's reputation as the city's skid road and its steady material decline since the 1960's form the background against which the self-portraits are presented. It aims to realign a short-sighted perception and give a voice to the marginalized citizens of one of Vancouver's oldest neighbourhoods.

Like the Carnegie Library building, a local landmark, this book was designed to be both a "meeting place" and a store of oral histories, and its production was also intended to reaffirm the dignity of residents, informally associated with what is now the Carnegie Community Centre and Brance Library. There is necessarily a somewhat fragmentary and disjointed quality to some of these pieced-together interviews, which are not really "stories" as the subtitle suggests, but collages of anecdotes. Some sections, however, such as Willis Shaparla's tale of the Relief Camp Workers' Union's march and the mayor's reading the riot act, work well in this format, perhaps because the union organizer's narrative has been polished through repetition. These reminiscences provide a sketch history of the century from the dying of the Victorian empire (Robert Bruce's account of turn-of-century Vancouver includes details of opium dens and the seizure of native land) to the Depression and World War II, the internment of Japanese-Canadians, and the effects of affluence since the 1960s.

In choosing interviews for this volume, the editor admirably sought to represent the composition of the area along the lines of class, gender, race and sexual preference. A number of those interviewed are loners and have had a more than casual acquaintance with alcohol, crime and just plain bad luck. As George Johnson puts it, "When you get to the point where you're hungry and have no place to sleep, you start disregarding social niceties." Katherine Kosta recalls her home papered with wallpaper samples from the city dump, and Moses Jimmy relates his people's search for "powerful colours, medicine colours, colours of vision." Alfred Yeske remembers being sent before parties of mine sweepers in the Korean War because of his miraculous power to withstand explosions; Gary Poirier recalls surviving the Second Narrows Bridge Disaster and Charlie Locke a shipwreck off the coast of Greenland. In these accounts there is a deep resiliency, a potent sense of optimism

(and even of patriotism) and a faith in the human spirit. *Hastings and Main* attempts to ensure that the literate and the economic victors alone do not write Vancouver's history.

John Harris's *Small Rain* is a linked set of stories about the life and loves, or anxieties and sexual preoccupations, of the narrator, a middle-aged writer and English instructor at a British Columbian college. The narrator, the only character to emerge fully, is ceaselessly worried by his various impotencies: sexual dysfunction, lack of publishing success, inability to abandon job security. The least interesting stories concern the state of his vas deferens and his dreams of seducing Jane Fonda, a trope for attaining a Hollywood screen-writer's success. All of the stories scrupulously avoid moments of epiphany; the narrator's account of failures and neuroses, amounting to the angst of male menopause, is interspersed with barroom philosophizing and ranting diatribes about something resembling the hippy notion of "the establishment."

For the frustrated narrator, a writer ideally tells "what he really knew," because "you can't write about nothing. You can't invent the truth." Such honesty is apparent in the strongest of the pieces where, in telling caricatures, Harris mocks the foibles of sheepish instructors, fiendish administrators, and boorish office workers. At its best *Small Rain* is a satire of the academic scene, not at universities like McGill, UBC or York (institutions mentioned here with a tinge of gruding jealousy), where professors "are involved in serious miscalculations about the most serious things," but at the community colleges of the interior, those in sprawling industrial and recreational centers. The instructor chooses stories for his literature courses according to the feasibility of drafting multiple-choice tests on them; his vocation keeps "teenagers out of shopping malls ... during business hours." Release from this drudgery will follow a party "where the retirer is presented with condoms, Rhino Horn and Grecian Formula." In this commentary on college life, wherein the teller trusts the power of his story and the tone is assured, Harris's work is reminiscent of Kinsella's. Here, the writing never approaches metafiction, loses its debilitating self-enclosure, and disarms the narrator's narcissistic preoccupation with impotency and powerlessness.

Robin Skelton's *A Portrait of My Father* is a gift of affection for a beloved parent. In it Skelton offers his father the voice and the audience he never attained. Elegantly written, with carefully-drawn metaphors evoking memories of gestures and expressions, this is a loving portrait and not a critical biography. It is a family history, partly based on the notion that certain traits and attitudes linger through generations; only occasionally does the writing lose force as a result of the strain of conjuring up an absent person's never articulated perceptions.

Cyril Skelton (1879-1964) was a rural Yorkshire school master with an enthusiasm for human eccentricity and rural traditions. He kept a pet owl, killing rodents for it with a catapult; grew a single giant dandelion in his flower garden; and let liver become fly-blown to collect maggots for fishing. These domestic Shandean touches might threaten to become overly precious but for Skelton's carefully modulated perspective: "When our tastes and enthusiasms coincided he was superbly happy, and so obviously so that his bliss had sometimes the effect of arousing my perversity." The author claims, for example, to have become a poet partly because his father seemed to object to the idea, and recalls him munching crackers once to insure the inaudibility of a recitation.

Generally, Skelton's irony tempers the indulgence of the extremes of sentiment.

Clearly his father would have loved but others may be less sympathetic to Skelton's account of his father's literary club papers. Even here, however, the reader may share some of Skelton's enthusiasm, largely because he invests so much of himself in his recovery of the past. Skelton's creation of his father's myth, a myth his father could not elucidate, is the great achievement of this book.

OLIVER LOVESEY

HEY WAITRESS, HEY WOMAN

HELEN POTREBENKO, *Hey Waitress and Other Stories*. Lazara Press, $12.00.

RHEA TREGEBOV, ed., *Frictions: Stories by Women*. Second Story Press, $14.95.

THESE COLLECTIONS profoundly represent a struggle in both the artistic and academic communities, a struggle with a fundamental issue of both creative license and aesthetic choice. Incomprehensibly the argument is grounded in the contradiction between cultural identity and individual liberty, between those who celebrate diversity and those who would seek its origins. Such contradictions may be seen as the struggle for and with "voice," an idea and literary term bandied about rather casually of late. At its useful level, voice may be described as the sensibility behind a piece of literature, somewhat akin to persona and identifiable in the details which are chosen for or, more dramatically, sneak into a piece. It is at the heart of such studies as King, Calver, and Hoy's *The Native in Literature: Canadian and Comparative Perspectives* (1987) where Terrence Craig can ask, "how do we who teach Canadian literature deal with E. J. Pratt's poem about the Iroquois torture of Brebeuf and Wiebe's novel about the pacifist Big Bear? Are both accounts hyperbole, inflating event and character to stereotype?"

Frictions includes several stories which were written some cultural distance from the author's experience, a fact which led the editors of Women's Press to withdraw several from publication. One such story, Jan Bauer's "In Such a State," offers the reader the hysterical anglophonic portrait of hispanic passion obvious in revolution and sex. Not enough to have the son assassinate the father, the midwife turn abortionist, the priest turn pimp, Bauer relentlessly drives one into the corner with this condensed saga of pain and suffering. The question is, does Bauer really know anything at all about her subject? Has she lived any such experience? Can she feel the pain in the gut, the pulse in the brain, the itch of the trigger finger?

The answers to these questions reveal what liberties one is prepared to concede to the artist. Is it not the artist's responsibility to be an opportunist? To find the Hester Prynne where we least expect her, the Hagar Shipley where we wish she weren't, the Offred where we most fear she might be? Of course.

It is equally fair to judge Bauer, Millar ("Against the Tooth of Time") and Perley ("Guatemala") against the potential of their subject, not against the culture from which they come. If they fail their subject, they fail their art; but if they create the effect they seek, they must be congratulated. And this book deserves congratulations. For bravery not bravado, for sentience not sentimentality, and mostly for stories which believably represent a voice of bluster and confusion, despair and disdain.

One must not be tempted by the Women's Press decision. In the case of *Frictions* many other stories are grounded in the same principle of creative license. I am particularly fond of "Mirror, Mirror" by Rachna Gilmore, a story with its palimpsest in graphite. "Childhood mem-

ories were so refracted, like images in a hall of mirrors. Crazy, rippled glass twisting reflections into ogres and monsters." Everywhere in this piece one discovers the accoutrements of colonialism, the framework of the woman's life, the tale of selective memory. But the palimpsest is the mirror, the photograph, the window on the wide, hot world. Each of these suggests the terrible borders all humans endure. But with "Mummy's" aviarian glass menagerie, Gilmore adds an intertextual referent which implies Williams' deep understanding of the relationship between fraility and vulnerability with their binaries of strength and power.

Helen Potrebenko is equally provocative. The title story of her collection is more told than written; that is, so real and tough that postmodernist jargon seems incapable of deconstructing it. Stella, the waitress, Ginny the daughter, and Ginny's own illegitimate daughter (Stella's granddaughter) represent the marriage of poverty and pride. If there is essence beyond the raw (as opposed to half baked) details of the story, it surely comes through the reflection on waitressing, not as an occupation after all, but as society's arrogance toward women. Read as a feminist assault on economic tyranny, "Hey Waitress" leads readers into the abyss of rationalizing. And yet, lest readers think Potrebenko has changed her approach, this story and each of the other ten in the collection are propelled by a kind of gray humour consisting of wit and hardened sarcasm.

Nowhere in the collection is that sense of humor more obvious than in her story, "The Bird," an appalling indictment of the comic strip lives allocated to women beneath the wheel. Sarah Oneschuk is a fifty-three year old bank teller supervisor whose children never visit, whose cars rarely outlast the payments, whose world resembles that of workers who relied on "the company store in the old days." On the one hand she is a cross between Elly Patterson of "For Better or Worse" and Cathy of "Cathy" — both syndicated comic strips — while on the other hand she resembles Nancy Bauer's Sophie Aspinwall in the maritime novel, *Wise Ears*. And like Gilmore, Sarah has her own bird, hers "about three or four inches high and its colour varied although it was usually a mottled grey/brown. Sometimes there were green and blue highlights in the feathers. It had a hooked beak like a parrot and generally looked like a cross between an owl and a parrot in miniature. It had disproportionately large brown eyes." Sarah's bird, visible only to her, returns one to the *Frictions* we all live with, explores the tensions we all deny, identifies the injustices we all regret. Sarah's bird stands, like the solitary and upright middle finger of all oppressed women, as the sentinel and trumpeter.

Are these two books worth reading? Certainly. Do they reflect admirably on the interest of small publishing houses? Undoubtedly. Several of the selections in both books will reappear in anthologies later; most of the writers in *Frictions* and Potrebenko, certainly, will return with the kind of vigor and insight woven into these two collections. Readers and scholars would do well to find copies for their own shelves, and libraries should move quickly to add both books to their holdings.

VERNON R. LINDQUIST

SOUNDING THE SHALLOWS

LESLEY CHOYCE, *Coming Up For Air.* Creative, $7.95.

BILL GASTON, *Deep Cove Stories.* Oolichan, $9.95.

BOTH THESE COLLECTIONS of short stories use Canada's coastlines — Nova Scotia in *Coming Up For Air* and British Columbia in *Deep Cove Stories* — regions where their writers have lived for at least part of their lives. Although most of the stories take place in the latter half of the twentieth century, both writers draw on Canadian history or legend at least once, and both include one or more stories set elsewhere. The coastal settings, however, serve different purposes.

Lesley Choyce, the author of *Coming Up For Air*, is an American expatriate now living in Nova Scotia. In most of the stories, Canada seems less significant than the United States. Many of the nine stories in the collection are mere sketches and give the impression of a literary and partly autobiographical grab-bag rather than a unified and coherent body of work. According to the cover blurb, "the stories focus upon work and how occupation shapes the lives of real or imagined people," but while there are token fishermen and other manual labourers, the recurrent work is academic and the recurrent situation the confrontation between student and teacher. The central character of one sketch, set in an unidentified American city, is a male graduate student who feels depersonalized by his female instructor. In another story an American instructor of American literature at a Canadian university loses an arm-wrestling contest to the class's one American male student.

The literary origins of this male world are immediately discernible. The first sketch, "Laurence," is an imitation of Sherwood Anderson, in both form and content; the elderly bricklayer and his obsession about his hands come not from Nova Scotia but from Winesburg, Ohio. The central character of the title story, an American graduate school dropout who insists upon skindiving alone in the wintry Nova Scotia surf, is a younger version of Hemingway's Santiago. His self-absorption is symbolized by the wetsuit which cocoons him from the icy water (and other cold realities of Canadian life?).

The Canadian content seems superficial by contrast to the American roots. One sketch deals with the expulsion of the Acadians, and there are passing references to the Ocean Ranger disaster and the CBC, but such externals do little to counteract the Americanness. After living in Canada for an undisclosed number of years, the American literature instructor "still had no notion as to what made Canadians tick." Judging from this collection, Choyce is too encased in his American wetsuit to care.

Literary and other ghosts haunt Bill Gaston's *Deep Cove Stories* too, but in a different way, given the mythmaking propensities of most of his characters. The twelve linked stories of the collection revolve around a 1960s high school class whose outward explorations with alcohol, drugs and sex are transformed into ritualistic encounters with legend and myth. At least three stories create legends to add to those already surrounding Malcolm Lowry's days in Dollarton. The most extensive of these, the opening story, "The Forest Path to Malcolm," is narrated by a young writer who believes himself to be Lowry's illegitimate son, and who offers his own reading of Lowry's "The Forest Path to the Spring" as proof. Another visionary, a blind girl, narrates her sexual experiences on an island supposedly associated in local mythology with an Indian chief. The characters also turn their mythmaking faculties on each other, creating

a love goddess out of the blind girl, and a Gatsby (and various classical archetypes) out of the class golden boy.

The discovery of mythic alternatives to the banalities and materialism of the outward life has a profound effect on many of the stories' characters, but one soon comes to expect the inevitable encounter between ordinary and extraordinary, outward and inward experience. Thus while Gaston's collection is more unified and ambitious than Choyce's, neither fully sounds the depths which their titles promise.

MARGARET DOYLE

VIDEOCRIT

The Apprenticeship of Mordecai Richler, written and directed by Alan Handel. NFB video/Wombat Film, $US 150.00.

Margaret Atwood: Once in August, written, directed and edited by Michael Rubbo. NFB video, $US 150.00.

CONSIDERING THAT OUR students have grown up in a cultural environment largely dominated by the video screen (be it attached to TV, VCR, or computer), the video cassette provides an especially useful teaching tool in that it speaks a language to which their ears are finely tuned. This is not to forget, however, that video has its own particular limitations as well as strengths.

These strengths and weaknesses are evident in the two cassettes under review. The Atwood video is by far the better of the two. Here the great strengths of visual presentation are evident. Although the "situation" of this video is that of an interview with Atwood, it has been set up as a narrative, with the writer/director and his female assistant sailing to Atwood's island (where she is spending her summer holidays), engaging in a quest to discover the "real" Atwood, and leaving with the knowledge that they have failed in their quest—"for she is an island on which no boat lands."

Hokey, yes — but that's the flip side of the video, whose message is a visual massage rather than verbal message. The visuals of the Atwood video are extraordinarily good — the blue greens of the water, the lush vegetation, the colour of Atwood's palette (reminding us that she is a visual artist as well as a verbal one). The direction is never boring; in addition to the expected scenes where the writer/director asks Atwood questions, there are also scenes where he and his female assistant discuss their differing views of the author, a scene in which Atwood and the assistant discuss *Power Politics* while taking shelter under a propped-up canoe during a downpour, and brief conversations with Atwood's mother, father, and with Graeme Gibson. These scenes are intercut with others in which Atwood reads from *Surfacing* (on which, for the most part, the video focusses), yet it is the merit of the video that although it begins as a quest to find the autobiographical elements within that novel, it ends (with a good deal of tight-lipped help from Atwood herself) by acknowledging the futility of such an approach. Instead, we hear the author pointing out the formal dimension within her work, talking about *The Edible Woman* as an "anti-comedy," noting the great influence which the nineteenth-century English novel has had on her, and even going so far as to say that no one would have seen victims overpopulating her novels if she "hadn't written that book," a sentiment which those of us who have had to teach Canadian literature under the pernicious influence of *Survival* are quick to echo.

While the Atwood video would be a most useful tool in teaching first or second year students, the same cannot be said for *The Apprenticeship of Mordecai Richler*. Despite the title, there is little that

directly pertains to that novel. The autobiographical element is as pronounced as in the Atwood video, but without any alternative point of view being represented. We are told that Richler's grandfather was a Hasidic rabbi in Montreal, that he came from an observant Jewish family, that he was embarassed by his parents' Yiddish accent when he was growing up, that some in Montreal's Jewish community found *Duddy Kravitz* to be anti-semitic, and that he has been called a "self-hating Jew." There are stories of the sharp-tongued Richler of legend, as in his reply to a society matron who tells him that he has come a long way for a boy from St. Urbain street: "And you've come a long way for the wife of a bootlegger" Richler is reported to have said. There is also the embarassing scene of a besotted Richler at his highschool reunion, lurching to the podium, insulting those who have just sung in the choir, and being booed and jeered. None of this display is very edifying, paradoxically because this video seeks to inform, whereas the appeal of video is essentially in its visual message. Alas, the colour scheme here is dark brown. The two clips from Ted Kotcheff's *Duddy Kravitz* remind us of a far better alternative to Alan Handel's *Mordecai Richler.*

RICHARD CAVELL

** Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows.* New Star Books. $14.95. The famous Wobblies (IWW or Industrial Workers of the World), who perturbed governments and challenged the great mine owners and lumber barons of the early twentieth century with their talk of syndicalism and their practice of direct action, were strongest in the Pacific Northwest, from Prince Rupert down to San Francisco and inland to the mines of Idaho. Some of their most dramatic battles were fought in British Columbia — the Fraser Valley rail workers strike, the great Prince Rupert general strike, the fights for freedom of speech in the streets of Vancouver and Victoria. But at best these were partial successes, for the Wobblies had enemies among the regular trade unionists as well as among the bosses, and the changed conditions of World War I, with its attacks on radicals and radical movements, really killed the IWW. It survives now as a legend and a lost cause remnant, and Mark Leier's *Where the Fraser River Flows* is welcome as a thoughtful and well-researched account of its history in Canada, where it left a strain of militant will in the labour movement that has not quite died out.

G.W.

CORRECTION

In André Lamontagne's review "L'Espace du quotidien" (*Canadian Literature* No. 129) the sentence, "Dans ces textes sans transparence d'une émotion neuve qui constitue déja un jalon de la poésie québécoise actuelle." (p. 230) should read: "Dans ces textes sans replis qui jouent de l'effet autobiographique, s'affirme la transparence d'une émotion neuve qui constitue déja un jalon de la poésie québécoise actuelle."

The editors apologize to the author and to Philippe Haeck for this mistake.

opinions and notes

THE CONCEPT OF AGENCY IN ELI MANDEL'S "THE LONG POEM: JOURNAL AND ORIGIN"

AMONG THE MOST VITAL areas of inquiry in literary and social theory has become the positionality, and, more recently, the "agency," of the subject. Is the subject "simply the *actor* who follows ideological scripts," as Paul Smith says in his very recent book, *Discerning the Subject*, or is the subject "also an *agent* who reads them in order to insert him/herself into them — or not" (xxxiv-xxxv)? Unlike what is often interpreted as a despairing notion of subjectivity as subjection, the concept of agency is dependent upon not only *following* scripts but also, and necessarily, *reading* them. It is the relation of reading to human agency that is of particular interest to literary theorists and to me in my reading of Mandel's "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin."

The concept of agency suggests that by and through reading we can become aware of the ways we speak — and so are spoken — as subjects within *multiple* discourses. Reading both literary texts and the "texts" into which, in our own lives, we are always already thrown, can mean becoming aware that the appropriation of subjectivity always occurs at moments of potential change, at a "temporally shifting intersection of multiple interpellations" in John Howitt's words (xiv). "The political meaning of agency," Howitt asserts in his introduction to *Discerning the Subject*, "is that it offers us a way to politicize the contradictions that structure daily life" (xxi). As an instance of agency, reading is political activity.

Mandel's "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" is an instance of writing as reading, of subjectivity as agency. It answers many of the questions Mandel raised in the essay on "The Death of the Long Poem" which opened the "Long Liners Conference" at York University in 1984 and which precedes "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" in his most recent collection *The Family Romance*. Mandel said then, in a discussion which followed Smaro Kamboureli's "A Preface to the 'Preface' of *Out of Place*," that

> language that creates the long poem conceives of its impossibility, and that's the difficulty. That is, the paradoxical position arises from the fact that the literary theory that it's based on says that it can't exist with the language that writes it. (285)

I suggest that "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" gives Mandel "a way out" ("The Death of the Long Poem" 12) of this dilemma, a way of not only writing it — the long poem — but also a way of writing "I" again.

If, as Mandel so often says, "books are always writing us" ("Interview with Eli Mandel, March 16, 1978"), in "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" the book, or more accurately, the text, that is written, is a text constructed out of readings. In other words "(and the long poem always insists on the other words)," Mandel says in "The Death of the Long Poem" (19), if "the poem as we know it is no longer there" (21) — and this is the argument made in "The Death of the Long Poem" — "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" reincarnates poet and poem in a writing of the past as reading of the past which offers a future for literary critical work in what Northrop Frye many years ago

called, "approximately Canada" (*The Bush Garden* 178).

Located at the crossroads of readings, Mandel's "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" is an uncanny "poem of corridors" where corridors meet, where the writing of an academic essay and a writing of one's life intersect in and as readings. This piece "reads" a wide range of texts, including all of the following: 1) the proceedings of the conference on the long poem published in *Open Letter*, 2) Mandel's journal entries in a notebook en route to and in Moscow, 3) poems written from those journal entries, 4) excerpts from journal entries kept on other trips, 5) Freud's essays, 6) Bloom's essays, 7) Frye's essays. At this written intersection of readings, a potentially revolutionary form appears, one that, by its model, teaches us to read and reread the scripts within which we find ourselves lost, to paraphrase a poem in "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin."

The active fictionalizing of moments of assumed presence in this text, of the self in a journal, of the origin of the self in the past, complicates our notions of each category of discourse: long poem, journal, and origin: "In completeness an incompleteness in completeness a completeness," as Mandel quotes Nichol (239). But "this" — and by this the poem means long poem, journal, and origin — "is not," as the next line says, "complete" (239). In its necessary incompleteness, "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" suggests how, after the death of the author, the death of literature, the death, most recently proclaimed, of the long poem, we can find a way of writing it and "I" again.

Because the first words that we read in "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" cite the proceedings of the conference on the long poem, our first assumption about Mandel's text is that it will be a book review — a particular kind of reading. However, rather than a complete reference to *Open Letter*, to the issue number and date, for instance, we are given the following commentary: "Documentary Autobiography Alternatives Poetics Locality Origins Origins Origins Journal" (233). The journal that Mandel cites is not *Open Letter* but a journal dislocated by all of these appellations. Not only is the journal *Open Letter* under review, Mandel's own journal — another kind of open letter — a "Hilroy Spiral Notebook 27.6 x 21.3 cm 80 pages Green Cover September 5/85 entry" — is also cited. Mandel brings into collision two discourses on the long poem and, by reading them together, reads the contradictions which they foreground.

It is worth saying again that "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" appears in *The Family Romance*, a collection of what Mandel calls, "critical essays," because in this particular critical essay, "the most interesting thing about it," to use Mandel's quotation of Frank Davey, "is that it moves toward the poem" (237). This critical essay as poem is not only critical, not only an essay, not only a poem, but also a piece of writing which is, as Linda Hutcheon says of Ondaatje's *In the Skin of A Lion*, "self-consciously grounded in social and political history" (Ex-Centric" 132). In its attempt to read the history of "human evil" found in the camp at Dachau, it is also an attempt at "writing in the present tense," as Mandel's citation of "b.p. nichol" suggests, at determining what is happening now because of this history (234).

Reading is a way of writing in the present tense. Reading constructs alternatives. Like Ondaatje's text, Mandel's insists that we see history as a *reading* of "an undefined past yet to be spoken" (236). Mandel speaks the past in documents he finds in — and as — the present:

> Hotel Roosia (Fodor's *Soviet Union*, 1985): Near Red Square. 6 Razin Street. One of the World's largest hotels, with accommodation

> for 6000 people. Its rating is *first class.* Lovely view from 21st floor restaurant. It has 3150 rooms, two cinemas, a concert hall seating 3000, restaurants, cafes, and shops. 5% service charge. Tel. 299 5500. (236)

This bit of documentation is juxtaposed with an entry from Mandel's notebook and is followed, finally, by words which are a reading of both the documents found about the Hotel Roosia and a journal entry about the Hotel Roosia: "Of course, the Long Poem is no more the Hotel Roosia than it is a journal entry about the Hotel Roosia.... As to what it is we have made no decisions of that sort at all" (236).

As I have already noted, "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" reads a past found not only in "museum exhibits: pictures, documentation" (243), but also in past and present intellectual history. The "I" of the poem is "haunted" not only "by images, by representations, by a re-creation, a fictional representation ... the fictional and the real" (243), but also by an awareness of its own positionality within representation, by all of the positions it takes up in order to speak — as journal writer, academic, Jew, father, son:

> I found
> myself lost looking for
> a father lost somewhere in mid Sask
> many years ago looking for the father
> Charles Mandel Charles Mandel son.
> (235)

Neither and yet both father — of Charles Mandel the son — and son — of Charles Mandel the father — the "I" finds a self lost in reading the past. The fictional construction is the only real that can be found.

Like the self inscribed there, "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" is constructed out of many texts. In a fundamental sense, this piece is what Dorothy Livesay would call a "documentary poem." But it is also a poem which foregrounds the act of writing as a particular way of reading documents. The "events as told occurred," Mandel writes, "but of course in the telling and writing they change" (242): "I had thought (error) the Varanasi entry was the 14th of Feb. 1985 but it is a double entry on Feb 25th. I choose only one of the two." (242) Self-reflexively described as "beginning beginning failing the book of the book the story of the story the map of the map not place but writing of place" (241), "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" might even be criticism as what Hutcheon would call "historiographic metafiction," or even historiographic metafiction as criticism.

In "Countertextuality in the Long Poem," Frank Davey doubts "that there are any purely 'documentary' poems" (40). "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" argues, rather, that there are no poems that are not documentary: that the poems that we write are constructed out of what Livesay called the "actual data itself" ("The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre" 267). "After Frye and Livesay," says "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin," "though we admire both for telling us to see how the poems were written into length and being, we found a way of writing it again" (237). Mandel's long poem teaches us to negotiate with the "actual data" within which we find ourselves spoken, and say it differently by saying it again and again and again from many positions: to, quite literally, find ourselves lost.

In other words, the possibility of writing "I" again — of risking the agency of the subject — is provided by the juxtaposition of documents of seemingly different orders: the "journal" called *Open Letter*, the journals kept to be written in and then kept to be read by Mandel, the poems read in the journal *Open Letter*, the poems written in "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" out of readings of the poems read in *Open Letter* and out of readings of the Mandel journals. The sub-

ject in this version of criticism, the "I" in what might be called historiographic metafictional critical writing, is a site of resistance which speaks in deliberately constructed moments of what Stephen Heath calls suture: moments of "junction — standing in, a taking place, a something, a *some one there*" (56). The subjects inscribed in the text are juxtaposed with the subjects figured as reading and writing the text. The reading subject is figured as an agent.

Consider the following passage in which the "I" takes its place "out of place" and becomes a poem of corridors like the Hotel Roosia:

> The Hotel Roosia as a poem. A poem of corridors. Kafka's poem. Down the long hall toward my room, toward where I look out toward the Kremlin towers in Moscow where my green notebook glows with poems where poems spiral toward my father's world
> where my father's world spirals toward me where I am imprisoned in his dark Russian heart where the history of loss repeats itself and all the Jews of Estevan grieve again toward the centre toward Red Square one text becomes another all the world is poetry
> and grief. (237)

In one sense, the "I" is imprisoned in a history of loss simply by speaking. The "I" both spirals towards a father's world — the symbolic order which permitted all the Jews of Estevan to grieve, and to grieve again — and at the same time the father's world spirals towards it. This perpetual constitution and displacement of the subject is the condition of subjectivity. But the possibility of agency arises in our ability to reread the positions from which we speak, to locate the ways that "one text becomes another," to write in green notebooks in order to reread the selves dispersed there.

No less than "On the 25th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz," "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" is what Mandel has spoken of as "an unsayable poem, a series of inevitable evasions" (*The Family Romance* 3). In "Auschwitz and Poetry," another essay included in *The Family Romance*, Mandel writes,

> I cannot recall to the day when it occurred to me I had been given a solution to a technical problem. There was a way to write the poem to be thought of as "Auschwitz." It would be a series of displacements: structurally, grammatically, imagistically, psychologically. It would be a camp poem by not being a camp poem. Stuttering. All theatricality. All frantic posturing. (9)

By "frantic posturing,' 'the subject in both "Auschwitz" and "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" becomes subject not only to history but a subject effecting change in history. The possibility of agency — in Smith's words, the "action, intention, and the production of meaning" (46) — is instanced in these poems which exceed the subject by bringing together the many discourses that constitute the subject. Simply put, Mandel has found a form in which the "I" produces meaning by undermining its own authority, by reading, and demanding that we read, the "documents" out of which it arises, out of which it speaks. In incompleteness a completeness.

At the Ottawa symposium on Canadian literature and literary theory in 1986, Hutcheon argued that "[p]ostmodernist fiction neither brackets nor denies the referent (however defined); it works to problematize the entire activity of reference" (177). Unfortunately, she continued, "historiographic metafiction's complex referential situation does not seem to be covered by any of the theories of reference offered in today's theoretical discourse." (177) I suggest that the concept of agency offers a theory of reference which *can* account for the resistances which are always already located within the interpellated subject, which can account for the complex referential situa-

tions in which we, and much of what we call "postmodernist fiction," live. "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" instances this concept of agency as "a place," in Smith's words, "from which resistance to the ideological is produced or played out" (xxxv). This text offers a new theoretical discourse, a discourse which locates the subject in the reading/writing situation, in moments of active agency.

For example, another of the texts which is read in "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" is a series of entries from a journal kept on another trip — this one to Munich Dachau, at Carnival time. The question raised by the reader in this text — by the agent who is figured as reading the scene of the carnival as inscribed in the journal — is "why does it chill me?" "It is much later, in Sicily, "says that reader in the text, the writer of another text called "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin," "that Adele Wiseman tells us what uneasy thoughts lie behind the masking and carnival of Fasching" (244):

> "You know why it's called Fasching, dont you?
> Sticks, bundles of sticks. As in the facshes, in 'fascist'. The sticks were used to beat the old Jews who were driven through lines of revellers, joyfully beating up the scapegoats. It's an antisemitic holiday. The carnival."
>
> The Long Poem Discloses Its Origin. (244)

Where "I" am inscribed is at the crossroads of this disclosure. I am, as the next passage goes on to suggest, my own double. In Frye's words, there are "[d]ark, repressed, oracular doubles concealed within each of us" (245). I am the subject of the long poem, journal, and origin and yet I am not I:

> this story is
> a true story
> about a costume part
> in which the actors could not unmask.
> (242)

"I" is a "true" position, a costume part "I" take up. Although I am not without the "I" that I appropriate, "I" am able to "wonder at what dark impulse took me one day onto that Aeroflot to the Soviet world so that I could see its shadowy images and the ancient play acted still one more time" (245).

The anxiety in the poem is produced by the despairing thought that "I" is simply a word which "I" use to assert presence. The uneasy "I" speaks, writes, reads, to make "this" poem, his story:

> This is a journal entry. The search for authenticity. This really happened. This is my journal. From structure to process.
> Doubles
> Doubling. Emptying language. (239)

In asserting the absence of things, words are duplicitous and yet they are all I/I have: "the Long Poem is no more the Hotel Roosia than it is a journal entry about the Hotel Roosia. It is not your grief or your loss or the loss of your father or the power of the Russians. As to what it is we have made no decisions of that sort at all" (236).

This new text in which "I" is "a poem of corridors" offers the subject of the poem as a poem of the subject. With Nichol's words, Mandel's poem self-consciously says, "[w]hat I have done here is to mix in a few blank pages from which I can *read* what is happening now. Now. Now" (235-6; italics added). "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" enacts the reading situation in which a few blank pages are written upon in order to write what is happening now, in order to be self-conscious about the positions within which we find ourselves lost.

"The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" considers the place of meaning when, in Mandel's words, "as they say in the new critical language":

> there is no soul, there is no dark night of the soul, there is only the language of my telling

> this as the clipper ship, last night, sails across the dark sky. Not my telling. It's telling me. Not Ann, not Sara, not Evie, not Charles (father or son), not Eli. Only the words. The syntax. The sentence. Unholy. Unmerciful. Unconcerned. Old artificer I despair. (236)

Meaning is nonetheless generated out of the contradictions which the poem exposes: "the language of my telling this . . . last night." "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" seeks, *in its own words*, rereads itself, and asks us to reread it, in order to locate these "alternatives: a way the road back," it looks for "another way another / road," but it does not want "this road past" (3), in the doubling sense of a *past* road and a road *passed* by. In order to effect change we must reread the roads we have travelled.

"The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" offers a textualization of the reading process by which our writing quite literally "becomes" us, the way that we write ourselves into the world. Writing ourselves into the world must become an active process of reading because the "something repressed which recurs" which Mandel quotes Freud as saying at the end of "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin," this "uncanny" which is "nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old — established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression" (245) — is the condition of the subject.

If, to re-cite Mandel's words with which I began this argument, "the poem as we know it is no longer there," the poem as we know it is now here in the only world that we do know; the world that, as agents, we can actively read and write, interpret and change. What we used to think was "there" can change because we can read the road past, read our journalizings of origin, read our long poems. Mandel's "The Long Poem: Journal and Origin" gives us a way of writing it, of writing "that old artificer I," by reading, by producing texts which, as Howitt says, "arise wherever we struggle to make sense of the resistance that eludes us in this very struggle" (xviii).

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SUSAN RUDY DORSCHT

CARL F. KLINCK: 1908-1990

CARL F. KLINCK IS NOW generally recognized as Canada's foremost literary historian: the scholar whose biographic, bibliographic and textual criticism established the study of Canadian literature within its historical and cultural context. In recognition of these accomplishments he was elected a member of the Royal Society of Canada in 1961, made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1973, and awarded the Lorne Pierce Medal for his contributions to Canadian literature in 1978.

Years earlier Pierce had told a much younger Klinck that some day he would receive this award. As this prophecy implies, Klinck was a bridge between the older generation in Canadian letters, in particular, Charles G. D. Roberts, Lorne Pierce, Pelham Edgar, and Edwin J. Pratt, and the younger poets and critics of the 1930s and 1940s, notably A. J. M. Smith, Northrop Frye, Roy Daniells, Reginald Watters and Desmond Pacey. Both groups were Klinck's near contemporaries and all shared his desire to "give English Canada a literary history."[1] Common denominators for this group included undergraduate training at the University of Toronto followed by the study of one of the major branches of English literature. Klinck was unusual in this group. He was the product of the then little known Waterloo College who began his study of Canadian literature at Columbia University with an M.A. ("Formative Influences on the '1860 Group' of Poets," 1928) and persisted to a Ph.D. on William Wilfred Campbell "without surrendering to 'American'," despite strong pressure from his supervisor.

At the start of his career, Klinck was very much aware that, as the product of a German family, a small town, and a small college, he was "an outsider in Toronto."[3] He was "conscious of a lack of sophistication, [my] rather small stature 5'7, 146 pounds, irritated by the arrogance of my inferiors in intelligence and learning, I was modestly stubborn about facts and contemptuous of unsupported absurdity." Nonetheless, he had a good sense of his own worth and capacities; in time, he developed what he considered an appropriate persona. He wished "to have the sophistication of a professional teacher and critic who could handle literary jargon so smoothly and (apparently) so learnedly. [But] being a small college man, I settled for a simpler unaffected diction which relied on demonstration, quotation, and examples."[4] His gentle and mild demeanour, and his remarkable courtesy and flexibility masked, but did not disguise, great integrity and determination.

Carl Frederick Klinck was born on 24 March, 1908, in Elmira, Ontario. The Klincks had come from the Palatinate in the 1820s and settled in Canada West, now Ontario. As the second son of dedicated Lutherans who combined piety with good works, Klinck was both energetic and bookish. He soon displayed independence of mind — at first by reading selected books prohibited at the local library (brought home by a tolerant father) and, later, in his twenties, by absorbing some of the anti-clericalism of one of his professors while still retaining a strong religious sensibility. He attended high school at Waterloo College School in 1923-4 and, when Waterloo (now Sir Wilfrid Laurier) affiliated with the University of Western Ontario, he stayed on to complete a B.A.

in 1928. His mother, who loved poetry and music, had wanted her son to become a Lutheran pastor or, failing that, at least a missionary. But his missionary work was to take other forms. As he recalls: "When one day in the library, I was writing an essay on Shelley I forgot lunch until I realized it was 4:00 p.m. Then I knew I had to study more English poetry."[5]

He was directed to the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, which he attended during the spring and summer of 1928 and again during the summer of 1929. At this time he had the good fortune to be taught by Pelham Edgar, a visiting professor from the University of Toronto. Edgar helped him to find a "Canadian subject" for his M.A. thesis and introduced him to Pierce, to Pratt, and to Roberts, thus bringing Klinck from the periphery to the centre of the Canadian literary establishment. In his memoir, he recounts his discovery of the joys of academic research:

> Literary people, real live ones at least, had never played a big part in my life before the morning in 1929. Those who wrote books dwelt on the mountain tops, it seemed, and I was surely of the valleys. But here in Victoria College this morning I was suddenly plunged into the midst of the Canadian literati. There was Dr. Pelham Edgar talking to me as though he had plenty of time and as if Canada were not ready to listen to his critical estimates of her literary works. There in the phone booth was Dr. Ned Pratt, and in the common room (the staff room really, of Victoria College), I saw Dr. Corelli, the famous ROM man. Pelham Edgar and I made an appointment to visit Roberts... and as I stood before the door of Roberts' suite in the Ernscliffe Apartments, in Toronto, I suddenly felt very shy as I stood there at the door; in fact, I was prepared to be struck down by the sight of greatness.[6]

Klinck was ready to be overwhelmed by "greatness" (a term suggestive of one of his favourite poets, Rupert Brooke); in actuality, he wrote down every detail for posterity, including the fact that the sixty-nine-year-old Roberts was still sufficiently agile to scratch a match on the sole of his shoe. Klinck never lost this capacity for biographical observation, his excitement in the joys of academic "sleuthing," his modest tone, and his belief that one had to go to the "source," whether it was Roberts' apartment, or Samuel Hull Wilcocke's prison, or Sara Jeanette Duncan's grave.

It is difficult for us to visualize what a great leap of faith was required to become a student of Canadian literature in 1929. There was no Canadian literature as we know it today. Literature consisted of English literature — the greats of Wordsworth and Tennyson and Arnold. North American literature — chiefly Emerson, Longfellow and Whitman — was just emerging and Canadian literature was seen as a minor branch of American. For Klinck, the canon in Canadian literature in the 1920s would consist chiefly of the Confederation poets with the addition of the moderns, E. J. Pratt and Wilson MacDonald; prose was a lesser field with Thomas Haliburton, Thomas Kirby and Stephen Leacock. There were few scholarly tools: the resources at his disposal included a few anthologies, books of criticism and biographies. But there was no comprehensive bibliography of writing in Canada, no representative anthology of poetry and prose for college students, no reprint editions of classic texts and, above all, no literary history. Thus there was no historical overview of the subject, little reliable periodization, and no easily consulted index of persons, titles, and dates.

That Canadian literature is now an established discipline is largely because many of these deficiencies were remedied by Carl Klinck. He was responsible for persuading the Humanities Research Council to sponsor Reginald Watters' *A Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials 1628-1960*. He and Watters jointly edited *Canadian An-*

thology (1955), the first text of poetry and prose to establish a canon for the university teaching of Canadian literature. He supported the development of the New Canadian Library Series in paperback and edited and wrote introductions to five classics: *"Tiger" Dunlop's Upper Canada,* John Richardson's *Wacousta,* Rosanna Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt,* Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague,* and Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush.* Singlehandedly, he set in motion the working committee that established the *Literary History of Canada.*

And, as a working biographer and critic, he helped show younger scholars of the 1970s and 1980s what might be done with their literary heritage. In a career that spanned four decades he published eighteen books, beginning with his doctoral dissertation, *William Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (1943), and followed by *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and His Poetry* (1947; co-authored with Henry W. Wells), *Canadian Anthology* (1955; co-edited with R. E. Watters), *William "Tiger" Dunlop, "Blackwoodian Backwoodsman"* (1958), *Tecumseh: Fact and Fiction in Early Records* (1961), *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains Canadien* (1964; co-edited with Guy Sylvestre and Brandon Conron), *The Journal of Major John Norton, 1816* (1970; edited with introductions and notes by Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman), and a biography, *Robert W. Service* (1976).

Throughout his academic career, Klinck continually called for basic research. He and his wife Margaret, a constant companion in literary research, began their first overseas journey in 1937 searching for the English roots of Canadian literature. His first call for Canadian literary "fact-finding" was a talk, "Salvaging Our Literary Past," given to the Ontario Library Association in 1943:

> You will feel the glow of pioneering.... You will do something even more significant in helping to discover the meaning of "Canadianism." ... Consider ... what is unique about Canada? What distinguishes Canadianism from any other sort of national "-ism"? In short, who are we? What are we? ... Our national soul is hidden within us, in what we are, in our expression of ourselves, in our literature.[7]

Klinck was a strong nationalist although much of his academic work had a regional focus, centering on the pioneers of Ontario. In time, the principles of research which he evolved to deal with Ontario writers were applied to national literary history.

In the 1940s, the book on Pratt was Klinck's most important publication. It established Klinck as a critic and laid the foundations for his academic future. In 1947, when he resigned from Waterloo College on a question of principle — he could not reconcile an overly fundamental Lutherism with his vision of a liberal Christian education — he was promptly hired by Arthur Jewitt, the head of the English Department at the University of Western Ontario, who admired his work on Pratt. It was at the University of Western Ontario that Klinck was to undertake his most important work in Canadian literature: he instituted courses, built up the library and, most importantly, taught several generations of scholars including Mary Markham Brown, Hugh MacPherson, Carl Ballstadt, and Louis MacKendrick, as well as creative writers Alice Munro and George Bowering. Klinck established the University of Western Ontario as a centre for the study of Canadian literature, a tradition continued by the recent appointment of Frank Davey to the Carl F. Klinck Chair in Canadian literature.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, Klinck was absorbed in planning his most important work, the *Literary History of Canada.* This project began one morning

in 1956 after a meeting of the English Institute at Columbia University addressed by Northrop Frye on "Lexis and Melos." Frye's paper prompted Klinck to ask, "Do you think that we could have a literary history of our own?" Several events had led to this question. *A Literary History of the United States*, edited by Spiller, Thorp *et al.* had been published by 1948. Secondly, an essential bibliographic inventory of Canadian literature was then underway by Reginald Watters. As Klinck knew, once a bibliography was underway, a literary history could follow. The problem was one of literary standards. He recalls that he said to Frye: "I asked him whether Canadian literature could be tested against international standards. Norrie replied, in effect, 'Of course, why not?' He added, 'First of all there must be a great deal of research in basic facts.' That was precisely what I wanted to hear."[8]

It is difficult to determine whether Klinck's primary concern — evaluation — influenced the content of the paper Frye was then beginning to write, "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology," but in this essay he specifically addresses the problem of literary value as it relates to Canadian literature and characterizes Canada as an "environment." Both formulations were extremely useful to Klinck in his attempts to structure the *Literary History*. Recalling their first meeting, Frye characterized Klinck in the following way:

> Yes. Well, at that time of course, I took to him so strongly — I thought here's a man who really cares about his subject. And after all that posturing and general nonsense that goes on at conferences and English Institutes and things, it was a very refreshing change to have him get so intense and white-eyed and his nose turning pink and so on. He was talking about the possibility of doing something about Canadian literature and I thought, 'This guy has the guts to carry through what he starts.' I've never lost that kind of affection and respect for him. Again, he cultivates a mask — he gave the impression of being much more innocuous than, in fact, he was. I knew that there was quite a strong will under there. That's why I was quite happy about joining his committee and then having him direct things.[9]

In the spring of 1965, with the *Literary History of Canada* just published, Klinck took a rare moment for summary and modest self-congratulation when describing the project to a group of graduate students at the University of Leeds. The book had taken seven years, occupied the time of thirty-five editors and contributors, and resulted in 900 tightly packed pages of text: "One is left with a dangerous sense of achievement — the feeling that there must have been something worth writing about."[10]

Carl F. Klinck's great contribution to Canadian culture, that of giving Canada a literary history, is perhaps best summarized by Klinck himself:

> The basic fact is that Canadians have been writing for nearly two hundred years, and that the tools for systematic study of the subject are still incomplete. I have tried to be one of the pioneers. . . . But I should rather put it this way. If one could think back upon Canadian *history* as a subject without status, without trained personnel, and without tools for research, one could see the position of Canadian *literature* at the end of the last war. Since then I have attempted to give leadership in establishing library holdings; an anthology (from which I receive no royalties); a consequent increase in such courses in other universities (over twenty of them now); connections with other commonwealth literatures; graduate courses in the subject; and finally a *Literary History of Canada*. The new areas to which critics believe I am pointing the way are Anglo-British literary relations; pre-Confederation literary activities; clues to social and intellectual history resulting from literary interpretation; and, in general, systematic study of our own literature because it means something seriously to Canadians. In short, I wish to perform a patriotic duty of which I believe I am capable, as a teacher and literary historian — happily, in this university, as both at once — for the good of a cause and the good of my students.[11]

NOTES

[1] Carl F. Klinck, *Giving Canada A Literary History: A Memoir*, ed. with intro. by Sandra Djwa (Ottawa/London: Carleton Univ. Press/Univ. of Western Ontario, 1991): 53.

[2] *A Memoir*, 19.

[3] *A Memoir*, 48.

[4] *A Memoir*, xiv.

[5] *A Memoir*, ix.

[6] Carl F. Klinck, "Biographical Notes."

[7] Carl F. Klinck, "Salvaging Our Literary Past," *Ontario Library Review*, 27:3 (August, 1943), 341.

[8] *A Memoir*, 103.

[9] Discussion with Northrop Frye, 9 September, 1988.

[10] Carl F. Klinck, Notes to lecture given to the English graduate seminar of Commonwealth Students at the University of Leeds, 3 March 1965, 3.

[11] *A Memoir*, xxi.

SANDRA DJWA

HENRY KREISEL: 1922-1991

IF THERE IS AN ARCHETYPE of the inspired humanist academic, warm and communicative but a brilliant intellectual, surely it is Henry Kreisel. The story is told, over and over, that every year in the spring, at the end of March or the beginning of April, word would get around the University of Alberta campus in Edmonton that Henry Kreisel was going to be teaching Eliot's "The Wasteland." When he taught a poem, he read it aloud. Of course, all his students would be there, but so too would innumerable others who came to hear a teacher read poetry so magnificently that he could transport the ears that listened to him. This was in the 1950s and 1960s, when poetry and its reading mattered, and however cynically we treat Eliot and the modernists now, this image of Henry Kreisel as a professor who read so beautifully that his classes drew students from all over campus is a moving and comforting one for every teacher and every writer. Kreisel's love of language and its literature transformed the very material that he read.

Although I attended the University of Alberta, I was never actually a student of Henry Kreisel's, which is an enormous regret to me. I came to know him as a person later, but like many others, I *was* Henry Kreisel's student because I read his writing. And his writing, along with his beautiful voice, will continue to touch the pulse of Canadian literature. Kreisel was not extremely prolific but there is, quite simply, a resonance to his work, emblematic of his experience of exile as well as of the west that he lived in and grew to love. His books include two novels, *The Rich Man* (1948), and *The Betrayal* (1964); a collection of short stories, *The Almost Meeting* (1981); and the invaluable collection of literary documents, *Another Country* (edited by Shirley Neuman, 1985). His individual short stories are particularly memorable. "The Broken Globe," first published in 1965, has been often re-printed and translated, and was even dramatized. It continues to speak to the mysterious, seemingly flat prairie, and to the persistent heartache between parents and children. "Two Sisters in Geneva," "The Almost Meeting" and "Annerl" are narratives of grace and sensitivity, working from a genuine emotion that is rarely articulated now. My personal favourite is "The Travelling Nude," a brilliantly funny story about a painter who makes his living travelling the length and breadth of Alberta teaching art in various small towns. His students are primarily interested in replicating mountains and lakes and flowers and, determined to teach them Abstraction, the painter hits on the idea of a travelling nude: a govern-

ment-sponsored model who could travel from community to community so that students would have the chance to paint the human figure, in the nude. Of course, the travelling nude is the painter's undoing, but that story, and indeed all of Kreisel's writing, speaks to the question of how we grapple with beauty, and where we locate culture in our lives.

Born in 1922 in Vienna, Henry Kreisel was a Jewish refugee who fled Austria in 1938, and in 1940 was interned in Britain as an "enemy alien." He was seventeen years old, and although he had fled to Britain to escape Nazi tyranny, he was interned, with his father, for more than a year and a half, during which time they were transported to an internment camp in Canada. In the camp, waiting for his future to be determined, Henry Kreisel read dozens of books, by Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Steinbeck, Keats, Shelley, Shaw. And a strange thing happened. Very early during his internment, Kreisel decided that he would write, and wanting to free himself from a linguistic and psychological dependence on German, that he would write in English. Daunted by the enormity of the very thing he was determined to undertake, he asked someone if it was possible to write in a language other than one's first language, and that person told him about Conrad, who became a beacon of both courage and despair for Kreisel. So, as he writes in "Language and Identity: a Personal Essay" (in *Another Country*), he set out to embrace completely English and its linguistic manifestations.

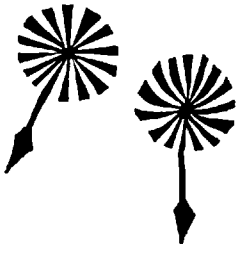
Through the efforts of various committees and individuals to admit these refugees as landed immigrants to Canada, Henry Kreisel was one of the first group of internees to be released in October of 1941, and at the end of November he entered Harbord Collegiate. In 1942 he began his studies in English Language and Literature at the University of Toronto and in 1947 Kreisel became a lecturer in English at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He became Head of the English Department there. He became Vice-President Academic of the University. He was subsequently made University Professor of Comparative Literature. And thus did Canada gain, by sheer political accident, *de jure*, a brilliant scholar and thinker, an intensely gifted writer, and a man whose teaching of literature influenced thousands of students. Most important of all, Canadian literature gained a powerful spokesman and supporter. In "Has Anyone Here Heard of Marjorie Pickthall: Discovering the Canadian Literary Landscape" (*Canadian Literature*, Spring 1984), Kreisel wrote about his personal discovery of the richness and vitality of Canadian literature. In that piece, he humorously mentions a 1961 conversation with Douglas Grant, editor of *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, who wondered how long *Canadian Literature* could keep going before the material for articles would run out. But Henry Kreisel was no such doubter. He was instrumental in the introduction of Canadian literature courses, and he was consistently generous in his warm encouragement of other writers. In that way, and by example, he taught: he taught writers here to believe in ourselves, and he taught us to believe in our literature.

Henry Kreisel was a man of grace and elegance. He epitomized all that was best about Old World gentleness and manners, and yet he lived here and he wrote into this country; he put the strange configurations of Canada into his fiction honestly and beautifully. Finally, enough cannot be said about the quality of the life that he led, about how much he gave to others. In this burgeoning cultural community, in the excitement of Canada's literary future, we must never forget that Henry Kreisel

was one of its supporters, its creators, its true originals. And in his living books, his epiphanic stories, we can read his legacy.

Henry Kreisel died on April 22, 1991.

ARITHA VAN HERK



ON THE VERGE

*** Allen Mills, *Fool for Christ: The Political Thought of J. S. Woodsworth.* Univ. of Toronto. J. S. Woodsworth is the nearest that Canada ever got to a local Gandhi. One looks at his photographs — the gaunt heron-like figure crowned by the Homburg hat — and immediately one has the same feeling of political eccentricity that Gandhi evoked with his shawl and dhoti. But one also has the feeling that Gandhi's saintly image was consciously cultivated, whereas Woodsworth's really was that of a political naif (not without a naif's cunning) as Allen Mills presents him in *Fool for Christ.* Mills has wisely avoided the temptation to write another biography of Woodsworth. Kenneth McNaught's *A Prophet in Politics* (1959) is not greatly outdated as an account of the life, and an intellectual biography such as Mills has written was what we really needed. Mills has gone at his task with rigour and at times ruthlessness, and reveals how inconsistent Woodsworth was as a political thinker. Canadian politicians in general have been pragmatists, appliers of the ideas of others to their own political and social situations, and Woodsworth was no different. He adapted British Labour ideas and proposals to the Canadian setting, but apart from that local aspect, there is little that distinguishes him from other social democrats of the saintly kind like—say—George Lansbury, who similarly abandoned the leadership of his party in 1939 over pacifist principles. As Mills analyses his weaknesses and his inconsistencies, Woodsworth emerges as less than a major political thinker or leader, though perhaps he was the best man for the CCF in its early emergent phases. Yet, critical as this account of his politics, thoughts and strategies may be, nothing emerges that lessens our admiration for Woodsworth as a rare figure of personal integrity among Canada's political leaders. In these days when politicians are — with cause — despised in our country, one might say of him as Orwell said of Gandhi: that "regarded simply as a politician and compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave behind."

G.W.

*** Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*. Watson & Dwyer, $17.00. The lives and tragedies of the Métis have in recent years been blazoned over the history of the Canadian West, and in the process the record of those of English-Indian as distinct from French-Indian descent has been somewhat ignored. Yet these Halfbreeds, as they have been generally called, played a significant role in both of the Western rebellions of the late 19th century. In the rising of 1869-70 their support for Riel was only reluctant and quickly withdrawn; in 1885 they withdrew when it became evident that Dumont, with Riel's approval, would resort to violence. In *A Snug Little Flock* Frits Pannekoek examines this apparently timid role of the English-speaking and Protestant Halfbreeds. Using Anglican church records more widely than any past historian, he demonstrates the extent of religious — apart from ethnic and linguistic — division between the two mixed blood peoples. He shows, in particular, the fanatic activity of the mainly Low Church clergy of the Church of England, as compared with the relative passivity of the Catholic priests. Prejudiced in terms of race as well as religion, these clergy and their women changed the social balance of the Red River and fostered hostility between the mixed blood peoples, so that a true rapprochement between them became impossible. And as the Halfbreeds, so scantily remembered, were almost as numerous as the Métis, this meant that Red River society was divided in ways that made a complete victory for Riel impossible. Yet what he did obtain, provincial status for Manitoba, in the end benefitted the English-speaking more than the French-speaking inhabitants of the region. Certainly Pannekoek adds a powerful new element to our picture of the Red River world in its last decades — the fanatically Protestant, radically prejudiced, social marginal Anglican clergy with their grimly meddling wives and sisters.

G.W.

*** Eugene Forsey, *A Life on the Fringe: The Memoirs of Eugene Forsey*. Oxford Univ. Press. Eugene Forsey was one of those Canadian public figures whose ubiquity and fame it is hard to explain. He was a politician of a kind, but he was never elected to parliament or held public office, though he did serve a brief while as a senator. He was a writer, but on subjects like the constitution and trade union history which assured that his books would never be popular. Yet there he was, a recognized figure in public life, an opinion to be called on in times of public controversy. He knew all the Canadian prime ministers except Sir Charles Tupper from 1894 onwards. He had been a Tory and a Liberal and had played an active role in founding the CCF. On occasion leaders of all parties consulted him. Even his awareness of people beyond his acquaintance was enormous. I met him once, at a reception in Ottawa, and immediately he put me at ease by giving me a three-minute listing of my best books with comments on each. He had obviously read them, and it warmed my heart in that gathering of empty-minded and philistine parliamentarians and bonzes. My impression of him was that he functioned — and well — as Ottawa's court jester — the man privileged to say, with a good deal of geniality, unpleasant truths.

Candour, a not unpleasing vanity, and humane loyalties characterise this book. It is not profound or very well written; Forsey, as I remember him, conversed more elegantly. But it is full of entertaining gossip; a personality emerges and a good many insights into a public world where Forsey moved far inward from the fringe he evokes in his title. Perhaps it is most valuable for the justice Forsey does here and there to figures historians have not fully valued, like Arthur Meighen, perhaps the most civilized man to serve as prime minister of Canada.

G.W.

*** ROGER NASH, *Night Flying*, Goose Lane Editions, n.p. Shklovsky's term defamiliarization, although too ponderously polysyllabic to catch Nash's tone, nicely describes his standard poetic tactic. "Homo Neanderthalenis" brings back an early version of the human animal to wonder about acid rain as she wanders beside polluted rivers. Elsewhere, a father is imagined in conversation from beyond the grave, while the title poem finds the poet's grandmother taking flight, literally, at the piano: "When her fingers kneaded / the keys together, a motor spoke / deep in the mahogany, usually with Liszt's / Hungarian Rhapsodies, and piano, stool, / and my very own grandma rose fearlessly / above the distant fields of our Turkish carpet." Nash takes his metaphors out of the hangar and warms up their engines: up they go, a little wonkily, but always deftly if unassumingly piloted, to surprising heights. In their careful delineating of particular experiences, these poems remind me of Philip Larkin, but in their incidental puckishness there's a touch of e.e. cummings. Nash, in this his third book, is a poet who is genuinely *entertaining*.

L.R.

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Dennis Porter's *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton, $35.00) covers travel writing from Boswell, Diderot, and Cook to Barthes and V. S. Naipaul, with chapters on Stendhal, Darwin, Flaubert, Freud, D. H. Lawrence, T. E. Lawrence, Gide, Malinowski, and Lévi-Strauss in between. In other words, this is an ambitious book and the reader's expectations correspondingly high. As the title indicates, Porter's conceptual framework is Freudian, and the chapter on Freud appears to be designed as central to his entire argument. The results of this approach, although promising, are not fully satisfactory, however. Part of the problem is the spotty appearance of chunks of theory; the other, more serious one, is the omission of any attempt to incorporate the considerable opposition Freud's assertions have encountered precisely in areas that should be of interest here. Porter declares in the introduction that he wishes to focus on male authors as a "consequence of [the] discovery ... that the father/son relationship was a central ... topos" in travel writing and he concludes that to "deal adequately with the complex motivations that drive women to travel or at least to write about it would require a separate book that should have to be theorized differently." His work might therefore be considered a part of "masculinist studies," he says. It is questionable whether male and female travel writing can indeed be separated so clearly in a book which, in some of the men's conduct at home and abroad, offers ample reason for the "complex motivations that drive women to travel." Moreover, many of the authors Porter has chosen to discuss were sexually ambivalent or openly homosexual, and his Freudian framework is also inadequate in dealing with *their* "complex motivations" for wanting to travel. Porter sketches out important areas of research and some of his gestures toward conceptualization have considerable potential, but as a whole the book leaves too many questions unanswered. In the introduction to Henry James's *Italian Hours: Revelatory and Resistant Impressions* (UMI, $39.95), Bonney MacDonald claims that her "aim is not only to rehabilitate the status of visual impression in the early and later works, but to rescue the dialogue as well from (what is often called) Jamesian convolution and exponential circuity." Unfortunately, "convolution and exponential circuity" also burdens this modest study of some 130 pages which offers a competent but by no means innovative introduction to James's superb travel writing. Despite its insufferably trendy title, Rob Shields's *Place on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of the Mind* (Routledge, $65.00) is of considerable interest to Canadianists. An introductory chapter presents a useful, if at times confusing, synopsis of theories explaining the "sociology of space," but — as the author himself concedes — the real value of the book derives from its four case histories on Brighton, Niagara Falls, the idea of the North in Canadian culture, and "the North-South Divide in England," each of which is distinguished by its conscientious documentation and clear argument. Working from a semiotic basis, Shields extensively criticizes Gaile MacGregor's *The Wacousta Syndrome* in his section on "nordicity," and he frequently shows how the work of one discipline challenges, even undermines, that of another. However, he has not fully learnt his own lesson: thus Shields' results would have been more persuasive if he had explored the literary evidence more extensively and more attentively than he does. It is, for instance, not correct to assert that the north has been exclusively "male-gendered," as Aritha van Herk's work could have made clear to him, nor that Quebec's view of the North has mainly focused on its economic resources, as Gabrielle Roy's or Yves Thériault's work amply demonstrate. Jack Warwick's *The Long Journey* is listed in the bibliography, but Shields does not appear to have taken the book as seriously as he should have. And Calixa Lavallée did *not* write the English lyrics for the Canadian anthem (nor the French ones, for that matter), as the book appears to suggest. All in all, this is a greatly interesting and inspiring book, but it is also beset by the typical limitations of a sociological approach. The title of John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (Sage) is misleading because here the "gaze" is little more than a metaphor. Still this is a good sociological study with valuable specifics on British seaside resorts, the marketing of "friendliness" by airlines, and other topics. Vancouver's Expo '86 and Peggy's Cove make a brief appearance. Andreas Selling's *Deutsche Gelehrten-Reisen nach England 1660-1714* (Peter Lang) focuses on a special form of travel within a carefully defined historical and geographical context: the *peregrinatio academica* undertaken by German scholars to England, a venue made increasingly attractive by the 17th century establishment of the Royal Society of London for Improving Nature Knowledge. The book offers a great deal of detailed information on the biographical and ideological background of the travellers and, in doing so, maps out an intellectual landscape for their country of origin; Leibniz's various changes of university for instance become comprehensible when

Selling explains the positively avantgardist milieu of Jena as compared to its conservative rival university in Leipzig. Selling is less interesting on travel itself or on the travellers' perceptions of England: a mere 50 pages out of 380 are given over to their discussion. The book comes with extensive notes and bibliography, but no index.

Travel from Germany to France alternately served to initiate young aristocrats into the extensive social and political network that their class had been careful to establish, to educate liberals in the theory and practise of the Revolution, and to sharpen German nationalists' views of their own identity. A book entirely devoted to Germans' perception of France is Thomas Grosser's *Reiseziel Frankreich: Deutsche Reiseliteratur vom Barock bis zur französischen Revolution* (Westdeutscher Verlag). Grosser's observations are more broadly based than Selling's; in particular, the book provides ample evidence for the need to situate national stereotypes within specific historical and social contexts. One of the most impressive research tools to have recently appeared in the criticism of travel writing is Peter F. Brenner's *Der Reisebericht in der deutschen Literatur* (Niemeyer). At almost 750 pages, this is a weighty book, with a price tag of approximately $200.00. One cannot help but smile at the author's apology for taking a full four years to assemble this colossal tome, a special issue of the *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*. Although Brenner is preoccupied with travel literature in German from its beginnings to the present, his thorough survey and analysis of the criticism available is of considerable interest to anyone working in the field, as is the fifty-page bibliography which also lists titles in English. Brenner is right about the paucity of theoretical work accomplished so far, but his own interdisciplinary approach (which includes work in geography, political science, economics and other fields) indicates a number of directions which will have to be pursued: one such intriguing connection exists between medieval and Renaissance mnemonic systems on the one hand, and travel guidebooks and journals on the other. Brenner is not equally sensitive to all areas of research; his comments on travel writing by women reflect less on available criticism than on his own somewhat limited ability to deal with it. His comments on contemporary travel writing are cursory, and his assertion that the genre is incapable of offering anything new (in itself a topos of travel writing) is debatable. Nevertheless, this is a very important work which creates a system of sorts for a field whose exploration has remained largely unfocused so far. It can be difficult to obtain the interdisciplinary breadth of background information that Brenner asks for. One model publication is the 3-volume *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (dtv) which, in some 40 essays, explores aspects of the 19th century German bourgeoisie in a European context. Of particular interest to literary scholars is volume 3 with contributions on the *bildungsroman*, the historical novel, and the institutionalization of history and literary history, but there are also important essays on such topics as ethnic and social minorities, education, health care systems, and social ritual. Readers of Egerton Ryerson's report of his tour through Prussian schools will find an essay on travel reports preoccupied with educational institutions particularly interesting.

E.-M.K.

Even diarists can be infuriatingly taciturn about everyday matters, and a researcher may have to be resourceful to fill in the gaps. For researchers of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canada, contemporary cookbooks may prove of considerable value. From Goose Lane Editions in Fredericton comes *Mrs. Whiting's 1819 Cookbook*, a delightful source of information on culinary problems and resources in early nineteenth-century New Brunswick. "Veal brought to market in panniers, or in carriages, is to be preferred to that brought in bags, and flouncing on a sweaty horse," says Mrs. Whiting One should certainly hope so. There are bloodcurdling recipes on how "To dress a Turtle" and "To dress a Calf's Head, turtle fashion," but there are also comments on vegetables, fruit, and spices which say much about a colonial's efforts to adapt old-world recipes to indigenous resources. Readers in search of information on Victorian table manners will find much in Margaret Visser's *Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners* (Harper Collins), a book bursting with detail about much more than nineteenth-century Britain. Particularly illuminating are comparisons between evolving differences of etiquette in the old and new worlds. Although more notable for its empirical richness than for its theoretical aspirations, the book offers the hypothesis that some of the most radical changes in recent Western table ritual respond to the growing assertiveness of women. What remains in one's mind, however, is the Rabelaisian gusto with which Visser presents her findings. Thus, even a section on bodily excretions becomes a choice morsel as it

were: "Snot, for instance gives rise to something very different from the sympathy which tears evoke. It is nasty viscous stuff, to be sniffed back, wiped away, or deliberately blown out and disposed of, as fast as possible. Saliva, semen, and sweat (the last runs like tears but stinks as it ages) are sometimes easy to contemplate, sometimes not. Intimacy and affection are often required, and elaborate proofs of cleanliness and control, to make the difference." Sarah Freeman's *Mutton & Oysters: The Victorians and their Food* (Victor Gollancz) lacks the special charm of Visser's book, but it makes a perfect companion to it nevertheless. Illustrations are sadly lacking in *The Rituals*, but *Mutton & Oysters* has some very good ones, including full-page reproductions of menus and recipes. Freeman is careful to relate food consumption to social class, but her descriptions of the elaborate dinner parties of the rich occasionally overwhelm the book (that, in itself, is of course a comment on the diet of the poor). Food and many other items feature in the 1910 *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* of the Hudson's Bay Company reprinted by Watson and Dwyer. Supplies and service were impressive: 15-day delivery was guaranteed for made-to-order garments in a variety of quality fabrics. There is a faithful account of fashion adapted to the rigours of the Canadian climate, whether it be "reliable underwear . . . made in heavy winter weight of all pure wool," fur-lined coats, or the "Ladies Silk Fascinator," a wrap for formal occasions which was distinctly more becoming than the ghastly hats of the day. Despite its urbanity, however, it is always apparent that the catalogue catered largely to a rural clientele: every imaginable tool was available, as well as a good selection of harnesses, saddles, guns, traps and fishnets. There was a wide range of all-purpose remedies to stock up on; pessaries and sanitary napkins were also available. One wonders if farmwives practiced a rather more radical form of birth control when one happens upon an "emasculator" innocently listed amongst "druggist's sundries" and placed directly above the picture of a horrendous-looking contraption called "Jason's scrotal truss." With a mixture of relief and regret one discovers that the "emasculator" is a veterinary item. More information on birth control is available in Wendy Mitchinson's *The Nature of their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (U of T, $22.95) a thoroughly researched work which also discusses topics such as puberty, menstruation and menopause, medical statistics, gynaecology, and mental health care. Mitchinson places these details against a carefully documented portrait of the "typical" woman in Victorian Canada, and in so doing furnishes valuable detail on matters that Mrs. Moodie and even the outspoken Kathleen Coleman did *not* care to discuss.

E.-M. K.

A Reader in Feminist Knowledge, ed. Sneja Gunew (Routledge, $24.95) inverts the usual order of tokenism by placing the voices of black and aboriginal women at the beginning. The effect is more than merely cosmetic, for the assertions made here relativize what follows as discourse as much motivated by authoritarianism as the patriarchal positions being challenged. Unfortunately, the volume does not practise the same salutary self-reflexivity throughout: thus, while some of the introductions to individual sections provided by Gunew's co-editors are very instructive indeed, others are turgid and likely to deter an unintiated reader from reading the subsequent (and much more lucid) essays. Further, in the notes on contributors only the authors who have provided introductions, not the authors of the essays themselves (most of whom are arguably more important to know about), are identified. Perhaps most of the latter, being "classics," need little introduction now, but the book occasionally adopts a college-primer approach, which suggests that it is meant for a readership not yet necessarily familiar with Daly, Irigaray, Cixous, and others. Still, the book is valuable and even in its shortcomings an instructive example of "the uneasy alliance of feminism and academia," as the title of one of the essays asserts. Whereas Gunew's book explores feminism in its relation to a variety of disciplines, Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore have edited an anthology entirely focused on literature; *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* (Macmillan), includes essays by British, Australian, American, French, and East Indian critics. This book enacts its own subject, "the politics of criticism," by characterizing — in a strikingly "balanced" and "sensible" introduction — essentialism as an extremist form of feminism to be overcome, rather than as a continuingly valid position. Yet the evidence presented in the subsequent essays often points into another direction: Gilbert and Gubar for instance, in "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality," speak about female redefinitions of the *Künstlerroman* and an attendant "scrambling" of women's language which is strongly reminiscent of Irigaray's "womanspeak." Patricia Parker's *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender,*

Property (Routledge, $19.50), now available in paperback, also enacts, admirably for the most part, its own subject. One of the central rhetorical strategies discussed here is the "dilatio," the swelling and deferral of discourse generally characterized by rhetoricians as "feminine," and Parker's own writing tends toward a richly enumerative syntax freighted with examples from diverse sources, with the conclusion sometimes infuriatingly delayed. Most instructive to those interested in the rhetoric of colonialism is the chapter on "Rhetorics of Property: Exploration, Inventory, Blazon," in which Parker explores proprietary tropes applied to women and territory alike. The republication of Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Oxford, $21.50) in paperback is very welcome. The book comes with a "New Intergalactic Introduction by the Author" which evaluates the reception of the book since it first appeared in 1978, as well an "Appendix to New Intergalactic Introduction: *Gyn/Ecology* in the Lives of Women in the Real World" by Bonnie Mann. Reading these books poses some uncomfortable questions about brilliance and originality, for Daly's caustic wit and sheer power of persuasion makes much subsequent feminist criticism in the same vein appear feeble and mannered by comparison. Elizabeth A. Meese's *(Ex)tensions: Re-figuring Feminist Criticism* (U of Illinois) is one book which indulges in the slashes, dashes, and parentheses which also pepper Daly's book, without achieving the lucidity and energy of the latter. And this is a pity, for despite the convoluted writing, Meese has some significant things to say about the pitfalls of feminist criticism. Similarly, Sally Minogue, ed., *Problems for Feminist Criticism* (Routledge, $24.00 paper) targets a tendency in feminism "to become exclusive and reductive, and in the wrong ways and directions." Minogue formulates some legitimate concerns, but it does not appear to occur to her that the label "wrong ways" is in itself exclusive and reductive. Her introduction raises many complaints against existing feminist criticism without formulating any alternative. The book features essays on Milton, the Victorians, and Lawrence by Barbara Hardy, Barbara K. Lewalski, Sandra Hopkins, and Mara Kalnins, as well as a piece by Minogue herself on the difficult agenda of feminist poetry. *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Susan Sheridan (Routledge, $19.50) includes essays covering subjects from cinema to shopping malls. The origin of the collection is a conference at the National Australian University, and, unfortunately, the essays retain the condensed and sketchy nature of conference papers. Particularly stimulating are Sneja Gurnew's essay on migrant women's writing and Alice Jardine's "play" "in the name of the modern: feminist questions *d'après gynesis*." The oddly titled *Courage & Tools*, ed. Joanne Glasgow and Angela Ingram (MLA) assembles essays which, between 1974 and 1989, have received the Florence Howe Award for Feminist Scholarship. Of particular interest to Canadianists is Linda Kauffman's "Special Delivery: Twenty-First-Century Epistolarity in *The Handmaid's Tale*," which carefully places Atwood's novel in the tradition of the epistolary novel. The essay has since also been included in Kauffman's book, *Special Delivery: Epistolary Modes in Modern Fiction* (U of Chicago Press). *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Reading, Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Weed (Routledge, $14.95) partly consists of conference papers, complete with commentary, from a 1985 conference at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. The collection is distinguished by a substantial introduction outlining characteristics of American feminism as opposed to its French counterpart. Particularly welcome is Leila Ahmed's "Feminism and Cross-Cultural Inquiry: The Terms of the Discourse in Islam," as is the entire section on "Discourses of Domination," in which her piece is included.

E.-M.K.

LAST PAGE

REFERENCE BOOKS come in various forms, not the least of which are the dictionaries and guidebooks one usually thinks of in this context. The newly revised edition of *The Macquarie Dictionary* (Macquarie Library, n.p.) is one such. More than merely an alternative assemblage of words, however — though some characteristically inventive Australianisms are to be found within its pages — this book is an attempt to counter colonialism institutionally. Taking Australian pronunciations and vocabulary as the norm, it dispenses with the perspective that defines Australian English as exotic, and proceeds on the assumption that norms can be reconstituted afresh in changing social circumstances. It's a wonderful resource. Canadians take note. But that it, too, constructs edges even while it constructs norms is apparent from its handling of Aboriginal terms that have swept into English. Consider the words "murri" and "noongar," for example — both of which appear here, both of which are

defined as "Aboriginal" in origin. Neither, however, is identified adequately by its regional usage; and the word "Aboriginal," as a linguistic source, is as vague as "Indian": more specificity is needed, for the lack of specificity suggests an unexamined bias — at a time when the society itself is actively confronting many of the features of racism that marked its history.

History and practice are the subject of *Australian English*, too, a series of informative essays edited by Peter Collins and David Blair (U of Queensland, n.p.). The book considers such matters as tonal variation, attitudes to prestige dialects, gender differences, regionalism, Americanization, migrant usage, and shearing shed vocabulary. While some reference is made, in comments on etymology, to Aboriginal connections — in particular in G. W. Turner's consideration of Tjapanmay dialect words — this subject remains at the periphery of the book as a whole. This absence may suggest some difficulties in collecting or sorting out data. It certainly indicates a beckoning territory of enquiry.

But that the Aboriginal presence is not silent is apparent from several recent publications by Mudrooroo Narogin, among others. Narogin (formerly Colin Johnson) has published *Writing from the Fringe*, a study of modern Aboriginal writing (Hyland House, A$19.95) which explicitly examines the way the social "fringe" can be established by ignoring a whole group of people, and can be perpetuated even in the act of addressing and categorizing it. Categories themselves (e.g., "Aboriginal Writing") can sometimes exclude. In a chapter on "Centering the Fringe," however, Narogin concerns himself with ways of speaking and writing that redefine the power or relations of "normative" systems. *Doin Wildcat* (Hyland House, A$19.95), Narogin's newest novel, also probes these issues. The story of a man released from prison, who goes on to watch a film being made of a story he has written, the narrative also watches the man watching his own life being relived as he watches the film take form. It should be an education, both for him (who comes to reassess his connections with traditional sources of cultural support) and for the non-Aboriginal filmmakers.

When they finish their film and wander off telling ethnic jokes, however, readers watch them failing to understand what they have at least been given the opportunity to see. Narogin is also one of the editors (along with Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, and Adam Shoemaker) of *Paperbark*, an anthology of "Black Australian writings" (Univ. of Queensland Press, n.p.). An excellent sampler of writings both traditional and recent, it collects several oral poems (including renderings in original languages) together with the work of the early 20th century writer David Unaipon and the poems, autobiographical narratives, tales, plays (and one scene from Jimmy Chi's rock opera *Bran Nue Day*) by such contemporary writers as Archie Weller and Sally Morgan, along with editors Narogin and Davis themselves.

The honey-ant men's love song and other Aboriginal song poems (Univ. of Queensland, n.p.), edited by R. M. W. Dixon and Martin Duwell, brings together (in original and in translation) several oral poems (both traditional and contemporary) from Dyirbal, Anbarra, Wangkangurru, and other sources. Notes and commentary are particularly clear.

That these traditional and modern writings are not unknown to Australian critics and readers is further indicated by the new *Macmillan Anthology of Australian Literature*, edited by Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson (Macmillan, A$39.95). Narogin, Noonuccal, Davis, Weller, Morgan, the *Song Cycle of the Moon-bone*: all are here, in sample or part, and they take a place (admittedly an editorially designed place), along with other writers, in a kind of semiotic revelation of the ongoing concerns of Australian writing. This is not a standard chronological revelation of development, nor will it be satisfactory to readers who ask for the "whole" of any given work. Instead it relies on the effects of scene, line, and juxtaposition — to convey (though not always to argue openly) the processes by which the mix of values that goes by the name "society" settles out in recurrent attitudes to land, race, gender, person, movement, language, and "reality."

W.N.

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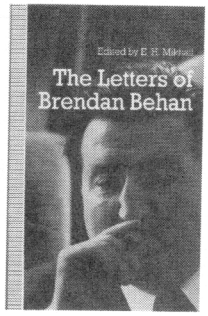

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Monique Engelbertz

Le théâtre québécois de 1965 à 1980 – un théâtre politique

1989. IX, 375 Seiten. Kart. DM 140.–. ISBN 3-484-56004-5 (Band 4)

L'ouvrage présent jette un jour nouveau sur un événement capital de la vie culturelle canadienne: l'apparition et l'évolution d'un théâtre politique au Québec entre 1965 et 1980. L'examen attentif et l'interprétation de plus de 50 œuvres dramatiques ainsi que l'étude de nombreux rapports sur le travail de collectifs de théâtre donnent un aperçu de la conscience collective de la nation québécoise. La multiplicité des formes théâtrales et des thèmes reflète autant l'authenticité québécoise que la réalité politique, sociale et culturelle de cette province. L'étude atteste que le nouveau Théâtre Québécois était dès ses débuts conscient de sa fonction politique et qu'il existe une relation indiscutable entre ce phénomène longtemps discrédité et les bouleversements politiques vécus par le Québec.

Patrice Brasseur / Jean-Paul Chauveau

Dictionnaire des régionalismes de Saint-Pierre et Miquelon

1990. V, 748 Seiten. Kart. DM 267.–. ISBN 3-484-56005-3 (Band 5)

Cet ouvrage étudie les particularismes du français parlé dans les îles de Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. Au noyau primitif de la population, constitué pour l'essentiel d'Acadiens, se sont joints au cours des 19e et 20e siècles des pêcheurs venus des côtes de Normandie, de Bretagne, du Pays Basque ou de Terre-Neuve.
Les données de ce travail ont été obtenues par une série d'entretiens avec une quarantaine de personnes. L'introduction signale les quelques particularismes phonétiques et morpho-syntaxiques relevés. Le français parlé dans l'archipel se caractérise surtout par son lexique. Le dictionnaire proprement dit comporte plus de 1500 entrées sous lesquelles sont notés des mots, des emplois ou des locutions qu'ignorent les dictionnaires du français contemporain ou auxquels ils assignent un usage restreint. Une brève notice historique tente de déterminer pour chaque cas par quelle voie le particularisme s'est implanté dans le français de l'archipel. Les concordances avec l'acadien sont nombreuses, mais les emprunts au parler des terre-neuvas donnent une physionomie originale à ce français d'Amérique du Nord.

Français du Canada – Français de France

Actes du Colloque de Cognac
Edités par Brigitte Horiot

1991. VI, 236 Seiten. Kart. DM 92.–. ISBN 3-484-56006-1 (Band 6)

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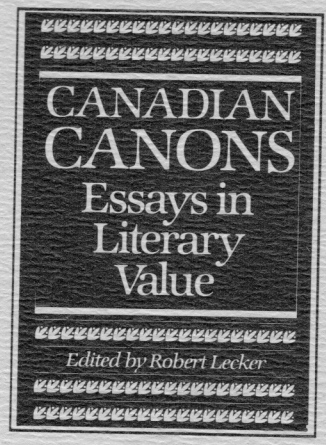

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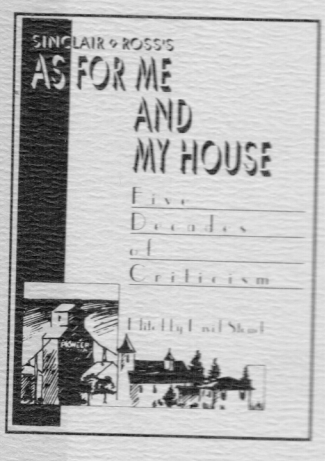

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Söderlind considers the current debate about the relationship between two discourses: that of post-colonialism as a political paradigm and that of post-modernism as a literary practice in Canadian and Québécois fiction. She proposes a methodology that makes it possible to identify and distinguish between features pertaining to the two. $17.95

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