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East Asian-Canadian Connections

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Editorial

Inside Gold Mountain

It's become a commonplace of critical asides in Canada to point to Frank Scott's critique of E.J. Pratt's version of the CPR railway construction— "Where are the coolies in your poem, Ned?"— and then to rush to the text of *Towards the Last Spike* to point out that Pratt mentioned them after all. But it's fundamentally an inadequate aside, for it's not just the *mention* that matters. Questions of recognition and marginalization recurrently depend on the manipulation of power, and no simple *mention* of an entire group of people will grant them an effective voice within the structure of a society that privileges others. Peoples of East and Southeast Asian origin—Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Philippine, Malaysian, Thai and more—have been part of Canadian culture since at least the 1870s, when the railway and the gold rush attracted workers to *Gum-shan*: "Gold Mountain...North." It's long since time that Canadian criticism should pay their cultural contributions more than passing attention.

But it's important, too, to remember that "East Asian" is scarcely an adequate term of cultural analysis. The Cantonese culture that has long been re-established in Canada differs in many ways—spoken language, for one—from the Mandarin cultures of Mainland China, Taiwan, and Singapore, all of which have more recently become influential in Canada. Other differentiations are obvious: Japanese, Korean, Philippine histories are not the same as each other, and have sometimes even been in conflict with each other, and with China. Malay and Indonesian societies differ

again, not just because of ethnic origin and geography but also because of the influence of Islam in Southeast Asia, as opposed to Shinto, Christianity, and official atheism elsewhere. Cultural variety may in fact be one reason that Canadian criticism has avoided this subject; another is likely the racism that has permeated so many "Eurocentric" versions of the Canadian Identity. Even in ostensibly cool academic retrospect, it's hard to read calmly all those 1920s diatribes against Opium Dens, Tongs, White Slavery, and the Yellow Peril, the clichés of popcult propaganda that characterized the politics and the literature of the first half of the twentieth century; yet it's also necessary to address the sources of this history of racism—the egocentricity, the fear, the bias of education, the residual animosities of international war—in order to oppose social clichés in the present.

Some writers have concerned themselves with precisely this change in attitude and expectation: Dorothy Livesay, in *Call My People Home*; Daphne Marlatt, in her memoir of Penang, where she spent her childhood, and in her evocation of World War II prejudices in *Steveston*; David Suzuki, both in his scientific and in his social commentaries; and the several historians who have examined the course of racial prejudice, its social basis and its institutionalized forms—historians such as Anthony Chan, Peter Ward, Ken Adachi, Patricia Roy, James Morton. Edgar Wickberg's *From China to Canada* (1982) collects essays by a number of writers on such subjects as immigration patterns, cultural accomplishment, social organization, and legislative exclusion. Yet the early twentieth-century political decision to deny "Asians" the vote in Canada (a decision that took effect for several decades) still stands as a powerful indictment of "Eurocentric" Canadian social policy—as does the early resistance (on the part of many labour leaders) to any Asian immigration, the longstanding official refusal of family immigration, and the easy political assumption in 1941 that ethnic origin took precedence over social commitment when it came to deciding the "patriotism" of Japanese-Canadians. Some writers such as Joy Kogawa have, for their part, radically opposed the stereotypes of wartime, and in both poetry and fiction have called for redress and reconciliation—an enterprise in which Roy Miki's essays and Muriel Kitagawa's diaries are also engaged. More plainly, they have also insisted that everyone—power groups included—pay attention to the human consequences of bureaucratic arrogance and cultural generalization.

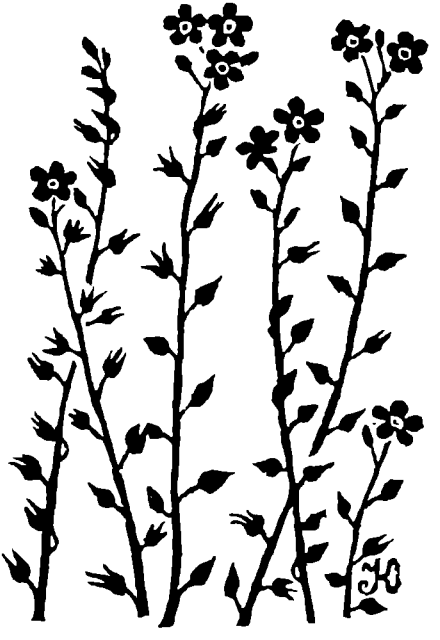
But that there are many more writers to be listened to is apparent from

such anthologies as Bennett Lee and Jim Wong-Chu's *Many-Mouthed Birds*, and Gerry Shikatani's *Paper Doors*, and from the scores of poems and stories that appear annually in all parts of the country. Names such as "Onoto Watanna" might well seem to have disappeared into the recesses of literary history; but names such as Kevin Irie, Gloria Sawai, Evelyn Lau, Paul Yee, and Sky Lee are just beginning to attract literary notice, and words such as *Nisei, Gum-shan*, and *feng shui* are no longer unfamiliar in the Canadian vocabulary. Ying Chen's 1993 novel *Les lettres chinoises* confirms that fracophone Quebec writing is experiencing parallel changes. Contemporary non-Asian writers, moreover, have drawn extensively on Chinese and Japanese culture for settings, symbols, characters, and political motifs—from Marilyn Bowering's *To All Appearances a Lady*, Ann Ireland's *A Certain Mr. Takahashi*, Gary Geddes's *The Terracotta Army*, and Steven Heighton's *The Flight Path of the Emperor* to the poems of Robert Bringhurst, plays by Ken Mitchell, stories by Marilyn Eisenstadt (in *Coming Attractions 92*), and a range of references to Mao Tse-Tung, the defence of Hong Kong, the Great Wall, Vietnam, and Norman Bethune.

For many years, the conventional image of Asians in Canada permitted Asian characters only pidgin English (or French) and peripheral occupations as launderers, fruiterers, and corner-cafe cooks; but many among the real-life communities sought other kinds of recognition. Older Chinese immigrants in B.C. used the phrase *yap-kong* ("to go into the mines") to mean *to move into the Interior*; metaphorically, it suggests that they identified with Canada ("Gold Mountain"), wanted to be able to contribute to its development, and wanted also to be accepted as a natural (as opposed to an exotic) part of the Canadian community. This is not to say there has been no sympathy. One of Gabrielle Roy's stories asks, with concern, about its central character, "Where are you going, Sam Lee Wong?" One of Ethel Wilson's stories depicts a Chinese-Canadian taxi-driver as a necessary guide. But human sympathy can sometimes still function as a barrier, expressing solidarity at one remove; sometimes it is an act that conceptualizes itself as generosity rather than as a tacit declaration of identity—because fundamentally it assumes that the norms of the cultural "inside" will never change. But they do change. And, in Canada, they are changing.

From mission literature to children's literature, from travel writing to theatre and film: Asian-Canadian literary connections cross all genres, and this issue of *Canadian Literature* can scarcely do more than provide another set

of "mentions." The writers assembled here, however, have not been content with casual asides; they have undertaken cogent analyses of literary expression, social expectation, and personal experience. In a decade when immigration patterns are changing to highlight the Asian components of Canadian culture, Canadian readers have a renewed opportunity to take account of the exclusions that have marked their history, the processes of social change, and the multiple sources of their current cultural heritage.
W.N.



from Seasons Greetings from the Diamond Grill

On the edge of Centre. Just off Main. Chinatown, at least in most cities, is always close to the centre but just on the edge of it, because of the cafes. In places like Swift Current, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver, the Chinese cafes are clumped together in a section of town usually within a few blocks of the hub. Not way out. Not rural. Downtown. but on the edge of. In smaller towns like Red Deer, Nelson, Fernie, the cafes are more part of the centre.

But somewhere further off from the cafes is usually the Chinese store—a room really, smoky, dark and quiet, clock ticking. Dark brown wood panelling, some porcelain planters on the windowsill, maybe some goldfish. Goldfish for Gold Mountain men. Not so far, then, from the red carp of their childhood ponds. Brown skin stringy salt-and-pepper beard polished bent knuckles and at least one super-long fingernail for picking. Alone and on the edge of their world, far from the centre. This kind of edge in race and family we only half suspect as edge.

For me, I would wander to it, tagging along with my father or, with a cousin, sent there to get a jar of some strange herb or balm from an old man who would force salted candies on us or take a piece of licorice dirtied with grains of tobacco from his pocket. the old men's voices sure and argumentative within this grotto. Dominoes clacking. This store is part of a geography, mysterious to most, a migrant haven edge of outpost, of gossip, bavardage, foreign tenacity. But always in itself and part of edge.

In a room at the back of the Chinese store, or sometimes above, like a room fifteen feet above the street din in Vancouver Chinatown, you can hear, mysteriously amplified through the window, the click-clacking of mah-jong pieces being shuffled over the table tops. The voices

from up there or behind the curtain are hot tempered, powerful, challenging, aggressive, bickering, accusatory, demeaning, bravado, superstitious, bluffing, gossipy, serious, goading, letting off steam, ticked off, fed up, hot under the collar, hungry for company, hungry for language, hungry for luck.

Who am I I thought I might say to my friend Charlie Chim Chong Say Wong Liu Chung, the chinese poet. He said he could tell me more about my father than I can imagine.

Like my name. This chinese doctor I go to for acupuncture always gets it wrong. He calls me Mah. And I say no, it's Wah. Then he smiles, takes out his pen and writes my characters on my forearm, sometimes on my back, between the needles, or down my leg (sciatic signature). He says Wah just means overseas Chinese. So I'm just Fred Overseas.

I tell him my dad was really Kuan Wah Soon. He says my family comes from Canton region. Then he smiles. He knows so much.

Now I have a large coloured portrait of Kuan Yü, illustrious chinese ancestor hero of China's epic drama, the San Kuo. You can see him as any number of small porcelain or clay statues in Chinatown; he has three long beards swirling out from his chin and cheeks. Charlie Chim Chong Say Wong Liu Chung says he wasn't even chinese, probably an invading Moor.

No swings in this long, slow stroke of signature. Unreadable, but repeatable.

What's already in the ground, roots of another body, method of dirt, fragment of stone, simple weight of the saviour, fossil of marrow, concrete translation of immediate skin pore, pigment, preamble to another quiet yet almost cloudhead thunder building, saying get to the end of itself, maybe the magnetic compass would help, chinese ink strokes too, a little purple and green from the lottery sheets, eye wanders into the middle of this book into the gutter, a certain speed there, swaying of the transit plumb bob, hand across his mind, intimate life lines, sudden

word for number, just sudden, skipping, rope, some later meditation anchor oriented.

Until she called me a "Chink" I wasn't one. That was in elementary school. Later, I didn't have to be because I didn't look like one. But just then, I was stunned. I had never thought about it. After that I started to listen, and watch. Some people are different. You can see it. Or hear it.

The old Chinamen had always just been friends of my dad's. They gave us candy. I went fishing down by the boat-houses with one of them. He was a nice man, shiny brown knuckles, baited my hook, showed me how to catch mudsuckers, showed me how to row a boat. But then I figured it out and didn't want to be seen with him. We were walking back up the hill with our catch of suckers and some kids started chiding Chinky, chinky Chinaman and I figured I'd better not be caught with him anymore.

I became as white as I could, which, considering I'm mostly Scandinavian, was pretty easy for me. Not for my dad and some of my cousins though. They were stuck, I thought, with how they looked. And I not only heard my friends put down the Chinks (and the Japs, and the Wops, and the Spiks, and the Douks) but comic books and movies confirmed that the Chinese are yellow (meaning cowardly), not-to-be trusted, heathens, devils, slant-eyed, dirty, and talk incomprehensible gobblydee-gook. Thus "gook n. Slang. 1. A dirty, sludgy, or slimy substance. 2. An Oriental. An offensive term used derogatorily." And now a half-Ukrainian-half-Japanese daughter of a friend of mine calls anyone, white or not, who doesn't fit, a "geek." Even her father, who, we all know, is really a "Nip."

Sticks and stones might break my bones, but names will never hurt me.

Strange to watch your bloods. Like one of those sped-up movies of a cell dividing under a microscope. For just a split second your body'll do something Asian—like poised over a dish of Lo Bok with your chopsticks. There's just a brief Chinese glint in your eyes that flashes some shadow of track across your blond and ruddy Anglo-Swedish dominance. Some uvular word for hunger guttered at the back

of your mouth, waiting. Or how about your cousins from Trail, where we gaze at the same sudden trace behind a dark Italian countenance.

And I've watched you both closely at times to see if I can detect any of that Nordic gloom my grandparents brought over from Sweden. Once in awhile during your teenage years I worried that that depressive despair might overwhelm you as it has me from time to time. But what foolish stereotyping, to generalize about an ethnic quality like that.

Certainly your Swedish grandmother has more cheerfulness about her than melancholy. And friends of ours have frequently said, your daughters are really pleasant, smiling all the time, such happy girls. And you've been that way to me, too. So maybe I fret for naught, as usual. Besides you're only as much Swede as I am Chinese, one-quarter, twenty-five percent, a waning moon, a shinplaster, a blind alley, a semi-final, less than half a cup of honey.

And exactly half Brit. Now that's the one I can't figure out. Your mother claims she isn't as strong and tough as I think she is. Rock island North Sea solid English weather fortitude. Sometimes just plain stubborness, and you both got enough of that.

But oleomargarine soft now; take that yellow colouring and mix it with the white stuff. Better for you than pure butter, my mom said. A good substitute, cheaper, easier to get, you can have more of it, it'll feed the world's starving, the mix of the century.

Know what I mean?

for A.D.

they are called weeping
tiles you dig down the
edge of the house and
make a ditch of
sand and gravel you
place the tiles
neatly there so that
the downpipe water the
surface rain seeping
through the earth
will be carried
safely safely
away from the
foundations of the
dwelling

late at night
with careful
listening with sharp
shovels with mended
buckets dear
liza dear liza
with small
stones

our terrible
stories our dry
basements

Marilyn Iwama

If You Say So:
Articulating Cultural Symbols of Tradition in the Japanese Canadian Community

In a house I do not own
In a country of isolation
In a land that belongs to others
I sit on folded legs, bent by cultural impulse.[1]

Haruko Okano wrote these lines in a volume of poetry she describes as "my personal journey to the present" (7). Okano is a third generation Canadian of Japanese ancestry who was raised in non-Japanese Canadian foster homes, knowing her nisei[2] mother only through memories now decades old. How has she come to identify herself as sansei? Okano walks, she says, on "[t]oes turned in to kick aside kimono hem." What process fixes in Haruko Okano the sense of belonging—as these metaphors signal—to a nation she has only imagined?[3]

Such questions trouble a sense of tradition[4] that depends on the translation of a historical past into a cultural present via the inheritance of core ancestral practices and ideology. But what happens when we consider the expression of perceived tradition as one step in a process of constructing and defining certain events or ideals as "traditional?" In this case, such events and ideals may be made imperative by historical incidents, and so achieve status as essential components of cultural identity. Then tradition is what one says it is. By examining received notions of history, origin, and "the past," this essay explores the process by which certain ideas and actions have come to be defined as essential symbols of Japanese Canadian tradition.

A potent strain in canonical "western" philosophical thought has been the idea of what Foucault describes as the "lofty origin" (143). This now

cliched premise of the point of origin informs a host of metaphors used to describe the fact and expression of human existence. The power of metaphors like *the journey of life* and *the roots of tradition* obtains in an accepted notion of temporality. Life's experiences have a beginning, a middle, and an end, and so one can talk about them. But it is the force and peerless quality of our beginning that sustain one perception of individual existence in community.

Provocative in this linear model of existence is the hierarchical participation of the past (which is only the beginning spoken) in the present creation of individual experience. Okano's narrator can learn the Japanese harvest dance because, she suggests in "Returning," the dance simply *was*.

> My hands seek
> the rightness of the place.
> My feet carry me
> along a near forgotten
> path.
> I reclaim lost pieces
> to satisfy this longing
> for moments remembered
> yet not known. (50)

The harvest dance is contained in the place of its beginning, at the end point of a journey back, and it can be incorporated as Okano's experience because this origin is within her mnemonic reach. The poem offers the possibility of experience that exceeds a finite linearity dependent on the original moment: the narrator is "gathered into wholeness" in the celebration of seasonal cycles. But the force of this suggestion is undercut by the poem's assertion of the "rightness" of the source.

The belief in a cultural wellspring is a persistent one. For her study of Japanese Canadian women, Yuko Shibata visits the homes of sixty issei women and finds a picture of the Meiji Emperor on the wall of each (265). Japanese tradition becomes what the first immigrants brought with them from Japan, freeze frame. The closer one is to the source, in this case Meiji Japan, the purer and more constant must be its expression in that life. So the description of issei as 'the most Japanese' gains common acceptance. And if you cannot be near the origin, the artefacts that you name can take you there, as Gerry Shikatani describes in his poem, "Japanese Rice:"

> My hands become wet;
> the grains of rice I've

> washed (circular action, cold
> water and drained) steamed.
> bowls of rice to satisfy,
> fill my stomach: rice kome
> circle ancestral gathering
> (descendera) to self....[5]

The (un)necessary washing of rice. A printed message on every bag ("coated with edible cereal product") excuses you from the task. But the circular action on the cold water is the way Obāsan does it, the way she taught you to do it, the way to return to ancestral source, "to self." Thus tradition exceeds the processes of defining and enacting experience, in a fugal construction of individual identity.

With the epithet, "mythical baseline" (128), Estellie Smith dismisses the loftiness of the pure source of tradition. She then utilizes the paradigm of "continuity" to explore the construction of "all traditions of identity" (135).[6] Smith defines continuity as

> a synthetic phenomenon with the property of appearing flexible and adaptive under some conditions and persistent and self-replicating under others. (127)

By the time of Smith's publication, theories advancing the concept of constructed identities abounded. Particular to Smith's analysis, though, is her assertion that the academically polarized states of cultural transformation and persistence are expressions of the same process (of continuity), differing only in surface degree or detail. Further, unlike Eric Hobsbawm, who acknowledges a hierarchical persistence of "invented" over "genuine" tradition (10), Smith's emphasis is more democratic: "invented" tradition can also be "genuine."

Central to Smith's analysis of tradition as construct is the relative dispensability of individual volition. People's traditions change because "things happen." Regardless of one's determination to either perpetuate or stifle a "traditional" event, changing contexts operate variously to determine the next stage of the process. Contexts such as environmental demands; the lag-time in realizing that today's reality is not the direct manifestation of a long-ago yesterday; the difference in writing a story that was only ever told; the metamorphosis from private expression to public display; all operate on tradition to maintain no more, but no less, than varying states of flux. What then becomes an important focus is not the event of Gerry Shikatani washing his rice the way his grandmother taught him, but the persistence of his

compulsion to do so, regardless of changing contexts, as an act of contact with the origin of his ancestors. Yet more compelling to me is Shikatani's insertion of this cultural metaphysics into the center of a poem about sex, replete with conflated images of life-giving semen and white rice water, all wiped clean with toilet paper; a poem that is "nothing special / it's our lives, / that's it / after all."

Smith urges me to turn away from the event to the why of its enactment. But does that not mean I have decided, for Gerry Shikatani, that he is, in fact, performing another step in the process of cultural transformation, regardless of any conviction he may have that he is preserving, through its ritual enactment, the symbolic connection to his origin? Smith has already told me that my own methods are equally "grounded in and bounded by past knowledge and current perception" (127). Perhaps it is Shikatani's speaking the chance connection of rice, toilet paper, and messy drops of semen—not the (in)voluntary reenactment of ritual rice washing—that reinforces an idea of tradition by its very articulation.

Yet, says Smith, the individual does impose a taxonomy on cultural data. What may seem to be a random ordering is rather "generated from within some sociocultural matrix" to produce "idiohistory" (139). While Smith is convinced that individuals design, and are designed by, contextual experience, implications of origin inhere in her use of the terms "generation" and "matrix." Smith accedes to the plural existence of truths and would, I think, agree to a certain randomness in "events generated by the milieu" (129). After all, Shikatani could just as easily have "chanced" on an image of crumbled bits of tofu. The resultant metaphor would, of course, have little force: cultural connotations of eternity and centrality surrounding rice and its washing are what enliven Shikatani's poem about the "nothing more special" than life. These connotations make the poem possible. Consciously, the poet is shaping his context.

By qualifying her definition of continuity with the limiting concept of the generative matrix, Smith's emphasis shifts to the selective relativity of volition. Not only do things happen, but people happen to things, and thus the particular operation of the individual on her or his environment gains significance for its manner. Her conflation of both the dispensability and relativity of individual acts manifest in the single process of adaptation directs my gaze to one focal point—the interdepen-

dency of context and choice. Instances of this counterpoint happen at Vancouver's Powell Street Festival.

The festival began in 1977, under the direction of a young sansei named Rick Shiomi, as one celebration marking the centennial of Japanese Canadian history. That year's festival is described in the Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association newspaper, the *Bulletin*, as one of the "Japanese-oriented" activities concurrent with the more broadly defined Vancouver Heritage Festival. The *Bulletin* invites Vancouverites to the festival to enjoy "traditional food, art, music and dance displays [and] a cherry tree planting in commemoration of the Centennial" (16). Though not mentioned specifically, the *Sakura Singers*, a fixture of the festival throughout its history, were probably there. In a call for members in 1970, the Singers' mandate echoes that of the festival:

> Through the singing of Japanese folk songs and other well-known Japanese songs, the choir hopes to introduce a bit of Japanese culture to the Canadian community.[7]

The invitation reassures potential singers who do not read Japanese that all lyrics will be printed in roman script. Like Okano dancing the harvest dance, another third-generation Canadian was about to orchestrate the public presentation of "traditional" Japanese culture, an invisible component of which had to be a phonetic representation of Japanese songs to accommodate its English-speaking members.

Incongruous by its ubiquity, this labelling as "Japanese" any public display by Japanese Canadians has been one pernicious marker of the dominant Canadian perception of Japanese Canadians. An early example is this expression of thanks from the president of the 1940 Vancouver Folk Festival, Nellie McKay, to the festival's Japanese Canadian participants:

> We are very indebted to *our* Japanese friends. Personally, I am very proud of our new Canadian Japanese. They bring grace and poise to this Canada of *ours*. Some day when Canadian Art and Literature has [sic] taken real form, there will be found I am sure, a dignified and gracious charm, the gift of the Orient (emphasis mine).[8]

Aside from the patronizing effect of the possessive pronoun, "our," which simultaneously separates Japanese Canadians from the dominant center (this Canada of ours) and names them as a possession of that hegemony, this thank you note reinforces the concept of cultural tradition as an evolutionary form. At some future point, the artistic and literary symbols of

Canadian tradition, having reached their apogee, will include a subspecies of Japanese Canadian culture. But, unlike the host culture, the dignified and gracious charm of the Japanese Canadian "Oriental" contribution is expected to ossify at the moment of transplant, excluded from even this teleology.

The discourse surrounding the Japanese Canadian presentation of the festival has changed since its inception. The *Bulletin*'s announcement of the 1990 festival begins:

> Powell Street Festival presents the performances, concerns, and changes of an ethnoculture... a presentation of the grass roots of Japanese Canadians.[9]

But this apparent move away from an essentialist definition of the festival as a traditionally Japanese event to a more inclusive orientation is compromised by the writer's contrast of the Powell Street Festival with other presentations of a more diverse nature, namely the "multicultural" event that "presents a lively and dynamic presentation of performances from a mosaic of cultures" (14). The rate of "intermarriage" among sansei is commonly quoted at "90%." The Japanese Canadian community has a long history, having celebrated its centennial only ten years after Canada marked its own. Yet the community's annual festival is described as a polar opposite to "mosaic" events, offering "grass roots" over performance. I suggest that the Powell Street Festival is dedicated overwhelmingly to performance, especially of things "Japanese," despite the mosaic face of the present community. The two-day event showcases Japanese dance, music, taiko, flower arranging, sumo wrestling, martial arts, sand painting, and food. One of the highlights is the Shinto ceremony involving the "traditional" shrine procession in which the "traditional" Japanese Canadian shrine bearers are doused with water. Change is apparent. With aging and other modulating demographics of the community, there are more non-Japanese Canadian actors. The flavour and force of participants is perceptibly different, and there are inclusions of performances less obviously "Japanese." Displays of archival materials teach the general public and young Japanese Canadians about Japanese Canadian history. But seen in light of the persistent popularity of its "traditional" Japanese events, major changes in the face of Powell Street Festival are just beginning.

Regardless, it is the process of the constant, public, performative nature of the Festival, more than any alteration in its content, which defines changing Japanese Canadian culture. As Handler and Linnekin elaborate, the jux-

taposition of private life and public display contains a dynamic of change in which the artificial context (for instance, the exaggerated transformation of the festival's Oppenheimer park setting and the creation of a multi-ethnic audience), reinvents the private entity (280).[10] Further, the selectivity in deciding what is to be performed—even if, as with the *Sakura Singers*, it must first be taught—organizes private expression into a catalogue of tradition which then signifies, for participants and audience alike, cultural identity.

Against this background of the Powell Street Festival and the expression of public perception of Japanese Canadian cultural tradition, I look now at the way in which the internalization of messages like Nellie McKay's is heard in the written and spoken words of this community.

Historians have documented well the ironic futility of the campaign to assimilate (that is, make invisible) Japanese Canadians.[11] Government policy and social pressure from the Powell Street riot of 1907,[12] through the immigration quotas of the early and mid-twentieth century to their dispossession and uprooting during the second World War bespeak historical Canadian reluctance to accept Japanese Canadians into the fabric of mainstream Canadian society. Despite commands to "assimilate," the impossibility of that process was underscored by such patronizing praises as McKay's (and they were many), and the fervent "Keep B.C. White" campaign of the early twentieth century.[13] Yet many Japanese Canadians, especially nisei, were persuaded that assimilation was a desirable, obtainable state, and accepted the assignment determinedly. Internalized assimilation rhetoric was rewarded by the Japanese Canadian community with publication in the pages of community newspapers like *The New Canadian* and the *Bulletin*, and pride of place in oratory and essay contests. Often lists of objectionable Japanese behaviours were followed by substitute "Canadian" ways, as in this passage from an elementary school essay quoted in *A Dream of Riches*:

> We Japanese are now facing discrimination. How can we avoid it? We should not do what white people do not like. Before going to school we should wash our hands and faces well. And we should make sure that our necks and ears are always clean. If we eat tsukemono too much we will be disliked for our bad breaths [sic]. It is also very bad to go out in dirty clothes. We should wear clean clothes but not too fancy. In the school playground it is better to play with white children. This way we can also learn English. In school we should listen to our teachers carefully and get higher marks than white children. Then white children and teachers will like us (64).

As Muneo Kawasoe, winner of the 1940 Vancouver Island Challenge

Trophy for oratory put it, the "ultimate victory" would be to be known, "not as Japanese Canadians, but simply as Canadians."[14]

In this climate of assimilation, *The New Canadian* published poetry by young nisei in most issues of the late 1930s and early 40s (before the uprooting of the community in 1942), the majority of which spans the range of so-called western forms from High Romanticism to doggerel. Most of these poets and speech winners were teenagers and, as Audrey Kobayashi has suggested, novices by any standard.[15] What is significant is that despite the mainstream's assertions of irremediable difference, the young poets were imitating, not Japanese, but British and, to a lesser degree, American, poetic form. One way for the nisei to try and resolve the tension of being discriminated against by their fellow Canadians was to erase the difference they believed lay at the root of the discrimination. Thus they integrated even more the symbols of the dominant rejecting culture, in this case poetic forms, into their own cultural memory. These nisei poets reveal a strong conviction, or hope, that they share an identity more with their non-Japanese Canadian classmates than with their very "Japanese" parents.

Intentions aside, Japanese Canadian poetry written at this time exhibits influences that are, as defined by the poets and dominant Canadian society, distinctly un-"Canadian." Eiko Henmi composed a song for the 1939 "Nisei Convention" that, as these first lines show, reads much like an addendum to the Canadian national anthem:

> Hail to new Canadians,
> Pledging loyalty,
> To the land that gave us birth
> And our destiny....[16]

Yet, despite the poem's lack of what Nellie McKay might call "Oriental charm," Henmi instructs the reader that "A Nisei Song" be sung to the tune of the militant Japanese refrain, "Aikoku-koshin-kyoku."[17] Thus, the poet synthesizes two seemingly disparate elements from her Japanese Canadian "sociocultural matrix" (the perceived Canadian words and the stated Japanese melody) to construct a "new," that is adaptive, tradition. As Kobayashi points out, the issei, who brought with them to Canada the practice of writing Japanese haiku and tanka, formed poetry clubs on their arrival in Canada (44). Unarguably, they were conscious of their new context, and often incorporated obvious concessions into their poetry.[18] But it is the sometimes less apparent expression of this altered poetic, like

Henmi's, that holds particular significance for continuity.

The poets of both generations were in the process of discovering the implications in their present Canadian today that was not a direct manifestation of a long-ago Japanese yesterday. At this moment in their history, young nisei like Eiko Henmi were not clinging to a remembered tradition, as they perceived their parents were, nor even revisiting it, as Shikatani may be doing thirty years later, but enunciating an altered form of those remembrances in the process of their conscious struggle not to do so. In the nisei's naming of certain behaviours and poetic forms as "traditionally Japanese," and then attempting to stifle the expression of those elements, tradition became, as Sylvia Yanagisako observes, a reconceptualization of the past in terms of the present (2). The apparent irony in all of this is that the internalized stifling of perceived tradition, in concert with the uprooting of Japanese Canadians, were both catalysts in an unexpected next stage of cultural flourishing in the continuity of the Japanese Canadian community.

One might predict the dispersal of Japanese Canadians during the second World War, coupled with their internalization of injunctions to assimilate, to have subdued distinct expressions of tradition. Smith counters that such forced migrations can alter without extinguishing the spatial dimension of a socioculture (131). In fact, a review of writing from and about the internment camps reveals a startling revival and revamping of "old" traditional symbols of Japanese culture, as well as an integration of new Canadian symbols into the internment milieu.

In the introduction to his recent textual gathering of issei wartime writing, Keibo Oiwa writes:

> They [those interned] continued observing both traditional and Western festivals and rites of passage, and inventing substitute ornaments for the children. It was a highly creative period. If we wish to speak about "Nikkei culture," here is a moment in which it was being forged. (22)

Oiwa's collection opens with excerpts from the diary of Koichiro Miyazaki, who describes himself as a "rightist" Japanese national. Miyazaki was incarcerated in the prisoner-of-war camps at Angler and Petawawa for defying the government order to leave his family for a road camp in the interior of B.C. Miyazaki's diary emphasizes his expressed loyalty to Japan and his strong identification as a Japanese. He writes of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour as "the day when our great nation asserted itself against the

white race" (72). He dedicates his free time in camp to "climbing the mountain" of his Japanese identity, reading Japanese philosophy and poetry, and participating in multiple recreations of Japanese ceremonies. For instance, in his entry for 5 May 1942 (sekku, or "Boys' Day" in Japan), Miyazaki decries the lack of koi[19] banners to fly for the celebration; remarks that he was heartened by the arrival of a package of Japanese food from his wife; notes that he passed the day reading *Oku no Hosomichi* (a poetic journal by the seventeenth-century poet, Bashō), and ended the holiday by participating in a sumo match. Miyazaki reflects: "I feel my present circumstances somehow made me closer to the wandering poet, Bashō" (56). Recalling the patriotism of "A Nisei Song," and the especially unjust internment of Japanese Canadian citizens, it is easy to empathize with the anger that the nisei writer, Joy Kogawa, describes on reading such professions of "an identity with a country that was the enemy country of my youth" (6).

However, my intention is not to scale degrees of individual loyalty, but to consider the symbolic manifestations of Japanese Canadians' cultural tradition in the enforced state of migration that tried all of their social values. In that vein, I choose rather to examine the unity in Japanese Canadian reflections on certain aspects of the wartime experience, despite the provocation there may have been in the protest of the seven hundred gambariya or "diehards" (Oiwa 21), such as Miyazaki, who were imprisoned in Petawawa and Angler, as well as in the less articulated dissent of those who complied only physically with the government's orders.

There is a particular paradox in the Japanese Canadian descriptions of the gambariya who resisted the uprooting. Throughout the literature about the Nikkei community in Canada there is a tendency to classify as "Japanese" any expressions of compliance within that community. In fifteen personal history interviews with Japanese Canadians, actions ranging from a lack of socializing outside the home, to cooperation with the government orders to "evacuate," are described—without exception—as indications of "Japanese" passivity.[20] And, like the symbolic presence of the Meiji Emperor which Shibata found in so many issei homes, the evaluation of "the" issei personality, like the issue of language, usually depends on a perception of the issei as being most connected to Japan. In response to the yonsei interviewer's compliment of his "good Japanese," S. retorts:

> No. I speak the Japanese that was spoken eighty years ago, from the old Japanese immigrants.... To you, I must sound like I just come [sic] out of the

> mountains somewhere. Just like the hillbillies in Tennessee. Maybe it's like Rip Van Winkle. (SP 23:16)

The obvious irony inheres in the individual's simultaneous devaluation (again, in the interviews and in written texts) of any resistance during their uprooting by even the "most Japanese" issei, as either a minor aberration or the harmless foolishness of youth. H. describes the gambariya as

> kind of young and mixed up.... In any society you find there are people that will say no to anything. (23:5)

How, then, did this overwhelmingly "passive" group of community members manage such bold resistance?

In the context of the uprooting of Japanese Canadians, some individuals chose compliance as the way to survival. In retrospect, this can be construed as a canny choice. Prior to the politicization of the community over the struggle for redress of this injustice, many Japanese Canadians did just that by pointing to perceived benefits of the internment. Understandably, such rationalizations have grieved those who fought for redress, but the cruel paradox is that compliance with the order to relocate meant that Japanese Canadians were now relatively free of those very external controls, such as curfews, that had hindered their gathering and, therefore, their communal exercise of tradition. Possibly, the heightened sense of community and even commiseration in the camps fostered the synthesis of certain Japanese Canadian traditions, prompting those interned to refashion the cultural symbols they deemed helpful or necessary. For the purposes of this paper, greater significance lies in the indications that the form and content of these symbols, whether considered particularly "Japanese" (like the ofuro[21]) or "Canadian" (like Sunday School) were altered by the new context.

For those suffering the even harsher injustice of being imprisoned for their non-compliance, the experience of containment provided a different, but at least as equally powerful, incentive to maintain or restore certain traditions. One might argue that punishing individuals for their perceived subversion—for prisoners at Petawawa and Angler, this meant seeming "too Japanese"—would extinguish external signs of that disposition. But, as experiences like Miyazaki's demonstrate, internment did not just "alter ... the spatial dimension" of Japanese Canadian culture. For reasons as varied as the individuals uprooted, that community's culture flourished in the state of internment. And the "tradition" of variously naming the Japanese

Canadian "essence" as passive or aggressive sustained continuity within the changing context.

One final area this paper addresses is the creation of language as a symbol of cultural synthesis, specifically the perception that maintaining a pure form of the "mother tongue" is the best defence against the erosion of "mother culture." After S. corrects the interviewer about his Rip Van Winklian Japanese, he goes on to qualify it as "the pure Japanese," in contrast with the Japanese of the shin-issei, or new immigrants, who speak "with a lot of American... so many English words" (SP 23:16). As with the above-mentioned essentialist perceptions of Japanese compliance, the majority of interviewees agree with S. that a pure Japanese language persists, not in contemporary Japan, but in the Nikkei community as a link with Meiji Japan, and as a conspicuous cultural marker of Japanese Canadians which distinguishes them from more recent Japanese immigrants. In other words, the ability to speak "real" Japanese shows you are a "real" Canadian.

Roy Kiyooka writes:

> i had meant to write about a pear tree i knew as a child
>
> when i lived over the mountains in a small prairie town but
> the language of that pear tree belonged to my mother tongue. it
> bespeaks a lost childhood language one which the pear tree in
> our backyard in chinatown has a nodding acquaintance with.
>
> how many languages does a pear tree speak? (32)

In this poem, the metonymic relation of Kiyooka's pear tree to his larger experience as a child on the prairies is secondary to the tree's symbolic representation through language. Allusions to the phallic interruption (pen writing, tree piercing the prairie sky) of the Lacanian mother-child dyad and its language of plenitude do not diminish the force of Kiyooka's poetic images of Japanese language as a cultural mnemonic for a "Japanese" childhood on the Canadian prairies. The loss of the pear tree "mother tongue" is perceived as a severance from the mother(country), not only Japan or Canada, but neither both.

More pragmatically, many Japanese Canadians hold the opinion that the Japanese language must be spoken or, not Japanese, but Japanese Canadian culture will be lost. There have been instances where this ideology has been complicated by more expected (perhaps) connections of Japanese language

with Japanese culture,[22] but the former process dominates this discussion as a component in the stereotyping of two deviant groups within an essentially defined Japanese Canadian community: recent (that is post-war) immigrants, and the gambariya.

Smith categorizes the stereotyping of deviance within a socioculture as a function necessary to the integration of difference, in order to maintain the predictable and repetitive milieu which marks "a relatively bounded socioculture (134)." The wartime interruption of Japanese immigration to Canada meant that the Japanese Canadian community was, for decades, free of foreign interjection. Regardless of the diversity that was reflected in response to the uprooting, H. remembers the community of these years as one where "there's no difference" (SP 23:5). Then immigration resumed, and Japanese Canadians were confronted with receiving as members of their community (in addition to non-Japanese Canadian spouses and the gambariya) the "deviant" shin-issei. As S. describes the new immigrants:

> Well, they're a very aggressive people.... And they don't have the manners like our old Japanese. They'll just trample all over you. (SP 23:16)

The descriptions vary only in detail. Shin-issei are "flamboyant," "outgoing," and "let [their children] run all over the place." To some, the shin-issei do not speak "pure" Japanese, like the Canadian-born nisei. Again, it is only an apparent paradox that S. uses American folkloric allusions like "Rip Van Winkle," and "hillbillies from Tennessee" to describe his proficiency in Japanese. Such perceptions of language impose on community members predictive expectations that privilege Meiji Japanese. For those who do not speak Japanese, Okano tells us in her poem, "Tongue Tied," the loss is palpable and cruel:

> Ghost words, like ice cubes
> jammed against the back of my teeth.
> Cold pain shoots up the roots of my teeth
> into my brain.
> But none of it changes, nothing
> turns the volume up
> on the silent movie of how we were
> when I was a child. (30)

And ideological challenges like Eric Sokugawa's attempt to publish a "Nikkei Pidgin Language Dictionary" expire through community neglect.[23]

The glaring deviance which the "Japlish"-speaking shin-issei introduce into this context is defined as symbolic of that deviance and, therefore, able to be integrated, however marginally, into the community.

I have nodded only slightly toward the discussion of memory in this paper, not because I think it unrelated, but because its complexity requires separate consideration. My emphasis has been on the larger process of continuity as it applies to the Japanese Canadian community, and I only pause at this point to suggest that interdependency of context and choice in the symbolic perception of tradition shapes, and is shaped by, complicated processes of memory.

As one example, I point to the clear—and official—identification of the Japanese Canadian community with other visible minorities, especially those, like First Nations peoples, seeking government redress of past wrongs.[24] Absent from the literature and tapes I have reviewed is any mention, as reported in the *New Canadian*, that in 1942 the Native Brotherhood and the Native Sisterhood of B.C. urged the federal government to demand compulsory deportation of all Japanese Canadians to Japan.[25] Because I agree with Yanagisako that recollections re-interpret rather than erase historical events (2), I am not implying that the Japanese Canadian community has forgotten injustices received from those with whom they now unite in a type of meta-community. What I am suggesting is that the function of memory as it relates to the process of sociocultural continuity invites further detailed study.

One place to start may be Roy Miki's latest volume of poetry, entitled *Saving Face.* In it Miki includes poems (like "failed tanka" and "beginning middle end") which are actively engaged with challenging essentialisms: "...the whole truth / & nothing but the truth / no no no no no no /...a pure language doesn't exist...."(49). Also inviting consideration are current debates on representation, community-specific issues across Canada, and Japanese Canadians' efforts to circumscribe their communities and continue those traditions they deem necessary for their survival. Together, these voices speak the symbols enabling individuals like Roy Kiyooka to remember the unlikely "ukiyoe" pear tree of his Canadian prairie childhood (32), or Haruko Okano to find "[t]he rice bowl is familiar in [her]palm. / Some distant memories, interrupted for years" (41).

[1] "Sansei," Okano 41.

[2] Issei, nisei, sansei, and yonsei refer respectively to first, second, third, and fourth generation Japanese Canadians. Nikkei are individuals of Japanese descent living outside of Japan.

[3] Although I make no direct references to Benedict Anderson in this paper, my thinking has been influenced by his theorizing on community and culture in *Imagined Communities*. Especially relevant are those strains in Anderson which speak to "nationness" as a creation of "cultural artifacts... capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains..." (4).

[4] Throughout this essay, "tradition" is held to be a problematic term, enclosed in quotation marks or not.

[5] "Japanese Rice," Shikatani 38.

[6] Any discussion of "continuity" is based on my understanding of the concept as developed by Smith, rather than any "traditional" connotations of the word.

[7] *Bulletin* 8 Feb. 1970:1.

[8] *Bulletin* 1 Nov. 1940: 2.

[9] *Bulletin* July 1990: 14.

[10] Even, Smith maintains, to the point where we witness an event and describe it as tradition, because the performance has been identified as such (128).

[11] See, for example, *The Enemy That Never Was*, Adachi; *The Politics of Racism*, Sunahara; and *A White Man's Province*, Roy.

[12] In which a crowd demonstrating against Asian immigration into Canada descended on Chinatown and the Japanese Canadian length of Powell Street, causing damages to the Japanese Canadians, according to claims made by the community, of $13,519.45 (Adachi 79-80).

[13] This was a campaign, in the most official political sense of the word. As Roy quotes B.C. Premier Richard McBride saying in 1912: "British Columbia must be kept white... we have the right to say that our own kind and colour shall enjoy the fruits of our labour"(229).

[14] *Bulletin* 15 Nov. 1940: 6.

[15] Private communication, 14 Nov. 1991.

[16] *New Canadian* 30 Jan. 1943: 2.

[17] The militant nature of this song was impressed on me in personal communication with M. Ayukawa, 27 March 1993. Also in personal communication, F.K. Iwama recalled hearing this song during wartime parades in Japan (10 April 1993).

[18] For instance, this haiku by Chōichi Handō Sumi in *Paper Doors*, 29.

Setsugen no
kumo no masshiroke
saihate no

shōten to naru
gurein erebetā

[19] carp

[20] That is, if they are described at all. Many are still reluctant to discuss either the events of the second World War, or their parents' part in those events. Even with the understanding that these interviews were intended as a compilation of the community's oral history, those who avoided or refused to talk about this time (and they were mostly men who, given the sexual stereotypes of the day, would be more likely to have had access to and involvement in resistance activities) concentrated determinedly on their occupational history.

[21] bath

[22] One locus of this debate was the function, in its early years, of the Japanese Language School, and the role of its first principal, Mr. Sato. When asked whether he attended the school as a child, M. recalls that his father equated learning Japanese at the school with learning Japanese nationalism (as did many mainstream politicians and citizens of the day), and so refused to let M. attend. And H. recounts Sato's receipt of the "Emperor's medal, the `Order of the Rising Sun'." Sato countered the charges with his assertion that he was teaching his students to be "good Canadian citizens" (NC 15 April 1939:2). Certainly, the force of the "debate" is weakened by the attention the *New Canadian* gave patriotic Canadiana written by these young citizens.

[23] *Bulletin* 11 Mar. 1985.

[24] In 1991, the Japanese Canadian Citizens Association sponsored the conference "Injustice," as a forum for minorities to share experiences of injustices received at the hand of the state, and work together for justice. As well, the *Bulletin* has printed messages from Art Miki, the president of the NAJC, urging participation, for example, in Native land claims (*Bulletin* Jan. 1992: 18).

[25] *NC* 15 Dec. 1942:2.

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NEWSPAPERS

Bulletin

The New Canadian

Deirdre Dwyer

The thin walls of Japan

I can hear the phone ring
in the next apato.
the thin walls of my Japanese home,
the wild field of tatami
tamed under my feet.

"We are quiet lovers" he said.
in this country you have to be.
I remember a picture of a Japanese woman,
her kimono scattered around her,
one breast revealed
and she is holding a book in her mouth.
somewhere outside the picture
her man is coming inside her
and she can't make a sound.

When the book falls
that's the only sound of love I hear.
the book opens, pages turn.
he gets dressed.

"We are quiet lovers, good lovers" he said.
when we make love you can hear
the sound of my breathing and his,
the small sounds of my body talking to his
saying "yes" "yes" "this way" "here,"
words of a closed book.

recipe for tea

(pronounce: téh or tèá
origin: fukienese/scottish dialects)

a modest pot
enough for
four
small cups

insert tea

green or fermented
or in a
bag

(the first ships came to trade)

the area was fukien
the traders were scottish

the water
boiled separately

brought it back
bastardized it
made it mud
drowned in heavy cream
two, three teaspoons
of colonial sugar

keep your eyes
on the bubbles

shrimp eyes
crab eyes
fish eyes

in search for monopoly
planted in india
after their first crop:
opium

the optimum is
crab eyes

crab
clattering
before
fish
winking

(the second ships brought my forefathers)

high tea
high civilized tea
biscuits
crumpets
crystalized ginger
fragrant cinnamon spices

note:

the first pour
is not for drink

the best known tea party
was in boston

the tea was chinese
but none invited

pour only
to
cleanse
and awaken

steep briefly

discard

(the third ships brought me)

the second pour: discovery

the third pour: exhilaration

the final pour: afterthought

if

desired

repeat

Graham Huggan

The Latitudes of Romance:

Representations of Chinese Canada in Bowering's *To All Appearances A Lady* and Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café*

Chinese immigrants in Canada, and their naturalized descendants, have struggled to assert themselves in a country of transplanted Europeans who have tended to ignore them or, worse, to demonize them as an irreducible, threatening "other,"[1] which Canadian literature has played its part in fanning the flames of racial resentment. Exotic—mostly negative—stereotypes abound in Canadian representations of China and the Chinese, providing spurious legitimation for a history of mistreatment.[2] Exoticism derives its greatest pleasures from the feeling of detachment; it seeks solace in the absent, in the *latitudes* of romance. The Far East can thus be apprehended as a source of romantic mysteries: mysteries all the more enticing when they are pondered from a distance. What happens when these ghostly foreign presences take on a greater substance; when these mysteries are transplanted onto home or native soil? Here, the appeal begins to pall: the objectification of the exotic "other" serves a different ideological purpose. Contact contaminates; romance plays out the darker themes of tainted love, miscegenation, incest. These themes come together in the figure of the Canadian *Chinatown*: a collective symbol of white European fantasies and fears of degradation. Here, from David Lai's study of Canadian Chinatowns, is a white woman's romantically-heightened perception of turn-of-the-century Vancouver:

> Secret tunnels. Opium dens. White slavery. Inscrutable celestials in pigtails with knives hidden up their silk sleeves. Gorgeous slant-eyed beauties with bound feet. Shadowy, sinister doorways. Ancient love drugs. Medicines made from the tongues of wild serpents. (Quoted in Lai, 70)

A familiar litany, in short, of exotic myths and stereotypes of the "treacherous Oriental";[3] and proof (if proof were needed) of the capacity of romance to turn attraction to revulsion: to transform the object of desire into a vehicle of loathing. For exoticist romance—like the genre of romance itself—is dangerously double-sided. In exotic literature, says Tzvetan Todorov, the tendency is to glorify foreigners; in colonial literature it is to denigrate them. But the contradiction is only apparent:

> Once the author has declared that he himself is the only subject ... and that the others have been reduced to the role of objects, it is often of secondary concern whether those objects are loved or despised. The essential point is that they are not full-fledged human beings. (323)

"Not full-fledged human beings": such—without undue romantic exaggeration—was an all too common assessment of Canada's early Chinese immigrants.[4] Brought over in the mid- to late nineteenth century to work in the mines and on the railroads, later recruited to low-paid jobs unfilled by the white European workforce, many of these indentured Chinese labourers were not considered "immigrants" at all. Instead, they were seen as "sojourners"; they were expected, in time, to return to the wives and children they had left behind in China—expectations frustrated, on one notorious occasion, by CP Rail's withdrawal of its promise to pay its workers' passage home. As Chinese communities in Canada began to grow and, gradually, to prosper, they became subject to increasingly discriminatory legislation. This culminated in the passing of the 1923 Immigration Act, which decreed that, until further notice, there would be no more Chinese immigration into Canada (the Act was not repealed until 1947). And it was not until after the Second World War that the Chinese in Canada acquired the right to vote. "Aside from the indigenous people," says Peter Li in his sociological survey of Chinese communities in Canada, "no other racial or ethnic group ha[s] experienced such harsh treatment in Canada as the Chinese" (1).

Two recent fictional accounts of the Chinese presence in Canada, Marilyn Bowering's *To All Appearances A Lady* (1989) and Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* (1990), appear against this background. Both books are, to some extent, "realistic" family sagas, drawing on historical record to place their tales of domestic discord within a wider context of social struggle. Both might be more accurately located, however, within the deliberately hyperbolical tradition of *genealogical romance*: a tradition in which romantic

(mis)adventures are assimilated to identitary fable, and the generational conflicts of an extended family are contained within a redemptive structure of collective—"group"—endeavour.[5] Yet while *To All Appearances A Lady* and *Disappearing Moon Café* draw on this tradition, they also subvert it, using the disruptive potential of the romance form to cut across its own idealist pretensions. Both writers use the ambivalent aesthetics of romance to challenge homogenizing myths of racial purity and/or superiority, and to open up an agonistic space in which European and Chinese Canadians confront one another on contested "New World" soil. They use the discontinuous structure of romance to dispute the patriarchal law of genealogical descent, confirming Janice Radway's view that "the struggle over the romance is ... part of [a] wider struggle for the right to define and to control female sexuality" (17).[6] Finally, they read the contradictory temporal codes of romance—its counter-impulses toward retreat and toward (imagined) revolution—as a means of recuperating and memorializing an ancestral past, while remaining free to fashion a different, as yet indeterminate, future.

Much of the action of *To All Appearances A Lady* takes place, significantly, on the border. As protagonist Robert Louis Lam steers a passage through the tricky coastal seas of British Columbia, he simultaneously navigates a path through the troubled waters of his past. Guided by the spirit of his Chinese stepmother Lam Fan, the woman who previously raised him, Robert relives the painful history of his own divided family. Much of this history, too, has to do with borders; as his boat skirts the official boundary between Canada and the United States, Robert pauses repeatedly to consider "where on the border he really is" (32). The more he considers, the more he realizes—as did his namesake before him, his mother's former lover, Robert Louis Haack—that borders make little sense (141). He himself is the product of two officially distinct, but increasingly cross-fertilized, cultural heritages: that of his expatriate English mother, the reformist India Thackeray, and that of his exiled Chinese father, the leper Ng Chung—themselves the ambivalent products of unlikely family backgrounds. Such doubled identitary formulae and preposterously contrived narrative schemata are, of course, the stock-in-trade of romance; so it comes as no surprise to learn that Robert Louis takes his name from Haack's acquaintance, the writer R.L. Stevenson. Lam is, in fact, the product of two very different nineteenth-century literary ancestors—his mother, India *Thackeray*,

gives away the name of the other. And the disjointed narrative of Lam's family turns out to be an amalgam of the two writers' various romances (*Kidnapped, Treasure Island*; *The History of Henry Esmond, The Virginians*). In the figure of Robert Louis Lam, then, the Stevensonian *Doppelgänger* meets the ambivalent frontier hero.[7] This play of doublings and divisions is deliberately overdrawn. The simultaneous deployment and deflation of romance gives Bowering opportunity for a ludic meditation on the phenomenon of mixed ancestry: one which repeatedly "crosses the border" on issues of official racial difference, and which clears a space to negotiate the tensions in Canada's hybrid (East/West) cultural inheritance.

Bowering's ironic manipulation of the ambivalence already inscribed within the romance form thus serves the political purpose of undercutting colonial pretensions to racial hierarchy and/or exclusivity. (It also undercuts the late nineteenth-century ideal of liberal reform, India Thackeray's circular journey from Victoria [Hong Kong] to Victoria [B.C.] neatly controverting her inherited belief in the possibilities of [New World] progress.)[8] Like Bowering, Lee uses the ultimately self-defeating project of constructing the exotic "other" as a means of exposing the contradictions in colonial attitudes to race.[9] Whereas Bowering parodies European textual constructions of the "frontier" and/or the "Orient," Lee inverts the white colonial perspective, standing binaries on their heads. "Here we are living on the frontier with barbarians," says the Wong family matriarch, the redoubtable Mui Lan. "We [tang people] stick together" (61). More pointedly still, in the opening sequence, Wong Gwei Chang recalls his chance encounter with the Native Indian, Kelora, and the comic exchange of racial epithets that follows fast upon it:

> "Look, a Chinaman!" She crept up behind him and spoke in his language.
>
> .....
>
> "You speak Chinese," he said, indignant, unwilling to believe what he saw before him.
>
> "My father is a Chinaman, like you. His eyes are slits like yours. He speaks like you."
>
> .....
>
> "But you're a wild injun." He spilled out the insults in front of her, but they were meaningless to her. In Chinese, the words mocked, slang-like, "yin-chin."
>
> "You look hungry, Chinaman.... My father tells me Chinamen are always hungry."
>
> "I am not hungry," he shot back. He could tell she was teasing him, and he was offended that she knew more than he did. She could tell he was hungry, that he had no more power left, that in this wilderness he was lost.
>
> "Ahh, he has no manners," she exclaimed. He could only blink, astonished by this elegant rebuke from a "siwashee," a girl, younger than he. It made him feel

> uncivilized, uncouth; the very qualities he had assigned to thoughtlessly to her, he realized, she was watching for in him. (3-4)

Apart from staging a brilliant parody of the White Man's racial thinking, this opening scene also sets the tone for the hybrid narrative that follows it. Through an ironic displacement of the totems and taboos of the European cross-cultural romance—(Chateaubriand's *Atala* is one of the examples that comes most readily to mind)—Lee produces a chaotic family narrative that exhibits and applauds its own mixed ancestry. Like Bowering's Robert Louis Lam, Lee's Kae Yin Woo learns to overcome the colonial stigma associated with mixed blood. One of the means she adopts to do so is through parodying the—already parodic—nomenclature of the Harlequin romance. Discussing possible titles of her book with the family nanny, Seto Chi, Kae comes up with the following:

> "Chi," I am ecstatic. "I've got the perfect title ... House Hexed by Woe. What do you think?"
> "Get serious!" Chi chopping chives.
> "I am serious. I've never been more serious in my entire life." I am standing at the counter beside her, staring hard into the woodgrain of my mother's cabinets, trying to imagine an enticing movie poster with a title like *Temple of Wonged Women,* in romantic script. "They were full of ornament, devoid of truth!" (208-9).

By converting her disastrous family history into the stuff of domestic melodrama, Kae—and, by extension, Sky Lee—counteract the negative impulse to wallow in self-pity (174). Like Bowering, Lee uses the *inclusiveness* of romance—its capacity to combine aspects of tragedy and comedy within an interwoven pattern—as a means of transforming a divisive history into unifying myth.[10] But whereas Bowering's romantic models are of European origin, Lee's are half (North) American, half (North) Americanized Chinese. "Life is an afternoon T.V. screen" (22), muses Kae in contemplating the latest family mishap. The already embellished world of the North American T.V. soaps is given further romantic glitter by being wedded to the extravagance of transplanted Chinese opera.[11] And so, amid much clashing of metaphorical gongs and cymbals, the melodrama proceeds. Romance outdoes itself; produces a many-headed monster, a hybrid tribute to excess. Yet, as in Bowering's fiction, such romantic excesses have a liberating function: they allow their practitioners to go beyond the limits that others impose upon their lives. By giving the protagonists of Lee's and Bowering's fictions a stage upon which to *perform* their racial/cultural "otherness," romance enacts a Camp subversion of the processes through which that "otherness" is created.[12]

Lee and Bowering also use romance as a lens to focus on the "otherness" of female gender. The question asked here by both writers is: Does romance provide an outlet for the liberation of women's desire, a means of reclaiming self-identity through the fulfilment of romantic fantasy; or does such vicarious self-fulfilment displace women's capacity for action onto the symbolic realm, and thereby reconfirm their subordinate status in the social status quo? Most commentators on romance have emphasized the genre's conservatism; yet as Janice Radway, among others, points out, the ability of romance to effect social change or to restrict it is obviously dependent on who controls its signifying codes.[13] In *To All Appearances A Lady*, this issue of control revolves around the figure of India Thackeray, and, more specifically, around her struggle to define her sexual identity in a male-dominated society. (Naming is a crucial component in the process; it is significant that her given name connects her to a history of male reformism, while her Christian name provides an allegorical marker of the feminization of a colony.)[14] India Thackeray carries the symbolic weight of other people's expectations: born in 1857, the year of the Indian Mutiny and the riots in Hong Kong, "she stood for any number of contraries: Christian forgiveness, for example, or Chinese barbarianism" (33). Throughout India Thackeray's life, and the narrative that derives from it, she is apparently kept prisoner to these imposed symbolic codes; thus, even when she makes her "escape" to D'arcy Island (and to her "forbidden" lover there, Ng Chung), that island still remains the product of a *man's* view of romance [see, for instance, the Stevensonian romantic myths of *Kidnapped* and *Treasure Island*]. Yet if India remains, throughout, the object of a male defining gaze—to all *appearances* a lady—she at least manages to transgress the paternal code of "civilized" behaviour. However, that very act of transgression remains subject to a male controlling imagination, suggesting that the symbolic realm of literary romance is by no means unassailable to patriarchal interference. (India eventually dies with the signs of incipient leprosy on her flesh: in a familiar romantic motif, the woman's body becomes an overdetermined site of racial/sexual "contamination.")

In *Disappearing Moon Café*, that metaphorical "contamination" spreads to the collective body of the Chinese-Canadian community. Whereas Bowering illustrates the effects of that "unpardonable sin," miscegenation, inscribed as a mark of symbolic punishment on the European woman's body, Lee charts the contradictions in the European fetishization of the gen-

dered ethnic body: a process which allows the desired exotic "other" to be simultaneously seen *as the carrier of a disease.* A primary vehicle for this racist/sexist fantasy is that other "unpardonable sin," incest. Incest, as Lee shows in *Disappearing Moon Café,* is a reaction to intolerable outside pressures; it spreads within a marginalized community that is forced back on its own resources (147). But this does not prevent it being seen by others as a self-inflicted condition—(hence the white colonial perception of Chinatown as intrinsically *decadent,* as carrying within it the seeds of its own destruction). The Wong family, in *Disappearing Moon Café,* hides a history of incest and illegitimacy: a history brought out into the open by the "scandalous revelations" of romance. Lee adapts these romantic codes to suit her own subversive purpose. By exploiting the rebellious tendencies within the Freudian family romance, Lee links the symbolic entrapment of women to the law of patrilineal descent.[15] How is it possible, asks Lee throughout the fiction, to recapture the spirit of one's ethnic forebears without obeying their paternal mandates? And it is here that, paradoxically, romance proves to be most useful. For romance patterns itself on the *discontinuous*: it rejects—explicitly or implicitly—the "genealogical imperative," whereby "the individual member [within the extended family] is guaranteed both identity and legitimacy through the tracing of [his/her] lineage back to the founding father, the family's origin and first cause" (Tobin 7). As Patricia Tobin argues, the structure of realistic narrative is pervaded by this "lineal decorum":

> All possibly random events and gratuitous details are brought into an alignment of relevance, so that at the point of conclusion all possibility has been converted into necessity within a line of kinship—the subsequent having been referred to the prior, the end to the beginning, the progeny to the father. Thus in life and literature, a line has become legitimatized because our causal understanding, always for the West the better part of knowledge, has been conditioned by our existential experience of genealogical descent. (7-8)

Such demands to not apply to the romance form, however; as Gillian Beer observes, "the rhythms of the interwoven stories in the typical romance construction correspond to the way we interpret our own experience as multiple, endlessly penetrating stories, rather than simply a procession of banal happenings" (9). This understanding of romance is crucial to Lee's revisionist project: it serves the dual function of allowing her to "disobey" the genealogical imperative—which might otherwise force her to see the history of her own community in prescribed evolutionary terms—and of

freeing her to reinterpret that history as a time-defying network of interconnected *stories*. These stories, in *Disappearing Moon Café*, are mostly told by women. Here, for example, is Beatrice Wong's interpretation:

> In the telling of [the] stories [of the women in my family], I get sucked into criticizing their actions, but how can I allow my grandmother and great-grandmother to stay maligned? Perhaps ... they were ungrounded women, living with displaced Chinamen, and everyone trapped by circumstances. I prefer to romanticize them as a lineage of women with passion and fierceness in their veins. In each of their woman-hating worlds, each did what she could. If there is a simple truth beneath their survival stories, then it must be that women's lives, being what they are, are linked together. (145-6)

Romance is thus conscripted into the service of generating female solidarity. By recreating "a lineage of women with passion and fierceness in their veins," Beatrice Wong implicitly appeals to a wider female interpretive community. This extended lineage of women does not merely replicate the law of patrilineal descent; instead, it creates a pattern of allegiances which spans—encircles—time. Lee mounts a further challenge to the genealogical imperative by undercutting the stable linear structure of the conventional family saga. As in *To All Appearances A Lady*, the *duplicities* of romance prove more than adequate to the task. "All my life I saw double," says Kae. "All I ever wanted was authenticity; meanwhile, the people around me wore two-faced masks, and they played their lifelong roles to artistic perfection. No wonder no one writes family sagas any more!" (128). Kae's search for "authenticity" indicates the temptation that exists within beleaguered ethnic communities to fall back on nostalgic myths of pure identity which only replicate the structure of the dominant culture.[16] (An alternative danger seems to exist for ethnic individuals such as Bowering's Robert Louis Lam, whose narrative holds him hostage to his desire to discover his true origins.) This dilemma is addressed, in *Disappearing Moon Café*, by providing a series of contending—often contradictory—narratives. None of these narratives is authentic, or complete, or even reliable: none can be traced back to a single source, or to an identifiable point of origin. As Gwei Chang remarks of the multiple stories that are told him by Old Man Chen: "Who knows which ones were true and which ones were fragments of his own fantasy?" (7).

The question is, of course, rhetorical: the gradual *hermeneutic* process, in *To All Appearances A Lady*, whereby Robert Louis Lam pieces together his past from the fragments of his mother's diary, in

Disappearing Moon Café, into an inconclusive *heuristic* linkage in which past and present intermingle in the lived experience of story. In both cases, a careful balance is maintained between retrieving the past and reinventing it. Romance mediates the tensions between these alternative temporal projects. The cyclical structure of romance places emphasis on the potential for regeneration (Frye); and in that restricted sense, *To All Appearances A Lady* and *Disappearing Moon Café* both end where they began.[17] But what interests both writers most is the "in-betweenness" of romance: the opportunity it affords to bridge an imagined past to an unknown future. Lee and Bowering are both sceptical toward the innovatory claims of a form which seems, all too often, to be self-evidently conservative; this scepticism is expressed in their parodic recitations of the clichés of the western frontier romance. "When I was a girl," says Lam Fan in *To All Appearances A Lady*, "I wanted to do something, anything that no one had ever done before. I didn't know what it was, I just wanted to be the first at something new" (74). Robert's response is characteristically sarcastic: "And so you started smoking opium" (74). Compare this with Fong Mei's ironic flight of fancy, in *Disappearing Moon Café*:

> Imagine, I could have run away with any one of those lonely Gold Mountain men, all without mothers-in-law. This was a land of fresh starts; I could have lived in the mountains like an Indian woman legend. If men didn't make me happy enough, then I could have moved on. Imagine, I could have had children all over me—on my shoulders, in my arms, at my breasts, in my belly. I was good at childbirth. And in turn, they could have chosen whomever and how many times they fancied, and I would have had hundreds of pretty grandchildren. I wouldn't have died of loneliness. (188)

The pseudo-psychological put-down follows: "Kae asks Hermia: 'Is this what they call a *forward* kind of identity?'" (189). Bowering and Lee are both adept at teasing out the contradictions in romantic wish-fulfilment; it seems no less than fitting that D'arcy (Treasure?) Island should eventually yield a cache of opium. Do romances really rebel, or do they seek disguises for acceptance? Do romances really remember, or do they provide a license to forget? These structural contradictions are contained within what Fredric Jameson has called the "transitional moment" of romance. The practitioners of the romance form, argues Jameson, "must feel their society torn between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile but somehow unrelated worlds" (158). Hence the tendency to *withdrawal*: the sense in which romance will often masquerade as an attempted

engagement with the past while providing a convenient pretext for escaping from the confines of the present.

By turning the contradictions within the romance form effectively against themselves, Lee and Bowering clear a space to explore the provisionality of ethnicity. The constituency of the ethnic, argues the cultural theorist R. Radhakrishnan,

> occupies quite literally a "prepost"-erous space where it has to actualize, enfranchise and empower its own "identity" and coextensively engage in the deconstruction of the very logic of "identity" and its binary and exclusionary politics. Failure to achieve this doubleness can only result in the formation of ethnicity as yet another "identical" and hegemonic structure. (199)

For Bowering, ethnic self-identity is necessarily mediated through the agency of the "other": Robert locates his own life-story in the interstices of another's narratives. Romance becomes a vehicle for this dialectical transformation: it enacts the transitional moment between alternative identitary formations. Bowering's focus is on the deconstruction of European exotic binaries; Lee's is on the presentation of an indeterminate ethnic subject. The doubleness of romance allows Lee to celebrate the collective identity of an ethnic (Chinese-Canadian) community, without isolating that community from its wider social context or attempting, through the mystifications of memory, to mould it into a harmonious whole. Romance also allows Lee to uncover the repressed history of the Chinese-Canadian community, without indulging in the false glories of nostalgia or succumbing to the paralysis of remorse. Romance *exceeds* these emotive categories: "It offers comedy; it includes suffering. Yet it does not have the concentration of comedy or the finality of tragedy. It celebrates—by the processes of its art as much as by its individual stories—fecundity, freedom, and survival" (Beer 29). In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Lee co-opts romance aesthetics into a politics of ethnic writing in which the search for self-identity is necessarily provisional. Eli Mandel has described this writing well. Ethnic literature, says Mandel, is "a literature existing at an interface of two cultures, a form concerned to define itself, its voice, in the dialectic of self and other and the duplicities of self-creation, transformation and identities" (99).[18] Romance provides a useful medium for an understanding of those duplicities. It also allows for an understanding of the doubleness of the European exotic project. "The category of the exotic as it emerged in [eighteenth-century] Europe," say G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter in their introduction to a

collection of essays on Enlightenment exoticism,

traded on the ambiguity created by the dialectical interplay of diachronic history (fact) and imagination (fiction). The exotic was the fantastic realised beyond the horizons of the normal everyday world the Europeans knew. (15)

The exotic, as it rematerialised later in nineteenth-century romantic fantasy, provided an imaginary justification for colonial intervention; and for the kinds of exclusionary racial policies that, in Canada, were directed against the Chinese. Romance has certainly played its part in the construction of the Oriental "other"; yet as Lee and Bowering show, it may also play a rôle in the *undermining* of that construction. In adjusting the expectations of romance to the task of social liberation, Lee and Bowering recognise that there is no simple means of escape from the system of stereotypical representations produced by the colonial past. Both writers choose instead to work *within* a genre which has historically participated in that system. But instead of deploying the latitudes of romance as a pretext for perpetuating myths of cultural incommensurability, Lee and Bowering negotiate that intervening distance as a means of bridging "East" and "West," and of positing a hybrid space between them that exceeds all fixed identitary categories.

NOTES

[1] The concept of "othering" is taken from the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; see, for example, the introduction to *In Other Worlds*. For a general discussion of the Western (European) "othering" of China, see also Zhang.

[2] See Craig's discussion of the work of writers such as Woodsworth and Stead (*Racial Attitudes* 25-30, 48-49). In his "pseudosociological" study *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909), Woodsworth "supplied a qualitatively ranked survey of possible immigrant groups. They were evaluated on the basis of their potential for assimilation, estimated on the grounds of their assumed intelligence and undesirable features. Asiatics were at the bottom of the list" (Craig 27). Compare this with Stead's description of a Chinese houseboy in his novel *The Cow Puncher* (1918): "Dave pressed a button, and a Chinese boy (all male Chinese are boys) entered, bowing in that deference which is so potent to separate the white man from his silver. The white man glories in being salaamed, especially by an Oriental, who can grovel with a touch of art. And the Oriental has not been slow to capitalize his master's vanity" (quoted in Craig 48).

[3] On the motif of the "treacherous Oriental" in Western literature, see Zhang; also, in a more specific context, Winks.

[4] For a capsule summary of attitudes to the Chinese in the early immigrant years, see Li, Chapters One and Two.

[5] On the connection between romance and identitary quest fable, also on the redemptive

structure of romance, see Frye, especially Chapter Two, "The Context of Romance."

[6] See the introduction and conclusion to Radway; also her excellent bibliography.

[7] On the *Doppelgänger*, see Eigner, Chapter One; on the frontier hero, see Williams, Chapter Six. See also Brantlinger's discussion of Thackeray's ambivalent relationship to India, in *Rule of Darkness*.

[8] The portrait of India Thackeray's father, in *To All Appearances A Lady*, is loosely based on the life of the father of her literary namesake. For purposes of comparison, see the early chapters of Monsarrat.

[9] See Bongie's discussion of fin-de-siècle exoticism, especially the chapter on Conrad. Bongie sees a struggle in Conrad's work between the writer's exoticist beliefs and a modernity that had already displaced them. The constitutive (self/other) polarities of nineteenth-century exoticism thus come to be redefined as a split *within* the self. Exoticism emerges as a gesture of self-defeating egotism, motivated less by the search for pleasurable alternatives than by a narcissistic self-contempt.

[10] On the inclusiveness of romance, see Beer 1-16, 29; also Frye, whose mythological approach toward the romance moves toward a *reconciliation* between the genre's oppositional tendencies.

[11] I am indebted for this insight to Bennett Lee's excellent introduction to a recent anthology of Chinese-Canadian writing, *Many-Mouthed Birds*. According to Lee, *Disappearing Moon Café* "reinvent[s] the past as domestic melodrama, borrowing elements from the Chinese popular oral tradition and weaving in incidents from local history to tell a story of the Wong family which is part soap opera, part Cantonese opera and wholly Chinese Canadian" (4). For an introduction to Cantonese opera, see also Yung. Yung stresses the *miscellaneous* nature of (contemporary) Cantonese opera, listing some of its constituent elements as: "singing and dancing, musical accompaniment by percussion and melodic instruments, recitation and dialogue, make-up and costume, acrobats and clowning" (1). The emphasis, as in *Disappearing Moon Café*, is clearly on *performance*, and on an aesthetically-pleasing balance between satirical critique and lively popular entertainment.

[12] For an introduction to the mischievous spirit of Camp, see Sontag. According to Sontag, Camp proposes "a comic view of the world ... but not a bitter or polemical comedy" (116). Camp is playful, anti-serious; it "neutralizes moral indignation" (118). This playfulness is much in evidence in Lee's and Bowering's fictions: it serves to mitigate the tragedies of Chinese-Canadian history, turning—often violent—prejudice into a subject for offbeat satire, and transforming the anger of its victims into a wry, resilient humour. The replaying of romantic clichés in both fictions is another instance of Camp; as is the writers' dramatisation of overdetermined romantic rôles (the Orphan, the Outcast, the Traitor, the Rogue, etc.).

[13] See *Reading the Romance*, especially the conclusion. For Radway, romance "recognizes and thereby protests the weaknesses of patriarchy and the failure of traditional marriage even as it apparently acts to assert the perfection of each and to teach women how to review their own imperfect relationships in such a way that they seem unassailable" (221). This realization of the covert *challenge* to patriarchy depends, however, on "a collective sharing of experiences" between (female) romance writers and readers, whereby both parties collaborate in the discovery that "together they have strength, a voice, and important objections to make about current gender arrangements" (220). For Radway, romances are only conservative if they are allowed to become, or remain, so; by arguing

for a reading of romance that "originates in dissatisfaction," Radway enjoins her sisters to come to an understanding that "their need for romance is a function of their dependent status as women and of their acceptance of marriage as the only route to female fulfilment (220), and encourages them to turn the imaginary outlet of romance into a springboard for social action.

[14] See Brantlinger; also Inden, who argues that the feminization of India, and of its "irrational Hindu spirit," helped fashion an ontological space for the British Empire, whose—one presumes *male*—leaders would "inject the rational intellect and world-ordering will that the Indians themselves could not provide" (128).

[15] See the oppositional model described by Freud:

> The liberation of an individual, as he grows up, from the authority of his parents is one of the most necessary though one of the most painful results brought about by the course of his development. It is quite essential that that liberation should occur and it may be presumed that it has been to some extent achieved by everyone who has reached a normal state. Indeed, the whole progress of society rests upon the opposition between successive generations. On the other hand, there is a class of neurotics whose condition is recognizably determined by their having failed in this task. (237)

The neurotic's estrangement from his parents, according to Freud, manifests itself in the fantasies and day-dreams of the "family romance." This neurosis can be overcome; hence the view of *Disappearing Moon Café* as *therapeutic* fiction: as a means of coming to terms with a, personal and communal, past rooted in conflict and estrangement. Like Freud, Lee seems to wish to turn romance from a vehicle of deception into an instrument of liberation; she does so, in *Disappearing Moon Café*, by stressing the *Oedipal* dimensions of the family romance, and by using these to contest the "natural order" of patrilineal descent. See, also, the implicit *literary* challenge presented in *To All Appearances A Lady*, where the fiction operates counterdiscursively toward its paternal ancestors.

[16] On the shibboleth of authenticity, see the relevant sections in Minh-ha. Minh-ha's attempt, through the agency of story, to forge a community of ethnic women who are moved to identify their own common concerns while resisting the identitary labels tagged on them by the dominant culture, is very much in keeping with the spirit of Sky Lee's fiction. (See, for example, the last section of *Woman, Native, Other*: "My Grandmother's Story.") Minh-ha's strategy, like Lee's, is to use the intersecting categories of gender and ethnicity to cut across fixed definitions of personal/cultural identity.

[17] See, in particular, the rhapsodic ending of *Disappearing Moon Café*, which recapitulates the early—semi-mythical—encounter between Gwei Chang and Kelora Chen. It seems, through this passionate alliance, that Lee is attempting to forge a link between two of Canada's oppressed minorities—a link that is further strengthened by the Native writer Lee Maracle's poem and short story, "Yin Chin," which are dedicated to Sky Lee. In *Disappearing Moon Café*, the regenerative potential of romance is enlisted to the common cause of two embattled "ethnic" cultures seeking a better, freer future.

[18] For an understanding of the ambivalence of ethnic writing within an Asian American context, see the essays in Lim and Ling (especially those written by the editors); also the introduction to Ling, *Between Worlds*. Lim sees the history of Asian-American writing as moving from "ambivalence" to "productive multivalence": a paradigm shift that is also, arguably, traced in Lee's history of the Wong family in *Disappearing Moon Café*. Note, however, the specificity of the *Canadian* context in Lee's fiction. Chinese communities in Canada, which emerge out of a different history to that of their sister-communities in

the United States, and which currently exist within a different geo-political make-up, are unlikely to subscribe to the benevolent pluralism espoused by Lim and Ling. Lee's model is still primarily *oppositional* (although by no means militantly separatist); her interest is not so much in integrating Chinese-Canadian culture into the wider geo-cultural realm as in locating it within the *interstices* of the dominant cultural system.

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Yue Ming Chen

The Pride of Illiteracy

He, born in northern China
Is now a sight-seer
In Canton, in southern China.
She, from western Canada
Is now a traveller
In Quebec, in eastern Canada.
Although well-educated, he
Never takes pride in himself.
Although well-informed, she
Is never proud of herself.
Are they both modest to people?
And towards knowledge humble?

Now, when Mandarin becomes useless,
He is completely illiterate (at least half so?),
No matter how familiar he is with the strokes.
Now, when English turns futile,
She is entirely unlettered (at least half so?),
No matter how acquainted she is with the letters.

Do they mind
If the locals take them for low or high?
Haughtily they refuse to see
A truth that they won't admit:
Such illiteracy will lead them
To a life of disharmony.

James Doyle

Sui Sin Far and Onoto Watanna:
Two Early Chinese-Canadian Authors

Edith Eaton (1865-1914) and Winnifred Eaton Reeve (1875-1954), the daughters of a Chinese mother and an English father, were among the earliest creative writers in Canada to deal with Asian people and topics. As far as I can determine, Edith Eaton was the first professional writer of Chinese ancestry in North America. From 1896 until her death, her short stories and articles on the experience of being Chinese or Eurasian in the New World appeared in various magazines and newspapers in Canada and the United States. These writings were signed by a pseudonym spelled variously "Sui Seen Far," "Sui Sin Fah" and, most frequently, "Sui Sin Far," transliterations of the symbol for water lily. In 1912 she published her one book, a collection of short stories entitled *Mrs. Spring Fragrance.* Her sister Winnifred, an immensely energetic writer, adopted a Japanese persona and the Japanese-sounding but apparently meaningless pseudonym "Onoto Watanna" to produce twelve best-selling romances in the sentimental and melodramatic idiom that made such work as the fiction of Lafcadio Hearn and Giacomo Puccinni's opera *Madame Butterfly* so popular in the early twentieth century. Winnifred Eaton Reeve's life and career have been briefly documented in Carl Klinck's *Literary History of Canada* and Clara Thomas's *Canadian Novelists 1920-1945,* but Edith's work has been ignored by Canadian literary history. Yet according to one segment of critical opinion, Edith was the more significant artist. In the early 1980s her work was rediscovered by scholars in the United States, and her reputation in that country has grown steadily since that time. But in most American studies of her life and work

her Canadian background is glossed over in favour of emphasis on the sixteen years she spent in the United States, and on the relation of her work to U.S. writing. S.E. Solberg described her in 1981 as the "first Chinese-American fictionist," and this label and variants have been repeated in the work of Amy Ling, Xia-huang Yin and others. Only Annette White-Parks, in an admirably researched bio-critical dissertation, dealt in detail with Edith Eaton's Canadian upbringing and its influence on her imagination and social attitudes, although she did not relate Eaton's work to other Canadian writing.

Edith and Winnifred Eaton were the daughters of Grace Trefusis, an English-educated Chinese medical missionary, and Edward Eaton, an English businessman-turned-artist who traded in China in the 1850s. Born in England, Edith Eaton immigrated in 1873 with her parents to Montreal, where she grew up in genteel poverty in a family that eventually numbered fourteen children. In Montreal she received her education, and in the 1880s began working as a stenographer, typesetter, journalist and short story writer. In 1898, she moved to the United States, but returned to Montreal frequently in subsequent years. The younger but precocious Winnifred, born and educated in Montreal, settled in Chicago in 1895, amd in 1899 published the first of her best-selling novels. In 1917 she returned to Canada to live.

None of the Eaton children learned their mother's native language and most of them had no contact with other Chinese people. Edith, however, developed a growing obsession with her mixed origins. Her earliest published literary efforts were impressionistic semi-fictional prose sketches written for the Montreal *Dominion Illustrated* magazine between 1888 and 1890. Although these sketches, signed with her European name, give no hint of her interest in Chinese subjects, they suggest her growing awareness of poverty and social alienation. Even the slight piece "A Trip in a Horse Car" (13 Oct. 1888) in which the narrator describes her journey through the Montreal streets expresses concern for such problems, especially as they apply to urban women.

Edith Eaton began writing articles and short stories about the Chinese in the 1890s, while still living in Montreal. On 21 Sept. 1896 the *Montreal Daily Star* published her "Plea for the Chinaman," a long letter to the editor denouncing recent government proposals to increase sanctions against Chinese immigration to Canada, and defending the Chinese as hard-working, honest citizens of their adopted country. In the same year she placed a short story signed "Sui Seen Far" with a little Boston magazine entitled the *Fly Leaf*, edited by Walter Blackburn Harte, the English-born husband of

her sister Grace. Harte had also written for the *Dominion Illustrated* before leaving Montreal to try his literary fortunes in the United States. With the further help of her brother-in-law, Eaton published more stories, first in another magazine edited by Harte in New York entitled the *Lotus*, then in a California magazine, the *Land of Sunshine*, edited by an acquaintance of Harte's, Charles F. Loomis. Over the next dozen years her stories and articles appeared in such American magazines as the *Overland Monthly*, the *Century*, *Good Housekeeping* and the *New England*. Seeking a change of climate to suit her fragile health, and encouraged by the apparent interest on the west coast in her fiction about Chinese and Eurasians, Eaton moved to San Francisco in 1898 and shortly afterward she settled in Seattle, Washington (biographical details from White-Parks, Ling).

In spite of her insistence in the *Montreal Star* article on the integration of the Chinese into North American life, Edith Eaton's early fictions tended to exploit exotic and melodramatic images of her mother's people. Her story "The Gamblers," in the *Fly Leaf* (Feb. 1896), is about intrigue and murder in a gambling and opium den. "The Story of Iso" and "A Love Story of the Orient" in the *Lotus* (Aug. and Oct. 1896) involve star-crossed love and generational conflict in China. "A Chinese Ishmael" (*Overland Monthly* July 1899) is also a melodrama of tragic love, related to the Chinese inability to adapt to the West. In "The Smuggling of Tie Co," (*Land of Sunshine*, July 1900; included in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*), a Chinese woman disguised as a man dies rather than betray the European-American man who helps her enter the United States illegally from Canada.

But behind the melodrama are indications of Eaton's serious concerns for a subject very close to her own experience, as she revealed in an article for the *Land of Sunshine* (Jan. 1897), "The Chinese Woman in America." Eaton was concerned that women of her ethnicity, when they were able to get into Canada and the United States at all, were frequently subjected to the double discrimination of the archaic domestic attitudes of Chinese men and the racism of European North Americans. The idea of a woman caught between two worlds and unable to participate fully in the lives of either is repeated in much of her fiction.

The stereotyped images and plot devices in Eaton's stories recall similar elements in the fiction of Euro-American writers who occasionally wrote about the Chinese, such as Bret Harte and Ambrose

Bierce. With its use of the transvestite disguise, for instance, "The Smuggling of Tie Co" is notably like Ambrose Bierce's "The Haunted Valley," in his story collection *Can Such Things Be?* (1893). The most significant of Eaton's affinities, however, is not with a United States author, but with another Canadian, Pauline Johnson (1861-1913). Indeed, the lives and literary careers of the two Canadians are remarkably parallel. Both were born in the 1860s of ethnically mixed parentage (Johnson's mother was anglo-American, and her father a Mohawk chieftain with some European ancestry); both began publishing professionally in Canadian magazines in the 1880s; and both used stereotyped images of their minority heritages to gain attention and sympathy for serious social and moral problems relating to those minorities. The affinity between Eaton and Johnson is dramatically indicated by their public images. Both adopted ethnic pseudonyms, but were known publicly by their European birth names as well as their pseudonyms. In their literary and other presentations of themselves they emphasized the coexistence of their European and non-European heritages. Eaton saw herself simultaneously as the anglo-Canadian Edith Eaton and the Chinese/Eurasian Sui Sin Far. Johnson similarly presented herself as Tekahionwake, the half-mythical "Mohawk Princess" of the Six Nations, and a conventional Victorian anglo-Canadian woman from Brantford, Ontario.

Analogies are evident also in their writings. It is not certain that they were familiar with each other's work; it seems likely that Eaton would know something of Johnson after 1900, as Johnson's fame grew from her stage recitations and her books of poems and Indian legends. But the two writers expressed in similar terms the feelings of alienation and the determination to survive of the human being suspended between two cultures. Unlike Eaton, Johnson avoided explicit autobiography, but some of her short stories collected in *The Moccasin Maker* (1913) are obviously based on her own and her family situations. "My Mother" dramatizes the discrimination experienced by Johnson's mother from both her English and Indian connections as a result of her marriage. "As It Was in the Beginning" tells the story of an Indian child separated from her traditions and language and forcibly introduced into white Christian culture.

Eaton's article, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian" (*Independent* 21 Jan. 1909), chronicles more directly her experiences of alienation and sorrow. "I have come from a race on my mother's side which is said to be the most stolid and insensible to feeling of all races," she wrote,

"yet I look back over the years and see myself so keenly alive to every shade of sorrow and suffering that it is almost a pain to live" (127). Focussing on her peregrinations between nations and cities, as a child with her parents and as an adult trying to establish herself as a writer, she conveys the rootlessness and isolation of the person of mixed European and Asian ethnicity. "... I roam backward and forward across the continent. When I am East my Heart is West. When I am West, my heart is East" (132). In eastern Canada and in the western U.S., she encounters hostility from people of both Chinese and European origin. "After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any," she concludes (133).

In contrast to Pauline Johnson, who found some consolation in a sentimental nationalism (as in her poems in *Canadian Born*, for instance), Eaton rejected the concept of patriotism. She also rejected the elaborate but artificial public displays of ethnicity of the kind that Johnson adopted in her stage presentations. "[People] tell me," Eaton wrote in "Leaves," "that if I wish to succeed in literature in America I should dress in Chinese costume, carry a fan in my hand, wear a pair of scarlet beaded slippers, live in New York, and come of high birth" (132). There is probably a sarcastic allusion here to her sister's career, for in the late 1890s Winnifred Eaton had settled in New York and presented herself publicly in precisely this fashion—except that the costume was not Chinese, but Japanese. Like Edith, she had begun her literary career modestly. The obscure *Iroquois Magazine* published her "Japanese Love Story" signed with her new pseudonym, "Onoto Watanna" in 1897, less than a year after Edith first appeared in the *Fly Leaf* as Sui Sin Far. In later years, she told an interviewer that she chose to write about Japanese characters because her older sister had appropriated Chinese subject matter (undated newspaper clipping, probably c. 1942, Reeve Papers, Calgary). It appears more likely, however, that Winnifred acted out of a pragmatic awareness of the prejudices of Euro-Americans against the Chinese as compared to their relatively tolerant attitudes toward the Japanese.

Although "A Japanese Love Story" was a slight and sentimental piece, it pleased enough readers to be reprinted in *Women's World*, *American Home Journal*, and *American Youth*. Winnifred quickly placed several other Onoto Watanna stories, and in 1899 Rand McNally issued her first novel, *Miss Nume of Japan*. A story of interracial love interspersed with Japanese scenery and shipboard travel, the novel established formulae that would win the author a substantial international readership. In a bid to increase

her public image and promote her fiction, she took to using her pen name in all publicity, wearing Japanese kimonos, and insisting to interviewers that she had been born in Japan of socially elevated parents. In these interviews, her ethnic origins tended to shift: her father was sometimes Japanese and sometimes English; her mother was usually Japanese, but occasionally part Japanese and part Chinese (various clippings, Reeve Papers). The truth was that she had been born and raised in Montreal, and knew Japan only from her reading. Nevertheless, she enjoyed great success as both a writer and a public personality. After the publication of her first novel she produced several best-selling Japanese romances, with titles often evoking the flora and fauna of the American popular image of Japan: *A Japanese Nightingale* (1901), *The Wooing of Wistaria* (1902), *The Heart of Hyacinth* (1903), *A Japanese Blossom* (1906), etc. In the course of her New York literary career she married twice, first to a journalist named Charles Babcock, then more durably to an American businessman, Francis Reeve.

Edith Eaton's literary career recalls the experiences and public attitudes of Pauline Johnson; Winnifred evokes parallels with another Canadian writer who exploited native Indian traditions: Archie Belaney, the self-taught woodsman and conservationist known as "Grey Owl." Like Grey Owl, Winnifred Eaton perpetrated an artificial and ethnically false legend about herself. While Edith Eaton and Pauline Johnson attempted to live the two lives between which they were suspended, Onoto Watanna and Grey Owl attempted to conceal their real selves behind ethnic images concoted from popular Euro-American notions and their own simplistic romantic ideas.

The fan-and-slippers formula that Edith despised obviously worked for Winnifred as well as the moccasin and feathers worked for Grey Owl. Unlike Grey Owl, however, Winnifred eventually became bored with the formulas, and risked trying her hand at other kinds of fiction. Among her non-Japanese works are *Me: A Book of Remembrance* (1915) and *Marion: The Story of an Artist's Model* (1916), both quite successful in their day for their representations of the liberated "new woman"—a character much closer in temperament to Winnifred herself. Although both novels avoid the subject of Asian ethnicity altogether, in the light of other biographical information they provide suggestive glimpses of the family and community tensions that impelled Winnifred Eaton to flee her family, Montreal, and Canada (Ling

27, 32-33). They also reveal a remarkable degree of ironic self-awareness on Winnifred's part, if in *Marion* she is portraying herself in the satirical portrait of Nora Ascough, a would-be writer who mincingly flaunts her newfound independence.

But while Winnifred occasionally dropped the oriental subject matter altogether, Edith continued to use it exclusively in her fiction. In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912) she collected some of her better stories dramatizing many of the problems she saw facing the Chinese and Eurasians of North America. A few of Eaton's stories are set in the eastern part of the continent, including an unnamed city that could be Montreal, but her favourite setting is the far western United States, occasionally Seattle, but most frequently San Francisco. In the streets of the port city's Chinatown Eaton's Eurasians and Chinese immigrants come to grips with acculturation and personal conflict. Like her autobiographical persona in "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio," Eaton's fictional characters are frequently alienated by circumstance, although she also depicts people who deliberately detach themselves from the urban American environment, such as the seemingly unworldly but slyly ironic young Chinese wife of the title story. As her sobriquet suggests, Eaton's character is ostensibly the fragile, submissive Madame Butterfly type of woman. As the story develops however, it becomes evident that Mrs. Spring Fragrance maintains a moral control over her husband and over the alien society to which she is being introduced.

But the title story of the volume introduces the themes of Chinese-American and male-female relations in a disarmingly positive light. Most of the stories that follow turn to the darker side of these themes, to depict the sorrow and suffering that Eaton described in "Leaves." "The Wisdom of the New" and "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu" deal with Chinese wives who find it impossible to adapt to the free and easy social customs of Americans. In other stories Eaton depicts more generally the victimization of Chinese immigrants at the hands of European Americans and their insensitive institutions. "In the Land of the Free," for instance, tells of a Chinese couple separated from their child by discriminatory immigration laws.

Suffering from crippling heart disease, Edith Eaton returned soon after the publication of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* to Montreal, where she died on 7 April 1914. Meanwhile, her sister Winnifred was still in New York, enjoying immense success as a novelist, playwright and public character. In 1916, however, the year of the appearance of her novel *Marion*, she divorced her

first husband, and the following year she moved to Calgary with her second husband, who had investments in Alberta cattle ranching and oil. For several years Onoto Watanna lived as Mrs. Winnifred Reeve, Calgary society matron, and did little professional writing. In 1922, however, she easily reclaimed her audience with *Sunny-San*, perhaps her most popular Japanese novel. Having reassured herself of her continuing abilities to please her faithful readers, she moved on to a new area, again in novels ignoring oriental ethnicity: *Cattle* (1924) and *His Royal Nibs* (1925), are about cattle-ranching in Alberta. Although probably influenced by the work of American regional novelists like Ellen Glasgow and Willa Cather in their exploration of the psychology of toil-worn and lonely prairie women, these two novels were in subject matter the most Canadian of all Reeve's work.

Reeve returned briefly to live in the U.S., and had some success writing Holywood screeplays, but through the 1920s and 1930s she rediscovered her native country. She also rediscovered her Chinese heritage, especially in the light of political events in Asia in the late 1930s. "Actually, I am ashamed of having written about the Japanese," she insisted to a Calgary interviewer soon after Canada joined the war against Japan. "She is herself partly Chinese on her mother's side," the interviewer explained, "and very proud of the fact" (undated clipping, Reeve papers).

Although she published no more novels after *His Royal Nibs*, Winnifred Eaton Reeve lived on until 1954, enjoying considerable financial comfort as well as vestiges of her early reputation as a novelist. Her work even attained approval in Japan, when a 1970 article by Yoohiro Ando in the Japanese literary journal *The Rising Generation* praised the work of Onoto Watanna as a remarkably astute portrayal of a country and people of which the author had no direct experience (clipping of translation of article, Reeve Papers). There seems little doubt now, however, that Winnifred was the less capable writer of the two sisters. Although she was a fluent stylist while Edith's writing is often stilted and laborious, most of the novels of Onoto Watanna are too obviously dependent on predictable formulas of sentimental fiction, while the stories of Sui Sin Far, whatever their artistic limitations, are sincere efforts to explore important problems of ethnic and gender conflict. But both writers were pioneers among North American writers in adapting asian subject matter to fiction, and on that basis alone, they both deserve commemoration in Canadian literary history.

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Denise Koh

whispers between weeds

a tangle of sheets
a tear—
i smell rain

hush you say
i am a thorny dandelion
and you my dear are my sweet, green thumb
fingers, eager, pull a strong root

water clapping glass
your juices drip through me
your earthworm tongue
explores my very dirt

no, my chlorophyll beau
we are both green-skinned flowers
intertwined in a soil-caked clasp
skin infecting skin

storm ending
we collapse
soaking in our muddy love

Hornby Island

(for Billy Little, who shared loved spots
and fond friends)

Here in the headland by Down's Point
where you cast dreams to rise
synchronous with eagles and gulls,
all make-believe, egocentric,
fully committed, near to fanatical,
or else aim true to roam deep
with Leviathan in the ocean's mind,
free from perplexities and profundities
such as binds the scheduled self.

Here is the arbutus grove
whose trunk and branches tighten
like nerves, twisted witnesses,
misshapened victims of shapely winds
which blow in always unseen,
sweet from the south
or coming home cold from the north,
from every direction
with the prevailing force of nature.
Wish I could emulate the arbutus,
slough off my thin skin as easily
as these native trees their bark,
from abrasion, disdain or design,
unveiling the bare beauty
of strong, hard wood beneath.

Over on Fossil Bay
the rot of herring roe
strewn amongst broken clam shells, dead crabs,
on dirty grey sand, exposed bedrock,
thickened the morning air,
but gave no cause for bereavement:
these millions of botched birthings!
And none also for the Salish,
no open lamentation for a race
almost wholly obliterated without trace
from their native habitat,
save a few totems, some evidence of middens,
a score of petroglyphs of their guardian spirits
carved a thousand years ago
on smooth flat rock by the shore,
of killer whales, Leviathans again,
to guide their hunts,
the destiny of their tribe.

Having retraced them
gently with finger tips,
they now guide mine.

George Woodcock

The Woman on the Treadmill:
A Recollective Pastiche on Cambodia, 1964

Introductory Note

When I was invited to write a piece on south-east Asia, I decided to make my subject Cambodia, which I visited in 1964, almost thirty years ago, before war and its aftermath of social chaos overwhelmed much of the region, and made the great and now deteriorating monuments of Angkor virtually inaccessible. I had written about my experiences in a variety of genres, personal journals, poems, articles in American and Canadian magazines (*Arts* of New York and *Saturday Night*), and finally in a chapter of a travel book, *Asia, Gods and Cities: Aden to Tokyo.*

What I imagined I might be writing now was a kind of palimpsest, a brisk contemporary account of the past overlying the old material. But when I reread that old material, I found it had a relevance against the background of coming mass tragedy (the war *and* Pol Pot), and a brightness of outline and colour that no revamping could rival. So I ended with a pastiche, a combination of the various genres that memorialized, more vividly than any recollections called up a generation later might do, an experience as a free wanderer in a land where no kind of freedom has existed for a long time.

I have concentrated on the descriptive writing evoking the countryside and its Khmer people, and especially the great jungle-infested monuments, and I have left out one theme that seemed important then but which events were quickly to make obsolete. In those days the United Nations was promoting a great scheme to harness the Mekong River and provide power and irrigation on an unprecedented scale in South-east Asia, turning a one-crop-a-year economy into a three-crop-a-year one. Work had already

begun; I visited a dam being built under the supervision of Australian engineers. But the situation was already politically tense, though real warfare had not yet begun, and my hope of gathering material for what I knew would be an interesting CBC documentary was ruined when the Cambodian officials, at first co-operative, suddenly began to shut their doors on me; a week later Prince Sihanouk gave a fierce anti-American speech and rioters sacked the buildings of US agencies in Pnom Penh; we had left by then. In a day my small radio project and the Mekong River Plan itself became irrelevant. We felt we had been playing in a minefield, and indeed we had.

I arrange the material more or less sequentially, beginning with the flight to Cambodia, continuing with our expedition into the countryside outside Pnom Penh, centering on the little town of Kampong Chhnang, and going on to the great complex of ruins near the little town of Siem Reap, of which Angkor Wat is only the most famous of many extraordinary structures.

JOURNAL Cambodia and Thailand are not at present on speaking terms owing to a flareup in their centuries-old border dispute. But there are means of travelling between them. You quietly obtain a Cambodian visa at the Indonesian consulate in Bangkok, and though officially there is no air communication between the two countries, one of Air Vietnam's flights from Bangkok to Saigon does in fact put down on the way to Phnom Penh, and on the way back to pick up passengers, under the polite fiction that they have come all the way from Saigon.

BOOK The Vietnamese plane, a decrepit DC 3, bumped reluctantly off the runway and swayed and tottered in the eccentric currents of air that rose off the paddies of eastern Thailand. Already we sensed the flavour of a different life, the special tang which generations of French occupation had given to Indo-China. French speech wove itself into a quick pattern over the drone of the engines; the sharp, tinny French of the Vietnamese, the coarse almost Provençal accent of French colonials returning to Pnom Penh and Saigon. The very beer we drank with our sandwiches had a thin pissy flavour that evoked the cheap bistros of the Paris suburbs.

JOURNAL Close to Pnom Penh [on our way to Kampong Chhnang], there are small hills with the sharp edges of pagodas rising from their summits, the relics of Cudong, former capital of Cambodia after the flight from Angkor, half-buried in the hill forest. The pagodas are dark and sombre, with none of the gilded glitter of similar structures in Thailand, and drabness, darkness is what characterises human settlement here. The houses are undecorated

and unpainted boxes on stilts, their wood faded by the monsoons, their roofs silvery—weathered palm thatch—among the palms and the kapok trees—stark candelabra hung with bursting green purses of tree cotton. Even the dress of the people is dark, mostly black and the only human touches of colour in a Khmer village are the orange robes of the monks at the weather-beaten wooden temples, and the red and gold festival decorations on the Chinese stores. The people are darker, more robust than other south-east Asians, the women very grave in expression; one has the sense of a frustrated and powerful anger, the power that may once have built the Khmer empire. It has a kind of outlet in the ball games—mainly basketball—that the boys and young men play vigorously, clad in ragged shorts or tattered bits of cloth worn kiltwise.

As the afternoon heats up, the people gather around the village wells, the men in sarongs and bare-torsoed, the women draping cloths over their breasts, and swill buckets of water over their bodies and garments for coolness. Burdens are always carried on the head, perched on a scarf tied into a kind of turban, and this I suppose is why the women walk so splendidly.

Already, at Kampon Chhnang, the swamps and lagoons of the Great Lake begin to encroach...

POEM

Kampong Chhnang
where the hills end
and the marshes begin.
The sky burning blue
and beyond the town
a blue lagoon among

buffalo meadows.

A woman treads a
watermill; conical
mushroom of hat,
dirty black sampot
down to her heels,
she holds her bar
and tramps in the noon
sun, and the water
rises in bamboo
buckets and spills
in diamond flashes
into her paddy.

We see her
and are gone,
but I know her
image will stay
in my mind. I
shall remember
as I do now
the image
of a land.

BOOK The plane for Siem Reap, which was the last to go, did not take to the air until 2 p.m. instead of noon. It was packed to the last seat, owing to the arrival in Cambodia of a large party of camera-garlanded Japanese tourists, and as soon as the doors were closed the air-conditioning apparatus went out of order. Riding under the afternoon sun, the plane became a flying oven, and we felt we were melting into our clothes like the wax victims of warlocks as we flew over the brown-parched paddies, and the above the waters of the Great Lake over which the fishing vessels were scattered like toothpicks, until the green roof of the jungle lay beneath us. It was relief we felt as much as anticipation as the plane last circled low over the vast glistening square of the moat surrounding Angkor Wat, and the towers of the great temple pierced up towards us in their pinnacled man-made mountain of grey-purple stone.

MAGAZINE One rides out from Siem Reap along the straight jungle road, with the metallic chorus of insects dinning in one's ears, until the broad moat of Angkor Wat comes into sight, silvered by the lowering sunlight, with buffaloes wallowing ecstatically near the banks, and wild duck feeding among the blossoming lotus. Reflected in it shimmers the high wall of reddish-purple laterite that encloses the temple precinct, and above the wall, among the mopheads of sugar palms, the tall conical towers rear up, touched with gold by the luminous glow from the afternoon sun.

MAGAZINE The harmonious grandeur of Angkor Wat becomes evident as soon as one steps onto the wide-flagged causeway that leads from the west towards the outer gate of Angkor Wat. With its three towers, this is a fore-shortened miniature of the temple itself. The original stands fully revealed as one passes through the great gate to the second causeway.

This is undoubtedly the finest vista of all Angkor. Between its serpent balustrades the wide grey causeway flows almost two hundred yards to the facade of the temple, where the long wings of the first terrace, sweeping out laterally for a hundred yards on either side of the entrance portico, form a wide base above which the

inner terraces rise in successive flights, linked on every side by broad, steep stairways. The third terrace serves as foundation for the five towers, of which the central and highest rises to more than two hundred feet, the height of Notre Dame. The effect, massive, yet irresistibly soaring, is precisely that of the peaks of the Holy Hindu Mount meru, far off in the Himalayas, that Angkor Wat was meant to represent.

JOURNAL We climb the final flights of steps, as steep as those of a Mexican pyramid, to the uppermost platform, and look down over the complex pattern of steep-edged roofs, their grey mottled with dark lichens, a mandala in stone.

BOOK Beyond the green moat there was a village of palm-leaf huts embowered in a grove of jagged-leafed breadfruit trees and surrounded by gardens of egg plants and yams; a gong was sounding inside its little modern temple, and the parakeets screeched harshly as they flew between the trees like green arrows. Below us the inner courts of Angkor Wat were already becoming tanks of gathering darkness in which the orange robes of the Buddhist monks floated like glowing flowers.

JOURNAL This is the best time for Angkor Wat, all the time the light changing and more deeply gilding the grey stone, and the patterns of light and shadow moving over the sculptured walls, until, as we return across the causeway, we look back and see the last patch of sunlight fading off the facade and leaving the great building standing as a dark but somehow still glowing mass against the brilliant sky. As we drive back, the sides of the moat are filled with people taking their evening bath, naked boys glistening with moisture running shouting beside us, and looking back we see the richness of the afterglow concentrated in the robes of a group of monks standing on the causeway.

MAGAZINE Angkor Wat is only one of at least a hundred sacred buildings that lie scattered in the deep jungles around Siem Reap, representing more than four centuries of high artistic and architectural activity. Conditions have changed a great deal since the French naturalist Henri Mouhot stumbled on Angkor just over a century ago, in 1963, and brought out to the western world the first fascinating accounts of dead cities and temples enveloped in the Cambodian rain forests and forgotten by the Khmer themselves.

BOOK The Bayon, the great temple to [the Bodhisattva] Akalokiteshvara on which the life of Angkor Thom had centred, was an even more ambitious structure than Angkor Wat, which it resembled in its general plan—a pyramidical structure forming the pedestal for the stone peaks that represent Mount Meru. But King Jayavarman's desire to commemorate his [newly acquired Buddhist] beliefs led him to rear on the terraces of the Bayon more than fifty towers, from which two hundred gigantic enig-

matically smiling Buddha faces looked out in the cardinal directions; their bland faces suggest a secret and boundless knowledge. The mountain image has changed to that of a complex range and each peak in that range has become identified with the deity inhabiting it.

MAGAZINE The tawny sandstone towers of Bayon are veined with silver and viridian lichens, and in the pearly light of the jungle morning the whole structure has the insubstantial beauty of a mythical temple materializing out of light. At this moment the great faces, eroded by five centuries of monsoon and destructive vegetation, do not seem to be disintegrating so much as emerging from the stone in an enigmatic mutability.

BOOK The introduction of Mahayanist Buddhism under Jayavarman not merely broadened the iconography of his artists, but also changed the subjects of their sculpture in a quite radical manner. The great bas-reliefs of Bayon subordinate the earlier Angkor Wat themes of the ancient Hindu epics to the recording of contemporary history, of the land and lake battles of the Khmer and the Thais, and of the life of ordinary people in their homes and gardens and fishing on the Great Lake. When I looked at them I was reminded of the genre carvings of the Indian sculptors of Bharhut in the early days of Buddhist art; there was the same sharp impact of observation and the same apparent spontaneity of observation. In Angkor Thom, as in every place where Buddhism first makes its appearance, the condition of man had become as important a subject as the dances of the cosmos.

MAGAZINE Only the sacred monuments of Angkor were built in enduring stone. The kings' palaces, where they administered temporal justice, and the houses of their subjects, were built of wood or palm leaf. They perished long ago, leaving here and there a stone terrace as sole relic, and what we see now of the vanished kingdom of Angkor are mainly the half-filled waterways that ensured its physical life and the temples that placed it under the aegis of divine help.

BOOK Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom are the tidy, well-visited monuments which have been kept clear of jungle for almost half a century, and to them most of the visitors confine themselves. It is the remoter, less familiar sites that preserve the atmosphere of a city buried under the jungle which the first explorers experienced when they came upon the lost Khmer ruins. To such a place we were taken by a haggard, toothless driver with negroid features and ragged clothes whom we engaged in the village of Siem Reap in preference to the brash youths who waited outside the Grand Hotel. Unlike them, he spoke little French, but we got along with names and maps and signs. He would take us to the site, as far as he could along a jungle path, and we would enter, through the tall gate in the outer wall, a dense

enclosure of thick forest, where the air would be sullen, breathless, but full of restless sound. The insects hummed and trilled, the coppersmith birds tapped with their little hammers, the dry leaves rustled crisply.

These more distant sites were almost deserted. Occasionally we met peasant women gathering gum in bamboo containers, and once a half-naked old man with a broom, whose task was to keep the paths clear of the tib teak leaves as a precaution against lurking snakes, followed us at a distance out of curiosity. But usually we were alone as we crossed the moats choked with blue water-lilies, passed the guardian figures of lions and cobras, half covered with undergrowth and creepers, and entered the recesses of the temple. We would go on and on through mazes of narrow passages and small chambers, separated by little open-air courtyards beyond which the doorways recede like repetitive mirror images until they were lost in the green gloom. The bombax roots clasped the roofs in their crushing grip, flowing in thick tentacles over the walls and scattering the great stone blocks into untidy moss-covered piles of rubble.... Sometimes the civet smell of a wild animal would linger strongly in a courtyard, or the dried skin of a cobra would stir like limp cellophane as we walked by, and more than once, in the dank inner chambers, with the restless bats twittering overhead, we felt solitude magnifying into terror.

POEM

Ta Promh

This was a temple
they did not free
from the jungle.
The air under the trees
is sullen, breathless,
but the forest clatters
with life, insects
thrilling, jungle
cocks crowing, and
the ficus trees stand
on the walls and
send down their roots
like pythons.
Gigantic bats
rustle and shit
in the empty chambers.
There is a smell
of civet. The monkeys
call in the trees,
the spiders

sit in great funnels
of gossamer.

Yet in the heart
of the maze
a broken tower
and the sun falling
on a broken
Buddha
and a rusty tin
filled with the burntout
ends of joss-sticks
and newly withered
jasmine.

We search
for that last
hermit
in vain.

JOURNAL Late afternoon. Walk beside the river into the town of Siem Reap. In the river boys are swimming, supported by bundles of green reeds like the *cabellitos de totora* used by surf-riders on the coast of Peru, and great water-wheels elaborately constructed of bamboo, are slowly turning in the stream and feeding the irrigation ditches. The day's market is almost over in the village square, the poor people walking home with little bundles of fish bought cheaply at the end of the day, but the open-air Chinese restaurants are still doing business, and the shops around the square are open; they sell rather beautiful olive-green stoneware and Chinese-style blue-and-white, richly coloured and designed cloths for festival sampots and sarongs, baskets of many kinds; a native apothecary has a stall with such curiosities as a sawfish's sword, cats' furs, gigantic dried fungi, dried starfish, etc. Drink Vermouth Cassis in evening light in little Frenchified Chinese restaurant and walk back to the Grand Hotel as night falls with tropical quickness like a curtain.

Epilogue

POEM *The Diamond Bowler of the Khmer Kings, Pnom Penh, 1964*

Sweet sounds of
gongs and strings
over the palace

compound. The
Royal Dancers
are rehearsing in
their gilded crowns.
We are not allowed
to Peer. The
Queen Mother
is observing.

Instead we may gape
at the royal jewels,
at the coronation crowns, one
for the palanquin, one
for horseback, one for
elephant driving;
at the throne and the
bed of state and
the two mats for washing,
gold for the right foot,
silver for the left;
at the funeral chariot
and the golden basket for
washing the royal ashes
in coconut milk;
at the black bowler
bought in Bond Street,
with a ruby knob
set by the palace jeweller
on the crown,
and on the side a
cockade with a
forty-carat diamond
focusing
east with west.

Kissing Cousins

We played as small fat frogs
and you a leprechaun
wide smiling lips and halcyon slanted eyes
before we both shot up
thin as hearth matches or a length of string
and you became a flying Dutchman, ball-player,
Siegfried on skates

Then one day as you lunged against the sun
the image froze, I caught
a charcoal stickman from a painted wall
spear poised for the kill
and my great-aunt's voice came back
talking about her brother,
among fine china and dirty silver,
"Well of course we realized the only one
Gerald could bring back to Ireland
was the one who looked white."

Gwladys Downes

Lucy's Children

I have a passion for bones
this frame which holds suspended
all our mad trappings, puts out every hour
such subtle flags to celebrate
the fact and feast of being.

And so my eye, a raging slave to form,
pierces the palimpsest, finds
through indelible subtexts every ghost
that lies in knee or cheekbone,
shoulders' slouch that marks our human walk
from Lucy's feet to here,
from here to where—black holes?
lemurs were us, but so far back
you cannot blame them for his bulging eyes
her quickened leap from sofa to the door.

curious how it crumbles
this brief bag of bones, shrinks down,
reveals complexities—lost Blackfoot hunter, Chinese pirate
that Ashanti slave—mirrors with fine exactitude
secrets of lineage, truth as our bodies age.

Frances Itani

Transforming the Insult

In 1991 my husband returned to Canada from Iraq where he had been a UN Military Observer. He'd been sent to monitor the ceasefire which ended the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq. He'd been in Iraq only three weeks in the summer of 1990, working in the south near the Iraq-Kuwait border, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The next half-year was a nightmare for our family. We were out of contact, and it was only months later, when Ted was moved to Baghdad, that he was able to phone—even then, by grace or accident. It did not take long for him to learn that when the Muslim telephone operator left for prayers she could not disconnect his calls so he tried to time any attempt to phone home with the call to prayer. The first words he would say to me would be: "Do not criticize the present government. Do not criticize its leader." Everything we said to each other was, of course, recorded. Usually, we were disconnected almost immediately so we had to cram information and family news into the first few breathless moments. Only once were we left alone ten or fifteen minutes, and so amazing was this, we began to be carelessly reckless, even allowing ourselves to waste precious phone time. We even allowed ourselves to laugh.

The night before Baghdad was bombed, Ted and the last three remaining Canadian Observers were evacuated to Amman and then to Cyprus. I immediately joined him in Cyprus, the only country close to the conflict that was accepting international flights during the Gulf War. The only airline flying at the time was Swiss Air. Two bombs exploded in Larnaca the day before I arrived but I stayed there—just outside the city, for a month. In March, I brought Ted home from the war.

I wish I could say that that was the last time I brought my husband home from a war but it isn't. I've just returned from Croatia where I lived for over two months, between July and September, 1993. Ted has been working in Bosnia for ten months and was transferred to Croatia from Sarajevo for the remainder of the one-year posting. Again, most of the year, we've been out of contact. The day he phoned to say he was out of Bosnia, I purchased a ticket to Croatia. It's too hard, too stressful to live this way. And he was suffering the terrible aftermath of coming off the front lines, the terrible feeling of betrayal— leaving others behind. The victims of war. Families and friends in Sarajevo. He'd been shot at, kidnapped, his bedroom destroyed by mortars, and he'd been under constant attack by snipers. The ethnic background of his attackers varied. The Russian plane in which he was flown to Sarajevo, his first day in Bosnia, took a bullet through the cabin, entering on the pilot's side and exiting inches from the head of the navigator. They were coming in for landing so there was no sudden decompression. They landed safely.

And yet, and yet, all the while, Ted and I both know that during this long and terrible year he has been doing valuable and practical work. Helping. Saving. Getting food, clothing, water, medicine to refugees. To babies, children, women, the elderly, the innocent. Helping individuals get their papers in order. Helping towns and villages with safe water supply. Offering hope and interest in people's lives when there is no hope left. I've listened to the stories. I ask questions. He sends me his personal journals from the field. I follow these histories to the finish. I want to know every detail. I follow these histories to the finish. I want to know every detail. I want to know it all.

Why am I writing this? What is this to say? It is to say that I have intimate knowledge of the work this man has quietly done for his country, our country. I know the kind of unofficial ambassador he is and has been. In Iraq, Iran, Bosnia, Croatia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Germany, Afghanistan-Pakistan. I've met some of his civilian and military co-workers; I know the respect he has earned. I see the kind of personal mail that follows him from post to post.

Ted is third generation Canadian-born Japanese, *Sansei.* He was born in Ucluelet and at the age of two-and-a-half, was interned in Lillooet where he spent seven years, 1942-49, as a prisoner of the Second World War. His family has lived in this country more generations than my own English and Irish ancestors. I have walked beside him on the street in Montreal and listened to a stranger ask, in ignorance, "How long ya' been over?" I have seen

a fellow officer with whom he'd worked for years call him by another's Japanese name because the man was not capable of differentiating Ted's face from the one other Japanese officer this man knew. I have watched Ted internalize overt blatant racist gestures and remarks. We have a family joke about the 'mask'—the face that neither reveals nor acknowledges the insult. But where, I ask myself, where does the insult go? How is it transformed?

Of course, I am going to write about this. How could I not? The experience of our mixed marriage, our now twenty-five-year marriage, seeps sideways into my work. It comes from inside now. My husband's family is my family. We have two bi-racial adult children. His ancestors are their ancestors.

In the fall of 1991, after our long separation during Ted's Iraq assignment, we decided to drive across the country, east to west, taking our time, using extra leave, visiting family and friends in British Columbia. W.O. Mitchell and Merna had for years invited us to join them to fish salmon at their Shuswap cottage, so we headed there for a couple of weeks and later, continued to the Okanagan.

We entered B.C. at a northerly point, and worked our way south from Prince George. As soon as we began to drive through B.C., I knew that something was terribly wrong. I knew it was racism but didn't know how I knew that. We hadn't travelled there for a number of years; perhaps things had changed, and changed again. At a home in the Cariboo, during a party (where only two of about thirty individuals were Japanese), the feeling of enmity in the room was palpable. We moved closer together and laughed. We stopped to buy our salmon licences the next day and as we entered the store, conversation ceased. There was something, something that could not quite be addressed, not quite articulated. Then, we arrived at the Mitchells' cottage and the episodes were forgotten while we were among close friends.

Later, we continued our journey. In Kelowna, the racism was so obvious I could not understand why I could not articulate it. I could not say what I, at Ted's side, was experiencing *with him*, this time.

A writer's disease is that she/he has to put everything into words. *What is it? What is it?*, I kept saying. I couldn't leave it alone. Are people staring? Do they...do they...I could not get it exactly right.

About four days after we'd been visiting his sister in Kelowna, I sat upright in bed in the middle of the night and woke my husband. "I know

what it is," I told him. "I know now what I've been trying to articulate. We've become invisible."

My brief experience that month in British Columbia only *two years ago* offered a small insight, perhaps even an understanding, of what my husband experiences every day of his life. I am thankful that I know even that small part. And of course, once I began to understand, it was easy to watch for. There's nothing startling and nothing subtle about this type of racism. People avert their eyes on the streets, in supermarkets, in restaurants, in the parks. We become invisible.

In a restaurant our last night in Kelowna, the two of us hosted the family for dinner. There were seventeen present, from 3 to 91 years in age. The waitress brought menus, returned a few minutes later, ignored the entire party and addressed me—the one 'white face' in the group. "Are you ready to put in the order?" she said. Assuming that I was the spokesperson for the sixteen Japanese.

It is not difficult to see why the literary art of Canadian Japanese deals with this experience, collectively and individually. This is true of our country and of the United States. not *all* art by and about descendants of Japanese immigrants, not *all* literature, but the history has to be written before the future can be imagined. I believe this is the state of this particular literature in Canada right now. In transition. Moving away from the preoccupation of the internment—that deep terrible lesson in what can happen, what did happen—towards some middle space. Where other 'present' possibilities exist. Where the first forty-five years of the century will not have to be carried along as baggage into the art of the next century, and the century after that. I am hopeful. I always carry hope.

Sometimes the impulse to make fiction comes before any necessary research; sometimes research around a particular topic stimulates fiction. I have a wonderful library of early Japanese-Canadian books and histories and I've read my share of microfilm. It was during a visit to East Lillooet—then, a bulldozed field—during the late sixties, when one of these random (perhaps not so random) impulses to make fiction occurred. A writer doesn't know how things are going to turn out, only that a particular detail of information is and is going to be significant. Something about the detail is recognized and stored for later connection—at least that's the

way I work. It is the meaningful connection that is the unknown. But if the writer trusts, it will be there. And a writer learns, over many years, to trust her/his instincts.

What I was seeing was the transformation of the man I was married to, in the midst of an abandoned field where no proof of human habitation was visible. Not a road, not a path, not a fragment of building or piece of shingle or pebble of cement. We were on the East side of the Fraser; the Japanese had not been allowed in the town of Lillooet, across the river, during the early years of the war. Suddenly, Ted was on his knees, digging in the earth. He'd recognized patterns in the grass, outlining parameters of earth cellars below invisible shacks, sixty-three of them, the contours of which he held only in his mind. An entire community had once lived here. His feet had taken him unerringly to his own family's square—indelibly stored in memory. He'd been nine years old when the family had left.

He began to dig. I went to the wood and returned with branches and the two of us scraped away the earth at the location he insisted was his own. Moments later we began to find dishes. Splendid blue and white china rice bowls, large fragments we were able to piece together. Later, we drove to Westbank, on Okanagan Lake, to visit Ted's parents, and we showed his Mother what we'd found. We were very excited about this. She remained silent, walked to her kitchen cupboard, and opened the door. She pulled out pieces that were an identical match to those we'd found in the earth. A glued-together rice bowl, missing one triangular piece of rim, is now in our *tokonoma*, our special corner, in our Ottawa home.

During the mid-seventies, when our children were young, and we were living in New Brunswick, I wrote this Lillooet experience into a poem called, "The Camp Revisited—1976," told from the point of view of an old woman, returning. Dorothy Livesay bought the poem for *CVII* (December 1976) and wrote to me about her own *Call My People Home*, a copy of which I have in first edition from The Ryerson Press, 1950. The poem inspired Takashima's art for the cover of my 1978 book of poems, *No Other Lodgings*: the broken rice bowl against the digs at Lillooet, on the Fraser.

It is not often that I write about the Canadian Japanese in my fiction and I never set out intentionally to do so. When I write, I come in from the side, so to speak, and try to pick up a dangling thread. I try, always, to be conscious of one of the things I've learned from Chekhov: Don't be judgmental. Only present.

In 1991, during our post-Iraq visit to British Columbia, I was having dinner at my Mother-in-law's senior citizen's apartment in Kelowna. She is now a widow. The family had gathered; we were celebrating, eating *tempura* and salmon; catching up, telling stories to one another. My husband and I had not visited for a long time.

And then, the unexpected happened. What every writer watches and waits for. My husband's older brother began to tell me the story of 'the burning of the dolls,' an event that took place the night before the family was forced from their seaside home in Ucluelet in 1942. He was amazed that I didn't know. But my husband had been only two-and-a-half years old at the time. He remembered other, later events. He had never heard about the dolls. After listening to the story, I found myself taking notes, asking questions, digging, digging into personal lives. Unwillingly, yet inescapably I was launched into another partial year of research, mostly interviewing *Nisei* and *Sansei* in B.C. and Ontario, learning more about their wartime experiences. I had thought I was finished writing about that period, finished with that history. But the stored moment of human exchange from that small Kelowna apartment, across the kitchen table, was too powerful. The story was too intense. My own fiction began to grow as prose in voices, each story told by a different member of one created family. What I had to do was to shape and form, to create what I believed were feelings, well concealed, behind the told events.

Neither my brother-in-law in the telling of that one story, nor I in the later writing, could have foreseen the startling drawing Takashima would later do for *The Canadian Forum* (July/August 1992). The drawing accompanied an excerpt from my fictionalized "Flashcards" which included 'the burning of the dolls.' The longer piece is in my forthcoming book, *Man Without Face* (Spring 1994).

Once again, I think I am finished writing this experience. I have closed the door, but I have not set the lock. At the moment I am working on a book of stories set in Duplessis's Quebec during the fifties. My husband has to return for a short time to Croatia, where he will continue to represent our country—quietly—perhaps, to some, even invisibly. He and our relatives and our Japanese friends have told me their stories without bitterness and without complaint. I see my part as a small part. Perhaps in my own way, I help to transform the insult. I am the storyteller. They want the story told.

Dongshan Liangjie

There is one tree growing
in the worked earth, one bird flying.
The stone woman rises to dance
when the wooden man sings.

The bird and the tree have no hands. With their mouths
they eat; with their feet they stay put;
with their arms they trace the original
shapes of the mountains.

Go up and look down. If the spirits
can find you to bring you
your dinner, your mind is unclear
and your meditation imperfect.

Saints and great teachers do not
know reality. Mountain cats, bristlecone
pines, wild buffalo do.
Though you are not it, it is certainly you.

You may only agree if you disagree
equally. Those who agree with their brothers
completely have stolen their shoes
when invited to mend them.

A sky full of migrating birds
is a mind, not a text to be studied
for seconds or centuries. One plus one
plus one equals one equals many.

One minus one equals equally many. The geese
cross and are gone. Below them the stones
have learned how to dance and the trees
how to fly without leaving their places.

The sages have learned how to breathe
through their ears, how to eat with their eyes.
Time and again they forget
to open and close them.

Xuedou Zhongxian

There is no person. There are no words.
There is this moment, silent and speaking.
What seem to be beings are facets of time, reflections
permitted to dance in the light or to listen.

All eyes shine toward
one another; all eyes shine away.
What will your first words be, now that your last
have already been spoken?

Self-expression is easy. Expressing what is
is a little more difficult.
Orioles sing. The kingfisher chortles
and falls like an axe through a hole in the rain.

If you like, we could visit the one with the answers.
Each step is exactly halfway to her home.
The knife you must take has no tang and no handle,
the hammer no socket and shaft.

Standing invisibly in the hills,
walking inaudibly on the seafloor,
the one you can talk to will use
neither silence nor speech to reply.

There is only one way. It goes every direction.
The seventy joints of the body are knotholes
through which the turtles peer out of the river,
through which the sea-turtles enter the sea.

The circle is square,
and its corners are everywhere.
Carry your nostrils out into the woods with you,
one in each hand.

Yongjia Xuanjue

Not a river, a road. What flows without flowing.
The sentence we read and reread with our feet,
not the pages we write and rewrite
and rewrite and rewrite with our hands.

What is is wherever the living
are walking. It limps through the earth,
swims through the water, flies through the air,
and it runs the full distance without ever moving.

What is is wherever the living
are walking. Not where the dead have planted
their flags. Where the living are walking, the dead,
the unborn and the newborn are comfortably riding.

The truth has two sides and two faces,
two bellies, tow backs, but the top of truth
is the bottom. The truth is that simple; the truth
is that twisted; the truth is that thin

Your hand cannot hold it; your mind
cannot leave it behind. When you chase it,
it runs. When you walk, it comes toward you.
Wherever you stand, it sprouts all around.

How many self-portraits and portraits emerge
from the face every day, and how many
return? If you stay, you have left; if you come,
you are leaving. This much is the same for all time.

Not a river, a road. Yet Mr Old
and Mr Serious, Mr Nostril and Anonymous
are walking by the stream, which speaks with each one
of their uninterchangeable voices.

Reader, great grandmother, grandfather, friend,
please come here this minute and speak to me,
as the trees do, as the wind does, if you also
have something, as they do, to say.

Dogen

I

The mind is old snow, new snow, brooding rain.
The mind is lichen crust and stone.
Pebbles and sticks are the fountains of wisdom.

Go into the hills and remain there forever.
Wise as a snowflake that lives
for ten minutes, wise as a stone

that is young at 3,000,000 years,
let the trees make your gestures,
the gutters your prayers.

Pass the note of yourself to the river
to read to the hills. Let the wind and the leaves
speak your thoughts in their language.

Many or few: any number will do. This
is the world. The world is one – either one –
and neither and both of your eyes.

And your face is its face. And the eyes in your face
are the eyes you have seen,
seeing you, in the faces of others.

II

One drop of blood, one drop
of falling rain contains
the final truth, the temporary
lie, the day, the night,
the earth, the sky,
the light, the dark, the still
unfurling world.

III

Under the sunrise the mountains
are walking on water.
This is the skin.
The mountains are dancing.
They are walking on their toes
on all the water in the world.
This is the blood.
And all the water in the world –
oceans, raindrops, runoff dipped
in cupped hands, moistened lips and tears –
is holding up the mountains.
This is the ligament. This is the bone.

The bones are flowing water.
There is marrow in the bone.
Never judge by just one world.
In the marrow is the blood.
If the mountains stop walking, the world
will stop being born.

IV

Water knows what to do
as the temperature rises and drops.
Water knows what to do
as it flies through the air
or touches the ground.
Water knows what to do
as it touches the water.

V

There is no pigment in the paint.
There are no bristles in the brush.
There is no hand.

There is no lid or lens
or retina in the eye.
And all the same,
the painting you have come to see
can see the forms and colors
that you are, which are

the world's forms and colors
in your size. The silence
you have come to see

can see you breathe; the breath you breathe
can hear the painted man in whom
this painted voice is speaking.

VI

Everything that is is the foundation of the mind.
Everything that is is root and stem
and fruit and flower,
head and tail, back and belly, belly and bum.

Everything that is is every
time that ever was
or is or will be and is
passing through the heart between your hands.

VII

Everyone goes to the mountains,
yet no one is there.
That is only to say
that we are who we are
and mountains are mountains.
The mountains are coming to us,
and no one is here.

The mountains are flowing,
the water is still,
Dogen is sitting.
His mind is a lake looking upward,
a sky looking down.

Inside the dead man's breath, the living breathe.
Inside the living woman's pain,
the dead, pretending to be soldiers,
hunt for sons and enemies and joy.
The hungry ghosts, disguised as living beings
are sucking their own bones.

The hungry ghosts grow younger,
crawling backward through the womb.
They swarm like angry hornets through the loins.
Dancing, broken
arm in arm with mountains,
is not a children's game.

L.R. Ricou

In Double Harness

"My hunch was," writes Robert E. Carter in sketching the hypothesis of *Becoming Bamboo: Western and Eastern Explorations of Life* (McGill-Queen's UP, n.p.), "that my North American culture was extrinsically oriented—that is, was adept at utilizing nature for our own life-purposes rather than at opening to nature's delights and gaining intrinsic value-experience by sitting in the midst of it, responding to it rather than controlling it." His testing of this proposition, in an unusually personal work of comparative philosophy, is a rich repository of the trans-Pacific dialogues to which this issue of *Canadian Literature* is dedicated. Chapter Five, for example, titled "Where is Here?", meditates on the ideologies (and puzzles) implicit in Northrop Frye's paradigmatic question by placing it against the awareness of environment achieved in Zen Buddhism's "transparency of ego-ness." Carter calls our attention to concepts linking Shintō shrines, Heidegger, the legendary potter Hamada Shōji, and Jake Thomas, hereditary chief of the Cayuga nation. Read in the context of this lineage, my use of the preposition *against* to position Carter's comparative methodology is, in one sense, fundamentally inept. The central hypothesis of comparison is immediately undone by a recognition that a distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic value would not hold—either in Japanese philosophy or culture.

In one of the personal journal entries which punctuates his more concentrated philosophy, Carter marvels at the pink sky of Japan's cherry blossom season. What stands out as meaningful cultural difference, however, is not the familiar symbolism of fragility and changeability, but the natural necessity of poetry:

> Special lanterns are hung from the trees, and even hand-painted and inscribed strips of paper are attached to the branches, with poetry on them. The strips are reachable and more or less at eye level so you can read and enjoy the poetry as you view the blossoms...

This seamlessly integrated reading of nature's images together with linguistic images is something Western poets have been dreaming after at least since Pound. A hefty source for pursuing such thinking is *Words and Images: Chinese Poetry, Calligraphy, and Painting* (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Princeton UP, $75.00 US). In 24 essays by various hands, its almost 600 folio pages present intricate arguments about the integration and interdependence, of language, word-characters, and landscape in two art-forms—poetry and painting—which can be thought of together as "visual thinking."

In a reciprocal gesture to hanging poems from the petalled black boughs, the Chinese painter will often brush a poem into a painting to express something beyond image. In this problematic relationship between language and visual image, trans-Pacific cross-cultural comparison can perhaps contribute most to extending our understanding of Canadian poetry. This book combines an impressive range of historical and disciplinary perspectives on the specific functions and cross-overs of Chinese poetry, calligraphy and painting, "known as *san-chüeh*, or the three perfections." Ch'ao Pu-chih (1053-1110) circles the artist's responsibility for appropriate relationships in a neat quatrain:

> Painting depicts a form beyond the object,
> and yet the form of the object must not be changed.
> The poem expresses a meaning beyond the painting,
> but should still contain the pictured scene.

"The poem depends," writes Sam Hamill, "upon a kind of parallelism, often moving two ways simultaneously through the deliberate use of ambiguity." This description of the "Double Harness style" helps to introduce Hamill's translation of *Lu Chi's "Wen Fu": The Art of Writing* (Milkweed Editions, US $6.95), a precise and subtle guide to the principles of good poetry, written around 200 A.D. This elegantly readable little book hardly seems dated. Indeed, its principles guide many of the 66 poets in Michelle Yeh's *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry* (Yale UP, US $33.00) as they define some of the experiments and trends outlined in Yeh's introduction, such as the inflection of Taiwanese writing, and the growth of a feminist poetry. Hamill's book is a revised edition of a work originally published in Canada,

at Crispin and Jan Elsted's Barbarian Press, and it could serve as a fitting guide to the collected works of Robert Bringhurst, or to the translations of Wang Wei by Roo Borson, Kim Maltman, and Andy Patton which appeared recently in the *Malahat Review* (Summer 1993):"Know when the work/should be full,/ and when it should be/ compacted./ Know when to lift your eyes/ and when to scrutinize."

For this blinkered Westerner, schooled, and then often poorly, in European languages, all this intricacy of the contained and the beyond is summarized in the mystery of calligraphy. When the aesthetic and literary ideal is simplicity and economy, Chinese characters (and the meaningful nuances of style and brushstroke by which they are variously rendered) have the ultimate advantage of containing a whole poem within a single character. To extend an appreciation of this extreme compression a most delightfully helpful book is Cecilia Lindquist's *China: Empire of Living Symbols* (trans. from Swedish by Joan Tate; Addison-Wesley, $51.95). Using the evidence of characters on antique bronze objects and oracle bones (where diviners inscribed questions to, and answers from, dead ancestors), Lindquist gives us a glimpse of the development of the Chinese writing system. Because she concentrates on particular characters, their analogues and compound forms, the book gives to those of us who cannot read, the illusion of capability for translation.

Lindquist shows us a primitive pictogram, outlines its represented logic, and narrates its evolution into more abstract, less imagistic characters. She accomplishes each fascinating explanation with the help of clear text and abundant illustration, not only of the calligraphy, but also of objects, animals, street scenes which demonstrate the origins of the characters. Using a quasi-dictionary format (with a very helpful index) organized by semantic field, Lindquist develops chapters, for example, on "Wild Animals," "Farming" and "Books and Musical Instruments." The character for "self," we find, stood originally for "nose." "Population" is expressed by the characters for "human" and "mouths". But such reductions hardly suggest the resonance and implicit interest of this introduction to cross-cultural etymologies. Here is a brief sample:

> "Cloud and rain" is an old poetic expression for intercourse. In the past, without rain there was no harvest in northern China. Rain and fertility were connected: the cloudburst that fertilizes the earth. The expression is said to go back to a legend about a prince of Chu, or perhaps it was the king himself. Anyhow, one of

> these gentlemen was visiting the mountain of Wu. He left his hunting companions, grew tired, and lay down to sleep. In his dream, the Queen of the Mountain came to him, and they spent the night together. When she rose to leave him, he asked her who she was and where he could meet her again. "In the morning, I am in the clouds; in the evening, in the rain," she replied, fay as she was, then vanished.

Because it subtly informs, the book tells such circling stories as this at every turn, delicate with surprise and flickering with intelligence.

The story of Canada's East Asian connections has frequently, and most noticeably, been a West Coast story. This Pacific tilt may not be so definite in contemporary Canada as it once was; certainly recent western histories are going a lot further to take account of the East Asian role in Canadian development. Geoffrey Molyneux's breezy tabloid history *British Columbia: An Illustrated History* (Polestar, $14.95) notes that the first Chinese had come to British Columbia with John Meares in 1788, the beginning of those two century's of influence uncertainly chronicled in Sky Lee's ambitious novel *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (1990). Jean Barman's *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (U Toronto P, $49.95), noting that "as of 1881, over 99 per cent of all Chinese in the country lived in British Columbia", makes ties to China and Japan one of the defining features of the province's identity. Her history of course, like Molyneux's, is frequently a narrative of shame—of race riots, and poll taxes, of 'internment and exclusion' acts. But it is also a history of a search for understanding—and the evidence of that theme (however tentative) often lies, as Barman discovers, in the literary artists, in Emily Carr and Daphne Marlatt, for example.

That the primary story of Canada's East Asian connections has been a war story and a women's story might be suggested by the political prominence of the problem of the 'internment,' and the rapid canonization of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* reiterated, albeit obliquely, by the books touching on Asia which have, often accidentally, been sent to us for review while we have been planning this issue of the journal. *James Ricalton's Photographs of China During the Boxer Rebellion: His Illustrated Travelogue of 1900* edited by Christopher J. Lucas (Edwin Mellen P, $99.95) reminds us of that earlier war in which the U.S. and China were allies. The old photographs are poorly reproduced, but Ricalton's usually straigtforward (if now more obviously racially clichéed) commentaries add detail and ways of viewing. Much of Ricalton's travel was prompted and enabled by a commission from Thomas Edison to search for varieties of bamboo that might provide the perfect fila-

ment for the incandescent lamp: this sidelight adds a dimension to becoming bamboo as intriguing as the early travelogue itself.

Two other books touch more directly on Japan and the Second World War. *Legacies and Ambiguities: Postwar Fiction and Culture in West Germany and Japan*, edited by Ernestine Schlant and J. Thomas Rimer (Woodrow Wilson Center P/Johns Hopkins UP, $13.95 US) brings together 13 papers from a 1988 conference considering the cultural and intellectual impact of the Holocaust and the nuclear bomb. This is a book whose most obvious unifying theme emphasizes the place of the novel in cultural witnessing. Anamnesis, the undoing of forgetting, might have given the book a more memorable title, and focussed its problematic of the writer as public conscience. In the exchange, the editors situate the United States between Germany and Japan as something of an interlocutor and enabler (even an "*éminence grise*"). To Canadian readers of Kogawa, in particular, this position will have provocative echoes, as will the arguments by several writers about how Japanese novelists have aestheticized the war. Concentrating more on the enabler, but quite sensitive to the differences between Japanese culture and a North American *nisei* culture, is Susan Schweik's *A Gulf So Deeply Cut: American Women Poets and the Second World War* (U Wisconsin P, $14.50/39.50 US). Chapters 6 and 7 focus on Nisei women poets and their response to the war. I found this section to be worthwhile reading for its contrasting women poets, especially their "war poems," to the Anglo-American male tradition of *dulce et decorum est*...(however ironic). Although Schweik emphasizes political and historical significance rather than poetics, even to the point of incorporating a considerable defense of 'bad poetry,' I found the discussions of the slippage between European and Japanese literary forms, and the impetus provided to poets by their mothers' writing, to be particularly rich in implications (again, Kogawa, of course, came to mind). Schweik presents a fascinating analysis of an essay in "Topaz" (an internment camp literary magazine) on alinguality. Here she shows how an understanding of the obscured Japanese intertexts gave the passage political bite and point, which the camp censors would not have perceived. "The war and internment," notes Schweik, created alinguality—it made writing impossible for Japanese-Americans. It also "made not writing impossible."

This paradox might nicely describe a woman's poems in a different, more recent war. Lâm Hô' Hiêp's *Poèmes d'un coeur en exil/Poems from a Heart in Exile* (TSAR, $10.95) is a first collection from a woman who emigrated from

Vietnam in 1980 and is now teaching in Toronto. The poems are written in French with English versions facing. The impossibility/necessity of speech is expressed in various ways. The absence of verbal play, of unusual metaphor, of 'decoration' suggests a writer tempered to face the bleakness of her past. She proceeds more by repetition with variation, as if to push herself to the undoing of forgetting. Another alingual strategy is to shift into other voices. In "Identification", the horror of identifying her soldier-husband's dead body is blunted by the rote bureaucratese of the military official who proceeds blandly through his checklist inured to the emotion crowding around him. These are frankly sentimental poems, whose lamentation finds shadow and echo in the irony that appropriating the speech of others provides a means both to hide and to discover one's own politics.

Bill Holm's *Coming Home Crazy* (Milkweed Editions $10.95 US) has no such problem with speechlessness. It's an account of being transformed by two periods spent teaching English in China—of being transformed into someone not angry or bemused, but freed into a wider imaginary world. Holm writes movingly of the genuine receptiveness and curiosity shown by his Chinese students in the face of literature, a marked contrast to his grudging, reluctant U.S. students. Holm's subtitle, "An Alphabet of China Essays," does not simply indicate a means of organization, but a shift in perception such as I touched on in discussing the Lindquist book. For Westerners, he notes, the alphabet is a theology governing so much of the organization of our own lives: "I mean here also to praise living outside the alphabet for a while in some interior China of unknown sequences—even without sequence." This objective provides a good enough reason to push our understanding of Canadian literature to where it is randomized by "a civilization without closure."

Holm's is a travel book that gives great pleasure. It is zesty, tart, bemused and bitchy. It is frankly, even preposterously American, but it is generously open to difference. Canadians are important mediators in Holm's China—a benign, slightly naive 70-year-old grandmother and grandfather from Manitoba. The book is even laugh-aloud funny at some points. To try to know China is to get out of ourselves:

> No Westerner ever really knows anything about China.... For a Westerner, literacy in Chinese means five years of intense drudgery and, without that language, nothing real can be known. But, after surviving a plunge into Chinese craziness, your mind opens in a different way to your own country, and having "seen" China, you are able to see what is in your own house or your own everyday life, with new "crazied" eyes. The view is peculiar and not what you expected.

Travelling Women

Ed. Momoye Sugiman
Jin Guo - Voices of Chinese Canadian Women.
Chinese Canadian National Council n.p.

Eds. Roseann Lloyd and Deborah Keenan
Looking for Home : Women Writing About Exile.
Milkweed Editions US$11.95

Reviewed by Maria Noëlle Ng

The first Chinese woman immigrant arrived in Victoria, British Columbia in 1860. The first Chinese child was born in Canada in 1861. These are some of the historical statistics one can learn from *Jin Guo,* an anthology of biographical and autobiographical writings of Canadian women of Chinese descent. The editorial committee interviewed about 130 women for the project, and one can easily imagine the sheer amount of material they had to deal with. The wealth of informants and information contributes to the rich texture of the anthology; unfortunately, this texture sometimes lacks definition.

The book is structured into two parts. The first part is a series of self-contained individual stories; the second part are anecdotal accounts grouped under themes such as 'work', 'education', 'interracial relationships'. There are contributors who were born in China, or Hong Kong, and there are also those who were Canadians by birth. The oldest woman interviewed is Margaret Chan, born 1902. Although the youngest interviewee was born in 1962, the age emphasis is more towards those who are in their 40s or older.

Naturally enough, the individual stories not only bear historical significance, but are also moving testimonies to women who were pioneers in their own rights. For instance, Margaret Chan immigrated to Canada in 1910 and attended public schools in Victoria. She wanted to become a teacher. In spite of her diploma, she could not get a job teaching because she was Chinese, and worked for many years in various produce stores. She went back to China and Hong Kong, looking for work, then came back to Canada and married. Margaret Chan spent most of her married life following her husband to various parts of Canada where jobs were available. Her husband was an abusive and callous man, and Margaret worked as well as brought up the children without the husband's help.

This pattern of drudgery was sadly repeated in variations by a succession of women who came to Canada without sufficient education to prepare them for a hostile, racially unenlightened society, where Chinese were despised, called names and barred from any kind of profession. Community support groups were far and few between. These early women immigrants also had to endure a kind of geographically-transposed patriarchalism within the Chinese community, where the men had all the privileges and the women were treated no better than commodities on a shelf. Not surprisingly, the father-figure plays a comparatively minor role in the anthology. Most women remember their mothers fondly; some express ambiguous and even critical views of their fathers and husbands.

Another common theme which runs through both the stories and the anecdotes is racial prejudice. There is a general acceptance among the older generations that to be treated as inferior, not good enough to live amongst the white population and not good enough to mix socially, was part of life in Canada. But even in the narratives of younger women, who are in their late 30s and early 40s and who are established professionals, there is a lack of organized aggressiveness. By studying and working hard, by making their children achieve ambitious goals, they believe they are showing the Caucasian society that the Chinese are just as good, if not better. This attitude raises some questions which this anthology has not dealt with, but which perhaps a more theoretical study could investigate, for example: is an individualistic philosophy effective enough in combatting racial prejudice, and what are the new reasons for hostility towards Chinese immigrants in the 1990s?

In an end-section called 'Keep Listening', one committee member mentions the diversity within the Chinese-Canadian communities, which is an issue this anthology cannot but fail to address successfully. The Chinese who live in Canada now are from all parts of Southeast Asia and China, as well as Taiwan and Hong Kong. They no longer are limited to running laundries and produce stores. Quite often, they maintain a kind of jet-set itinerant way of life, with the parents travelling back and forth Canada and the native country. One also cannot ignore the fact that among the Chinese themselves, there are internal prejudices based on differences in dialects, social background and countries of origin. These are essential components of what is homogenously called the Canadian-Chinese community, and should constitute a jumping-off point of further investigation.

The poems collected in *Looking for Home*, an anthology of poetry written by women who were born in other countries but are now writing in English, are also concerned with differences. Although the subtitle of Keenan and Lloyd's anthology is *Women Writing about Exile*, the 125 poems in this book deal with a much wider range of problems women face today, from being a stranger in a new and sometimes hostile country, to a child's memory of sexual abuse by her father. The nature of exile may be cultural, but also spatial, temporal and psychological. One is immediately struck by the overwhelming sadness in these poems : to travel is not to have an adventure, to explore; instead, to travel is to be displaced, to escape, sometimes without destination.

And yet some women thought that they had arrived. In Mitsuye Yamada's 'I Learned To Sew', an uneducated seventeen-year-old leaves Japan for Hawaii as 'a picture-bride'. Upon arrival, the intended bridegroom refuses to sign for her papers. The immigration man advises her, "your man is not coming back/he told me he does not want you/he said you are too ugly for him/why don't you go back to Japan/on the next boat?" Some live in the new country but retain the deepest affection for the old, such as the old woman in Sara Hunter's 'Travelling Back', "And never again : the arrival,/the flowers, the tears,/the babble of familiar accent/lulling her like a baby". In this poem, the 'arrival' is in effect a saying-goodbye to one's homeland. When one lives in many places in one's heart, words such as 'home', 'leaving' or 'returning' have ambiguous and conflicting meanings.

In *Jin Guo*, many of the women interviewed could neither speak nor write in English, and their narratives have been transcribed and translated for them. The text in a way has been smoothed out, though there are different voices. One gets the opposite impression in *Looking for Home*. The poets are all too aware of the power and the problems of languages, and

they choose to relate personal experiences of communication in perhaps the most hermetic of literary forms. They tell the readers, through the density of the poetic medium, how complex, how emotionally charged and memory-encumbered the interior lives of these exiled women are. One is drawn to and at the same time distanced by these poems. They are voices of intimacy with obstacles built in. No two experiences are alike. The only commonality is that the women are a long, long way from home.

Who is the Daughter?

Maryka Omatsu
Bittersweet Passage: Redress and the Japanese Canadian Experience. Between the Lines n.p.

Ann Decter
Paper, Scissors, Rock. Press Gang $12.95

Reviewed by Marilyn Iwama

In the preface to her book, Maryka Omatsu promises a "personal account of the redress years." The writing in *Bittersweet Passage* is most convincing when Omatsu does tell her story, for instance as she leads the reader into her dead father's room, raging against the father's lifetime of injustice. Equally tantalizing is Omatsu's sliver of a tale describing January, the month when there is no work on the farm, and grandmother, her friends, and all their children "move in with one another, spending the time sewing and enjoying each other's company." Consistently, the vigour of Omatsu's text emerges in such narrative vignettes of family history, and in Omatsu's telling of how the struggle by Japanese Canadians to achieve redress of wartime injustice rewove the unravelling tapestry of her family by reuniting generations in a common effort.

Regrettably, in this thin volume Omatsu also attempts an overview of Japanese Canadian history from the beginning of immigration to the present; a detailed narrative of ten years of redress negotiations; and an analytical foray into Ronald Reagan's motivation surrounding his signing of the Japanese American settlement. This Omatsu sacrifices a potentially powerful and simple telling of the personal and the particular for what reads as a representative record of the general, compromising her rendering of this community's history in Canada, and its struggle to redress wartime wrongs.

Omatsu's historical summary offers conclusions and conjecture presented hastily and treated superficially, partly because the book is short. Because of this, her text contextualizes the central event inadequately. Not surprisingly, this superficiality locks *Bittersweet Passage* in a subtext of generalization. As Omatsu tells it, first-generation Japanese Canadians who "were universally treated as second-class citizens" all met with absolute "enmity" from the 'white' Canadian community, and all found their strength in their lineage from "the sun goddess Amaterasu." Omatsu borrows heavily from Japanese mythology throughout Bittersweet Passage, to the point of comparing Otto Jelinek with "Japan's samurai-cowboy icon, Miyamoto Musahi." This interdependence of myth and universal philosophizing is a dangerous one when treating a political event, and Omatsu snares herself in this trap, depoliticizing redress to the point of "a timeless and universally understood tale."

Further obscuring Omatsu's personal story is her disturbing reliance on racial stereotyping and physical features as modes of characterization. At some point, she describes most major actors in the redress negotiations with reference to their ancestral heritage, often predicating their behaviour on their race. Frequently, this dependence on racial characterization extends to her treatment of complex political conflict. For example, the early fight for

The Aquiniad Continues

André Lamontagne

Les Mots des autres: la poétique intertextuelle des oeuvres romanesques de Hubert Aquin. Les Presses de l'Université Laval $35.00

Reviewed by Patricia Merivale

André Lamontagne's study of intertextuality in Aquin's four major novels is among the richest and most important works of recent Aquin criticism. While it is not, on the whole, designed for the general reader, not even the general reader of Aquin, the specialist reader, while finding matters of disagreement, will find even more that is informative and stimulating.

Lamontagne opens with a brief, clear, and useful history of intertextuality as a critical concept. The intertextual methods discussed, from Bakhtin, Kristeva, Jenny, Riffaterre, and Genette, offer far more methodological scope than Lamontagne chooses to deploy. He makes virtually no use of major concepts like, for instance, pastiche and parody, as defined by Jenny and Genette, his principal intertextual masters, while a Bakhtinian view of the polyphonic dialogism of Aquin might be of great interest in assessing that eponymous key to both theme and structure, the title "l'Antiphonaire".

Lamontagne's own intertextuality could do with more "forest," what Riffaterre calls "appréhension abstraite des ensembles", than this introduction supplies. He excludes such matters as reminiscence and allusion to such a degree that it seems the postmodern contexts so valuably suggested later are not, in Lamontagne's own typology, "intertextual" at all.

The second chapter analyses by categories Aquin's own intertextual practices. Here Aquin's texts are being used to exemplify the typology; in the later sections, the balance shifts (though not entirely) to a typology used to elucidate Aquin's texts.

Lamontagne is actually apologetic about discussing the key intertext, for *Prochain épisode*, of Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon"; he knows the relationship to be important, but is methodologically inconvenienced by the lack of direct citation. Because of the inapplicability of "la critique génétique" (source study) in a work of "études intertextuelles" (that is la critique Genettique), we are teased with, but deprived of, Lamontagne's conclusions on the significance of such major and extended allusions. This seems Procrustean to me; I will learn more about Aquin's text from some (necessarily selective) synthesis of these two modes of intertextual relationship than from either one of them alone. The non-narratologist might wish that Lamontagne's critical insights into Aquin's texts were not so firmly cabined within his methodology; even the narratologist might wish that methodology more generously interpreted.

Most of the book is eminently readable, but the reader of the earlier sections needs to accept at least provisionally such thorny categories as the four types of "médiation répertoriés," almost Polonian in their hyphenated permutations. Or such prickly sentences as, "L'enchâssement par isotopie syntaxique constitue donc, au même titre que celui qui est fait par isotopie narrative, un modalité 'classique' de la pratique de la citation, mais seulement lorsqu'il est couplé à un enchâssement par isotopie métaphorique ou narrative...", and so on for another thirty words. It is the price one pays for the system and rigour of this mode of analysis.

Plagiarism, a major and clearly defined concept in Lamontagne's typology, is one he finds all too extensively exemplified in Aquin's work. Lamontagne finds "des analogies troublantes" between *Trou de mémoire* and Georges Bataille's *L'Abbe C.* on the one hand and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, on the other. But why should what turn out to be Aquin's "emprunts thématiques" in *Trou de mémoire* be "trou-

control of the B.C. fishery—a conflict in which First Nations Peoples were also major actors—is reduced to a standoff between "whites" and "Japanese." Given Omatsu's anger over the injustices she and other Japanese Canadians have suffered because of perceptions of "race," such generalizations are probably more a result of carelessness or haste than an actual adherence to theories of racialization, but I wonder why she did not take care to avoid such unthinking repetition of racial epithets. Had Omatsu kept the promise of her preface, she might have avoided these problems.

Ann DEcter has chosen the wiser course in her first novel, *Paper, Scissors, Rock*. Most obviously, this work is a chronicle of the narrator (Jane)'s attempt to recognize her "Self" that played "daughter" in her father's life and death. But Decter's multiply-layered text also treats larger political and historical Canadian events, such as the WInnipeg General Strike of 1919 and the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, as well as the recording of history in general. Always, though, the personal account directs the larger historical one: "History is no longer Columbus and Brebeuf, brave discovery and cruel burnings," decides Jane finally, but the tales of grandparents and others whose lives are documented only by their living. Accordingly, HIstory appears in these pages as fragments of media reportage, dependent on memory, and secondary to the story of the narrator's life, itself a collage of the actions and memories of other's stories.

It is not so much this message that makes *Paper, Scissors, Rock* a remarkable work: righting history is already a common theme in Canadian literature. In fact, Decter's tendency to lapse into a didactic historical corrective mode is one of the least engaging features of her writing. What softens my grimace at this, and her overstated and (given the flavour of the text) strangely apolitical conclusion is the daring way she takes me there.

Decter has divided her text into five sections. The first, "Hatred," introduces themes she treats in the course of the novel: Jane's father's abuse of her mother; Canadian brands of racism and homophobia; and history silenced. Fragments of the game, "Paper, Scissors, Rock," intersect with Decter's major metaphor of cutting back the wildly overgrown caraganas planted by her mother, and still thriving on the thin soil of pre-Cambrian shield at the family cabin. The final section, "Justice," manages to revisit the earlier ones while refusing a denouement.

Within the five sections, Decter ventures a poetic to and fro of language acrobatics that sometimes falters: "Memory, *memoir*, [sic] mindful. / Remember, *rememorari*, [sic] call to mind." But this dependence on deconstructive finger exercises happens far less than her more sophisticated and challenging attempts, such as the rollicking exchange between the child Jane, her brother, and the graduate student who interviews the siblings for her research on "cross-religious marriages." Where the former passage reads much like a forces reworking of Decter's early poetry, the latter offers a hilarious conflation of artificial religious, cultural, and linguistic boundaries suffered by the children's unconditioned interpretation of the Bible and Old Testament epic movies. Had Decter treated the reader to more of such dramatic dialogue the book may not have sagged as it does in places, but this minor point does not detract from the overall appeal of *Paper, Scissors, Rock*.

blantes"? They turn out to be red herrings—"tout au plus influence," he says, almost regretfully—in the hunt for "plagiat," or even for "faux-plagiat." And when at last "un plagiat évident" appears, it is the one (already often noted) from Baltrusaïtis' work on anamorphosis, from which he culls four pages of illustrative quotes. Edgar de Bruyne's equally unacknowledged contribution to the even more impressive erudition of *L'Antiphonaire* rates another three pages. "Ce plagiat massif, parce-qu'il n'est pas signalé..." is authorial, rather than imputable to the characters: that is Aquin is getting no textual mileage out of it at all. Is Lamontagne's point here that Aquin is just saving himself trouble? In any case, he is "left perplexed" by the plagiarism.

In so schematically objective and formalist a critique, it seems odd that the term "plagiarism" is used to register shock or moral disapproval at all, given Lamontagne's concession that these unacknowledged borrowings form part of the thematics of works themselves dedicated to self-reflexive inquiry into the possibility of their own originality. A closer look at Aquin's textual purposes should form part of this quasi-moral assessment.

The central part of this book is made up of readings of each novel in terms of its intertextuality. The disproportion in the pagination of these four chapters is telling: while *Trou de mémoire* and *Neige noire* tip the scales at thirty and twenty-seven pages respectively—i.e. about the *average* of the four—*Prochain épisode* rates a measly eleven pages and *L'Antiphonaire* an elephantine forty-eight, a disproportion attributable to the extreme and atypical intertextual peculiarities of *L'Antiphonaire* and the primitive simplicity, intertextually speaking, of *Prochain épisode*. The latter merely thematises authorial originality and impotence, in the form of the narrator's struggle with such figures of textual authority as Balzac and Simenon.

Trou de mémoire, however, is notable for its stress upon the "cultural insecurity" of Aquin's narrators, and indeed of Aquin himself, whenever the characters' "debauche d'érudition," lacks integral value to the text—in short, whenever he, as well as they, is (just) showing off. This excess is inexorably connected with the "terreur croissante associée à l'écriture" which is so powerful a motive for Aquin's (and his characters') intertextual excesses. The discussion of *Trou de mémoire* is confined almost entirely to the editorial conflicts of Magnant and RR; one wishes to hear more of the intertextuality of Olympe or even of the intertexts found in the "trou de mémoire" of the title.

The discussion of *l'Antiphonaire* is the most fully developed, because of that novel's sheer volume of intertextuality; yet its being more relaxed about what constitutes intertextuality makes it the most useful discussion of the four. Christine's dissolving personality is destroyed by her multiple, fragmented identifications with her invented characters, and by the insufficiency of her texts under the invading presence of her borrowed sources. Intertextuality is thus seen as both strategic and autoreferential, a successful way of metaphorising the literary space.

The emphasis of the *Neige noire* discussion is, first, on the interdiscursive elements of the film scenario, although Aquin (and Lamontagne) knows perfectly well that *Neige noire* is, in the end, "bel et bien un texte". Then the *Hamlet* intertext (*Hamlet* is *Neige noire*'s Mousetrap), is shown to serve Nicolas' self-referential purposes as well as his plot-driven need for the concealment of Sylvie's murder. Lamontagne overemphasizes somewhat repetitively, perhaps, Nicolas' insane overprivileging of his own creative acts and of himself as demiurgic creator, culminating in his movement towards mystical transcendence. Lamontagne implies that *Aquin* is skeptical

of this "vacuité de la plénitude mystique", although other critics have found it all-too-identifiable with Aquin's own position. Shouldn't Lamontagne connect this "celebration" with the "terror" of writing so prominent earlier, of which it is probably another, and particularly desperate, manifestation? Largely because the cinematic intertext (the scenario) loses out to the mystical one ([Nicolas'] commentary), Lamontagne finds *Neige noire* the *least* successful of the four novels.

These "pratiques recensées" in the four central chapters are brought into a useful "synthèse diachronique" in Chapter VII. The first section, "Schémas fictionnels," elegantly summarizes them and suggests links: "le discours aquinien, sous le masque de différents narrateurs..."; the mysterious Orpheus subtext found in each novel. The second section returns us to the "modalités d'énonciation" found in chapter II; it summarizes (with statistics) the narrower classifications of Aquin's intertextual rhetoric.

Lamontagne's most adventurous and speculative chapter, "Intertextualité et postmodernisme," is likely also to be the most interesting chapter to the general reader—i.e. the non-Aquiniste and/or the non-narratologist. It offers some comparative contexts for Aquin, by making his intertextuality, more broadly, a matter of the other texts that he read, knew about, was influenced by, or could, for purposes of literary history, be usefully compared to or placed among, rather than by the narrower categories given in the introduction, which taxonomically determine much of the analysis. Lamontagne asserts, I think correctly, that apart from Nelligan, Aquin, for intertextual purposes, ignored Québécois literature; conversely, though Lamontagne does not discuss this, Québécois authors, while admiring Aquin, have seemingly not been much influenced by him. Other possibilities he touches upon include Aquin and the Nouveau Roman, Aquin, Burroughs, and the cinematic, Aquin and Nabokov; even the most thorough and intriguing comparison he makes, that of Aquin and Borges, could be looked into further. The taxonomic trees have largely dominated the contextual forest, but at the end we get extraordinarily stimulating views, with suggestions for further exploration, of that forest.

Critical? Solitude?

Caroline Bayard, ed.
100 Years of Critical Solitudes: Canadian and Québécois Criticism from the 1880s to the 1980s.
ECW $25.00

Reviewed by Patricia Merivale

The title of this volume, a heavily allusive and perhaps too pessimistic formulation, suggests the current politically correct assumption of the non-meeting of this country's two most long-enduring critical solitudes. Here are sixteen dollops of separation which none of the contributors is even attempting to bridge. Six pairings of approximate critical topic are made: biographical, historical, "thematic and sociological," psychoanalytic, formalist-to-semiotic, and an ever-so-capacious portmanteau of "pistes critiques postmodernes" (*all* of them), wisely left to the polymathic critical capacities of Barbara Godard. Two essays, André Belleau's on "sociocritique" and Philippe Haeck's joyfully Barthesian "amorous" reading (which, "aerienne" and "libérant[e]," as Bayard says, spiritedly concludes the volume), asymmetrically lack "Anglo" partners, a point which passes without comment and without redress. The reader is, in good postmodern fashion, left to his or her own devices for bridging these critical solitudes.

But the editor may have given up too easily. The introductory essays, while of great merit and interest, do not attempt "comparison": Bayard discusses the Québécois

essays as a whole in her French introduction, but George Woodcock makes no such survey of the Anglo-Canadian essays. Neither introduction relates one group to the other; Bayard, in her sketchy English introduction, alludes only briefly to the problems that might be raised by attempting it. Where were the Canadian comparatists in 1980, by which time most of these essays had already been written? Two of these authors at least, E.D. Blodgett and Godard, are eminently capable now (and doubtless were then) of bridging some of these gaps: perhaps they weren't asked to.

The second major editorial problem is the dating: Bayard, in her 1992 (French) introduction, makes a virtue out of the apparent necessity of a 1980-ish terminal date for most of the essays. But by the time we reach Jon Kertzer, who handily updates his bipartite argument on historical criticism to reach a tripartite conclusion, it is evident that the editor requested more updates from her contributors than she received. However, several essayists confuse matters further by doing *some* internal updating, for instance by mentioning *en passant* the CWTW series of the 'eighties (as Woodcock does). Frequent temporal locutions, like "aujourd'hui," or "recent," or "in the last fifty years," are made ambiguous by the uncertainty as to how much, if any, revision has taken place. Several conclusions, exhorting us in some way, or inquiring about the future of such and such a concept or situation, are left hanging in the air, for in all probability some partial answer, or even some alteration in the terms of debate, has emerged in the last decade. Finally Fisette (writing on the movement from structuralism to semiotics) lets the cat out of the bag by mentioning an editorial request to update and then sensibly supplying a neat and useful coda, rather than emending the essay itself. Would that the other contributors had done likewise. For it is simply not the case that essays of 1980 can meaningfully make their way in the world twelve years later: we need a far clearer focus on this material from the most recent point of view available, if they are not to seem, collectively, like objects found in a critical time-capsule. Dating each of the many references within the essays might have clarified the individual time schemes; most of the dates can be picked up, with some labour, from the bibliography, admirably thorough for references before 1981, but distinctly haphazard (like the essays themselves) thereafter.

In this limited space, I can indicate only a few of the accomplishments of these sixteen essays, whether individually or as paired by topic, that is critical approach. There seem to have been occasional misunderstandings: Woodcock writes to say that the criticism of authors by means of critical biographies is weak to the point of nonexistence in Anglo-Canadian prose. (Does he still find this true in 1990?) Then Laurent Mailhot follows with a thorough account of biography, the genre, in Québécois literature, making the point, almost in passing, that good biographies of writers are not numerous. Given these negative conclusions, their differing starting points, and the non-centrality of "biographical criticism" in the current literary scene (as well as the overlap of Woodcock's essay, stressing the importance of "public" as against "academic" criticism, with his introductory essay a few pages earlier), perhaps this category should be re-thought.

The controversy over "thematics" links several of the Anglo-Canadian essays, starting with Woodcock's; Northrop Frye and Frank Davey are, by a wide margin, the critics most often referred to. Both Blodgett (on thematics) and T.D. MacLulich (on formalism), try, in different ways, to protect "good," subtle, sophisticated, thematics from the obloquy into which Davey and others have cast the whole approach. MacLulich does so by his vigorous qualify-

ing of Davey as a critic with his own polemical purpose, one yielding "a morality play in which Modernism is the villain and postmodernism the hero." Blodgett does so by way of the "problematics of thematology," as seen from a European comparatist perspective, while Bonenfant (in a fruitful overlap of concern regrettably uncharacteristic of the volume as a whole) usefully discusses the history of both the term and the approach as the French understand it. But Belleau's "sociocritique" seems lonely in this section, though no one comes right out and *says* that Anglo-Canadians don't do that sort of thing.

André Vanasse's lively and stylishly metaphorical essay on psychoanalytic criticism perks up the book, though like many of the other essayists, the Québécois more than the Anglo-Canadians, he feels obliged to run his argument into the dry sands of survey, with lists of critics and texts. Vanasse at least (unlike for instance David Hayne, on "historical" criticism) makes no vain attempt at thoroughness.

Monk, regretting the lack of psychological, or even of the more common (in her useful distinction) psycho-cultural criticism of Canadian literature as of 1975 (an awkward closing-off date), leaves it unclear what difference the past seventeen years would make to her assessment, while Godard, whose full and learned paper is frankly un-updated, lays more stress on phenomenology and (or against) structuralism than she would be likely to do today.

As Philippe Haeck, only a bit unkindly, puts it—in aphoristic and "journalesque" formulations which remind us of George Woodcock's equally eloquent claim for the virtues of the 'public' critic with which this collection begins—the criticism of one creative person by another constitutes "la critique libre, résolument non académique" with "vertige" and "joie" unknown to "professeurs qui coupés de la création citent abondamment leurs collègues..." Somehow his essay (1983) seems to have dated less than some of the others...

Portraits of the Artist

Robert Majzels

Hellman's Scrapbook. Cormorant $14.95

Reviewed by Patricia Merivale

Montreal Anglophone Jewish writing is the literary 'bridge' between the two more notorious Canadian solitudes, suggests Michael Greenstein in *Third Solitudes.* Robert Majzels' novel, *Hellman's Scrapbook,* seems to have been written expressly to confirm this generalization.

Hellman's Scrapbook is ludically but unintimidatingly postmodern in its narrative tricks and strategies, several of which are hinted at by the title. It is the Bildungsroman of a self-conscious, politically sensitive young Jewish Montrealer, David Hellman, whose "Bildung" must be put together by the reader of his antiphonally structured "scrapbook," constructed in that home-away-from-home of the Canadian postmodern narrator, an insane asylum. (*Prochain épisode* and *The Studhorse Man* come to mind, for starters). It is a growing-up-in-Montreal story, with many echoes and elements of its predecessors, both (Jewish) Anglophone (like Richler) and Francophone (like Victor-Lévy Beaulieu), and numerous relatives abroad, such as Alexander Portnoy. David's re-telling of, in order to come to grips with, his father's sufferings in a Nazi concentration camp presents interesting parallels with Art Spiegelman's son-of-a-survivor story, the two-part comic-strip novel, *Maus.*

The episodic autobiography of David, as child, adolescent, and young man, is (on one level) set into motion by and (on another) alternates with, the narrative shadow of his parents' awful past. He

explicitly (although inconspicuously) claims his father's stories as a main ingredient in his own cripplingly creative neurosis. The biographical and the autobiographical are rapidly interleaved within the frame story, the "self-begetting novel" of Hellman in the asylum, putting himself together by means of this journal-like series (dated from March 10 to May 31, 1980) of "letters to his father." Parody, pastiche and cliché: Hellman is "trapped in the [Oedipal] Jewish joke" of the third, or Portnoy, generation.

The "scene of writing" is everywhere, although it must be furtively concealed from the prying eyes of Antoine, the Gothically (or Nabokovianly) sinister asylum attendant (is he friend or foe?), and thus from the eyes of David's psychiatrist. Dr. Caulfield (like Portnoy's Dr. Spielvogel) is a blackly comic stand-in for those other ambiguously benevolent torturers of Jewish youth from the Old Testament through Portnoy, the hero's parents, as well as a grotesque figure whose mission of "extracting confessions," resonantly echoes, in Hellman's mind, the interrogators of the concentration camps. His name metamorphoses in every episode. It may be "really" Caulfield, but soon becomes "Crackfile," "Coldfeel" or "Clayfeet," and another twenty-one phonetic yet significant variations pile up into a comically cumulative liturgy towards the end of the story.

While Hellman resists, by way of the Scrapbook, the psychiatric attempt to box him into a fixed identity, when he needs a running, jumping, dodging, fluid, and polymorphous one, Majzels does not stint us of plot. There are such satisfying set pieces as a World-of-Wonders-like episode in one of the seamier carnival corners of the 1967 World's Fair, where our adolescent hero, playing the picaro, runs into "real [low] life" head-on. Here he meets Annie, a walking, yet three-dimensional, cliché of the Older Woman with a Heart of Gold who introduces our hero to love and, inevitably, to his own capacity for haplessly betraying her. David's experiences as a (bilingual) factory worker introduce his political commitments; his encounters with Oscar the Frathouse hippie, a joyous specimen of the bizarre, eccentric, doomed and drug-soaked loner as Québecois—albeit anglophone—literary type, provide the heart of the book's blackest (and funniest) comedy.

A fourth textual element, further reifying the "scrapbook" image, is made up of clippings from current Montreal newspapers, which Hellman tapes *over* the texts of his stories to conceal them. These antitexts, printed as if on darker paper, obscure most, but not all, of the underlying texts, from us as well as from Antoine and Crackfill; we try (maddeningly, in vain) to make sense out of the more interesting narratives underneath. The main stories are *de facto* fragmented by them; yet these rather anodyne, allegedly random news items are full of palimpsestically antiphonal implications for Hellman's text, of which they are (of course) an integral part. This becomes particularly clear towards the end, where the major antitext, moving slowly into the frame, introduces David's Philippine adventures, the climax of his autobiography, and perhaps the weakest segment of the book. David's account of being on the politically correct side of the people's war in that vividly steamy corner of the third world is interrupted by a recasting (corresponding to the newspaper intertexts of the earlier sections), from historical journal accounts (Magellan's and others, shaped into a sort of *Lord Jim* plot), of the early exploration and conquest of the Philippines. This, the longest antitext, is the only one detachable into a narrative of its own. The sources of all the anti-texts are given at the end, both out of obligation and courtesy (real-world) and mock-accuracy (text-world). This interesting, if peripheral, device is at least unsentimental, while the "magic" (that is the Magic Realism), of

David's telepathic hand-holding, an image of his imaginative forays into other people's lives and hearts, suggests the exhaustion of those images of authorial empathy employed with such vigour by Grass and Rushdie.

From the beginning, the discrete and distinct narratives are smoothly juxtaposed to suggest subtle parallels; by the end, they segue into low-key phantasmagoria, moving in and out of each other, while leaving their traces on, and leaking unmistakeably into, the asylum narrative proper. It never becomes wholly clear what prompted David to burn his hands and thus incite his incarceration in the Hochelaga Memorial Institute: an Einsteinian sense of responsibility for the sufferings of the world? (See the Einstein quote among the epigraphs). Or the deaths of his own friends? "I've killed them all," he says, like Grass' Oskar Matzerath, who also mulled over, from an asylum bed, his responsibility for history and the lives of others.

The writing therapy which makes up this fairly long (perhaps slightly too long?) novel, Hellman playing with his memories in order to make artifacts of them (self-reflexive imagery is seldom far to seek, but most of it is subtler and more effective than the "magic" hands, or even the burnt ones), seems to be therapeutically as well as aesthetically successful. At the end, the main characters from his memory-stories come together in his cell in narrative harmony, to give their blessing to his reconciliation—through 'real' magic this time—with his parents, and thus with his own life. "Give me your hand" are the last words of the book.

Hellman's Scrapbook is one of the liveliest and most substantial novels of the 1992 Canadian season.

Personal Interest

John Lennox ed.,
Margaret and Al: Margaret Laurence-Al Purdy. A Friendship in Letters. McClelland & Stewart. $39.99.

Reviewed by George Woodcock

I admit to a strong personal interest in this book. Margaret Laurence was my good friend; I have a stock of her letters, but most of all I remember phone calls from Lakefield which would begin at 2 a.m. there and continue for an hour or more, Margaret with something on her mind in the lonely hours and me worrying about her phone bill. She never would listen to my exhortations to call collect. Now, in memory, they have a strange hallucinatory quality, perhaps because we both dipped into the Scotch as the conversation went on. Al Purdy still is my good friend, and a selection of our letters from the 1960's to the 1980's was published as *The Purdy-Woodcock Letters* in 1988. So I do have a point of comparison in reading and reviewing *Margaret Laurence-Al Purdy, A Friendship in Letters*, this remarkable and perhaps great book, which seems to me quite different from the correspondence between Purdy and me, and which perhaps reveals a different kind of friendship.

Writers' correspondences tend to be more a professional exercise than that of non-writers, since writers do not think of their correspondence as a mere communication of news and sentiments. Writing letters tends to become an extension of their other writing. Letters provide a mental exercise in offering a different genre and intent from the work they are usually involved in. They provide a way of escaping the chronic loneliness of the profession. And they give a partial outlet at least to the fugitive ideas, reactions to life, minor but vivid experiences, and the daily involvement in living, that do not find a place in the book-length work.

I have already read reviews that accuse

Margaret and Al of being self-conscious in their letters, of writing for an invisible future audience. The same accusation was levelled against the *Purdy-Woodcock Letters.* And in a totally creditable sense it is true. A professional writer does not become unprofessional toward words just because he or she has an audience of one, with a mass audience a remote possibility and no more. A novelist like Laurence, a largely narrative poet like Purdy, are inventing characters as they go along and it would be inconsistent if they did not to an extent shape their own images in correspondence. There is always an eye toward the possible unauthorised reader. One does not write, even in a letter, what one would shrink from seeing in print.

Margaret Laurence was, and Al Purdy is, a self-created professional of high quality, with little academic stiffening but a natural kind of erudition, and a remarkable sense of the colloquial in language: much of their correspondence is about professional problems, and especially about Laurence's hesitations and delays in her work. Especially in England, she felt that loneliness of writing, and she needed reassurance from one of her tribe, yet she was also remarkably secret about what went on in her imagination or even her books until the day of publication. Once she said to me, like a Dutch auntie (though she was 14 years younger) "George, always play your cards close to your chest. Don't let anybody *see* it until you're ready." I have played my cards that way ever since.

The opposite is true of Purdy—that he is not so much concerned with the difficulties of creation, which are quite different in the short form of the poem from those in the long form of the novel. He is more concerned with achievement, and he is always sending to Laurence, as he has sent to me, copies of recent poems which he likes to try out on his friends first. It is on the whole the annoyances of life rather than the agonies of creation that concern him, but he is immensely supportive of Laurence in *her* agonies.

They joke and jostle with each other, like unruly mental siblings, they admit—as friends should—the deeper hurts life imposes on them, and they together defy the puritan world from which both of them, in their various ways, came and which still inflicts its hurts on them, as in the attempted banning of Laurence's books. There is no doubt that Purdy's friendship was of great importance to Laurence during the unhappy period when she was writing her last—and perhaps Canada's greatest—novel, *The Diviners.*

As for Purdy, there is something Protean about him. His poems contain passages of great vulnerability, and he grouses like the rest of us in his letters, and yet there is also that easy self-containedness that helped him remake himself from a conventional and traditional poet in his early years into a fine, free-flowing, colloquial writer, deeply conscious of time and place, in his maturity.

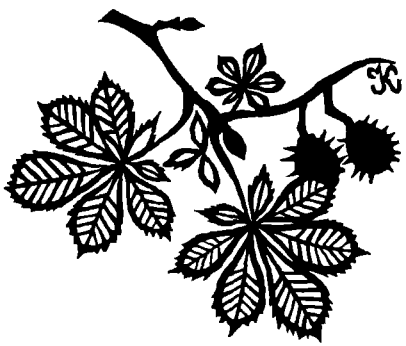
Certainly his mutability comes up in his friendships, which are not like each other, so that the *Purdy-Woodcock Letters* are quite different from those with Laurence. Purdy and I seem superficially dissimilar—far more so than Purdy and Laurence—and many people have wondered how we can be such firm friends. This rowdy poet, this withdrawn critic—what can they have in common? Yet the sparks of friendship strike strangely, and in fact Purdy and I have a great deal in common. If he and Laurence were like siblings, he and I have been in our formative experiences, like the boys next door. He in Canada, I in England, went through childhood poverty, never went to a university and taught ourselves almost all we know (and Al is a far more erudite man than he lays claim to), endured and denounced the puritanism of our backgrounds, which still haunts us, and once we shook off circumstances became great and committed travellers.

The relationship is different from that between Purdy and Laurence and the corre-

spondence is different, most of all, I suppose, because it is not based on obvious and at times overbearing need, as the other correspondence was, at least on Laurence's side. No friendship of course exists without some kind of need being fulfilled, but between Al and me there was an equality of it, as there was not between him and Laurence. We grouse to each other constantly, though it must be evident to readers of our letters how we like each other as men and admire each other as writers.

So we find Purdy as not only a fine poet, but also a stimulating letter writer (there is another, again different, volume of letters between him and the American poet Zukofsky), who sets us all communicating, though in what was communicated Margaret Laurence remains the best of the lot, for in spite of her reticence about them, her accounts of the struggles with her books make them all the more meaningful to us.

A final point. The last letter but one is dated 7 November 1980. The last letter, written when Purdy had learned late of Margaret's final illness, is dated 31 December 1986. (She died on the 5th of January 1987.) Is it possible that these two fervent correspondents went without writing for more than six years? What has happened to the rest of the Laurence-Purdy correspondence?



Mennonite History

Andreas Schroeder
The Mennonites: A Pictorial History of Their Lives in Canada. Douglas & McIntyre, $34.95

James Urry
None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889.
Hyperion, n.p.

Reviewed by Howard Reimer

Andreas Schroeder and James Urry provide complementary accounts of Mennonite history. Although they are similar in their brief reference to Mennonite beginnings in the Anabaptist movements of sixteenth cen-tury Europe, and in the account they provide of a social ideal that placed great emphasis on a rural, static way of life, they deal with distinct geographical settings: Schroeder is interested primarily in those Mennonites whose emigrations took them to Canada whereas Urry focuses on the development of Mennonite colonies in Russia.

In their four and a half centuries the Mennonites have found the world to be more often hostile than receptive to their pacifist, separatist ideals; consequently, as Schroeder and Urry demonstrate, their history has has been punctuated by major upheavals, experienced in struggles for control of their own language and education and in frequent emigrations. Thus, in a process that began in the sixteenth century, Mennonites have been dispersed throughout the western hemisphere. (James Urry made his first contact with Mennonites on a visit to Belize in Central America.) And, although there are conservative groups that retain the early rural, separate way of life, the majority of Mennonites in Europe and North America have adopted an identity compatible with life in urban centres, and have entered into the world of commerce and the professions in large numbers, particularly in

education and medicine.

Schroeder, who calls himself an ethnic Mennonite, writes expressly for the "great many Mennonites (both religious and ethnic) [who] know their story only in discontinuous fragments." What the general reader (Men- nonite or non-Mennonite) will find in *The Mennonites* is a compact, lucid account of the Mennonite experience in Canada, together with some 180 photographs; the last 68 pages have no text, and are indexed as photograph-ic essays. The text, quite apart from the photographs, succeeds in putting into perspective the main events of Canadian Men-nonite life and the ethos that undergirded them—an efficient use of its fifty pages.

Although there are a great many interesting photographs that, in the way of pictorial records offer nuances difficult to verbalize, they are somewhat more problematical than the text. To place a photo into a particular context is to create the expectation that it will make its contribution to that context. Placement is a problem then in that photos and text do not consistently match. In the first chapter, for example, the text takes in the period from 1527, when the first Anabaptist

Confession of Faith was formulated, to the early 19th century, but the photographs are dated from approximately 1870 to 1914. The captions, although generally helpful and sometimes essential, are at other times scarcely relevant. The phrases "a contemporary Mennonite farmer," "a young Mennonite man of today" do not extend the meaning of photographs of smiling young men to which they are attached; photo credits alone would serve as well to indicate that, at least in matters of dress, young Mennonites today are indistinguishable from non-Mennonites.

Nevertheless, there are a great many excellent photographs, scenes of emigration and immigration, of baptisms, funerals and weddings, of strong, worn-looking, faces. The poignancy of emigration is beautifully captured in a 1948 photo taken at the point of departure for Paraguay, its anguish a comment on the many emigrations that punctuate Mennonite history. A contrasting shipboard scene shows a group of men on the way to Paraguay. If there was sadness at departure the mood at this juncture is clearly one of anticipation: the Paraguayan wilderness holds no terrors for these men. And there are the nineteenth century group portraits, their subjects regarding the camera with the earnest, unflinching look that is directed not only at the camera but also, characteristically, at the world. It is difficult to imagine them softening with laughter.

Where *The Mennonites* relies on photographs and brief text, Urry's *None But Saints* offers a densely textured historical account based on extensive historical research. After a chapter on the genesis of Mennonite principles, including a glance at Mennonite history up to 1785, Urry tells the story of a century of Mennonite life in southern Russia—the migration from Danzig and Polish-Prussia, the process of establishing colonies, the struggle that developed between conservative and reform-minded leaders and groups, the problems of growth and landlessness, the formation of a landed gentry, the impact of Czarist governmental policies; these and other aspects of Mennonite life are dealt with in impressive detail.

The principles of selection and arrangement that guided the shaping of this detail are not as readily assessed as is the scope of the scholarship. Indeed, Urry seems to be uncertain of the genre to which his book belongs. The Introduction identifies it as "an interpretative essay," and the epigraph, an excerpt from Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* from which the title *None But Saints* is taken, signals a satirical essay. The lines, "With Tyranny, then Superstition join'd/ As that the Body, this enslav'd the Mind;/ Much was believ'd, but little under-

stood/ And to be dull was constru'd to be good," are Pope's commentary on the critics who flourished in the aftermath of the fall of Rome, an event Pope regarded as concurrent with the end of true learning. And the following couplet, which, incidentally, is not commonly part of the anthologized versions of the poem, is heavily ironic: "Vain Wits and Critics were no more allow'd/ When none but Saints had Licence to be proud." What is curious in all this is that the book does not appear to have any satire; if satire was indeed Urry's intention, then he has been altogether too subtle about it. If one approaches the book as an interpretative essay a further problem arises, in that analysis is less in evidence than narration. Urry implies as much when, at the very end, he draws a parallel between historical and fictional writing.

Problems of genre aside, *None But Saints* is a thorough piece of work, and it has the further virtue of being readable. The book is therefore valuable to both general reader and scholar; the latter will also be well served by its eleven pages of bibliography. Although Urry does not argue his thesis, it becomes clear by the end of the book that it has shaped the narrative. Thus, when he describes the 1889 year of celebration, what is celebrated is the triumph of progressive over conservative colonists, of "open and worldly" Mennonite communities over "inward looking religious congregational-communities," and what he has put in place is an account of the forces, internal and external, that have brought about this result. There is, finally, an interesting parallel in this conclusion with that of Schroeder's *The Mennonites.* Whether in Russia or in Canada, the forces that have moved the Mennonites toward assimilation have been remarkably similar, and, at least in 1889, before the communist revolution destroyed the Mennonite colonies, a changed but nevertheless distinct identity has survived.

Voices in Context

Gary A. Olson and Irene Gale, eds.
(Inter)views: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Rhetoric and Literacy. Southern Illinois UP $19.95

Eve Browning Cole and Susan Coultrap-McQuin, eds.
Explorations in Feminist Ethics: Theory and Practice. Indiana UP $35.00/$12.95

Reviewed by Judy Z. Segal

These two collections (one of interviews and the other of essays) have little in common, but both affirm the value of studying the individual in context: *(Inter)views* focusses on individual scholars in their disciplinary contexts, while *Explorations* proclaims each of us in our own contexts as the motive and the site of a new ethics.

(Inter)views collects interviews with Mary Field Belenky, Noam Chomsky, Jacques Derrida, Paulo Freire, Clifford Gertz, Richard Rorty, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The interviews first appeared in the *Journal of Advanced Composition,* and were followed, as they are in this volume, by the considered responses of well-known compositionists.

Referring to rhetoric and composition studies, John Schilb quips in his response to one interview, "Our particular field has largely developed by selectively raiding others." Herein lies the rationale for the book: it brings together interviews with luminaries of the raided. So *(Inter)views* becomes a talking family album of rhetoric and composition. There's Uncle Jacques, warning that "rhetoricism" is a kind of logocentrism. There's Aunt Mary with the story of the collaboration that produced *Women's Ways of Knowing.* There's Cousin Richard. I'll never forget the look on everyone's face when he asked, "what's a social constructionist?". Oh, and there's Aunt Gayatri. Remember what she said when we asked her to "conceptualize" rhetoric?

While this collection of interviews and

responses will appeal first to an audience of rhetoricians, it deserves a wider audience. Although not everyone would want to ask the same questions the interviewers do (for example, Olson, who conducts all the interviews but those with Belenky and Spivak, usually leads with "Do you consider yourself a writer?"), the interviews are engaging, revealing, even riveting—and they remind us, as David Bleich says in his Introduction, that "there *is* a heartbeat on the pages of our intellectual lives." The responses to the interviews are generally insightful, and they work to set up another dialogue, not only with participants of the interview, but also with the reader, who is forming responses of his/her own.

What's wrong with the book is confessed adequately within its own pages. In one response, C. H. Knoblauch distinguishes between the interview and the conversation: "Interview is static, simplified, deferential (as a rule), and abbreviated, resisting the give-and-take, the fluid, mercurial, serendipitous movement of conversation." The fact that these are interviews (and in some cases—like Chomksy's—a series of short lectures) means exchanges are sometimes forced and disappointing. "The politeness of the interview," as Knoblauch says, "closes off talk"; the interviewer often settles for half-answers, too respectful (?) to push a line of questioning. A final criticism: the interviewers persist in asking scholars *not* in rhetoric and composition to comment on the field, including its politics and pedagogies—and the interviewees often flounder or demur. I agree with John Clifford who writes in his response, "When thinkers like Derrida, Rorty, and Spivak are being interviewed for informed readers, we should probably stop asking them what they think about our specific professional concerns." As it is, readers are sometimes invited to judge these people by their sympathy to the projects of rhetoricians (Geertz comes off well; Rorty, badly) and this is unfair.

A different polyvocality characterizes *Explorations in Feminist Ethics*, where authors share at least a particular perception of a problem. The valuing of the individual in context over the individual as human abstract is one point of commonality among the various and divergent voices which populate the book.

Explorations originates in papers given at a 1988 conference of the same name, each paper considering some aspect of a feminist ethics or the invention/discovery/construction of one. The book's main weakness is that the essays are short—conference-length rather than real essay-length—and therefore somewhat undeveloped. In fact, given the self-conscious self-consciousness of most of the essays, and their careful set-up work to rationalize and position their arguments, some essays end just a page or two after they really get going.

The book's main strength is its subject matter. Patricia Ward Scaltsas writes, "The project of criticizing, analyzing, and when necessary replacing the traditional catagories of moral philosophy in order to eradicate the misrepresentation, distortion, and oppression resulting from the historically male perspective is, broadly speaking, the project of feminist ethics"; these "explorations" command our attention. Another strength is that some of the essays at least begin to be excellent, and are provocative in the best way.

Naturally recurring points of reference in the essays are Carol Gilligan's (*In a Different Voice*) distinction between a more-or-less masculine ethic of justice and a more-or-less feminine ethic of care and Nell Noddings' (*Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*) elaboration of an ethic of care. The most interesting essays in *Explorations* get past not only a dichotomy of justice and care, but also the argument, now well-known, that the care ethic binds women to traditional roles, newly glorified. Marilyn Friedman sets feminism against

communitarianism, finding communitarian values friendly to feminism only when they are focussed on friendship and communities of choice. Cheshire Calhoun looks for a moral theory that includes "emotional work"—work we do not as agents on ourselves but as mediators on others. Sarah Lucia Hoagland locates in a lesbian context the revaluing of choice, where choosing to help a friend, for example, is an act of creation rather than self-sacrifice. Charlotte Bunch calls for a new consideration of difference within feminism, not constrained by a tradition in which difference is known only as inequality.

It is probably worth noting that (with a single exception) every one of the contributions in *Explorations* participates in that masculine genre, the academic essay, and is, accordingly, rather proprietary and somewhat bellicose. Perhaps as they explore ethical theory, some of these authors might explore as well different genres for writing about it. The interview, perhaps?

Life, Work & Free Verse

Naomi Guttman
Reasons for Winter. Brick Books $9.95

Sandy Shreve
The Speed of the Wheel Is Up to the Potter. Quarry Press $10.95

Reviewed By Cynthia Messenger

Contemporary lyric poets have inherited (through the modernists) many things from the English Romantics, not the least of which is the high seriousness with which the Romantics regarded the mundane. In both books under review, the everyday, the quotidian, figures prominently in poetry that continually reiterates its commitment to writing as a moral act.

I would argue, contra Perloff, that there is nothing in the "lyric frame," to use her words, that prevents the poet from adopting a socially committed position. The *a priori* assumption shared by Perloff and the Language Poets that disjunction—as expressed through found poetry, montage, collage, and fragmentation—expresses "inclusiveness" is unconvincing. The rhetoric used in the promotion of language poetry (and simultaneously in the undermining of lyric) attempts to conceal the aesthetic judgment that underlies the privileging of one form over the other.

To pass off found poetry as untainted, as untouched by the authorial "I," involves subterfuge. And to posit that collage's juxtaposition of disparate materials is (to quote Perloff from *Poetic License*) "without commitment to explicit syntactical relations" only weakly disguises what is actually an aesthetic argument. Perloff's implicit assumption that, in language poetry, the apparent violation of syntax equals a broadening of the moral and social scope of the poem reflects only her interpretation of this "structure"—it *could* mean something else entirely.

Naomi Guttman is not a language poet; nor is Sandy Shreve. But neither are they formalist poets. Both Guttman and Shreve relie on the confessional tone, the imagism, the shortish lines, and the verse paragraph that are intrinsic to modernist free verse. And even if one craves the rigours of the formalists, or the aesthetics of the language poets, one cannot deny the integrity and purpose of writers like Guttman and Shreve, who write, not out of engagement with trends in literary criticism, but out of their experience as women.

In Sandy Shreve's *The Speed of the Wheel Is Up to the Potter*, commuting is the central metaphor for the alienation of the modern worker from her job. Often in this volume, the speaker narrates the sadness/emptiness of daily life from inside her automobile:

> The whole way home, I was stuck
> under the wet, black half
> of a sun-shower sky,

and this, only the fifth
of forty-five Mondays
to survive this year

The automobile, the communter's second home, is also the embodiment of the deep irony of technology—that it frees *and* destroys—but this implication remains unexamined by Shreve. Other poems find the speaker in her office, angry, belittled, and dehumanized by her unappreciated clerical work.

Like Tom Wayman and others who write Canadian work poetry, Shreve protests or mourns but never really probes. Work is not, the work poets might argue, an intellectual problem. The trouble is, though, that the free verse complaint poem is by now a bit laboured. And the nifty, ironic two lines of closure we have come to expect do nothing to ease the weariness of this verse.

Shreve's volume does contain poems that seem almost to escape cliche. "Lost in This City," for example, its protagonist a man "attacking traffic," is about the self isolated through fear or madness. But even in this poem Shreve cannot resist the political formulas: the man's body is "a flailing X of anger," "anger" the liberal's code word for insanity.

At one point, in a poem called "White Out," I am reminded of the famous closing image in P.K. Page's "The Stenographers." Shreve's poem: "But the eyes no longer cooperate. / figures wriggle and blur / in a dance these pupils / never learned". In Page's poem, the "pinmen of madness in marathon trim / race round the track of the stadium pupil." If Page's problem is occasional over-reliance on metaphor, Shreve's is an almost complete absence of metaphorical sensibility. One observes in the older poet a deftness with language and a music missing in the younger.

Naomi Guttman writes *Reasons for Winter* for her parents, with "gratitude and love," an entirely fitting dedication in a volume devoted to childhood, the past, and change. Guttman is, at times, sentimental in her reminiscences about growing up in Montreal; but she writes with integrity and never simply for effect:

Where are you now, white ghosts of plaster?
Moses who stood in the corner, who lured
and repelled us with thick horns?
Where are the bottles, blues and greens,
stacks
of old newsprint, sacks of dank clay,
silver-scraps, cans of agate, where does
everything wait
to be made—in whose kitchen, what trash
heap?
Your figure bends over this page

Even in this short excerpt we can see the themes that predominate in her book: her family, her Jewish heritage, her efforts as a poet to interpret and give meaning to memory.

Guttman is the kind of poet who must remain true to her preoccupations if her poetry is to show strength. When she writes in the voice (not hers) of an accomplice to the murder of a policeman, in a poem titled "Ginette," we are doubtful. The poem reads like a story chopped up into lines—*the* danger for the free verse poet.

For the kind of poetry Shreve and Guttman (and countless others) write, the Canadian model is probably the Toronto poet Anne Michaels. Language is for Michaels a kind of controlled indulgence. Shreve and Guttman, if they left Michaels's excesses behind, would doubtless profit from a study of her work.

Vita Nova

Anne Hébert

L'Enfant chargé de songes (roman). Seuil n.p.

Le Jour n'a d'égal que la nuit (poèmes). Seuil $18.95

Oeuvres poétiques. Boréal/Seuil Coll. Boréal Compact n.p.

Reviewed by Grazia Merler

Autant la critique a été élogieuse à l'égard du roman qui, en effet a reçu le prix du Gouverneur Général (1992), autant elle a été réticente à l'égard du retour d'Anne Hébert à la poésie. Et pourtant, à peine quelques mois après la parution du recueil *Le Jour n'a d'égal que la nuit*, une nouvelle édition réunissant les deux autres recueils de poèmes est parue dans l'édition de poche. Il était temps, d'ailleurs, que cette oeuvre, un peu comme pour le théâtre, soit réunie et trouve sa place à côté des grands de la poésie.

Si la constante tension émotive de l'univers d'Anne Hébert est bien reconnaissable, le ton de ces deux dernières oeuvres a cependant changé. La sensualité sourde qui menace à tout moment d'éclater et de tout détruire dans son déchaînement est toujours présente. Roman et poèmes, dans leur mise en oeuvre d'un monde paradoxal, visent, comme toujours, à nommer les choses extrêmes mais, cette fois-ci, c'est pour les maintenir ensemble, pour qu'elles coopèrent à une certaine illusion de la joie de la vie, pour qu'elles disent l'étonnement de la naissance. Le songe, ainsi, dans les deux oeuvres n'est plus porteur d'oubli, de fuite mais il engendre une vie nouvelle.

Enfantement et création artistique semblent se rejoindre dans un seul geste d'amour posé avec précaution et patience. Dans l'introduction au recueil de poèmes dont le titre même suggère cette recherche d'unité (Le Jour n'a d'égal que la nuit), Anne Hébert explique sa propre évolution: "Le poète est au monde deux fois plutôt qu'une." Une première fois pour nommer et refléter le monde le plus fidèlement possible, une deuxième fois pour dire le "passage du dehors au dedans et du dedans au dehors, échange et jubilation....La parole, empoignée de toutes parts, est dite, surprenante et de naissance inconnue, pourrait-on croire, tant l'événement nous dépasse et nous enchante".

Les "Poèmes anciens" écrits entre 1961 et 1980 ainsi que les "Poèmes nouveaux" écrits entre 1987 et 1989 témoignent du fait que, de façon intermittente, Anne Hébert n'a jamais arrêté d'écrire des poèmes à côté des romans et des pièces. A la différence, cependant, des trois autres recueils qui tracent un parcours intime et spirituel de la mort vers la vie, celui-ci explore différentes attitudes à l'égard de la vie et de la réalité quotidienne, différents états d'âme et impressions.

Certains poèmes démasquent l'injustice (Le Piano, Les Offensés, Soleil dérisoire, Sous la voûte céleste, Les fusillés, Fin du monde), d'autres dénoncent la supercherie (Noël, Parricide, L'Ange gardien, Nuit d'été, Que Dieu soit). D'autres poèmes moins engagés expriment des impressions rapides dans l'éclat de leur fraicheur et justesse (Bel été, Baigneuse, Referme l'eau, Silence, Matin ordinaire, Chant des cloches, Oiseau de givre, Cher amour, Le Cri, Le Pain, Parmi les aulnes). D'autres poèmes encore offrent des images non dépourvues d'une certaine ironie moqueuse (La Soeur de Charité, La Page blanche, Terre originelle, Pour un phénix, Le Jour n'a d'égal que la nuit, Les Tournesols, Cher amour). Les tableaux surréalistes (Apparition, Couronne de félicité, Terre brûlée, Une fois seulement, Leçon de tenèbres) parlent d'inspiration poétique et d'attente. D'autres, enfin, font preuve d'humour et de rapidité d'expression (L'Aide-ménagère, Etrange capture, L'Offense faite au jardin, Les Vieux, Jardin dévasté). Bref, il s'agit d'un recueil d'inspiration fort variée. La simplicité du vocabulaire, la rigueur de l'expression, sa clarté même produisent une oeuvre

polysémique. Le sentiment de légèreté sobre et équilibré ressenti vient du fait que l'angoisse et la révolte laissent la place à la lucidité et à l'amour de l'autre.

Le roman réconcilie la fureur de vivre pour soi et la naissance de l'amour pour l'autre. Dans *L'Enfant chargé de songes*, le souvenir du passé où dominent fureur de vivre et angoisse, est remplacé par l'acceptation lucide, voire même résignée du présent et précisement d'une naissance. Le voyage de découverte qu'entreprend Julien à Paris lui permet de se libérer du souvenir et de l'emprise de sa mère. Il exorcise aussi son evoûtement pour Lydie, la voleuse d'enfants et de chevaux. L'image de la noyade et de la naissance se juxtaposent dans un récit épique de retour à la terre de son enfance. Mais avant ce retour au bord d'un bateau au nom révélateur d'"Homéric", Julien aura connu les ravages et l'attrait de la passion aveugle et obsédante.

Comme dans les autres romans d'Anne Hébert, désir charnel et passion sont filtrés, par pudeur, par le souvenir-songe. C'est au son de la musique classique: Couperin, Mozart, Schubert entendue à Paris dans les églises et dans les salles de concert, que Julien évoque son enfance au village de Duchesnay, son esclavage sous les régimes de Pauline, sa mère et de la mystérieuse Lydie. C'est aussi le souvenir de sa chambre rouge, rue Cartier à Québec, où Julien s'enferme pour lire, pour écrire et écouter Bach, Beethoven, Ravel, Stravinski, entre les visites d'Aline, toujours tendre et disponible, qui pousse Julien à retourner vers sa terre natale. "Aline est cette terre obscure à l'horizon qui tremble avec son fruit. Aline est cette source et ce commencement. Julien a rendez-vous avec elle. Le songe est à nouveau devant lui."

L'écriture du roman respecte le rythme du songe, non pas celui du personnage central, mais plutôt celui d'un narrateur qui impose sa propre vision épique et ironique à la fois. Ce narrateur impose sa façon de styliser les dialogues, les lettres, le récit. Cette distance affective lui permet même de dévoiler ce que les personnages n'osent pas dire ou faire. La même voix narrative se projette parfois aussi vers le futur. Tous ces procédés témoignent certes d'une grande maîtrise de l'écriture.

Roman et poèmes marquent un nouveau tournant dans un monde où les objets sont pourtant familiers.

"Dialectical Authenticity"?

Clement H. Wyke
Sam Selvon's Dialectal Style and Fictional Strategy. U of British Columbia P $35.95

Reviewed by Jean-Pierre Durix

Besides their concern with Caribbean life in the West Indies or with that of immigrants in Britain, Selvon's novels are characterized by the author's playful use of various registers of language, from Trinidadian English to (sometimes parodic) Queen's English. The excellent *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon* (ed. by Susheila Nasta, Washington: Three Continents, 1988) brings together essays by various contributors on all aspects of the writer's work. Clement H. Wyke's book adopts a deliberate linguistic approach while explicitly avoiding obscure terminology. His technical analyses are inspired by such theoretical texts as Loreto Todd's *Modern Englishes: Pidgins and Creoles* and John Holm's *Pidgins and Creoles*. One may argue that, at this stage, the use of the term "dialect" in Wyke's study is ill-chosen because of its derogatory connotations. Variants of Caribbean English constitute fully-fledged languages, which each support a particular culture, with its specific codes and rules.

Wyke researches into the characteristics of Trinidadian English and provides a well-informed description of its main grammatical and lexical features. Unfortunately his

developments on the phonetic particularities of this language resort to a system which is neither the international phonetic alphabet nor any other convention which the layman can read directly. As a result, the introduction of yet another code leads to further difficulties instead of clarifying the issue.

Wyke's basic thesis is that Selvon's writing can be divided up into three periods: in his early works (those of the fifties), the novelist is said to use "an authentic pattern of language", while later compositions (*Moses Ascending* and *Moses Migrating*) "show a lessening of the original indigenous dialectal usage", with the middle period serving as a transition. One may regret the judgement of value introduced in what is otherwise a sensitive and useful study of Selvon's work based on a close textual analysis. Underlying all the argument is a belief that what counts in a Caribbean novel is "authenticity" of language, that is a faithful rendering of the people's speech. This rather elementary realistic tenet leads Wyke to conclude that the experimental handling of adapted Trinidadian English in the narration of *Moses Ascending* marks a weakening of Selvon's mastery of the idiom and an increasing estrangement from the island culture due to his long self-imposed exile. One could equally argue that Selvon's playing on a variety of registers, from parodic "literary English" to modified West Indian language, is a sign of the writer's sophistication. It does not necessarily mean that he is pandering to metropolitan tastes. A similar objection might be raised concerning the rather didactic use the author makes of narrators in his early works, a feature which can only be aimed at satisfying a foreign implied readership.

When Wyke forgets about his explicit "message", he can prove extremely perceptive, especially in his study of Selvon's sense of place. The novelist's vision is vehicled by evocations of settings which crystallize past and present, changes in cultural patterns and produce sustained lyrical effects. Wyke argues that Selvon's eye is that of an accomplished painter. Taking up John Thieme's notion of "carnivalization" and Maureen Warner-Lewis's idea of a "linguistic extravaganza reflective of the 'exuberance and eclecticism of the Carnival pageant'" to characterize *The Lonely Londoners*, Wyke introduces an interesting parallel with the Menippean satire, which might well be developed into a Bakhtinian analysis of the work. Similarly *Moses Ascending* is described as "an intertext combined of many threads". It is precisely this clash of various codes which represents Selvon's great originality. Far from stigmatizing the characters' acculturation, Selvon seems to delight in these cultural fireworks which, though disconnected at first sight, develop into a rich and variegated tableau. The novelist succeeds in composing symphonies through the interplay of what appears at first sight as jarring musical lines.

Wyke's distaste for Selvon's use of Caribbean language in later works reminds one of the quarrel between artists who advocate the writing of novels in Creole because they supposedly appeal to the West Indian public more directly and those who prefer to use standard English because of the wider potential audience. Apart from the case of "popular fiction", which is meant to be read fast, the novel as a genre is basically reserved to educated people. In the Caribbean, this category of the population lives in a creolized world; they can enjoy and master several registers of English and appreciate the different class and emotional implications of each. Selvon's novels may be classified in the same category as *La Lézarde* by Edouard Glissant or *Texaco* by Patrick Chamoiseau; in these works, multiple forms of expression are used, including the local Creole, without language becoming a real barrier to an outsider. While avoiding the pitfall of

writing merely for a foreign audience (a form of cultural alienation), these writers keep clear of parochialism. Selvon too steers a difficult and original course between all these obstacles and succeeds in using humour and the tradition of the calypsonian to evoke serious and sometimes tragic situations. His unique handling of various linguistic modes becomes increasingly elaborate, especially in his later novels, even if "authenticity" has to suffer...

Cultural Objectivity: Facts and Fictions

Rick Hornung
One Nation Under The Gun. Stoddart $25.95

Robin Ridington
Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology. $16.95

Reviewed by Blanca Chester

Both *One Nation Under The Gun* and *Little Bit Know Something* explore the complicated relationships between Native and white culture. But beyond this superficial similarity, the two books could not be more different. Hornung's book maintains a certain sort of journalistic objectivity in its reporting style. He makes a strong case for the physical barricade at Oka resulting from a variety of political barriers. The internal affairs of the Mohawks, Hornung suggests, were aggravated by the interference of outside white authority, in particular, the Quebec police and the Canadian military. He paints an unsavoury picture of this interference, and uses the words of the individuals themselves to paint his picture. He quotes one policeman as saying, "We did what we had to do with minimum force necessary... Certainly the fact that children got hurt is unfortunate. I think you understand that we weren't clubbing children". Hornung presents the other side of Oka, the side with which much white Canadian society is still not familiar.

Recent history leading to the events at the barricade is presented from the Native point of view. The conflict at Oka becomes a broad one, including not only Mohawks and whites, but different factions of Mohawk society. The different groups within the Mohawk community are transformed into an issue: pragmatism is set against ideology. Hornung presents the white mainstream perspective of Oka as the version which the media created; it is, he suggests, a different reading from the events which actually took place. The Mohawk Warriors were victims of circumstance, attacked repeatedly before they fought back. Traditional anti-gaming groups operate out of an outdated traditionalism which, according to the Warriors, is no longer functional in today's society. But, while the Warriors see themselves as nationalists, some other Mohawks see them as opportunists.

Hornung goes on to link Oka with older Mohawk history, showing an historic and continuous opposition between traditionalists and progressive Mohawks. But the issue of Oka finally becomes one of redefining what and whose history Hornung is actually writing about. This issue of perspective would have seemed more problematic if Hornung had included in his text an explicit discussion of who defines Mohawk history, and from whose point of view the facts are interpreted and written. While Hornung points out some of the ironies resulting when European laws were first inflicted on Mohawk territories, in the final analysis the facts do not stand for themselves. Mohawk history remains tied up with issues of interpretation and power and Hornung's use of direct quotation and dialogue to undo that complexity is, paradoxically, both the strong and weak point in his writing.

Hornung's writing gives the appearance of being unbiased. He appears to provide the reader with a whole view of events, but

he ignores the writing of any history as just that, writing. It is always a translation, always incomplete. The illusory objectivity which Hornung maintains through the different voices and viewpoints, all seeming to speak for themselves, disguises another reality: Hornung makes the editorial decisions. He decides which questions and issues to raise, and how the interviews will be incorporated into the text. The constant use of quotation marks to validate facts comes to irritate the reader and the journalistic idiom colours the assumed objectivity of Hornung's writing. If Hornung is implicated in the history which he critiques, he is too heavily implicated. Hornung makes it clear which side of the Oka controversy he is on, but he could have been a bit more honest if he had examined his own opinions and biases, including the problem of language itself, in a more direct manner. As it is, Hornung sets himself up as neutral—the static white receptacle of Native knowledge and history.

Ridington's writing contrasts starkly with Hornung's apparently transparent style. In *Little Bit Know Something*, he emphasizes the complexity in communication and understanding between cultures. This book may be read as an academic companion volume to his *Trail to Heaven*; the series of essays expands and amplifies Ridington's personal experience of ethnography. He is keenly aware that communication between cultures involves translating between a tangled web of discourse systems. One cannot read about and understand other cultural experiences by isolating and placing that culture within a Western framework, a Western context of experience. For Ridington, like Hornung, the facts do not shift, but one's perspective on the facts, however, can shift dramatically—and affect their meaning. The subtle self-consciousness of Ridington's writing signals a shift in thinking itself. In "Technology, World View, and Adaptive Strategy," he argues for a different definition, a different interpretation of the word "technology." The Western definition of technology is one comprised of artifacts, material objects; in hunting and gathering societies, technology needs to include it opposite, the notion of artifice.

Ridington's personal goal is "to communicate what I was learning from my own experiences of an Indian way of life". He emphasizes that he is learning from the Dunne-za rather than about them, and continually places the emphasis on the cultural context of narratives by refusing to read in isolation. He reinserts the personal into anthropological discourse. The writing is suggestive of the personal ethnographies of the nineteenth century. This style fell out of favour in the early part of the twentieth century, when anthropology focused itself on being scientifically objective. But Ridington argues that one cannot separate the personal from the ethnographic. The cultural includes the personal, and these together form the stuff of ethnography.

What happens when white European values are super-imposed onto different societies? Ridington notes, for example, that by retaining Marxist concepts in radically different cultural contexts, academics use a sleight of hand to make them fit with Native culture. In his paper on Wechuge and Windigo, he questions whether the idea of Windigo, which has taken on mythic proportions in its translation to white culture, is more a function of Western categories of thought than of Native categories. Anthropological study needs to reflect the thoughtworlds of the people studied, he insists, and not merely our own. That this task requires a great deal of familiarity with another culture, and is objectively impossible, does not invalidate the process. In the last section of the book, which deals specifically with the problem of discourse, Ridington looks even more carefully at questions of interpretation and context. Ultimately, *Little Bit Know*

Something functions both as a critique and a reworking of the notion of ethnography. It works as an attempt to understand, translate, and interpret as much as possible, insisting on the effort, at least, to translate the discourse of otherness.

Black Holes of Fiction

Leon Rooke
Who Do You Love?. McClelland & Stewart $16.99

J.A. Hamilton
July Nights and Other Stories. Douglas & McIntyre $16.95

Reviewed by Elaine Auerbach

Both of these collections contain stories focussing on changing human beings in a sometimes hostile, sometimes benevolent world.

Most of the twenty-six stories in Rooke's eighth collection of short fiction have been previously published and subsequently revised for this edition. The variation in voices is remarkable. "Want to Play House" is a monologue delivered by a child in which the amusing, harmless game suddenly turns sinister. "Body Count" is a narrative by a woman in a nursing home concerned about the premature death of infants along the road of her own mortality. "Art," perhaps the most unusual of the stories, records the voices of a couple who are figures in a painting that is slowly disintegrating. The majority of the stories are not very long, yet most succeed in developing raw and tender evocations of emotional truth.

Two stories are especially compelling. "Who Do You Love?" is a minimalist novel in which time, place and character are compactly drawn. The rich sensation of movement, created through subtle shifts in point of view, is palpable and slightly dizzying in its effects. Rooke deftly modulates from first to second person narration, gradually drawing us into the significant presence of events as commonplace as a woman washing her hair in a sink and a young boy falling off a bicycle and breaking a tooth. Carefully selected and balanced events recollected from a fluid memory stream are kept in motion by the tantalizing anticipation of the answer to the question "who do you love?" A fatherless boy is asked repeatedly by his mother whom he loves best, her or the father who has, like the boy's stolen nickel, "fallen between the floor boards" into oblivion. Rooke often uses "loveless" characters to show the power of emotional polarities that circumscribe desire and pleasure. The "fat woman," who, in the guise of Ella Mae in Rooke's novella of the same name, crisscrosses the boundaries of appearance and reality, resurfaces at the centre of this story, represented by a nameless fat woman. The narrator watches as she and her fat boyfriend make love in a lighted window. The poignancy of this scene—a fatherless boy feeling the ache of lovelessness, observing two social outcasts engaged in lovemaking—is shrouded in mystery and revulsion only because the youth cannot decode the feeling, does not see himself as outcast and can not love without remembering his own loss. Elements of this story allude to *bildungsromans* such as Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. The atmosphere of unfulfilled desire, of innocence shrinking from experience of the world, trapped yet continually tantalized, never loses its mesmerizing power.

"Pretty Pictures," another minimalist piece, is about story-telling. Here Rooke clarifies why he sometimes grovels in ugliness and consciously cultivates the unusual and the bizarre. The cadences of the writing are similar to those of "Who Do You Love?," the intimacy of the narrator's voice establishing a bond with the reader: "There are pretty pictures and not-so-pretty pictures. You know that. We would probably

agree which is which." Who has not been driven to avoid painful memory pictures by diverting the mind with more pleasurable, pretty scenes? Infidelity is one of the not-so-pretty pictures, and the narrator, in an attempt to evade what is very disturbing, takes refuge in a memory of a happy moment in his son's childhood, claiming it as his own. We live "reconstructed" lives all of the time, Rooke perceives, because the "one true picture, the one picture drawn from real life...is not a picture that will do any of us any good." Echoes of Emily Dickinson's injunction to "Tell all the truth but tell it slant, Success in Circuit lies" is one of the paths to what "does good," and fiction, firmly grounded in an awareness of the circuitous paths of memory, lies at the heart of this effort. The pain of infidelity, for example, is realized not by story alone, but by the narrator's manipulations of other pictures. Perhaps the effect which beauty and love have on our lives, Rooke suggests, comes by way of intimately acknowledging their opposites.

Not all of the works in this book are memorable. "Drivers," essentially a familial contest of wills revolving around who drives whose car, is a yawn of a tale. "Cornfields," "LR loves GL" and "Admiral of the Fleet"—which are some of the lengthier pieces—do not inspire or encourage a second reading. Portions of the "Extracts from the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Huron Street Benevolent Society" seem better suited for the stage. Though clearly a display of Rooke's talent at creating dialogic voices, these extracts fool with the cant of post-modernism. Despite these shortcomings, Rooke always expresses an ironic tension built on contraries and excess. In a world of mixed signals, where some become lost waiting for everything to fall into place, Rooke keeps up the exuberant call. "The world," cries out the narrator in "Sweethearts," "doesn't belong to those you thought it belonged to, and never did."

J. A. Hamilton, in the fourteen stories which comprise her first collection, portrays characters on the brink of acknowledging how much they have permitted the world to belong to "others" and, consequently, how much they have been controlled and repressed by that world. The voices in Hamilton's stories are possessed by figures of authority—paternal, maternal, social, and psychic—and this possession sometimes leaves a didactic aftertaste, especially in the wake of so many wrecked relationships. (Every story, with the exception of two—"Too Young Boys" and "Blood"—places some form of abuse or infidelity as a significant part of the narrative.) Hamilton writes from the position of a New Age Pandora who is all too aware of the pain and suffering that women, men and especially children must endure. "Cimarron" is told from the point of view of Ines, who with her husband Alberto and orphaned grandchild, Carmelita, are fleeing Mexico to escape the soldiers who have murdered her son and his wife. Though Hamilton displays a skill for descriptive detail, the narrative voice is not convincing and the story reads like a fleshed out version of a statistic. Ines is much too detached to sustain our compassion. Though Hamilton is scrupulous and detailed in her diction (a result perhaps of her practice as a poet—her book of poems, *Body Rain*, was a finalist for the Pat Lowther Award, and she can use imagery to carry emotions in a split second of timing) the language itself, as a technique, sometimes becomes the focus of the piece rather than the voice. "Gumboot Sadie," for example, contains an array of carefully crafted colloquialisms and vocabulary specific to living on the range. Yet there are instances in which the diction is too baroque, such as in the episode where Gladys, the narrator, pushes similes as far as they can go in her description of the foster children and social workers at the

ranch: "The rest was soon history swaggering in rude adolescence around corners, predictable as the black Cinzano ash trays cluttering Ajaz's oil-cloth table and her coffee thick as Cowhichan sweaters, predictable as warm wet chinook winds licking at winter and aurora borealis fooling with the night sky, predictable as hucking manure and haying."

The appeal of Hamilton's characters—their cynical, irritable glee—arises from their intuition that they can no longer be fooled by the "mere promise" of hope. "On Morris Hill" moves away from mothering in the heterosexual nuclear family (and beyond the patriarchal focus on the role of the father in the "The Names of the Constellations") to mothering in a lesbian relationship. Anna is on the staff of a treatment centre for autistic children. Marion is a divorced social worker whose autistic son, Sammy, gains the love of Anna. Love spills over, uncontainable in this story, just as Sammy, who is unable to behave like "normal" people, spills over with his exceptional being in the world. But the impulse to cruelty and violence is not overcome simply because the people in the relationship are lesbians. Anna loses control and strikes out at Sammy. The struggle that the two women and Sammy must undertake to make things work continues indefinitely, with passion and the recognition of human imperfection—a recognition accumulated from surviving family and social conventions.

Release from a host of spectres—parental, sexual and emotional abuse, sexual infidelity—is found through catharsis. "The earth is quaking," remarks the narrator of "Shelter," writing in her journal while she is a resident of a transition house, "Can no one else feel it?" Change, especially the deepest emotional change, can often feel like an earthquake. But Hamilton never leaves us staring at the black holes; she expresses a bittersweet touch, a dark humour that makes us care about these characters and their situations. There isn't much more that a good writer can want for her work than this vital link with her readers.

Masque without Revels

George McWhirter

A Staircase For All Souls: The British Columbia Suite, A Wooded Masque for Readers and Listeners. Oolichan $10.95

Reviewed by Manina Jones

In one sense, *A Staircase for All Souls* is a throwback to traditional Romantic nature poetry in which the natural world, whether it is a garden, golf course, or, most often, British Columbian forest, becomes "a staircase for all souls," the subject of a series of meditations that allows the poet both ascent and descent, transport into the sensual as well as the spiritual realm. To borrow a phrase used by the B.C. tourist industry, McWhirter sees the landscape as "Super. Natural." Indeed, the volume's transformation of British Columbian terrain into a mythical locale might almost be an advertisement for the province's natural wonders, except that its language so seldom bears the traces of specific region, the feeling of a unique place and time. The poems at several moments deal with the Irish immigrant's experience of Canadian nature, designating the New World a paradise discovered by "St. Christopher Columbus," investing it with a timeless numinousness and its settlement with a nostalgia that some might find *un*settling in these times of environmental, cultural and historical crisis. Indeed, in reading *All Souls*, I am haunted by the spectre of what it ignores, such as the devastation of clear-cut logging, or the vehement responses of First Nations people to the notion of a New World paradise created for post-Columbian human exploration and exploitation. The

poem "A Sound Observation" describes a populist party, where "*Representatives / Dance to polkas / In public places...* [and] *At night they talk / About the new reality*," but the dance is a dream; these poems are mostly private rather than public meditations, and the nature of the "new reality" remains obscure.

The cover of *A Staircase for All Souls* depicts a tangled sphere of trees and ladders; the poems inside seek a difficult balance between the possibility of poetically harvesting the sensual fruits of nature as in themselves valuable, and the perceived necessity for poetry to be a privileged means of ascent beyond the realm of the physical. The volume most often seems to opt for the latter approach, humanizing the landscape and moulding it, via a formal poetic voice, to a variety of conventional Judeo-Christian and classical mythic patterns: "Insurgent earth, obedient / As the platoons of mushrooms to their brown motto: / *We will rise up, we the resurrected.*" This mythologizing isn't necessarily a bad thing, except that the persistent perception of the sensory world as a metaphor for metamorphic processes and metaphysical life-cycles sometimes becomes ponderous and self-involved. A character in one poem asks, for example, "Is the soul just a freeze-dried drop of sweat?," and while there may be an ironic slant to this quotation in its dramatic context, it is exemplary of the volume's occasional tendency to formulate the big questions rather tritely.

The use of striking metaphors, similes and other tropes is clearly one way the poems in *A Staircase for All Souls* strive for poetic concentration; it is a way of enacting in language the kind of transformation with which the volume is seriously concerned. However, some might feel, as I did, that the poems often miss a rung on the metaphoric ladder that links sight and insight. This overly-ingenious example is taken from a poem called "The Quick:"

> Spring! The ground here thistled
> And ferned over,
> Measled with vine maple, hatching its sept-
> Or octuple tips, like gangrenous claws
> In the clean face of April air. The results of this pleasure
> As marked and precise as teenage Zits.
>
> How they stab their faces with chocolate.
>
> There's a thin poultice
> Of pine needles on the twisted wrist
> Of the path that reached too far into the dark
> Vulva of the forest.
>
> Don't touch that poppy's green unopened scrotum,
> Ms.

"The Voyeur and the Countess Wielopolska" is a short autumnal narrative that offers a perplexing witches broth of mixed metaphor:

> ...she heard the heartbeat of apples
> Thumping down in the dark, into their leafy packets
> At the tree bottom—demure cidery fermentations
> Like good dowagers in rustled chiffon,
> On eightieth birthdays. How October leaves its scum
> Around a tub of stars.

The first sub-title of *A Staircase for All Souls* suggests that the way the various components of the poem work are analogous to a musical suite, or, even more provocatively, as suggested by the second sub-title, the masque, a composite form of dramatic spectacle that blends music, text, and movement, finally drawing its audience into the performance in the dance of revels. One appealing element of the poems in *A Staircase for All Souls* is their self-conscious use of sound, both as a device and as a theme. Many of the individual poem titles play on the word "sound" itself, and readers are implicitly asked to be attentive to

the language of sound as well as the sound of language. As the sub-title indicates, these are poems for listeners, and at times they demonstrate a musical, percussive flair: "The vanity of bracken in the cracks, / Budded through the blacktop," "*A guttural glory and gypsy singsong / Rings throughout the trees,*" "Soft moths curfewed under fir, hemlocked / In an archdiocese of trees."

In addition to these resonant moments, there is an attempt to modulate the unified voice of lyrical sensibility with the dramatic, performative qualities of the masque. Differences in type face and tone alert the reader to a variety of voices, but these seem largely undifferentiated, disembodied components of stationary, meditative set pieces rather than "moving" dramatic performances. The exception to this rule is the sequence "Notes Toward the Disappearance of a Canadian Family on the Gulf Islands," which might be called the "settee piece" in this "suite" of poems; an item of furniture (the settee) becomes the focal point of a surreal family drama that manages to incorporate individuated voices: "The furniture / Configured / Around all their conversations." James Reaney once described Halloween as a kind of folk drama, a masque-like revelry in which the audience performs. McWhirter's version of All Souls' Eve in *A Staircase for All Souls* is too stagey for my taste; it is a performance in which I don't feel invited to play.

Sons and Mothers

David Watmough

Thy Mother's Glass. HarperCollins $24.95
Vibrations: Readings, cassette & C.D. The Writer's Voice n.p.

Reviewed by Tom Hastings

A prolific writer with over thirteen books to date, David Watmough has described his overall literary project as, "a fictional autobiography of Davey Bryant, a twentieth century man who happens to be an author, an immigrant and a homosexual." In *Thy Mother's Glass,* his latest novel, Watmough turns his attention more exclusively to Davey's younger years, presenting a touching portrait of Davey's childhood in Cornwall and his labyrinthine physical and emotional journey towards Vancouver as an *out* gay man in the early 1960s.

Here, as elsewhere in this understudied series, Davey Bryant functions as an alter-ego through which Watmough is able to explore the intersection of sexual and national identities while converging the political with the personal in a way that is more explicitly autobiographical than his earlier novels and short stories. Like Davey, Watmough is also a Cornish immigrant to Canada and Davey's journey parallels his own arrival in Vancouver as a gay writer in the 1960s.

This long novel is divided into two main sections which recount the relationship of Davey and his tenacious mother, Isabella Bryant, over a period of 35 years. Davey is very much his mother's child: like his "Mama," he is stubbornly independent and infuriatingly iconoclastic. Not surprisingly, their initially close emotional bond begins to unravel as Isabella struggles to come to terms with her son's homosexuality while Davey struggles to accept his mother's idiosyncratic personality. Isabella, according to her son, "doesn't fit neatly into stereotypes or national patterns." As a young bride, Isabella refuses to assimilate her more urbane personality to the demands of her husband's conformist rural family and spends most of her senior years living not with her husband but her friend Charlotte. Her son exhibits a similar streak of non-conformity. A "scholarly boy," Davey is discharged from of the navy on buggery charges, travels to Paris with a friend and suddenly decides to move to San Francisco with his American lover Ken.

Mother and son's successful journey

towards reconciliation, the novel's primary narrative, takes place against a backdrop of various geographical locations and historical events. Davey's travels through Prague and other urban centres, for instance, provide a rare glimpse into the gay underground scene of post-WW II Eastern Europe. Eventually Davey and his mother not only come to accept each other's personality, but acknowledge how similar they are in temperament. Watmough's choice of title and opening epigraph from Shakespeare's Sonnet Three is therefore particularly apt: "Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee calls back the lovely April of her prime."

Before being reconciled after a decade apart, Davey and his mother separately experience acts of homophobic violence. These shared experiences draw them closer and inculcate in them a growing political awareness about the oppression of certain marginalized citizens, especially homosexuals. Davey helps defend a group of gay men in California from a police sting operation and Isabella comes to the rescue of a falsely persecuted young gay man with whom she is travelling. Such explicit consciousness-raising guarantees that this newly discovered dimension of their relationship will be based on mutual respect and not just filial obligation, and marks *Thy Mother's Glass* as not just another gay coming-out story, but a story about the politics of identity.

At his best, Watmough is an old-fashioned story-teller with an evocative theatrical voice that conveys both a sense of whimsy and moral authority. Thus it is a treat that The Writer's Voice has released a C.D. and cassette of three of his best readings. Listening to Watmough frequently can be more enjoyable than reading him. Each reading recalls some poignant moment in Davey Bryant's life. As a six-year-old in "A First Death," he encounters death for the first time in a way that underscores the simple beauty of childhood innocence. In "The Reluctant Club," the most entertaining reading, two elderly widows commiserate over afternoon tea when they discover that they both have gay sons: "We share the identical affliction. We are two old women with pansy sons. We should belong to some kind of fiendish club." In the final bittersweet reading, "Thank You Siegfried Sassoon," a fifty year old Davey, while recuperating in a hospital from renal colic, meets a young man with AIDS. Twisted and distorted from chronic pain, this "monkey boy" reminds Davey of a Sassoon poem about a dying soldier in WW I. As he recalls the closing lines of that poem, Davey unites these two senseless tragedies that have cut down two generations of young men in their prime.

While Watmough may not write with the same stylistic verve that Scott Symons does or with the Timothy Findley's thematic inventiveness, there is no other Canadian writer of Watmough's generation who is as passionately committed to exploring the relationship of homosexual and Canadian identity. Perhaps that is why Watmough is able to call himself "the queen of current gay Canadian literature" and get away with it.

Nelligan

Pierre H. Lemieux
Nelligan amoureux. Fides n.p.

Gerald Godin
Nelligan Revisité. l'Hexagone Lectures n.p.

Reviewed by Kathy Mezei

In 1991, *Oeuvres complètes*, a new critical edition of Emile Nelligan's poems was published, edited by his biographer Paul Wyczynski, Réjean Robidoux, and Jacques Michon; in February 1990, the opera, *Nelligan*, opened in Quebec City, with a libretto by Michel Tremblay. And recently,

resting on the frail shoulders of a poet who wrote only from the age of 16 to 19 (1895-1899) and spent over 40 years in an asylum, two speculative narratives based on his poems based on his poems have appeared. Alongside scholary studies, Nelligan has inspired such speculative works—on his madness (see Bernard Courteau, *Nelligan n'était pas fou*), and now, on his love life.

Pierre Lemieux's *Nelligan amoureux* is a scholarly investigation of Nelligan in love, an appealing but obviously elusive subject for we lack concrete biographical information. Lemieux speculates on Nelligan's unrequited love for a "Gretchen", "*la vièrge blonde,*" and proceeds through three amatory periods—contestation, conversion, and alienation to link Nelligan's poems and love life. Drawing upon evidence from the poems themselves and relying on Lacourcière's 1952 edition and Wyczynski's 1987 *Biographie*, Lemieux describes the period of contestation (October 1895 to Autumn 1897) as one influenced by pagan mythology and poetic landscapes and a longing for a "*vièrge blanche et rose.*"

From autumn 1897 to spring 1899 occurs the period of conversion during which the poet's passion for Gretchen, *la vièrge blonde* is aroused, particulary in what Lemieux calls "cycle of Gretchen," a group of fifteen poems. During this period, Nelligan seems to retreat to Catholicism, possibly caused, claims Lemieux, by "un événement majeur et tragique de l'été 1989, quelque chose comme une grande déception amoureuse qui se répercuterait dans *Vaisseau d'Or.*"

The third period, centred on Nelligan's friend, Françoise, signals severe alienation, characterized by hallucinatory poems haunted by Poe-like spectres, skeletons, phantoms, black cats, and is dominated by a *vièrge noire.*

Although a reader and devotee of Nelligan will be rewarded by Lemieux's painstaking dating, positioning and exegesis of Nelligan's poems, this reader will unfortunately also fall upon two problems. First, since the *Oeuvres complètes*, was published in 1991, Lemieux's information is based upon the now outdated 1952 edition. Second, can we really create a biography based on a reading of the poems themselves. Aware of this biographical fallacy, Lemieux defends himself:

> Le récit que nous présentons, bâti a même les textes poètiques, n'est généralement pas l'histoire réelle de la vie de Nelligan, mais bien plutôt une transposition littéraire ou une reconstitution due à la plume du poète, dont on peut dire seulement qu'elle offre une vraisemblance suffisante.

Nevertheless, at the end of the book we wonder at the thinness of the evidence for Nelligan's love life. After all, Nelligan was a young poet who relied on poetic conventions and forefathers (Rodenbach, Verlaine, Baudelaire etc), and whose turn of phrase was often derived more from literature and literary posing than from lived experience. This is not to deny Nelligan's poems their moments of breath-taking beauty and poignancy. Think only of the closing of *Vaisseau d'or* :

> Qu'est devenu mon coeur, navire
> déserté?
> Hélas! Il a sombré dans l'abîme du Rêve!

or the terror of the later poems:

> Il a hanté mon noir taudis
> Et ses soliloques maudits de fantôme
> ("Le spectre")

or the longing in Soir d'hiver:

> Ah! comme la neige a neigé!
> Ma vitre est un jardin de givre.

Godin does something both more dangerous and more compelling with Nelligan's poems. In his short collection of musings on Nelligan, Godin who had worked on a proposed film script on Nelligan to be shot by the late Claude Jutra, offers his reflections on the poet's life. Here we learn more

of Nelligan's life, his madness, his "women", and his deeply embedded fascination for generations of Québécois than in the larger, more scholarly study. Godin assuages our fear of biographical fallacy because he does not read the poems as biography that is as in the commonplace interpretation of the "vaisseau d'or" as a metaphor of Nelligan's descent into madness, but instead as poetic *premonitions.* When he lays the lines before us from "Soirs d'octrobre," we feel a shiver: "Oui, je souffre, ces soirs, démons mornes, chers Saintes..../Mon âme se fait dune à funèbres hantises."

Suddenly, Godin is absolutely right; this is a frightening premonition. When he turns to the theme that preoccupied Lemieux—love and women—Godin, although sailing too close to the oedipal, to biographical fallacy, and to misogynous metaphors (can we really read "*le puits hanté*" as the sinister symbol of the vagina?), captures what was quite possibly, given the oppressive religious context, the complex response of a young man both fearing and desiring sexual experience.

The book is charming and affecting, interposed as it is with photographs, paintings, and newspaper clippings; it radiates immediacy and intimacy. In this thoughtful, whimsical, mournful 57 pages, one will have at last a sense of this elusive young poet and his art.

Ethnography as Dialogue

T. F. McIlwraith, with introduction by John Barker
The Bella Coola Indians. (Two vol.) U Toronto P $60.00/ Cloth $125.00.

Reviewed by Julie Cruikshank

"Ethnographies begin as conversations between anthropologists and their hosts," John Barker reminds us in his introduction to T.F. McIlwraith's *The Bella Coola Indians.* A classic study of Nuxalk society conducted in the 1920s and first published in 1948, this 1,500 page two-volume work demonstrates how ethnographies *continue* to be conversations, not only in inception but also in construction, publication and in their ongoing lives.

T.F. McIlwraith was born in Hamilton, Ontario, in 1899, one year after Franz Boas published *The Mythology of the Bella Cook Indians.* Following overseas service in World War I, young McIlwraith studied anthropology at Cambridge. In his preface, he confirms that he was already distinguishing the approaches of "the American school" of anthropology from "the older school of English anthropology" when he began his fieldwork in 1922. With Edward Sapir's sponsorship and financial assistance from the Anthropology Division at the Victoria Memorial Museum he spent two six-month periods in Bella Coola between March 1992 and February 1924.

Franz Boas's salvage paradigm dominated North American anthropology by this time. Boas interpreted narrative texts as providing objective evidence of the past, somehow uncontaminated by the observer, and he recorded stories with scant reference to narrator or circumstances of narration. While disagreeing with Boas on a number of points McIlwraith's most compelling long term conversations with his Nuxalk hosts began because he initially decided to avoid replicating Boas's narrative collection. Ironically, he observed "...the Bella Coola... are so intensely proud of the deeds of their first forefathers that several insisted on recounting them before they were willing to do other work; in consequence, a fair number of myths was collected through necessity."

Unexpectedly, then, oral narrative became central to McIlwraith's ethnography. He learned the trade language Chinook and recorded stories in that language so that he could make his own translations. He came to realize that

narratives—origin stories, family histories, stories of relationships between animals and humans—were being presented to him as explanations for virtually *all* topics he raised with Nuxalk people, their way of establishing the importance of connections between secular and superhuman dimensions of existence.

McIlwraith conversed directly with the Nuxalk, but he began a second, indirect conversation with Boas in his notes, sometimes confirming, sometimes challenging the latter's observations. He questioned Boas's contention that versions of particular narratives could be evaluated in terms of their accuracy, that they could somehow be codified as *a* definitive mythology. Instead, he noted, different families have different—though not necessarily competing—accounts of how things came to be. "Each man, convinced of the authenticity of his own family account is quite willing to believe that the one belonging to someone else is equally correct." Like Boas, though, he remained convinced that he was recording was a kind of 'memory culture' rather than a viable, living tradition. Like Boas, he sometimes complained about the difficulty of finding people to work with during periods of ceremonial activity. But unlike Boas, McIlwraith participated fully in the winter ceremonial in 1923-24 and describes the songs, the dances, the narratives in minute detail. While he remained committed to the salvage paradigm of the day, his actual presentation moved away from the notion of myth as collectible object and toward myth as philosophical explanation.

Back from the field, McIlwraith began fulfilling his obligation to the Museum, constructing his ethnography by 1926 for publication. Here, we learn from Barker's introduction, began a third conversation, very different from ones he had with Nuxalk or with Boas—this time a conversation with guardians of public morality. Barker's careful discussion of the twenty year process involved in the original publication of *The Bella Coola Indians* exposes an important chapter in the history of Canadian anthropology and raises questions about the role that bureaucratic censorship has historically played in the arts and social sciences in Canada. In the decade prior to McIlwraith's fieldwork, Canadian parliamentarians seem to have taken an unusual interest in ethnographic publications, apparently sparked by references to the irrepressible 'talking vagina' in one earlier collection of aboriginal narratives which they ordered burned. Diamond Jenness, then Chief of the Anthropology Division, was warned in 1929 that "the Canadian government could publish nothing which might offend a 12-year-old school-girl," and that contravening this might lead to the banning of all anthropological publications and even to "the elimination of the Anthropological Division itself."

Jenness went to work on McIlwraith's report to ensure that all passages containing sexual references were Latinized. In 1931, Jenness sent it to Boas who returned lukewarm comments after two and a half years. Systematically edited, fragmented, and altered, the manuscript was finally returned to McIlwraith at his request in the 1940s. Determined to publish it, McIlwraith began the laborious process of reconstituting it "as it was written in 1924-26." It first appeared in 1948, twenty-two years after it was submitted for publication.

Manuscripts have a life of their own, quite independent of authors. With its republication in 1992, *The Bella Coola Indians* has become part of a new conversation. While McIlwraith noted a general disinterest of younger people in the narratives in 1922-23, contemporary Nuxalk have shown tremendous interest seventy years later. A few copies of the 1948 ethnography survived in the community and have been in regular use in Nuxalk school programs. The 46 photographs, the diagrams,

genealogies, place names, maps, songs, and narratives provide reference material for programs initiated by the Nuxalk Cultural Centre and for Nuxalk collaborations with the Canadian Museum of Civilization. In October 1991, as this book neared publication, the Nuxalk community invited McIlwraith's children and editor John Barker to a potlatch at Bella Coola.

Ethnographies do, indeed, begin as conversations. But such conversations do not end with a printed text. Just as Nuxalk people drew on narratives to explain important issues to McIlwraith in 1922-23, the narratives, the songs, the photographs in *The Bella Coola Indians* continue to take on new meanings in a contemporary community. As First Nations draw on oral tradition and material culture to represent their identity both to themselves and to cultural outsiders, ethnographies come under critical scrutiny by a new generation of young people struggling, as their ancestors did, to make connections between past and present.

This ethnography will continue to be an invaluable work of reference for the Nuxalk, for ethnographers, and for anyone interested in oral narrative or in the history of Canadian anthropology. John Barker has done an admirable job of framing these conversations for us. His introduction deserves careful reading before and re-reading after immersion in the ethnography.

Irony

Linda Hutcheon (Ed.)
Double-Talking: Essays on Verbal and Visual Ironies in Contemporary Canadian Art and Literature. ECW P $25

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Double-Talking is devoted entirely to the study of the presence and significance of irony in various Canadian artistic productions. The starting point for this project is a remark by E.D. Blodgett that the Canadian language—and consequently what is said in it—is "by law ambiguous " In the brief statement that Hutcheon sent to the contributors, she defines this ambiguity as inherently ironic and suggests that "obsessed with articulating its identity, Canada's voice is often a doubled one, that of the forked tongue of irony." In that case, Canada's art would also have to be ironic, if not exclusively, then at least to a significant extent.

The contributions to *Double-Talking* were written in response to a brief statement, "'Speaking Canadian': The Ironies of Canadian Art and Literature", in which Hutcheon suggests two possible functions of irony, a deconstructive critique and a constructive assertion of multiple meanings which opens up new spaces between meanings "where new things can happen." One of the underlying motives for this statement was "to combat the customary diffuseness of essay collections," but to claim that this goal had been reached would in itself be ironic. The ten contributors work with a variety of definitions and applications which is so wide that the recurrence of the term "irony" in connection with Canadian cultural products frequently appears the only bracket that holds the collection together.

The opening essay, "*Who* Says That Canadian Culture is Ironic?," is the best contribution to *Double-Talking*. In the piece, Jamie Dodd discusses Canada as an essentially ironic country which profits from the postmodern acceptance of multiple meanings. Dodd's main concern is literary criticism, and he debates the works of various Canadian critics (Frye, Kroetsch, Davey) in the context of irony and the problem it poses for canonization.

Six of the essays are devoted to the study of irony in Canadian literature. The most impressive of these is Arun P. Mukherjee's investigation into "The Discursive Strategies of Some Hyphenated Canadians."

Reading poems by Marlene Philip, Dionne Brand and others, Mukherjee argues that "irony ... is a way of speaking that creates exclusionary communities" which in Canada constitute themselves frequently along colour lines. Similarly well done is Karen Smythe's close reading of Mavis Gallant's ironic preface to *Home Truths*. The other contributions on Canadian literature (on novels by van Herk and Findley, feminist poetry, and found poems) are rather less convincing, because the expected connection to irony is often rather vague.

Postmodernist and deconstructive practices have led to an increasing consideration of other art forms beside literature, and so it is only logical that *Double-Talking* devotes some space to visual art. More than the pieces on literature, these three essays are concerned with products from the canon's margin. One essay, in particular, "The Writing on the Wall: The Ironies in and of Lothar Baumgarten's 'Monument for the Native Peoples of Ontario, 1984-85" by Julie Beddoes, raises—voluntarily and involuntarily—questions about the ironic mechanics of artistic and critical production. According to Beddoes, Baumgarten's piece becomes, mostly as a consequence of its geographic environment, involuntarily a monument for the natives' enemies. This reading may be possible, but the question remains how much sense it makes.

The various approaches to the function of irony in contemporary Canadian art provoke questions that the essays collected in *Double-Talking* do not address sufficiently. Wendy Waring refers to "that troublesome self-referentiality which undoes the masterful premise of irony." Irony can hence only function properly if it is not unmasking itself. But what if the irony has masked itself so well that it is not being recognized as such? And what if the irony rests with the critic who has found what isn't there?

Somehow the book leaves one dissatisfied. This may partially be due to the lacking coherence that had been promised. But more likely the reason lies in the fact that the topic itself is far too ambiguous to make possible the kind of analysis we traditionally expect from scholarly study. The irony lies in the fact that its meanings are far too manifold to reduce it to just *Double Talking*.

Company of Strangers

Marta Weigle
Spiders & Spinsters: Women and Mythology
U of New Mexico P. n.p.

Gloria Feman Orenstein
The Reflowering of the Goddess. Pergamon Press. n.p.

Mary Meigs
In The Company of Strangers. Talonbooks, n.p.

Reviewed by Lynne Masland

Spiders & Spinsters: Women and Mythology is a collection of mythological material about women drawn from the Americas, Europe, and the Greco-Roman/Judeo-Christian myths which underlie Western culture. Marta Weigle, a professor of anthropology, English, and American studies at the University of New Mexico, has drawn from a variety of sources, including anthropology, folklore, literature, comparative religion, theology, and Freudian and Jungian psychology in her multi-cultural study of the portrayal of women through sacred symbols, texts, rites, social beliefs and customs.

Weigle contends that we know more about how women figure in men's mythologies, narratives, philosophies and analyses than we do about women's mythologies themselves. The goddesses and other mythical figures are archetypal images of human females as envisioned by males. The mythological imagery reflects men's fears and desires, embodied in religious concepts. The narratives have often been collected by male scholars researching

from their own perspectives. Women's myths, she asserts, are less frequently found in traditional formal religious and social ceremonies and more often in the mundane, in the stories women recount among themselves and to their children, in the rituals they perform among themselves, and in their gossip while they work together.

The book is organized into categories: goddesses, heroines, spinsters, guides, origins and matriarchy. Each chapter is a compendium of text, collected myths and narratives, illustrations, popular beliefs and customs, historical accounts, and critical, interpretative material. Rather than an analysis of each topic, the result is a "spinning and weaving" together of many strands and voices into a tapestry or collage of material. The pattern is suggested in a line from the book's opening poem, "Grandmother," by Paula Gunn Allen: "After her, the women and the men weave blankets into tales of life..." For this reader, the "weaving" unfortunately at times resembles an assemblage of research notes and quotes, interesting in themselves, but requiring more digestion. In "Origins and Matriarchy," the quotations range, in a few pages, from a 19th century Swiss comparative historian/mytho-logist's theories, to an illustration of a Native woven basket, to anthropological notes on food-carrying bags and women's gathering activities, to a South American matriarchal myth. These quotations follow each other with little or no authorial interpretation or analysis, nor do they, in themselves, always provide a continuity of viewpoint or contrast of opinion. They simply "are." So the reader makes meaning by following the progression of quotes throughout the chapter, concluding from the ending passages that the author wishes to imply that, although there was no golden age of matriarchies, the value of the matriarchal myth lies in its visions of new paradigms for the future.

Weigle's strengths include her use of indigenous American as well as European material; her recognition that myth "ratifies" existing social order; her understanding of many myths and lore as male interpretations of the female archetypes, and her location of women's own myths in the mundane, the telling of life experiences.

In *The Reflowering of the Goddess*, Gloria Feman Orenstein, a professor of comparative literature at the University of Southern California, includes the "mothers" of contemporary Goddess research, Merlin Stone and Marija Gimbutas, in her dedication and, indeed, draws heavily upon the work of these women in her theorization of a "feminist matristic vision." Using Gimbutas' studies of pre-patriarchal cultures in Old Europe and Stone's research into the old Goddess religions of the Near East, Orenstein recalls the existence of ancient Goddess-centered cosmogonies and creation myths; traces the suppression of the Goddess; and postulates a relationship between women's madness and separation from the power of the lost Great Mother. Orenstein's interests include women artists and surrealism, ecofeminism, theater, feminism and the creative arts, and shamanism—all of which have been woven into her theory of a "feminist matristic vision," embodied in a "reflowering" of the ancient Mother Goddess as the sacred symbol of the center and origin of life.

The concept of a feminist matristic vision, which Orenstein distinguishes from "gynocentric," meaning "woman-centered," and from "feminine," a "patriarchal social construct" which varies in meaning in different historical periods and cultures, implies "a shift in cosmogony rather than a shift in gender alone." Orenstein places the Goddess, envisioned as the Great Mother/Earth Mother, "at the origin of Creation and at the center of the Cosmos." With this shift in mythic visioning, she argues, comes a distinct change in values, world view, and action because "on a very

subtle level, myth is real—or, creation is literal. It matters very much what our myths are; it matters very much what we create." Orenstein conceives of visioning in a shamanic sense, that is, creative visioning is "literal" and has consequences in "real" life. Thus, there is a relationship between dreaming and waking, between artistic visioning and living; between journeying and understanding. Orenstein also distinguishes feminist matristic art from feminist art, to which it is obviously related. Matristic art, she writes, acknowledges and is based upon the "shift in Cosmogony, mythology, spirituality, psychology and history" resulting from the reclamation of the Great Goddess as the center of creation.

Throughout the book, Orenstein describes the "reflowering of the Goddess" in art works created by a number of contemporary women painters, writers and performance artists, who use visual and performance media to express an earth- and Goddess-centered vision of creation and being. The connections between spiritual belief, myth, and ethical practice as well as the relationship between art and religious expression are explored through the prism of value shifts occasioned by the feminist matristic vision in which the Mother Goddess forms the symbol system of the sacred. Numerous examples of works by contemporary feminist matristic painters, poets, and performance artists serve to reinforce her contention that the movement is fueling a late 20th century "renaissance," in which matristic iconographic images and ritual performance lead to personal transformation and resacralization of the Earth. Her ecofeminist perspective, which she describes as a "fusion of ethics, aesthetics, and politics in a global ecological vision of survival both for humankind and for all non-human life on Earth," is Goddess-centered and woman-oriented, but not exclusively so. The feminist matristic vision, she claims, does not exclude anyone—male or female—but, instead, makes the Planet Earth, rather than humans, the central focus of life.

Mary Meigs' *In The Company of Strangers* is a gentle book, a profound meditation on aging, time, memory, creativity, life, friendship and death. Written after the filming of *The Company of Strangers*, released in 1990 by the Canadian National Film Board, it is the story of the eight diverse women of the cast; the two women directors; and the magic space of the film itself.

If women's myths are to be found in the mundane, in the area of "genealogy," described by Michel Foucault as recording the singularity of events, seeking them "in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts," then this "semi-documentary" film creates a magical space in which a group of elderly women and their bus driver emerge from the matrix of ordinary lives to enter an imaginary realm of connectedness and meaning. With the skilled precision of a neurosurgeon, Meigs runs her scalpel cleanly along the interface of real life and myth, noting where and how the two fuse and merge, the process, and the effect of the process.

The film plot is simple: a bus carrying seven elderly women, from "eclectic" backgrounds, to a Golden Age retreat breaks down while making an unscheduled detour to find the rural childhood home of one of the elderly women. The breakdown provides the several days of isolation needed for the group of strangers to become friends, to devise practical solutions for coping together, and to begin to confide in one another. The old, abandoned house and surrounding landscape of pond and rolling, wooded hills becomes a pastoral metaphor for old age, memory, life and death as well as a "mother space," in which necessities are provided. As Meigs writes, the mist from which the bus emerges at the beginning of the film "symbolizes the

absence of explanation...the mist cuts us off from reasons, and lifts to show us, who have stepped out of time and logic into a magic space where old women have room to exist." In short, the mist symbolizes the creating of a mythic space in which elderly women can be heard.

Meigs also delicately explores the effect of becoming/being myth upon the individual's sense of self. In postmodernist fashion, she examines the construction of the many "selves" which make up an individual's fluid, somewhat amorphous identity; the interdiscursivity between film, text, and the women themselves, the multiple discourses which perceive the same event differently. She sensitively identifies facets of the myriad self: the "pattern face" (the mask by which people recognize us, and we recognize others); the "shadow selves" (seen in childhood pictures where we can see the lives we didn't lead as well as the ones we did); the mirror image (which shows the passage of time); the inner image (by which we keep ourselves young); our "ideal or semi-selves" (the myth of our "ideal" selves in which we are and receive what we truly desire); the old self; the everyday "real" self; the fictional self of the film. The film's world presents the "myth of our ideal selves," in which "we are the center of attention, unlike real life where old people are often invisible or an obstacle." Like the fairy tale, the film protects against time: "We are filming a holiday from growing old...in the real world we move along the conveyor belt of old age like luggage at the airport." She describes the emergence of the "focused" self as a result of participating in the filming process; the "focused self aligns aspects of the everyday, individual self with the film images to create yet another self.

Meigs interweaves linear and circular time, the women's self-images and film images, portraits of their past and present lives, and the film-makers' vision into a storytelling about elderly women and their powers—a story which extracts them from the human mass and gives them voice. Connected now through bonds of friendship in their real lives, they share in and are transformed by their participation in the creation of the film's myth. As she concludes, "The special power of our film is to make people happy."

Theories in Practice

Leah D. Hewitt
Autobiographical Tightropes: Simone de Beauvoir, Nathalie Sarraute, Marguerite Duras, Monique Wittig, and Maryse Condé. U of Nebraska P $25.00

Marlene Kadar Ed.
Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice. U of Toronto P $50.00 (cloth) $19.95 (paper)

Barry Rutland Ed.
*Genre * Trope * Gender : Critical Essays by Northrop Frye, Linda Hutcheon, and Shirley Neuman.* Carleton U P $9.95

Reviewed by Susanna Egan

The first part of Leah D. Hewitt's title, *Autobiographical Tightropes,* describes the intersections among these three texts: all of them interrelate life, (life)-writing, critical practice, and the theories that question and define these activities. (The front cover of Hewitt's book also makes this point; the author's name, though last on the page and prefixed with the preposition "by," gets lost in the list of women about whose works she is writing.) In all three books, creative artists and critics engage simultaneously with evolving theory and with the grounded or specific nature of their participation in cultural debate. The cumulative effect on this reviewer is a state of intellectual excitement and an absolute paralysis about entering the discussion in what might seem an objective or evaluative mode: notes I made as I began to read now seem outdated and I must acknowledge

transformations in my thinking that make my reading a small part of each project. In each case, it seems to me, such reader involvement has been a conscious and deliberate part of the writer's process.

Writing on five French writers, for example, Leah D. Hewitt has been scrupulously careful about access for readers with English-language limitations. She cites texts that are readily available in English translations and provides her own translations for quotations when no other is accessible. She is careful to explicate subtleties of meaning when these depend on French syntax or connotation. On a wider scale, her notes are rich sources of annotated bibliography and summaries of political and theoretical discussions. With this courtesy-net in place, she climbs her tightropes in examination of modern and postmodern autobiographical writings by five women who work within contiguous and overlapping contexts in a variety of genres, exploring the specific difficulties of autobiography for women and the problematic persistence of the autobiographical subject. Hewitt describes them as "working through/against the genre of autobiography" and looks carefully at the ways in which each one provides "new possibilities for imagining the genre and modern women's relationship to it, as well as to writing in general." Walking "the tightrope between fiction and experience," she concludes, "they consistently show that the gendered subject continues to be an issue in the fictions of identity.... Their negotiations with the masculine/feminine dichotomy refuse the authority of a masculine universal or an essential feminine....they open up autobiography to the multiple affirmations, negations, and displacements of the feminine subject."

The feminine subject is central to Kadar's work not only because she receives the lioness' share of the text but also because "she," is "a kind of feminized reading consciousness" that impels the exploration of "life writing" as a genre more variable, democratic, and reader-inclusive than traditional autobiography. "Life writing culminates for me," Kadar writes, "in its combination of feminism and narrative, fictional or non-fictional, in what has come to be known as *l'écriture au féminin*.... This writing in the feminine IS life writing." Given that autobiography theory has not stood still long enough for any position to assume hegemonic control, I have some difficulty with Kadar's programmatic approach to writing that has been "other." What she has done, however, is powerful and persuasive. This is a remarkable collection of fine essays organized into a narrative of exploration that incorporates the literary and the accidental, the writer and the reader as subjects, discussion of writing strategies and of unexpected self-revelations. Part One includes Alice van Wart on Elizabeth Smart's early journals, Christl Verduyn on Marian Engel's notebooks, Helen M. Buss on Anna Jameson and the sub-genre she identifies as "epistolary dijournal," and Eleanor Ty with a valuable piece on Wollstonecraft. Part Two contains Elizabeth S. Cohen and Thomas V. Cohen on court testimonies and Sally Cole on anthropological lives, extending discussion beyond the literary and the single subject. Part Three considers fiction and autofiction as life writing; Janice Williamson reads Elly Danika's *Don't*, Marlene Kadar uses Gail Scott's *Spaces Like Stairs* as explication for her theoretical agenda, Nathalie Cooke reads *Cat's Eye* as meta-life-writing, and Ellen M. Anderson explores *Don Quixote* "as one of the earliest and most complex examples of fictional life writing" (173). The collection then concludes with what Kadar calls "two conventional scholarly essays" by Evelyn J. Hinz and Shirley Neuman that demonstrate the intellectual exuberance with which theoreticians can burst the bounds of what we may from

time to time call "conventional."

Kadar harnesses this variety in "subject matter" and approach with introductory paragraphs for each section. She achieves coherence also from the very attractive indications within numerous essays that she and her contributors have discussed life writing at length, that the essays are specific aspects of a colloquium. Evelyn J. Hinz concludes with a magnificent Poetics of Autobiography that identifies thoroughly and persuasively the dramatic lineage of the genre. Her suggestions feed back into the essay collection as we consider both the traditional appeal of autobiography and its constant reworking in text and critical practice as each generation moves onto centre stage. Shirley Neuman's essay concludes the collection by calling for a "poetics of differences." This poetics, which "cannot be systematized" opens out the discussion in important ways that are likely to have far-reaching impact on work in this field. Neuman suggests "that the theorist and reader of autobiography enact a series of *simultaneous* and *multiple* gestures" that acknowledge the value of separate and oppositional poetics but recognise "a complex, multiple, layered subject with agency in the discourses and the worlds that constitute the referential space of his or her autobiography, a self not only constructed by differences but capable of choosing, inscribing, and making a difference." (This very exciting collection needs good proofreading before it goes into inevitable multiple reprintings.)

*Genre * Trope * Gender* is a collection of the Munro Beattie lectures given by Northrop Frye in 1989, Linda Hutcheon in 1990, and Shirley Neuman in 1991. It's a slim volume and a rivetting read—on disconnected subjects that do, in one volume, connect, in part because they represent pioneering work and in part because these thinkers and writers are preeminently teachers. Frye speaks on two unfinished Henry James novels and their working notes. With all the encyclopedic knowledge that we associate with Frye, he identifies the ghost story as "the type of story [James] had been telling all his life." In "The Power of Postmodern Irony," Hutcheon challenges reading that suggests the postmodern and its ironies are trivializing. She takes Calvino's phrase, "lightness of thoughtfulness," and identifies the ironic as usefully "destabilizing and dismantling," capable of historicising and politicising and, maybe constructing something new. Finally, Neuman deals with the paradoxes inherent in nonrepresentation of the mother in autobiography. She reads a cross-section of very recent autobiographies for their complex and often painful recognitions of the mother as physical source identified by reproduction and, indeed, as reproductive of mothering. Working with psychoanalytical and cultural causes for repression and expression, Neuman identifies serious work that needs to be done in writing and reading the body.

Ringing the Changes

Neil K. Besner
Introducing Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women. ECW n.p.

Jeanne Delbaere
Multiple Voices: Recent Canadian Fiction. Dangeroo n.p.

Reviewed by Christine Somerville

Two recent books of literary criticism show how Canadian literature has developed as an academic discipline. *Multiple Voices*, the published proceedings of the fourth International Symposium of the Brussels Centre for Canadian Studies held in 1989, resembles the collections of short stories and critical essays that appeared in the sixties and seventies. Thirty years ago, however, few would have predicted that our

literature, struggling for recognition even at our own universities, would be studied by Europeans. But the other selection, Neil K. Besner's *Introducing Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women* provides even stronger evidence of progress in establishing the legitimacy of Canadian literary studies. Eighth in ECW's series of readers' guides to major texts by Canadian fiction writers, this book could not have been imagined until a large audience of serious students of Canadian fiction had developed, or written until a substantial body of critical commentary had accumulated.

Multiple Voices provides a variety of material for advanced students and scholars. It includes academic papers, informal panel discussion and a memorable opening address by Robert Kroetsch, in which he blends autobiography, confession and meditation to shed light on his creative process. Like Margaret Laurence's "Time and the Narrative Voice" and Rudy Wiebe's "Where Is the Voice Coming From?" Kroetsch's "I Wanted To Write a Manifesto" may become a key text that is read again and again over a lifetime of literary study.

Vividly, Kroetsch sketches a series of images from his childhood: himself on tiptoe reaching blindly into the font of holy water where his fingers touched ice; his two red-haired teachers, the one in his first grade for whom he pretended not to know how to read, and the one at high school who suggested that he become a writer; the farm well-diggers whom he tested by peeing a few drops into their drinking water, which they drank despite his warning; and, in adulthood, a visit to his ancient, speechless Aunt Rose, at whose bedside past and present coalesced.

Similarly, excerpts from *Innocent Cities*, Jack Hodgins' account of an English widow disoriented among the unfamiliar sights and sounds of Queensland, show what an outsider's perspective might be like; however, Hodgins, like his character, was a visitor in Australia, and not an immigrant. By concluding with this excerpt, editor Jeanne Delbaere confuses the issue of multicultural writing in Canada. Admittedly, the editor's task is daunting when voice and ethnicity are under discussion. A consensus has yet to develop on what these terms really mean to Canadian literature. Although the question of voice appropriation is not raised here, it has become important in the years since this symposium; therefore, the categories into which the editor divides her selections: ethnic voices, women's voices, French/English voices, and multivoiced fiction, are somewhat out of date. Nevertheless, the panelists do consider the roles of academic fashion and Canadian politics in fostering ethnic writing. Mavis Gallant asks when "ethnic" became a noun, and deplores this "horrible deviation." Just as she expressed her impatience with questions of national identity in her introduction to *Home Truths*, here she reiterates her conviction: "A real Canadian is someone who says he's a Canadian." But this view is not typical of the panelists. Janice Kulyk Keefer recalls prejudice against the name Kulyk. In her opinion, "Canada is no longer—if it ever was—'Two Solitudes'—but rather a locus of ethnic diversity." Yet the two essays in French that appear in this book remind us of the continued relevance of MacLennan's phrase to two separate Canadian literatures.

Smaro Kamboureli introduces the term "audible minority." Although her experience of growing up feeling lonely and isolated was obviously familiar to other writers present, no one speculates on the positive effects that being an outsider may also have generated. Sometimes, anger at being in the minority rouses a desire to speak stronger than the silencing force of the majority.

Besides ethnicity and voice, these essays also reflect recent debates over critical theory in the Canadian literary world. In

"Theory: Beauty or Monster," Smaro Kamboureli shows how attitudes to theory have divided Canadian women writers and critics. In "The Bodies of the Texts in *Lives of Girls and Women*: Del Jordan's Reading," Neil Besner uses postmodern and feminist theory not to exclude the non-specialist, but to add to the enjoyment of the text for the general reader.

Besner is also the author of *Introducing Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women*, a reader's guide that will appeal to high school and university English teachers and their students. I hope that this book will also be discovered by readers of Canadian literature outside the universities. Although some women, myself included, may feel a pang that ECW assigned a male critic to a text that women cherish because it inscribes their own stories, Besner's fair, thorough, and gracefully written survey of the critical methods that have been applied to *Lives of Girls and Women* quickly reassured me.

He follows the series' excellent format, which includes a chronology, the importance of the work, a review of its critical reception and a comprehensive ten-part analysis of the text, as well as an annotated bibliography and index. Whereas earlier examples in this series ran to about 75 pages, Besner expands to 121 pages, owing partly to the extensive bibliography. ECW deserves thanks for adding the extra text and several revealing photographs of Munro's manuscripts in the Special Collections Division of the University of Calgary. A page from her notebook, headed "Burglars," reveals Munro's round, closely-spaced, slightly back-slanted handwriting covering the entire page. Only one word is blacked out. Another page shows three different versions of a single paragraph in the draft of the beginning of "Princess Ida."

In his critical analysis, Besner emphasizes the importance of the short story form for Alice Munro and Canadian fiction as a whole, and discusses the question of whether *Lives of Girls and Women* is a novel or a short story cycle. More importantly, he shows how the first story, "Princess Ida," became the nucleus for the entire work, and how Del discards her Mother's view of the world, but learns from her how "stories conjure and reshape the past." While Besner does full justice to the structure of the text, most readers will probably consult him for guidance on interpretation. They will find him particularly helpful about "Epilogue: The Photographer," the concluding segment that gave Munro considerable trouble and continues to trouble her readers.

Introducing Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women distils the commentary of a generation of critics on a single text, exemplifying Besner's contention that Canadian criticism is moving away from surveys toward a focus on individual writers and texts. Nevertheless, there will always be a place for a book like *Multiple Voices* that brings together writers and scholars to discuss the relationship between culture, voice and literature.

Surfaces

Richard Teleky
Goodnight, Sweetheart and Other Stories. Cormorant $12.95

J. Jill Robinson
Lovely in Her Bones. Arsenal Pulp Press $12.95

Reviewed by Susanne Goodison

Richard Teleky in *Goodnight, Sweetheart and Other Stories* and J. Jill Robinson in *Lovely in Her Bones* explore a myriad of connections between friends, family members, and lovers. The ways relationships are adjusted to suit people's lives and why, despite those adjustments, they break, fascinate both authors.

Teleky's collection ranges across very different situations and seemingly different

protagonists. These protagonists are generally his narrators and give his stories the perspective of children, of middle-aged men, and of elderly men. They are straight, gay, and bisexual. They appear in settings as diverse as an orchestra pit, a therapist's office, a park, China. Despite their diversity, each protagonist lacks connection with his peers. They all feel like observers in their own life, try to overcome that by various means, and fail to do so. In the title story, "Goodnight, Sweetheart," Steven's family must decide whether to put his grandmother in a home. Steven pushes his mother toward making that decision, and then proceeds to make a documentary of the grandmother's removal to the Eldorado. His logical and reasoned motivations tempt his mother to suggest he "'[f]ilm [his] divorce'". The appropriateness of her advice becomes evident as he experiences a surge of unresolved emotion following the completion of the film. In fact, such advice would be appropriate for most of the characters in this collection who, throughout, seek for resolution to pain they will barely admit to feeling. Their consequent detachment from their lives tends to alienate the reader from the character as much as the character is alienated from himself.

"Goodnight, Sweetheart" uses this technique most effectively because Teleky offers the reader details of Steven's life in conjunction with details about the other characters. The combination of information provides a context for Steven's tone, as does his profession. Teleky treats documentary film as the last fortress of objectivity and then proceeds to tear down its walls.

This story sets the tone for the collection when it suggests to the reader that Steven is a product of his past; there is a forced realization of the dilemma of imposing judgement in a relativist world. Other stories in the collection do not provide the reader with those explanations for the character's personality; instead, these narrators are introspective and still opaque. Reading these stories leads to an extrapolation of relativism until the reader reaches the same state of alienation and paralysis that the characters seem to be in. Curiously enough, the stories without this effect are the ones in which the reader is given even less detail. These stories do not suggest they will provide characterization, and therefore, the reader does not feel like a detective searching for insight; the surfaces are more important than the depths behind them. In "Notes on Parking," Teleky creates an atmosphere—not a story or a character—, and this piece is successful although sometimes melodramatic.

J. Jill Robinson's collection, *Lovely in Her Bones*, also manipulates surfaces but, unlike Teleky, her style does not obscure the theme that threads through her work: the importance of unsettling the past in order to resolve past traumas. Robinson makes evident these discoveries of the past's effect on the present through relationships that seem familial even when they are not between family members. Often, some component of the relationship is missing or damaged and often it is that component which can be traced to a past experience of the protagonist.

Robinson, throughout, writes of these relationships by describing their surfaces. As Robinson endows her surfaces with intensity but not always with complexity, her symbolism is overt. In "Waters of the Heart," Leslie remembers the pain of a friendship she is trying to maintain while swimming: "the water stroking her, stroking her." Deciding the friendship is detrimental to her, the rhythm of the wind soothes Leslie, and wakes the next day to note the "water taps with their big lying signs: WATER." I was reminded of one of Teleky's stories in which a character, after a diving accident, says: "There's no such thing as an accident."

Robinson's tone matches her subject mat-

ter. However, the continuous seriousness of the material results in a collection in which the tone of each story blends into the next and quickly becomes monotonous. By the end of the collection, the reader is exhausted and no longer interested in the characters or the resolution they reach. Robinson counteracts this apathy somewhat by using some lovely phrases. In "Finding Linette," one daughter "hugs quietly against" her mother. Expressions like this one hint at the subtlety that exists within surfaces; every time the reader finds one, the story lifts. That lift is temporary, however, as Robinson continues to use realist prose for essentially romantic stories.

This problem is particularly clear in her last story, "Hiding Among the Trees." Here, two women make love and their distinct personalities blend into one pronoun: "she." Such a representation is romantic but the plot which leads to this scene delves into social realism. In this story, Peg works through her anger over her mother's alcoholism on which she blames her home life and her father's death. She wears her father's clothes, lives in a different city, drinks too much, occasionally has sex with strange men, and attempts suicide. She is rescued by a woman, Monica, who she encountered upon her arrival at the city's bus depot. Monica, unknown and unexpected, proceeded to find her an apartment, to help her get a job, to take her to the hospital after her suicide attempt, and to become her friend, at least until they became sexually involved. They then fight over Peg's lack of involvement with her mother—a problem Peg's mother's death solves. Her death evokes memories in Peg which help explain the alcoholism. Resolution is reached when Peg moves home, feels guilty for hating her mother, calls her girlfriend and tries on her mother's clothes. This plot of the nurturing friend who becomes a lover raises fascinating questions about female sexuality and about female friendship but never addresses them because of the romanticism attached to the relationship between Peg and Monica. The story ends with a worrying sense that Peg has merely switched parental allegiances. "Hiding in the Trees" is representative of Robinson's collection in that its surfaces are made romantic and symbolic whereas in Teleky's *Goodnight, Sweetheart* they remain realist and opaque.

Unteaching Literature

Kecht, Maria-Regina, ed.
Pedagogy Is Politics: Literary Theory and Critical Teaching. U Illinois P $15.95

McGowan, John
Postmodernism and Its Critics. Cornell UP $12.95

Reviewed by Roger Seamon

Both of these books, one rather good and the other ranging from awful to alright, are evidence that many teachers of literature, particularly teachers of English it would seem, are increasingly out of touch with both literature and politics. John McGowan patiently reveals how contradictory, implausible and out of political touch are the beliefs about society of various postmodernists, all of whom claim to be telling us something deep and useful about our entire condition. And the writers in *Pedagogy Is Politics* continue an ignorance of pedagogy and politics that is as surprising as it is alarming.

The ignorance about political life is deep and deeply Eurocentric, for it rests on the assumption that there is something peculiarly wrong, even evil, in contemporary Western society (the center of late capitalism). This social self-criticism can perhaps be traced to the Hebrew prophets, but its current incarnation goes back to the late eighteenth century when it was discovered that Christian civilization, measured by the standards of reason, was not the bearer of

civilization it was trumpeted to be by its ruling class and their lackeys. Quite the reverse, it was barbaric, and its contemporary name is "late capitalism." We are, in other words, in dire moral straits.

To most people the death of the Soviet and American empires and the end of the Cold War are welcome events. And whether one likes capitalism or not, it is extremely odd to believe that it is in decline, and the writer herself envisions a world of universal economic competition, that is, capitalism. But these are mild fantasies in comparsion with what follows:

> On the other hand, although CIA recruitment is on the increase, in the academy we seem to be experiencing an exciting and progressive development that signals a very different sort of trend: the number of canon-busting scholars and poststructuralist theorists is also on the increase. A generation of scholars in their forties, whose social and political consciousnesses were shaped in the crucible of the 1960s, has now reached full maturity, is writing many of the books and articles we now read, and is attaining (or seeking to attain) tenured positions in English and literature departments.

The idea that CIA recruitment, whether in decline or ascendency, is a major matter is evidence of the common belief of Americans that whatever their concern is it is world class. But that is mere unselfconscious provincialism. More serious is the fact that, as usual, capitalism has found a way to de-fang its most threatening opponents, for I can think of nothing as likely to sap revolutionary energy as the pursuit of tenure. As silly as the passage quoted above is, it expresses the belief which animates *Pedagogy Is Politics.* But let us assume that the world *is* worse off than ever, and that after centuries of struggle men and women have been enslaved to the most oppressive of regimes. What will save us? *English departments*! Barbara Foley, the author of the preceding quotations, says that "the captains of industry actually *need* us to do much of what we do" so "We should not minimize our importance to ruling-class hegemony." John Clifford continues this delusional self-empowerment when he says that writing is not a value neutral skill, but "one of the apparatuses through which the cultural norms and ideological values of advanced capitalism are reproduced and legitimized," and since theory undermines capitalism, Mas'ud Zavarzadeh concludes that "The politics of resistance to theory is one of collusion with the oppressive ruling regime." Such a claim is utterly destructive of reasonable discussion of anything, but that is no bar to the inflation of English department power.

> Reading poetry as an atheoretical and transhistorical discourse produces the reader as a nonconstrained, self-same (speaking) subject who is marked by autonomy and a direct, unmediated access to the plentitude of the imagination: an instance of presence free from all social contradictions. This notion of the subject is necessary for the maintainance of the existing exploitative arrangements.

Well, aren't we powerful! All this is innocent enough in terms of the wider world, for it doesn't matter one whit to the fate of capitalism whether English departments in American universities (for that is what this is all about) are run by radicals or conservatives. But it does matter to students, and on the evidence of this volume radical pedagogy is a pedagogical disaster.

How do the radicals propose to alter teaching? Their argument is that the only way to dismantle the system is to undermine the idea of legitimate authority, and that process can begin in the classroom: "We need to question our own authority." We, the professoriate, will not determine what goes on in classrooms, but will make decisions jointly with students, so that "standards, expectations, and goals are negotiated by the teacher and student." The

teacher's task is to "elevat[e] them to the role of co-inquirers." This is all so bad that it is hard to know where to begin. It is, of course, *we* who will question our authority, and most students will learn that in Professor X's class they should *pretend* to question his authority, for one can imagine what would occur if a student asked Professor X not to speak so much, or not at all, since he had talked enough for the entire term. And the suggested "negotiation" is a farce. What power does a student have to negotiate? Absolutely none. Students can, at best, *appeal to a higher authority.* Finally, few students are in any sense "co-inquirers," and it is nonsense to claim that they are. Almost the entire radical program, as portrayed in this volume, is a cruel, destructive deception. The better students might see through it, but many will be very hurt and confused when they discover that this effort to liberate and empower them is nonsense. It was somewhat less nonsensical when it was the students themselves in the 1960s who were the rebels, but the idea of the professor-rebel instructing students in the illegitmacy of his or her authority is contradictory, in bad faith and subversive of anything we might justifiably call education.One writer seems to have an inkling that something is wrong with all this: "Such an interrogation of the work students do in the class can certainly be encouraged by instructors without overtly indoctrinating students within a leftist agenda, for students must be allowed the option of aligning themselves with the dominant discourse." How charmingly liberal! And it goes without saying that "the leftist agenda" and "the dominant discourse" are the obvious and only alternatives, as if the dominant discourse in many universities weren't left-liberal, and that what has most often been excluded, since the sixties, is anything to the right.

More problematically silly are ideas about the curriculum. One writer says that "Texts should be chosen in terms of the theories and social and historical relations they may be made to illustrate," and this choice leads to a preference for "the straightforward, resonant prose" of Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* over James's "more intricate and highly wrought" *What Maisie Knew*, because "the racist brutality faced by the black indentured servant who serves as Wilson's heroine is more important for our culture—and thus more deserving our of consideration—than the middle-class sexual and marital merry-go-round that oppresses Maisie." The belief in the moral superiority of English teachers who share the writers' political beliefs is taken for granted in this volume: "I myself insist in addition that to counter the official master narrative with more liberatory ones is an act that empowers." But is it our business to liberate and empower? I think that learning to read complex works and write about them is inherently liberating, but then so is learning anything.

But enough of this sad volume. John McGowan's *Postmodernism and Its Critics* is happily very different. McGowan's book has two parts. In the first he shows how incoherent postmodernist theory is in its social theory, and in the second he offers a theory of "positive freedom" in opposition to the negative freedom (freedom from) of traditional liberalism and, in his interpretation, the postmodernists.

McGowan's premises are sound. He takes postmodernism as a response of the humanist intellectual class to its diminished role within our cultural life, rather than as a condition of society generally. Science and popular culture dominate, serious reading of classic texts declines, and the status of the humanities diminishes. This is the postmodernist crisis seen in proper perspective.

McGowan also believes that postmodernism is another gasp of romanticism, perhaps its last. The romantic dream was

one of social transformation and liberation, with the imagination (and thus the arts) leading the way. This has not happened. The despair over the loss of radical hope among intellectuals has led them to posit a society (late capitalism) which is omnipresent and omnipotent. Resistance to the established order, which had been at the center of romantic art and thought, is now seen as impossible—or almost so. Yet the postmodernists want to keep the idea of liberation alive. "Postmodern texts thus often begin their work by making deeper the very hole out of which they hope to climb."

But the hole may be self-invented, and McGowan contributes to its invention. He claims, for example, that

> The suppression of women and of minority groups within the society and of non-European races wherever they were encountered must be read as the outcome of the West's obsession with identity, singleness, and purity, with its belief that only unified, homogeneous entities (be they selves or states) can act effectively.

The truth is that (almost?) all societies have suppressed and continue to suppress women and minorities, and that, if anything, the Western record is somewhat better than most (all?) others. The very idea that women and minorities even deserve better is a Western invention, though for all I know others may have invented it too.

The main thrust of *Postmodernism and Its Critics* is that postmodernists, despite their critiques of the free subject, continue to hold on to the idea of negative freedom, in which freedom consists in freedom from social coercion by an autonomous subject, rather than the realization of goals that are inescapably social. This belief has led the postmodernists, and many of their predecessors, to abandon action in the real social world, which is seen as a mere prison-house, in favor of the mere dream of a very different future. For example, Marxism "involves the complete repudiation of any notion of legitimate social authority or political agenda," because "all power and all goals are the products of interest, with no claims on others who do share those interests." Again and again McGowan shows that the basic assumptions of much postmodernist thought doom believers to political impotence even as they claim to be working toward grand social transformations.

In the second, and weaker, section of *Postmodernism and Its Critics*, McGowan offers his prescription. The weakness is that his ideas here approach democratic common sense. For example, "the pluralist works to construct and preserve a different identity [than does the conservative], one built not on ethnic, religious, or racial grounds, but on the commitment to the civic virtues required to make democracy and tolerance work." Democracy is the standard for McGowan, and he tells us clearly what it means: "In the ensuing discussion, the word *democracy* is used to designate social arrangements that guarantee that public decisions are made through processes that allow for full and equal participation of each citizen." I heartily agree with this democratic dogma, but too much of McGowan's text is devoted to the reassertion of what many already believe. McGowan does not argue with objections to these beliefs, nor does he explore the problems the complex forms of resistance to their implementation.

Tocqueville warned us 150 years ago that it is the pressure toward equality which can be the basis for deep injustice in democracies, and since today that pressure is a source of injustice from the left, McGowan is most useful in his effort to make the democratic process itself more important than any egalitarian outcome. McGowan neatly sums up this idea in a slogan: "in democracy the means justifies the ends." He contrasts his commitment to democ-

racy as means with the abstract goals that the postmodernists vainly pursue:

> [B]y holding society accountable to abstract, disembodied norms (which they despair of ever seeing embodied), the postmodern theorists both misunderstand the nature of legitimacy and discount the accrued legitimacy of contemporary Western society. Paradoxically, this attitude leads them to both underestimate and overestimate the possibility of change. In their manic, euphoric moments, they believe in absolute revolutionary transformation, writing as if pure thought can foster such change and its historical moment is upon us.

That criticism applies directly to *Pedagogy Is Politics*, and I highly recommend McGowan's book as an antidote to the wild and sometimes dangerous fantasies that postmodern radicals entertain and promulgate.

Three Keepers

Ann-Marie MacDonald
Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet). Coach House n.p.

Morris Panych
7 Stories. Talonboks n.p.

Maryse Pelletier
Duo for Obstinate Voices Guernica n.p.

Reviewed by Barbara Kerslake

Ann-Marie MacDonald is a graduate of the National Theatre School, an actor and clearly an alchemist. This is her first solo play, for which she won a Chalmers Canadian Play Award. Recycling literature, a tradition that goes back beyond Shakespeare, is once again acceptable. Tom Stoppard, Pavel Kohout and many others have achieved success with this method, which frees the author from the tyranny of the blank page and thus allows her imagination greater leeway.

Playing with two plays, MacDonald produces a third. She has chosen to work with the heroines, and this is a feminist look at comedy, but ten of the sixteen characters are male, and there is plenty of room for cross-casting. In the 1990 Toronto production, Juliet's nurse was played by a man and Mercutio by a woman. In keeping with the need to minimize costs, all these parts can be played by 5 actors.

Act One begins in the present, with Constance Ledbelly, a repressed and oppressed academic at Queen's University. She is enthralled by and in thrall to a devious professor named Claude Night. Her other obsession is her thesis, positing a lost source for Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet.* She believes the key to this source lies in an ancient alchemical manuscript, which she hopes to decipher, in order to prove that these two tragedies were originally comedies. When her life is at its lowest point, the alchemy begins to work, and she is abruptly catapulted into the crucial scenes of the two plays.

Actual scenes from Shakespeare are used, first in their original form and then subverted, so that they are spoken by different characters in reverse situations. My one reservation was the excessive repetition of the handkerchief scene from *Othello.*

The result of all this genre-bending is neither tragedy nor comedy, neither death nor marriage, but an ending that opens up to countless questions and limitless possibilities. The characters are flawed with a vengeance—Desdemona is addicted to violence and Romeo and Juliet are spoiled, petulant teenagers, but a genuine comic heroine is created in the person of Constance Ledbelly. Once she enters the world of Desdemona and Juliet, she begins to speak in iambic pentameter, adding to the hilarity of communication at cross-purposes across the centuries.

This play provides great scope for actors, directors and designers. It is wonderfully witty, full of action, suspense and con-

stantly shifting emotions, a natural for production at Stratford.

Morris Panych is a West Coast actor, director and playwright, who has at least five other plays to his credit. *7 Stories* won six Jessie awards in 1990. The action centres on one character, the Man, who is standing on a ledge on the seventh storey of an apartment building, about to jump off. Behind him is a row of windows, opening quickly or slowly to allow the Man and the audience to gain glimpses into the lives and stories of a dozen people, all played by four actors. These bizarre encounters complicate and illuminate on a horizontal level the position of the man in the vertical scheme of things, and there is constant interaction on these two planes, with people and objects that seem about to plunge from the various windows to the pavement below.

Our attention is wonderfully focused by the set and staging embodying the sense of restriction, limitation, flatness and absurdity; on a ledge one can go so far and no farther without falling off. At the same time the mind of the Man is constantly distracted by his interaction with the various stories. Sometimes he is merely a witness, at other times an arbiter of style or a judge of moral issues. In almost every case there is a lack of communication, and his position is almost always misunderstood.

It is only in the final conversation with a 100-year-old woman that the Man, the only character who is never named, reveals anything about himself. It is the old woman who shows him the way to escape limitation, leading to the surprisingly uplifting ending.

Once again, we have an actor, trained at the Conservatoire d'art dramatique in Québec City, who has turned to playwriting with great success. For this play, Maryse Pelletier won the Governor-General's award and the Grand Prix du Journal de Montréal.

In a revealing introductory note, she says that the voices come from deep within her own psyche, one representing the dreamer, the questioner, and the other the observer of reality. They represent also the experience of journalists and artists in Québec from 1970 to 1975, just before the Parti Québécois came to power.

Duo for Obstinate Voices is and is not a love story, concerning the complex relationship between Philip, a charismatic and passionately political television journalist, and Cathryn, a dancer and choreographer. There is also the interplay between domination and the desire to be dominated and the desire to rebel, between two different kinds of creativity, one that demands an audience and constant feedback, and one that needs slow reflective maturing in silence.

The text is divided into scenes, each marked by a musical notation (Allegro ma non troppo, Andante con brio, and so on), emphasizing the fact that both these characters are performers in different ways. Each scene also has the title of an emotion or state of mind (Ignorance, fear, etc.) as a guide to interpretation. We are conscious of the author's desire, as a performer, to communicate with the actors, as well as with the audience. The musical analogy is sustained as the characters performing this duo together occasionally burst out into solos or monologues addressed to the audience.

Louise Ringuet is responsible for the translation of this text into English. Despite a few gallicisms near the beginning, once we become enmeshed in the conflict between Philip and Cathryn, the magic works, and everything they say becomes credible.

The weaving together of these conflicting voices is masterful, and the total effect is one of simplicity and universality. Maryse Pelletier has written an elegant play, daring at the same time to express emotions with great honesty and power. What more could one ask?

Ryga

George Ryga
Summerland. Ed. Ann Kujundzic. Talonbooks
$19.95

Reviewed by Viviana Comensoli

Summerland is Talonbooks' second anthology of largely unpublished writings by George Ryga. *The Athabasca Ryga* (1990), edited by E. David Gregory, included essays, dramatic scripts and fiction written before 1964 during Ryga's Alberta years. For the current volume Ann Kujundzic has selected material written between 1963 and 1987 in Summerland, a small community in the Okanagan Valley where George and Norma Ryga settled as an alternative to living in poverty in Edmonton, and where they could more easily provide a refuge for artists, friends and political refugees. *Summerland* attests to Ryga's sustained interest in a variety of genres: television and radio drama, the essay, and the short story. Also included are advocacy letters and the poem "Resurrection," Ryga's final work written shortly before his death. The anthology is well conceived and skilfully edited. "The artist's or writer's work," Ryga explained to Anne Kujundzic in one of their many conversations recorded here, is "due no greater elevation than the work of any person"; it is "the integrity of the work which count[s]." Kujundzic's Introduction is both a well-researched, fully documented account of Ryga's literary career and a tribute to the integrity of Ryga's life and art. Ryga's development as a writer is discussed in the context of personal, cultural and political influences. There is a good deal of pertinent information about George and Norma Ryga's marriage, their passionate commitment to community, and their unrelenting struggle with poverty. Kujundzic interweaves excerpts from personal journals, letters to and from friends and acquaintances, and recollections and tributes from fellow-writers, creating a detailed and engaging portrait of "a very real and remarkable human being, who happened to have the word 'writer' attached to his name." To her credit, Kujundzic eschews sentimentality in favor of balance and nuance. For example, in her discussion of the common observation that for Ryga the political was always personal, Kujundzic records not only the praise of Ryga's principles by his friends and admirers but also her conversation with Norma Ryga on the rigidity of her husband's ideology: "He was rock solid in his beliefs and although he would always give people their share of the floor, I'm not sure that he could really listen."

The anthology is divided according to the three decades that Ryga spent in Summerland. The 1960s, which Kujundzic characterizes as "a storm of struggle and success," are dominated by Ryga's work for the CBC. The five television and radio dramas included in this section, as well as the short stories and essays, show the emergence of themes that underlie Ryga's writings of the seventies and eighties: the complexities and struggles of ordinary people; their relationship to their land; the need for a Canadian mythology; the appeal to Canadian writers to tap the "language and cadence" of their culture; the tension between Ryga's social realism and his interest in spirituality and mysticism.

The essays in particular are indispensable to our understanding of the passionate convictions that propelled Ryga's major drama and fiction. In "The Temporary Arrangement: A Western Viewpoint" (1967) Ryga bitterly recalls his early childhood education: "trail[ing] hot oxen in a cold field, I was about to go to school where I would spend some years learning of kings and crusaders, sea- captains, warlords and other useless riff-raff unsuited to any useful pursuit in life.... What of the people who came [to this continent] in the holds of ships like cattle to build a country?" And in "Theatre in Canada: A Viewpoint on Its

Development and Future" (1971) Ryga's fervent nationalism is unleashed in a vitriolic condemnation of the cultural institutions which, in his view, prevented the development of a viable Canadian theatre: "dinosaurs like the Stratford Festival and the self-indulgent thing at Niagara continue to be lavished with endless resources to produce Moliere, Shakespeare and Shaw"; "I refuse to endorse the cheap, diversionary and divisive tactics of the Canada Council and the regional theatres to delight their bookkeepers in announcing vast numbers of productions of Canadian works—when in reality, nothing more than public rehearsals occur." Ryga's strident posturing—"I demand the right to equal auspices, for I, too, am an artist of world stature"—was largely a response to his increasing alienation from mainstream Canadian theatre, a phenomenon which, Kujundzic observes, originated in his political disputes with the Vancouver Playhouse. After producing *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* in 1967, the Playhouse commissioned another work for the 1970/71 season; Ryga responded with *Captives of the Faceless Drummer*, in which he denounces the Canadian government's proclamation of the War Measures Act during the October crisis, which had led to the imprisonment of activists and artists. The Playhouse refused to produce it apparently on the grounds of its subversive politics. In "Social Responsibilities of Writers" (1971) Ryga defends his work by calmly and eloquently appealing to the writer's need "to shift through the sands of the past and the present-day for the paradoxes which throw new light upon the commonplace and elevate the experience of living into humour, pathos and heroism," an undertaking fraught with "distinct danger" (1986). In his tribute to Ryga, Richard Ouzounian, artistic director of the Neptune Theatre in Halifax, goes as far as to suggest that "The potentially greatest playwright in this country was blacklisted as carefully and as thoroughly as any one of the 'Hollywood Ten' were under McCarthy." Yet today, as Kujundzic observes, we still need to determine what dangers Ryga actually posed for the theatre establishment.

The selections in the anthology are accompanied by a number of high-resolution photographs and a Bibliography of Ryga's major works published between 1956 and 1992. Although full bibliographic documentation is provided for the six previously published entries, it would have been useful to have the full original broadcast dates of screen and radio plays (dates are given only by year) and a sampling of their reception by various audiences. Despite these minor shortcomings, the anthology is timely and will appeal to a wide variety of readers.

Journeys and Returns

Stan Rogal
Sweet Betsy from Pike. Wolsak and Wynn $10.00

Kenneth Sherman
Open to Currents. Wolsak and Wynn $10.00

Kenneth Radu
Treading Water. Oberon n.p.

Michael Bullock
The Walled Garden: A Fantasia. Ekstasis Editions n.p.

Reviewed by Lesley D. Clement

In an "Afterword" to *The Walled Garden*, Richard Olafson contends that modern realism with its "specialized perception of reality" has reduced much Canadian poetry to solipsism and thus to "cynicism and nihilism." In contrast, Olafson discovers in Michael Bullock's latest volume the "expansiveness" of "the myth of return: the river always returns to its source" through memory: "The poetic ritual is a cultivation of memory, syllable seeds planted in the garden of consciousness." With the four volumes of poetry under review, the odds refute Olafson's argument. Each explores dark depths of the mind and nature and undertows that

society churns up, threatening annihilation; however, each also explores the river's return to its source, the garden, and, with one exception, offers an affirmative, sustaining vision.

Sweet Betsy from Pike, the first published book of poetry for Toronto environmentalist Stan Rogal, is the exception. These poems reflect the world as a "terrorain," as "outside the gate of any idyll garden" where humankind's fear of confronting the unknown narrows perception to "[c]rude sights for cruder eyes long riddled by the (s)word." Several poems, including the first, "Yonder," forecast a return—"What goes around comes around / Moves civilization to wilderness"—but, as "Phoenix" establishes, this return will be from "one darkness to the next."

The river for Rogal is a Canadian Lethe, the Saskatchewan, memory being "a foul century's blood" that pollutes "Betsy's waist with a whelp of chancres / and Ike's teeth with a stomach for moldering flesh." Near the close of the volume and Betsy's westward journey, Betsy, dreaming that she is *every* river out of which everything arises, confronts the Pacific Ocean, "refuses to break / against the salty tide," slides "beneath the waves / colliding with untold other / ill-considered rivers," and creates

> some hitherto
> Unknown
> Multi-headed monster
> soon to emerge
> erupt
> and shroud the world
> in its cloudy
> Wings.

Betsy awakes, only to turn her back on the fertile land of the West Coast, and then fires her rifle into the branches of a tree: "A mewl. / Rapt in crow feathers. / Silenced." Three poems, three opportunities for metamorphosis, follow. In the first, "Echoes," the memory of "me" is eradicated; in the second, "Comedians," the laughter from the grave is mocking and riotous. The third, "Stars," endorses, but does not envision, the "sheer / Abandon- / Ment" of civilization to wilderness—feeble hope for a ruined garden drowned in the effluence of such cynicism and despair. There can be no return. "Nowhere translates *now here*."

The return in Kenneth Sherman's *Open to Currents*, more modest than the mythic return of which Olafson speaks, nonetheless achieves a comforting sustentation and qualified affirmation. Corresponding to each of the three sections of the book, Sherman's currents take him, first, backwards to memories, then, through the flotsam and jetsam of everyday life, and, finally, on outward journeys to foreign destinations.

The volume opens with "Seminal cloth" in which the child buries himself in the "darkness" of fabric scraps in his father's tailor shop "until the box became a boat, / the darkness, a sea." The second poem, "Currents," spins another memory of the immigrant father whose perplexed forehead "folded for reference / in my memory, / that inheritance / open to currents." Currents toss the poet hither and thither, several opening up potentially cynical or despairing responses, but ultimately inspiring him to embark on other journeys. "Talking it through," the final poem of the first section, ends

> Strange to come to control
> by letting go.
> I go back into the fray
> that is everyman's life,
> resolute bedouin in the stretch
> of his own inner scape,
> sustained by those deep wadis of loss.

The second section celebrates the humble events and objects in this "fray," from "Justine's ballet class," to "Fish cart," "Hallowe'en pumpkin," and "Chair." At times, the poet is like "The water skier," demonstrating "the fluidity of a motion / that weaves back against itself," "his joy the sheer doing of it"; at other times, he is like "The owls," whose "attitude instructs the wise / that in this world, be wary / of all motion, strife and frenzy." When he sets

out to explore foreign destinations and discovers silence and absence in the Poland of his ancestors, perplexity and lepers among the Dravidian Ruins of Mahabalipuram, he remains open to currents and ends with twenty sonnets, each dedicated to a different city. The sonnets test the vision against the reality, always balancing the two. Only in the ninth sonnet, "Hiroshima," can there be no affirming vision, but this is followed by "Kyoto," which concludes, "I am infinitesimal but also reaching the furthest shore / as I muse upon the rock garden's concentric circles." Thus Sherman's poems affirm the joys of both the vision and the reality, the currents and, in the final sonnet, "Toronto," his "[s]taid and sure" home: "A good place for departures and returns."

From effluence to currents, we now dip from the still, deep well of Kenneth Radu's *Treading Water*. The opening poem, "Treading Water," poses a conundrum that teases throughout. Treading water is conducive to "middling ruminations" but is also "a kind of dying": "If the distance is too great / I will deepen into inertia, / not great enough, / Why bother?" Satirical poems, such as "Vermeer" and "Auto-Da-Fe," offer bitter drams of a world tainted by mercantile and patriarchal values. Descriptive poems, such as "Myth," offer a pristine dipperful of pagan delight. Best are the narrative poems, such as "Shadows" and "Jocasta," more murky as through the ritual acts of remembering the poet tries to squeeze some significance from memory. In both, significance rests not only with the remembered joy but also with the present poignancy of suffering conveyed through silences and spaces.

The poems in *Treading Water* are skilfully arranged to build to the longest of the narrative poems, "A Day at the Beach." Satire, spoofing the self-conscious masculinity of father and the escapism mother immersed in an Iris Murdoch novel, moves into a pagan exuberance as mother, "tired of print and peccadilloes, / rushes to the water, where she swims straight out / on the ocean's curve, the salt on her lips, / undercurrents pushing against her thighs." Reality insists on intruding as "undertows of fact and fear drag her / back to the hard embrace of nuclear arms." Monstrous thoughts almost overwhelm her, but instead she emerges from the foam and

> becomes a net to catch sparks of light
> and reason;...
> Her feet touch the golden sand, the wind
> picks up
> and the shapes of seeds are planted
> firmly
> in the wind as the children run to her
> laughing, voices loud with jubilation.

The five poems after "A Day at the Beach" detail imperfections that prevent these seeds establishing roots in an idyllic garden, and then the poet works through four sonnets in which art appears to have lost the vigour to sustain in a frenzied, wearied world. Solitude and reflection bring the seemingly inert words to life so that by the end of the sonnet sequence, the poet affirms: "The action of film stiffens, falls to lead; / reading quickens, raises to gold." *Treading Water* closes with two celebratory poems: "Bird-Watcher," dedicated to Janusz Korczak whose "mind opened windows" because he understood and protected six-year-olds crying in the night; and "Keeping the Faith," in which feeding the birds, like writing poems, seems merely "an act of courtesy / in a world impoverished by extinctions." Yet at the end of the journey, in the ruined garden, the poet still has a role:

> I have to live up
> to my reputation in the skies,
> to the pattern my arm makes
> when it sweeps over the unsmiling
> face of the snow in benediction
> and fidelity.

In his sixteenth collection of poems, *The Walled Garden: A Fantasia*, Michael Bullock balances the vision with the reality by inte-

grating myths and archetypes. Despite the intrusive reflexivity of many transitions between dream and actual worlds, the mergings of river and garden make this a more challenging and mystical journey and return than those undergone in the other collections. For Sherman and Radu, whether following currents or treading water, the journeys, exotic and mental excursions that nourish and heal, always remain separate from the gardens, places of security. In Rogal's *Sweet Betsy*, the merging results in the river threatening to submerge the garden. The journeys in *The Walled Garden* are towards the reconciliation of opposites—male and female, movement and stasis, outer and inner, reality and dream—and affirmation of total being.

The ease with which Bullock moves between open verse and prose forms reflects the integration of different realms of being in this fantasia. *The Walled Garden* includes eight black-and-white photographs of scenes in and around the garden, but their realism fails to intrigue in the same way as the "fantasia" itself and actually undercuts the synthesizing momentum of the verse and prose pieces. In contrast, the photograph on the back cover of this attractively bound volume effectively overlays an image of the author's face with shadows of the garden and, in the foreground, a feminized Yggdrasil.

The chestnut tree, "an avatar of Yggdrasil, the World Tree," which "holds the sky in its branches and the underworld in its roots," and the cloud-grey cat, transformed into "the living priestess, the incarnation of Shakti" emerge as the dominant images on the odyssey through real and dream gardens. The first poem in the first section, "The Walled Garden," alludes to the merging of different realms—bird, garden, river—as the ringdove cooing "its siren notes / atop its leafy rock" becomes "a Lorelei / of the garden's limpid lake." The odyssey begins as the poet seeks for the synthesizing image through the Gothic forms of the second section, "The Green Christ." During "A Month in the City," the third section, outer submerges inner, and the garden is threatened, first, by the river and, then, with the consequent re-assertion of self, by brutality and warfare. The fourth section, "Luna," details another fruitless because solipsistic journey, this time above the garden, while the fifth section, "Chrysanthemums," takes the poet below. Having travelled inward and outward, above and below, the synthesizing image remains to be found. Only the final section, "Two Cats," as the poet follows the cloud-grey cat-priestess to the temple-tomb and unites with Shakti, is the odyssey complete. And within the garden the chestnut tree holds firm.

In "Shakespeare at the Well," Kenneth Radu's bard asks, "What can I say / to an age striking the face of the moon / and laying waste to forest and water?" From Stan Rogal's effluence has come the treat of total submersion of the garden, from Sherman's currents the security of the garden after the journey, from Radu's well a garden where benevolence and fidelity yet have a place, and from Bullock's odyssey, this "homage" to the chestnut tree:

> Looking up at the tall chestnut tree
> I hang my thoughts and dreams
> on its branches stripped by winter—
> invisible messages
> waiting for intangible birds
> to carry them to an address
> lost in the mists of memory.

Back-patting & Bakhtin

Henry Beissel and Joy Bennett, eds.
Raging Like a Fire: A Celebration of Irving Layton.
Véhicule $18.95 paper

Douglas Barbour
Michael Ondaatje. Twayne $26.00

Reviewed by Susan MacFarlane

Raging Like a Fire is a *festschrift* celebrating Irving Layton's eightieth birthday with

brief anecdotes, poems, essays, and an interview. Thirty-nine writers, friends and former students contributed personal and often emotional memories which, although not always complimentary, evoke Layton's vibrant character and mark strong responses to it. But for all this evidence of the personal, the book presents a curiously detached view of Layton as perennial *enfant terrible* of Canadian literature.

For one thing, Layton himself never speaks. And while there is an essay on Layton's attitude toward women, there are no pieces by his wives. For sure, Layton speaks through the contributors—every page bears the stamp of his words—but they are little performances, poses and *mots justes*. George Woodcock describes meeting Layton ("circling each other like suspicious bears"); Jack McClelland offers an approving assessment of Layton's self-promotion; Elspeth Cameron compares him to a trickster; Theodore Sampson reads Layton's deportment as a metaphor; Douglas Lochhead's "Remembrances" are flagrantly apocryphal. And among the tributes, both cautious and effusive, many note the conflation of Layton with his work, less as obsessive workaholic than as deliberate craftsman.

In a way, the book celebrates the poet's greatest work—his self-creation, his persona. David Solway's "Framing Layton" shows this—structured like a triptych, the left panel is a personal anecdote, the right a critical study, and the central hinge a theoretical meditation on "Layton" as a construct. So instead of a personal look at the man, the book offers a mosaic of views of the creation. And there are many sides to "Layton": gentle nurturer of vulnerable student poets, spirited and uncompromising foe of pretension and injustice, wily master of artifice. Layton exists in, depends upon and promotes a context of controversy, of which the book constantly reminds us. Cameron's biography and the early flap with Ryerson over *The Improved Binoculars* which spurred Layton's condemnation of Canadian publishing are two such controversies. This is the impression the book leaves one with, and it is clearly what sticks in people's minds about Layton: not the poetry so much as the pose of the public Poet.

Whereas *Raging Like a Fire* is synchronic—a variety of perspectives on Layton presented at, and for, one moment in time, the new Twayne book *Michael Ondaatje* is diachronic. Barbour uses a chronological frame—starting with the early poems and concluding with the celebrated *The English Patient*—to show both development and continuity in the work. Barbour contends that Ondaatje's work has become increasingly novelized, in the Bakhtinian sense, moving from lyrics to increasingly longer, more layered, dialogic and even carnivalesque texts. What has remained constant is a liberty with historical fact and a political ambivalence; the corresponding themes of revision and indeterminacy are reflected in the structural fragmentation of Ondaatje's texts.

Since Barbour considers Ondaatje's themes more effectively conveyed in his later works one can infer that Barbour sees him becoming a better writer over the course of his career. But Barbour rarely makes explicitly evaluative statements. He is showing how Ondaatje's work increasingly fits Bakhtin's ideals, but he is clearly uncomfortable with the organic model of a young writer's gradual maturity. Barbour's study is of the work and not the writer, except as he is inscribed within his texts. Development, then, is shown by comparing the same images and themes from earlier and later works to show the work becoming more open and engaging. Evidently, the themes don't change as much as the technique. "Meaning is not the point; writing is," Barbour says. And "because I can't fix either the characters or the text within a single generic focus or a particular kind of reading, they remain in flux, evading expla-

nation, yes, but singing a siren song of empathy I cannot resist."

The siren song of Ondaatje's texts is one point at which Barbour's method fails—he cannot convincingly account for Ondaatje's appeal and success. Because Barbour is using dialogism as the measure of excellence he surrenders the sensual appeal of Ondaatje's images. It may be true, as Barbour claims, that violently paradoxical images "argue the end of metaphor" in foregrounding writing and textual structure. And it may be true that there is emotional appeal in the collapse of metaphor, or in the failure of coherence. But I don't agree that Ondaatje's appeal lies there; I think it is in the images themselves. And I think Barbour recognized this problem when *The English Patient*, in many ways less disjunctive than Ondaatje's earlier works, got raves; he praises its poetic sensuality and treats it merely as an afterword, since it was hot off the press as his book was going to press.

Typically Twayne, the volume is well produced and reads smoothly, despite American spelling and a few typos. The bibliography of primary works is useful; the secondary bibliography covers only selected articles and book chapters, but is perceptively annotated and scrupulously fair. The tone is scholarly if bland, but heats up a bit in the footnotes where critics like Mundwiler, Lee and Nodelman are faulted for their blindness in reading Ondaatje's texts as monologic. So this book is an interesting and valuable study of Ondaatje's work up to *The English Patient*. Barbour hasn't convinced me that Bakhtin is the key to Ondaatje's work, but his own reflections and insights are truly helpful and engaging.

Saints Alive

bpNichol, with Howard Gerhard
Ad Sanctos: The Martyrology Book 9. Coach House Press $14.95

bpNichol, ed. Irene Niechoda
Truth: a book of fictions. Mercury Press $14.95

Reviewed by Stephen Scobie

Ad Sanctos, the Latin phrase used as the title for Book 9 of bpNichol's *The Martyrology*, may roughly be translated as "To the Saints." But that English phrase contains an ambiguity which the original Latin doesn't allow for. "Ad" sanctos means *towards* the saints, in the direction of the saints; if one wanted "to the saints" in the sense of an attribution ("This book is dedicated to the saints"), strict Latin grammar would require the dative case with no preposition: simply, "sanctis."

Nichol's text in fact encompasses both meanings. It takes the form of a libretto for a one-act opera, featuring an assortment of characters. Some of them are named functionally ("a writer," "a reader"), some pronominally ("i," "she," "we"), and some by names which have already appeared in Nichol's linguistic hagiography ("st. orm," "st. ranglehold"). These characters are moving, literally, ad sanctos, towards the saints: they are seeking out a saint's tomb, at which they propose to sit in contemplation until they die. Since they are a quarrelsome lot (somewhat reminiscent of the Players in Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*), this meditative outlook never seems likely, and it finally collapses when they find not one but two possible sites for the tomb of St. Valentine (ad sanctos, to the saints). Some choose one tomb, some another, and the final three (i, agnes, and ranglehold) choose neither. As Nichol's Preface puts it, "If the heart is divided even here, then this is a sign. There is no peace in escaping into death. The three turn and head off, back into the world."

So we have a simple little story, with a straightforward "moral" about the perils of sanctity; rather than seek "escape" in a delusory quest for a religious absolute, the surviving saints return "into the world," into the actual sites and arenas of human action. "Surely when they fell," Nichol wrote of his saints long before, "it was *into* grace"—grace, that is, belongs in the here and now, not in some imaginary Cloudtown. For *Ad Sanctos* is also "to the saints" in the sense that it is addressed, intertextually, to the earlier books of *The Martyrology*: the familiar characters reappear, and st. reat's song ("that old chestnut") is quoted from Book 1. So *Ad Sanctos* continues the project (most evident in Book 5) of re-reading and commenting on the accumulating poem.

As such, *Ad Sanctos* is an ironic, rueful, and sometimes bitter commentary. The grand theme of *The Martyrology* has always been community, the establishment of a human "we." But in Book 9, "we" is just one character among other fractious characters; the community splits at the end into three opposing directions, and it is "i," not "we," who decides to return "into the world." Within community, *The Martyrology* had always celebrated diversity, "fluid definition"; but the split in Book 9 occurs precisely over the attempt to establish a *single* definition, a single site for the tomb. The last words of the libretto (which may also, distressingly, prove to be the last words of *The Martyrology*) are "bloody fools!"

The dilemma which Book 9 leads us into may perhaps best be illustrated by the following passage:

> No path but the true path
> should be taken. No road but the
> holy road, the way. All other roads are
> mistaken. When the true path is
> taken, the way is clear, tho
> the true path be not the near path
> & the price be dear,
> no path but the true path
> should be taken. No road but
> the holy road, the way. All other roads are
> mistaken & when taken
> lead to loneliness, lovelessness,
> lead to emptiness, bitterness,
> lead to nothingness, lead away.

Taken by themselves, these lines are utterly beautiful; they exhibit Nichol's mastery of lyric cadence and verbal music. (Much of Book 9 is written very simply, not to get in the way of Howard Gerhard's music; this is one of the few passages where Nichol unmistakably supplies the music himself.) It is a moving statement on the need to find a "true path," and on the desolation of failure. And indeed, one was actively encouraged to take these lines "by themselves," since they were previously published as a separate postcard, printed as a Christmas gift.

But in the context of the libretto, these lines are very different. They are first sung by two opposing characters, "she" and "he," each claiming a different "true path" to the tomb of St. Valentine. They are then taken up and sung by the whole chorus "as a combination of a series of monologues and conversation." The dramatic presentation of difference completely undermines the unity of the lyric statement; those who believe what the music of the verse is telling them (that there is one "true path") are shown to be only "bloody fools."

The fact of Nichol's death, and thus the sad possibility that Book 9 may be the final volume of *The Martyrology*, gives a disproportionate emphasis to this ending. In comparison with the previous volumes, Book 9 is slight—a sketch, notable chiefly for the formal innovation of its status as a libretto, and for its collaboration with Howard Gerhard as composer. In all probability, it would not have stood as any kind of "last word" on the themes and concerns of *The Martyrology* as a whole, but rather as an aside (a temporary deflection, if you

will, from the "true path"). But slight as it is, it remains a complex, divided, and disturbing text.

Nichol's Preface and Libretto take up the first 50 pages of the book; the remaining 250 are devoted to Howard Gerhard's score. I do not have the musical competence to pass judgment on it as music, though I long to hear it; but I think that Nichol himself would have been amused by the dilemma of non-musically-literate "readers" faced by this massive piece of visual semiotics. Perhaps one could regard it as an extended concrete poem: an example of graphic notation which is both beautiful and mute; the voice in the silence of the page, singing.

Or else the score is a "Probable System," of the kind included, among many other exploratory pieces, in *Truth: a book of fictions*. The "Probable Systems" are far-fetched ideas (a re-written alphabet; a reading of the letters which maps show appearing on the surface of Manitoba), expounded and developed with a fanatical thoroughness which turns them into parodies of academic discourse, often as "unreadable" as a 250-page musical score. One delights in their ingenuity, and in the insane persistence with which Nichol works out every extension and permutation. These pieces are in some sense "conceptual," yet the delicious point of the jokes lies in the literalness with which they are worked out on the page.

Truth: a book of fictions is another product of the inspired and devoted editing of Irene Niechoda, whose work on the great mass of Nichol's posthumous manuscripts has already proved of incalculable value to students and lovers of his work. In assembling this volume from Nichol's incomplete notes and folders, Niechoda has been guided by the ideas of "pataphysics which Nichol and Steve McCaffery developed, as a probable system, out of Alfred Jarry; she also takes as the "prime concerns" of the collection "the iconicity of the page, the mechanics of the book, and the fictions of writing & reading."

Again, the point of the wit lies in its *literal* realisation, as when a section called "Unsigned" actually consists of six blank (but numbered) pages. I am reminded of Erik Satie's piano piece "Vexations," which he declared ought to be played 840 times in succession. When John Cage actually did this (in 1963), some critics claimed that such a literal realisation of the instruction was a naive and clumsy trampling of Satie's delicate, whimsical, and purely conceptual wit. I disagree: I think that Cage's performance is much funnier than Satie's concept; and it is the same humour that I find in many of Nichol's pieces gathered here. As always, they are a delight: explorations at the edge of writing, at the limits of language—in that area of border-blur where Nichol found, not one true path, but many.

Studies of the Majors

Judith Halden-Sullivan
The Topology of Being: The Poetics of Charles Olson. Peter Lang n.p.

Irene Niechoda
A Sourcery for Books 1 and 2 of bpNichol's The Martyrology. ECW Press $25.00

Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

Among the many things these two books do, they demonstrate how far along Olson studies have moved in the past couple of decades and how far Nichol studies have to go; but each, in its own way, testifies to the importance of the 'marginal' writer whose work it explores. Although he is still not really accepted among the Ivy League critics like Helen Vendler (which only goes to show how out of touch with modern American poetic experimentation such critics are), Charles Olson is well recognized as the major innovator he was by many of the most interesting poets and critics writing today, as a glimpse at the Bibliography of Judith

Halden-Sullivan's intriguing short study of his poetics shows. bpNichol will eventually be recognized as a similarly engendering figure in Canadian and contemporary writing, but as yet there are only two studies of his work, plus a couple of special issues of journals (*Open Letter* and *Line*). George Butterick edited both *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson* and *The Maximus Poems* (both with University of California Press) as well as publishing his massive and necessary *A Guide to* The Maximus Poems *of Charles Olson*, and most of the rest of Olson's vast writings are available to the interested reader. In contrast, Nichol's equally vast oeuvre is scattered widely in small press publications, and even *The Martyrology* has been mostly out of print for some time (although Coach House Press is reprinting it over the next few years). Halden-Sullivan's essay on Olson's poetics is the kind of book one can write after a lot of preliminary critical work has been done; Irene Niechoda's *A Sourcery for Books 1 and 2 of bpNichol's The Martyrology* is, in fact, the first installment of an equivalent to Butterick's *Guide* or Edwards and Vasse's *Annotated Index to the CANTOS of Ezra Pound*, and it is as important and necessary as those were.

Judith Halden-Sullivan knows Olson's work (her M A thesis was a study of Olson's letters), but her purpose in *The Topology of Being* is not to add to the close readings of Olson's poems but to investigate the grounds of his poetics in the context of her reading of Martin Heidegger. Intelligent, coherent, and compressed, her book does well what it sets out to do. Hers is not an influence study, for there is no evidence that Olson read Heidegger; nor does she offer "a simple case of analogy. I do not intend to pair likenesses between these two thinkers, but to use Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology as a context in which Olson's canon finds a firm foundation—a ground that *does* come to support the coherence of Olson's ideas" (33). In order to do this, she examines Olson's prose more than his poetry, seeking to show that his various statements on poetry, history, mythology, and language do (contrary to what many of his negative critics have argued) make up a coherent poetics, and a valuable one. Perhaps her major point is that Olson, as both poet and thinker, represents an answer to Heidegger's heartfelt question: "'...what are poets for in a destitute time?'".

Part of her argument is that Olson thought in a Heideggerian manner (if also a specifically American one), that his approach to the world was similar to Heidegger's even if neither of them really knew of the other's work. In some cases, Heidegger's terms—his particular way of thinking "world" and "planet," for example—can help us understand how Olson approached a "comprehension of Being's presence." In others, she simply discovers in Olson a stance towards the human and the natural that Heidegger shares. For example, Olson's interpretation of Herodotus's use of the term *historein* ("'*istorin*" as he wrote it) as meaning "finding out for oneself" or "'looking for the evidence' of what has been said" is, for her, "closely aligned with Heidegger and the Greeks who speak of truth as *aletheia*—the uncovering of beings or non-concealment." In other places, Heidegger's particular philosophical language helps her explicate Olson's stance. What strikes her most forcefully is how both "Olson and Heidegger delineate several 'basic structures' that distinguish humans" in "their being-in-the-world": these include, "human beings' participation in the disclosure—the truth—of their world," "their 'care' or concern for the world, their 'thrownness' or their being cast into an unchosen world of things, their 'projection' or ability to project multiple possibilities for defining both things and themselves, and their 'fallenness' or being in a world already made complete with traditional established truths and untruths."

She also argues that Olson and Heidegger

share an attitude toward logos, what is said, that stands them in opposition to deconstructive modes of thought and analysis (although I would suspect that a closer reading of Derrida on Heidegger might cause her to differentiate his work more carefully from that of his followers; nonetheless, she does argue forcefully that her two thinkers are defiantly unnihilistic in their approach to the potentials of human language). As these quick glances at her argument suggest, Halden-Sullivan's *The Topology of Being* crams a lot into its 150 or so pages. What she does, in both her use of Heidegger's thought and her critiques of the limitations of some of Olson's interpreters, is provide a thoughtful background to a renewed reading of Olson's many writings. Demonstrating that they deserve such attention is one of the major achievements of her study.

A Sourcery for Books 1 and 2 of bpNichol's The Martyrology is not simply an *Annotated Index* or a *Guide*, if only because Niechoda needs to provide a more complete critical introduction to Nichol's massive "life-long poem" than the authors of the works on the *Cantos* or *The Maximus Poems* did. Her introductory essay does a fine job of gathering a great deal of necessary material in a small space; it is critically useful without being too rarefied in its critique.

Pointing to the "polyphonic or communal nature" of Nichol's varied inherited and discovered forms, Irene Niechoda points to how "[h]is interest in pre-print or non-print societies stems from their fundamental integration of language, voice, and the cosmos, of the poet and society. As *The Martyrology* accumulates, its many voices interplay with each other more complexly, and its layering of cultural history becomes denser. It is an amazing collection of dispersals." Following these comments, Niechoda turns to Olson and his sense of "'*istorin*, of finding out for one's self," as a clue to what drove Nichol in his search for valid mythologies and pasts: "*The Martyrology* records the process of Nichol's confronting the responsibility that faces anyone living on this continent and willing to acknowledge the fact: that is, composing one's own tradition."

Niechoda had the distinct advantage of being able to consult with Nichol during the writing of the *Sourcery*, and clearly he was a willing participant in her labours; she also had access to all the Nichol papers in Simon Fraser University's Special Collections (although it seems clear to me that she must continue this work with the later books of *The Martyrology*, it only further underlines the loss his death brought to us to know that she will have to do so without his generous help). One of the first ways in which he was able to help her was in elucidating his extraordinary debt as a writer and a mythologist to comic strips and comic books. As Stephen Scobie long ago pointed out in his discussion of *The Martyrology* in *What History Teaches*, by the mid-point of the 20th century, a writer pretty well had to create a mythology rather than simply writing out of some given one. As he has pointed out, and as Niechoda further argues, Nichol absented his long poem from the obvious mythological base of Greek mythology, choosing instead "to investigate non-Mediterranean mythologies, in an attempt to discover any that might be more relevant to himself and, most importantly, would spur him to create his own." Niechoda's comments on Nichol's responses to *Dick Tracy* and the Marvel comics superheros of the 60s reveal one of the ways he went about this particular mythography.

Perhaps even more useful is her archaeological digging in Nichol's various unpublished works, especially "The Plunkett Papers," in which much of the original mythology of "Cloud-town" as well as the discovered history of his own family appears, only to be alluded to in *The Martyrology*. Later, in the actual annotations, she makes stellar use of earlier drafts of the work to

provide helpful background material on many of its most opaque lines, always reminding us that to a degree that opaqueness is what counts, as a sign of how the poem occurred, how much it signs the process of its own writing as it creates a possible narrative about various figures, sometimes called saints, sometimes parts of an autobiographical context. I think she manages to strike the right balance most of the time, giving us the personal, literary, mythological backgrounds to specific aspects of the first two books yet demonstrating, again partly from Nichol's own comments, how these are meant to remain part of the rushing surface of a writing/written stream. Nevertheless, her explanation of the cosmogony behind *The Martyrology* will prove invaluable to all future students of the poem.

Niechoda often alludes to future sections of the poem in order to show how what seemed too inchoate to both the writer and many of his readers when Books 1 and 2 appeared would be integrated into the formal explorations the poem continued through to its too early ending. These remarks suggest that she will be able to do the necessary work to complete what she has begun in this book, even without the personal help she received from Nichol, especially as she has access to his papers (she has already edited one of his unfinished manuscripts for publication: *Truth: A Book of Fictions*). Meanwhile, *A Sourcery for Books 1 and 2 of bpNichol's* The Martyrology offers all those who already love bpNichol's great poem as well as all those who may someday read it a number of necessary handles. I can only hope the next volumes are on the way, and that the publishing support they will continue to require will be forthcoming. Too many such major works are neglected today simply because the scholarly contextualizations they demand are not available. I am most grateful to Irene Niechoda for providing the beginnings of such scholarship in this brilliant little book.

Les Légèretés lyriques

Philippe Haeck
Preparatifs d'Écriture. VLB $16.95

François Ricard
La Génération Lyrique. Boréal n.p.

Reviewed by Dominique Perron

Établir une comparaison entre les essais de Haeck et ceux de Ricard, pourra peut-être a priori sembler injuste pour le premier, mais le rapprochement entre les deux ouvrages, quoique leurs propos s'inscrivent dans deux perspectives complètement différentes, est quasi inévitable puisque le hasard a fait que Ricard dans *La Génération lyrique* ne fasse pas autre chose que de décrire les déterminants idéologiques dont est tributaire la catégorie intellectuelle à laquelle appartient un professeur-auteur-créateur-pédagogue tel que Haeck.

Pour mieux établir cette catégorie, dont les manifestations sont toujours très vivaces dans l'intelligentsia québécoise, il n'est pas inutile de se remémorer les mordantes critiques lancées par Jean Larose dans certains de ses textes rassemblés dans *L'Amour du Pauvre* et publiés en 1991. Plus particulièrement, dans *La littérature à distance*, Larose s'en prenait à cette conception de l'enseignement de la littérature par le biais de la création littéraire et de la relation au "vécu" qui prévalait (et qui prévaut toujours encore un peu) dans la plupart des institutions collégiales au Québec. Plus particulièrement, il dénonçait l'affaiblissement dramatique de la qualité du français, le manque d'articulation de la pensée, et la générale insignifiance des contenus auxquelles cette pratique de la pédagogie du vécu avaient mené. Si les propos de Larose semblent cruels, il s'avère encore plus cruellement véridique de constater à quel point tous ces travers se sont textualisés, sans aucun retournement ironique, dans les essais de Philippe Haeck. Il est vrai que les thèmes de ceux-ci sont par nature résistants

à une articulation poussée: l'auteur commentant particulièrement son rapport à l'écriture et sa conception de la pédagogie, favorise une fluidité mystique qui tourne autour de la création ou de l'enseignement, parce qu'ils sont pour lui des objets d'abord sentis, jamais pensés et réfléchis. Ne parle-t-il pas, entre autres du "livre-parole", du "livre-cri", du "livre-désir", du "livre-chant", comme n'abuse-t-il pas d'associations du genre "jouer-travailler", "penser-sourire", "pensée-désir" ou "apprentissage-différence", qui à elles seules sont tout un programme qui ne peut être qualifié que de soft-idéologique. Mais le plus affligeant, parce que le plus virtuellement dommageable (et je pèse mes mots), c'est que cette représentation de l'approximation créationniste en lieu d'articulation d'une démarche intellectuelle est offerte, que dis-je, imposée puisqu'elle est enseignée à de jeunes étudiants de collège, car Haeck dans "Préparatifs d'Écriture" nous expose, et longuement, ses préparations de cours et les objectifs qui en découlent. Ainsi, les jeunes québécois dont on déplore tant et plus les faiblesses en français écrit et parlé, se voient invités à rejeter une "expression rigoureuse (qui) permet à qui l'entend de penser uniquement ce qui lui convient et ce que, de toute façon, la raison lui ordonne" et "à sortir de la langue stéréotypée, académique, morte", comme s'ils avaient jamais eu la chance d'y entrer, et comme si le discours de Haeck lui-même n'était pas rempli de ces stéréotypes de la naïveté-gouroue, même pas mal intentionnée, ce qui est un autre comble de l'insignifiance, parole mystique qui invite ses pathétiques adeptes à faire des "exercices-jeux avec le langage" pour ne pas "risquer votre âme-peau, votre pensée-désir". Pour en finir, je ne peux, encore une fois, que citer Jean Larose "... l'Association Québécoise des professeurs de français (l'un des organismes qui mettent le plus en danger en ce moment—bien plus qu'Alliance Québec—la vie du français au Québec)". No wonder.

Heureusement, pour notre réconfort moral et intellectuel, *La Génération Lyrique* de Ricard s'affirme comme un brillant essai d'une écriture remarquablement efficace, sur les paradigmes socio-historiques qui ont prévalu au surgissement, et ensuite à l'établissement des baby-boomers, dont Ricard situe la naissance entre 1945 et 1967. L'un des grands mérites de cet essai—et ils sont nombreux—est d'abord de situer le phénomène démographique du baby-boom dans son contexte mondial pour ensuite s'attacher à l'étude de ses caractéristiques au sein de la société québécoise. Ainsi, l'expression "Révolution Tranquille", perd sous la démonstration de Ricard sa spécificité québécoise, car l'auteur démontre bien que le tournant réformiste des années soixante n'a pas été une exclusivité au Québec, mais s'est manifesté partout, de la même façon en Amérique et dans de nombreux pays d'Europe. Ces élargissements faits, l'auteur s'attache ensuite à montrer, en revenant au cas québécois, comment la création du Québec contemporain, avec ses orientations sociales, est redevable à ce qu'il désigne comme étant "l'idéologie lyrique", représentation propre aux baby-boomers marquée d'abord par l'urgence de couper les ponts avec ce qui a précédé, les contraintes, les restrictions de toutes sortes, ensuite par le sentiment, plus, par la certitude, que toute réalité puisse être transformée par leur seul désir et leur seul enthousiasme. Dès lors, devant l'immédiat succès de cette volonté de faire table rase d'un univers dépassé, découlerait aussi le sentiment de la non-résistance du monde, de la société, devant cette détermination à instaurer un ordre nouveau, sentiment que Ricard qualifie globalement de lyrique, exprimant bien à quel point la génération des baby-boomers n'aura jamais eu à éprouver le poids et la lourdeur de ce monde. Mais c'est aussi à partir de cette singularité que s'instaure aussi le discours

critique de l'auteur contre une société entièrement investie de ces idéologies de l'allégement, du renouveau, de "l'effacement du monde comme horizon et limite de l'existence", toutes idéologies qui prennent le "moi" comme point de départ absolu de toutes perspectives. Et c'est du même élan que Ricard stigmatise, vers ses derniers chapitres, le lyrisme de cette génération qui ne perçoit plus la nécessité d'aucun décryptage, aucune étude, d'aucun 'apprentissage,' mais seulement la capacité de sentir, de voir, d'entendre et d'éprouver de la jouissance", commentaire qui renvoie exactement aux positions euphoriques et inarticulées prônées par Haeck, lui-même parfaite illustration de cette paradoxale volonté molle de l'épanouissement à tout prix, du culte de la créativité naturelle, et du refus de toute forme imposée. Mais en sus de la pertinence de l'analyse de Ricard, ce qu'il faut aussi souligner c'est l'impressionnante maîtrise formelle de son média, cette efficacité dans l'argumentation, l'élégance des formules et le bonheur de l'image, où visiblement, l'auteur lui-même s'est abandonné à un certain lyrisme où cependant la légèreté du rythme est en heureux équilibre avec le poids du propos.

Subterranean Landscapes

Tom Walmsley
Shades: The Whole Story of Doctor Tin. Arsenal Pulp Press n.p.

Kenneth Radu
Home Fires. Vehicule $14.94

Reviewed by Sharon Meneely

Shades is a book about sex, violence, and murder victims who refuse to remain dead. Fourteen years after his death, A.J., the former Doctor Tin, is back in town. Yet *Shades* is not simply a sequel to *Doctor Tin*, the winner of the Pulp Press 2nd International 3-Day Novel-Writing Contest, it is a story that literally encompasses Walmsley's first novel, which was published in 1979. Sharply satirical, the novel is energetic and colourful; scenes unfold with cinematic clarity, fleshing out the sinuous plot of *Doctor Tin*. Like *Doctor Tin*, however, *Shades* leads the reader on an exciting chase through city streets and hotel corridors, leaving the reader not knowing where s/he is going and wondering where s/he has been.

Walmsley constructs the somewhat fragmented plot of *Doctor Tin* as a centrepoint of *Shades*, neatly doubling the narratives in "The Main Drag," the large middle section of the novel. Onto this base, he grafts alternative versions of past and present events. While at times difficult to follow, these multiple strands of the twisting plot of *Shades: The Whole Story of Doctor Tin* weave together to form a coherent but decidedly bizarre storyline. One suspects that the whole story of Doctor Tin can never be told and the "true" story never known.

With the resilience of cartoon characters, dead people return to life to fulfil their destined roles, critiquing everything from rock music to police violence and racism along the way. "Doctor Tin has the message, he's seen it all, been the lamb and avenging angel, both." As the lead singer-guitarist in the band known by the same name, Doctor Tin, more recently known as Anvil Jinx and Allah Jihad (among many other names), turns to violence when he realizes that he has "been unable to spread peace, love, happiness or anything but rock 'n roll." The crazy corpse-scattered world into which he plunges with detective Harry McGraw in hot pursuit is one of drugs, prostitution, and sadomasochism.

By design, the characters are thinly-drawn caricatures: beautiful Melody Miles is a singer whose voice is a national treasure; Rip and Razor are rock stars into coke and violence against women, as well as homophobia and racism; and Mung is the rock stars' chauffeur who will kill on demand. The most fully-drawn character is

Harry, the ex-cop anti-heroic detective who pursues the case which has been "a sewer from the very beginning" to discover the facts in order to cover them up.

Shades parodies the detective novel, but its focus is contemporary media culture. Finding a woman's corpse on a muddy riverbank reminds McGraw "of a late-night news broadcast, or a series of stills from a cheap detective magazine." There is nothing distinctively Canadian about the culture that Walmsley portrays; American television, like the *Heraldo* and *The Newlywed Game* shows that some of his characters watch, seems to predominate. While Walmsley's book is funny, it is also disturbing; the sheer volume of physical and sexual violence directed towards both women and men in this novel leaves one to question whether *Shades: The Whole Story of Doctor Tin* and its readers are not active participants in the culture the novel critiques. This lack of participation, however, may be exactly what Walmsley had in mind.

The frank treatment of human sexuality in *Home Fires* has led one Calgary critic to declare Kenneth Radu the Henry Miller of Canlit. A more serious and deeper exploration of human passions than *Shades*, *Home Fires* surveys the subterranean landscape of sexual desire in combustive Montreal, a city where sex shops and arsonists proliferate.

With insight and sensitivity, Radu probes the minds and hearts of three men and three women whose lives intertwine: Brian, an attractive and seemingly successful warehouse floor manager who advertises for sex partners; Giselle, his wife; Mariette, a middle- aged widow who answers his advertisement; Nick, the respectable family man who owns sex shops and indulges in arson; Wanda, his alcoholic wife; and Jacques, his muscle-bound, body building employee. The female characters are particularly interesting. The three men, caught up in the fantasies of patriarchal culture, move toward self-destruction, while the women, struggling toward more humane visions and values, become stronger and self-sufficient. Giselle refuses to tolerate Brian's infidelities and leaves him. Mariette rejects Brian in favour of Roger, a homeless person that she meets at the shelter where she does volunteer work. Wanda begins to recover her sense of self, controlling her drinking and finding a job, when she confronts Nick with the knowledge of his arsonist activities. The only ring of unreality occurs when Mariette brings Roger and several other homeless people to live in her upper-middle class suburban home after the shelter is destroyed by arson; her surprise at the violence of her neighbours' negative reactions is simply too naive.

Radu peels back Montreal's thin veneer of middle-class respectability to expose a city struggling with multiculturalism and xenophobia. Difference occasions fear and contempt. For Nick, however, arson is a means of consuming difference. Having escaped from a Communist controlled country with his parents and emigrated to Montreal while still a child, he suffers a loss of identity that can only be assuaged by fire. For him, fire is "the language of his lost home, the lost language of his true self":

> Where is my home? In the heart of the flame. I am without body, without geography, without nationality. My French is acquired, laboured, not heart-felt, not part of my being. My English has replaced my native language. I live in a society that calls itself distinct, built upon the exclusion of its original inhabitants, terrified of the publicly displayed English word. And it jumps into bed with the Americans.

Beautifully written, Radu's second novel, *Home Fires* is a thoughtful and provocative examination of Quebec culture that articulates many of the tensions inherent in contemporary Canadian society.

Wallace Stegner 1909–1993

Robert Thacker

High on a list of Canadian books not written by Canadians is Wallace Stegner's *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* (1962). Its reputation among prairie people is enormous, and that reputation is an enduring one: although an odd mix of memoir, narrative history, and fiction, *Wolf Willow* evokes the essences of prairie space: "Viewed personally and historically" Stegner writes early on, "that almost featureless prairie glows with more color than it reveals to the appalled and misdirected tourist. As memory, as experience, those Plains are unforgettable; as history, they have the lurid explosiveness of a prairie fire, quickly dangerous, swiftly over" (4). Visiting the area of his boyhood home in Eastend, Saskatchewan, where he lived from 1914 to 1920, Stegner notes the scent of the shrub wolf willow and, through it, he rediscovers still within himself the "sensuous little savage" he had been forty years earlier; together with that former self, he responds once more to "the circle of the world" created by prairie space (25). Building upon these recognitions, Stegner then tells the history of the Cypress Hills, a history he learned later and long away from Saskatchewan, one that he was denied as a schoolboy but that he claimed emphatically as a writer in *Wolf Willow*. Looking at Eastend once again—though he calls the town Whitemud—Stegner proclaims his connection: "If I am native to anything, I am native to this" (20).

His writing—broad in its range and detailed in its knowledge—shows that he came to know the history and being of southwest Saskatchewan as well as any; and, as the short stories included in *Wolf Willow* demonstrate along with his early novel, *On a Darkling Plain* (1939), this was the very history Stegner himself lived through there as boy during the latter years of the first war, even if he did not comprehend it then. Its history, and other histories too (the Mormons, John Wesley Powell, Joe Hill), are made vivid in his work, both imaginative and profound. More pointedly, Stegner used his Saskatchewan years and those that followed as the basis for his depiction of the western portions of this continent, the places he knew best; for him, place and feeling were symbiotic. Derived from personal associations like those elaborated in *Wolf Willow*, such connection with wild nature, he wrote, is "a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope" (Coda 153). The recollected trip home to Saskatchewan which structures *Wolf Willow* is such an exploration of landscape, to be sure, but it is much more than that—it is a reassurance of the relation between a particular place and a particular person, one born of intimate connection made early in life.

For Stegner, that place was Eastend—adjacent to the Cypress Hills, a place emblematic of pioneering, a place fecund with human history: Native and Métis, explorer and trader, Mounted Policeman

and pioneer, longtime resident and passer-by. "However anachronistic I may be," he writes, "I am a product of the American earth, and in nothing quite so much as in the contrast between what I knew through the pores and what I was officially taught" (23). As the emphatic "American" here indicates, once away from Canada, Stegner identified with the United States and its literature yet, equally, this statement includes the generic form—he never forgot that he qualified, as he wrote, as a "halfway" Canadian since he "missed becoming a Canadian by only about one inch of rain" (WW 277, Provincial 299). That personal story, and that broader allegiance, is everywhere affirmed in *Wolf Willow*, which shows its author to have been a rare being indeed, a most Canadian American writer. Personal circumstance allowed Stegner to grow up a prairie boy on what he calls last plains frontier, "With nothing in sight to stop anything, along a border so unwatched that it might have been unmapped..." (283). He was one of those very few who could write, quite truthfully, that "The 49th parallel ran directly through my childhood, dividing me in two" (81). Ever beckoned back to Whitemud by the scent of wolf willow and the pull of memory, his connection to Canada was far more than halfway. Profoundly—if not literally—Wallace Stegner was "native" to this country.

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Dorothy Roberts 1906–1993

Rhea Tregebov

I in my age am sent
the poems of the dead
who are melted down to themselves

who lie in the thin wafers
who are holy and consumed for love

who are back in their time
who are in their native land
or journeying to return

(from "The Poets of Home,"
In the Flight of Stars)

"Small views of my life would be of the constrictions first"—so Dorothy Roberts begins "Some Phases," the autobiographical Foreword to *The Self of Loss: New and Selected Poems* (Fiddlehead, 1976) which provides a rare, if oblique, insight into this extraordinary New Brunswick poet's life. Constrictions indeed. An expatriate who never was reconciled to exile, and a poet whose great gifts were in large part ignored by her compatriots, Roberts nonetheless succeeded in producing in her long life a body of literary work of striking lucidity and intelligence. It is, however, painful to follow, through the bibliographical compendiums and periodical indices, the vagaries of Roberts' career. In the flares and then embers of critical appreciation thus observed, it is tempting to see Roberts' life as paradigmatic of Canadian poets of that era (women in particular), and of the impediments they faced.

Initially, Roberts' talent and promise do receive attention. A chapbook of poems, *Songs for Swift Feet* (Ryerson, 1927), is published when the young poet is all of 21. Her work appears in anthologies such as *Our Canadian Literature*, edited by Bliss Carman, as early as 1935. While there are frequent contributions to anthologies through the '50s and '60s, book publication is both sparse and

infrequent. *Dazzle*, Roberts' second chapbook (Ryerson, 1957) is published a full thirty years after her first. Roberts is now 51—what has intervened? She has married, raised two children. *In Star and Stalk*, which follows shortly after (Emblem Books, 1959), is only twelve pages long. *Twice to Flame* (McGraw Hill Ryerson, 1961, 58 pp) and *Extended* (Fiddlehead Books, 1967, 44 pp), are Roberts' first substantial books. *Extended* is dedicated to her husband, A. R. Leisner; *The Self of Loss* is dedicated to his memory.

Roberts continues to publish in the best Canadian and American publications. Despite her talent and achievements, she doesn't qualify for her own listing in the 1973 edition of the *Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*. (Her father, the adventure writer and poet Theodore Goodridge Roberts, has an extended listing as, of course, do his brother, Charles G.D. Roberts, and cousin, Bliss Carman.) But in the supplement to this edition, *Extended* is (somewhat faintly) praised for its concern with landscape and for "placing specific locales in larger terms in language sometimes craggily dense, sometimes indirect, but generally successful." Nor does Roberts merit a separate listing in the 1983 edition of the *Oxford Companion*. The brief entry is more epitaph than commentary: Roberts "showed promise in the fifties with *Dazzle* (1957) and *In Star and Stalk* (1959), though her later work has not become popular."

Reading Roberts' final book, *In the Flight of Stars* (Goose Lane, 1991), it is difficult not to feel that popularity is a deficient criterion of the value of Roberts' remarkable sensibility—a sensibility I can only described as grace—her insight into the human condition, her technical mastery of prosody, syntax, and image. Not withstanding the vicissitudes of literary appraisal, I would that Dorothy Roberts could know that her poetic achievement will stand.

Two Poems for Tom Marshall

David Helwig

for Tom

1
Waiting rooms. I write this
in a small hospital
in an old town; elsewhere, you
are held in cold storage, deep
in your fabulous stone city.

2
Fire in April, a secret image,
caressed, and now, suddenly, yours,
the frozen body taken
by the first element.

3
On a barren highway, surrounded
by the endlessness of everything
I think of you, Tom, your bright
blue eyes, your sudden accuracies,
the babble of bachelor loneliness.

All across China, we shared
rooms and with a cool
mandarin respect
for the other's privacy.

After thirty years
the story of your life
becomes the story of mine.

(Or is it other way around?)

4
Your lovely acolytes, light
and dark, wish you farewell
into sunlight. Which
is also fire.
"Still, words
between the dead and the living
are difficult."
Also between
the living and the dead, between
the charmed disorder of our days
and the blank purity of yours.

5
And now. You are inveterate.
You insist on being dead,
day after absent day.

6
A month later we drove
through the green world-garden
of new leaves and luminous rain
to Roblin Lake. You were not there
(or were you?) as we talked
about you and your ways,
stood where you often stood.
Outside the windows, the familiar trees,
high and vegetable, perfect
by the water, here where you were happy,
at ease with beer and gossip and poems
after twenty-odd years of arrivals,

where your voice grew, sang.

7
The savage rhetoric of age
is all around, heart, lungs, womb
break, falter, stumble
as we drop dead quick or slow.

The phone rings. No-one there
when I shout Hello, hello, hello,
but over the magic wires
I hear birds calling.

The green things of the world
grow damp and lush with desire.
Lilacs wild by the road.
Love is the same old puzzle
and new mint sharp on the tongue.

The green things of the world
grow green, my old friend,
and words make their way or not.
For all we know, each virus speaks
against our cells with one
of the voices of one of the gods.

Sun, wind, a cinematic splendour
of moving clouds, the sound of water.

Alone or together, we practice
the good and bad days of our endurance, which
will go on without you, as with,
to the glad intolerable future, where

you wait for us in your poems.

April–July 1993

Elegy as a message left on an answering machine

Hello, you've reached 542-8942. I'm unable to answer the phone just now, but just leave a message after the beep and I'll be sure to return your call.
Goodbye for now

Won't bother waiting up for you
to get back to me on this one. Waste of time.
My dime
in a bar by the water, your factory-new

answering machine is—like anything bereaved—still
full of your words, the waves
of your voice, the nervous laugh that gave us,
sometimes, "cause" to laugh. And which we now miss. Well,

human nature. I say Fuck my own. I own
up: this stinks. Too late
to erase all the crap, a watergate
of gossip, off-hand words, no time to phone—

in those last minute changes, additions, to say
what we find it so impossible to say—
I find. So cut all this *can't*
come to the phone right now can't, I don't

buy it, I figure you're in there somewhere, still
screening your calls, you
secretive bastard, pick up the phone right now if you
would hear a friend. Don't stall,

don't, like me. Thinking
there's time, there's still time enough, or rather
not thinking enough. Now look, I'm not sure whether
the executors will be disconnecting

you—your line—tomorrow (nurses, almost, pulling closed
the green curtain & tearing
out of your torso the drips & plugs & electrodes
to leave you drifting

with that astronaut in the film
who squirms awhile, signals some last, frantic word
then spins away into the void)—
that's why I'm here. Sky's clear tonight, by the way, calm

the wind, the water. Not sure really
why I called—
gesture of a drunk old
friend and ally.

Anyway it was pretty good
for a second or two, to
get through,
Tom. Good-

bye.

Reference

Recent reference publications include Canadian entries in several standard series, including comments on Gary Geddes and Robert Service in *Contemporary Authors* 140 (Gale, n.p.) and a curious selection of excerpts from commentary on Margaret Laurence in *Short Story Criticism* 7: 243-73 (Gale, n.p.). The *Dictionary of Literary Biography* extends itself judiciously in vol. 117 (ed. Bernth Lindfors and Reinhard Sander) to a first selection of *20th Century Caribbean and Black African Writers*, a grouping that includes Rhys, Walcott, Montreal-born John Hearne, and (helpfully, though somewhat surprisingly, in this context) a reflection on Equiano and 18th-century slave narratives. Of importance to researchers in science fiction are: Robert Reginald's *Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, 1975-1991* (Gale, n.p.), a bibliography of SF, Fantasy, and Horror fiction books, and non-fiction monographs; the third edition of Noelle Watson and Paul E. Schellinger's *20th-Century Science-Fiction Writers* (St. James P, n.p.), a useful biocritical guide; and H.W. Hall's 2-volume *Science Fiction and Fantasy Reference Index, 1878-1985* (Gale, n.p.), indexed by author and subject. Other standard works include James L. Harner's *Literary Research Guide*, 2nd. ed. (MLA, $37.00; pb $19.50), grouping entries by genre, area studies, mss and archives, databases, periodical literature, and other categories. And perhaps a special kind of standard reference is much more sociocultural than biblioliterary: a new, clear edition of *Kate Aitken's Cook Book* (HarperCollins, $12.95).

Dictionary format books include *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus in Dictionary Form*, ed. Princeton Language Institute (Laurel, n.p.); Joanne Shattock's *The Oxford Guide to British Women Writers* (Oxford, $42.00), which gathers available material on a number of early writers, draws on up-to-date scholarship, and includes many contemporary writers as well; Mary Kandiuk's *French-Canadian Authors* (Scarecrow, $27.50), a bibliography of primary works together with lists of *English*-language criticism that has dealt with them; Pierre Brunel's edition of a *Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes* (Routledge, n.p.), containing over 1200 pages of descriptive commentary on Echo, Faust, Centaurs, Nietzchean attitudes to various subjects, and other material; Jeremy Hawthorn's *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* (Routledge, $15.95), lucidly explaining various systems, from diegesis to différance; Julian Franklin's *A Dictionary of Rhyming Slang* (Routledge, n.p.): a book is a "Captain Cook" or a "Joe Hook," but not a "Joe Rook," which is a "crook"; Brenda F. Berrian and Aart Brock, eds., *Bibliography of Women Writers from the Caribbean* (Three Continents, n.p.), a useful photo typescript detailing works by Spanish, French, English, and Dutch-speaking writers, listed by category; and Daryl Cumber Dance's excellent *Fifty Caribbean Writers* (Greenwood, n.p.), a valuable biobibliographical sourcebook which brings

together much information not readily available elsewhere, and involves Dionne Brand, Tony Boxill, and others with a Canada-based perspective.

Anthologies also fall sometimes into the "Reference" category, as do reprints and other related texts. Recent books include Stewart Brown, ed., *Caribbean Poetry Now*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, $13.95), a collection of works on 10 themes, in which it would have been good to see more poems by Lorna Goodison and other contemporary women; Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, ed., *The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (Oxford, $15.50), including works by Eunice de Souza and Agha Shahid Ali as well as the more familiar Seth, Moraes, Ezekiel, and Kolatkar; Michael Ackland's *The Penguin Book of 19th Century Australian Literature* (Penguin, $17.95), which rediscovers 19th-century Australian women, and reads Clarke, Lawson, and Kendall beside Louisa Lawson, Baynton, and Ada Cambridge, against a broad range of themes including landscape, sex roles, and the past; Yolande Grisé and Jeanne d'Arc Lortie's ed. of *Les Textes Poétiques du Canada Français 1606-1867* (vol. 6: *1856-1858*): a massive, 320-poem selection from various sources, dutifully edited for textual variants; and René Dionne's *Anthologie de la poésie franco-ontarienne* (Prise de Parole, n.p.), which includes work by William Chapman, Alfred Garneau, Simone Routier, Pierre Trottier, and Cécile Cloutier, among others, who are often treated purely as Quebeckers. Reprints include Samuel de Champlain's *Des Sauvages*, ed. and annot. by Alain Beaulieu and Réal Ouellet (Editions TYPO, n.p.), Champlain's first book, adapted to contemporary French, with index, bibliography, appendices on the economics of the time and other subjects, and some illustrations, though these are not as clear as might have been hoped for.

Another group of works is primarily critical. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn subtitle their *Redrawing the Boundaries* (MLA, n.p.) "The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies"; this process takes place, apparently (the boundaries are *theirs* after all, in the first place, not *mine*), by inviting a bunch of U.K.-&-U.S.-based theorists to review the literature on Feminism, Gender Criticism, African-American Criticism, Deconstruction, and Composition Studies; the most useful article is Homi Bhabha's on "Postcolonial Criticism" (pp. 437-65), discussing cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to show the "antagonistic" and "ambivalent" moments in structures of modernity (a useful, if familiar, bibliography is attached). Other collections include *Colby Quarterly* 19.2 (1993), a special issue on the American presence in Canadian literature, Canadian and American painting, Mavis Gallant, and George Bowering on Vancouver; Gordon Collier, ed., *Us/Them: Translations, Transcriptions and Identity in Post-Colonial Literary Cultures* (Rodopi, n.p.), an anthology of European conference papers on prairie literature, Findley, Dub Poetry, Eliza Fraser, *Foe*, Rushdie, and multiculturalism (including two papers by Michael Batts and Smaro Kamboureli); and Balz Engler, ed., *Writing & Culture* (Gunter Narr Verlag, DM 48—), vol. 6 in the Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature series, with a wide embrace of topics, from Literacy in Papua New Guinea to Margery Kempe, Melville, and Native American culture. *A Survey of Modern English* (Routledge, $31.50), by Stephan Gramley and Kurt-Michael Pätzold, includes general articles on English pronunciation, grammar, gender, and (of special interest) language variations around the Commonwealth.

Visual books also furnish valuable reference data. *Land Spirit Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada* (National Gallery, n.p.) is a critical history of the gallery's exhibitions, with essays on spiritual

legacy, different kinds of knowing, and the relation between modernism and nationalism, with instructive plates and interviews with such contemporary artists as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun. Yves Bonnefoy's 2-volume compilation of *American, African, and Old European Mythologies* and *Asian Mythologies*, tr. Wendy Doniger (U Chicago, $25.00 and $27.00), comprehensively summarize the *Ramayana* and other holy books, and in separate signed articles take account of various religious cosmogonies, the significance of twins among the Bantu, Huron creation stories, and other subjects; the accounts of religion far surpass the rudimentary data, gathered along with population statistics, in Joyce Moss and George Wilson's *Asian and Pacific Islanders* (Gale, n.p.), but the black-&-white illustrations pale in comparison with those in Larousse's guide to mythology. Meredith Bain Woodward's *Land of Dreams: A History in Photographs of the British Columbia Interior* (Altitude, n.p.) wonderfully documents another history of social change; the transformed character of an often-neglected part of Canada comes alive here in pictures of natives and settlers, railway workers and miners, mountain-climbers, bronco-busters, Doukhobour communities, and British landholders taking tea on a cultivated lawn.

In a special category is *Canada 125: Constitutions* (Canada Communications Group/Govt. of Canada, $85.00); this collection of seventeen documents brings together in one handsomely illustrated volume the 1763 Proclamation, the Quebec Act, the acts relating to Confederation and Rupert's Land, the B.C. Terms of Union, the Alberta Act, the Statute of Westminster, and related acts right up to the present. It's both a reference volume and—because these are documents that impact directly on Canadian life—a cultural reminder that future constitutional documents deserve to be composed out of principle rather than political expediency. W.N.

On the Verge

Expressions: A Compilation of Feelings. ed. Bill K. Braisher. P.O. Box 39503, Richmond, B.C. V7B 5G9. $28.50. Believing that teenagers should have the opportunity to speak up and be heard, Bill Braisher plans to invite high school students from across British Columbia to submit their writing to this annual publication. The first collection, in the words of poet Michelle Yeh, speaks most often of the "heart aching with faint whisper of hope/to catch a butterfly/with a broken net." In drawings, short prose pieces and poems, the young people here represented care intensely about the implicitly racist label "people like that" (Tanya Syrota), and the agony of children with no toys, no clothing and nothing to eat" (Harmony Hemmerich). As a primer on the evolution of the poem, this collection reminds us that the first objective of the developing writer is not the startling metaphor but discovering some words to better the world. The words these aspiring writers feel most intensely about are those words most likely to "become lies" (Tawnya Bossi). L.R.

Sandra Gwyn. *The Tapestry of War*. HarperCollins. $26.95. This is a remarkable book, and very few more illuminating account of the effects of the Great War have been written. It is an account, not so much of the gruesome battlefields of the Western Front, though these make their appearance, but of what participating in the war, or even living passively through it, did to Canadians' lives. Sandra Gwyn is writing archival rather than oral history, for none of the ten people on whom she has chosen to concentrate lived long enough for their voices to be taped, and she is relying mainly on letters or diaries they left, supported by other incidental information. It is in fact a grand pastiche, from which Gwyn's good

psychological instinct draws out the essentials of character, the individualities of the persons involved, from active field officers to fading Ottawa social butterflies, from Max Aitken to Harold Innis, but in such a way that the book as a whole amounts to an exploration in depth and with great empathy of what the unprecedented experience of the Great War did to Canadian society, the strengths of nationality it developed, and the potentialities it destroyed. G.W.

Ernest Hillen. *The Way of a Boy.* Penguin. "Memory is, finally, all we own," says Ernest Hillen as he ends his reminiscent book, *The Way of a Boy*, and who can deny it, especially when faced with such a fine piece of recollective writing? Ernest Hillen was a small boy when the Japanese on Java took him and his family into their prison camps, his father and eventually his elder brother into one for men, his mother into a series of steadily worsening camps for women and children. It is a book that exposes with a strangely detached frankness the cruelties imposed by the Japanese guards and officers, yet it is surprisingly lacking in hatred. Hatred can spoil a book, but Hillen has written a really good memoir by reentering his childhood self and showing the mixture of courage and loyalty and cunning by which a surprising number of people survived those appalling conditions. It is one of the best memoirs I have read in years, and should interest both historians and also addicts of autobiography, for here is not only a true story, but one written with remarkable skill. G.W.

Clarence R. Bolt. *Thomas Crosby and the Tsimshian: Small Shoes for Feet Too Large.* U British Columbia P. $35.95. Among other things, this is a study of the relationship between the missionaries and their converts on the Pacific Coast, and of the extent to which those who are about to be converted often precipitate the event. Clarence Bold takes as his example the passionately evangelical Methodist Thomas Crosby, who went to Port Simpson at the call of those Tsimshian Indians who had not joined the famous Anglican missionary Duncan in his religious utopia of Metlakatla (where the aim was to turn the Indians into model Victorian working men). Duncan's success, particularly in saving his people from the smallpox epidemics of the time, had led the Tsimshian who did not follow him to seek an emotionally motivated Christianity that would come nearer than low church Anglicanism to their quasi-religious practices, irradiated by inspiration and possession. Crosby fitted their need, but only for a while, since most of the missionaries—and he among them—were working-class Englishmen with their own urges to wield power above their status in Victorian society, and who did not have the political standing or influence to deal with the great problems of acculturation, particularly those of land ownership. The strange mixture of enthusiasm and cagey aloofness on the part of the Native people is well evoked, and Bolt develops one of a number of possible explanations of the conversion enthusiasms of the Pacific Coast. His research has its flaws; he missed the most important book on Duncan of Metlakatla, and other key books on the native cultures of British Columbia, but he contributes an unstereotypical point of view that is plausible and not demeaning, as so many academic accounts are, to the native peoples. G.W.

David Neel. *Our Chiefs and Elders.* U British Columbia P. $35.95. *Our Chiefs and Elders* is a handsome book. It consists of photographs of native chiefs and elders from the West coast, taken by David Neel, son of the fine carver, Ellen Neel, and statements regarding the native past and present by the sitters. If the portraits have a fault, it is that they are too self-consciously posed. Yet it might be said that posing, as

expressed in the steps of the dance, the formalised gestures of oratory, is part of the tradition from which chiefs draw their respect. The overtone of the book is nostalgia. Many of the speakers refer to the past of native custom before assimilation, even going back to the lives of their parents, and the general consensus of these older people seems to be that the old ways were best and that in gaining liberation the native peoples should use the past as a foundation. It seems almost as if, in memory, the past has been remade into a geriatric paradise. This book is a fine monument to the old ways, but I wonder if it offers a solution to contemporary native problems or how far it will aid in that reconciliation through which, before too long, the native and the later coming peoples must come together and learn from each others' wisdom. G.W.

Eric W. Sager. *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seamen in Canada's Age of Steam.* U British Columbia P. $29.95. *Ships and Memories* is a good piece of semi-oral history. Eric Sager is a professor, not a seaman, yet the material on which he relies and which he handles sympathetically is drawn from the oral accounts of Canadian seamen (together with one non-oral account of the life of the ship's cat, a necessary member of the crew on many vessels). The result is a deromanticing of life at sea, the portrayal of a working-class existence, somewhat more risky than most trades, and generally less well paid. In fact, some of the most interesting pages deal with unionization and the modification of the structure of seaboard authority. Of course, since the 1870s and the 1880s, when Canada had the world's fourth largest merchant marine, Canadiah shipping has been in a steady decline; I often drive sadly along the shores of Burrard Inlet, count the ships waiting to take on wheat in Vancouver harbour, and realize that not one of them is a Canadian ship carrying Canadian grain. G.W.

Gabriel Dumont Speaks. Trans. Michael Barnholden. Talonbooks. After the North West Rebellion, Gabriel Dumont, who could not write in any language, dictated two groups of his memories of his life and the uprising of 1883. The first was written down in 1887, among a company of sympathizers, by B.A.T. Montigny, the Recorder of Québec, and a translation by G.F. Stanley appeared in 1949 in the *Canadian Historical Review.* Later, in 1903, the second memoir was taken down by someone in Saskatchewan, and found its way into the archive of the Union Nationale Métisse de Saint-Joseph, which is kept in the Manitoba Provincial Archives. Michael Barnholder, who now presents a translation of the document, states that he received a copy of it by chance from the National Archives when he asked for a copy of the first Dumont memoir. He now presents his translation of this "discovery."

This is indeed the first published translation of the text in its entirety, though I received a copy from the Manitoba Archives when I was writing *Gabriel Dumont* (1975), translated it for my own benefit, and quoted it extensively in my book—of which Barnholder seems to be unaware. Thus the second Dumont memoir is not the "chance discovery" that this introduction suggests. It has been publicly known for nearly two decades.

There are other doubtful points. The frontispiece is entitled "Possibly Madeleine Dumont with Gabriel Dumont." The woman beside Gabriel is certainly not Madeleine, for the photograph (here reproduced the wrong way around) was taken in New York when Gabriel was with the Buffalo Bill show: he is wearing a silver medal given him by a New York audience in September 1886. Madeleine was dead by then. The woman is probably a member of the company. No known photograph exists of Madeleine. When Barnholder talks of her "teaching school" at Batoche, I think he

is repeating one of the many apocryphal tales one hears in Duck Lake and St. Laurent to this day about the now mythic figures of 1885.

Finally, Barnholder makes the astonishing conjecture that the memoir was spoken in Michif, a strange macaronic dialect of Cree and French combined. But Michif, in my view, was a late development, which emerged during the second Métis diaspora after the disaster of 1885, when they filtered out to the far verges of civilization. Gabriel spoke highly serviceable, if idiomatic, French to his audiences of French Canadians in the United States and Quebec. I have heard no suggestion at all that he spoke Michif, though I do know that he spoke Sarcee as his first native tongue (from his grandmother), and then Cree, Blackfoot, Sioux, Saulteux (Ojibway) and Assiniboine (Stoney). It seems to me an unnecessary assumption that Gabriel told his tale in a clumsy jargon when he knew French well enough to talk on a level with the priests and with Louis Riel and to address a variety of French-speaking audiences. G.W.

Christine Hantel-Fraser. *No Fixed Address: Life in the Foreign Service.* n.p. $24.95 paper. Like the Foreign Legion, the Foreign Service has acquired what may be a false glamour, as Christine Hantel-Fraser suggests in her highly interesting book. Hantel-Fraser, a long-time embassy wife, with experience of her husband's many postings, has gathered memories and impressions from many foreign service personnel and their families, rather in the old Mass Observation way, to present a composite picture of what life is really like in Canada's embassies and high commissions and on home postings in Ottawa. There is even a comparison at the end of the book with the practices of other foreign missions. The interest in the unfamiliar, the pleasure of alien environments, the stimulus of living among foreign people, all are indeed there, but not for everybody and certainly not all the time. The tales of loneliness, of inadaptability, of shattering overwork, of sickness (particularly in the ranks below the diplomats themselves), are so many and so extraordinary that one wonders why people try so hard to enter the foreign service or to stay in it. Hantel-Fraser helps to sort out the mixture of motives and loyalties involved, and on the whole she does so with objectivity; only when she is talking about personal family experiences does she tend to gush. Still, it is a book one would recommend to anyone thinking of trying to enter the Foreign Service. If it doesn't deter them, it will at least forewarn them. For no foreign servant, however high his or her status, entirely escapes the negative side of this way of life he chooses. G.W.

Howard O'Hagan. *Trees Are Lonely Company.* Talonbooks. For aficionados of the fine western Canadian writer Howard O'Hagan, the new book, *Trees Are Lonely Company*, will be welcome even if it does sail under somewhat false colours. It purports to be "A collection of ... short stories," but in fact it is a combination of two earlier volumes, *The Woman Who Got on at Jasper Station*, which does consist of real stories, and *Wilderness Men*, a group of biographical essays on historical figures of the Old West, mainly outlaws and loners like Almighty Voice, Simon Gun-an Noot, and Albert Johnson, "the Mad Trapper of Rat River." O'Hagan's sketches of these men are vivid to the edge of being mythical, but short stories they are not. G.W.

Books Received

Anthologies

Carolan, Trevor, ed. *The Colors of Heaven: Short Stories from the Pacific Rim.* Vintage, $11.00.

Dutt, Krishna & Andrew Robinson, eds. *Noon in Calcutta: Short Stories from Bengal.* Bloomsbury, $24.99.

Friday Circle. *Chasing Sundogs: A University of Ottawa Anthology.* Friday Circle/U Ottawa, $2.50.

Gooch, Bryan N.S. & Maureen Niwa. *The Emergence of the Muse: Major Canadian Poets from Crawford to Pratt.* Oxford, $19.95.

Stone, Ted. *Riding the Northern Range.* Raincoast, $12.95.

The Arts

Boime, Albert. *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy.* U Chicago P, US$55.00.

Clement, Claude. *The Voice of the Wood,* Paintings by Frédéric Clément. Puffin Pied Piper, n.p.

Collinson, Howard Creel. *Documenting Design: Works on Paper in the European Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.* U Toronto P, $65.00/35.00.

Ellenzweig, Allen. *The Homoerotic Photograph: Male Images from Durieu/Delacroix to Mapplethorpe.* Columbia UP, $44.95.

Teitelbaum, Matthew, ed. *Montage and Modern Life: 1919-1942.* MIT, $24.95.

Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slaver.* U North Carolina P, n.p.

Children's Literature

Alma, Ann. *Skateway to Freedom.* Orca, $6.95.

Berton, Pierre. *Dr. Kane of the Arctic Seas.* M & S, $5.99.

Borlenchi, Patricia. *From Albatross to Zoo: An Alphabet Book in Five Languages,* pictures by Piers Harper. Scholastic, $14.95.

Brouillet, Chrystine. *Mysteres de Chine.* La courte échelle, n.p.

Brouillet, Chrystine. *Un rendez-vous troublant.* La courte échelle, n.p.

Coué, Jean. *Les 80 Palmiers d'Abbar Ben Badis.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Dalton, Anne. *This is the Way.* Scholastic, $14.95.

Décary, Marie. *L'incroyable Destinée.* La courte échelle, n.p.

Dorros, Arthur. *This is My House.* Scholastic, $14.95.

Drozd, Irina. *Meurtre en Miroir.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Dufeutrel, Marie. *Le Monde au Bout des Doigts.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Ehrlich, Amy. *Pome & Peel.* illus. László Gál. Penguin, $5.99.

Evans, Dilys, comp. *Monster Soup and other Spooky Poems.* illus. J. Rogers. Scholastic, $14.95.

Frolick, Gloria Kupchenko. *Anna Veryha.* Maxwell Macmillan, n.p.

Gauthier, Bertrand. *Les Griffes de la Pleine Lune.* La courte échelle, n.p.

Grace, Eric S. *Elephants: Natural History Series.* Key Porter, $18.95.

Idrac, Janine. *Espaces dans le Temps.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Johnson, Gillian. *Sahara Sara.* Annick, $12.95.

Lavigne, Guy. *L'obsession de Jérôme Delisle.* La courte échelle, n.p.

Lohans, Alison. Laws of Emotion. Thistledown , n.p.

Mathieu, Pierre. *D'Est en Ouest: legendes et contes canadiens,* illus. M. Leblanc. Edns des Plaines, $8.95.

Mayer, Jeni. *Suspicion Island.* Thistledown, n.p.

Makhele, Caya. *Le Vieil Homme et le Petit Garnement.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Modesitt, Jeanne. *Sometimes I Feel Like a Mouse: A Book About Feelings,* illus. Robin Spowart. Scholastic, $14.95.

Morantz, Elizabeth. *Taking Care of Alabama.* Maxwell Macmillan, $14.95/9.95.

O'Donnell, Peter. *Dizzy.* Scholastic, $14.95.

Pol, Anne-Marie. *Le Galop du Templier.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Relouzat, Raymond. *Sonson et le volcan.* Hurtubise, n.p.

Robbins, Ken. *Make Me a Peanut Butter Sandwich and a Glass of Milk.* Scholastic, $14.95.

Criticism

Brookshaw, David. *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature.* Scarecrow, $37.50.

Brownlee, Marina S., Kevin Brownlee & Stephen G. Nichols, eds. *The New Medievalism.* Johns Hopkins, $42.50/14.95.

Clausen, Jeanette & Sara Friedrichsmeyer, eds. *Women in German Yearbook 7: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture.* U Nebraska P, $9.95.

Cuseo, Allan A. *Homosexual Characters in YA Novels: A Literary Analysis, 1969-1982.* Scarecrow, $49.50.

Fiedler, Leslie. *Fiedler on the Roof: Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity.* David R. Godine Publ, $19.95/11.95.

Harkin, Patricia & John Schilb, eds. *Contending with Words: Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age.* MLA, n.p.

Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Studying the Novel, 2nd Edition.* Edward Arnold/Routledge, £12.95.

Hoffmann, Léon-François. *Haiti: Lettres et l'être.* Gref, n.p.

Hönnighausen, Lothar & Valeria Gennaro Lerda, eds. *Rewriting the South: History and Fiction.* Francke, DM 136.

Kaminsky, Amy K. *Reading the Body Politic: Feminist Criticism and Latin American Women Writers.* U Minnesota P, n.p.

Lees, Stella, ed. *A Track To Unknown Water: Proceedings of the Second Pacific Rim Conference on Children's Literature.* Scarecrow, $37.50.

Leerssen, Joep & Karl Ulrich Syndram, eds. *Europa Provincia Mundi.* Rodopi, n.p.

Leiner, Jacqueline. *Aimé Césaire: Le Terreau Primordial.* Gunter Narr, n.p.

Ludwig, Hans-Werner, Elmar Schenkel & Bernhard Zimmermann. *Made in Britain: Studien zur Literaturproduktion im britischen Fernsehen.* Gunter Narr, n.p.

Mazzotta, Giuseppe. *Dante's Vision and the Circle of Knowledge.* Princeton UP, n.p.

Nelson, Cary. *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory 1910-1945.* U Wisconsin P, $14.95.

Savran, David. *Communists Cowboys and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams.* U Minnesota P, n.p.

Stemmler, Theo. *Homoerotische Lyrik: Vorträge eines interdisziplinären Kolloquiums.* Gunter Narr, n.p.

Sundquist, Eric J. *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature.* Belknap, n.p.

Tintner, Adeline R. *Henry James and the Lust of the Eyes.* Louisiana State UP, $39.95/16.95.

Traldi, Alberto. *Fascism and Fiction: A Survey of Italian Fiction on Fascism (and its reception in Britain and the United States).* Scarecrow, $32.50.

Valdes, Mario J., Daniel Javitch & A. Owen Aldridge, eds. *Comparative Literary History as Discourse.* Peter Lang, n.p.

Van Dyne, Susan R. *Revising Life: Sylvia Plath's Ariel Poems.* Scholarly, $38.50.

Zima, Peter V. *Komparatistik.* Francke, n.p.

Drama

Glissant, Edouard. *Monsieur Toussaint,* tr.Juris Silenieks. Three Continents, n.p.

Kureish, Hanif. *London Kills Me.* Faber & Faber, $13.99.

Fiction

Brontë, Branwell. *The Hand of the Arch Sinner: Two Angrian Chronicles,* ed. R.G. Collins. Oxford, $76.50.

Condé, Maryse. *Haremakhonon.* Three Continents, n.p.

Forrester, Helen. *The Liverpool Basque.* HarperCollins, $24.95.

O'Sullivan, Vincent. *Palms and Minarets (Selected Stories).* Victoria UP, n.p.

Wright, Daniel James. *Cadillac Songs.*Not As Much Books, $13.95.

General

Barratt, Glynn. *The Tuamotu Islands and Tahiti: Volume 4. Russia and the South Pacific.* UBC P, $75.00.

Boon, James A. *Affinities and Extremes: East India Ethnology.* U Chicago P, n.p.

Bourne, Larry S. & David F. Ley. *The Changing Social Geography of Canadian Cities.* McGill-Queens UP, $60.00/29.95.

Cruikshank, Margaret. *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement.* Routledge, $62.50/18.95.

Feinberg, Walter. *Japan and the Pursuit of a New American Identity: Work and Education in a Multicultural Age.* Routledge, $31.50.

Foust, Clifford M. *Rhubarb: The Wondrous Drug.* Princeton UP, n.p.

Fuentes, Carlos. *Latin America: At War With the Past.* CBC Enterprises, n.p.

Hatt, John. *The Tropical Traveller.* Penguin, $14.99.

Hellige, Joseph B. *Hemispheric Asymmetry: What's Right and Waht's Left.* Harvard UP, n.p.

Jabès, Edmond. *The Book of Margins,* tr. Rosmarie Waldrop. U Chicago Press, US$32.00/12.95.

Kuhn, Elisabeth D. *Gender and Authority: Classroom Diplomacy at German and American Universities.* Gunter Narr, n.p.

Merchant, Carolyn. *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World.* Routledge, $62.50/18.95.

Montgomery, Martin, et al. *Ways of Reading: Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature.* Routledge, n.p.

Norwood, Vera. *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature.* U North Carolina P/Scholary, $52.50/25.95.

Ripley, C. Peter, ed. *Witness for Freedom: African American Voices on Race, Slavery, and Emanipation.* U North Carolina P, n.p.

Spanos, William V. *The end of Education: Toward Posthumanism.* U Minnesota P, n.p.

Stone, Albert E., *The Return of Nat Turner: History, Literature, & Cultural Politics in Sixties America.* U Georgia P, $35.00.

Yúdice, George. *On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Cutlure.* U Minnesota P, n.p.

History

Kindleberger, Charles P. *Marines and Markets.* Harvester Wheatsheaf, n.p.

Life-Writing

Baird, Wellesley A. *Guyana Gold.* Three Continents, n.p.

Blake, Susan. *Letters from Togo,* fwd. Albert E. Stone. U Iowa P, $25.00/12.95.

Moggridge, D.E. *Maynard Keynes.* Routledge, $45.00.

Sexton, Linda Gray & Lois Ames, eds. *Anne Sexton: A Self-Portrait in Letters,* Houghton Mifflin, n.p.

Western, John. *A Passage to England: Barbadian Londoners Speak of Home, Fwd. Robert Coles.* U Minnesota Press, $39.95/17.95.

Paperback Reprints

Ives, Edward D. *Larry Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs.* Goose Lane, $16.95.

Paterson, Isabel. *The God of the Machine,* intro. Stephen Cox. Transaction, $21.95.

Poetry

Bowering, George. *George Bowering Selected: Poems 1961-1992.* M & S, $16.99.

Cogswell, Fred. *In Praise of Old Music.* Borealis, n.p.

Cogswell, Fred. *When the Right Light Shines.* Borealis, n.p.

Dibbs, Martin. *The Suggestion of a Kiss.* I.V.M. Communications, n.p.

Duncan, Robert. *Selected Poems,* ed. R.J. Bertholf. New Directions, $13.99.

Philips, Katherine. *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda, Volume II - The Letters,* ed. P. Thomas. Stump Cross, £14.95.

Travel

Gott, Richard. *Land Without Evil: Utopian Journeys Across the South American Watershed.* Routledge, $43.95.

Price, Richard & Sally Price. *Equatoria.* Routledge, $29.95.

Spender, Matthew. *Within Tuscany.* Penguin, $16.99.

Women's Studies

Caplan, Paula J. *Lifting a Ton of Feather: A Woman's Guide to Surviving in the Academic World.* U Toronto P, $45.00/18.95.

Delphy, Christine & Diana Leonard. *Familiar Exploitation: A New Analysis of Marriage in Contemporary Western Societies.* Polity P, n.p.

Dowden, Ken. *Death and the Maiden: Girls'*

Initiation Rites in Greek Mythology. Routledge, US$35.00.

Ellison, Julie. *Delicate Subjects: Romanticism, Gender, and the Ethics of Understanding.* Cornell UP, $31.50.

Erens, Patricia, ed. *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism.* Indiana UP, $45.00/17.50.

Flitterman-Lewis, Sandy. *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema.* U Illinois P, $39.95/15.95.

Just, Roger. *Women in Athenian Law and Life.* Routledge, $42.00.

Lakoff, George. *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind.* U Chicago P, n.p.

Lesser, Wendy. *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women Through Art.* Harvard, $24.95.

Mayne, Judith. *The Woman at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema.* Indiana UP, n.p.

Mellencamp, Patricia. *Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video, & Feminism.* Indiana UP, $29.95/12.95.

Morgan, Susan. *Sisters in Time: Imagining Gender in 19th Century British Fiction.* OUP, $41.95.

Shefer, Elaine. *Birds, Cages and Women in Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite Art.* Peter Lang, n.p.

Sissa, Giulia. *Greek Virginity,* tr. A. Goldhammer. Harvard, n.p.

Sizemore, Christine Wick. *A Female Vision of the City: London in the Novels of Five British Women.* U Tennessee P, n.p.

Last Page

An occasional reading list:

Bapsi Sidhwa, *Cracking India* (Milkweed, $13.00): a reprint of *Ice-Candy-Man*, a novel about Partition, by one of Pakistan's leading women writers, now resident in Texas; it tells its readers it is told from a young girl's perspective, but reconciling speech with the claim to be realistic is a recurrent problem, for it clearly uses an adult vocabulary.

Doris Lessing, *The Real Thing* (HarperCollins, $28.95): a collection of stories and sketches focussing on women who cope with "the real" world of ego and resentment; one story ends: "He was waiting to see if she would turn and wave or smile or even just look at him, but she did not."

Beverley Farmer, *The Seal Woman* (U Queensland, $29.95): a novel in which a woman leaves Scandinavia for Australia, mourning her dead husband; emotions become images here, yet the prose seems recurrently to take more interest in explaining and defining what people are to feel.

Yvonne Vera, *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals* (TSAR, $11.95): fifteen short stories by a Zimbabwe-born writer now studying in Canada; these show an early talent, better in the sketch form (the less *explained*, the less overly *dramatized*) than in the first attempts at extended fiction.

Beryl Fletcher, *The Word Burners* (Daphne Brasell, n.p.): in New Zealand, a woman and her two daughters must, separately and together, come to terms with who they are—and where; a lesbian woman dismissing men at one point also dismisses the whole tenor of NZ academic discourse: "It's a Pakeha disease, this need for security, the delineation of the colonial identity...."

Earl McKenzie, *Two Roads to Mount Joyful and other stories* (Longman, n.p.): short stories, many of them overexplained.

Lorna Goodison, *Baby Mother and the King of Swords* (Longman, n.p.): fourteen stories about critical moments in life, by one of the leading younger poets in Jamaica; one story ends, "Some people say I know things. I know one thing. I come through." It's politically significant, perhaps, that the stories assert (rather than reveal) survival power; the writer's poems, so far, tend rather to reveal it.

Olive Senior, *Arrival of the Snake-Woman and other stories* (Longman, n.p.): this collection is one of the author's finest so far; in it a loving re-creation of time past establishes for the narrator a sense both of the craziness and of the power of reiterating childhood, through its games, its rituals, its imprinted associations; the generation that remembers in this way, however, is also expressing its unhappiness and its uncertainty as it moves towards a category that other people call "old age."

Sam Selvon, *Foreday Morning: Selected Prose 1946-1986* (Longman, n.p.): the author, now a Canadian citizen, assembles here much of the fiction and some of the essays that have never before been collected; a lot of the early work was published in his native Trinidad under pseudonyms. Of particular interest are stories such as "Calypsonian" and the extended autobiographical writings.

Alecia McKenzie, *Satellite City and other stories* (Longman, n.p.): this is a fine book by a wonderful new writer from Jamaica; the stories do not on the surface probe "grand" themes, but they discover importance in small ones: people ride buses, give parties, a woman gets a scholarship, another woman exchanges letters with her grandmother—each of these apparently ordinary incidents gives rise to extraordinary revelations about gender, poverty, class, language, and madness. Stylistically, these stories are polished and inventive. I look forward to reading more of McKenzie's work. W.N.

Contributors

Marilyn **Iwama** lives in Okinawa, Frances **Itani** in Ottawa, Gwladys **Downes** in Victoria, Deirdre **Dwyer** in Halifax, Yue Ming **Chen** in Fredericton, Denise **Koh** in Saskatoon, David **Helwig** in Montreal, Steven **Heighton** in Kingston, Elaine **Auerbach** in Waterloo, Rhea **Tregebov** in Toronto, and Robert **Bringhurst** on Bowen Island.

George **Woodcock**, Jim **Wong-Chu**, **Goh** Poh Seng, Joy **Kogawa**, Maria **Ng**, Sharon **Meneely**, and Susan **MacFarlane** live in Vancouver.

L.R. **Ricou**, Patricia **Merivale**, Judy Z. **Segal**, Cynthia **Messenger**, Susanna **Egan**, Christine **Somerville**, Roger **Seamon**, Blanca **Chester**, and Julie **Cruikshank** teach at UBC; James **Doyle** and Viviana **Comensoli** at Wilfrid Laurier University; Fred **Wah** and Dominique **Perron** at the University of Calgary; Grazia **Merler** and Kathy **Mezei** at Simon Fraser University.

Graham **Huggan** teaches at Harvard, Jean-Pierre **Durix** at the University of Dijon, Stephen **Scobie** at the University of Victoria, Doug **Barbour** at the University of Alberta, Tom **Hastings** at York, Barbara **Kerslake** at Toronto, Susanne **Goodison** at Queen's, Manina **Jones** at the University of Waterloo, Howard **Reimer** at Okanagan College in Kelowna; Lesley D. **Clement** at Medicine Hat College; Lynne **Masland** at Western Washington Univeristy, Robert **Thacker** at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, and Axel **Knoenagel** at the University of Hamburg.

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