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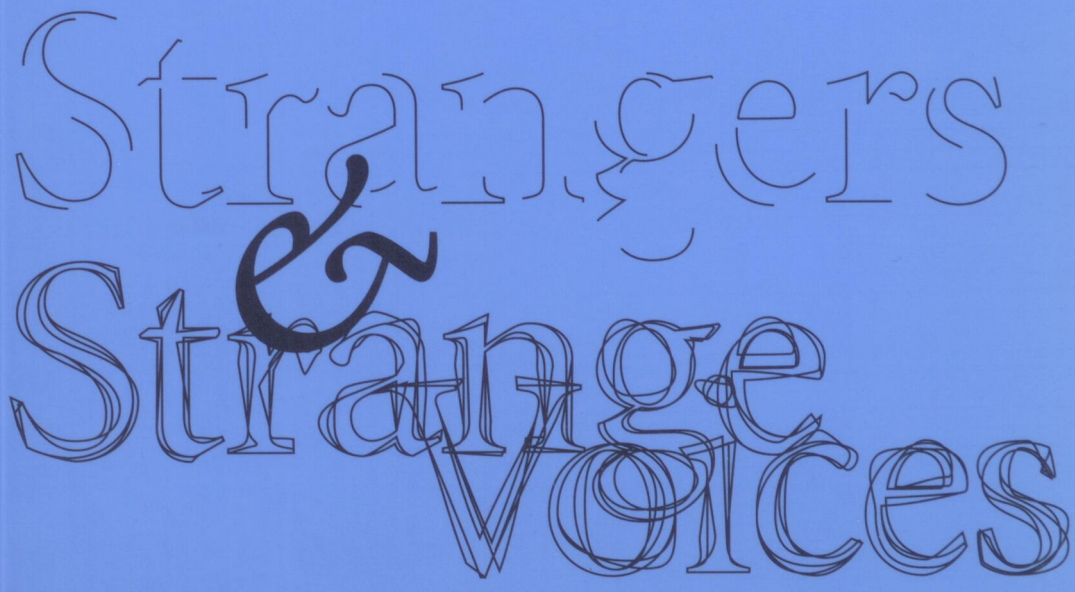

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Editorial

Remembering 1993

I forgot *Amnesia.*

This time last year, writing about 1992 publications, I omitted mentioning Douglas Cooper's fascinating novel *Amnesia,* perhaps because (like the French-language works of Nancy Huston, recognized in 1993 with the Governor-General's Award) it was published first outside Canada. This possibility does not so much raise serious questions about the relevance of national boundaries to criticism as it comments on the difficulty (even in an age of "free" trade and mass communications) of keeping up with interesting publications wherever they appear. The bias of information networks always intervenes.

Lately, there's been a kind of bureaucratic barrier also set up which promises to do an even more active disservice to Canadian readers. The *Globe and Mail* reported in February 1994 on the power over books that the Mulroney government of the 1980s (casually? or was it with deliberate intent?) granted to customs officers; a six-week training course in Rigaud, Quebec, including one afternoon on obscenity-recognition, constitutes (says the *Globe*) all the qualifications that that government thought necessary for the job of literary classification. Now, *in practice,* all kinds of books—textbooks, classics, children's books—are being barred at the border, often on the basis of a "keyword" in their title, but always in the name of decency. But there's another obstructive practice going on, too. By current regulations, if a foreign publisher sends a "gratis" review book to a Canadian journal at a Canadian university—even a book by a

Canadian author, and sent "on spec"—the journal must pay a fee to a customs broker (the minimum cost I've been quoted is $18.00) or else Canada Customs charges the university a fine of $100.00. (Yes, I think this is absurd, but that's the way it's been explained to me.) Academic journals, of course, don't have this kind of money, and generally have to refuse the package if they can before the broker gets his or her hands on it: not something an unsuspecting recipient can readily know about in advance. The consequence is not to raise the profile of Canadian-based publications but to limit access to print-based information. The consequence of limited access to information is ignorance, and greater susceptibility to bureaucratic manipulation. It seems that this is what is meant by "free trade" in action.

Perhaps the Canadian public's resistance to being so controlled is what led to the massive electoral rejection of Mulroney's party in 1993 (though it's cautionary to observe that the replacement government has not yet found it necessary to revise the customs act). Perhaps this resistance also explains the number of times that a figure called Mulroney and the divisive politics that many came to associate with the politician of this name surfaced as a literary motif in 1993 publications. Wilfred Watson's *The Baie Comeau Angel and Other Stories* might be the most forthright satire of these political presumptions; bill bissett's *th last photo uv th human soul* most explicitly names the clichés of the age. Frank Davey's biography of Kim Campbell (the real-life Mulroney's real-life successor) as a politician who re-enacted the iconographic image of Anne of Green Gables might also be read in this connection; and so (more bleakly) might Timothy Findley's horrific novel *Headhunter*, which (by means of a *Heart of Darkness* paradigm) openly confronts the social underworld of the 1990s. In Findley's telling of it, this underworld has come almost to demoralize the Canada he wants to love, because this contemporary Canada has become so used to public schizophrenia, institutional child abuse, snuff-film pornography, urban violence, and psychological manipulation and maltreatment, *that it is politically unwilling to recognize its own part in this decay.* Given its graphic nature, it's hard to "like" *Headhunter*, but not hard to see its social relevance; newspapers daily tell of the kinds of event that Findley has combined into narrative form. And even the passive voice in which so much of this narrative is written seems, on reflection, to epitomize the institutional mindset it criticizes; in fearsome, fearful times, it asks, who will take responsibility? Who will even recognize that the responsibility is theirs?

This is one of the questions Cooper's *Amnesia* asks as well, and so does Margaret Atwood's brilliantly readable *The Robber Bride*. Cooper's novel does an Ancient Mariner turn, with a character stopping a bridegroom on his wedding day so that his own nightmare story might be told: it is a tale of a dysfunctional family adrift in a maze—children die in bizarre circumstances; one is drawn to charismatic, enigmatic evil; only amnesia protects the teller (and listener) from drowning in the sewers of reality. *The Robber Bride* is in some ways no less dour in concept, though much more linear in form—*and funny*. Atwood's title bride is an inversion of one of the Grimms' fairytales; the novel uses this allusion (and deliberately adapts a lot of the conventions of Harlequin romance as well) to tell of women's (as well as men's) active involvement with evil. Only when they admit to their connection can they deal with it—or "her," in this case, as evil (unpredictable, uncontrolled by easy categories, marvellously attuned to weakness and desire, and metaphorically rendered as an auto-immune disease) is embodied in the character of Zenia. The three other central figures (a successful stockbroker named Roz, a new-age crystal-and-pure-food enthusiast who now goes by the name of Charis, and a history professor named Antonia, whose abilities range from mirror-writing to a detailed academic knowledge about war) lead the narrative to reflect on subjects that range from the Cathars to conservation. The technique of the novel, full of extended, mordantly selective flashbacks, combines the modern costume-Gothic with politically-charged satire. The resulting narrative insists on the necessity of memory—which turns out to be different from "history." That's the point.

David Scott's *Ontario Place Names* and Robert Prévost's *Montréal: A History* provide a couple of familiar access routes to the world of "history": the gazetteer and the documentary survey. Perhaps quixotically, however, I looked in Scott's book for a guide to Alice Munro—I found "Maitland" (after Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lt.-Gov., 1818-1828), but not the earlier "Meneseteung"; and while "Berlin" is there to antedate "Kitchener," there's no sense of the first-syllable stress in pronunciation. There are human stories behind gazetteers, in other words, and conditions of relationship and power that affect and underlie the documentary surface of official record. "Fiction" in whatever genre and social history—are forms that remember these stories differently. They differ from "fact," and so counter the politics of superficiality, through a variety of literary strategies. Richard Outram's sometimes witty lyrics in *Mogul Recollected*, for example, tell of a circus ele-

phant that drowned in a ship fire off the coast of New Brunswick in 1836; the sequence as a whole is a Noah's Ark critique, a tale of death and remembrance, cruelty and revelation. Anne Chislett's play *Yankee Notions* again reconstructs Susanna Moodie's relation to the war of 1837. Jane Urquhart's earnest *Away* and Graeme Gibson's inventive *Gentleman Death* both dip enterprisingly into the past to illuminate the present, the one as immigrant saga, the other as psychological metaphor; David Adams Richards' *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* tells quietly and inexorably of the violence that swings back from the past to disrupt the present (though it also records the persistence of love); and in *Christopher Columbus Answers All Charges*, Mark Giacomelli and Yuri Rabinsky construct a reply to current history by assembling the ostensible diary fragments and reflections of the now-much-maligned "discoverer" of the Americas: "I have brought you a New World," Columbus muses finally, "and I forgive you all." He forgives, perhaps as much as anything else, the modern fondness for exclusive binaries and the modern eagerness to appear politically correct.

"Fictions" that are cast as personal memoir offer a variant form of this will to find meaning in the passing of time. These are epistemological claims, literary works that use the past as a trope to shape the acceptability of knowledge. George McWhirter's lyric sequence *A Staircase For All Souls: The British Columbia Suite* displays a wonderful eye for images in the wet west coast woods, the whole poem crafted to suggest the cadences of creativity, in poetry and in life. Harold Rhenisch's *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country* crafts evocatively a set of glimpses of an immigrant Okanagan boyhood, claiming adult space as it reshapes boyhood time. Also set in British Columbia, Peter Trower's *Grogan's Cafe* recreates the life of a 19-year-old awkwardly discovering sex and independence in a logging camp (the vocabulary of the logging industry is accurate and apt). Evelyn Lau's *Fresh Girls and Other Stories* details a less enfranchising sexual past, in laconic tales of massage parlours and hypodermic needles. Gavin Scott's *Memory Trace*, Hugh Hood's *Be Sure to Close Your Eyes*, Dennis Lee's sexually-charged *Riffs*, Richard Teleky's *Goodnight, Sweetheart*, Karen Connelly's *This Brighter Prison*: memory is the structuring device in all of these books, resulting in varying degrees of guilt, consternation, illumination, and freedom. Farther afield, Ven Begamudré's *Van de Graaf Days* tells of a boy educated in India as well as in Canada. Bill Schermbrucker's *Motortherapy* uses the automobile as a unifying image in a linked series of stories about Kenya, Canada,

youth, and coming to terms with the world. Margaret Gibson's *Sweet Poison* presents a woman at a critical point in her life, as she faces up to her own psyche, coping elliptically with guilt, bewilderment, betrayal, and madness as parts of a recuperating self. Audrey Thomas's rich prose in *Graven Images*, one of the most effectively crafted novels of the year, is both funny and desolating as it details a woman writer's encounter with her past, her ambitions, and her aged mother. And Carole Shields, in *The Stone Diaries*, tells a more linear family saga involving the USA and Canada; mixing conventional and fragmentary forms, the novel hinges on one woman's memories, and on the failure of anyone else ever understanding the implications of that woman's cosseted images and casual phrases, souvenirs as they must be of privately understood relationships rather than of publicly verifiable phenomena.

The desire to remember how other people or another time saw the world and said their say about it also underlies the industry of reprints, collections, travel narratives, and academic handbooks; this industry allows people in the present both to praise and to criticize, to take from the past what seems valuable in the present and to understand why other perspectives seem alien, unacceptable, unproductive, or counter-creative. Take travel books, for example. David Solway's *The Anatomy of Arcadia* hints by its title at what the modern traveller hopes to find in Greece. The reprint of George Woodcock's *Ravens and Prophets* (a now-historical discovery of Native B.C. history) reveals how recently middleclassness became a social norm. Karen Connelly's *Touch the Dragon* (an apprentice work, for all the critical praise it attracted) is a teenager's discovery of Thailand and time—perhaps a recognition of the power of difference if not quite yet a recognition of the limits of independence.

Autobiographies fall into a similar stance, with style sometimes at war with self-indulgence: Farley Mowat's *Born Naked* claims to reclaim a Saskatchewan childhood, Al Purdy's *Reaching for the Beaufort Sea* traces the emergence of a vernacular voice, Clark Blaise's "postmodern autobiography" *I Had a Father* reflects on himself by reconstructing the paradigms of quest and loss in his restless father's life, and John Mills's splendidly unconventional account of an often deeply unhappy life—*Thank Your Mother for the Rabbits*—reclaims an earlier wartime, often with humour, often edging memoir with social critique.

Sometimes picture books are also records of the past, as in *Algonquin: The Park and Its People*, by Donald Standfield and Liz Lundell, which con-

tains excellent historical photos, or in Pierre Berton's *Picture Book of Niagara Falls*, amply illustrated in colour, which contrasts the images of the sublime and the picturesque with those of tourism and power, and so constitutes a kind of short history of icons of taste as well as being a coffeetable guide to popular culture.

Selections and reprints worth reading, among the publications of 1993, include bp Nichol's *Truth: A Book of Fictions*, foregrounding the referentiality/non-referentiality debate in literature; Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works* (three prose pieces); Howard O'Hagan's *Trees Are Lonely Company* (stories and some other material); Basil Johnston's *Tales of the Anishinaubaek*; Margaret Laurence's Somali translations, *A Tree for Poverty*; and books of stories by Norman Levine and John Metcalf, and new and selected poems by Erin Mouré, Michael Harris, Brian Brett, George Jonas, Tom Wayman, and especially John Newlove, whose *Apology for Absence* is a reminder of the strengths of poetic craft and a demonstration of the power of visual detail. Lorraine McMullen and Sandra Campbell, editing *Aspiring Women* (one of a series devoted to reclaiming the short stories of women writers), draw attention to the liveliness of writing in the late 19th century. Carl Ballstadt and others edited *Letters of Love and Duty: The Correspondence of Susanna and John Moodie*, lending a private side to the public persona of *Roughing It in the Bush*; and Cynthia Sugars produced a a fine edition of *The Letters of Conrad Aiken and Maloclm Lowry 1929-1954*. Joyce Marshall's *Any Time at All and Other Stories* is a new selection of this wonderful but underrated writer's work, with an afterword by Timothy Findley, one of several reprints in the New Canadian Library (another is a fresh selection for the 1990s from the work of Stephen Leacock, called *My Financial Career and Other Follies*). And both Ramsay Cook's edition of *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, with useful notes, and Germaine Warkentin's *Canadian Exploration Literature*, a lively anthology of selections from the writings of the land explorers, with a thoughtful introduction and instructive notes, add insights into the conditions of contact between peoples and systems of ideas.

Some of these reprinted writers were also the subject of critical enquiry in 1993. Margery Fee's *Silence Made Visible: Howard O'Hagan and "Tay John,"* for example, collects notes, interviews, and commentary, and is a valuable resource book for the study of O'Hagan's novel—a work that contemporary readers have found more immediate than did readers at the time of its first publication. Irene Niechoda's *A Sourcery for Books 1 and 2 of bp*

Nichol's "The Martyrology" is another valuable book, an exhaustive map of the routes of transformation that took Nichol from experience into poetry. D.M.R. Bentley's account of a 1790s travel writer named Isaac Weld, with reference to Canadian poetry of the sublime, is one of the most illuminating and interesting essays collected in James Noonan's *Biography and Autobiography.* Marian Scholtmeijer, writing on animal victims, and Tom Wayman, writing on the culture of work, also produced, from less conventional vantage points, commentaries on the assumptions of culture. Manina Jones—one of several writers who contributed essays on Canadian poets and poetry to W.H. New's *Inside the Poem*—also produced a volume called *That Art of Difference: 'Documentary-Collage' and English-Canadian Writing,* which establishes her as one of the leading current critics on Canadian poetry. Picking up where Livesay, Scobie, and others left off, Jones examines the work of Marlatt and others, examining the "aesthetics of interruption" and contact zones between writer and reader. Simone Vauthier brilliantly reads the texts and contexts of several short story writers—Blaise, Thomas, Rooke, among others—in *Reverberations: Explorations in the Canadian Short Story.* Unevenness, however, marked a number of reference works of 1993—ECW Press published the excellent *CWTW Poetry Series,* volumes 8 and 10, but also some inconsistent guides to individual works and writers; the articles in Irena Makaryk's useful *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* are divided by subject (on "schools," such as Frankfurt, formalism, and poscolonialism; "individuals," such as Kierkegaard, Frye, and Toril Moi; and "terms," such as aporia, patriarchy, and universal), the last section being the most consistently useful; and the best of the essays on criticism that Caroline Bayard collected in *100 Years of Critical Solitudes* (its title premise indicates the foreordained limits on its conclusions, unfortunately) is likely the one written by Barbara Godard.

On a different front, a number of writers took imperial relations either as their subject or as their metaphor of past and present inequities. J. Edward Chamberlin's *Come Back to Me My Language,* on language and colonialism in the Caribbean (though with relatively little analysis of poetic practice), examines the politics of language in the contact zones of cultural borderlands, and traces ways in which the "imperial" language has variously been used by West Indian poets, and also reiterated, challenged, destabilized, and reinvented. Robert H. MacDonald's *Sons of the Empire:*

The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement 1890-1918 takes up this motif in a more familiar milieu, arguing that "*Scouting for Boys* ... presented the frontier life both as an adventure and as a discipline, an escape from the enervating, feminine atmosphere of the home to a place where pure masculinity could be shaped." (The language of exploration often embodied this sentiment.) MacDonald's book goes on to analyze these imperial attitudes and the semiotics of uniform and speech; Sharon Nelson's poems in *Grasping Men's Metaphors* in a sense take up the premise of this Baden-Powell rhetoric in the way they distance modern women from the men-as-boys stereotype. Julia Emberley's *Thresholds of Difference*, on postcolonial theory and Native women's writings, applies the imperial metaphor in a feminist context. Fiona Sparrow's *Into Africa with Margaret Laurence* also takes up the imperial question—apparently equating Laurence's great sensitivity to Africa with an empirical freedom from the mindset of empire. But despite her sensitivity and knowledge, Laurence used language in a way that marked her as a cultural outsider to Africa. This doesn't make her any less accomplished as a writer; it does mean that she wrote *from a perspective*, and that this perspective was informed, even to the degree that she questioned convention, by the politics of her time and place. When Frank Davey, in *Post-National Arguments*, argues that Canada is a "semiotic field," he has something of this same sense of the politics of representation in mind. It isn't that readers should not think of nation and literature in the same breath, but that they should be able to distinguish between the value of political aspirations and the political function of words.

There were, of course, numerous books published in 1993 that didn't fall neatly into a "memory" category, and my highly subjective list of English-language books I found interesting from the year would not be complete without naming some of them: the Edvard Munch poems in Don Coles' *Forests of the Medieval World*, the prose-poems about sexuality in Christopher Dewdney's *The Secular Grail*, Bill Gaston's stories called *North of Jesus' Beans* (their effect created by cadence and sentence control), stories by Barbara Parkin, Hannah Grant, and Gayla Reid (all collected in Douglas Glover and Maggie Helwig's *Coming Attractions 93*), Steven Heighton's stories (published in *Malahat Review*, for example), and Judith Fitzgerald's love poems in *Habit of Blues*. There were other noteworthy short story writers as well: Mavis Gallant for one, whose new stories return to the Montreal of the 1930s as well as hover in Paris. Carol Windley's *Visible Light* (mostly

told in muted tones, as is, for example, "Moths," about thwarted communications in marriage) and Caroline Adderson's *Bad Imaginings* (with its extraordinary range of techniques, subjects, and points of view) introduce two especially fine fiction writers. And with two new books, Thomas King reconfirms his position as one of the most engaging and culturally provocative writers of the decade.

King's *One Good Story, That One* is a story collection that includes some familiar favourites—"The One About Coyote Going West," "Joe the Painter and the Deer Island Massacre"—along with less familiar works such as "Trap Lines," an evocative account of the elliptical expressions of love between father and son. *Green Grass, Running Water,* however, is a novel that in many ways reiterates the year's dominant motif: the need for a faithful cultural memory. About a contemporary Native man's relation with his very up-to-date community, the novel is a comic *tour de force* in which cultural conventions fall into disarray before stability is restored. But what kind of stability? Not the old stereotypes, for this has been a tale in which trickster figures named Robinson Crusoe and Ishmael and the Lone Ranger (the imperial rhetoric can name their names but not govern their function, permitting their "identities" to be as subversive as they like) wander away from a Western mental institution, commenting instructively on life, literature, the pursuit of happiness, and peaceful good government *until they choose to return* and the narrative jaunts to a close.

Social history seldom conforms as entertainingly with fiction as one might wish; literary closure, in any event, is an agreeable hypothesis more than it has ever functioned as an historical conclusion. It is hard, therefore, to imagine why bureaucratic institutions repeatedly behave as though they had possession of a fixed truth, or finite solutions to social needs. It's as though they find amnesia the easiest way to deal with the stress of uncertainty or change. But while a willed amnesia can be a route to equanimity, and a cautious amnesia can be the catalyst of forgiveness, a casual amnesia can have dangerous consequences, in politics and in art: and it's something that writers, at least, have recognized. The need to imagine alternatives, the need to champion access to information—the need, in short, *to remember to remember* that alternatives have existed and can again exist—it is this need that Canadian writing in 1993 repeatedly and often eloquently voiced. W.N.

Sue Ann Johnston

For Pioneering Women Whose Babies Died

How could they bear the need to bear
what must be buried in a bare land
with bare acknowledgement

A cross of sticks.

No place like this, a poem to bury sadness in.

Horizons endlessly unscrolling—
unframed, unfurnished,
bones rocking inside the skin
milk dripping through invisible holes

mockery in this dry land
where hunger has no mouth

Anna Mozga

Leon'todon

He was a dandy lion
the colour of butter
long of tooth but jolly too

When his mane became
the colour of eggshell
and his smile without bite

He let the wind take him in tufts
—as it roared and whispered
and sang of dying

Anne Le Dressay

In my next life

I have stumbled four times
over the same step today.
I am the kind of person who
cannot climb stairs without
thinking about climbing stairs.

In my next life, I will be
a dancer. To make up for
the undirected hunger in
the shape of my bones —
the long hungry bones and the
flat incapable weight that
hamper me now. To make up
for the distrust of space
and of my own perceptions.

In my next life, I will be
the same size in my mind
as in the world. I will know
without thinking
how much space I take up,
how far to lift my foot
to the next step.

In my next life, I will flow,
trusting the air and the earth
and my own feet. I will
write poems with my body,
poems so fine and ephemeral
they will flow into smoke
and leave an ache
like hunger in people's minds.

I will not stumble, I will not
stumble
over the top step.

Marie Vautier

Postmodern Myth, Post-European History, and the Figure of the Amerindian

François Barcelo, George Bowering, and Jacques Poulin

Most studies of Québécois and English Canadian literature in the 1960s and early 1970s, from Gilles Marcotte's *Une Littérature qui se fait* (1962) to Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972), thematized the question of national identity. In the late 1970s, the structuralist approach refuted thematics and related questions of nationalism and identity to concentrate on the more formal aspects of literary works. In the 1980s, poststructuralism, deconstruction—and, more importantly to my argument here, the emergence of postmodernist and postcolonial theories and practices—opened the door to renewed interest in the question of national identities in these two literatures. As Linda Hutcheon notes, the "entire question of Canadian identity has become a kind of playground—or battlefield—for the postmodern as well as the post-colonial defining of 'difference' and value" ("'Circling the Downspout of Empire,'" 166).

Historiographic metafictions[1] such as François Barcelo's *La Tribu*, George Bowering's *Burning Water* and Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues*—all published in the early 1980s—investigate and destabilize the double problematic of myth and national identities. These novels flaunt their use of techniques considered as markers of postmodernist fiction in their challenges to history and to historiography, and in their investigations of autoreferentiality; intertextuality; playful self-reflexivity; parody; irony; and multiple, often contradictory retellings of the same event. They also thematize many concerns of postcolonial practice: the centre/margin debate; place and displacement; language, speech and silence; written versus oral history; and

multiple challenges to eurocentric world views. It has been proposed that Max Dorsinville's expression "post-european" may prove to be a more useful term than "postcolonial," as its "political and theoretical implications have much to offer" (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back*, 24), and I have chosen to employ it in much of my discussion.

In "Circling," Hutcheon makes a lengthy but "crucial" digression to address a basic question: *can* Canada be considered a postcolonial country? The punctuation mark in the title of Albert Memmi's earlier essay, "Les Canadiens français sont-ils des colonisés?" signals the equally problematic situation in Quebec. As Hutcheon argues, "when Canadian culture is called post-colonial today, the reference is very rarely (at least explicitly) to the native culture, which might be the more accurate historical use of the term (*Splitting Images*, 75). Furthermore, the postcolonial situation in Quebec is debatable on two fronts: Quebec has not as yet achieved the political independence which motivated the use of the "colonisé" argument in much of its literature of the post-war years, and its first-world status as a mainly white, industrialized "nation" is not comparable to the third-world situation of most of France's former colonies. Much to the dismay of the authors of the postcolonial study *The Empire Writes Back*, the fertile field of cultural complexity and the characteristically Canadian "perception of a mosaic [have] not generated corresponding theories of literary hybridity to replace the nationalist approach" (36).[2] Arun Mukherjee's *Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition* (1988), Joseph Pivato's *Contrasts* (1985) and Jean-Michel Lacroix and Fulvio Caccia's *Métamorphoses d'une utopie* (1992) underline the social, political, and ideological concerns of what is often called "writing by ethnic minorities" in English Canada and Quebec, but little critical attention has been focused on the postcolonial thrust of historiographic fictions from what is known as "the mainstream."

This lack of scholarship is perhaps due to the particular posteuropean situations of English Canada and Quebec, which have been addressed respectively by Diana Brydon and Max Dorsinville, in "Re-writing *The Tempest*" and *Caliban Without Prospero*. Whereas most postcolonial theorists illustrate the colonized/colonizer relationship with the Caliban/Prospero metaphor, Brydon argues that English Canadians tend to see themselves in Miranda, the "dutiful daughter of the empire" ("Re-writing," 77). Prospero's values, she notes, "are internalized by Miranda but redefined through her interaction with Caliban" (86). English Canadian re-writings

of *The Tempest* are clearly different from those of other ex-colonies: they show how "Canadians have internalized the process of their colonization: they are themselves Prospero and what he has colonized is a vital part of themselves" (87). It is for this reason, suggests Brydon, that English Canadian texts find it harder to reject outright the imperial/colonial legacy. In many contemporary novels from English Canada, a self-conscious postcolonial urge *to* myth co-exists with a postmodern play *with* myth, and the search for national identity, which William H. New calls that "congenital art form" in Canada, forms an ironic backdrop to it all (*Among Worlds*, 101).

Many contemporary texts from Quebec also struggle with internalized politico-historical myths. This struggle is largely ignored in comparative Canadian or English-language postcolonial studies, where it is assumed that the question of "national identity" in Quebec has long been resolved. The upheaval of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s brought about social, cultural and literary reforms which prepared the field for what Dorsinville calls novels of ambiguity. These works reflect "the consciousness of the complexity of life the French Canadian never had access to when either the cult of Messianism or *le pays* meant a belief in simple creeds and answers, a reduction of life to religious or secular dogma" (*Caliban Without Prospero*, 181). The nationalist concerns of most Québécois literature of the early period of "la modernité" (1960-75) are relatively homogenous, as Micheline Cabron has argued in *Une société, un récit* (1989). Even in the early 1960s, however, postmodern writers such as Jacques Godbout signalled the need to rework Quebec's historical myths of identity.[3] Contemporary Québécois texts do address the social and ideological heterogeneity of contemporary Quebec, as Sherry Simon, Pierre l'Hérault and others propose in *Fictions de l'identitaire au Québec* (1991).[4] The posteuropean thrust evident in many contemporary novels from both English Canada and Quebec involves a rewriting of "the myths that write us" (Brydon, "Myths," 1)—a self-conscious effort to decolonize the mind.

A traditional myth is often perceived as a special narrative, most frequently a classical or a religious story, which is seen as eternal, universal, and, especially, transhistorical. In Mircea Eliade's view, myth serves to establish, reinforce and legitimize the validity of human beings' existence—to answer, as Eric Gould notes, "questions concerning the self and its place in the world" (*Mythical Intentions in Modern Literature*, 34).

One function of traditional myth, then, is to attempt to make unified sense of the world. The dominant Christian belief system and the eurocentric myth of the superiority of the European colonizer have long informed the mythological universes portrayed in English Canadian and Québécois literary canons. These European-based world views no longer suffice; hence, the creation, in narrative, of posteuropean myth.

Posteuropean myth involves a challenge to the teleological and ahistorical qualities of traditional myth. Thus, in posteuropean texts, an investigation of myth might well point to the decentering and destabilizing properties of myth—factors that would work against the eurocentric notion of mythic universality. In *La Tribu*, *Burning Water*, and *Volkswagen Blues*, a posteuropean attitude is evident in three major re-examinations of traditional eurocentric myth. In these texts, one finds a parody of the myth of the superiority of the European explorer, a disempowering attack on eurocentric theories of myth-criticism, and a foregrounding of the role of the Amerindian figure as an element of postcolonial discourse.[5] It is this third aspect of posteuropean myth that constitutes my main concern here: these texts' problematic yet intriguing portrayal of the Amerindian figure as a device of postcolonial discourse. Although the historical colonization of the Amerindian and Innuit peoples by the British and French is openly signalled in these contemporary texts, they sometimes *use* the figure of the Amerindian and/or the Métis to further the postcolonial arguments of the non-native cultural majorities of their traditions. My investigation centres on what Terry Goldie calls the "image" of the Amerindian in these works—rather than on "the people the image claims to represent" (*Fear and Temptation*, 6).

Language issues are often thematized in postcolonial fictions, as the act of colonization frequently involves the imposition of a foreign language upon an indigenous people. (Slemon, "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse," 12) There are differing colonial situations—and therefore different linguistic struggles—as D.E.S. Maxwell has shown us.[6] In New France, the French colonists did impose their European language upon the indigenous peoples—a linguistic imposition that was continued by the British and then by the English Canadians, to the point that the first non-native language of the majority of Innuit and Amerindians living in Quebec today is still English.[7] The French speakers, however, were colonized linguistically in their turn by the British, and the struggle for the survival of French as a

living language is an ongoing one in Quebec. Writers of francophone fiction in Quebec and those from settler colonies such as English Canada face a similar challenge: modifying what was originally an imported language and working within literary conventions established elsewhere. The rage to write in "joual" during the Quiet Revolution was in part a response to an unarticulated linguistic and literary pressure to conform to French standards. In this sense, joual may be seen as the language of *de*colonization: a "socio-linguistic form of protest akin to Caliban's interjectory 'Uhuru' in [Aimé] Césaire's *Une Tempête*" (Zabus, "A Calbanic Tempest," 48). Barcelo's post-nationalist, posteuropean fiction is not written in joual, but in standard French, as are most contemporary texts from Quebec. *La Tribu*'s postcolonial approach to linguistic battles involves a blurring of the boundaries between linguistic/cultural groups and an ironic look at Quebec's history of passionate debates around language, culture and identity.

The Clipocs, the tribe of the title, are first presented as "primitive" Amerindians.[8] Discussing the relationship between allegory and history, Slemon has proposed that postcolonial allegorical writing "not only constitutes a challenge to prevailing theoretical assumptions about what kind of cultural grounding is required for allegorical communication to take place, but also, that it is helping to change our received ideas of history" ("Post-colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History," 158). Although Barcelo's novel is dedicated to nine Amerindian tribes in Quebec, and although the text does address contemporary Amerindians concerns, its political allegory is centered in large part on non-Amerindian Québécois society. On an allegorical level, this small tribe can be seen partially as a microcosm of French-speaking North Americans of European descent. Thus, the Clipocs' territorial area is similar to Quebec's geography, the tribe's history recalls political events from Quebec's past, and some tribal leaders strongly resemble—and parody—Québécois politicians. Politically correct, the tribe has a female chief, Mahii, who oversees a period of rapid technological and social reforms. The invention of ice skating, the hockey puck, and social systems such as family allowances and unemployment insurance, further blurs the divisions between "primitive" Amerindians and twentieth-century Québécois.

In the New World, the tribe adopts a cabin boy, Jean-François, who has been abandoned by his shipmates, all of whom are explorers from the "Vieux Pays." Jean-François, called Jafafoua by tribal members, is unable to

learn their language. The first indication of the "québécitude" of the tribe—and of the many complex cultural reversals in this novel—is that its members *choose* to speak "vieux-paysan" instead of Clipoc. Rather than portraying the linguistic colonization of the Clipocs by the Vieux-Paysans—the usual "colonisé" argument—the narrator describes the willingness of the Clipocs to absorb Jafafoua's language and customs.

Lengthy passages in *La Tribu* are devoted to tribal debates over bilingualism. Some Clipocs argue for the intellectual stimulation provided by a bilingual or multilingual society, whereas other oppose bilingualism on the grounds that language is not just a method of communication but the very *soul* of the tribe. Barcelo's ironic descriptions of these debates and his overuse of political clichés manage to convey a certain post-Referendum (1980) ennui, underlining the fact that the tribe is tired of discussing language rights. Toward the end of the novel, the Clipocs have a problematic identity: they appear to speak the same language and practice the same religion as the Vieux-Paysans, and seem to be aligned with the latter in their on-going cultural struggles against a large and powerful country to the South. They are nonetheless distinct from the Vieux-Paysans: there is both antagonism and cooperation among constantly shifting groups. Episodic blurring of cultural and linguistic boundaries constitutes a posteuropean exploration of heterogeneity in Barcelo' work. The novel's retellings of problematic linguistic and cultural relations among various yet inseparable groups raise several issues, including the ongoing, unresolved issue of Amerindian rights. It has been suggested that the term postcolonial can hardly be applied to Quebec, given the confrontation between Natives and non-Natives at Kanesatake (Oka) during the summer of 1990.[9] I would argue, however, that Barcelo's novel, which predates the crises at Kanesatake and Kahnawake by almost a decade, does address certain postcolonial concerns of contemporary Québec.

The narratorial play with history in *La Tribu* presupposes a general knowledge of the traditional version of events, along with a tacit acknowledgement that the traditional version of events needs to be re-examined in the here and now. The novel strongly suggests that there is a need and a place for alternative apprehensions of the past. By placing an indigenous people who are made to resemble ironically the majority of Québécois in the foreground of the story, the narrator first emphasizes the history of the peoples of the New World and jolts the traditional focus of the "roman his-

torique," which is usually on the historical voyages of the Old World explorers. (It is easy to discern the symbolism of the political message in the first chapter, where the Clipocs skilfully and deliberately explode the explorers' boat and kill all on board.) Thinly disguising the history of the Québécois collectivity in stories about this seemingly autochthonous group, Barcelo then critically examines the worn-out historico-political myths that inspired much nationalist literature in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution. For instance, the detailed stories of the poor treatment meted out to the Clipocs by the Vieux-Paysans at the end of the novel constitute a narratorial criticism of the Québécois policy toward the Amerindian peoples who live within Quebec's boundaries today, as well as an obvious comment on the historical French colonization of New World Amerindian tribes. In fact, the narrator not only ironically comments on the former patronizing attitude of the Europeans vis-à-vis the New World, but also satirizes the New World's equally patronizing treatment of its own indigenous peoples, of its immigrants, and of Third World nations. Thus, in a parodic reference to Canadian gifts of indigestible food to famine-stricken areas of Africa, Mahii offers to provide relief supplies to a neighbouring tribe, proposing: "qu'à tout le moins on offrit aux Niox ... des surplus de lait en poudre lorsque la faim les tenaillerait" (*La Tribu*, 129).

James Clifford has argued that the West's approach to ethnographic allegory is often one of salvaging—that is to say, "The other is lost, in disintegrating time and space, but saved in the text" ("On Ethnographic Allegory," 112). The *slippage* among what has traditionally been perceived as separate or separable groups in Barcelo's fictional allegory, however, provides a textual space in which to explore various manifestations of cultural representation. Signalling a certain postcolonial acceptance of heterogeneity, the novel's re-examination of the history of New France, of the nationalist assumptions of the 1960s and of worn-out historical myths also makes room for *other* ideologies, decrying what has recently been described as the need to proclaim oneself "Québécois-francophone-de-souche." (Jacques Godbout, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Québécois?" 236).

In contemporary Québécois literature, the previously sacrosanct concept of the "collectivité" has begun to be the focus of a postmodern thrust to disunity. The utter lack of *any* fixed racial, linguistic or religious boundaries in *La Tribu* permits this novel's re-telling of conflicts of the past to offer ongoing commentary on the social issues of the present. This posteuropean text

demonstrates an openness toward cultural multiplicity by underlining the constantly changing nature of the Clipocs: are they "primitives"? Innuit? Amerindians? Québécois? Other? Postcolonial cultures, as Brydon points out, are more receptive to heterogeneity than the European cultures which have dominated cultural theory to the present day ("Myths" 7). The characteristic postcolonial insistence on cross-cultural awareness has become practice in this text. *La Tribu*, then, through its frequently parodic re-tellings of past events, promotes a heterogeneous approach to political history and to society. The use of the Amerindian figure in the novel, along with the novel's deliberate installation of a continual slippage regarding the "identity" of that figure, permits an examination of those issues which are foregrounded in much postcolonial literature. Thus, this text critically addresses language issues, the foreshortening of history, the problematic notion of a national collectivity, parodies of government and politicians, and absurd, de-stabilizing re-creations of history which open up space in the text for various colonial and postcolonial relationships to be explored.

The Clipocs have no interest in recording events for posterity. Although Ksoâr, the self-appointed poet/scribe of the tribe, "invents" writing, the other Clipocs see no need to write things down. This tribe's apparent lack of appreciation for its past would seem to support the notion that the past is useless, and that the Clipocs—like the Québécois—should release their "légendes vieillotes" into the past and gladly embrace the present (212). The narrator of this novel, however, chooses to re-tell (together) the distant and recent past of both the Clipoc tribe and the Québécois people. On the one hand, the obvious parodies of "primitive" and/or Québécois myths of the past seem to be an invitation to escape from the stasis of a mythology into a praxis of the here and now. On the other hand, that praxis involves the re-telling of historico-political events, thereby positing a need for that past, along with an acknowledgement that there exist other, non-eurocentric versions of that past.

Although the double focus of George Bowering's *Burning Water* is the story of George Vancouver's explorations of the West Coast and the self-conscious narratorial interventions about the writing of such a story, a surprising number of passages in the novel refer to the original inhabitants of the New World. Bowering's use of the Amerindian figure as an element of postcolonial discourse is problematic. On the one hand,

the conversations among Indians[10] in *Burning Water* subvert the European clichés of the monosyllabic "savage"; mock the eurocentric, anthropological image of the myth-laden "primitive"; disrupt the notion of the progressive flow of historical time; and upset the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. On the other hand, while Bowering's play with language in the novel does indicate his interest in the problematics of communication and translation between different linguistic and cultural groups, the Indian figure is used to illustrate mainly non-Amerindian points of view. Bowering is aware of the theories of Benjamin Whorf (who is obliquely referred to in *Burning Water* [143]) and his colleague Edward Sapir. These linguists based their theory of linguistic relativity on studies of Nootka and other North American Indian languages. According to W.D. Ashcroft, "Sapir proposed the exciting and revolutionary view that what we call the 'real' world is built up by the language habits of a group, and that the worlds in which different societies live are quite distinct, not merely the same world with different labels attached" ("Constitutive Graphonomy," 65). Bowering's interest in language issues is evident in the Indians' anachronistic flaunting of twentieth-century psychological jargon and contemporary obscenities. The Indians speak like twentieth-century Vancouverites. By contrasting their agreeable, idiomatic, and familiar conversations with stilted passages supposedly taken from eighteenth-century journals—whose authors, the narrator notes, "were fond of nouns and Latinate abstractions" (*Burning Water*, 101)—this text installs a linguistic tension between "them" (the eighteenth-century British) and "us" (people who sound like twentieth-century inhabitants of the New World). This opposition, of course, is political—in that the "us" are Amerindians who have come close to losing their voice in "our" New World culture. Elsewhere in the novel, Indians who can discuss "relative concepts" and "unsubstantiated rumours" with sophistication in English respond to Vancouver's queries about the Northwest Passage in rudimentary Nootka with English of another type: "Many portage. Many days eating chickens on the flat land past the highest mountains" (144). Ashcroft argues that postcolonial literature's "appropriation of English, far from inscribing either vernacular or 'standard' forms, creates a new discourse at their interface" (61). Bowering's flaunting of different linguistic norms, which parody both linguistic and racial stereotypes, is an example of this type of postcolonial writing. However, Bowering's "use and abuse" of the Amerindian figure appears to be more concerned with presenting the tensions between the

world views of white twentieth-century North Americans ("us") and those of Europeans ("them") than it is with exploring and understanding Amerindian world views. This text uses parody to undercut eurocentric world views, but, as Hutcheon has noted, there are inevitable complicities in the use of parody.[11] Speaking as a Haida/Tsimpsian and a woman, Marcia Crosby argues in "Construction of the Imaginary Indian" that in the case of Bowering's work: "One can only parody something that is shared .... For me [Crosby] as a native reader, Bowering's approach is not radical, but a continuation of The West's assumed right to use native figures ... in a search for its own 'roots'" (271-2).[12] Her criticism centres on Bowering's undermining of one of the novel's characters, Menzies—that otherwise perfect "eighteenth-century man"—by his portrayal of Menzies' sexual use of an unnamed Amerindian woman. Crosby argues that although "the ideological dimension of Western discourse has changed to one of self-criticism, in this case it is still about a particular 'self,' and not about First Nations People" (271). Bowering's construction of the "Imaginary Indian," which exploits stereotypes to subvert eurocentric attitudes, is perhaps not as accommodating of various levels of cross-cultural representation as is Barcelo's text.

Given Bowering's stated interest in myth and the vehemence with which he refutes much of the myth-criticism of Northrop Frye,[13] it is not surprising that a subtext of myth is found in many allusions to the Indian figures in *Burning Water*. The novel ironically explores certain accepted truisms about myth and related notions of madness, "primitives" and gods. The young Indian artist at first believes that the white men are deities. However, the numerous gaffes made by the explorers belie that first impression. When the British are attacked by unfriendly Indians, they try to deflect the attackers' wrath by declaring themselves to be invincible gods, but the Indians' derisive reactions reveal their disbelief: "'Aeh, shit!' ... 'They say that you should go and be gods in your own land. They say you are not permitted to step your sacred Mamathni feet upon their mother'" (231). This last reference to the Amerindian Earth-Mother myth is of course misunderstood by the British: "'We don't care about their old women' ... 'By their mother they mean the continent,' said the guide" (231-2).

Penny Petrone notes that in Renaissance Europe, the figure of the Indian was "comprehended either in the negative and unflattering image of 'sauvage', or in the romanticized image of primeval innocence—the 'bon'

sauvage, a Rousseauesque pure being" (*Native Literature in Canada*, 2). The concept of the Amerindian as a "primitive," myth-ridden creature easily dominated by European technology is parodied—and frequently inverted—in Bowering's novel, as is the European literary myth of the noble savage: "Before the white 'settlers' arrived there were lots of impatient Indians. It's only in the last two hundred years that Indians have been looking patient whenever there were any white men around" (92). Elsewhere, the narrator often has white men acting in a "primitive" manner:

> Magee stepped out of the nearby copse with a donkey loaded down with supplies. He held his hand up, palm forward.
> "How!" he said, in a deep voice.
> The two Indians made their faces look patient.
> "What is this 'How'?" asked the first Indian of his companion.
> "Search me," said the second Indian. "But we may as well go along with him." (199)

The narratorial discussion of the Amerindian figure in *Burning Water*, however, remains focused on the subversion of eurocentric myths and does not open up much space for a political discussion of the English Canadian/Amerindian relationship. As Crosby has argued, there "is a difference between using a theoretical critique and being used by it" (271). Although *Burning Water* makes considerable use of postcolonial theories regarding language, place and displacement, the postcolonial thematic of "identity" is played out ironically by contrasting eurocentric/"New World" cosmogonies, and the figure of the Amerindian is employed mainly to this end.

In Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues*, the representation of the Amerindian figure centres on one character, La Grande Sauterelle (infrequently called Pitsémine), who has French Canadian and Montagnais antecedents. As she travels from the Gaspé to San Francisco in a Volkswagen van, she educates its owner, a Québécois author known only by his pseudonym, Jack Waterman, about the inadequacies of traditional historiography, especially as it concerns the Amerindian presence in North America. Gilles Thérien notes that the Métis figure is to be found everywhere in Québécois literature in the 1980s, and that its presence is demonstrably linked to cross-cultural representations of contemporary Québécois society. ("L'Indien du discours," 365-6) *Volkswagen Blues* is Poulin's sixth novel and the first in which the action is situated beyond the boundaries of Quebec; that fact

alone reveals a willingness to explore "l'altérité" (The Other).[14] The novel contains an extended discussion of cultures and identities that can no longer be seen, in Pierre L'Hérault's words, as "*pures*, mais nécessairement *métisses*, non contraintes en des frontières étanches, mais en quelque sorte transfrontalières, lieux de croisement, de confluence" ("*Volkswagen Blues*: traverser les identités," 28). Compared to Barcelo and Bowering, Poulin makes relatively little use of irony, allegory, or humour in his use of the Métis figure and his extended retelling of Amerindian, American, and Québécois history. Instead, multiple intertextual references to historical and literary works, along with Poulin's subtle and understated rendering of interpersonal relationships, thematize postcolonial concerns such as oral versus written history, place and displacement, and the Foucauldian relationship between political power and the "truth" about the past.

Volkswagen Blues presents an overdetermined portrayal of La Grande Sauterelle as an active, capable, informed, well-read, passionate, fun-loving (if sometimes angry) mechanic. In marked contrast, Jack Waterman is a passive, observant, self-deprecating and frequently inadequate author. Jack is between books and on the trail of his long-lost brother Théo, who is frequently linked to the "heroes" of the history of New France and of "l'Amérique," from the *coureur de bois* Etienne Brulé to the American poets of the "beat" generation. While the ambivalent Québécois/American relationship is undoubtedly a main intertextual concern, it is Poulin's forthright portrayal of the complex and ambivalent relationship between the two main characters that most strongly marks this novel's postcolonial discourse. Simon Harel has discussed the changing reception of the "représentation de l'étranger" in contemporary Québécois literature:

> "on peut avancer que cette extra-territorialité (par exemple la menace de l'exode rural dans le contexte du roman du terroir) suscite un phénomène de repli défensif, une volonté de refonder un espace restreint qui serait associé à une identité stabilisée. Dans ce roman de Poulin [*Volkswagen Blues*], l'extra-territorialité n'échappe pas toujours à une consolidation défensive. (*Le Voleur de parcours*, 160)

Indeed, Poulin's novel explores changes in the relatively homogenous Québécois ideology of identity in the 1960s by signalling the characters' *struggle* to come to an acceptance of socio-cultural heterogeneity.

All of Poulin's works are characterized by nostalgia for childhood and simpler times. In *Volkswagen Blues*, Jack's adherence to eurocentric myths of the past learned in childhood is constantly challenged by his travelling com-

panion. Although Jack slowly comes to appreciate La Grande Sauterelle's alternate versions of history and follows her lead in learning about the cultural diversity of "l'Amérique," he is a reluctant student. For instance, his perception of Etienne Brulé as a French-Canadian hero and explorer does not withstand La Grande Sauterelle's portrayal of the same man as a sadistic transgressor of Amerindian law. Jack, however, is reluctant to lose the security provided by his personal/political/historical mythology, as is illustrated at the end of the chapter which discusses Etienne Brulé: "And for Jack, in his heart of hearts, it was as if all the heroes of his past were still heroes" (*Volkswagen Blues*, 58). L'Hérault's reading of *Volkswagen Blues* sheds light on this ambivalence. He proposes that both characters are isolated by their necessarily irreconcilable versions of the historical past (represented by the two very different maps of America on display at the Museum in Gaspé) but available to each other in the present (represented by the road maps of America which they consult during their shared road-trip). For L'Hérault, each character "se déplace, non seulement par rapport à l'autre, mais aussi par rapport à lui-même, dans un mouvement de décentrement qui va de l'unique au multiple.... il faut de plus préciser qu'il y a une force d'attraction qui agit dans le récit pour lui donner une direction: celle du multiple, représentée par Pitsémine/La Grande Sauterelle, la Métisse" (34). However, a sense of unresolved ambiguity dominates the reflections on the presence of the Métisse as Other in this complex novel. For instance, although L'Hérault's perspicacious reading of the novel frequently assigns a double onomastic appellation to La Grande Sauterelle/Pitsémine, the text itself uses only the francophone denomination.[15] Although the critical reception of *Volkswagen Blues* generally praises its emphasis on "négociation" (L'Hérault, 30), on being "recueillante" (Pierre Nepveu, *L'Ecologie du réel*, 216), Poulin's main focus is on the struggle and the difficulties of reconciliation with the notion of heterogeneity. This is perhaps evident in the parallel Jonathan M. Weiss has drawn between the Volkswagen van (*the wagon of the people*) and the little red car in the mural by the Mexican painter Diego Rivera, which the travellers visit in the Detroit Institute of Art. ("Une lecture américaine de *Volkswagen Blues*," 94) Jack and Pitsémine/La Grande Sauterelle decide that the red car is a symbol for happiness and that "Rivera wanted to express something very simple: happiness is rare and getting it requires a lot of trouble, fatigue and effort" (*Volkswagen Blues*, 71). Immediately after the viewing both are tired and depressed. Co-habitation in the constantly shift-

ing "world" of l'Amérique—represented here by the inclusion of a Mexican revolutionary—is demanding and difficult, and this episode may be read as a foot-dragging reluctance on their part to arrive at transcultural acceptance.

Jack's reluctance to fully accept the Other is also evident in his sexual inadequacy when La Grande Sauterelle initiates lovemaking on the Continental Divide, and his subsequent dream in which she appears as an extraterrestrial. She too is troubled by problems of self-identity. As a child, she was rejected by Amerindians and non-Amerindians alike because of her transcultural identity. As an adult, her explorations of androgyny, proper names (Québécois vs. Amerindian), and retellings of Amerindian history all point to her fascination with her own gendered and cultural identity. According to Bernadette Bucher, the Métis figure is "à la fois ceci et cela, le même et l'autre" ("Sémiologie du mixte et utopie américaine," 308), and thus offers the possibility of a less confrontational perception of difference and multiplicity. Nepveu has proposed that the Volkswagen in this novel can be seen as "une métaphore même de la nouvelle culture québécoise: indéterminée, voyageuse, en dérive, mais 'recueillante'" (216). Be this as it may, the Volkswagen van stays with La Grande Sauterelle, who decides to live in San Francisco for a while, because "that city, where the races seemed to live in harmony, was a good place to try to come to terms with her own twofold heritage, to become reconciled with herself" (*Volkswagen Blues*, 211). Jack, however, decides to return to Quebec. At the end of the text, he *has* expanded his personal mythology, feeling that "somewhere in the vastness of America there was a secret place where the gods of the Indians and the other gods were meeting together in order to watch over him and light his way." It is through *writing*, however, that he will strive to integrate his experiences of socio-cultural heterogeneity, eventually producing the novel that, we are given to understand through multiple intertextual references, is none other than *Volkswagen Blues*. Poulin's novel is a courageous exploration of the unease felt by those who are struggling to eventually come to an acceptance of the Other. In keeping with its posteuropean focus, *Volkswagen Blues*' non-traditional ending is neither mythic nor the stuff of fairy tales: "on ne s'épouse pas comme dans les contes de fées; on ne meurt pas comme dans la tragédie; on ne se suicide pas comme dans le drame shakespearien. On se quitte plutôt banalement, sans drame, emportant quelque chose de l'univers de l'autre: Pitsémine garde le Volks; Jack ramène les dieux de Pitsémine" (L'Hérault, 40).

In his conclusion to *Orientalism*, Edward Said asks if "the notion of a distinct culture ... always get[s] involved either in self-congratulation (when one discusses one's own) or hostility and aggression (when one discusses the 'other')" (325). Recent debates about "cultural appropriation" tend to sustain this either/or stance. However, it would appear that the fictional works discussed here do not apprehend socio-cultural distinctions as always already separable into this self/other dichotomy. I have no quarrel with Lenore Keeshig-Tobias' argument at the 1992 Vancouver conference on postcolonialism that Amerindian stories are the property of First Nations Peoples and should therefore only be told by them ("The Identity of the Native Voice"). I remain intrigued, however, by the presence of the Amerindian figure in contemporary non-Amerindian literature. Challenges to traditional, eurocentric notions of myth issue an invitation to the reader to consider the flexible and indeterminate nature of posteuropean myth and the related ongoing question of national identities. These texts explore transcultural identities in part through their use of the Amerindian figure as an element of postcolonial discourse. Although that use is exploratory and sometimes problematic, the figure of the Amerindian and the Métis can facilitate a textual discussion of pluralism in political identity. A cognizance of the limitations of the binary "us"/Other argument in these novels leads to an awareness of multi-tiered postcolonial situations and indicates various degrees of willingness to explore heterogeneity.

NOTES

[1] For a discussion of this term and related concepts, see Chapter Four of Linda Hutcheon's *The Canadian Postmodern*, "Historiographic Metafiction" (61-77).

[2] See also the panel discussion on postcolonialism and postmodernism held at the meetings of the Learned Societies in Victoria in 1990 and subsequently published in *World Literature Written in English* (Mukherjee et al.).

[3] See, for instance, Jacques Godbout's "Novembre 1964/Faut-il tuer le mythe René Lévesque?"

[4] Sherry Simon writes: "Si au Québec la culture a longtemps désigné le lieu d'un consensus identitaire, l'expression d'une appartenance collective totalisante, elle est aujourd'hui de plus en plus marquée du signe de l'hétérogène. C'est le caractère organique à la fois du domaine culturel et de son lien à la communauté qui est aujourd'hui mis en question" (9).

[5] A fourth eurocentric "myth," that of the central god of the Christian faith, is strongly challenged in many posteuropean works. Although the texts by Bowering and Poulin occasionally seek to subvert the hegemony of Biblical myth, only Barcelo's *La Tribu* offers

an extended parody of the Christ-myth in its stories of the wonder-child of the tribe, ironically named "Notregloire."

[6] In "Landscape and Theme", Maxwell discusses the two major categories in Commonwealth countries: "In the first, the writer brings his own language—English—to an alien environment and a fresh set of experiences: Australia, Canada, New Zealand. In the other, the writer brings an alien language—English—to his own social and cultural inheritance: India, West Africa ... Viewing his society, the writer constantly faces the evidences of the impact between what is native to it and what is derived from association with Britain, whatever its form" (82-3).

[7] Normand Delisle writes: "Il y a au Québec 48 600 autochtones, dont 57 % connaissent au moins l'anglais comme autre langue et 25% le français" ("Les langues autochtones," 3).

[8] The quotation marks around the word "primitive" in this paper signal both accurate citation and ironic distancing, given Barcelo's play with the usually oppositional "primitive/ civilized" argument.

[9] Quebec's position, proposes Carolyn Bayard, "made the formerly colonized 'Nègres Blancs d'Amérique' (see Vallières) look like the colonizers in their turn" ("From *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* [1961] to Kanesatake [1990]: A Look at the Tensions of Postmodern Quebec," 21).

[10] Daniel Francis, in *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, states: "Indians, as we think we know them, do not exist. If fact, there may well be no such thing as an Indian.... The Indian began as a White man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy" (4-5). Bowering, however, uses the term "Indian" in his novel, and I use it in my discussion of his work in the following paragraphs.

[11] Hutcheon notes that parody's "appropriating of the past, of history, its questioning of the contemporary by 'referencing' it to a different set of codes, is a way of establishing continuity that may, in itself, have ideological implications" (*A Theory of Parody*, 110). For Hutcheon, however, modern parody, which works through "repetition with critical difference" is "endowed with the power to renew" (114-15).

[12] I thank Carole Gerson for bringing Crosby's text to my attention.

[13] See Bowering's "Why James Reaney is a Better Poet 1) Than Any Northrop Frye Poet 2) Than He Used to Be."

[14] Much has been made of Poulin's alternative approaches to "québécitude," of his investigations of "l'altérité" (The Other). Poulin is frequently perceived as a marginal writer in mainstream Québécois society (see Nicole Beaulieu's "L'écrivain dans l'ombre,"), but he has attracted much critical attention in recent years, with *Etudes françaises* (23.1; 1985-86), *Voix et Images* (43; automne 1989) and other journals devoting issues to his work.

[15] The third person narration in the novel is equally problematic, installing a depersonalized distance between the reader and the text.

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Liliane Welch

Nursing Home

Her eyes rest on his middle-aged face
but her memory disperses
their unfinished tie.
The drifts of loyalty and affection
must have made a channel for
puzzlement in her night, even so,
for though she cannot find her way
through the snow flurries to recognition,
she remains stranded on her son's name.

Unfinished Business

maybe the man will telephone his lover
maybe he'll let it ride
after all, he'll see her
when he gets back into town
and the snow's not too bad after all

and the lover
waiting in a warm house
with cats, yes let's say cats
will after all go to sleep
we're all adults here

so there's no story really. no stormy
'phone call, winds whistling
around the 'phone booth
or frost coming between them. no heat
to warm one's sleeping and the other's driving

no moral to the story
and no difficult dreams to settle
lovers think in the night of each other
at home or on the road
and probably are sensible
about the telephone bill

or,
maybe not

sometimes that happens too
it's never possible
to predict these things
reliably, at midnight, in winter
when roads are long and beds are cold.

Josef Timar

As Caravaggio

INTEGRITY

In April 1604, Caravaggio (then 30 years old)
entered the Osteria del Moro and ordered a dish of artichokes.
The waiter, bringing four cooked in butter and four cooked in oil,
when asked which were which replied, "smell them and you will know,"
an answer so distasteful to Caravaggio that he flung his plate, artichokes and all,
into the poor man's face, injuring his cheek. Thus enraged the painter drew his sword.

Some days later the artist was called before a magistrate,
his defence remarkable insolent, his phrasing clumsy, confused.
In appealing to those in judgement, "how I suffer and count myself
among the earth's most wretched people," he continued in an anguished voice,
"and how I long for compassion—but I'll be damned before I accept any from you!"

Caravaggio's defiance, by now well documented in Rome, added further to his reputation for misery.
Amazingly, for one suffering dispossession as a privilege, the artist was rarely without friends.

NARCISSUS DESCENDING

Knowing rules for making glorious things does not prevent him from disparaging those who confirm his apprehensions: externalizer, and prone to violence! Beware his self-aggrandizement (over compensation for an underplayed hand with his superiors, overplayed with his peers), but do not forget that charity was given him long before he had a chance to beg for it.

CARAVAGGIO'S CONSCIENCE

Such was its flavour on warmers days
that if the Piazza Campo dei Fiori
could spew forth its flowers, vegetables
and desirable young women

I could think it the mind's warm mine
digging through odours and movement
for veins of scarlet porphyry.

Excavating the light there
(it emanates from darkness)
is like finding the rich
but only among the poor,
like equating work with
remorseless destruction,
a kind of changelessness for me—
the more I think of it
the more I understand
nothing at all.

Patrick Lane

Wysteria

You say wysteria and something plunders you, a mouth
heavy with blue as if it had spent the morning eating
grapes
or the heavy black cherries of childhood you picked
wild in the alien orchards of the desert hills. Words
come flowering, myriad
as if they grew in clusters on your tongue, as if
you were speaking to the grandmother
you never knew who they say sat
strapped in the chair for the last years of her life
asking for fruit from a tree that wasn't there.
Hers was a kind of frailty, tough and trembling,
like a scant branch you think if you take
will break. It can be like that if you want.
She wanted fruit for the pies they wouldn't let her make.

A trembling, as wysteria, or hands when you are still
a child that reach farther than they can to plunder

the farthest branch of its first fruit. Still, I think
inside that old woman I never knew was a stone
as there was inside my mother. Cherries,
she would cry, cherries, and I would go to her
if I could, my mouth a rich purple and speak to her of the hills
and the solitary lark beyond the wysteria
that is as real as the knife she holds as she peels
the skin I wear like a shroud, whispering through whatever blood
there is: you must eat child, you must eat.

Held Water

I have discovered I cannot bear to be
with people anymore. Even the querulous love of old friends
defeats me and I turn away, my face staring
at the hard sleet
scraping at what little is left of the trees
in early spring. The bellied pods of the wysteria hold
my face, upside down
in minute mirrors of held water. Ice falls from the eaves.
The telephone rings and like a monk I chant to myself
the many names of whatever gods I can find
in the temple bells of the hidden voices. I know
under the rotting snow there are small flowers
like insistent girls giggling in narrow attic beds,
and yes,
I know the flowers are not girls, just as
I know that what resemblance there is is lost
in the ordinary crying we think we will release
and don't. The little furred pods of the wysteria crack open
dropping the mirrors from their blue hands.
Ice slides from the roof and for a moment the air is torn.
I think if I wasn't afraid
I could play back the sounds of my friends,
the measure of their voices
almost steady in the hard wind out of the north.
Little flawed bells.
If I didn't hear them I could almost listen.

John Clement Ball

Framing the American Abroad

A Comparative Study of Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* and Janet Frame's *The Carpathians*

It is the paradox of Columbus' perceptual moment that it cannot end. The moment of the discovery of America continues. Its reenactment becomes our terrifying test of greatness; we demand to hear again and always the cry into mystery, into an opening. We demand, of the risking eye, new geographies. And the search that was once the test of sailor and horse and canoe is now the test of the poet. KROETSCH "MOMENT," 25

When Christopher Columbus "discovered" America he was, like other explorers, acting as the agent of a higher authority that remained nominally in control from a relatively stationary position — at home on the throne, at the centre of imperial power. Once he set sail from that imperial centre, however, Columbus himself was the one really in charge: no higher human authority was present to direct or curtail his actions, or to prevent him from making one of the most significant and far-reaching errors in Western history. When Columbus began treating the Americas as Asia, he was unknowingly subverting the very project he had been authorized to undertake. His freedom to do so demonstrates an unpredictable dynamic that straddles the gaps of geography and power established by any act of imperial exploration. There is potentially a big discrepancy between the agent-explorer's actions faced with a concrete object of discovery and the authorizing mandate from home that frames his journey. As middleman, the agent-explorer subdivides the familiar colonial gap — between imperial oppressor and the peoples and places over whom it exercises its self-appointed power — into two gaps. Versions of those two gaps — between the imperial project's two locuses of power, and between the agent-explorer and what he encounters — appear as textual dislocations and narrative gulfs in two quest novels from former settler colonies: Robert

Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* (1973) and Janet Frame's *The Carpathians* (1988).

The Kroetsch novel has an explicit Columbus intertext. Its protagonist, Jeremy Sadness, is an American graduate student from Manhattan sent by his supervisor, Mark Madham, on a journey to fulfill his "deep American need to seek out the frontier" (5). Jeremy's thesis, which he is perpetually unable to begin, let alone finish, has, as one of its false starts, the following first sentence: "Christopher Columbus, not knowing that he had not come to the Indies, named the inhabitants of that new world—" (21). And there it ends — or doesn't. One of the titles he tries out is "The Columbus Quest: The Dream, the Journey, the Surprise" (62). Like Columbus, Jeremy has a dream — of the frontier of his imagination, and of himself as Grey Owl — he makes a journey — to the small Alberta town of Notikeewin — and is surprised — repeatedly. His quest is deconstructed in the surreal, carnivalesque world of the prairies during a winter festival, a world where social roles are exchanged and identities become so blurred that Jeremy can be unnamed — stripped of his previous identity — and renamed into a multiplicity of new identities that include buffalo, Roger Dorck the Winter King, and Indian. He can dream the dreams of a mute aboriginal woman. He can subvert his original mission, to attend a job interview arranged by his supervisor, simply by failing to show up for his appointment. Like Isabella and Ferdinand back in Spain, Madham is unable to control the activities of his agent-explorer. Or is he? Just as Columbus's voyage was framed by the imperial project of which it was a part, Jeremy's adventures as narrative are framed and ultimately controlled by Madham, who, from his fixed position in Binghamton, New York, is the stationary centre of power over this text. To Madham at the time of framing, as to us, Jeremy exists only as text, as narrative. Mádham transcribes, edits and critiques the tapes on which Jeremy reports his experiences. As motivating cause of Jeremy's journey, and as intrusive framing narrator, Madham retains control over his apparently out-of-control agent by reconstituting Jeremy's actions as a U.S.-based narrative. In this late twentieth-century recasting of the Columbus quest, the neo-imperial centre of power has become what 500 years ago was the object of discovery: America.

The inclusion of a U.S.-based framing narrator is just one of many intriguing correspondences between *Gone Indian* and *The Carpathians*. Both novels follow the travels of a "child of Manhattan" (*Gone Indian*, 5) to a fictional town in, respectively, Alberta and New Zealand's North Island.

The town's names, Notikeewin and Puamahara, suggest aboriginal languages, and both Kroetsch and Frame use aboriginal history and experience as touchstones for the local, and for their explorations of such themes as the reconstitution of language, the appropriation of narrative point of view, and the destabilization of the subject. But while both novels concern quests for knowledge of the other, the unknown, generically they are cast as very different kinds of story: *Gone Indian* as a parody of the picaresque western with the roaming cowboy hero, and *The Carpathians* as suburban anti-pastoral with a female protagonist and a domestic setting.

In Janet Frame's layered metafiction, narrative frames blur ontological boundaries both from inside and outside the story, multiplying narrative points of view even more than Kroetsch's book does. Frame's questing protagonist, Mattina Brecon, is manipulated *as* text first by Dinny Wheatstone, the "imposter novelist" of Kowhai Street, who provides a typescript for Mattina to read which describes, in the past tense, Mattina's actions over the next several weeks. Because the typescript substitutes for the events it describes — because, as Susan Ash explains, "It is Mattina's process of reading the typescript which makes these events actual or 'real'" (2) — the novel here places signifier and signified in an overlapping relation that renders them indistinguishable. Another character *in* the text, Mattina's son John Henry, is revealed in opening and closing notes as the text's *Ur*-narrator, creator *of* "this, my second novel," in which "The characters and happenings ... are all invented and bear no relation to actual persons living or dead" (7). Claiming at the end that his mother and father died when he was seven, John Henry the framer fractures the expected correspondence to himself as a character, Mattina's son John Henry who writes *his* second novel within the pages of the framer John Henry's fictional creation. And the concluding note's teasing remark that "perhaps the town of Puamahara, which I in my turn visited, never existed" (196) is simply the final spin on a destruction of "the painful opposites and contradictions of everyday life" (114) that is Frame's procedure and her theme. Frame conflates experience and imagination, text and event, envisaging a universe in which "it seemed that lost became found, death became life, all the anguished opposites reverted to their partner in peace yet did not vanish: one united with the other" (114). And while John Henry's concluding remarks may, as Suzette Henke points out, permit a reading of 'his' novel as "a psychic strategy for coping with ... Oedipal loss" (36), the novel that Janet Frame has written

challenges, through its narratorial free play, the reader's attempt to pin down an interpretation based on the apparent dictates of any one of its multiple frames. The narrative layering creates too many ambiguous ironies and deferrals of meaning. So even though John Henry, the text's apparent framer of last recourse, is set up like Mark Madham as a U.S.-based controlling voice, the model of neo-imperial invasion and exploration seems here to be built on too destabilized a foundation to embrace without more detailed comparison of the concerns and strategies of the two novels. Not least among the destabilizing factors is, of course, the irony that while both novels posit U.S.-based framers as the controllers of discourse, both are post-colonial fictions created and controlled by their real framers of last recourse, the Canadian Robert Kroetsch and the New Zealander Janet Frame.

Kroetsch's interest in Columbus revolves around "the perceptual moment" in which the explorer misrecognized and misnamed the "Indians" of the Americas. That moment of misnaming is paradigmatic of a process of imperial appropriation through textual authority that has become, for Kroetsch, the chief burden and challenge of the New World writer. In his essay, "Unhiding the Hidden," he writes:

> At one time I considered it the task of the Canadian writer to give names to his experience, to be the namer. I now suspect that, on the contrary, it is his task to un-name.... The Canadian writer's particular predicament is that he works with a language, within a literature, that appears to be authentically his own, and not a borrowing. But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American. (43)

Gone Indian can be read as a fictional enactment of that process of unnaming. Jeremy's experience of the frontier turns him into the very opposite of the "integrated Being" that Madham struggles to remain: Jeremy's unnaming and renaming into multiple possibilities represents what Madham calls "the consequence of the northern prairies to human definition: the diffusion of personality into a complex of possibilities rather than a concluded self" (152). While the processes of unnaming and renaming occur throughout the novel, beginning from Jeremy's arrival at the airport, the central event is a literal stripping-down of identity symbolized by the discarding of his jacket and keys during the snowshoe race. At this point, language has also been discarded: misrecognized as an Indian after winning the race, Jeremy replies to questions and harassment with silence because "if

I had tried [speaking], it would have been a tongue I did not understand" (93). And even though as Indian, Jeremy is restricted by definition to the inauthentic imposter-status of his model, Grey Owl, this new identity nevertheless becomes an ennabling condition of imagination, allowing him to enter the dreams of the silent Indian woman, Mrs. Beaver. And along with the other identities that he collects along the way, it allows him to escape quite literally from the fixity of lived experience to the realm of imagined, multiple possibilities. Defying the control of his American framing narrator, he frustrates closure by disappearing without a trace, leaving Madham to speculate on various imagined ends. As Peter Thomas explains, Jeremy uses "trickster cunning" to "escape into ficticity and story" (78). Kroetsch dramatizes the post-colonial problematic of cultural inheritance and independence by locating textual authority in the neo-imperial centre and then undercutting that authority through liberating gestures within the story.

Simon During describes the initial encounter between whites and Maoris in New Zealand as a site of misrecognition and misnaming. Like Columbus misnaming the Indians, the Pakeha invaders misrecognized the locals as "cannibals," "savages"; they in turn were misrecognized by the Maori as "gnomes," "whales," and "floating islands." The words of pre-colonial Maori language, adjusting to new social realities, "began to lose their meaning until no consensus remains as to what certain words 'mean'" (41). Janet Frame, not unlike Kroetsch, centres her novel on an event that enacts "the natural destruction of known language" (Frame, 119). Portrayed as a quasi-science-fictional, Kafkaesque nightmare of unexplained and unexplainable occurrences, Frame's apocalypse, with its alphabets raining down like nuclear fallout and its transformation of ordinary New Zealanders into non-verbal, primal-screaming victims, is a more ambiguous, far less hopeful event that Kroetsch's liberation into possibilities. As Susan Ash points out, "*The Carpathians* narrates the collapse of language without attempting to symbolize its possible replacement" (1).

The differences between Kroetsch's and Frame's prospects for language are evident in their varying uses of the motif of writer's block to represent a failure of words. Kroetsch's Jeremy, despite years of unsuccessful attempts to write his thesis, never stops trying to begin, and his many aborted titles and first sentences become at least a catalogue of the possible. Mattina's husband Jake, struggling for thirty years to write his second novel, appears no further ahead at the end than at the beginning; his excuses and earnest

promises are the only verbal products related to his novel that we are shown. The fact that he has been writing journalism and essays seems almost unimportant to him, to his family and to Frame's novel in the mutual preoccupation with his failure to novelize — for in Frame's world imaginative fiction is a privileged discourse.

In the aftermath of the midnight rain and the collapse of language it brings about, the forces of destruction, silence and obliteration of memory appear to have triumphed. Frame evokes totalitarian paranoia in her descriptions of anonymous, androgynous figures dressed in white removing the residents of Kowhai Street in vans and putting their houses up for sale. The only voice available to speak for the new reality is the eerily evasive real estate agent Albion Cook, whose name combines Blake's England with Blake's contemporary and the Southern Hemisphere's nearest equivalent to Columbus, James Cook. Far from Kroetsch's themes of purgation and renewed authenticity, Frame appears to suggest a regression to a colonial state where tribal memory is under siege and "strangers" (as the Kowhai Street residents call themselves) become silenced victims scarcely remembered or mourned by their successors. The Gravity Star, Frame's astrophysical metaphor for perceptual sea-change, can become a liberating phenomenon only to those who are prepared to adapt to "the demolishing of logical thought, its replacement by new concepts starting at the root of thought" (119). For those wedded to the traditional binary oppositions of self and other, "here and there" (14), that supported the imperial projects, the failure to adjust to post-colonial necessities will have tragic consequences. It is one of Frame's bitter ironies that the motivation to "preserve the memory of Kowhai Street and its people" (165) comes not from New Zealanders, but from Mattina and her family, invaders from a neo-imperial power filling a perceived void with a necessary act of appropriation — appropriating story and point of view.

Nicholas Birns says that *The Carpathians*, "with its emphasis on time, loss, and continuity, is clearly Frame's most explicit effort at confronting New Zealand's cultural inheritance" (18). Recently New Zealand has made strides towards recuperation of the losses its aboriginals suffered in colonial history, but Mark Williams points out that this "understandable cultural wish" carries the risk of self-deception. If Maori culture is embraced by the Pakeha as no more than "a decorative sign of difference," its use as a sign of distinctiveness from European culture remains ironically structured on a

European dualism that preserves "the separation of head and heart, reason and feeling" (18-19). In Puamahara, this reclamation takes place in both Pakeha and Maori communities, represented by a learning or relearning of Maori language that means different things in the two contexts. Madge McMurtrie's Pakeha grandneice Sharon, learning Maori at school, points to an absorption of the previously denied "other" into the dominant culture; this activity can be viewed either liberally as progress or territorially as appropriation. On the other hand Hene Hanuere, the Maori shopkeeper, tells Mattina wistfully that "it's not so easy" relearning Maori at her age because "it's been away so long":

> "We're all changing back now. It's strange, you know. Like someone you turned out of your house years ago, and now they've come home and you're shy, and ashamed of having turned them out and you have to get to know them all over again and you're scared in case you make a mistake in front of the young ones, for the youngest ones know it all. You know, it's been lonely without our language. People from overseas sometimes understand this more than those living here." (26)

The Maori children, who are further away temporally from the suppressed past, can get psychologically closer to it because their elders have "been brought up Pakeha" (26). This generation gap creates an uneasy sense of fracture and discontinuity between past reality and whatever form its present resurrection and transformation will take, casting a shadow over the good intentions of the recuperative project.

The aboriginal contexts provide both Frame and Kroetsch with tangible historical models for the post-colonial theme of the decimation of language and the systems of thought that rely on language. In the historical contexts of Cook and Columbus and their successors, that destruction was part of an incipient colonizing project of subjection and assimilation. In the contemporary context, a parallel process, whether it is called "unnaming" or "the natural destruction of known language," carries the potential of liberation from colonial mentalities. And in a social climate that stresses revaluation and recuperation of aboriginal cultural losses, these narratives of deferred, slippery referentiality and unrealistic events are able to sink strong roots into the ground of real political projects. In fact, Kroetsch's novel, if not exactly prophetic of the current Canadian climate of increased sympathy to aboriginal perspectives, certainly finds itself open to interpretations that foreground its conceptions of "Indian" and language

now more clearly than might have been possible in 1973. Jeremy is mistaken for an Indian by his fellow whites and later finds his dreams infiltrated by a Blackfoot tribal memory. In one dream he becomes Poundmaker's warrior, an Indian subject, and absorbs the memory of the other into his own through an act of imagination. As Buffalo Man making love to Buffalo Woman, he gains a stake in the land as the Indians knew it — in the ecosystem that white intervention disrupted. And his role as "listener" is, for Mrs. Beaver, a victory; he is the white man empathizing with and taking responsibility for a past in which his racial forebears were the other, the enemy. By reclaiming her lost past through *his* imagination, she helps him internalize a new point of view and a new language, an act made possible by his willingness to "uninvent" himself — to enter other identities and reject the language that articulates "the systems that threaten to define [him]" (Kroetsch "Unhiding," 43-44).

But if there are positive transformations possible in these encounters of white with aboriginal, both authors remain conscious of the delusions enabled by insincere or inauthentic appropriation. The failure of perception that causes Kowhai Street's tragedy is demonstrated in part by the residents' isolating attitudes and the provincialism that locates quality elsewhere — in the "centres" of Auckland, England, or America. But it is symbolized by the cynicism that surrounds the town's "rediscovery" of the Maori legend of the Memory Flower. Distracted by the perceived bright lights of other places or times, residents like the Shannons, Dorothy Townsend and Hercus Millow are inclined to view the Memory Flower as of no more significance than any other "tourist promotion" (21), a clever way to give visitors "a feeling that when they're in Puamahara they've arrived somewhere" (39). And perhaps no more serious attitude is deserved by the lonely, shabbily-maintained kitsch sculpture that represents the Memory Flower. Perhaps the local cynicism is simply a reflection of the attitude behind its government-sponsored rediscovery in the first place. It is only the outsider Mattina who takes the legend's ramifications seriously; for the locals it is a missed opportunity. As she says:

> "I thought ... that I'd find the Memory Flower, the land memory growing in the air, so to speak, with everyone certain as could be of the knowledge of the programme of time, learning the language of the memory, like the computer language, to include the geography, history, creating the future.... It sounds crazy, I guess. It's the idea you get about other places. But I do feel that having the memory at hand, even if it is buried in legend, is having access to a rare treasure. Such

> memories are being lost rapidly and everywhere we are trying to find them, to revive them. Puamahara in the Maharawhenua could be the place for pilgrims (I guess I'm a pilgrim) to be healed of their separation from the Memory Flower." (60-1)

It is because of this failure that the destruction visited upon the Kowhai Street residents does not result in the kind of renewal that Kroetsch's novel imagines.

However, there are difficulties with Kroetsch's use of aboriginal materials, too. When Jeremy "dreamed always a far interior that he might in the flesh inhabit," his model was Grey Owl; he tells the Customs agent on arrival in Edmonton that he wants to "become" Grey Owl (5-6). As a white man perhaps his choice is unavoidable, but his desire to become an imitation of Indian rather than the thing itself becomes problematic when he later declares Grey Owl "the truest Indian of them all" (80) because he refused to kill animals. Here Jeremy seems to be using white stereotypes of Indian identity and philosophy — simplified notions based on the interconnectedness of human and animal realms — to render the inauthentic white version of Indian "truer" than the authentic Indian experience, which does involve killing. Clearly there are dangers of misrecognition and misnaming in the present-day encounter of aboriginals and whites as profound as those of Columbus and Cook. *Gone Indian* also undercuts its own optimistic themes by locating the desired unnaming and renewal in a farcical narrative acted out by an often passive, impressionable and erratic character, a renegade American trickster whose enactment of a necessary process takes place with a cavalier, self-centred individualism that uses but does not include the members of the Canadian community in which it takes place.

The duality of individual and community is one that Kroetsch has articulated in his criticism. Explaining that "Behind the multiplying theories of Canadian literature is always the pattern of equally matched opposites," he associates "Self: Community" with "Energy: Stasis" (Kroetsch and Bessai, 215). In another essay he establishes some related dualities:

> The basic grammatical pair in the story-line (the energy-line) of prairie fiction is house: horse. To be on a horse is to move: motion into distance. To be in a house is to be fixed: a centering unto stasis. Horse is masculine. House is feminine. Horse: house. Masculine: feminine. On: in. Motion: stasis. ("Fear of Women," 76)

Kroetsch's paradigms are apt to a comparison of *Gone Indian* and *The Carpathians*. Where the Kroetsch novel privileges the "masculine" principles of motion, energy and the individual quest, including sexual *con*quest, Frame's Mattina pursues her antipodean quest through a largely static domesticity, rarely leaving Kowhai Street, undergoing even such dislocating experiences as the reading of Dinny's typescript and the trauma of the midnight rain within the walls of her temporary home. The people Mattina observes, the Kowhai Street residents sheltered in their homes, also seem static compared to the constant motion of Kroetsch's characters. The act of observation rarely transcends the fixed binaries of observer-observed, self-other, and it is tempting to interpret the failure that Frame's novel seems to imply as related to an absent element of the carnivalesque. In his essay "Carnival and Violence," Kroetsch borrows Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque to describe a liberating state of being located on the frontier, one in which normally fixed identities and hierarchical social roles are in a fluid state of becoming, of mutation, transformation and exchange. While the spirit of the carnivalesque is productive in Kroetsch's novel, it is absent from Frame's more pessimistic vision.

And while Mattina's quest is an individual one, she is not the subject of *The Carpathians* in the way that Jeremy is of *Gone Indian*. The residents of Kowhai Street — a group that fails to achieve its potential as a community — are the narrative's main interest. Mattina is important primarily as a frame: as the observer and interpreter of the community, and as preserver of its story as memory. Ultimately, of course, even these framing roles are superceded by John Henry, the largest framer within the text, just as Jeremy as subject is controlled by Madham, and his subjectivity threatened by Madham's attempts to assert himself as subject.

It is more important to the post-colonial visions of both *Gone Indian* and *The Carpathians* that their superceding narrative frame-narrators are American than it is that their central characters — the agent-explorers Jeremy and Mattina — are American. The explorers, despite their limitations, do strive for an open-minded and positive embracing of the requirements of place; they respond and adapt to their destinations rather than imposing themselves. Once the explorer has left the "centre" of neo-imperial power — New York — for the "margin" — Puamahara or Notikeewin — she or he becomes implicated in the place itself, in its stories and realities, just as Cook and Columbus did. But if the final mediating power — the

framer, Madham or John Henry — remains located at the centre, in a place with expansive global "cultural authority" (Said, 291), a gap of narrative control will be constructed that sustains the colonial tensions of speaking versus being spoken for. As long as this gap exists, there will be competing claims on authorship and authority. What power the "margin" has to tell its own stories will be overshadowed by a stronger interpretive power located elsewhere, just as the political authorization for Columbus and Cook's journeys remained at the centre. Kroetsch, by making Madham such an articulate spokesman for his own egotism and delusions, offers more hope for dismissing the centre's claims for authority than Frame does; her John Henry as *Ur*-narrator is so minimally presented as to be almost invisible. An important but uncomfortable post-colonial problematic emerges from these two novels: they deliberately compromise their own status as locally framed and authorized texts by deferring narrative authority *in* the text to an "other" located at the centre of global cultural imperialism.

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Steven Heighton

Elegy, Apollo 1

Du mußt dein Leben andern

As the cockpit filled with fire it must have seemed
the rockets were erupting backwards, as if to drive
the ship's alloys back down into ore-crammed
veins underground, the astronauts in their cave

of circuitry and radium, shot drifting to the north
as atoms, ash for gravity and the draughts
to reconcile with their home country, earth.
Last night, that nightmare you have where jets

like reckless sons are shuttling from the skies
skywriting this: *you have to. Change. Du mußt.*
The dashboard's face of glowing dials and gauges

like the calm, measured mask of Apollo, fused
to madness, melts, its data burning with the eyes
of tigers starving in tin-can cages.

Shari Andrews

Instructions to the Intending Emigrant

(after reading N.B. as a Home For Emigrants, J.V. Ellis, 1860; N.B. Information for Intending Settlers, Hon. Michael Adams Surveyor General, 1879; and Facts for the Information of Intending Emigrants, Samuel Watts, 1870.)

To see the light of day
you must go into the wilderness
"between 45 degrees and 48 degrees
20' North latitude and between
64 degrees and 67 degrees
30' west longitude" (1)
where the years are piled in layers;
rich robes of fallen leaves,
skin covering the dark stones
and the bones left lying
where their last breath was drawn.

The earth rises here as high
as eight hundred feet; ocean waves
that fall away suddenly,
a rug pulled out from under you.
The tall trees: maple, birch, fir and spruce
blot out the sun. And birds
swoop and call. Both wings
and branches are thick hairs on a head.
Keep in mind, the frost
that cuts to the bone, lasts only
two or three days at a time,
and is a sword slicing clay and loam,
ploughing up the soil even as you sleep.

Take with you only:
"a cross-cut saw
a one inch augur
a one-and-one-half inch augur
a hammer or hatchet
a peevy
1 tin bake-oven

2 tin pails
cups and plates
a frying pan
knives, forks and spoons. "(2)
Above all these, have in your possession:
"one axe and one grub hoe. (3)

Do not be afraid,
for these are your survival, your comfort
when you lose your way,
when the stars move with you
and the trees have legs.
You will be honed by your own sweat;
your hair damp and sticking to your forehead,
the back of your neck,
salt from your lips on your tongue

as you lean into this work
as into love. Even the wooden handle,
cupped in your curled fingers,
begins to remind you of your wife's cheekbone
as you trace it in the dark.

You must become uncivilized
in order to hack out a space for yourself.
To finally scoop a piece of it
into the palm of your hand,
letting it trickle through your spread fingers,
as you walk upright, at last.

Stephanie Bolster

Three Poems

"We left behind one by one/.../...our civilized/distinctions/and entered a large darkness./It was our own/ignorance we entered."

Margaret Atwood, "Further Arrivals," *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*

Alice's Adventures under Ground

He titled it this before it was published, when it was only
a single hand-lettered volume drawn
with his own versions of Alice. He dutifully capitalized
Alice, her proper name; Adventures, because they were
after all; Ground, the place on which
all stood.

But under unseen, secret—
underneath, under-wraps—and wild as undergrowth.

(Now it conjures Alice smuggled North
through the underground railroad; coiffed and travelling
the Paris Metro; passing out illicit leaflets
behind the Iron Curtain.)

As one studied in the architecture
of rabbit burrows, the universal
truths expressed in numerals,
he no doubt knew this word was key.
Opener of doors to all prepositions,
bestower of subtext, secret pass
to every room in hidden places. He could not
leave it out or he'd lose the sense (Alice's Adventures
Ground
suggesting gritty bits of exploration, hard to swallow)
but neither could he hand it to her complete
with capital authority, as if it were
a concept already taught. Instead he plunked her

in, let her learn it for herself,
take it in like a mouthful of magic
cupcake or mushroom. Unlearn above-ground ignorance,

innocence. This a preparation for the later
lesson of through; an adjustment of her eyes

for the journey further into dark & largeness,
when she would have to lift heavier
cloaks of logic, peer through soot obscurity,
navigate deeper holes, to find the true story. Even her own
truth
elusive: a sliver lodged under her skull.

In which alice visits pacific rim national park

She does not know how to read this untended garden.
Her hands fondle fern, salal, driftwood,
seeking some texture reminiscent of parchment;
hoping for roses, her nose finds only ocean.
There is too much sand
& too few people, only an agelessness
more ancient than the oldest buildings
at home. She resents the algaed stones
which make her sip, soil her pinafore.
This is not the sort of water in which one could meander
in a storied boat. She thinks
if this place has any stories they would not be spoken
in her tongue.

In Tofino she sheds tears at breakfast,
the marmalade has too little peel
& the potatoes too many spices.
At least here there are buildings, a post office
from which she might write letters home, except
she cannot remember what words she used there,
her only speech now a fluttering of hands
like gulls' wings.

She finds small comfort only in the road
that twists its sinuous way, sometimes within view of water.
It moves like a familiar river,
the rowing-place of stories back in Oxford.
Motor vehicles pass, rippling

the wind as fishes stir water. Voices sometimes shout greeting
but they're gone too quick, she cannot catch
a whiff of perfume, cannot assess
Sunday finery & parasols.
Though there is still too much green
for her liking, even that fear is familiar—
once she dreamt of falling
from the rowboat, drowning in the mess of green,
muddled reflections,
& never being found as the don's story flowed on.

Instead of a ramshackle shelter of driftwood on the beach
she empties her velvet purse for a room
beside that river of a road,
where the owner speaks kind words
in a familiar lilt, accepts
payment in £.s.d. In her own small room
she strokes the orange walls,
pulls drapes against green. Then turns a knob on a box
with a dusty screen, and hears regal notes, sees for an
instant
the distinction of an old white parliament;
the image mirrored, sky blue as that river,
home, the blessed word
spelled out before her, now
melting on her tongue: THAMES.

Alice's socks

are plain white in Wonderland
but striped in Through the Looking Glass
because bi-colours went well with chess, and besides
she was six months older now,
knew something of divisions
between colours
and worlds;

knew something
of bars.

Christopher Patton

river parts

1.

your mouth of salt

laps against the seawall,
grey tongues
the size of waves

(waves made of smaller waves)

tongues
the size of molecules.

a woman stands
staring at you through the drizzle,
wrapped in a red
scarf, heart

beating, lungs opening,
mouth forming
vowels shaped like flowers

2.

the tailbone of rock
is a dry place.

so. what makes you?

the beads that cluster
on the sharp mountain grass
dribble
along crevices

but are not enough

3.

river

or a dream of a river?

4.

this delta could be your hair
tangled with muck

or your crooked and supple fingers
combing the silt
for jewels, the atoms

of nitrogen

to feed your petalled children

5.

your foam eyes, swept
along by the current,
always
look skyward

where is he, my lover?

not in the jetplane that rumbles

not in the crow that spins away

there is his cloud beard,
swept and blown,
but where the mouth behind?

6.

the woman returns
in her drizzle and her red scarf
to a hollow house
by the sea

(so. we are not made
of ourselves but
collect,
like rain in a trough,
to be drunk.)

the sea still turns
against
the seawall

mouth of salt

mouth of flowers

David Lucking

"And Strange Speech is in Your Mouth"

Language and Alienation in Laurence's *This Side Jordan*

In a brief retrospect of her writing career published in 1969, Margaret Laurence declares that her African works were produced by "an outsider who experienced a seven years' love affair with a continent."[1] The key word here is "outsider," a term which — like the phrase "heart of a stranger" encountered in other writings — serves to define both Laurence's authorial stance and the narrative technique she found most congenial during this phase in her artistic development. Not only did Laurence necessarily deal with African themes from the external point of view of the foreigner, but she introjected the relation between herself and the world she was describing into the fabric of her texts, focussing on characters who were themselves estranged in some crucial respect from their cultural background. This tendency is very much in evidence in *This Side Jordan*, in which an ironic parallel emerges between dislocated representatives of the black and white communities living side by side in the Ghana of the 1950s. Despite their different ethnic and cultural affiliations, the two personages who occupy the centre of the stage, and the antagonism between whom generates much of the emotional tension of the novel, can in neither case be considered truly typical of the societies from which they derive. Nathaniel Amegbe, the idealistic but largely ineffectual schoolteacher who aspires to contribute to the emergence of a new society in Ghana, and Johnnie Kestoe, the ruthlessly pragmatic opportunist who is concerned only to exploit the African continent for what it is worth, become paradoxical doubles for one another precisely because, in an important sense, they do not really belong to their own worlds.

If, as is arguably the case, the most important constitutive element of culture is language, then it is perhaps to be expected that the kind of alienation which Laurence is intent on exploring in its psychological and social aspects will be reflected within the linguistic domain as well. As I hope to show in the course of the following discussion of the novel, some of the major thematic concerns of *This Side Jordan* — the phenomenon of deracination, the nature of personal identity, the relation between Self and Other — are given figurative embodiment in a dense allusive pattern woven around references to language, voices, and speech. What is ultimately implied by the existence of such a pattern, however, is more than a vague symbolic correspondence alone. The predicaments in which the male protagonists of the novel find themselves, which are assimilated to one another inasmuch as they resolve in both cases into problems of identity, are in a very real sense, and not only metaphorically, linked with the ambiguity of these characters' relation with the "languages" through which they are both existentially and culturally constituted. Most immediately, perhaps, the tension between self and language manifests itself in the rift that can open up between the individual's self-conception on the one hand, and the personal name through which his identity is denoted in the public world on the other. Both Nathaniel Amegbe and Johnnie Kestoe are, in their different ways, deeply preoccupied with the status of their names and with their function as instruments of self-definition, and it would perhaps not be too much of an exaggeration to suggest that it is precisely this anxiety which lies at the origin of their conduct.

Nathaniel is described from the outset as being divided between two realities, variously represented as past and future, Forest and City, tribe and nation. The son of a village drummer, he has been educated in a Christian mission school and converted to the white man's religion, although he has never been able wholly to repudiate the gods of his father. Because "he had never been brave enough to burn either Nyame's Tree or the Nazarene's Cross,"[2] both gods contend for dominion over his soul, haunting his dreams and his daytime fantasies, paralyzing him during the critical moments of his life. The claims of these rival deities seem equally compelling and equally exclusive, each incapable of leaving the least margin for the other. The consequence for Nathaniel is that he is afflicted by a kind of moral and spiritual schizophrenia, so that no unequivocally clear path of thought or conduct ever lies open to him. "Must a man always betray one god or the other?" he asks himself at one point: "Both gods have fought over me, and

sometimes it seems that both have lost, sometimes that both have won and I am the unwilling bondsman of two masters" (113).

This schismatic tendency of thought penetrates every aspect of Nathaniel's existence.[3] He teaches a course in the history of African civilizations, believing ardently that "there must be pride and roots" (22), but at the same time he broods obsessively over the barbarism of the past, and is adamant that his wife should avail herself of the resources of a modern hospital when she gives birth to their child. Nathaniel's position with respect to the people among whom he lives in the city is no less ambivalent: "Nathaniel was part of them, and yet apart. . . . He was educated, but he was not so much educated that he had left them far behind" (45). Nathaniel conceives his situation, even within what is ostensibly his own country, as one of exile. "You have forgotten your own land", he castigates himself: "You live in the city of strangers, and your god is the god of strangers, and strange speech is in your mouth, and you have no home" (104). It is Nathaniel's uncle who diagnoses the implications of this marginal status for his identity as a man:

> "You are young," his uncle said. "Some day you will know where you belong."
>
> Nathaniel grinned, and bitterness welled up in him.
>
> "I belong between yesterday and today."
>
> Adjei Boateng smiled also.
>
> "But that is nowhere."
>
> "I know," Nathaniel replied. "Yes, I know." (106-7)

The only way that Nathaniel can make sense of his experience is in terms of the metaphor adumbrated in the title of the novel: that of Israel in the desert, released from thralldom to Egypt but not yet admitted to the Promised Land. The symbolism becomes overt during a prayer meeting which is described in brilliantly evocative detail towards the end of the novel (240-48), but even at the subconscious level Nathaniel tries repeatedly to reconcile the contradictory aspects of his background within the framework of this metaphor, as when he dreams for instance of Jesus crossing the river Jordan in the ceremonial apparel of an Ashanti king (76-7).

Nathaniel is by no means alone in his dilemma. Of the boys in the Futura Academy who are unsuccessful in government examinations and so unable to embark upon any productive career it is said that "the past was dead for them, but the future could never be realized" (64). Nor are even the English exempt, despite the mask of superiority and self-

possession they assume for the benefit of the local population. The socially accomplished but professionally inept products of the British public school system, disparagingly described as the "relics of a dead age" (123), are exemplified as a category by the urbane and perennially inebriated Bedford, whose "world was dead, and he did not know the language or currency of the new. Nobody wanted gentlemen nowadays" (124). If Nathaniel remembers his childhood haunts as "that was Eden, a long time ago" (167), there is something even more pathetically Arcadian in the British community's nostalgic attachment to the expatriates' club where "the exiles of three generations had met... to drink and to mourn the lost island home for which they longed but to which they did not want to return until they were old" (140). The deepest fear of the English is that of being obliged to return to an Eden which has altered irrevocably in their absence, and in which they no longer have a place. Virtually all the characters, then, white no less than black, are painfully racked between the old world and the new, psychologically anchored in a moribund tradition and propelled despite themselves towards a future that is conceived by turns as desolatingly vacant and overwhelmingly menacing.

The one member of the British expatriate community who seems to be essentially immune to this syndrome is Johnnie Kestoe, who is anxious to obliterate a past that for him is associated only with squalor and humiliation, and who is wholeheartedly oriented towards a future in which he hopes to achieve the personal success upon which his sense of self depends. If commitments divide in his case as well, the choice is not between the old and the new, or between one culture and another, but between the imperatives of friendship — or at least of group solidarity — and those of professional expedience. The crisis is precipitated by the decision of the London-based head office of the company for which he works to recruit local personnel for its African branch, although this entails making its English staff redundant. Having cynically gauged the climate of the times, and determined to wrest whatever personal advantage he can from the situation, Johnnie forges a secret alliance with the chief instigator of the company's Africanization policy, thereby betraying the colleagues who have confided their anxieties to him. This breach of trust has a number of unforeseen moral ramifications, and in the end even Nathaniel, who has taken upon himself the task of selecting suitable candidates for Johnnie's recruitment scheme, is induced to compromise his own ideal of disinterested public conduct by accepting a bribe.

Both Nathaniel and Johnnie are in some sense strangers in their own communities, and both experience psychological difficulties which are attributable in the final analysis to their resulting insecurity with respect to their own identities. One of the more effective means by which Laurence dramatizes the problem of identity and its relation to culture is in terms of the linguistic metaphor which, in its various manifestations, is a recurrent element in her fiction. Although the metaphor is elaborated most extensively in connection with Nathaniel's situation, its relevance to Johnnie's plight also becomes increasingly apparent as the novel proceeds. In a certain sense, the problem for both men reduces into one of names, because whereas Nathaniel is burdened with two names and wavers indecisively between the conflicting demands of each, the only name that Johnnie is ultimately prepared to acknowledge as his own is the name he is trying to make for himself.

Although Nathaniel "did not have the gift of spoken words — only of imagined words, when he made silent speeches to himself" (22), he inhabits a maelstrom of competing tongues, each associated with a particular world-view or mentality or cultural posture. Educated English is the language he has imbibed at the Christian mission school, and it is this that continues to be the language of his professional life, recognized by him to be the only viable idiom of the future even as he berates himself anxiously for the fact that "strange speech is in your mouth" (104). At home he speaks Twi, the language of his native village, to his wife and her relatives, while he resorts to pidgin English to communicate with people originating in parts of the country different from his own. During an altercation with Johnnie in a nightclub, he lapses defiantly into pidgin as he reverts atavistically and irrelevantly to the simplistic formulas of ethnic confrontation in order to vent frustrations which are not really racial in origin (222).

Nathaniel is responsive to other varieties of language as well, each urging their own perspectives, their own distinct patterns of thought and sensibility. His father is described as "he who knew the speech of the Ntumpane and the Fontomfrom, the sacred talking drums" (28), and although Nathaniel has forgotten much of this "drum language" he experiences acute discomfort when Europeans attempt to imitate it (152). Other ancestral voices have been awakened in him at his father's funeral, when "the keening voices entered into him, became his voice" (29), to the point that "his voice [became] more frenzied than the voice of the drums" (31). The different

languages with which he is conversant are at once circumscribed and circumscribing, meaning being exclusively determined by the particular idiom within which it is formulated. It is for this reason that when Nathaniel is talking to Johnnie's wife Miranda about the history of indigenous art he feels tongue-tied, for "there was too much to say. And so much that could never be said" (42).

It is frequently remarked in current critical discussion that identity and "selfhood" are not private constructs but constituted by a discourse which is itself a function of specific social circumstances.[4] The meditations of both Nathaniel and Johnnie indicate the degree to which their sense of self depends upon the language they use, and more specifically upon the names they are assigned within the framework of that language. But because Nathaniel and Johnnie are both, in their different ways, adrift in a sea of conflicting languages, the incompatibilities between which mirror the fluidity and instability of the social order they inhabit, their respective self-conceptions are correspondingly fragile and bereft of secure coordinates. The relation between identity, names, and the language which gives meaning to those names, though not identical in the case of each, is nonetheless comparable. Johnnie, whose belligerent self-assertiveness is the defensive strategy that has enabled him to survive a childhood blighted by poverty and trauma, is defiantly resolute in equating his identity exclusively with his name, and more specifically with the name he is trying to make for himself. In his reveries he ascribes an almost preternatural power to his own name:

> Magic symbols — a rune, a spell, a charm — the thing that made him different from any other man on earth. His name. John Kestoe. What proved identity more than a name? If you had a name, you must exist. I am identified; therefore, I am. (57)

While Nathaniel's relation to the world of names is problematic for somewhat different reasons, his reflections on the interdependency of names and identity are very much congruent with Johnnie's own:

> Nathaniel. That was his name. Before he went to the mission school, he had had an African name. He never thought of it now, even to himself. His name was Nathaniel. They had given him that name at the mission school.... And after they had given him a different name, they began to give him a different soul. (242)

Although Nathaniel has been given a new name, the old has not been entirely eradicated. "The new name took hold, and the new roots began to grow," we are told: "But the old roots never quite died, and the two became intertwined" (243). The two names correspond to two possible formulations

of his own identity, two self-conceptions, two souls, with the consequence that there are potentially devastating existential implications to the fact that "I was of both and I was of neither" (243).

The breaches of faith that both Nathaniel and Johnnie commit are given symbolic resonance, and at the same time partially assimilated to one another, through the identical metaphor of languages and voices. Nathaniel accepts the bribe because there are so many claims on his meagre resources, "so many voices" (192) to which he must attend. Because his every act is susceptible to divergent interpretations, depending on the particular language that is used to describe it, there exists for him no possibility of wholly unambiguous conduct. As is illustrated by the dilemma precipitated in him by the feud between the Togolander Yiamoo and the Twi-speaking Ankrah, in which he is torn between the claims of friendship and justice on the one side and of tribal affiliation on the other, what appears to be betrayal in one language can be construed with disconcerting facility as loyalty in another (109-14). Because meaning is inevitably constrained by the language used to formulate it, Nathaniel recognizes that any attempt to explain the reasons for his taking the bribe to an Englishman such as Johnnie would be as futile as "straining to make your voice heard across an ocean" (207).

Johnnie's motivations are entirely different, but to the extent that his actions, too, are determined by deep uncertainties regarding his identity — an identity which is inextricably bound up with language and with the "name" which that language accords to the individual — he too is the puppet of voices in and around himself. As Johnnie hovers irresolutely on the brink of betraying his English colleagues and their wives, his imagination evokes the desolate echoes of the "womenvoices" lamenting their situation (172), voices that are disturbingly reminiscent of the "girlvoice" of his dying mother (60).[5] Once the decisive step has been taken, "the dead voices were still. Now there was only his own voice, shouting inside him, shouting his identity" (174). Even if he has succeeded in silencing the voices of those whose trust he has violated, however, the position of duplicity to which he has committed himself continues to trouble him, to the degree that "his own voice sounded strange to his ears" (179). It is of course profoundly ironic that the voice through which he has sought to formulate his own identity, to establish a satisfactory name for himself, should itself become as alien as it is alienating.

The fact that Nathaniel and Johnnie are each obscurely attracted, despite the ideological reservations professed by the one and the outright repugnance

evinced by the other, to representatives of the opposing culture is another indication of their inner fragmentation. In Johnnie this attraction assumes a blatantly sexual form, for although he is scathingly dismissive of the Africans in general he is preoccupied to the point of obsession with the local women. For his own part, Nathaniel, while he is painfully conscious when in the company of white people of "the thousand years that parted them" (158), and in his imagination bitterly asks at one point "how many centuries' clotted blood lies between your people and mine?" (209), is also aware that the Europeans possess the apparatus of modernity that his own country must assemble if it is to survive in the twentieth century. He decries the history of imperialistic exploitation on the part of European powers, yet approaches Johnnie in the hope of securing positions for his students in an English firm that still remains in Africa as a tangible vestige of the colonial epoch.

The characters who, in their limited and largely ironic ways, function in the capacity of mediating agents between the contraposed worlds of Nathaniel and Johnnie are Johnnie's own wife Miranda and the African prostitute Emerald. The similarity between the names of the two women suggests that they might legitimately be perceived as the counterparts or mirror images of one another, although the parallel is not worked out with the kind of mechanical rigidity for which the novel as a whole has been criticized.[6] Miranda is drawn towards the Africans because she is fascinated by precisely those aspects of native culture and history which arouse Nathaniel's deepest misgivings. While there is no overtly sexual component to her relationship with Nathaniel, the ribald commentary inspired by the visit of the two people to the local market suggests that it might be open to this construction (155-56). In her own way Miranda, too, is susceptible to the allure of the Other, although this otherness is, as in the case of her husband's sexual fantasies, largely a projection of her own morbid imagination. Ironically, it is Miranda's casual forays across racial boundaries which inspires Johnnie with the idea that spells the ruin of their English friends, creates the conditions for Nathaniel's acceptance of a bribe, and precipitates the conflict between the two men.

The climax of the novel occurs when both of the male protagonists are compelled, in consequence of their confrontation with their counterparts on the other side of the racial divide, to recognize within themselves at least the germ of the faults that they have each been ascribing

exclusively to the other, and thus to take the first steps in the direction of personal authenticity. Nathaniel, who has discredited himself even in his own eyes over the incident of the bribe, encounters Johnnie in a nightclub and allows himself to be provoked into attacking him. When Johnnie threatens legal action, a colleague of Nathaniel tries to settle matters by offering him the services of the young prostitute who had been designated for Nathaniel himself. Nathaniel, whose thoughts are perpetually haunted by the long chronicle of slavery that has left an indelible scar upon the African mind, is painfully conscious of the irony inherent in the fact that in order to save himself from prison he has allowed a girl of his own race to be used to bribe to Kestoe into silence: "It seemed to Nathaniel that she was a human sacrifice. And he had allowed it. He had been relieved that there was someone who could be sacrificed" (226-27). Overwhelmed by this sudden glimpse of himself in the character of exploiter of his own people, Nathaniel is obliged to acknowledge his own latent complicity in the most savage crimes of history, as he realizes with disgust that "I have embraced what in my ancestors I despised" (227). His response to this discovery is to feel that like Esau "he had sold his birthright and now could not take up his inheritance. Independence was not for him?" (227). At this point he relinquishes all hopes for a future of which he feels abjectly unworthy, resolving to return to the village where "a man knows what to do, because he hears the voices of the dead, telling him" (227).

The complementary revelation to which Johnnie is subjected is triggered by his sexual encounter with the prostitute Emerald. His first sensation after finally satisfying his craving for an African woman is to feel that in acquiescing in the offer of the girl "he'd sold himself just as much" as she by exposing himself to ridicule in the eyes of the Africans (232). He has not only compromised his dignity, but demonstrated himself to be as susceptible to corrupting influences as he derides the Africans for being. This preoccupation with his own reputation begins, however, to give way to less egocentric concerns when he discovers that in the violence of his assault on her he has provoked a hemorrhage in the girl, who has undergone the sexual mutilation her society prescribes for women. The spectacle of blood evokes the memory of his mother, whom as a child he watched die in consequence of a self-inflicted abortion, and this in turn awakens in him the dormant sentiment of compassion. Significantly, in view of the role played by languages and voices not in bridging but in delimiting realms of meaning in

this novel, the possibility of mutual comprehension that begins at this point to open up asserts itself across linguistic barriers. The girl "began to speak in her own tongue, a low rhythmical keening sound. Her voice rose for an instant and then shattered into incommunicable anguish" (232). The awareness to which Johnnie attains as he listens to her is one that comprehends the dual aspects of the human situation — the irrevocable isolation to which every individual is condemned, on the one hand, and the universal humanity in which all individuals participate on the other:

> He knew nothing about her, but she no longer seemed anonymous to him. . . . He would never know [the details of her life]. He could not speak to her. They had no language in common.
>
> But it did not really matter who she specifically was. She was herself and no other. She was someone, a woman who belonged somewhere . . . (233)

This represents, in a sense, the culmination of the novel, at least as regards the English point of view. Johnnie externalizes his newfound awareness in a symbolic gesture — that of covering the girl's nakedness with the cloth he has earlier wrenched from her — which, however eloquent in itself, is pathetically inadequate to the magnitude of her suffering: "It was all he could do for her, and for himself" (234). The cloth betokens respect for the mystery of the Other, for the sanctity of the individual soul, but it is also in its way — like the hospital screen concealing the misery of Miranda later (262) — an emblem of division, the means by which the self is consigned to its own essential solitude. There are, moreover, distinctly ironical overtones to the restitution of the girl's private identity which is implicit in Johnnie's gesture. The cloth, green in colour, has been chosen for Emerald by her employers to accord with the sobriquet which they have imposed upon her because her own name is unpronounceable (220). If the name is a token of identity, as both Johnnie and Nathaniel believe it to be, then it would seem that the girl has been robbed of her identity together with her original name, and that in restoring the cloth which is the external correlative of her acquired name and her enforced professional identity Johnnie is merely setting the seal on her alienation.

Despite Nathaniel's insight into his own latent capacity for exploitation and betrayal, which exposes the spuriousness of the categorical distinction between oppressive white man and victimized black man which he has hitherto used to organize his experience, he proves incapable

in the end of proceeding any further than Johnnie himself along the road towards universal brotherhood. Though he becomes caught up in the euphoria of a prayer meeting that "provided for every man, every tongue" (241), and which seems to annihilate barriers of race and language in a millenarian vision of Jordan crossed and Jericho achieved, he is in the end thrown back once again on himself and on his own frustrations: "What was Jericho to him? What was Jordan to him?" (248). The parallel to Johnnie's epiphanic experience with the novice prostitute is, as Jane Leney points out,[7] Nathaniel's response to Miranda's suffering in the hospital where his child is born. Miranda has made friendly overtures to Nathaniel's wife and been repulsed, the failure of communication stemming partly from the fact that the two women speak different languages. For a while Nathaniel considers the possibility of repairing the slight: "He had only to speak to the white woman. Surely it would be easy to call out something . . . All he had to do was open his mouth and say the words" (262). In the end, however, he cannot bring himself to speak, despite the fact that he recognizes the common humanity linking Miranda and himself when he is seized by "the sudden knowledge that she could feel humiliation and anguish like himself" (263). At least as regards the possibilities of communication between different cultures, it would seem, the last word is silence.

The coda to the novel represents the author's endeavour, valiant if somewhat strained in its final effect, to dissipate the prevailing gloom of the vision that has emerged in the course of her work. Both Johnnie and Nathaniel become fathers, with all that this implies concerning the perpetuation of life and the possibilities that such perpetuation contains of moral and social regeneration. The fact that the two babies are born in the same hospital within hours of each other might also be construed in hopeful terms as portending future harmony between the races,[8] although it must be acknowledged that there is little else in the text to bear out such an interpretation. Johnnie puts the voices of the past to rest by naming his daughter after his mother, to whom both the expatriate wives and the prostitute Emerald have in their turn been distantly assimilated. At the same time, Nathaniel determines to sever himself decisively from the old world governed by ancestral voices, in order to commit himself without reservation to the new reality that is struggling to be born. The name with which he has been christened by the mission fathers is no longer conceived as an alien imposition or as a source of internal division, but as a positive token linking

him to the only reality with which he now feels he can identify: "I have a new chance and I have a new name and I live in a new land with a new name. And I cannot go back" (274).

In view of the crucial role played in *This Side Jordan* by names, by the languages of which names compose a part, and by the identities that names designate and help to constitute, it is significant that the book should conclude with yet another symbolically charged gesture of naming. In the penultimate scene of the novel Johnnie listens to the "ancient untranslatable voices" of the past contending with "another voice on the wind," that of the "new song" which is sweeping over the land (280). Just as Johnnie's choice of a name for his daughter symbolizes his reconciliation with the past, so by the same token does Nathaniel's decision to confer the name Joshua upon his son represent a sort of compact with the future. By investing the child with the name of Moses' successor, enjoining him at the same time to pass over the river which must for himself remain an untraversable barrier (281-82), Nathaniel is implicitly affirming his faith in the process of social and spiritual metamorphosis in which he can personally participate only in vicarious anticipation. But he is also doing something else, for if the authority of language as a medium of self-formulation has been relentlessly undercut in the course of the novel, then the improvised ceremony of name-giving with which the work concludes would seem to imply its triumphant rehabilitation. By vindicating the possibility of a language of selfhood that is at once both uncontaminated and uncontaminating, Nathaniel is giving practical expression to his newly won conviction that in spite of everything "my own speech is in my mouth" (275), and contributing in his own way to the emergence of the "new song" that Johnnie has earlier heard on the wind.

NOTES

[1] Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences". *Canadian Literature* 41 (1969), p. 11.

[2] Margaret Laurence, *This Side Jordan* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, rpt. 1989), p. 32. All further references to this novel are in this edition, and are identified by means of page references inserted parenthetically in the text.

[3] George Woodcock perceives Nathaniel as representative of "a bicameral mind in the process of detachment from the world of myth". Woodcock, Afterword to *This Side Jordan* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), p. 286.

[4] For an application of this kind of analysis to the female characters in Laurence's Manawaka cycle see Diana Brydon, "Silence, Voice and the Mirror: Margaret Laurence and Women", in Kristjana Gunnars (ed.), *Crossing the River: Essays in Honour of Margaret Laurence* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1988), pp. 183-203, and Christl Verduyn, "Language, Body and Identity in Margaret Laurence's *The Fire-Dwellers*", in Christl Verduyn (ed.), *Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation* (Peterborough, Ont.: Journal of Canadian Studies/Broadview press, 1988), pp. 128-40.

[5] His mother's last words have been "what am I going to do at all?" (60), of which Helen Cunningham's question "if we're sent home, what shall we do?" (124) is a distant echo.

[6] See for instance Clara Thomas's remarks concerning Laurence's "insistence on symmetry and balance in plot and character" in this novel in *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, rpt. 1988), p. 50.

[7] Jane Leney, "Prospero and Caliban in Laurence's African Fiction", *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 27 (1980), p. 73.

[8] For an interpretation in this vein see Patricia Morley, *Margaret Laurence: The Long Journey Home.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, rev. ed. 1991, p. 66.

Cam McAlpine

near Brandon, Manitoba

North, of the border: sucking in the prairie air—stoppt / at a fruit stand offering strawberries resh from the fields of BC: ($1.89/basket): succulent on this hot July day — the fruit-seller asking whereya from? . . . fresh from the fields of BC, have you ever wondered about the espistemological gap that is the border? — (she doesn't answer, just kind of stares — & I pause in savage wonder at the wetness of these berries, my home . . . biting softly into the biggest berry of them all, release its juices, let them trickle down my chin, mingle with the perspiration on my face — pondering still on the dilemma of a line/mind (a situated self) as regards the question above (cf. 'have you ever wondered . . .'—am I north or am I south (of what?) am I east/of west or am I west/of east of halfway in between or am I — being hustled on my way now / distracting to the paying customers — this terminology, I decide, only direction of movement / not location (dis-location) — the pale heart of the strawberry / spreads across parched throat . . . then, toss the green weed into the dust at the roadside & move / north.

Winnipeg, Manitoba

eastbound train / grey rail yard / Winnipeg / 1987

no land marks:

buildings & sky
blue frost melting
on black tar
railway ties

thinking of a yellow room in a hotel bar; remembering a friend I met here once — thinking of towering mountains / in the rain: reminded of a vast emptiness — thinking that the prairie sky in winter is like a mind:

self perpetuating:

crystalline:

Tom Wayman

Eye Mountains

The dead returned
have mountains
in their eyes
These dead watch the wind
know the reason
the aspen leaf shimmers
judge how well a crow
climbs up the thermals
hear what minnows listen to
as spring runoff
oozes into the water meadow
feel the stresses of the rocks
where one ridge leans away
The dead cherish blue-green puddles
on a dirt road
under a fresh sky
The dead
Eyes
Mountains

John Reibetanz

Wyeth

The eye trawls endless inlets,
picking a way over sheer
spurred outcrops and escarpments
that mark the coastal landscape
of a few millimetres
of a farmhouse wall, roughcast
in one of his canvases.

It is not Vermeer's seeing,
where paint baptizes objects
in light, sleeking surfaces
seamless as a newborn's cheek,
as if a Bauhaus God set
the polished ark of the world
gliding to eternity.

Here, light tracks fault lines, lays bare
pockmark, aura of spill, botched
resurfacing, defiles where
planed edges resist matching,
each timber's face an old man's
inexhaustibly distinct
logo of skews and wrinkles.

Unstable script: turn your back
and risk, on return, fresh dents
printing the untouched bucket,
the earth beneath it fresh-split
with watermarks. This baptism
scours off the world's finish
in spider-limbed crisscrossings.

And signs it with the only
immortality we know,
where tin or wood chronicles
our lives in indelible
legends of impact. Hallmarks:
the lamp stem logged with handling,
the desk that reads like a book.

His hand mistrusts the slippery
sheen of memory's varnish,
its airbrush-perfect circles,
and seeks more lasting purchase
an irreparable things.
That pail, struck, would ring and ring
far beyond the mind's hearing.

Keith Harrison

Patrick Lane
Barthesian Wrestler

"...I coughed for an hour, my chest feeling like the subject of a poem by Pat Lane...."
GEORGE BOWERING (64)

Why has Patrick Lane, a major Canadian poet, become a figure to be mocked allusively, to be dismissed psychoanalytically? For example, in reviewing Lane's *Mortal Remains* among the nominees for the 1991 Governor-General's Award for poetry in English, Cary Fagan (while acknowledging Lane as a previous winner) asserts he "shows us a wild frontier with frightening consistency" (C6). Although ambiguous, the reviewer's assertion seems directed less at the notion of a consistently frightening setting or subject for the book, more at the diagnosis of its author as obsessive, as writing out of repetition compulsion, from malady. In brief, through a predictability of theme Patrick Lane has become within the context of Canadian poetry nearly as familiar a persona as Irving Layton (passionate self-embrace) or Margaret Atwood (coolly ironic feminism), and reaction to Lane's persona (complicitous witness to violent suffering) *now precedes, often displaces, and even* replaces *a response to his words, lines, and books.* Lane's role has become that of Barthes's wrestler who

> presents man's suffering with all the amplification of tragic masks. The wrestler who suffers in a hold which is reputedly cruel (an arm-lock, a twisted leg) offers an excessive portrayal of Suffering; like a primitive Pietà, he exhibits for all to see his face, exaggeratedly contorted by an intolerable affliction. (Barthes 20)

A poem typefying Lane's art as it emerged in the sixties,[1] "Wild Horses," uses image, subject, theme, and tone in a way that through later recurrence would create his persona as simultaneous victim and victimizer:

Just to come once alone
to these wild horses
driving out of high Cascades,
raw legs heaving the hip-high snow.
Just once alone. Never to see
the men and their trucks.

Just once alone. Nothing moves
as the stallion with five free mares
rush into the guns. All dead.
Their eyes glaze with frost.
Ice bleeds in their nostrils
as the cable hauls them in.

Later, after the swearing
and the stamping of feet,
we ride down into Golden:

Quit bitchin.
It's a hard bloody life
and a long week
for three hundred bucks of meat.

That and the dull dead eyes
and the empty meadows. (*Sun* 52)

The wish that opens the poem, "Just to come once alone," repeats itself insistently—perhaps once too often—like a wish that can't come true: death is the only possible encounter between man and wild horses. Narrating the self-destructive slaughter of untamed animal life (analogous to the central incident in Arthur Miller's script for *The Misfits*, where men kill the last wild mustangs for dogfood), the speaker of Lane's poem recognizes an ambivalence of self isolating him from both the dead horses and the (apparently) unanguished men. The vivid image of "raw legs heaving the hip-high snow" registers an empathetic sense of cold and pain, and connects through alliteration to "high Cascades," which, as oxymoron, indicates an emotional descent. Lane's unobtrusive skill in using place names of British Columbia can also be seen in the phrase, "down into Golden," whose name fits both monetarily, "three hundred bucks," and ironically, "All dead"; Lane's use of a casual curse, "bloody," parallels this technique of maintaining a prosaic, naturalistic surface while subtextually establishing his theme of victimization. The murderous "trucks" and "cable" that technologically supersede the horses implicate the speaker, and specify a partial cause for "dull dead eyes" in *humans*.[2] For Lane, the Barthesian wrestler, "...Defeat is not a con-

ventional sign, abandoned as soon as it is understood; it is not an outcome, but quite the contrary, it is a duration..." (Barthes 22).

The much anthologized poem, "Mountain Oysters," is gathered in 1972 with "Wild Horses" in *The Sun has Begun to Eat the Mountain*, and likewise through animal imagery illustrates defeat as duration, but in finding linguistic form to express victimization through castration,[3] Lane now makes conspicuous use of rhetorical figures:

> The rams stood holding their pain,
> legs fluttering like blue hands
> of old tired men. (*Sun* 124)

The empathy accorded to the mutilated rams through simile and personification again involves complicity (and the figurative linkage deconstructs as "coercive," as inappropriate emotional appropriation), since the speaker "enjoyed...the deep-fried testicles"(124); nevertheless, having acknowledged—even *celebrated*—his guilt, the speaker moves beyond accessible definitions of hypocrisy, and, consequently, Lane, in the concluding lines quoted, "completely fills the eyes of the spectators with the intolerable spectacle of his powerlessness" (Barthes 16).

In Lane's next major selection of poetry, *Beware the Months of Fire* (1974), the reader as voyeur watches "the spectacle of suffering, ...an externalized image of torture" (Barthes 20). This book's repetitious, and relentless, focus on the pain created by human violence can be sketched easily. The opening poem, "The Bird," takes as its central image the dying of a bird because it has been caged; the second poem, "You Learn," likens the speaker to a breast-shot bird; the third, "My Father's House," through a variant on the children's rhyme, "Step on a crack,/you break your father's back" (*Beware* 3), expresses grief and guilt for a murdered father; the fourth poem, "Because I Never Learned," with "the fragile skull collapsed/under my hard bare heel" (4), images disturbingly the speaker's memory of killing of a kitten; the fifth poem, "Act of the Apostles," visualizes the growth of children as a mode of cannibalism; the sixth poem, "Last Night in Darkness," describes the burial of a pregnant cat that was burned in gasoline; the seventh, "Three Days After Crisis in Cuba," narrates the shooting of a crow, and so on. While individually many of these poems are shockingly intense, collectively they seem formulaic. In a review article, Christopher Levenson suggests that Lane's concentration "on brutality and ugliness may be...partial and...sentimental (because excessive)...." (279). Implicitly, the epigraph to *Beware the*

Months of Fire, taken from Céline's *Journey To the End of Night*, refutes such criticism:

> "The greatest defeat, in anything, is to forget, and above all to forget what it is that has smashed you, and to let yourself be smashed without ever realizing how thoroughly devilish men can be.... We must tell...everything that we have seen of man's viciousness...."

Six years later, in an explanatory note to *The Measure*, Lane paraphrases Céline's statement about the artist's responsibility to record human cruelty: "If there is a violence reflected among them [the poems] it is only because I care deeply for the many lives I have seen wasted uselessly" (back cover). Nevertheless, with such thematic predictability, Lane has begun to approximate the role of Barthes' wrestler whose function "is not to win; it is to go through the motions which are expected of him" (16).

However, Marilyn Bowering, in "Pine Boughs and Apple Trees; The Poetry of Patrick Lane," argues that there comes a significant affirmative shift in his art with *Unborn Things* (1975) because "the separation between self and object is blurred. The earth is not 'other.' (If you become one with place, you need not fear it.) The myth of the dying/resurrected god emerges as solution" (M. Bowering 30). Lane's title poem can be interpreted as exemplifying an atypical affirmation[4] in such lines as

> One with unborn things
> I will open my body to the earth
> and watch worms reach like pink roots
> as I turn slowly tongue to stone
> and speak of the beginning of seeds. (*Unborn* 7)

Yet, this same poem restricts—and maybe negates—optimistic readings of fulfilment and resurrection by including a dog that drowns and old people who "stumble into the jungle"; a single line, "and the child draws circles in the dust," implies the futility inherent in the cycle of birth and death.

A more representative poem from this period, one canonized by Margaret Atwood in her edition of *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, is "If," which, with brutal clarity, records female victimization:

> Like that dying woman in Mexico
> who fled her family by fucking a burro
> on a wooden stage in Tiajuana
> you are alone and I am drunk again
> on tequila, refusing to die,
> hearing the madness of the burro

as the woman wept in pain. You are
naked and I no longer want you.
If I could choose a last vision
it would be the dream of the knife,
the dream of the death of pain.
Put on your clothes.
I am obscene.
I am one of those who laughed
when the burro dropped her on the floor. (*NOBCV* 291)

Céline and Barthes converge here in Lane's reflexive narration of defeat. Like the wrestler—but *not* as mere *image* of pain—the woman within the poem "takes up the ancient myths of public Suffering and Humiliation: the cross and pillory. It is as if...[she] is crucified in broad daylight and in the sight of all" (Barthes 22). But the self-accusing speaker within the poem also is more than unhumiliated spectator—*as is the reader whose (inadvertently?) assaultive eye is placed on a voyeuristic continuum.* The poem itself in publicly drawing attention to Lane's self-defeat can be compared to

> [t]he gesture of the vanquished wrestler signifying to the world a defeat which, far from disguising, he emphasizes and holds like a pause in music, corresponds to the mask of antiquity meant to signify the tragic mode of the spectacle. In wrestling, as on the stage in antiquity, one is not ashamed of one's suffering, one knows how to cry, one has a liking for tears. (Barthes 16-17)

When "excessive portrayal of *Suffering*" (Barthes 20) lacks tragic form, and catharsis is impossible, does pathos become sentimentality?

Scenes of viciousness alternate with gently lyrical glimpses of potential intimacy in *Old Mother* (1982), especially in the China poems, such as "Lotus":

A lotus, pink as a child's mouth,
opens. The girl by the pond is so still
the strangers on the bridge do not see her
and do not hear as she carefully repeats
their words over and over under her breath. (Lane, OM 75)

The girl's nearly silent efforts to echo the speech of foreigners become—in Lane's metaphor of hopefulness—a "bridge" across silence and separateness: a muted, naive alternative to alienation and violence. However, elsewhere in the book, "All My Pretty Ones," ending with the slaughter of a barn-full of chickens with a double-bitted axe, conforms perfectly to Lane's established persona (even though the poem, itself, is seemingly derivative of Ondaatje's description of his protagonist in *The Collected Works of Billy the*

Kid shooting a barn-full of drunken rats). *Old Mother*, with the savage Monarch series at its core, leaves a dominant impression of Nature's irremediable and excessive cruelty. Again, Barthes's comments on wrestling offer illuminating parallels to Lane's practice and persona as a poet:

> Since Evil is the natural climate of wrestling, a fair fight has chiefly the value of being an exception. It surprises the aficionado, who greets it when he sees it as an anachronism and a rather sentimental throwback...; he feels suddenly moved at the sight of the general kindness of the world, but would probably die of boredom and indifference if wrestlers did not quickly return to the orgy of evil.... (24)

Winter (nominated for the Governor General's Award in 1991) brings together brief, bleak, blank moments enlivened only by "transgressions" (Lane, *W* 1). This reader knew "from the start" that like all of the "actions,...treacheries, cruelties and acts of cowardice" of the Barthesian wrestler, Lane would "not fail to measure up to the first image of ignobility he gave me; I can trust him to carry out intelligently and to the last detail all the gestures of a kind of amorphous baseness..." (Barthes 17). In "Winter 3," there are echoes of "Wild Horses" in the harsh "necessary" victimization of mammals:

> Surrounded by crystals
> he will peer down their breathing hole
> smelling the sweet simplicity of their mouths
> deep in the blue cavern where they sleep
> and then
> he will take his spear
> and thrust it through fold after fold of snow
> holding it there while they twist
> just below him in the cold. (3)

Another poem, "Winter 18," can be read as a conflation of "If" and "Lotus":

> Naked in the empty room
> the young girl offers herself. Such a forlorn gift,
> such hopeless dance; so incomplete
> with only innocence to offer. Her love, so awkward
> without wantonness: *transgression or transformation.*
> A simple defeat. (18)

In some ways, "Winter 6" is a yet more unsettling artifact because its opening reads like a parody of a Pat Lane poem:

> The guests have arrived at last. The old
> woman in rags who pushes a steel cage

> filled with her life, and the man with dogs,
> the two pit bulls who whine with eagerness
> at the end of their tethers. The young boy
> with the burns on his face and shoulders
> stands by the piano where the girl with no legs... (6)

The concluding stanza has "[t]he host...sitting in his study, staring/at a painting from the Ming Dynasty," thus shifting the poem from victims (and victimizers) to victimology from the perspective of a connoisseur: is this intended as literary autobiography, as self-criticism?

In "Estimates," a poem from *Mortal Remains* (also published in 1991), Lane seemingly takes as his subject someone reacting to his persona of violence:

> Did you ever kill anybody? the woman who was driving
> asked. (47)

It is precisely at this juncture that Lane must internalize his exterior persona, and thus distortedly react to "the image of passion, not passion itself" (Barthes 19). In poems like "Father" and "Mother," Lane voices his sense of artistic failure, "Each time I try to create you I fall into intricate lies" (20), and later lines (e.g.,"a world of green blood") seem self-consciously "poetical." In *Mortal Remains*, where he seeks to understand his bitter, destructive familial past in relation to his present self, Lane's language wavers; "as in the theatre, one [wrestler or poet] fails to put the part across as much by an excess of sincerity as by an excess of formalism" (Barthes 21).

But where Lane *differs* utterly from the Barthesian wrestler, and what spurs on his most compelling poems, is an insistent emotion: suffering is unintelligible. His best words, lines, and books induce strong emotive response through the clarity and cruelty of that poetic insistence—and the reader suppresses the epistemological fear that the poet's persona in its textual superimposition must necessarily occlude any directly apprehended knowledge of the poem as a pure object. In both the creation and the reception of his works Lane can, at times, be defeated by his habitual role as the poet of uncathartic defeat. Consequently, a critic like Cary Fagan can argue that Lane's "loving portrait of lost men seems less a tragic vision than a revelation of male narcissism" (C6), and Patrick Lane's audience, with fixed expectations, reductively observes him "pinned to the ground, [where] he hits the floor ostentatiously to make evident to all the intolerable nature of his situation; and sometimes he erects a complicated set of signs meant to

make the public understand that he legitimately personifies the ever-entertaining image of the grumbler, endlessly confabulating about his displeasure." (Barthes 18-19)

NOTES

1 In the agglutinative publishing history of Lane's poetry, which involves self-publication, small presses, pamphlets, broad sheets, and shared anthologies, as well as a dozen books, earlier materials frequently become incorporated into later ones. *Patrick Lane: Selected Poems*, which is subdivided into three decades, "The Sixties," "The Seventies," and "The Eighties," offers the best perspective on his work.

2 An interesting tonal contrast to this lament is "The Cariboo Horses," where Al Purdy through half-comic elegizing mutes the angst-edged imagery of "Wild Horses," and omits the implied self-laceration set down by Lane.

3 Lane's "complicity" explains why the sombre tone in "Mountain Oysters" counterpoints that of Alden Nowlan in "God Sour the Milk of the Knacking Wench," where castration is cursed indignantly (and facetiously).

4 Nowhere is an awareness of isolate sentience, of separation, more striking than in Lane's poetic dialogue with Lorna Uher, *No Longer Two People*, where the title's premise of union becomes ironic. The book's final poem (written by Lane) emphasizes distance, not intimacy:

> Alone at night
> I look down upon your sleeping
> hear the unborn crying for release.
> Castrate, stripped of seed, I break
> a trail through the snow.
> There is no looking behind.
> Everywhere the wind covers my passing. (*NLTP* 51)

The savagely barren imagery, "castrate, stripped of seed," conveys hostility and dread of the void, rationalizes departure.

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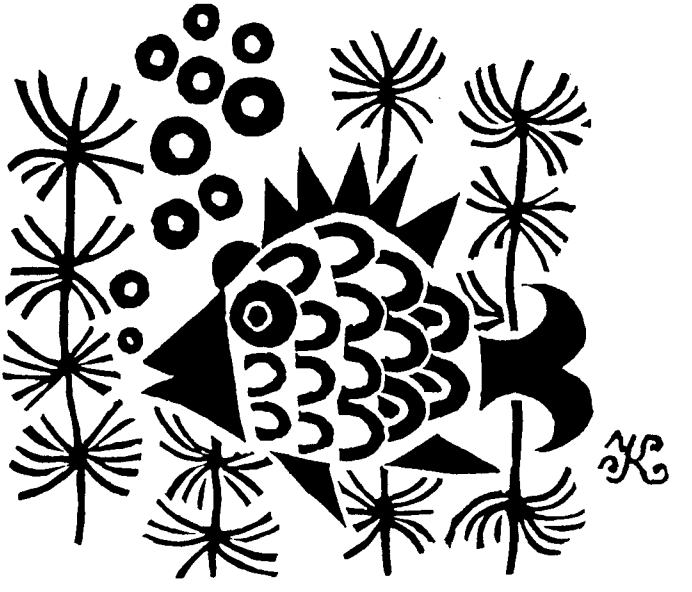

The Cherry Tree on Cherry Street

I saw you first as a cloud
fettered to a tree
whose huge gnarled branches draped
a long-lived wooden house.

We saw the house and tree,
its grey against your white.
We bought the house and you
continued to inhabit
your root-filled habitat.

The rooms were servant small,
the ceilings falling, the
paper draping off walls,
the basement an anthropologist's
agglomeration. Horse furniture,
old spades, the walls insulated
with newspapers whose readers
were long dead. The place's history.

This was the first land settled,
Vancouver, 1862, unnamed but months
before Gassy Jack loaded
his canoe with whisky.
The Irish McCleerys, disaffected,
built their house
on the escarpment.
This was a hired man's hut,
embellished by generations of
Gothicizing carpenters. And
here they planted their great orchard
and called it Cherry Street.

Two trees survived. You were ours.
Ghosts also lingered,
a clear bell in the air,
a finger flicked in the ear,
and smells, ghost cooking
at three in the morning,
cakes and well cured bacon;
horse piss and violets also.

The horses' bridles
remained in the crawl space,
and a strange red violet
lives in the garden,
among the white and mauve.
Kindly ghosts,
slowly fading.
You, tree, commanded all,
a dense white cloud in spring,
a loud bird haunt in summer
as we shared
your bounty with the robins.

Your branches began to crack.
Tree surgeons praised your age
as they lopped another limb
and you gave us winter's firewood.
I ached as I saw it burn.
You had become my brother,
wakening the year
with splendid regularity,
marking the lustra,
and as your essence failed
and fewer boughs bore bruit,
I felt my own heart fail.
You had become parallel
as Lowry saw his pier,
and while I watch your dying,
I know my own will follow,
and as calmly know it
as you in your dryad mind.

Klay Dyer

Passing Time and Present Absence

Looking to the Future in *In the Village of Viger*

Formally arranged to accentuate the "simultaneous self-sufficiency and interdependence" (Mann 15) of the constituent stories, a story cycle is distinguished from a miscellany or collection by an emphasis on what Forrest L. Ingram suggests is the central dynamic of the cycle form, a "tension between the one and the many."[1] Although the formal integrity of the individual stories allows for each to be read or published independently of the others, the recurrence and elaboration of characters, symbols, themes, and motifs throughout the stories of a cycle invite the attentive reader "to construct a network of associations that binds the stories together and lends them cumulative thematic impact" (Luscher 149). As these patterns of recurrence emerge, evolve, and interweave, the reading experience becomes one of progressive and perpetual (re)modification, an almost Iserian project that promotes both a reconsideration of those stories already read and a rereading of the complete cycle with the added knowledge of the patterns gained with the completion of each additional story. As Iser suggests, it is during the process of rereading that readers "tend to establish connections by referring to [their] awareness of what is to come, and so certain aspects of the text will assume a significance [they] did not attach to them on a first reading, while others will recede into the background" (Iser 286).

It is this formal tension between the need to attend to the present while remaining attentive to both the past and future that Duncan Campbell Scott mirrors at a thematic level in his *In the Village of Viger* (1896). "A revo-

lutionary accomplishment" (New 42) in the development of the Canadian story cycle, *In the Village of Viger* "stands at the head of a rich tradition indeed" (Lynch, In the Meantime 70), anticipating notable contemporary cycles like Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) and *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914) as well later contributions to the cycle form including George Elliot's *The Kissing Man* (1962), Margaret Laurence's *A Bird in the House* (1970), and Alice Munro's *Who Do You Think You Are?* (1978). In a recent discussion of the story cycle in the context of the development of literary forms in Canada, Gerald Lynch suggests that "[o]ver the past hundred years the short story cycle has become something of a sub-genre within the Canadian short story" (One and the Many, 91), a form that is geopolitically appropriate for the expression of the Canadian imagination.

More importantly, the cycle form, "with its hint of a formalistic challenge to unity and the master narrative of the nineteenth-century novel of social and psychological realism, provided Scott with a form ideally suited to the fictional depiction ... of what may be called Vigerian virtues and vices" (Lynch, In the Meantime 74). The issues explored by Scott are not entirely the result of material changes, but of a complex of external and internal forces that raise questions concerning the spiritual, psychological, and historical underpinnings of this fictional community on the periphery of the modern world. Challenged from without by modernity and the advancing industrialized urban sprawl from the south, Viger is a village coincidentally threatened from within by the degenerative effects of a past scarred by lack of care, decay, and the disintegration of the traditional foundations of community and communal spirit. Scott looks to the heart of the village, as it were, to examine the tension between the historical past and present as individuals and groups struggle for survival and to (re)define themselves in terms that will guarantee them a future.

Scott's attention to the formal structure of the *Viger* cycle has been well documented. Eight of the ten stories were originally published individually in two contemporary literary periodicals — *Scribner's* and *Two Tales* — between 1887 and 1893. Scott would later edit a number of these magazine versions and add two previously unpublished stories — "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" and "Paul Farlotte" — for the initial publication of *In the Village of Viger* by Copeland and Day of Boston in 1896. As Carole Gerson details (Piper's 138-43), the stories appeared in Viger in the following order, with

the year and source of original publication noted parenthetically:

1. The Little Milliner (1887, *Scribner's*)
2. The Desjardins (1887, *Scribner's*)
3. The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier (1891, *Scribner's*)
4. Sedan (1893, *Scribner's*)
5. No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset (1896, *Viger*)
6. The Bobolink (1893, *Scribner's*)
7. The Tragedy of the Seigniory (1892, *Two Tales*)
8. Josephine Labrosse (1887, *Scribner's*)
9. The Pedler (1893, *Scribner's*)
10. Paul Farlotte (1896, *Viger*)

Five decades later, in the 1940s, when Lorne Pierce of The Ryerson Press undertook the project of reissuing a Canadian edition of *In the Village of Viger*, Scott continued to emphasize and ask "for recognition of [the] textual integrity and formal arrangement" of his stories (New 178). He steadfastly refused to reduce the original ten stories to a sextet (Dragland 12), and, consistent with his belief that the stories "will require tender handling by an illustrator" (McDougall 76), retained right of refusal over Thoreau MacDonald's accompanying illustrations (Bourinot 89-90). Scott frequently voiced his concerns over numerous details of publication, from the design of the jacket cover to the physical dimensions of the book itself, noting in July of 1944, for example, that he "was not particularly impressed by the size of the book sent as a sample" (Bourinot 89).[2] In a letter to E.K. Brown following the release of the Ryerson edition, Scott comments: "It was a bit of a struggle to get the book produced in its present form" (McDougall 142).

Although not all readers have appreciated the complexities of Scott's story cycle,[3] the thematic patterns that result from Scott's insistence on the formal integrity of *In the Village of Viger* have not gone unnoticed by a number of contemporary and modern scholars and critics. In 1896 a book reviewer for *Massey's Magazine*, commenting on the austerity of Scott's style and complexities of the Viger stories, noted that "every word is made to count, and there is, consequently, no writing to cover space.... There is so much suggested in it, so much left to the imagination" (73). Writing in the *Canadian Magazine* in 1914, Bernard Muddiman observes that Scott's style "suggests so much more than it actually performs," (63) adding that the stories of Viger, in particular, "have a bewitching grace, that is, however, something deeper than mere prettiness" (70).[4] In his introduction to *A Book of Canadian Stories* (1947), Desmond Pacey comments: "One feels in Scott's work that every word has been first weighed and considered and finally

chosen with a full realization of all its connotations. All parts of the stories have been similarly deliberated upon: characters, setting, and events are blended and shaped into a satisfying artistic whole" (xxvi).

More recently, Stan Dragland's introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *In the Village of Viger* (1973) includes a discussion of Scott's use of detailed repetition — notably, of bird imagery and the motif of city and swamp — which develops "a rhythm of structural links between the stories" (12). Gerson suggests that the stories establish a thematic balance, with "each instance of apparent defeat" offset by "a corresponding example of strength" and "human resilience" (139).[5] New further uncovers the complex thematic patterns informing *Viger,* schematizing the ten stories according to what he identifies as "two internal cycles," one of vertical/sequential repetition and the other a horizontal/structural variation; these sequences "are not mirror reversals of each other," he continues, "but alternate variations [that] constitute a set within which alternatives have value and variation has meaning" (185). Lynch builds on these previous discussions with his dual focus on the formal qualities of the *Viger* cycle and "the primary thematic concern of this story cycle — the threat that the advance of metropolitan modernity poses to the traditional conception of family and, by extension, to the ideal of community itself" (In the Meantime 70).

Conservative in his private life and public politics, Scott was nonetheless aware of the inevitability of social, economic, and philosophical changes fueled by what he recognized as the "growing freedom in the commerce and exchange of ideas the world over" (*Circle* 145). But as Lynch suggests, Scott's "attitude toward developments around the turn of the century — the whole ethos of positivism, materialism and progress — was complex and ambivalent" (In the Meantime 71). He remained apprehensive about the future of traditional communities like Viger in a modern society that he saw as becoming increasingly "casual, intermittent, fragmentary" (*Circle* 128).

Scott introduces his stories of Viger with a verse epigraph in which he paints a picture of a seemingly idyllic alternative to this pattern of social fragmentation, calling on those modern souls "wearied with the fume and strife, / The complex joys and ills of life," to "staunch" their worries "In pleasant Viger by the Blanche" (*Viger* 8).[6] He reinforces this picture in the opening lines of his first story, "The Little Milliner":

> It was too true that the city was growing rapidly. As yet its arms were not long enough to embrace the little village of Viger, but before long they would be, and it was not a time that the inhabitants looked forward to with any pleasure. It was not to be wondered at, for few places were more pleasant to live in. (13)

But Scott immediately subverts the notion of a distance, psychological or otherwise, separating the present version of the village from the unnamed city to the south. The arms of the urban centre have physically embraced the settlement, surrounding it with the new houses needed to accommodate "a large influx of the laboring population which overflows from large cities" (14). More importantly, the influence of the city on the lives of the villagers has extended well beyond the hint of "the rumble of the street-cars and the faint tinkle of their bells, and ... the reflection of thousands of gas-lamps" (13-14) in the night sky, developing what Dragland describes as "an urban undercurrent which surfaces several times in the volume" (12). Madame Viau's main street house, for example, the village site central to the tale of "The Little Milliner," is constructed by "men from the city" (14-15), and her personal and professional titles are announced to the people of the village when "a man came from the city with a small sign under his arm and nailed it above the door. It bore these words: 'Mademoiselle Viau, Milliner'" (15). Later in the opening story a messenger arrives "from the city with a telegram" (26) that alters forever the little milliner's life, drawing her to the south to witness the death of a close relative.

This pattern of urban influence and interaction continues in the historical present of other stories. Eloise Ruelle's strategy in "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" ensnares, not a village beau, but Pierre Pechito, the son of "one of the richest of the city merchants" (69). In "Josephine Labrosse," the title character, a young girl, watches her mother go to work in the city to save the family from financial ruin, the economy of the village having been restructured by the presence of a larger market to the south. Venturing southward herself when her mother falls ill, Josephine meets and eventually falls in love with Victor, a clerk from the city who comes to Viger to court her.

The social, moral, and psychological effects on the village of this "urban undercurrent" or, more accurately, urban undertow are not recent developments. The city has a strong historical presence in Viger. The mill, once a landmark and a cornerstone of the traditional village economy, had shut down years earlier, due, in part, to the availability of cheaper flour from the

larger and more efficient markets to the south: "The miller had died; and who would trouble to grind what little grist came to the mill, when flour was so cheap?" (13). It is this same market economy that surfaces in the concluding story of the cycle, "Paul Farlotte," as two generations of St. Denis women join the "hundreds of women in the village and the country around" making paper match-boxes for "the great match factory near Viger" (124). The history of "The Desjardins" is scarred by the stigma that the patriarch of the family, Isidore Desjardin, had gone to the city years before only to return in a coffin with rumours of madness circling his grave. In "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier," the title character recollects a past dispute over the width of the lane that separates his main street home from that of his neighbour, Madame Laroque. The dispute was settled when "they had got a surveyor from the city, who measured it with his chain" (47). It was also "An emissary of the devil, in the guise of a surveyor" who had "planted his theodolite, and ran a roadway which took off a corner" (88) of the Rioux family estate in "The Tragedy of the Seigniory," thereby "allowing the roadways of Viger to circumscribe and diminish it" (New 182).

While this continuing pattern of urban contact and circumscription reinforces the presence of an external challenge to the landscape and lifestyle of Viger, Scott interweaves complex thematic patterns that reveals Viger as a village as much threatened by a dramatic and ultimately destructive pattern of decay originating from within as it is from the challenge to its geographic and psychological borders from without. Past and present versions of the village are marked by the absence of any traditional "centre," a focal point of community spirit and spirituality that would imbue the social fabric of the village with a sense of community and a collective identification with place, shared history, and common values that would allow the people of Viger to look to the future.

In a letter written to Thoreau MacDonald on 17 July 1944 in which he discusses the illustrations that would accompany the Ryerson edition of his stories, Scott expresses his desire for the artist to omit the most traditional communal centre — the Church — from all these designs (Bourinot 88). Yet in a number of the stories St. Joseph's *seems* to be the institution around which Viger is organized. In "The Little Milliner" the Church is the physical presence that defines the landscape of the village: "The houses, half-hidden amid the trees, clustered around the slim steeple of St. Joseph's, which

flashed like a naked poniard in the sun" (13). When Monsieur Cuerrier and Cesarine pause at the crest of a hill to reflect momentarily on the route they have just travelled in "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier," Cesarine thinks she sees "like a little silver point in the rosy light, the steeple of the far St. Joseph's" (49-50). The Church marks the geographic location of the village of Viger, its position as place in relation to the surrounding landscape. In two stories — "The Desjardins" and "Paul Farlotte" — the resonance of the church bells replaces the visual marker of the steeple as a reminder of the presence of a traditional spiritual centre.

But the Church in Viger has become "like a naked poniard," a symbol of the severing of the ties of community rather than the weaving of a supportive fabric of communal tradition, ritual, and common values. St. Joseph's has lost the power to unite the people of the village, even briefly, in gatherings and rituals that reaffirm a belief in community spirit and shared future. When the inhabitants of Viger gather together in any of the stories, they do so in places and with results far removed from the spirit/spirituality of community traditionally associated with the presence of the Church. They gather in The Turenne, the Arbiques' inn, where community disintegrates into an ally-enemy binary that precipitates mob violence; in Cuerrier's grocery, where the Widow Laroque's programme of malicious rumour, gossip, and innuendo reigns essentially unchallenged; and around the figure of "The Pedler," a symbol, not only of demonic proportions, but of a capitalist/consumer impulse out of control:

> Coming into the village, he stopped in the middle of the road, set his bandbox between his feet, and took the oiled cloth from the basket. He never went from house to house, his customers came to him. He stood there and sold, almost without a word, as calm as a sphinx, and as powerful. There was something compelling about him; the people bought things they did not want, but they had to buy. (114-15)

When the young women of the village gather, it is at the main street house of the little milliner, a building described as resembling "a square bandbox which some Titan had made for his wife" and which could hold "the gigantic bonnet, with its strings and ribbons, which the Titaness could wear to church on Sundays" (16). The Church as a main street place of communal gathering has been replaced, for at least one sector of the village population, by the hatbox of a pagan god. Even "The Bobolink," a story in which the potential for a positive spiritual connection is at its strongest,

ends with the seemingly idyllic relationship between Etienne Garnaud and the blind child Blanche being tainted rather than reaffirmed by their shared act of charity: "From that day their friendship was not untinged by regret; some delicate mist of sorrow seemed to have blurred the glass of memory. Though he could not tell why, old Etienne that evening felt anew his loneliness" (84). In the village of Viger the Church is absent as anything other than a signpost of geographic midpoint, evident only as a marker of place and not as a symbol of community.

Emphasizing this lack of spiritual centre, Scott systematically locates the individual Viger stories in settings that are progressively distanced, physically and psychologically, from the traditionally unifying forces represented by the central presence of the church steeple; the traditional centre of this village can no longer hold. He uses his opening story, "The Little Milliner," to establish the *Viger* cycle in Mademoiselle Viau's "Titan's bandbox" on the main street across from Cuerrier's grocery and Post Office, the gathering place for the characters of the story. The primary settings of subsequent stories become increasingly isolated, radiating outwards from the main street and church steeple in a concentric pattern that moves readers, and stories, to the edge of the village. "[O]ne of the oldest houses in Viger," that of the Desjardin family, is built "Just at the foot of the hill, where the bridge crossed the Blanche" (30), and in "Sedan" the Arbique's inn is on "One of the pleasantest streets of Viger ... which led from the thoroughfare of the village to the common" (51). The setting for "Sedan" is ironically described as a wonderfully "contented spot," the location of the inn "seemed to be removed from the rest of the village, to be on the boundaries of Arcadia, the first inlet to its pleasant, dreamy fields" (51). Eloise Ruelle's strategy in "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" unfolds in a house that "stood alone on the brow of a little cliff" (63), and "The Bobolink" is set in and around a cabin built in "the sunniest corner in Viger" (78). In "The Tragedy of the Seigniory" the Rioux's estate home is on the outskirts of the village, "set upon a rise, having nothing to do with the street, or seemingly with any part of the town" (85). In the final story of the cycle, "Paul Farlotte," readers are located, and left, "Near the outskirts of Viger, to the west, far away from the Blanche" (118). The story cycle is completed far away from sight of the steeple that marks the geographic and traditional spiritual centre of the village, the symbol of the Church having lost its power to unite the villagers in a celebration of shared values and beliefs.

Although the absence of a spiritual centre informs both the past and present versions of the village, it is not the only significant absence that Scott recognizes as threatening its future. Equally dangerous to the future of the village is the absence of traditional family units that can initiate or facilitate the processes of communal myth-making, remembering, or tradition-building. As Scott reminds readers in a contribution to "At the Mermaid Inn" contemporaneous with the publication of the *Viger* stories, individuals and families "stand conservators of the past, pioneers of the future" (37). Positioned at the geographic centre of the village, the church bearing the name of St. Joseph, the protector of the Holy Family and patron saint of workers and fathers of families, is a physical reminder of the importance of family units and the ideal of community to the future of the village. As Lynch suggests, "the institution of family is the intermediary between the individual and society, and the relay between past and future ... [that] facilitates the transmission of values and cultural continuity itself" (In the Meantime 88). But there are few members of the current village population who recognize Viger as home and define themselves, at least in part, by their participation in the present or the past of the village. The villagers remain as disconnected from the myths and stories of village history as the "large influx of the laboring population" (14) who commute daily to the factories of the city, unwilling or unable to acknowledge that their own stories are intimately connected with those of the village in which they live.

The fundamental link between place as home and personal history is made explicit during Widow Laroque's "plot" to discover all she can about the newcomer to the village, Mademoiselle Viau. With her second cousin as an accomplice, the Widow's interrogation begins, and ends, with a futile attempt to define the little milliner in terms of a place other than that in which she now resides:

> "Mademoiselle Viau, were you born in the city?"
> "I do not think, Mademoiselle, that green will become you."
> "No, perhaps not. Where did you live before you came here?"
> "Mademoiselle, this grey shape is very pretty." And so on.
> That plan would not work. (20)

In the same story, Scott introduces a number of other characters who have emigrated to Viger and continue to be defined or define themselves in relation to a place other than the village where they now live. Monsieur Villeblanc bases his personal history in terms of his past career in Paris;

Monsieur Cuerrier's "native place" (17) is identified specifically as the village of St. Therese and his professional place as simply the Postmaster. In "Sedan" the Arbiques "considered themselves very much superior to the village people, because they had come from old France" (52), also the home of Paul Farlotte in the final story, and Hans Blumenthal, defined by the village people in terms of his homeland, is known as "the German watchmaker" (55). Etienne Garnaud in "The Bobolink" came to Viger from St. Valerie, possibly along the same path used by the roaming pedler who "used to come up the road from St. Valerie, trudging heavily, bearing his packs" (113).

The few native characters in Viger, those who have family stories linked directly with the history of the village, have traditionally existed and continue to exist on the margins of the village scene, unwilling or unable to facilitate a unifying sense of community. When Isidore Desjardin, the patriarch of the one of the oldest families in the village, "died there was hardly a person in the whole parish who was sorry.... He was inhospitable, and became more taciturn and morose after his wife died. His pride was excessive and kept him from associating with his neighbors, although he was in no way above them" (31). Hugo Armand Theophile Rioux, the last of a longtime village family, "shook off the dust of Viger" and left with the promise to return a decade later "and redeem his ancient heritage" (87). And the history of the St. Denis family is one scarred by tragedy. The individuals or families of Viger who could facilitate the continuation of community — who could tell the stories of the mill, the gold mine, and the fields — either have no intimate personal history associated with the place or have been thrust into positions of isolation and silence on the margins of the village.

With the historical present of the stories marked by an absence of communal centre, and the historical past stripped of its mythic potential by the failure of villagers to identify place as home and themselves as an interdependent community, Scott's *Viger* cycle forces readers to look to the future of the village with a critical eye. It is a future on which the past and present patterns of absence weigh heavily. Juxtaposed against Scott's "unobtrusive but careful delineation of the season, with its natural phenomena, in which each story takes place" (Dragland 12)[7] are the stories of family units whose members are unable to guarantee the future of the village in human terms and who are themselves the victims of their own pasts.

Because of an absence of one or both of the primary parental figures, the current families of Viger are frequently forced to redefine and reconfigure

themselves with surrogates or siblings in the primary parental roles. For the current generation of village women, notably Adele Desjardin and Marie St. Denis, "the tall girl who was mother to her orphan brothers and sisters" (123), this restructuring forces them to function in the complex dual roles of sister and surrogate mother or mother figure. The role is a village tradition established by two women of previous generations represented in the stories, Eloise Ruelle in "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" and Diana Girourard in "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier." As admirable as is this resilience in the face of adversity, for these women it inevitably signals a future with few options. Marie St. Denis runs the risk of becoming the second St. Denis "mother" to be physically and emotionally overcome by a male family member's obsession with the machinery in the attic, and Adele Desjardin is forced by her genetic heritage to accept a future of total isolation. Escaping the pattern of isolation that Diana, Adele, and Marie seem destined to continue means leaving the village behind and contributing to the future in another family and in another place. When Eloise Ruelle gains her freedom, she does so in a place other than Viger, moving away from the future of the village to the city of Pierre Pechito's family. Even Felice Arbique, a village mother by choice, is anything but a model of maternal love. Limited by her sense of superiority from forming close friendships with the people of the village, she is also unable to nurture her immediate family, treating her stepdaughter Latulipe like "something between a servant and a poor relation working for her board" (54). Three generations of Labrosse women — Josephine, her mother, and grandmother — represent the continuation of a tradition of failure brought to the present of their story; they belong in, Josephine's own words, "to the people who do not succeed" (101).

Whereas the present generation of mother figures either leave the village for futures elsewhere or are denied their own futures by present circumstances, father figures and past fathers are the disseminators of an especially dangerous heredity. They are the carriers of a genetic past scarred by traditions of degenerating mental health, obsessive fixations, and premature death. Isidore Desjardin's posthumous return from the city in "The Desjardins," for example, "gave rise to all sorts of rumour and gossip; but the generally accredited story was, that there was insanity in the family and that he had died crazy" (31). When his eldest son Charles rises from the table one evening and announces his madness to the remaining family members, it is not surprise that is articulated in his sister Adele's cry that

"'It has come!'" (35), but an acknowledgement of the inevitability of the decline. "It" is the madness that leads Adele and her other sibling Philippe to isolate themselves for the rest of their lives in a dramatic effort to end the genetic transmission of the family tradition: "[Philippe] knew that Adele was in the dark somewhere beside him, for he could hear her breathe. 'We must cut ourselves off; we must be the last of our race'" (35). Adele, whose striking physical and behavioral resemblance to her father hints of strong genetic links, and Philippe, whose "waking dreams" (33) suggest a mild form of madness already present, are left to wait for their time and the story of their family to end.

Paternal obsessions and patterns of genetic weakness inform the past and present of other Viger families. Paul Arbique's obsessive behaviour in "Sedan" stems from his attachment to his birthplace and pride in his military past. When the realities of the Franco-Prussian War threaten both his beloved Sedan and his belief in French military prowess, the degenerative effects of his violent reactions are increasingly compounded by his chronic alcoholism, an obsessive legacy passed to him by his father: "He drank fiercely now, and even Latulipe could do nothing with him. Madame Arbique knew that he would drink himself to death, as his father had done" (59).

In "The Tragedy of the Seigniory" the surrogate father figure, Louis Bois, "who was old enough to be [Hugo Rioux's] father, and loved him as such" (87), becomes obsessed with winning the local lottery. Although Bois's entry into the pattern of mental deterioration is gradual, he too eventually loses control of his life in the present time of the story:

> He began to venture small sums in the lottery, hoarding half his monthly allowance until he should have sufficient funds to purchase a ticket. Waiting for the moment when he could buy, and then waiting for the moment when he could receive news of the drawing, lent a feverish interest to his life. But he failed to win. With his failure grew a sort of exasperation — he would win, he said, if he spent every cent he owned. (89)

Ironically, he rationalizes his habit by calling on the images of two other victims of incomplete families: "He had moments when he suspected that he was being duped, but he was always reassured upon spelling out the lottery circular, where the drawing by the two orphan children was so touchingly described" (89). When he does eventually win his fortune, his victory sets in motion a sequence of events that culminate in a father figure's knife murder of his returning son. St. Joseph's poniard, which in the opening

story defines the village as place, reappears later in the cycle as a knife that ends the possibility that another village lineage might one day be perpetuated.

It is in "Paul Farlotte," however, the concluding and frequently anthologized story of the *Viger* cycle, that Scott concisely draws together the patterns of past, present, and future absences developed through the previous nine stories. As Lynch emphasizes, "it is the concluding stories of cycles that present the most serious challenges to readers and critics. These stories bring to fulfillment the recurrent patterns of the cycle, frequently reintroducing many of the cycle's major characters and central images, and restating in a refrain-like manner the thematic concerns of the preceding stories" (The One and the Many 98).

The story of Paul Farlotte unfolds "Near the outskirts of Viger, to the west, far away from the Blanche" (119) in two houses that are positioned in stark physical contrast to each other:

> One was a low cottage, surrounded by a garden, and covered with roses, which formed jalousies for the encircling veranda. The garden was laid out with the care and completeness that told of a master hand.... The other was a large gaunt-looking house, narrow and high, with many windows, some of which were boarded up, as if there was no further use for the chambers into which they had once admitted light. Standing on a rough piece of ground it seemed given over to the rudeness of decay. (119)

Although the two residences differ dramatically in outward appearance and maintenance, the connection between their residents is an intimate one. Like the house in which they reside, the current version of the St. Denis family, like that of many who live in Viger, is characterized by a history of decay and lack of care. Their father's "frantic passion" with his match-box-making invention had driven him to abdicate his responsibility for his young family, to devote "his whole time and energy to the invention of this machine ... with a perseverance which at last became a frantic passion" (124), and finally, unable to deal with his persistent failures, to suicide. Their mother, forced to toil long hours at menial labour in an attempt to keep the family together, died as a result of the relentless physical and emotional exhaustion brought upon by her husband's obsessive behaviour. The orphaned children persevered, however, reforming themselves into a family unit parented by the eldest siblings — Marie, "who was mother to her orphan brothers and sisters" (123), and Guy, whose "likeness to his father

made him seem a man before his time.... and was like a father to his little brothers and sisters" (127).

Throughout their ordeals the St. Denis children are supported financially and emotionally by the neighbour in the garden cottage, Paul Farlotte, a man blessed with a gift: "[he] had been born a gardener, just as another man is born a musician or a poet. There was a superstition in the village that all he had to do was to put anything, even a dry stick, into the ground, and it would grow" (120-21). Like the other Paul of the stories — Paul Arbique — Farlotte is a character who defines himself, and his garden, in terms of his past connections with the Old World:

> He had often described to Marie the little cottage where he was born, with the vine arbors and the long garden walks, the lilac-bushes, with their cool dark-green leaves, the white eaves where the swallows nested, and the poplar, sentinel over all. "You see," he would say, "I have tried to make this little place like it; and my memory may have played me a trick, but I often fancy myself at home. That poplar and this long walk and the vines on the arbor, — sometimes when I see the tulips by the border I fancy it is all in France. (125)

His "parterres of old-fashioned flowers," like his own biological parents and the philosophy that guides his life, are from distinctly Old World stock, "the seed of which came from France, and which in consequence seemed to blow with a rarer colour and more delicate perfume" (120) than the personal philosophies and gardens of the villagers around him. Farlotte's attachment to Old World sensibilities is reflected as well in his passion for the author Montaigne.

Like Charles Desjardin's pattern of imaginary campaigns, Farlotte's dual passions — gardening and reading Montaigne — are all-consuming and linked with the inevitable passing of the seasons:

> He delved in one in the summer, in the other in the winter. With his feet on his stove he would become so absorbed with his author that he would burn his slippers and come to himself disturbed by the smell of the singed leather. (122-23)

Remaining constant in Farlotte's life regardless of the season, however, are the "visions of things that had been, or that would be" (122), mysterious voices, and apparitional visitors that accompany him. Unlike many of his male village counterparts, whose lives and stories are destroyed by their legacies of mental instability and obsessions, Farlotte finds his visions and passions a supportive, positive force in his life, providing "a sort of companionship" (122) for the bachelor living on the margins of village life.

Farlotte's sense of self and of community is of Old World stock as well, for when the paternal figure of Guy St. Denis inevitably reenters the vortex of obsessive behaviour and psychological deterioration that his father had begun, it is Farlotte who quits his lifelong ambition of returning "home" to France to visit his aged mother and the birthplace of his beloved Montaigne. Instead, he resolves to remain and resume his role as the fiscal and spiritual guardian of the St. Denis family, finding his reward in the "comfort that comes to those who give up some exceeding deep desire of the heart" (133).

It is the character and story of "Paul Farlotte" that a number of critics point to as the final figure of hope and redemption amid the decay and disintegration of the Viger cycle. Glenys Stow, for example, suggests that the stories in general, and "Paul Farlotte" in particular, depict characters who "tend to be martyrs through self-sacrifice," giving up their dreams for the sake of others (124),[8] whereas New sees in Farlotte the positive results of learning to rely on the values that accompany knowledge in order to sustain oneself in times of personal crisis (184). But while Farlotte's personal philosophy of selflessness and social conscience is hopeful, it is important to recognize that the potential influence of his moral vision on the future of the village is inexorably linked with the environment in which his story occurs. The life stories of Farlotte and the St. Denis family, like the interdependent stories of the *Viger* cycle, are interconnected with the stories of disintegration that have unfolded. Although Farlotte's attention to the traditional responsibilities of community is a positive alternative to the absence of communal spirit and care predominant in the preceding nine stories, his potential influence on present and future generations of villagers is minimal. The Old World "gardener" collides in Viger with the barren soils of the modern New World.

Although gardening and Montaigne are Farlotte's passions, teaching is his profession, and it is in his position as the village school-master that he comes in direct contact with the future of the village — its children. In contrast to the effort expended and pride taken in the cultivation and care of his flowers, his teaching is unable to nurture the seeds of Viger's future: "he was born a gardener, not a teacher; and he made the best of the fate which compelled him to depend for his living on something he disliked" (121). As Madame Laroque spitefully comments: "if Monsieur Paul Farlotte had been as successful in planting knowledge in the heads of his scholars as he was in

planting roses in his garden Viger would have been celebrated the world over" (121). Unhappy within the enclosed space of his classroom and unable to instill the ideals by which he lives his own life into the future generations of Viger, Farlotte passes his hours anticipating his return to the confines of his garden and the words of his beloved author.

Significantly, Farlotte is equally ineffective in his attempts to transfer his knowledge of horticulture to members of the village. Such attempts to pass on to Guy St. Denis the techniques and philosophy of tending one's garden for future growth prove futile: "'See,' he would say, 'go deeper and turn it over so.' And when Guy would dig in his own clumsy way, [Farlotte] would go off in despair, with the words, 'God help us, nothing will grow there'" (126). His words reverberate through all the stories of the book, further underscoring the thematic connections among them. Physically demarcated by the boundaries set out in the design of the master gardener himself, Farlotte's garden is an (en)closed system. There can be no successful cross-pollination between Farlotte's admirable Old World paradise and the harsh horticultural and philosophical soils of Viger. Just as the seeds from France can germinate and blossom only within the narrowly defined boundaries of the cottage garden, the philosophy of the gardener himself fails to take root anywhere but in the heart of the man who "looked almost as dry as one of his own hyacinth bulbs" (121).

Located far from the steeple of St. Joseph's and the main street, the bounty associated with Farlotte's garden is an anomaly in the village. The garden motif or, more accurately, the motif of *failed* gardens is one that Scott returns to throughout his cycle. The Desjardins's small garden is a sparse one in which "a few simple flowers grew" (30), and the images of gardening and flowers in "The Wooing of Monsieur Cuerrier" and "No. 68 Rue Alfred de Musset" bear only the bitter fruits of jealousy and calculated manipulation of others. The single geranium Mademoiselle Viau places in her window to signal her entry into the village dies soon after her departure, opening the cycle with an image that is repeated in the lore surrounding Farlotte's horticultural skill: "It only had one blossom all the time it was alive, and it is dead now and looks like a dry stick" (29). But this dry stick, located on the main street of the village, is one that even Farlotte will be unable to bring back to life. Even the landscape of the St. Denis house, separated from the fertile soils that encircle Farlotte's cottage by only a narrow roadway, is "the stony ground ... where only the commonest weeds grew unregarded" (120).

Unable to reach into the future of the village through the lives of its children, Farlotte is equally incapable of saving the present generation from the dangers of the past. When he enters the attic of the St. Denis house one evening before his scheduled voyage, it is not the results of his own tutoring that he sees, but the past and present of the village joined together in an activity that subverts any hope of a positive future for the St. Denis family:

> There he saw Guy stretched along the work bench, his head in his hands, using the last light to ponder over a sketch he was making, and beside him, figured very clearly in the thick gold air of the sunset, the form of his father, bending over him, with the old eager, haggard look in his eyes. Monsieur Farlotte watched the two figures for a moment as they glowed in their rich atmosphere; then the apparition turned his head slowly, and warned him away with a motion of his hand. (132)[9]

Farlotte retreats silently, returning to the comforting confines of his garden to ponder his inevitable decision to delay indefinitely his voyage home. Guy is left to his work, destined to repeat the pattern of obsession and abdication of responsibility that almost destroyed his family years earlier. The story closes with Farlotte's vision of his mother's death, a sign of the final passing of his dreams of the Old World and his dedication to the victims of the modern world of the stories. It is important to note, however, that when Farlotte tells Marie St. Denis that his mother has died, "she wondered how he knew" (135). The son's vision of his mother, like his personal philosophy of responsibility and selflessness, cannot be understood by anyone but the man of the garden himself.

In the Village of Viger is not a celebration of the unqualified benefits of looking back, of claiming a romanticized past as the mythic foundation on which to construct the social ideals and personal philosophies of the present and future. There can be no safe return to the seemingly idyllic world of a nineteenth-century rural village either in memory or in reality. In Viger the genetic past is deadly, infecting the historical present with patterns of mental deterioration, fragmented and incomplete families, and premature death. The mythic past is equally flawed, marked by the absence of any traditional, unifying centre of community spirit/spirituality and the collective identification with place that are perpetually reaffirmed through legend and ritual. The Old World as the touchstone that supports Farlotte in his selfless decision to set aside his personal ambitions for the

sake of others dramatically fails another Paul of the village — Paul Arbique — whose blind attachment to his Old World home and past glories leads only to conflict, personal despair, and death. Undeniably a model of social conscience and responsibility, Farlotte, with his dedication to Old World social sensibilities, is of limited influence in the village, remaining unable to extend the seeds of his ideals outwards into the harsh soils of Viger.

Nor does *In the Village of Viger* reward looking away from the social implications of progress. The people of the village cannot dismiss change as something that will happen sometime in the future. The influence of the city — the urban and technological horizon — has already been felt on the main street of the village and in the houses that have begun to encircle it. As New concludes, the Viger cycle "rejects the idea that social naivete is equivalent to moral strength, and also that change is equivalent to moral degradation" (186).

What *In the Village of Viger* does stress, both thematically and formally, is the necessity of looking again. Characterized by a dynamic tension between "the individuality of each of the stories and the necessities of the larger unit"(Ingram 15), or what Mann suggests is "the tension between the separateness and interdependence of the stories" (18), the cycle form was especially appropriate for Scott to express his fears for the growing number of small communities and individuals forced to redefine themselves and their roles within an increasingly urban, industrial society. As Dieter Meindl suggests, these are concerns that the cycle form "appears predestined to treat," with the sense of alienation and isolation that pervades Scott's stories becoming "palpable through the confinement of individuals to self-contained stories which in their aggregate suggest the societal, communal or family context which fails to function" (19).

In the Village of Viger emphasizes the need for individuals and communities, like the readers of the story cycle itself, to engage in an ongoing critical reconsideration of the past, the present, and the future, and to attempt to strike a balance between the needs of the one and the necessities of the many. "As social ideals spring from individual beliefs," Scott writes in the early 1890s,

> it would be safe to have a reexamination of these last from time to time to find out whether they have not become tarnished with neglect, or whether, perchance, they were only pot-metal and not genuine bronze at all, and need to be cast out and broken to pieces under the wheels on the great roadway of life. (*Mermaid Inn* 307-08)

In the Village of Viger shows that these processes of re-evaluation, like Paul Farlotte's spading of his garden, are necessary in order to guarantee that the future will find somewhere to grow and someone to nurture it.

NOTES

[1] The term " story cycle," used by both Ingram and Mann, is most appropriate for emphasizing the development of dynamic patterns of recurrence and complexity of interconnectedness characteristic of the story cycle. Alternative terms have been suggested, notably "story sequence" (Luscher 148) and "short story volume" (Etter).

[2] For Scott's comments on the jacket cover design see Bourinot (88-90) and McDougall (114): on the title page, McDougall (133). Scott was, in the end, apparently satisfied with the quality and appearance of the Ryerson product, commenting in July of 1945 that "as a bit of book-making it was worthy of praise" (McDougall 145).

[3] A reviewer of the Copeland and Day edition of *In the Village of Viger* writes in *The Bookman* (June 1896) that "these little sketches of provincial types, pretty enough, are yet thin and amateurish," going on to suggest that rather than continue producing fiction "Mr. Scott keep to verse and continue to rejoice us"(366). One outspoken critic of the book, John Metcalf, argues in *What is a Canadian Literature?* that claims of Scott's importance to Canadian literature and the experiences of reading *In the Village of Viger* are nonsensical inventions arising "from the desire of various academics and cultural nationalists to be the possessors of a tradition" (85). Accordingly, he argues that "it is clear enough that Scott's intention is to offer the reader in 'pleasant Viger by the Blanche' an idyll of French-Canadian life" (50). To ignore the complexities of the cycle form and Scott's use of it in favour of foregrounding the local colour of the stories is, as Lynch summarizes, to "short-change the book's currency ... [and] render mute *Viger's* real ability to speak to present-day readers about their history and the formation of their values (or lack thereof)" (In the Meantime 72).

[4] Elizabeth Waterston agrees with Muddiman's observation, suggesting that the *Viger* stories exhibit a "latent sombreness" underlying a volume "generally veiled in prettiness" (111). Although this "veil of prettiness" led some contemporary critics to consider the stories as a collection of local colour vignettes in the tradition of William Kirby and Gilbert Parker, I agree with New that "[b]y minimizing the presence of the Church, and by rejecting the label 'French-Canadian stories,' Scott signalled that he was doing something different — not portraying then and over there so much as he was finding an external design for the world now and right here, the otherness being recognized as part of 'here' and demanding to be recognized as self, not an exotic worthy only to be watched and excluded" (181).

[5] See also Gerson, *A Purer Taste* 130-31.

[6] All page references are to the Copeland and Day edition (1896).

[7] Dragland, p. 12. For similar discussions of Scott's careful delineation of seasonal activity in his stories see also Stow (123-24), and Waterston (The Missing Face 223-29).

[8] Similarly, Gerson considers the Viger stories "documentations of human resilience as small individuals wrestle with imagination, reality and the urge to self-fulfillment" (The Piper's Forgotten Tune 139).

[9] Scott's attention to iconographical images and names is again evident in this final story. The name St. Denis clearly links the family with the Old World, St. Denys being the patron saint of France whose principal emblem is the head in hands. Significantly, when Farlotte discovers Guy in the attic hunched over a sketch he was making, it is with "his head in his hands" (132).

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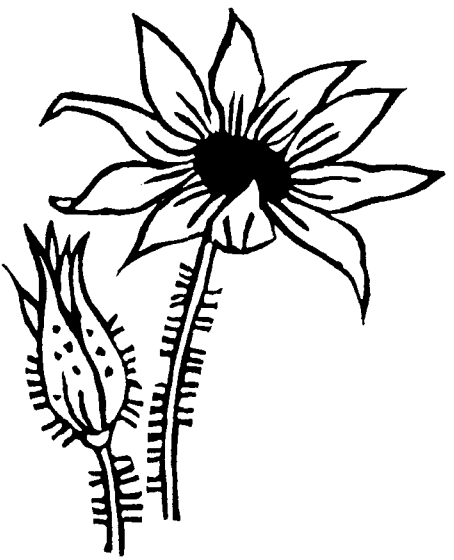


Between Cultures

Anne Montagnes
Mumshaib: A Novel in Stories. Goose Lane Editions, $14.95

Jennifer Mitton
Fadimatu. Goose Lane Editions $14.95

Reviewed by Dieter Riemenschneider

Putting aside Anne Montagne's tightly constructed and beautifully written book on fifty-year old Torontonian Lucy, her mother Agnes and her grandmother Amy, one wonders who really is (or deserves to be referred to as) the *mumsahib* in a story which easily shuttles back and forth through the 20th century and between Canada and India. The Shorter OED using the more common spelling *memsahib*, explains: "[f. *mem* = Ma'am + Sahib] used by the natives of India in addressing European women." And at the end of the novel "Mumsahib..." is explained as "...[a]n older person. An honoured older person. Generative." But then, are these meanings really verified in and through the novel, or is *mumsahib* perhaps an ironical gesture meant to subvert 'a truth to be told'?

The three Canadian women's involvement with India begins with Amy and Jacob Byer's work as Baptist missionaries in late 19th century India. Preaching and teaching the gospel, Amy, the morally superior *mumsahib*, tries to convert Indian heathens to Christianity, a synonym for European civilization. Yet as her proselytizing efforts can hardly be called successful, her *mumsahib* status is subtly undercut and even more so after the premature death of her husband and her re-marriage to the part-Indian (and this socially 'not quite acceptable') medical doctor Ben Mohur.

Their only daughter, Agnes, after having been brought up in Canada, returns to India to spend, as she says later, the most happy years of her life with her parents in Patna. Here mother and daughter enjoy their *mumsahib* status to the full and as only white European women were wont to do who were implicated in the colonizer's system and its social establishment. A carefree life, the supervision and control of an army of servants and an almost complete mental erasure of 'the world of the natives' from Agnes's experience. But it is her role as *mumsahib* that also engenders her subsequent failure as a woman, a wife and a mother in Canada where she returns with her parents at the beginning of the 1920s, where she marries under difficult economic circumstances and where her children are born. Lucy, the eldest, never experiences a loving mother but a person whose concerns circle around crossword puzzles, smoking, complaining about Canada and nostalgically remembering the one romantic affair of her life in India.

For Lucy, India initially manifests itself through vague memories of a handsome but increasingly senile grandfather and, more importantly, the atmosphere of the family homes in Grafton and Toronto with their museum-like array of Indian carpets and curtains, furniture and jewellry, bronze and brass figures of Hindu deities, vases, bowls and all sorts of knick-kanckery. It is

an India at once familiar and unknown; the image of a world which eventually raises the desire in her to become known as a reality on its 'home ground.' With her mother dead, the children growing up and herself divorced and ready temporarily to separate from her lover, Lucy seemingly sets out on a journey of discovery. While travelling in close contact with a people and culture Amy and Agnes had always shunned, Lucy's experience is twofold. Her grandmother's and mother's *mumsahib*-lives have been completely erased, and she herself is being cast into the role of a *mumsahib* who is in turn despised, exploited, or simply ignored by her Indian surroundings. If anything, she eventually realizes that the cultural gap between a *mumsahib* and India is unbridgeable and that she is inextricably bound to a culture to which she willingly returns. Indeed, walking back to the family cabin she feels "someone is in there already [...], someone is moving towards her as she moves across the deck [...] it is herself, her own reflection coming to meet her..."

Jennifer Mitton's Fadimatu, too, is implicitly concerned with the question of intercultural communication, but it is very differently constituted text. Its main agent is Fadimatu, a young woman from Northern Nigeria. Her years of growing-up are narrated through numerous episodes which depict her school days and village life with her father, a short 'career' as an artist, married life as the third wife of a Muslim, the loss of her twins shortly after their birth, a teaching assignment in a college, the separation from her husband, a quick visit to London and a temporary stay with her mother now re-married to a fabulously rich man. She finally comes to the conclusion that she should go back to London to study fine arts: "She knew exactly where St. Martin's School of Art was and she was no longer afraid of the trains..."

Described with precise attentiveness, Fadimatu is made to practice a whole array of those female roles which a partly traditional and a partly modern Northern Nigerian society has instituted: roles which are meant to assist her search for her woman identity, whether accepted or rejected by her. Thus not unlike Mumsahib, this text also sets out to deconstruct social woman roles to construct *woman*. But whether this goal is achieved is another question. The narrative strategy attempts to achieve mimetic authenticity by using direct speech, dialogue and summarizing report. The effect is an almost mechanical test-run of all imaginable social roles for women and of their supposed subject-engendering potential. However, as these roles really are stereotypes, it is all too easy to dismantle them. And this is where the narrative stance adopted by Jennifer Mitton (a cultural outsider figuring as an insider) eventually fails to mediate the constructed-ness of another culture. Based on her life and experiences in Nigeria, Mitton gives voice, as it were to a voiceless society; at the same time she makes it voiceless by appropriating its voices. She does succeed in catching rhythms and cadences of everyday language in Northern Nigeria. Yet the cultural outsider's position prevents her from gaining insight into the central literary concerns of West African women writing, as a look at the work of Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Zulu Sofola and especially, Zaynab Akali's *The Stillborn* (1984) will illustrate. Anne Mitton's novel, laudable though its intentions are, eventually fails in overcoming its cultural biases.

Old Wine, New Bottles

Carravetta, Peter
Prefaces to the DIaphora: Rhetorics, Allegory, and the Interpretation of Postmodernity. Purdue UP n.p.

Pefanis, Julian
Heterology and the Postmodern: Bataille, Baudrillard, and Lyotard. Duke UP n.p.

Perloff, Marjorie, ed.
Postmodern Genres. U of Oklahoma P n.p

Reviewed by David Thomson

Although each of these volumes attempts to situate a discussion of postmodernism around one key term, only *Heterology* maintains a consistent focus. The essays collected in Perloff's book vary so widely in subject matter and approach that it requires both Perloff's introduction and the first offering, Ralph Cohen's "Do Postmodern Genres exist?" to establish an adequate context for the essays which follow. *Prefaces to the Diaphora,* containing loosely related conference papers Peter Carravetta delivered between 1983 and 1989, is ostensibly organized around the central term of the *diaphora,* but his concept seems to be of diminishing importance in the later chapters.

Carravetta uses "diaphoristics," which is intended "to signify a movement akin to a dialogue between and among forms of discourse," to argue for a reassessment of the trope of allegory, beginning with a reading of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* which he sees as an early text in the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Carravetta discovers in the appropriated mythology of Gabriele D'Annunzio's epic poem *Maia* (1903) a further allegory of this transition; he reads the metamorphosis of Ulysses into Hermes that is enacted within the poem in terms of a displacement of the figure of a wanderer seeking a final destination to that of the nomad-messenger "who is always becoming, sailing and journeying..." In fact, Carravetta offers the figure of Hermes as a representation of the diaphora itself, a mediation between discrete orders of discourse which permits a renewed dialogue between poetry and philosophy. Following an historical survey of avant-gardes in the twentieth century (a survey that culminates in the elaboration of a conception of postmodernity "characterized by the mood of inclusion instead of the principle of exclusion, of heterogeneity rather than homology or autonomy," Carravetta discussed the contributions of Jean-François Lyotard and Gianni Vattimo to the postmodern debate. He emphasises the open-ended nature of their thought, especially their rejection of a universal *Grund* and celebration of competing, fragmented discourses; *Prefaces* concludes with a tentative sketch of a hermeneutics that can account for the multiplicity of meanings immanent in language, for an *engagement* with narrative that does not require a *reduction* of it.

Julian Pefanis traces an alternative history of postmodernism, exploring the indebtedness of French theorists, especially Jean Baudrillard and Jean-François Lyotard, to the critical texts of George Bataille. Pefanis demonstrates how "the emblematic concept of the gift," that economic form found in primitive societies but effaced in the West by the law of production, underwrites Bataille's model of the general economy, the concept of symbolic exchange developed by Baudrillard, and Lyotard's *economie libidinale.* Against the imperatives of capitalist accumulation, the gift represents an anti-economic principle, a conspicuous destruction of surplus wealth—what Bataille calls *dépense.* Applied in opposition to a mode of textual production obsessed with efficiency and coherence, the emblem of the gift signifies the reinscription of play and non-productive discourse in postmodernism. Heterological writing, the privileged mode of Bataille, Baudrillard and Lyotard, signals an assault on the rational discourse of modernity in its tendency

to transgress demarcated lines of thought and readmit those discourses labelled superfluous by the productivist political economy of the West. Pefanis's study is of particular interest in the way it is itself a heterological text, raiding the disciplines of anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy and literary theory in order to convincingly demonstrate that "generic similarities" exist among these three writers.

Pefanis, like Carravetta, identifies postmodernism with a body of theory that is fundamentally critical of the totalizing strategies of Western rationality. In his view it functions as a social critique of the limits of reason, in its textual practices seeking to postpone closure, to free writing from the tyranny of production and the metaphors of economics and deliver it into a realm of indeterminacy and *jouissance*. In celebrating the oppositional potential of postmodernism, however, he disregards the possibility that its engagement with the commodity culture it seeks to critique might facilitate the transformation of postmodernism from a potentially subversive strategy into a set of conventional gestures emptied of political effect. Ironically, by claiming that postmodernism is, "like the best examples of the modernist avant-gardes, a progressive and potentially radical phenomenon," Pefanis compares it to an earlier aesthetic that has itself become engulfed by the discourse of capital.

The desire to equate postmodernism with a revolutionary politics is most evident in Postmodern Genres, where, as Marjorie Perloff points out, "contributors repeatedly use terms like *violation, disruption, dislocation, decentering, contradiction, confrontation, multiplicity,* and *indeterminacy*...." Far from advancing their radical aspirations, however, this "conceptual agreement" among writers with otherwise widely diverging views suggests that "postmodernism" has become a stable category, a label to attach to a text possessing predetermined formal characteristics. In many of the essays there is a sickening air of finality about what the genre "is," leading to earnest deliberations about whether subjects under discussion "deserve" the label. Although most contributors uneasily acknowledge the paradox of a genre predicated on the principles of disruption and multiplicity, they remain determined to have their indeterminacy and label it, too; this, unfortunately, leads to unhelpful assertions such as Henry Sayre's assessment of the work of the American artist Jonathan Borofsky: "It is like a genre composed of all possible genres...." Followers of Bertrand Russell might lose sleep over whether such a genre includes itself, but I would ask why in such a context the term genre is used at all.

Of the dozen essays collected in the volume, only Joan Retallack's "Post-Scriptum—High-Modern" deserves close attention. Retallack is not afraid to confront the thick strands connecting postmodernists to high modernists of the mid-century, recognizing the inevitable influence of the past on contemporary thought, both artistic and critical. If the other authors had shared her belief that "[t]he excitement of postmodernism is that it is in many ways a letter just beginning, a roomy category waiting to be filled," the book as a whole might have been more interesting.

Generation

Di Brandt
Mother, not mother. Mercury P $11.95

Sarah Murphy
The Deconstruction of Wesley Smithson. Mercury P $12.95

Reviewed by P. J. Gerbrecht

Reading Canadian writers Di Brandt and Susan Murphy together is very much like reading dialogue. Both *Mother, not mother* and *The Deconstruction of Wesley Smithson*

discuss frustrated attempts to discover the source of violence, particularly of violence in words. The authorial voices occasionally speak undertones of WASP *mea culpa* as both women write about language and identity, power and self-esteem, individual voice and confusion, balance and endurance, in families and in larger social structures. Without a self-conscious awareness of language, "without the necessary cool edge to the voice," says Murphy, "you lose your objective understanding of the full range of human degradation and cruelty and even its counterpoint in the beauty of it all."

Murphy's prose is visual, full of color, light, heat. Her voices, partially self-directed, make complaints against wrongs perpetrated by and against faceless far-away people. Brandt's strongest images are tactile and aural; physical ecstasy speaks through masks of small silences so that her poems are quiet, warm, intimate, her voice personal and reassuringly sympathetic and nurturing. Brandt writes close to home; she addresses herself to daughters and friends, to first-named people. She choreographs for her readers and subjects an involuntary but agreeable separation — what mothers call "letting go."

Mother love, pride, sex, unanswerable questions, subversiveness and subservience step through *Mother, not mother* in heartbeat couplets with an occasional skip like caught breath. Punctuation is elegant and mannerly; ampersands and lower case letters speak both rebellion and humility. Brandt's soft familiar rhythms settle readers into intimacy. But a sweep of present participles scrim the revelations of the mother-not-mother interchange and maintain a dignified measure of authorial privacy. The collection reads like autobiography, yet Brandt throws her voice into the third person, tosses it to second, occasionally back to first. Talking sometimes to herself, sometimes to yesterday's "dear reader," she addresses the problem of identifying one's selves, simultaneously, by individual essence and by place in the family.

Few poems in *Mother, not mother* complete a sentence. The opening poem muses, "why she can't put down simply, / i am the mother, / & leave it like that," the thought bitten off and the last line thrown away like wadded paper. The poem "The time i didn't know" is a long introductory phrase with the unpredicated *i* covertly confessing to pre-mourning of the self and of the self's child. Brandt insists on generations of recurring not-mother/mother/not-mother images — on continuity: a new mother wants to be held by "a woman . . . / crooning / a child's lullaby."

Erin Mouré found mutually sustaining opposites burning passionately in Brandt's *Agnes in the Sky*; they burn again in *Mother, not mother*: women, devour, subsume, or sustain as they circle one another, the hearth, and the altar. Mothering *is* dramatic conflict, a self-destructive generative drive: "your hands won't let them go," even though they "slit open your belly, trampled / your sheets, / wanting to be gone." Failure to transform the earth must be the mother's fault: ". . . you / weren't big / or pure, or beautiful / enough / to change things, you / weren't / the perfect mother."

The women and children of *Mother, not mother* question the basic borders of patriarchal tenets. Searching for — and sometimes finding — doors in the religious and familial walls of identity, they move gracefully, either eagerly or languidly, among facets of themselves.

Susan Murphy's characters are less volitional but more self-conscious than Brandt's. *The Deconstruction of Wesley Smithson* is peopled by physical, political, and emotional victims who are devoured when they would be nurtured. Exchanges of identity claims — always emotionally charged — generate violence. In her dedication, Sarah Murphy describes the collection (there are three pieces) as "untellings."

The appellation fits the smudged images of the first piece, "Cassie, Cassie." There are many loose ends and false clues that must be atavisms and vestiges of other efforts. "Cassie, Cassie" reads suspiciously like rejected branches of Murphy's *Measure of Miranda.* Cassandra's sister, Pollyanna, is courted by her parents, much as Miranda was courted by hers: they send her to good schools, feed her in fine restaurants, and keep luxury at home. Polly, like Miranda before her, finds privilege nauseating, maddening, and she descends into no-point suicide — on skis (Miranda went by airplane, Cassie climbed down a wall). Polly, Cassie, and Miranda believe in the father's unexercised power to make the world a better place, but Cassie and Polly have lived without seeing or hearing of the world outside protective walls; the stand (or plunge) they take has no basis; they have no text.

"Parliamentary Parafiction" is the second piece in the volume. The title page describes it as "Seven Elementary Catastrophes: A Set of Footnotes in search of their text." What follows are fragmentary transcripts, with the interviewing doctor's explanatory footnotes, of interviews with a refugee couple. The survivors' presence dominates "Parliamentary Parafiction" as it does earlier stories set by Murphy among Central and South American refugees, but here Murphy writes omissions as poets do. The refugee wife has learned relevant words of the doctor's language (*torture, corpse, percentage*), but the husband communes only with spirits now; he cannot be reached in any human language. The doctor records the husband's responses as blank pages and comments that "one can note the laws of applied linguistics at work . . . [as they] sabotage those changes . . . necessary to satisfactorily complete acquisition of a new *target* language." The doctor's words — they ring like found objects — are a powerfully condemning paralipsis.

The volume's title story, "The Deconstruction of Wesley Smithson," is Murphy at her horrified, amused, and attentive best. The story is set in Canada and Mexico among unnamed or punningly-named people. Wesley Smithson is "not to be confused with . . . Smith and Wesson"; his wife Alice is "née de Wonderland," and his mistress is "Rosalyn 'the Red' Queen." After experiencing a crisis of conscience and a mild earthquake, Wesley Smithson has disappeared to (or from) somewhere in Mexico, leaving behind an audio tape diary. In the wickedly comic introductory segment, editors argue: one writes that Smithson's diary is his best work, that he "stood firm to the last, his fingers on play/record"; another calls the tapes a hoax and grouses that no newsman in the world "will think Wesley capable . . . of this . . . lazy, pretentious, emotional crap." Alice believes in the power of narrative and begs for suppression of the diary so that her children need not be identified as the offspring of a "cult figure, a well-known and admired *nut.*" The tapes themselves record our decade's worst nightmares; they are not comic.

As Smithson approaches death, all is circles and cycles: mechanical gears reflect in life and time, in medical check-ups, prayers, memories, customs clearance, word patterns. Images beget images. The word *around* becomes a litany. Smithson has lived by an instinctive faith in words, but now letters rotate with the earth, like a wheel of fortune, a carousel, a torture rack, a ceiling fan, a passion flower.

The passion flower, folk art, and the overview are Murphy's signature tropes. Smithson adds serpents. The body is a country, words are cancers and guerrillas and snakes; fate is political. The only hope for survival, the only road from overview to understanding, is deconstruction of the words and tumors. In Smithson's world there is little choice of identities. His text wanders among his failures. Newsprint terrors metastasize; "nothing can ever be only

skin deep." Smithson knows words are a scrim, yet he chooses to believe the chorus of his colleagues, family, and doctors, "doubtless it's harmless." He weeps because he is "not the one who has the story that will bring it all down."

There is an irresistable temptation to assume that Sarah Murphy shares Wesley Smithson's frustration. (The initials WS, turned upside-down, are SM. Is there metastructural significance?) Murphy has told us before that people — children and old people and strong useful young adults — are being tortured and murdered and spirited away, and she has told vividly and well, but the terror spreads, and the systems do not fall. Alone in a hotel room, Smithson stares at the ceiling and tries to project an image of a carousel; he sees a helicopter, never reality — not in prayer, not in experience — never a ceiling fan. I hear — and wish to share with Smithson before he dissolves into rotating blades and words — some lines from Di Brandt's *Mother, not mother*: "i stole the language / of their kings & queens. . . . oceans are dying & here we sit / discussing words."

Women's Histories

Helen Duncan
Kate Rice: Prospector. Simon & Pierre $22.95

Doris Pennington
Agnes Macphail: Reformer. Simon & Pierre $24.95

Reviewed by Deborah Blenkhorn

Doris Pennington's biography of Agnes Macphail is a comprehensive account spanning the early life, political career, and mature years of the woman who was both lauded and criticized in her role as "Canada's First Female MP." Macphail was born in 1890 and died in 1954; her career in politics was illustrious, and her views on social reform were provocative and controversial. She worked actively for gender equity in all aspects of private and public life, and was generally a spokeswoman for the downtrodden—whether they were imprisoned, unemployed, disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged.

Kate Rice, the subject of Helen Duncan's biographical study, was also a rebel of sorts—although certainly more in a personal than a political context. Rice lived from 1882 to 1963; as a prospector in the Yukon in the early decades of this century, Rice flaunted her difference from the norms and expectations of the day; overthrowing a teaching career, she was inspired by her father's tales of "the Northwest Frontier" to live an isolated life fraught with hardships in order to attain the elusive goal of striking it rich. Rice also raised more than a few eyebrows by living with her business partner, Dick Woosey, whose journal entries are interwoven with Duncan's narrative.

Simon and Pierre have published several recent works on notable women in Canadian history, including these portraits of Agnes Macphail and Kate Rice. Although both of these works purport to be biographies, they differ considerably in both style and substance: the former is a collection of rich and diverse source material, categorized into a chronological, highly structured format; the latter is a narrative account that virtually takes the form of a historical novel.

Besides the structure of their titles, these books share a number of other similar features. Both authors, Doris Pennington and Helen Duncan, had personal knowledge of and contact with the subjects of their biographical studies: Doris Pennington's father was a one-time suitor of Macphail, and maintained contact with her throughout her political career; Helen Duncan met the adventuresome and rebellious Kate Rice when Duncan was a child and Rice was just setting out on her life as a prospector. Both

Pennington and Duncan display in their works a strong sense of admiration for the women whom they are profiling. Indeed, one could argue that this sense of admiration often precludes a more critical stance on the way in which the source materials reflect the characteristics and behaviour of the subjects.

This bias is most apparent, in both books, in the discussion of the sexuality of these women. Both authors cling steadfastly to the image of the women they champion as eminently desirable and frequently admired yet chaste throughout their lives. Rice cohabited for years with her partner, Dick Woosey—a married man whose wife had deserted him—and many of their contemporaries speculated about the nature of the relationship. Yet Sarah Duncan goes out of her way to "clarify" that the friendship was a platonic one: "It was more than a pure business deal; his prescience where she was concerned warned her of his closeness but what it actually was, she didn't yet know." Nevertheless, with typical, if not skillful, insertion of romanticized and highly speculative passages about Rice's state of mind, Duncan does include one moment of "sensuality" in Rice's relationship with Woosey. The beautiful Kate was, of course, courted by many suitors, both worthy and unworthy, and refused them all. In the only scene of physical intimacy on which Duncan speculates, Kate lies beside Dick Woosey and "holds" him during his serious illness; later, she mourns his death with as much grief as a wife, Duncan tells us. Throughout the work, Duncan seems to want to legitimize Rice's connection to Woosey.

Doris Pennington also chronicles a life that was ostensibly virtuous and virginal. Agnes Macphail herself was anxious, according to her own records, to make it clear to posterity that her unmarried state was not the result of a lack of interest by or offers from various men in her life. Macphail did regret that she could not be a complete role model for women because she was not managing both a career and a family. Like Rice, Macphail admired her father: in fact, a strong father figure who somehow has failed to live up to his potential lurks in both women's backgrounds.

Regrettably—and not only because of their tendency to lionize their "heroines"—these two biographies also fail to achieve their potential. In Duncan's book, the desire to produce a narrative that will inspire sympathy and admiration for the subject results in an excess of material and language that is scarcely relevant to serious biography: such features as the "romantically-drooping" figure of Rice's father, the woman's strong attachment to her "Duckling" (the canoe), and the cheerful cries of her pet canary (until its melodramatic death scene) are all too pervasive. Although the work, on the whole, is surprisingly engaging, I would like to have been less surprised and more engaged.

In Pennington's work, the organization of material according to chronology rather than theme results in chapters that—although they faithfully recount everything important within a given time frame—jump from subject to subject , without transitional markers, in a rather annoying fashion. Indeed, some of the chapter headings, such as "The Birth of the CCF," indicate only one (not necessarily the main one) of the issues addressed therein. Nonetheless, the overall impression created by Pennington's biography of Macphail is of a conscientious compilation of source materials—transcripts of speeches, letters, and other documents—which are, themselves, fairly well-crafted and entertaining to read. The political issues with which Macphail grappled several decades ago are vividly portrayed, and they seem strangely familiar.

In short, both works merit a look—even if at times they tell us as much about the biographers as they do about the subjects.

Photographic Mixtures

Keith Maillard

Light in the Company of Women. Harper Collins $24.95

Reviewed by Lorraine M. York

It is no coincidence that Sarsfield Middleton, the central character of Keith Maillard's *Light in the Company of Women*, is a turn-of-the-century pioneer of colour photography's mixture of primary hues, for the novel itself meditates on mixtures of various kinds. Indeed, it challenges the very notion of non-mixture, of detachment, and so when the novel opens with a view of Sarsfield "look[ing] down from the rooftop of the building that housed his father's photography business," wishing he could capture the sight of an odd man in the street, he appears to embody Olympian photographic detachment. As the events of this compelling family story unfold, however, this visual and philosophical stance undergoes a remarkable—and twentieth-century—revolution.

That Sarsfield should cultivate detachment is not surprising; the father-photographer mentioned in the opening paragraph of the novel has a habit of bestowing unwanted children on his wife—by means of rape. As a young child, Sarsfield has no vocabulary to describe the act which he has overheard and barely understood; in this sense he stands in for a whole society which had no vocabulary, no legal understanding of rape within marriage. And so, we hear, "Sarsfield resolved to detach himself, so far as was humanly possible, from the life of the family," and the instrument of severance which he adopts is the in-humanly possible technology of the camera. But one of the richest philosophical debates associated with photography concerns the viability of detachment: Does the camera offer separation from the viewed object or an inevitable connection? Maillard's sympathies lie with the latter proposition, and so Sarsfield's programmatic detachment is doomed to crumble. Indeed, his initial practise of photographing women as an aesthetic act alone dangerously parallels, in its philosophy, therape of the female by the Patriarchal Photographer. And so, on the day on which the novel opens, Sarsfield tries to take another of those photographs of women—only this time he will step away from his photographic and emotional viewfinder and marry the subject (object) of that photograph.

This eventual, hard-won alliance between Sarsfield and his photographic working subject, Emma, associates the mixing of subject-object relations which I have just discussed with the mixing of social classes. To marry Emma Rossiter is, in Sarsfield's propertied-class West-Virginian system, to fall prey to a dangerous class heterogeneity. At the same time, Maillard does not fall prey to an easy fictional cliche: rebellious son and imperious blocking elders. Sarsfield himself is ambiguously mixed in class terms; though he often wishes to be free of the monied and propertied ancestors, he also yearns after his cousin Julia Eberhardt—an up-and-coming society queen. This yearning is, to Maillard's credit, never transcended or cancelled out; it remains, like so much else in this novel, what E.M. Forster would have called a "muddle."

One of the most intriguing muddles in *Light in the Company of Women* is, as the title suggests, gender ambiguity. We hear that, as a young boy, Sarsfield prefers, by far, "the company of women," and his father takes steps to remove him from that dangerously feminizing company and to place him in a boy's school. There, of course, gender-crossing is decidedly outlawed; Sarsfield's first fight results from a cross-dressing insult: "We've got some fine new muslin, Miss Middleton...want to make yourself a petticoat?" Here gender

and class, already mixed, are mixed yet again; Sarsfield's antagonist is a son of trade (hence the reference to muslin), and Sarsfield automatically defines himself in opposition to the mercantile. This antagonist, Arch Kimbell, eventually becomes a most docile Horatio to Sarsfield's Hamlet, and together the two boys form a cult of male heroes like Teddy Roosevelt and Dick Davis, though here, too, gender exclusivity must crumble. At one point, Sarsfield wonders what his male heroes would have to say about the repeated rape of his mother. He finds no answer.

The mixed female *par excellence* in this novel is the socialite Julia Eberhardt, who deserves mention as a literary creation of unusual power. Her novelistic predecessors are Hardy's Sue Bridehead and Fowles's Sarah Woodruff, for she is, to Sarsfield, maddeningly incomprehensible, luxuriating in her privileged existence at one moment, and raging against it the next. Sarsfield never does understand her rages, her ambiguous social position as both powerful and powerless. *Light in the Company of Women* has convincedme, as no other of Maillard's works I have read to date has, that he is a writer to pay attention to.

Uncomfortable Tradition

Fee, Margery, ed.
Silence Made Visible: Howard O'Hagan and Tay John. ECW n.p.

Sparrow, Fiona.
Into Africa with Margaret Laurence. ECW $25

Reviewed by Dorothy F. Lane

Michael Ondaatje uses the term "uncomfortable tradition" to describe writing that promotes a peripheral counter-tradition and resists the conventions of realism. Both Howard O'Hagan's novel, *Tay John*, and Margaret Laurence's African writings can be regarded as "uncomfortable" within the Canadian literary scene. While *Tay John*—first published in 1939 and virtually ignored until its republication by New Canadian Library in 1974—is the principal work of a writer excluded from the Canadian canon, Laurence's involvement in East and West Africa has often been overlooked in examinations of her writing. These two studies, then, have more in common than one might initially expect, since both are attempts to take a more critical and comprehensive look at Canadian writers, and at Canadian literature in general.

Questions of canonicity and reception are implicit throughout *Silence Made Visible*, a dynamic collection that places *Tay John* within the context of O'Hagan's life, his early writing, and critical responses to his work. In both her introduction and a convincing article, editor Margery Fee illustrates that "the positive reception of a literary work depends on more than its literary quality". *Tay John* was initially neglected, Fee suggests, because it did not conform to the realist-naturalist tradition celebrated by many of O'Hagan's contemporaries. Ironically, however, O'Hagan's writing can now be viewed as an early stage in the development of contemporary Canadian fiction and the convention of the "wilderness man."

Silence Made Visible incorporates a wide variety of material and thus encourages readers to take yet another look at the period that produced MacLennan and Grove. The chronology, bibliography, and selection of short pieces by O'Hagan are valuable for those who wish to get a clearer sense of O'Hagan's life and writings. For instance, his first published story, "How It Came About," is a chilling study of racial exclusion and resistance that shows O'Hagan's characteristic depiction of violence, as well as the influence of Conrad's experiments with language and atmosphere. Fee also includes a fascinating interview with O'Hagan, in which interviewer

Keith Maillard finds that O'Hagan refuses to be directed in his responses. Other items, however—such as the letter from Lovat Dickson, which is intended to relate an early recollection of O'Hagan—seem superfluous, especially since a lengthy footnote is required to explain the letter's significance.

Oral storytelling, native "authenticity," and cultural appropriation are issues examined by other critical articles in the collection. *Tay John* focuses partly on a white narrator, Jack Denham, and his encounters with "Tay John" in the mountains of British Columbia, and has therefore been compared to Margaret Laurence's "The Loons." Ralph Maud's article explains the background of the "Tay John" stories and speculates about O'Hagan's sources for First Nations customs; he finally assures the reader that O'Hagan's "claim to ethnographic validity is...sound". This tendency to legitimate O'Hagan's presentation of the Shuswap and Métis—reading the novel for its measure of truth and objectivity—is another connection between Fee's collection and Sparrow's study of Laurence. It is interesting, in fact, that both *Tay John* and Laurence's African writings focus on, or emerge from, encounters of white settler and indigene, and that they confront the difficulty of communicating an unfamiliar oral tradition through a written text.

Fiona Sparrow's *Into Africa with Margaret Laurence* presents the results of exhaustive research into Laurence's fascination with Africa, with African literature, and with European explorers such as Richard Burton. The scope of the book is certainly impressive, and it contributes a great deal to current studies of Laurence; however, Sparrow also expends considerable space in unnecessary evaluative criticism, praising Laurence's accurate portrayals of African cultures and peoples. Like Ralph Maud, Sparrow comments on Laurence's "uncompromising standards of truthful reporting and careful research", where it might have been more useful to examine the appropriateness of employing realism to inscribe an oral tradition. Moreover, many of Sparrow's statements echo Conrad's ambiguous descriptions of the "dark continent"; for instance, she responds to W.H. New's depiction of Laurence as an outsider to West African culture by suggesting that Laurence "penetrated deeply into the society she wrote about and illuminated it from within".

Despite these weaknesses, Sparrow's study does present an invaluable new perspective on Laurence's Manawaka writings, by showing how Laurence may have returned to Canada as an "outsider". Moreover, in her examination of Laurence's *Long Drums and Cannons*—a critique of African texts—Sparrow suggests that Laurence shares with Chinua Achebe a focus on social commentary. It would be worthwhile to examine more fully the effects of Laurence's African experiences upon the Manawaka stories, since Sparrow's text does hint at a different relation between Laurence and the Canadian literary tradition than is usually adopted. Fee's collection similarly suggests that O'Hagan was an "outsider" to the Canadian nationalist canon, and urges a closer examination of his writing than this study is able to provide. Both of these surveys, then, serve as encouragement and resource for further critical work, as well as presenting us with a fresh perspective on the more "uncomfortable tradition" of Canadian writers and texts.

Home Fires

Kevin Irie
Burning The Dead. Wolsak and Wynn $ 10.00

Dennis Cooley
This Only Home. Turnstone Press n.p.

Michael Harris
New and Selected Poems. Signal Editions $ 12.95

Reviewed by Richard Stevenson

If poetry can be construed a journey of sorts, then the ground, space, and time covered by the three volumes under review reaches widely across generations and cultures. Yet an insistence on the particularities of the local, the vernacular, the prophetic in the profane speaks volumes about their shared humanistic concerns.

Kevin Irie, the youngest and least well-known of the three poets, has been widely published. His debut collection offers an accomplished and finely chiselled suite of lyric and serial narrative poems. His subject, the culture conflict of growing up a third generation Japanese Canadian in Toronto's Little Italy — dealing with the forces of assimilation versus the riches of a multi-cultural inheritance — is given a contextual grounding in a section entitled "In Retrospect and Consequence," a serial lyric centrepiece and several short lyrics on Canada's betrayal of Japanese Canadian citizens in the 1940s.

This final section should be the best; it is the most ambitious and far-reaching in terms of the social-political ramifications of the theme. But too often the poet rails against the faceless bureaucracy instead of mining his work with the carefully observed details and subtle nuances of speech that characterize the bulk of the collection. Perhaps the poet himself knows this:

> Am I choosing
> to speak for a voice,
> which, collectively,
> still
> prefers its silence?

It is when he speaks in the first person singular, or chooses to record the observations of a third person narrator — when he hones his line to a a short, terse set of imagistic phrases; when he observes coolly, with a matter-of-fact tone of feigned objectivity — that he is able to get in close for the final ironic twist of the knife that the best of these poems deliver:

> The boarder upstairs
> was the best nominee,
> he gave a performance
> that won him your hand.
> You moved one flight
> above your parents, finally a tenant
> of their own beliefs.
> (" For Maria, Growing Older ")

If Kevin Irie occasionally errs in the direction of declamatory denunciation, Dennis Cooley, in his latest collection, sometimes pares his lines to barest bone and delivers rapture and awe in absence of grounded description. The subject of Cooley's eighth full-length collection is the humanistic and deeply personal response of would-be empiricists and scientist/explorers to the vastness and ultimately inscrutable beauty and mystique of space. As the poet notes in his preface, the poems were initially inspired by his chance encounter with an enthralling coffee table book, *The Home Planet*, which depicts earth from the vantage point of deep space. The central insight throughout the poems, and the original photos,is how all the socioeconomic problems and political mayhem on the planet and all man's petty personal concerns pale before the awesome splendour and fragility of spaceship earth. This theme seems a natural progression for a flatlander poet who has already explored the prairie and — indeed — the vastness of the spaces in between our poor language when confronted by the raw power of nature.

Cooley notes in his preface that the political realities of Vietnam and the Civil

Rights Movement of the Kennedy years have overshadowed the supreme achievements of the Apollo missions, the Russian space program, and man's exploration of the final frontier in general, and that he, "... found the space business offensive in its worship of power and jingoism ...." Thus his discovery that all the famous astronomers and astronauts were overwhelmed with a sense of grace and experienced a deflation of ego —a poetic as opposed to a rationalist stance to their powers of penetration — has released him to explore the language of these primary texts and examine his own response to the new physics of cosmology.

In poem after poem, Cooley cracks open his syntax and evades closure in open form, composition-by-field experiments with vernacular rhythms and shifting figure and ground. Typically, his titles run right into his first lines and the periodic structure of his initial sentences undergo a kind of meiosis when confronted with the ineffable, evasive objects of his gaze:

spun out in spring
season to season
sun so strong so unsparing
the clouds behind us
coming undone
one by one, only fast
very fast
spin backwards off the skein
we skim the translucent skin ...
("intravenous space ")

For sheer verve and breathlessness, for his masterful control of rhythm and mouth music, Cooley remains one of our most adventurous and accomplished poets. Although occasionally, the sparks fly off the carborundum wheel into the starry dynamo of night without a kind of corresponding force to keep the fragments in orbit about some still centre.

Michael Harris's volume strikes me as the strongest of the three — as avolume of Selected poems it represents the quintessence of fifteen years' of published work. However, at 205 pages selected from only three previous volumes and perhaps the equivalent of a fourth collection of new material (no chronology is used; the poems are merely divided up thematically), a volume of half or two-thirds the length of this one might have been preferable. Still, Harris is equally adept at writing modernist free verse sonnets, persona poems, linked imagistic and narrative sequences, family and character sketches, metaphysical lyrics, object and nature poems, travel meditations, satiric squibs, and deeply personal lyric meditations on love and death, and he generally brings a keening lyricism to the page.

It is as a craftsman perhaps that Mr. Harris impresses me most. Listen to the sheer energy in the compression of syllables and taut phrasing here:

O I do love her, that woman in love with death,
numb with denial, drugged and dumb with fear.
Why beat around the bush. And if one more
adage still manages to retain

a little of its original power, I confess
I have flown from time to time
in the face of convention, like Icarus,
who fucked up badly, rebelling against
his clever daddy, or maybe just flying wild
for the hell of it. Or living like Dionysus the Dark
popping grapes until his tummy bulged,
rubbing his knees and elbows raw with women.

For now I am the father she can fondle,
the man she needn't marry, the boy she teases
with full impunity. I am the scribble in her diary,
the walk-on in her dreams. I am the weekend guest...

Harris is a poet's poet, delightfully irreverent, not at all stodgy or academic, despite a certain amount or erudition and an allusive hand.

A Dance of All the isms

Barry Callaghan, ed.
15 Years in Exile. Exile Editions n.p.
Exile's Exiles, the Happy Few. Exile Editions n.p.
Reviewed by Marta Dvorak

Thank you, Barry Callaghan, for "de-ghettoizing" Canadian literature in the 15 years of publication of *Exile*, the literary quarterly in which international contributors and Canadian writers, painters, composers, and photographers have together found a haven and joined in a dance of all the *isms: the fox trot, the tango, modernism and postmodernism, the concrete cakewalk and comic book tales and gothic ghost stories and summonings in circles of sacred stones from all over the world.* If you are looking for a real treat, don't miss this superb anthology culled from the best of its past 15 volumes, published to celebrate *Exile* magazine's 15-20th anniversary!

Adding to the eclecticism is the fact that we find young writers alongside established ones, and writers from Eastern Europe as well as Africa, Australia and South America, alongside the major contributors from Western Europe. But the best part of the treat is the fact that some of these works have been published nowhere else. One delightful example is Mavis Gallant's *Mau to Lew: the Maurice Ravel-Lewis Carroll Friendship.* This witty short story, that does not appear elsewhere, is reminiscent of the best works produced by nonsense artists, from Edward Lear on through Ogden Nash, Peter Sellers and the Goons, the Marx Brothers, and Monty Python. Through her brand of nonsense, M. Gallant explores the universe of discourse and of (re)discovery. The aim is to sow the seeds of doubt, to disorient, to question what is (too) commonly known and (too) easily accepted. In this gradual and impeccably structured reversal of roles mirroring the perverted world of *Through the Looking Glass*, we find true gems based on a deft control of bathos.

Then those unfamiliar with the experimental work of Hungarian-Canadian Robert Zend can sink their teeth into an excerpt from *OAB*, or the delightful story *The Key*, an admirably well-structured deconstruction, beginning (of course) with The End, which is followed by a Footnote On the Conception of the Short Story Entitled "The Key", in turn followed by a Footnote On the Miscarriage of the Short Story Entitled "The Key", and the Footnote on Footnotes... *The Key* is a wonderful twist on the chest-of-drawers story, a blend of fiction and metafiction, intertextuality and interdisciplinarity, synthetic and playful literary analysis and narrative. In the embedding process, Zend even manages to include doodles that we could call concrete prose!

Those who admire Murray Schafer the composer can now enjoy Murray Schafer the author, in a work that defies description. Suffice it to say that it is a sensuous exploration of form and space and texture. Contributing to the diversity of the material are sketches, oils, engravings, and photographs, often playful, often experimental, such as the intriguing fusion of nude and landscape in Michel Lambeth's *Nuescapes.* or the deceptive simplicity of line of Tomi Ungerer's disturbing drawings, or Claire Weissman Wilks's editing of Hannah Maynard's extraordinary photographs. Robert Markle combines sketches with a reflexion on the eroticism and beauty of the female body. In the *Hogg Poems and Drawings*, we savour an intriguing oil pastel along with Barry Callaghan's poem *Judas Priest*, in which he demonstrates a mastery of the metrical, syntactical, and rhetorical possibilities of the couplet, and a superb control of rhyme worthy of Pope and Byron and Bob Dylan all rolled into one. One thinks of the line by Swift: *For Pope can in one couplet fix/ More sense than I can do in six.*. The rhythm gallops along in the

best tradition of the ballad, always natural, never forced, due to a command of the rhythmic potentiality of vivid colloquial English.

We can feast on Sean Virgo's powerful, precise prose, and Margaret Avison's poems, carrying such impact in their simplicity. Then there is an excerpt from Jane Urquhart's *Changing Heaven*, playing with intertextuality yet moving beyond, and the haunting *Prophecy* by film-maker and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini. But among the most superb pieces is the breath-taking extract from Timothy Findley's 1977 novel *The Wars.*, a stark portrait of war-time in which the author proceeds like a painter, through dabs, light brush-strokes, mere touches, to capture fragments of truth/ insight, bits of reality like the ancient pictures that crumble under the narrator's gaze. T. Findley's minimalist technique is awesome, as he manages to telescope image and reality, to achieve perfect stasis, a time freeze in which the reader literally enters the snapshot.

Not all the pieces are of equal calibre, of course. There are forgettable pieces like M. Atwood's *Murder in the Dark* or Claude Gavreau's *The Good Life.* Tibor Déry's *The Circus* (Hungary) is laborious and flat, and Italo Calvino's *If On a Winter Night a Traveller* (Italy) is equally unconvincing, reading like a poor imitation of Alain Robbe-Grillet. Mainly translation getting in the way, you might argue. Not so. For throughout its 20 years of publication, *Exile* has systematically offered the English-speaking public samples of the best Quebec authors, all respecting a tradition of fine translation. Ray Ellenwood's translation of Jacques Ferron's *Papa Boss* is but one example of translation at its best, that is translation that does not privilege the referential system of the target text, and that rather than erasing or assimilating the foreign quality of the source text, aims at preserving the difference or otherness. Another success is W. Findlay and M. Bowman's translation of Michel Tremblay's *Les Belles-Soeurs*, which convincingly turns Tremblay's jarring *joual* into a vivid Scots-English working-class dialect.

Don't miss this superb compilation of high quality artistic production: indulge yourself and feast on it. Taking Houdini as the embodiment of magic, killed by a gratuitous act, B. Callaghan and his literary magazine have tried to be keepers of the magic: "If you want to know where Harry Houdini still lives," says Callaghan, "where he escaped before your eyes, from all the traps and locks of poetry and prose and painting and music, Harry Houdini is in *Exile.* Houdini is in the heart of every writer who appears in *Exile.*"

The Author Speaks

Margaret Atwood

"An Interview with Margaret Atwood." American Audio Prose Library n.p.

"Margaret Atwood reading "Unearthing Suite." American Audio Prose Library n.p.

"Margaret Atwood reads from A Handmaid's Tale and talks about this futuristic fable of misogyny as compared to Orwell's 1984." A Moveable Feast #17 n.p.

Reviewed by Nancy Roberts

When the scholars at the Twelfth Symposium on Gileadean Studies gather to discuss the tapes that make up *The Handmaid's Tale*, their document is about two hundred years old and its narrator has long since met her fate. The scholars are not, however, as interested in the narrator as they are in the identity of her Commander, whose power and public position compel their attention. While the tapes considered here differ from that archival material in a number of ways, an interest in identity and power remains. At the end of the twentieth century it is the public identity of the author and the sources of her power that fascinate us.

The voice on these tapes is that of

Margaret Atwood, respected author and icon of Canadian culture. When her heroine, Offred, spoke into her tape recorder, she took care to hide her words so that they and she would not be destroyed. Atwood, on the other hand, speaks openly and at length from a position, not merely of freedom, but of power and authority. Her tapes are public acts. And it is through these acts—the reading of her fiction and the answering of the interviewers' questions—that the public figure of the author is created.

The first of the tapes under consideration here is an interview with Jan Castro, taped in 1983. (The same interview, altered only slightly, has been published in VanSpanckeren and Castro's *Margaret Atwood: Vision and Form.*) The second tape is a reading of the story, "Unearthing Suite," from Atwood's 1983 collection of short stories, *Bluebeard's Egg.* The third is comprised of a short reading from the opening of *Handmaid's Tale,* followed by a twenty-minute interview on that novel. Since so much of this material has appeared in printed form (the story, the novel, the longer of the two interviews), the question arises, why tapes at all? What do we seek in these tapes that we feel we can't get from the printed page? Perhaps—whether for ourselves or for our students—we are hoping to gain access, through the author's voice, to the "real" person who we imagine standing or hiding behind the fiction she has produced. In the taped performance we may catch a tremor in the voice, a caught breath, or an angry or a sarcastic tone—moments which might never appear in print.

The voice that we hear in these tapes employs the familiar flattened tones which, particularly in the fiction, provide irony and humour. At other times, especially in the interviews, there's a testiness and an edge to Atwood's voice. Defensive and seemingly wary, she shows little patience with questions she perceives to be naive or overly critical. Such questions are met with questions of her own. When Tom Vitale asks about *Handmaid's Tale,* "Did you mean to write a prediction of what our society might become or was it meant as an allegory for elements that are in our society now?" she coolly replies, "Could it be both?" When Jan Castro asks "Why and when do males dominate city spaces," Atwood retorts, "When don't they?" It is the tone of her delivery in each case as much as the words themselves which stuns the interviewers into awkward and stumbling silence. Mildly shocking as these retorts may be, they might nevertheless be helpful to students tempted by overly simplistic interpretations of Atwood's work.

At other times the voice on these tapes is that of an exhausted teacher, her patience worn thin by the dullness of her pupils, but compelled to educate them nonetheless. Tom Vitale is given a lesson on Orwell: "A lot of people remember *1984* as ending with Winston Smith loving Big Brother. Isn't that how you think of it as ending?" she asks. "Yeah, sure," he admits. "But it doesn't," she gleefully pronounces and then proceeds to explain.

The pedagogic method is particularly evident in the Castro interview. Whether the subject is the third eye—

> There actually is a physical third eye, did you know that?
> . . . . I can refer you to a poem.... one meditation technique is to put ... a drop of water, or I recommend tiger balm on the third eye to help you concentrate on it.

literary endings—

> Are you familiar with the work of Charlotte Bronte at all? The first really ambiguous ending is in Villette where the reader is given a choice of two endings.... Double endings, I mean anybody who reads nineteenth-century literature—in any depth—knows about those.... Anybody who has studied, for instance,

> the stucture of tragedy, [knows] the denouement is always swift.

or political history—

> The history of Grenada was quite different. Would you
> like to hear it?... Grenada happened in the following way...

Atwood turns the tables on her interviewers, teaching them before they can quiz her. Defensive, didactic, and somewhat pompous, the author protects herself.

In "Unearthing Suite," however, the author arranges her own revelation of self, and this is far more satisfactory. Atwood's voice in the telling is warm, relaxed and very funny. A family is presented and considered, its mysteries probed, and left intact. Like the interviews, the story is an attempt to understand origins and identity, but this time there is no sense of threat, protection or defensiveness. The narrator (who presents herself as incurably lazy) contemplates her elderly and ferociously active parents and wonders about their own approaching death and her own entropy: "As for me, I will no doubt die of inertia." As she meditates on the enigma of her parents' lives ("What is my mother's secret?") and compares their own vigor and industry to her purported sloth, the narrator and her story succeed where the taped interviews failed. The reader is presented with a view of the author's parents (virtually identical to those portrayed in *Surfacing*) and author that is at once revelation and concealment, a sense of mysteries considered and not yet understood. Atwood is able to construct this representation in a manner far more gracious and self-deprecating than in either of the taped interviews. It is no doubt instructive that the author's fictionalized representation of herself and her origins should be so much more satisfying and complete than any so-called factual interview.

Creating Collectively

Diane Bessai
Playwrights of Collective Creation (The Canadian Dramatist, ed. Christopher Innes, Vol. II). Simon & Pierre n.p.

Helen Peters
The Plays of Codco. Peter Lang $26.95

Reviewed by Neil Carson

Two recent publications underline the importance of collective creation to the development of drama in English Canada. The method of actor-generated "playwrighting" by which the performers produce their own script during rehearsals is by no means unique to Canada. But it has probably played a more important role here than elsewhere. This fact presents its own problems to those attempting to record the history of Canadian drama.

Primary among these is question of evidence. Since many of the collectively created plays have never been published there is no agreed-upon body of material for the historians to discuss. Furthermore, when performances can be reconstructed there is disagreement about how they should be evaluated or related to similar works elsewhere.

Diane Bessai addresses this latter problem in *Playwrights of Collective Creation*, the second volume in *The Canadian Dramatist* series edited by Christopher Innes. The title is somewhat misleading, suggesting as it does a comprehensive study of the subject, since Bessai focuses only on the work of Paul Thompson and three of the several playwrights who have worked with him. In the first half of the volume, she discusses a number of works collectively created at Theatre Passe Muraille during the 1970's. In those years, Thompson and his actors sought to attract new audiences and to explore those indigenous subjects ignored by the regional theatres. To do so they employed a number of theatrical tech-

niques borrowed from, or inspired by, the popular culture with which these audiences were familiar.

As Bessai herself points out in an introductory section, however, most of the non-naturalistic and presentational techniques employed by the company had been pioneered earlier in the century by innovators such as Erwin Piscator, Bertolt Brecht and Joan Littlewood. What is it, then, that makes a collectively created play unique? In what significant way, for example, does *1837: The Farmers' Revolt* differ from Brecht's *Arturo Ui* or Sharon Pollock's *Walsh*? Is it the case that "theatrical characterization" differs from literary characterization? And just how is the performer who "writes on his feet" fundamentally different from the author who writes on the usual part of his anatomy?

Bessai is conscious of these problems, and her analysis of several Theatre Passe Muraille productions is a valiant attempt to establish critical definitions and criteria for what she claims is a unique genre. While I myself do not find all of her arguments equally compelling, I very much welcome her detailed accounts of the evolution of particular plays.

Somewhat less successful, in my opinion, is her discussion of the playwrights influenced by involvement in some of these productions. Rick Salutin, who collaborated on *1837: The Farmers' Revolt*, John Gray, who composed music for several TPM productions, and Linda Griffiths, who worked as an actor with Thompson, have all gone on to produce successful works alone or in collaboration. That these writers were influenced by their contact with Thompson is undoubtedly true. But to argue that this somehow sets them apart as "playwrights of collective creation" seems to me less convincing. Bessai's suggestion, for example, that Rick Salutin learned how to use stage metaphors during his work with TPM, and that the theatrical presentation of hockey as history in *Les Canadiens* is a result seems to me to oversimplify the creative process. Similarly, the raconteur style and special relationship to the audience which John Gray used in *Billy Bishop Goes to War* are not techniques peculiar to collective creation.

The difficulty of creating a "canon" of these ephemeral works is confronted by Helen Peters who has prepared an edition of five of *The Plays of Codco*. Peters has had recourse to the tools of the new bibliography in an effort to reconstruct works that were designed for performance rather than publication. She has produced carefully line-numbered texts and an extensive apparatus listing the variants she has found in the sources consulted (audio cassettes, videotapes, and written transcriptions). The result is a rather solemn and reverential entombment of the improvisational spirit which one imagines would appeal enormously to the company's sense of humour.

It is a paradox of the theatre that the life of the drama is in performance but its survival depends on publication. Indeed it was partly the lack of published Canadian plays that prompted actors and directors to resort to the techniques of collective creation in the early 1970's. When it comes to preserving the results of that creative process, however, publication is a clumsy method. Plays like those of Codco, which depend heavily on the idiosyncratic pantomime and regional accent of the original performers, are very inadequately reproduced in print. Since this is the only form in which most of us are likely to know these works, we are deeply indebted to editors such as Peters for their painstaking efforts at preservation. Nevertheless, it is a melancholy fact that until some more satisfactory method of recording the non-verbal characteristics of collectively created productions is devised (a videotape library perhaps), much Canadian drama, like *The*

Plays of Codco, will remain in a kind of academic limbo accessible only to students and highly skilled readers.

Rising Playwrights

Colleen Curran
Escape Acts: Seven Canadian One-Acts. Nuage Editions n.p.

Harry Standjofski
Urban Myths: Anton & No Cycle. Nuage Editions n.p.

Jeanne-Mance Delisle
A Live Bird In Its Jaws. Nuage Editions n.p.

Reviewed by Paul Malone

Escape Acts, edited by Colleen Curran, presents seven short plays whose settings purportedly traverse the country from Nova Scotia to B.C. That is to say, one play takes place in B.C. and the rest east of Thunder Bay or nowhere specific (although two of them were produced in Calgary). Fortunately, the major claim of the plays to thematic unity is the broadly defined idea of "escape," which ties them together nicely, and the high quality of the offerings offsets any possible complaints about an Eastern Canadian bias, especially with Toronto so little in evidence.

Beginning in Plymouth, Nova Scotia, for example, Bonnie Farmer's *Irene and Lillian Forever* presents an affecting scene from black working-class life and shows that poverty can drive people both to dishonesty and to solidarity. An extremely skilful first play, all the more valuable for giving exposure to a little-seen aspect of Nova Scotian society. At the opposite end of the spectrum if not of the country, Curran's own *Senetta Boynton Visits the Orient* is a shaggy-dog mixture of dotty travelogue and senior-citizen romance that bounces all over the world in a church hall but never quite gets to the Orient. Perhaps the flimsiest selection, but lively fun. In *Vengeance*, set in Montreal, a retired opera singer from the old country hires a caregiver who turns out to be no stranger. Aviva Ravel deftly subverts the dusty at-last-I've-tracked-you-down thriller motif without disappointing. In Laurie Fyffe's brief but charming *Sand*, a Mississauga housewife belly-dances out of stifling bourgeois respectability to the ever-changing desert of her fantasies. *Texas Boy*, by George Rideout, is a perceptive picture of first love, an affectionate look back at the 60s, and an examination of some of the differences between the US and Canada, then and now. The longest selection, Clem Martini's sure-handed *Life History of the African Elephant*, is an off-kilter romance that provides gentle fun and genuine warmth out of some very Ortonesque ideas. Finally, Meredith Bain Woodward's *Day Shift* is a finely drawn character vignette of a woman confined to a life without promise in rural B.C.

Equally promising are Harry Standjofksi's two plays collected in *Urban Myths*. The first play, *Anton*, is about three wealthy sisters trapped in a big house, occasional desires to go to Moscow, the felling of trees, nostalgia, and yearning for love. Only one of the onstage characters is a Russian, however; the others are anglophone Montrealers, and the title is not only a reference to Chekhov (whose work is done homage here), but also the mnemonic for a bank card number. The play's monetary subtext juxtaposes the far-off opening up of Eastern Europe—the play is set in 1989—with the characters' and the author's lack of satisfaction with Western wealth and capitalism. Standjofski deals with a similar theme in less naturalistic fashion in the second play. *No Cycle*'s title is also multi-leveled, referring to the Japanese Noh theatre, which provides the play's five-part structure, but also pointing up the spiritual poverty of Western culture, "where the death and resurrection of Christ is celebrated with a bunny hiding chocolate eggs

around your house." Thus, Standjofski cunningly superimposes the Stations of the Cross on the cycle's first segment, "Rabbit"; other segments consist of monologue, pantomime or dance, often with text projected on the set. In both plays, Standjofski's careful craft and diligent workshopping result in intellectually and emotionally layered scripts that come daringly close to pretentiousness but never teeter off the edge. If Standjofski can keep up this balancing act, his future should be extremely bright.

In four short scenes, Jeanne-Mance Delisle's *A Live Bird in its Jaws* presents a triangular relationship. The compulsive writer Hélène, "a sensual, attractive woman," has an unfaithful bisexual lover, Xavier, who is the father of her absent eight-year-old son. Xavier has a twin brother, Adrien, who is also his long-time partner in incest. Hélène has written a weird expressionistic performance based on Xavier's reminiscences about the mother he seemingly adored and the domineering father who died in a mysterious house fire. Adrien arrives to take part in the performance, but first he seduces Xavier and, more roughly, Hélène as well. At last, the performance begins: with the twins costumed as fighting cocks and Hélène as a gypsy mother, the play reaches a violent climax as the arsonist's identity is revealed. At the end, Hélène dons the gown of a "glass princess" and proclaims: "I reclaim my body and my soul, condemned to hope for love! . . . Better to run through life with dreams impaled and held aloft!"

In Delisle's original text, *Un oiseau vivant dans le gueule*, the French language itself suits both the ritualism and the passion of a play that seesaws constantly between poetry and profanity, two great obstacles to successful translation. Yves Saint-Pierre's version, polished by workshopping with actors, conveys both in good idiomatic English; but the play is flattened by the very act of translation, the characters reduced to empty stereotypes. *A Live Bird* never soars above its thick layer of overdone Freudian imagery (shafts, lances, snakes, lone trees, chimneys, and so on rear their heads on every page). It would take a truly brilliant staging to send an audience home "wringing wet and exhausted" as a note demands. This English edition is more than competent, but not sufficient to convey Delisle's promise as a playwright, and is further marred by typos—particularly at the beginning of Scene Two when Xavier is given a stage direction as one of his lines—and by Guy Rodgers's brief but pretentious introduction. Many other stage directions from the French have disappeared altogether, and the author's original preface is also sorely missed.

Individual Native Voices

Lynda Shorten
Without Reserve: Stories from Urban Natives. NeWest Press, pa. n.p.

Daniel David Moses
The White Line: Poems. Fifth House, pa. $10.95

Reviewed by Mava Jo Powell

An egalitarian concern for the rights of all members of underprivileged minority groups has been a predominating sociopolitical line of thought in Canadian culture during the last decade. In the case of First Nations peoples, this corrective dialogue acknowledges long standing neglect, prejudice, and abuse. Yet, by its very nature, sociopolitical attention is distanced because it focuses on people as members of a group. Therefore it remains silent about the lives of many urban Natives who have neither band nor Treaty status; above all, it renders indistinct the Native as *individual.* However, the literary text can transcend the impersonality of political discussion. In the two texts under review, the uniqueness of poignant, individual voices is intimately

spoken in response to a safe and sympathetic listener and perceptively written within and in reaction to the conventions of contemporary poetry.

Written/edited by Linda Shorten, a sensitive journalist who is herself white, *Without Reserve* comprises realistic, ethnographic profiles of eleven Native people who live or have lived in Edmonton. The personal stories were taped and transcribed with a self-conscious and, I believe, successful effort not to appropriate voice but to represent it fairly. The male and female speakers range in age from fourteen years young to middle-age to eighty-four years old. Shorten explains in her brief introduction that she did not seek horror stories; nor did she seek a representative sample. She claims only to have covered a range of experiences.

It is very difficult not to recoil from this range of experience, from these testifying, intensely personal voices which, with few exceptions, chronicle desperate lives of recurrent illness, alcohol and drug abuse, attempted suicide; of profound poverty and family instability; of personal irresponsibility and betrayal of family members; of sexual abuse by family members; of undereducated children humiliated and hungry in institutional settings and in a seemingly endless progression from foster home to foster home. The personal outcome is a self that hates and is hated, a self that is hopelessly improverished and vaguely defined, a self that despises and desires Aboriginal ties. Above all, most of these profiles provide the microscopically fine filaments of an unbearable lesson in survival: stop being a victim of abuse by becoming its perpetrator.

These individuals—Jimmy Mix (Canadian), Grace, Lisa, Casey, Jokes, Maggie, Kicker, Helen, Bicycle, Sky, Jane—long for respect; very occasionally they receive it. Jane Ash Poitras, for example, escaped total ruin by having a very religious white foster mother, called Grandma, who, while feared ("...Grandma would always tell me the social workers were going to come take me away. So I was always scared.") instilled in Jane a sense of gratitude—the idea that "no one has it all". Jane says that consequently she was never angry about "what happened" to her:

> When I was kid, I was always wondering, who did I look like? ... I really wondered, was I an alien? Was I a human person? Because I had no family, no physical family .... And I got this kind, little elderly white lady looking after me, but I knew I didn't belong to her.
>
> You see, here is this brown mouse. You're looking around and all the other mice are white. You do see the odd brown mouse, but they're on skid row, and everyone is saying, 'Those mice over there, they're drunks.' And you're thinking, 'Oh shit. I'm one of those mice.'

It was through academic achievement that Jane gained self-respect and the strength to learn about her Native roots, about Native spirituality. Today she is an acknowledged artist; she is regarded as a holy woman; and she is used as a role model, giving talks to Indian children on how they should undertake their education. "And not just Indian kids, other people too."

The form of the second text is an expression of individuality through a literary form and of a tone that is very different from the first. Written by Daniel David Moses, *The White Line*, is a collection of poems whose various points of view are expressed by personae who evince no hint of the bitter or the sere. In this poetry of enactment, self-regarding statements are few. And even these are distanced with wit and conveyed through an exemplary technical control over the expressive force of diction. The externalized point of view, while revealing a penetrating inner vision, is directed outward from the self in celebration of the subtleties and mysteries of the

observable patterns in nature and in language.

Significantly, the "white" in the title of the collection scarcely reverberates in subtle allusion to the referent which one would expect. Rather, the title is the name of the third subsection, where white is the white of winter sky, of old age, of the pale face of the moon "numb with a mummy's happiness", of hospital sheets which make one feel snowed in, of frost before dawn, of breath that flakes like snow, of shards of ice, of stars glinting like ivory, of a memory made of snow, of the glare from the white rising sun. Most movingly, in 'Paper', the white line is the white space on the printed page which figuratively signifies the literal meaninglessness of the nonetheless vital social convention: "You can't deny the truth of salutation or address—/there is nothing but white between the lines." And in the final poem, 'The Line', the extended figure of the fishing line and of fishing sustains a complex comparison with the poetic line, which itself metonymically represents the poem, and the poem itself, verbal expressivity. The speaker concludes with this rhetorical question, "... How would it feel, knowing,/at last, what the poem really/is, to lack the line to speak?" The reviewer nonetheless replies: Masterfully varied explorations in the rhythmical subtleties of syllabic verse, there is no such lack in these impressive lines.

The Real Goddess

Alan Cumyn

Waiting for Li Ming. Goose Lane Editions, n.p.

Reviewed by Sandra Filippelli

The Eastern female has long been viewed as a figure of exotic beauty and mysticism in both life and art. The mis/appropriation of such a goddess figure by the Western male, lacking fundamental knowledge of her engendering culture, is not new, either. Sinophiles comprise one group which does not make light of the issue of the involvement of foreigners with Chinese nationals, especially within China's closely guarded borders; indeed, the subject is virtually a moral imperative.

In Alan Cumyn's novel, *Waiting for Li Ming*, the protagonist, Rudy Seaborn, does untold damage while adrift, as his name suggests, in a sea of emotional naivety and cross-cultural ignorance in the People's Republic of China. Regrettably, the chilling repercussions of his actions do not become apparent to him until he is back in Canada watching the events in Tiananmen Square unfold on television when he discovers that his girlfriend, Li Ming, the woman whom he passionately awaits to join him in Canada, has become one of the bolder players in the demonstrations.

Cumyn's shifting narrative, altering between Rudy's first person account of his life in China and his still confused, yet vastly more self-reflective third person view from Canada the year after he returns home, augments the character's slow but gradual process of self-realization. Although this structure works as a kind of endistancing technique, enhancing perspective, in the early stages of the narrative, the abrupt scene changes are somewhat off-putting; as June 4th and the birth of his playwright friend Lou's baby loom nearer, however, the dramatic shifts become more fluid and suspenseful. The birth scene itself is perhaps the most absorbing part of the narrative, particularly since it occurs on the night of June 4th and since Lou is the primary catalyst in Rudy's internal journey.

Cumyn's descriptive writing does exquisite justice to the novel. He captures the ambiance of China, the impenetrable haze of otherworldliness, the unbreakable "bubble of cultural glass and steel" separating the Chinese from foreigners, and the mysterious scrutiny of watchful eyes, ambiguous shapes forever looming in the shadows.

This is the China experience of the newcomer to China, stumbling blindly through the culture while being treated like a "celebrity ... from a land that is magic, ... so free, where people can do what they want."

In some sections, however, the events lack credibility. When Li Ming enters Rudy's room to make love with him, it seems as if they exist on an island when, in fact, they might more typically have to worry about the ubiquitous building doorman downstairs and the intimidating sign-in book which local visitors to foreigners' living quarters so often fear.

Rudy is a very naive lad indeed and Li Ming a little too lacking in caution for a young college faculty member and applicant to international conferences and North American graduate schools. However, the hyperbolic nature of their characters and their actions enhances the story as does the earthy realism of Lou whose flat refusal to establish a relationship with Rudy captures his essence in a nugget of truth: "You see, I can't compete with some mythical Chinese goddess that you're never going to see again."

As Cumyn suggests, foreign interference in a society whose politics and culture are so alien can unwittingly harm innocent people who may not themselves be aware of the repercussions of their own actions until it is too late. In Li Ming's words," *Nothing* will happen to you. ... It is my life that is running away!" The real goddess is China itself and the yearning of foreigners for all that they may want to make it be.

Cumyn deserves commendation for painting a vivid and poetic prose picture of the dizzying effect an encounter with China can have on the foreign psyche. The task now is for a foreigner to penetrate the cultural bubble more deeply and write a story depicting the Chinese inside their own country from a truly multi-dimensional perspective.

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 $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 MA 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". 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 explana-

tion 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.

Emotions and Facts

Judith Thompson
Lion in the Streets. Coach House Press $9.95

Heather McCallum and Ruth Pincoe
Directory of Canadian Theatre Archives. Dalhousie University, School of Library and Information Studies $24.95

Reviewed by Kathy Chung

Judith Thompson is one of the most exciting voices in Canadian drama. Employing a stunning language, often of expressionistic poetry, her plays present an urban world of violence and terror, desire and cruelty, involving verbal and sexual abuse, infanticide, suicide, and murder. Her drama is a visceral experience which assaults the audience, engulfing them in her characters' personal obsessions and crises.

Since her first work, *Crackwalker* (1980), Thompson has involved more and more characters in her drama. These characters come from increasingly diverse levels of social class, ethnicity, and physicality. *Crackwalker* depicts the relationship between two couples from the lower working class. In *Lion in the Streets,* Thompson uses a complex relay structure in which one character remains common to any two consecutive scenes while new characters are introduced until by the end of the play she has presented a whole urban neighbourhood of 28 characters in a string of about 18 scenes.

The scenes deal with many diverse personal and social ills: a woman reacts to her husband's infidelity, bourgeois parents met their day care worker, a hypocritical yuppie reporter confronts a poor woman with cerebral palsy, a group of affluent children taunt the child of working-class Portuguese immigrants, a woman diagnosed with bone cancer dreams of dying in the manner of Ophelia in Millais's painting, a man recalls a childhood friendship and its betrayal, and a rape victim is verbally abused by her fiance. These scenes are unified by the continual observing presence of Isobel, the ghost of a 9 year old girl from the neighbourhood who was murdered 17 years earlier.

Thompson's greatest strength is her use of language, particularly the dramatic monologue in which her characters seem to lose the common division between a private and public self. After setting up a seemingly familiar social context, Thompson's characters erupt and express themselves in masterful expressionist and surreal theatrical moments. Scarlett, the woman with cerebral palsy rises from her wheelchair to

dance with her imaginary lover and later offers imprisonment in her immobile body as the image of a punishment, a living Hell, for Christine, the reporter who has betrayed her confidence. When Rodney remembers a childhood betrayal by his school friend Michael, he envisions a present encounter where he takes a knife and cuts Michael's throat.

Thompson's theatre challenges the notion of a unitary fixed self, showing individual identities under attacked, changing, and being constructed. We watch Sue changing, chameleon-like, enacting a seductive strip tease, adapting herself in an attempt to regain the desire of her adulterous husband. In a harrowing scene, a young woman collapses under her fiance's verbal abuse in which he totally rewrites the circumstances of her past rape and forces her to agree that it was an event which she had desired and initiated. It is a painful demonstration of the emotional mechanics of patriarchal social forces and violence against women.

What I find troubling in this brilliant play is its quasi-religious ending. The ghost of Isobel confronts her male killer and forgives him with the words "I love you." In this moment of what Thompson has elsewhere called "grace," Isobel achieves spiritual enlightenment and transcendence. Isobel then tells the audience, "I come back. I take my life. I want you all to take your life. I want you all to have your life." What was a complex play concerned with a community, with showing the patriarchal construction of identity, and with the plight of individuals faced with a variety of social problems, reverts to the affirmation of an autonomous self and to individual forgiveness and grace, solutions which seem pitifully inadequate in the play world of *Lion in the Streets.*

Despite its weak ending, *Lion in the Streets* is a challenging play for both its performers and audience. I am sure Thompson's emotional dissection of contemporary life and her dazzling language and theatricality will leave enduring impressions in the minds and senses of her audiences.

In a totally different vein yet making an equally significant contribution to Canadian theatre is Heather McCallum and Ruth Pincoe's *Directory of Canadian Theatre Archives* published in the *Occasional Papers* series of the School of Library and Information Studies, Dalhousie University. This volume focuses on non-book and visual materials and is an update of the 1973 publication, *Theatre Resources in Canadian Collections.* McCallum's informative introduction identifies "scholars, educators, researchers, archivists, librarians, theatre personnel, and the general public" as the intended readers of this reference work. She clearly describes the parameters of the project, the editorial choices, and the procedure by which the data was collected.

Directory entries are arranged geographically, from east to west, the only omission being the Northwest Territories. The entries are further arranged alphabetically by city or town, followed by institution or theatre. Special collections at each location are also listed. Each entry helpfully contains the address, phone number, fax number, and establishment date of the collecting organization, and a brief description of its holdings based on information supplied by the staff of the institutions.

The directory includes a variety of archival sources ranging from government archives; national and public libraries; university archives and drama departments; theatre companies; schools and associations; museums; and private collections. It describes a wealth of fascinating information for theatre research such as administrative and financial records, prompt scripts, programs, posters, press clippings, correspondences, visual and audio records, play manuscripts, architectural plans, production designs, and much more. There is

also a comprehensive index that is easy to use and an informative selected bibliography.

Not surprisingly, Ontario and Quebec contain a large number of collections, but compared to Alberta and British Columbia, the entries for Manitoba and Saskatchewan seems curiously few. This scarcity may be due to an actual lack of materials or the differing efforts of regional research assistants working on the project.

In addition to meeting the informational needs of her readers, McCallum expresses several other goals in her introduction. She states, "The growth and appreciation of Canadian theatre research largely depends—in the first instance—on the development of Canadian archival resources. This Directory is designed to encourage the preservation and use of materials important to the study of Canadian theatre history." She encourages the continued identification and collection of materials and their deposition in public institutions which, one would hope, are better financed and equipped to preserve, manage and publicize the material, and to provide convenient public access to them. I believe McCallum and Pincoe's *Directory of Canadian Theatre Archives* will prove to be a valuable resource for theatre research in this country. In addition, it does achieve its goal of increasing public awareness and appreciation of Canadian theatrical history and the importance of archival preservation.

Theatrical Biographies

Joyce Doolittle
Heroines. Red Deer College Press $12.95

Daniel MacIvor
House Humans. Coach House Press $12.95

Reviewed by Kathy Chung

Heroines is a collection of three Canadian plays edited by Joyce Doolittle. Two of the pieces, John Murrell's *Memoir* and Michel Tremblay's *Hosanna*, have had previous publications and substantial production histories while the third, Sharon Pollock's *Getting It Straight*, is a much more recent work.

Tremblay's critically acclaimed *Hosanna* (wrongly titled in the table of contents as *Heroines*) was first produced in English in 1974. It deals with the identity crisis experienced and resolved by transvestite Claude Lemieux/Hosanna and his relationship with his lover Cuirette. Tremblay's play about Hosanna, a man who wants to be a woman who wants to be Elizabeth Taylor in *Cleopatra*, and his final acceptance of his male identity is also a political allegory about Quebec's cultural emulation of France and the necessity of accepting its identity of being Quebeçois in North America.

Memoir, Murrell's sentimental, romantic homage to nineteenth-century actress Sarah Bernhardt, was first produced in 1977. Set in 1922, at the close of her life, the seventy-seven year old Bernhardt, on the pretext of writing her memoir, recollects and re-enacts her past in an attempt, in her words, to "accomplish something," "to do—say—mean something," to "understand" and "make sense" of her existence. In this endeavour, the imperious Bernhardt has the reluctant help of her devoted servant, Pitou, whom she forces to act out the other figures in her life.

The play relies on the audience's uncritical acceptance of the Bernhardt legend without which Murrell's Sarah becomes a selfish, tyrannical, grandiose woman who uses Pitou to relive her past. While the play has it humourous and tender moments, it is unclear exactly what sense Bernhardt does make of her life and the conceit of forcing a reluctant Pitou to help her re-enact the past becomes tedious in its repetition.

Getting It Straight is a monologue written and first performed by Sharon Pollock in

1989 at the Winnipeg International Women's Festival. Eme, a so-called schizophrenic who may or may not have attacked her husband, speaks in a fragmented, stream-of-consciousness language weaving a kaleidoscope picture of a woman struggling to come to terms with the inhumanities of our contemporary world largely created by patriarchal forces. Images of nuclear warfare, international military conflicts, multinational commerce, alienating technology, are juxtaposed with those of women silenced and murdered by men, famine and war stricken children, marching men and mothers' tears.

Eme questions who is really mad ("they say I am mad / I say enola gay little boy fat man") and tells the audience, "I say have the courage to fear / I say the more boundless the deed the smaller the / hindrance / I say reality is surpassing imagination." In the end, *Getting It Straight* becomes one woman's call for action addressed to all women to work collectively to challenge and defeat the violent and unconscionable activities of patriarchal society. It is a powerful and challenging play for actress and audience alike.

What puzzles me about *Heroines* is Doolittle's editorial choices and introductory statements. She does not explain her combination of two older, previously published, plays and a much newer experimental piece (separated by almost twenty years), all by established Canadian playwrights. For example, it might make more chronological sense to include Pollock's *Blood Relations* (1980).

It is also unclear what Doolittle means by "heroines." Personal honesty and transformation along with courage, intelligence and creativity are cited in Doolittle's introduction as important qualities in the women of these plays. These qualities I can understand. It is her opening remarks which I find incongruent. Doolittle recalls Carl Jung's theory that each individual has both male and female characteristics, citing this as the source of her "intuitive choice of *Heroines* for the title of this collection." She continues that "masculine and feminine roles are more ambiguous and troublesome today than ever before" and that "Each of the principal characters in *Heroines* has complicated mixtures of so-called masculine and feminine attributes." These remarks have little relevance to the plays except perhaps *Hosanna.* Certainly, Doolittle's strange remark that "The lack of an active, masculine 'other' may be one reason that Eme is mad" is totally misguided and she continues to use the term 'other' without explaining its critical context.

In any case, perhaps *Heroines*'s major contribution lies in the questions it raises about the nature and determination of heroism as it applies to women. I must add that I am grateful to Doolittle for making widely available the poetic gem of Sharon Pollock's *Getting It Straight.*

Daniel MacIvor's *House Humans* contains a dramatic monologue, *House*, and a collection of short quirky literary pieces titled *Humans.* MacIvor's strength is in story telling and in *House*, his character Victor does just that. Angry and intense, Victor tells us about the eccentric people and relationships in his life. In exasperation, he says: "My mother is possessed by the devil, my father is the saddest man in the world, my sister is in love with a dog, the one I love does not love me and I got no place to live."

The overall feel of the monologue, like one of the lists in *Humans*, is a collection of discreet snapshots of a chaotic life, which the audience herself must order and make meaningful. The language in vernacular and the stories are a mixture of the comic and the surreal. The themes are loneliness, the absurdities of human relationships, and the desire for love and happiness. Interspersed within Victor's account of his own life are short bittersweet stories on

similar themes but in a much more gentle and whimsical tone.

House is also metatheatrical. Victor enters the theatre acknowledging the audience and thanking them for "not staying home and watching teevee." Lighting and sound effects come on and off at the snap of his finger. In mid-performance Victor leaps off the stage and wanders through the audience, commenting on his surroundings and his own actions. Given the context of a monologue and the almost throw-away nature of these actions, it is questionable how revolutionary these self-referential effects are. I suspect that today's audience will easily assimilate these gestures and find them more humourous and entertaining than disruptive of audience expectations. One observations I have is that Victor's control of the theatre apparatus, in combination with his angry and aggressive manner, adds a strong element of manipulative power and control to a character whose stories often picture him as lost and powerless.

Humans is a grab bag of lists, character sketches, stories and fables. Many of the stories are delightful and fanciful observations of human nature and can easily be interchanged with those in *House*. "The Stupid Boyfriend" and "His Smell That Room Her Green Dress" are particularly successful. The least interesting are the lists such as "List for a Lunenburg Bride" and "Somebody (to 1984)" which seem to describe individuals but quickly become reductive and stereotypical.

Overall, *House Humans* certainly indicates that MacIvor is a theatrical performer and writer to watch for on the contemporary Canadian stage.

On Endings

Roy MacSkimming
Out of Love.

Robyn Sarah
A Nice Gazebo.

Reviewed by Jill Franks

Rare and refreshing is the book that celebrates coming to terms with endings instead of romantic beginnings, and this is the aim of *Out of Love*. The syntactical ambiguity of the title suggests the emotional ambiguity of the ending of this book: its protagonist falls out of love with both his ex-girlfriend and ex-wife, while he risks his life out of love for his son, who doesn't appreciate his efforts. Jim Urquhart falls out of love, but in the most positive sense of the phrase; the epigraph by Durrell indicates MacSkimming's awareness of the illusory nature of romantic love and of our willful self-deception when we are caught in its throes.

Reminiscent of John Fowles' *The Magus* as well as his *Daniel Martin*, this adventure novel/psychological thriller tells the story of an erudite and cosmopolitan publisher who is called from his home in Toronto to rescue his son Nick from the machinations of the fascist Greek government of 1974. His search for his son, who has been protected from persecution by Jim's ex-girlfriend Maria, is also a search for clarity in his feelings about her and his ex-wife. While Jim is astonished and pleased to see her again, he is as alienated as ever by Maria's emotional honesty and her greater command of events. He believes, however, that she is using her knowledge of Nick's whereabouts emotionally to manipulate him in compensation for his abandonment of her, just as he had wedged Nick between them in their previous relationship. Such coincidence and poetic justice make this a well-patterned, if slightly melodramatic story.

Out of Love is not a melodrama that cloys,

however. In fact, the most sexually-charged scene between Maria and Jim (who never do make love this second time around), though it has great potential for Harlequinesque overwriting, avoids it by MacSkimming's honest appraisal of Jim. The turbulent mixed emotions that Jim feels upon meeting Maria again in such bizarre circumstances are too humanly ambivalent for melodrama. The partly-recriminating, partly-forgiving dialogue between these two ex-lovers is shockingly familiar; the author has apparently been there before, as another title of his attests (*On Your Own Again: The Down-to-Earth Guide to Getting Through a Divorce or Separation and Getting on with Your Life*). MacSkimming sees through Jim's posturing and rationalizations, as Jim himself only begins to do at the end of the novel. The male ego is superbly rendered in all its blind glory, as Jim dashes impetuously from government offices to clandestine meetings with politicians of unascertainable alliances, to Maria's suburban hideaway, heedless of the warnings by higher-ups and Maria herself that his actions are endangering both his and Nick's safety. Jim's rashness and tenacity are not always foolish, however; it is a similar quality that enables him to assess his emotional shortcomings in an astonishingly direct manner, as when his "blunt, tweedy shrink" advises him to "go cold turkey on women for a while . . . because it would stop you from kicking them in the cunt". Jim immediately recognizes the truth in this offensive statement — he had caused pain without taking responsibility for it — and he attempts to amend his behavior. Later, he is put to another severe test of his capacity for love. When he finally locates his son, Nick kicks him, figuratively, in his own genitals, with a declaration of his infatuation with Maria and his ingratitude in the face of his father's deep concern and determined efforts to rescue him from the government gorillas. Jim's sense of fatherly responsibility is perhaps stronger than that which he feels towards women, and his restraint and understanding in this last blow to his ego are the heroic emotions that finally redeem him.

A Nice Gazebo is a collection of short stories that, by comparison, are mundane in setting and plot. Each one is a careful slice of everyday life. The stories are finely crafted, with careful attention to rhythm. The title story alternates its subject between anecdotes from the lives of the speaker's unruly children and the life of her male friend. In an irreverent, off-beat style, Robyn Sarah describes minute incidences in everyday lives that succinctly reveal character. The male friend appreciates simple things like eating his packed lunch alone in the basement of his store, "a kind of temple he makes for himself." He confesses to the narrator that when he has such good food packed in his knapsack, he has everything he wants in life and doesn't even need money. The narrator's mixed feelings about this potential lover form the basis for the story which is also filled with meditations on the meaning of life. Digressions into dream analysis, the conjugations of French verbs that suggest the repetitiousness of life, and the recollection of a tedious summer job made tolerable by her lunchtime consumption of Plato's *Dialogues* — all are juxtaposed with her awe and admiration of the apparent simplicity of her friend. How can he be happy with less than I have?, she seems to be asking. She answers her question with the metaphor of the gazebo, a place of creative play for grownups. He has "a nice gazebo," whereas she's lost the richness of her own inner life in the exigencies of rearing a family and holding a boring job. The fact that she loses her friendship as well as her gazebo would make this a melancholy story if it weren't for the upbeat humor with which the narrator observes all things: losses, achievements, a good day or a gray one, are all revealed

with equal equanimity and wit. The desire to know the truth, as evidenced by her continual analysis of dreams, desires and symbols, is itself the quest for happiness, and packed lunches will not suffice for the narrator as they do for her anti-hero.

Sarah's forte is characterization, but she is also adept at creating vivid imagery. The bored housewives who toss off their colorful garments in an arc against the sky to wallow in quicksand-mud like their children. The man with eyes like an Irish family-run tavern door: only the invited may enter. The gazebo with its human presence, of a girl with a crown of braids, playing alone and singing. Many of the stories lack this poetic quality, relying instead on the fundamentals of plot and character to keep our interest. But the stories that do sing like "a small girl playing alone" produce an "aha!" of recognition: the title story in particular exhibits mastery of the short story form.

The Prison of the Self

W.O. Mitchell

For Art's Sake. McClelland and Stewart $27.99

Reviewed by Dick Harrison

For Art's Sake has a more adventurous plot than Mitchell's other novels. Its protagonist, Arthur Ireland, sets out to restore art to the people and to its higher purpose by stealing paintings and sculptures from private collectors and later letting them drift back into the hands of the insurance companies, who will eventually sell most of them to public galleries. Ireland, as the punning title suggests, has a passionate faith in the transcendent value of art. He is a kind of Gulley Jimson figure, defying the materialist establishment, but, unlike Jimson, inclined to sermonize about his mission and "the sorry state of all art today." On one level the novel can be read as a modernist declaration to a post-modern world that the old essentialist convictions about truths universal and eternal were not in the service of bourgeois power structures. On another level it resumes the themes of Mitchell's other Livingstone University novels, *Since Daisy Creek* and *Ladybug, Ladybug....* Again, an older man is mistaken in his attempts to deal with his mortality and the isolation Mitchell has identified as fundamental to the human condition. That isolation is again manifested in his severance from the university and in the death of a beloved wife. The pattern suggests isolation from female humanity in particular, but Mitchell is careful to block out the complications of sexual union as a solution. Like Colin Dobbs and Kenneth Lyon, Ireland finds his way back to community through the agency of a daughter figure, in this case an artist/policewoman who helps to apprehend him.

Ireland has, of course, been wrong. He can find grace only when he recognizes that his rebellion, however principled, was self-centred and careless of the welfare of the young artists drawn into his scheme. His violation of community is of an aggravated sort: dereliction of the parental duty the old have toward the vulnerable young. In prison his modicum of grace is signalled by a break in his five-year "artist's block" when he begins a series of "inscape" paintings with an "inner genesis."

The location of Ireland's success is suggestive in two ways. Literally, it completes a vein of satiric commentary on the university, suggesting that a penitentiary is better adapted to nurturing the arts. Metaphorically it speaks of the artist's need to face the prison of the self and begin working creatively within it to build bridges to other lonely, isolated selves.

Readers may find that this central theme of Mitchell's has less resonance in *For Art's Sake* than in some of the other novels. One of Mitchell's strengths is his ability to render his fictional world in both lyric and

dramatic modes. Here the dramatic rendering dominates, enlivened by character oppositions, dialogue, and Mitchell's anecdotal humour. Through most of the novel, the lyric mode in less developed; even Ireland's reflective moments are largely past time, past tense recollections of experience. Only in the prison sequence does a profound interior experience, in the form of a dream, become present, not remembered, and Ireland's engagement of life becomes evocative, poetic, and immediate.

For Art's Sake does engage Mitchell's most important continuing concerns, but its greatest strengths are those of his drama more than of his fiction.

Expansions

Sharon Butala
The Fourth Archangel. HarperCollins, $24.95 cl.

Peter Stevens
Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life. ECW, $14.95 pa.

Reviewed by Claire Wilkshire

Sharon Butala's *The Fourth Archangel* is an apocalyptic novel set in the town of Ordeal in the Palliser Triangle (neighbouring towns bear the cheery names Remorse, Solitude and Crisis). Rural communities are dying, the drought has lasted seven years, and the millennium is at hand. The novel features an unusual assortment of characters: the seventeen-year-old town slut who Finds Jesus and exhibits (maybe) the stigmata, the repressed schoolmarm with an obsession about abortions who's losing her grip, the reclusive Ph.D. searching for himself in William Francis Butler's *The Great Lone Land* (a nineteenth-century exploration narrative about the prairies), and the quietly powerful Zena Lavender, who organizes the town's widows. The action stems from the threat that Ordeal will lose its post office (that's rural decline in microcosm) and the ensuing community protest, but there are other things going on as well

Various community members are plagued by visions of the past (ghostly homesteaders, a huge and invisible herd of cattle which leaves real footprints, dreams of the buffalo and the Indians) as well as the future (whirlwinds and annihilation). In a more realistic vein, two relationships are explored: the liaison between Amy Sparrow (protagonist/potter/activist) and Neil Locke (the reclusive Ph.D.), and the three-year-old marriage of Jessie and Val Sheridan (she's from town; he's a failing farmer). The novel is about tradition and transition, family and community, the tension between rural and urban life, between the right to live where one chooses and the ability of an economy to sustain a population (and vice versa).

So far so good: the lives of men and women in hard farming land are familiar ground for Butala, and she spices things up here with religion and revelation. The weakness of the novel lies not in its imaginative conception but in its uninspired narrative. Butala's fiction is characterized by an unfortunate lack of ambiguity. The reader is repeatedly provided with an excess of information. At a community rally organized to protest government policies which contribute to rural decline, Jessie "had a moment when she felt glad she was present, and much to her surprise, almost a social activist. This last thought struck her as ridiculous, then embarrassed her, and then made her feel proud." This kind of sequence, an unnecessary description of predictable emotions, is common in the novel. At the next public rally, Amy tries to persuade Lowell Hartshorne to introduce a petition. Hartshorne agrees, but he is visibly uncomfortable with the idea, "shifting his stance, looking over his shoulder... studying his shoes." As if it were not already abundantly clear that Hartshorne is a good guy in a tight ethical spot, Butala plunges

into Amy's point of view to spell it out: "It was not that he didn't want to help them, they were his people after all, but that he had always believed that things of the spirit were everlasting, while political oppression or freedom were equally fleeting. She knew it, thought he was wrong, but loved him for his belief." A few lines later, in case we've forgotten the discomfort motif, there are some additional gestures: "he frowned... glanced toward the platform as if it represented something that frightened him, or that was somehow not quite the way things should be. Amy wanted to reassure him." It is not that there is anything terribly *wrong* with these sentences; the problem is that that Butala overburdens the text with repeated physical cues backed up by over-explanation by one or more of the characters. The omniscient point of view contributes to this problem: the reader has access to the thoughts of many of the characters, and some limitation of perspective would be helpful.

If Butala tells too much in *The Fourth Archangel*, Peter Stevens leaves the reader wanting more. His *Dorothy Livesay: Patterns in a Poetic Life* provides a lucid and highly accessible overview of the people, places, events and ideas which have contributed to Livesay's poetic vision. "Overview" is the key word here: the main body of the text runs a mere fifty-nine pages (including photographs) and this is clearly designed as an introductory book. What is not clear is why ECW has decided to print a series of such abbreviated biographies: surely anyone interested enough in Livesay's work to read a Life would also be interested enough to read something with a bit more detail. An expanded version would have permitted more discussion of the relation between Livesay's personal development and that of her writing (Stevens does refer to the poetry, but not very often).

Brevity is also a chief feature of the individual sections of this book, most of which are two or three pages long— perhaps the intended reader has a short attention span. The titles of these sections indicate the focus on people ("Parents," "Father," "Mother," "The Death of Duncan Macnair") and places ("Paris, 1931-32," "Return to Toronto," "Montreal," "Englewood and Toronto," "Zambia"). In the second half of the book they reveal a closer attention to Livesay's artistic career ("*New Frontier*," "*Contemporary Verse*," "The Search for a New Poetry," "Poetry and Sexuality").

Stevens' discussion is generally clear and engaging and it requires no background knowledge of the subject. There is the occasional oddity: the section entitled "Recovery," for example, begins with the assertion that "The cancer surgery Livesay underwent could almost be viewed as symbolic, on one level." The doubled qualification ("almost... on one level") does little to mitigate the bizarre and rather exploitative suggestion. In the second half of the book there are occasional summaries (of Livesay's illnesses, her trips to London) which might be useful reminders in a longer work but which here seem unnecessarily repetitive. These, however, are minor points. Dorothy Livesay has led a long and eventful life, and Stevens' thoughtful selection of material provides a useful starting point for anyone interested in the subject.

Centre and Periphery

Louis Dudek
Paradise: Essays on Myth, Art, and Reality.
Véhicule Press $13.95

Northrop Frye
The Eternal Act of Creation: Essays, 1979-1990.
Indiana University Press $25.00

Reviewed by David Rampton

Dudek's essays, handsomely packaged by Véhicule Press, constitute a collection of earnest, eminently decent thoughts about literature and culture, but they are too often undistinguished and predictable. The risks of any cultural jeremiad are easy self-righteousness and querulous nostalgia, and Dudek sometimes succumbs to both. Perhaps other readers will respond more positively than I to his special brand of guarded narcissism: "I do not consider myself to be a specialist or an expert in anything, but I think—I hope—I may be qualified in substantial thinking, or in comprehensive understanding, which is a much rarer and more important goal." Maybe the swerve of the co-ordinating conjunctions in the following example will create no blurred effect for the more kindly disposed: "the mind of man contemplates [the world], in order to put forth a replica, or a net of meaning, or simply a song accompaniment to the whole." But I think that Ockham's razor judiciously applied to such unnecessary multiplication of categories would result in some salutary bloodletting.

True, picking one's careful way through all the self-praise, the self-citation, the chunks of unabsorbed quotation that form rather wobbly arguments when strung together, the ponderous banalities ("myth is not literal truth"; "nationalism is not a rational mode of thought"), the eulogies for writers than whom, as someone once said of a long-forgotten nineteenth-century composer, no one seems to have deserved obscurity more richly, the cranky anti-academia (interpreting the Bible typologically is dismissed as "nonsense"; university professors, we are told, "don't read"; a "widely researched" contemporary reading of a 1962 Nabokov novel is solemnly reproduced as if thirty years of commentary did not exist), one often happens upon a felicitous expression, a clever epigram, an evocative threnody for a lost cultural synthesis, or a compelling hortatory appeal for making literature studies central in a humane society. But pace the blurb, this is not vintage Dudek.

He repeatedly makes a distinction between the academic arcana produced by mere literary critics and an intellectual, broadly based criticism that flows from the pens of original thinkers like himself, yet Frye's tenth book of essays shows, once again, that such a distinction is a false one, that venerable qualities like critical acumen and imaginative responsiveness are still the main criteria by which we judge a critic, no matter what sort of hat he wears. His book, admirably edited by Robert Denham, contains a dozen addresses he made during the last decade of his life. Some highlights: Frye tells a conference on Computers and the Humanities about his total lack of competence to speak on the topic, and then proceeds to be as engaging, illuminating and provocative as he is on the book of Ruth or Blake's illustrations. In "Literature as Therapy," he conducts a brief survey of medical lore in Chaucer, Shakespeare, Burton and Molière, muses about catharsis, the medical metaphor at the heart of Aristotle's view of tragedy, and then goes on to suggest that literature's power to evoke "controlled hallucinations" might give it a therapeutic role to play in our hallucinatory world. His thoughts on subjects as various as eighteenth-century sensibility, Henry James's novels, lyric poetry, and the work of Harold Innis prove consistently stimulating. Frye's account of the development of Canadian literature breaks no new

ground, and will no doubt re-offend all sorts of Canadianists, but another essay devoted to his native country, "Levels of Cultural Identity," should be required reading for all literate Canadians.

No critic in our time has gained such a hold on our imaginations or been the object of so many accolades. Yet Frye's range of interests and protean sympathies, everywhere apparent in this volume, also made him a target for critics throughout his life. A liberal humanist with a deep affinity for tory radicals, a protestant minister with a haunting sense of an imaginative world that exists beyond time, a seminal theoretical critic who became increasingly uninterested in theory, a brilliant practical critic who wandered freely in every area adjacent to literature and then some—such a figure loomed so large that nearly everyone felt the urge to take a crack at Frye at some point, as the history of the response to his work shows. No matter: the large edifices, built with a careful attention to detail, tend to last.

Bold Omissions

Trinh T. Minh-ha

When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics. Routledge $56.50 cloth, $18.95 paper

Framer Framed. Routledge $59.95 cloth, $19.95 paper

Reviewed by Jennifer Lawn

When the Moon Waxes Red and *Framer Framed* gather Trinh's work from 1980 to 1990, essays and conference papers in the former, film scripts and interviews in the latter, which also adds a selected bibliography of film reviews and analyses. Consistent throughout Trinh's writing of the past decade is her insistence upon the deconstructive third term, the constantly shifting ground beyond binary thinking and calcified representations. In the past, Trinh's resolute resistance to categories has confused not only film festival jurors, but also the thirty-three publishing houses which rejected her earlier work, *Woman Native Other* (1989). These two more recent texts clarify Trinh's motivations in contesting the practices of Western realism. Having "trained herself" to answer questions lucidly in defence of her work, Trinh expounds her puzzling and controversial film techniques with professorial patience in interviews. In her essay collection Trinh most clearly announces her aesthetic principles in papers first intended for oral presentation. "A Minute Too Long" states her interest in "*making films that* further engage filmmaking." She creates to raise consciousness, not to "*[tell] people what they don't know*," but to "[awaken] their reflective and critical ability." Trinh prefers allusion over explication, however, and the later essays in *When the Moon Waxes Red* show a dense accumulation of ideas, not the logical pursuance of a thesis so much as a series of thoughtful detours, punctuated with quotations from an eclectic range of sources.

Admirers of *Woman Native Other* will find the specificities of third-world women's experience featuring less centrally in these two books. Instead Trinh emphasises a non-illusionistic aesthetic claimed for feminist and anti-racist projects on the premise that "the function of any ideology in power is to represent the world positively unified." Trinh distinguishes "making political films" from her own practice of "making films politically." Viewers who interrogate Trinh's films according to criteria such as utility or political commitment against Third World poverty merely reinvoke "devices set up by the Master's liberals to correct his own mistakes." Trinh here enacts the rhetorical equivalent of a preemptive strike: to challenge her adherence to post-structuralist articles of faith is to remain "in ideology" by asking the wrong

questions and misguidedly expecting documentary films to deliver definitive answers. Trinh's refusal to countenance realist representation thus carries a certain absolutism. In effect she essentializes realism as necessarily hegemonic in function, downplaying its possible subtleties and subversive capacity.

Trinh's statements of purpose in film-making always carry the disclaimer that intentionality can never exhaust meaning. Employing a textu(r)al metaphor she argues that "a film is like a page of paper which I offer the viewers...[who] can fold it horizontally, obliquely, vertically; they can weave the elements to ther liking and background." The issue of textuality emerges in the reprinting of film-scripts, which translate the visual and aural experience of film-viewing to written text and thus militate against the more dislocating effects of Trinh's films. For example, the juxtaposition of text and image in the film *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* splits the activities of reading, watching, and hearing, which are usually collapsed into unity by the synchronicity of voice-over and image. But the printed page offers alternative anti-mimetic strategies, including the reproduction of extracts from the working film script together with examples of design sketches which show, among other directorial choices, the manipulation of lighting tint, direction, and intensity for each take. In her essay "The Totalizing Quest of Meaning" Trinh distinguishes between self-reflexivity as authorizing device in ethnographic representation (to expose context and methodology and so enhance the appearance of scientific rigour), and self-reflexivity as "[inquiry] into production relations." The diagrams in *Framer Framed* invite the latter interpretation, but they also serve to defend Trinh's professional credibility by revealing the disjointedness of her films to be carefully contrived and not, as one disparaging viewer put it, something that "looks like my *mother*'s first attempt at video."

Trinh attempts to pursue anti-humanist conceptions of subjectivity in her interviews as well as in her creative work. Wary of the construction of the film-maker as originating genius, Trinh politely dispatches questions probing for clues towards subjective or intentionalist interpretation (such as inquiries into her intellectual influences or formative childhood experience). As a consequence, the interviews seem curiously devoid of Trinh's responses to her own situation, including her membership of a "Third World" intellectual élite teaching within a Western institution. Trinh abhors disciplinary "territoriality" but does not pursue the particular conditions enabling her own geographic, creative and intellectual mobility.

In this refusal to respect disciplinary boundaries Trinh adds cogent arguments to the debate about appropriation of voice, now burgeoning as a newly institutionalized field of academic inquiry in Canada as elsewhere. Trinh encourages creative engagement with an other, undertaken with love, appreciation of beauty, and "wonder [that] never seizes." She attacks self-styled experts who presume to bear authoritative, "objective" knowledge to be wedded to the "subjective" knowledge of the cultural insider. Trinh herself breaches ethnographic decorum by, for example, reproducing film stills without captions to identify geographic location, tribal affiliation, or other markers usually assumed to enhance cultural significance.

Trinh's own cultural background is impeccably hybrid — she has studied in Vietnam, the Phillipines, Senegal, France, and the United States — but her argument about deterritorialized knowledge extends to western philosophy itself. Post-structuralism has, Trinh claims, been made possible by non-Western thinking. Thus, ironically, the post-structuralist insight that the Western Self consumes the Third World as other itself came about through the cul-

tural anthropophagy of the West — just one of the many brain-benders cheerfully strewn throughout these two texts. Trinh also challenges the reader to affirm while questioning, to disregard realist aesthetics while acknowledging their pervasiveness in Western tradition, to claim difference while "unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at." The course of inquiry will inevitably entail risk, a dissolution and rearrangement of self, "intermittent blindness."

One of the most intriguing moments in these texts occurs in the opening paragraphs of "Bold Omissions and Minute Depictions," in which Trinh allows her poise to falter by sharing a moment of "intermittent blindness." In conversation, two Caribbean friends had scoffed at Western academics' newly-fashionable preoccupation with marginality, which happens to be one of Trinh's main research concerns: "What marginality? Marginal in relation to whom? to where? to what?". Trinh's elusive response — a meditation on the nature of the Asian-American "hyphen" together with the "formlessness in form" of traditional Chinese painting — displaces the original question with a creative non-answer, and leaves moot many of the issues it raises.

Variance

Charlene Spretnak
Lost Goddesses of Early Greece: A Collection of Pre-Hellenic Myths. Beacon Press, n.p.

Paula Gunn Allen
The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions. Beacon Press, n.p.

Walter L. Williams
The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture. Beacon Press, n.p.

Reviewed by Lynne Masland

All three books share in common the fact that they are new editions of older works, well known in their particular fields. Each contains a new preface tracing recent developments and clarifying earlier contexts. In this sense, the prefaces have something of the quality of a letter from an absent family member which brings the reader up to date, reflecting upon events and changes since the last letter. Since each book treats some aspect of gender and/or ethnic studies, the new prefaces provide useful retrospective on the development of these areas in the last decade or so.

In the "Preface" to *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, first published in 1978 in the "first wave of Goddess books," Charlene Spretnak reviews the significance of the Goddess spirituality movement during the ensuing decade-and-a-half since her reconstruction of the mythical stories of several classical Goddesses: Gaia, Pandora, Aphrodite, Hera, Athena, Demeter and so forth. Spretnak introduces each myth with a brief scholarly prologue tracing each deity's characteristics, powers and history. Reclaiming the goddesses from their late classical, Homerian patriarchal roles, she has carefully pieced together from fragments of archeological evidence and scholarly investigations by classicists and mythologists the myths as they reflect an earlier Great Goddess period in Greece before waves of Ionian, Achaean and Dorian invaders. The stories themselves are re-told in a delicate, poetic style which heightens the close relationship between the goddess figures and the spirit of living nature. She distinguishes between the pre-Hellenic Goddess cultures, including Minoan Crete, and later classical patriarchal religions and social orders, noting that a male supreme deity is "a relatively recent invention." Zeus, she writes, first appeared around 2500 BC and the Old Testament patriarch, Abraham, around 1800 BC. Early goddess statues date to circa 25,000 BC. She also distinguishes between "patriarchal archetypes," or archetypal figures as interpreted from a patriarchal social perspective,

and the goddesses as viewed from a matrifocal perspective, in which they appear powerful and wise in their own right rather than petty adjuncts to supreme male deities.

Since myths and archetypes transmit "cultural possibilities," the reinterpretation of the Goddess myths offers to contemporary culture mytho-religious figures which present alternatives to patriarchal socialization and values. "The reemergence of Goddess spirituality has never been a simple attempt to reinstate the Goddess religion of the Neolithic era, about which we have limited knowledge," she writes. "Rather, the contemporary movement is based on creative expressions of continuity with the cultural presence of the Goddess... regarded as a potent metaphor for both the immanence of the divine and the transcendence that is the larger reality, the sacred whole."

In the "Preface" to a new edition of *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in Native American Traditions*, a series of essays exploring a matrifocal feminine spirituality in the context of Native American traditions," Paula Gunn Allen writes that "as we enter the year that marks five centuries of European-Native contact, the recovery of American Indian culture and tradition proceeds ever more rapidly." With the resurgence in Native cultural restoration comes a resounding affirmation of survival and endurance, an affirmation of "tribal values, tribal thought, and tribal understanding." Both Gunn Allen and Spretnak discern a convergence of advanced science and cosmology with ancient understandings. "...The new dedication to restoring the entire planet, and the new findings of the advanced sciences, which resemble more and more the old understandings of the nature of life and the universe, all these bear witness to something sacred happening," writes Gunn Allen. In *Sacred Hoop*, she describes the gynocratic, mother-right aspects of traditional Native culture, linking these with the primary power of creation, the power to give life which is the "source and model for all ritual magic... It is the power of Thought, or Mind, which gives rise to all things, creating the hoop of being." Mothering, she writes, is the power to make, create and transform.

With European colonization has come a devaluation of the matrifocal, matrilineal traditions among contemporary Native Americans. Gunn Allen discusses the great differences in world view between tribal understandings and Western culture, emphasizing the different purposes, structures, symbols, time orientation, and themes of the Native oral tradition's ritual, ceremonial stories in comparison with Anglo-European literature. A professor of English at the University of California, Los Angeles, she combines a feminist approach with keen insight into the underlying mechanisms of both tribal and European storytelling conventions. Several essays in this collection explore the time, space, and motifs of ritual literature and detail the effects patriarchal themes of violence, conflict and heroism. Many of the tribes, including her Keres (Pueblo) people, she writes, valued balance and harmony, an orderly transfer of power through "the peaceful exchange of dominance," mediated by and through women. The theme of overlooked gender patterns and possibilities runs through all three works. As does Spretnak, Gunn Allen stresses the power of literature to point to these other possibilities. The power of literature is its power of image, its ability to arouse the imagination, she writes. Through its imaging qualities, literature has the power to change a people's fate; the resurgence of Native literature and writers is evidence that tribal cultures have survived and endured.

In *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*, anthropologist Walter L. Williams explores

gender formation, gender roles and sexual diversity, expressed in the Native berdache tradition. In the six years since his book's first publication, the study of gender possibilities and variance has greatly expanded, he notes in his "Preface." At the same time, he poses new avenues and questions for additional study and fieldwork. His extensive investigation of the "he-she male" as an important figure in many Native societies has contributed to both an understanding of gender role construction, which in at least some societies may be independent, to a certain degree, of morphological sexual characteristics, and to a theory of sexual diversity which encompasses more possibilities than conventional opposition of male and female. Usually identified in childhood by an interest in feminine pursuits, the berdache, or feminized male, assumed a woman's persona in dress, habits, work and sexual role. Valued for his/her special relationship to masculine and feminine spiritual power, the berdache often became a shaman or healer. These persons held a special ceremonial position; were esteemed for their community service and prosperity; often married as second wives; or served as an alternative sexual partners for males. According to Williams, their traditional mediating role between male and female spiritual powers often extends today to balancing and integrating Western and traditional Indian cultural values.

Like Gunn Allen, Williams traces the strong repressive influence of European values on Native traditions, noting as do Gunn Allen and Spretnak the effect of religion and mythology on gender social status. Degraded by Christianity, which emphasized a male creator God, the berdache was no longer valued for spiritual powers but was seen as subverting natural male superiority by adopting an inferior female form. Williams also describes the effects of the Western bias for "normality," as constructed by European standards and transmitted through the influence of missionaries, government agents, boarding schools and European education. At the same time, he, too, asserts that forms of traditional Native culture, including linkages between berdache/amazon traditions and current gay/lesbian activism, have persisted into modernity. The exploration of flexible gender and sexual roles as evidenced in Native cultures makes Williams' study a contribution to the on-going construction of gender theory. The importance of cross-cultural research in developing theories of human gender and sexual variance is underscored by his closing summary of various berdache, amazon, woman-centered, and male-male bonding patterns in cultures world-wide, including not only tribal cultures but those of ancient Greece, medieval Japan, and the modern Ottoman empire.

Southern Dreaming

Elizabeth Hay
The Only Snow in Havana. Cormorant Books $14.95

Stephen Henighan
Nights in the Yungas. Thistledown Press n.p.

Reviewed by Catherine Addison

The central motif shared by these two collections is the opposition between north and south. In both, the Canadian dream of the Other is projected onto more southern parts of the Americas, from Florida to Peru. Both invoke many colonial clichs, but in Elizabeth Hay's *The Only Snow in Havana* these function dynamically as elements of a complex personal symbolism, whereas in Stephen Henighan's *Nights in the Yungas* they represent a somewhat naïf dabbling in the exotic.

Hay's book is not so much a collection of stories as a series of short lyrical passages which "Draw a line from Yellowknife to

Winnipeg, over to Toronto, down to Mexico City, back up to Salem, and over to New York." This line traces an autobiographical journey, its psychological dimension "the hairline crack of [the narrator's] particular coming apart and staying together." The sections may be exerpted and read separately, but their strongest effects are cumulative and sequential. The narration is poetic, internal, associational, retrospective; the text is dense with verbal echoes, motifs, puns.

One of the most important themes is fur, "the connecting thread, the hair in my soupy geography"; its implications are teased out as Canada's historical *raison d'tre*, the grail of the early explorers' quest, the only warm Cathay ever found in the cold north. More symbolically, fur is death and sexuality, the outer shell of the dead animal hung on the body of the woman whose own fur is denied, hidden. Though its warmth may seem to place it in Manichaean opposition to the snow from which it protects its wearer, Hay erodes this sort of opposition in the course of her book. Both snow and fur are ambiguous—they are "two forms of ambivalent softness":

> Snow appears simple and isn't. It's cold and warm, light and dark, soft and hard. Snow is solid but it flows, fur is continuous but composed of millions of hairs. Fur ... wraps us against death and wraps us in death.

All the major oppositions set up by this book are similarly eroded. "North elides into south" as the narrator gradually comes to terms with her own conflicts. Seeing herself as essentially Canadian in this quest, she goes south to Mexico "to get warm," but pines for snow, despite falling in love with Alec, an American "who love[s] anything Latin." When she becomes pregnant, she persuades Alec to return with her to the north, where he is unhappy. Her sense of guilt and inadequacy in this relationship initiates the quest for reconcilement with self—and, coincidentally, with Alec—which the book outlines. She identifies her shyness, her colourlessness, her inarticulateness as Canadian characteristics, and this feature explains the book's historical dimension. It is partly a poetic revision of Canadian history—along the lines of W. C. Williams's *In the American Grain*—in which the mute voices of the past are given imaginative life. Though not all of these voices are female, the most memorable are the Inuit woman Tookoolito, and the eleven-year-old wife of Champlain, Hlne Boull. The resuscitation of these and other marginalized figures is an important step in the narrator's recovery of herself, as is a sense of the mythic significance of her beloved north, and its interdependence with other mythologies:

> Lachine was the starting point, that wistful fur outpost eight miles west of Montreal. The end was Cathay—where furs were prized and ivory made into snowballs.
>
> In between ... ourselves, of course. Looking for Cathay and finding fur. Looking for fur and finding various Cathays. As though we're off the map, casting about between climates of love.

This kind of poetic and psychological resonance is not to be found in Henighan's collection. Though symbols, such as the "bog people" motif in "North to South" and the Janus-faced distaff in "My Last South American Story," are skilfully handled, the stories' resolution is achieved mainly in terms of action and character. They are all well-crafted, and if their characters seem rather shallow this may be a result of the brevity and closure of the form. But, in any case, many readers will be more interested in setting than in either character or action. Henighan has a distinct talent for description; his stories are above all travel tales, regardless of the fictionality or otherwise of their protagonists. He has

himself travelled in Central and South America, and he offers his experiences of the exotic south in story form for the delectation of the armchair tourist back home. That the exotic is mostly found to be somewhat unglamorous and "scruffy" (a favourite word of Henighan's) makes it no less the mysterious Other for him.

Perhaps the least successful of the eleven stories are the two which attempt to give a voice to the South American Other itself. "Small Exposures" is a kind of snapshot narration of the linked lives of two wealthy Columbian girls, one of whom is considered too darkskinned for beauty. This "exposure" of the intimacies and prejudices of a foreign society has a phony flavour; it is the kind of narrative which depends on authenticity for its interest, yet it cannot shed its male, northern author whose existence it refuses to acknowledge. "The Sun of Coricancha" avoids this kind of phoniness by means of irony. Its fabulously aged narrator tells a secret hidden from strangers, the author and reader alike, which concerns the whereabouts of the greatest of Inca treasures. This secret possesses a deadly relevance to their voyeuristic—not to say narcissistic—interest in the subject-matter of all these stories; but it is an irony into which the stories and their author are trapped, not one which they control or benefit from. The "golden disk of the sun" which used to adorn the walls of Coricancha disappeared because the conquistadors plundered the gold sheets whose mirror effect on the other walls created it as an illusion. The trope places Henighan and his book clearly in the role of conquistador: the eye which plunders to see, and sees to plunder, and is hence blind.

All the other stories are tainted with this ironic consciousness of their own bad faith, especially "My Last South American Story," in which Henighan actually kills off his first-person narrator as punishment for "spending the last four years in countries where [he] was granted a special, favoured status . . . due to the colour of [his] skin and the power of [his] currency." In other stories, this colonial encounter is handled with varying degrees of guilt and sensitivity. Henighan's gringoes may strike up poses as casually familiar as Jos's in "North and South" or as committed as Edward's in "The Border," but what emerges time and again is their isolation from indigenous people and landscape. The south is portrayed according to the prevailing northern myth, as a primitive, violent, sexualized environment, in which the quest for the Other is really a quest for a lost version of self. No matter how involved these North American figures may become in the politics of the south, they remain sight-seers, bargain-hunters, thrill-seekers. All of them have problems with commitment or social responsibility "back home" and flee southward for escape or diversion. The narrative focus is always on the consciousness of the subject. Even when a character elects to stay, as Laura does in "The Wind Off the Volcano," this is mainly because remaining can give her experiences and satisfactions which her superficial life in Canada with her swimming pool engineer cannot provide. Her spurious offering of herself in "atonement" for the sins of her city (Philadelphia, where one of the Contra leaders apparently learned English) will convince nobody. She is disappointed by the virility (and fidelity) of the northern male and, by staying in Nicaragua, she opts for the greater manliness of the Latin Silvio—though, as is characteristic of sexual relationships in this collection, she is denied the opportunity of enjoying him. *Nights in the Yungas* is a youthful attempt, whose self-destructive irony prophesies Henighan's abandonment of the balcony attitude in later writing. In contrast, Hay's *The Only Snow in Havana* is a mature work, poised and contained by its ironies, which work not against but with the rich flow of

the language and the gentle turning towards itself of historical insight and self-knowledge.

Nation & Communauté(s)

Jean-Michel Lacroix & Fulvio Caccia, eds.
Métamorphoses d'une utopie. Presses de la Sorbonne nouvelle/Eds Triptyque

Bernard Dagenais
La crise d'octobre et les médias: le miroir à dix faces. vlb éditeur

Richard Poulin, ed.
Criss d'octobre! Les Editions du Vermillon

Compte rendu par Leif Tufte

Le volume intitulé *Métamorphoses d'une utopie,* qui constitue les Actes d'un colloque organisé à Paris conjointement par le Centre d'études canadiennes et la revue *Vice Versa,* est à coup sûr un ouvrage qui sort de l'ordinaire. Cela se manifeste non seulement par le grand nombre et la variété des interventions, mais surtout par l'ampleur du sujet proposé sous forme d'une interrogation provocatrice: "A l'orée de l'an 2000, le pluralisme ethnoculturel en Amérique du Nord peut-il être un modèle pour l'Europe?" Il est difficile d'imaginer, dans l'état actuel des choses, une question plus cruciale, plus controversée et passionnante. Et quoi de plus opportun que d'arranger un tel colloque à Paris—le symbole même de l'Etat-nation—et qu'il se déroule sous les auspices des Etudes canadiennes, si intimement apparentées à l'enjeu du multiculturalisme.

Etant donné qu'une vingtaine de spécialistes venus des horizons les plus divers de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique se sont donné rendez-vous à cette occasion, il est inévitable qu'ici ou là des sous-thèmes quelque peu éloignés du thème principal soient développés. Loin de nuire à une quelconque homogénéité dont on pourrait peut-être rêver, cela contribue plutôt à mettre en relief le caractère fondamentalement expérimental de cette aventure pluridisciplinaire. A ce propos, il faut également se féliciter du bon équilibre obtenu entre les sciences sociales, malgré tout prédominantes, et ce qu'apportent les humanités à travers leurs perspectives transculturelles appliquées aux problèmes de langue et de littérature. Cela se voit clairement dans le nombre important d'interventions consacrées à certaines minorités outre-Atlantique, comme par ex. les autochtones au Canada et les communautés chicano aux Etats-Unis.

Dans l'ensemble, les contributions ici réunies sont d'un très grand intérêt pour quiconque s'intéresse à ce qui touche à la "transculture"—compris comme un changement ou une osmose de culture - pour utiliser le terme proposé il y a cinquante ans déjà par l'anthropologue cubain Fernando Ortiz. La plupart des participants à ce colloque font preuve de la prudence qui s'impose devant l'ampleur des problèmes auxquels il faut faire face. Sans parti pris trop prononcé, ils essaient de rendre compte de leur mieux des changements identitaires en cours dans les consciences, individuelles ou collectives. Ce n'est peut-être pas un hasard si la contribution la plus remarquable sort de la plume d'un des organisateurs du colloque, Jean-Michel Lacroix. Dans son analyse comparative entre la problématique de "l'intégration" selon la logique étatique/juridique de l'Etat-nation, dont la France reste le prototype, et celle de "l'insertion" ou de la "mosaïque" selon la formule canadienne, l'auteur met l'accent sur les ambiguïtés plutôt que sur les certitudes. N'empêche que sa mise au point succincte et lucide nous fait mieux comprendre le véritable enjeu des grands mouvements migratoires de cette fin de siècle. Ce n'est sûrement pas un hasard non plus si des références aux ouvrages de Julia Kristeva et de Tzvetan Todorov sur la nation et le nationalisme—

tout récemment traduits en anglais - ont été discrètement placées en fin d'article. Elles sont là pour nous rappeler de façon opportune la dimension symbolique indispensable dans le jeu dialectique entre le particulier et l'universel, qu'il faudrait sûrement mieux explorer qu'on ne le fait actuellement pour maîtriser ce problème.

L'étude de Bernard Dagenais sur *La crise d'octobre et les médias: le miroir à dix faces* appartient à une toute autre sphère: celle du petit monde étriqué où il s'agit des tribulations des "deux peuples fondateurs". Il est inévitable que la lecture de cet ouvrage, où l'on suit dans les menus détails une mesquine affaire de politique intérieure, doive se ressentir de la comparaison sous-jacente inévitable que fait le lecteur avec les perspectives géopolitiques dont il a été question ci-dessus. Or, même sans une telle lecture comparative, l'ouvrage de Dagenais n'a rien de très attrayant. Essayer de dire quoi que ce soit d'intéressant sur un thème aussi rebattu que la fameuse "crise d'octobre" de 1970 est déjà une gageure, et la façon dont s'y prend l'auteur n'a rien pour faciliter sa tâche. L'idée principale n'est cependant pas mauvaise en soi: il s'agit d'exploiter toute la variété des descriptions que les médias de l'époque ont véhiculé à propos de cette affaire. Selon l'auteur, il en ressort une histoire à dix "faces", ou plus précisément dix façons différentes de voir la crise: "comme un fait divers, un drame humain, une activité policière, comme un lieu de réflexions morales ou de considérations économiques, comme un événement d'envergure internationale, un fait de presse, un geste révolutionnaire, une affaire politique ou comme un sujet d'indifférence."

L'auteur a vite fait de nous persuader de la pertinence d'une telle approche. Malheureusement, l'exécution n'est pas à la hauteur de la conception initiale. La documentation, il est vrai, est abondante, mais elle est très fragmentaire et présentée de façon décousue. Il est possible que cela fasse partie de toute une stratégie, celle de vouloir atteindre le grand public. C'est une hypothèse qui est confirmée par la composition hâtive et très peu littéraire de l'ouvrage, qui le rend, certes, d'une lecture commode et facile, mais aussi peu apte à provoquer la réflexion. Il n'empêche que c'est un livre qui, ne serait-ce que par sa conception, peut servir à rappeler aux lecteurs ces événements dans toute leur complexité.

Réunir en un volume sous le titre cocasse *Criss d'octobre!* quelques nouvelles policières ou "noires", dont les thèmes sont plus ou moins rattachés aux événements d'octobre 1970, voilà une excellente idée de la part de Richard Poulin (éd) et d'une maison d'édition ontarienne (Les Editions du Vermillon). Leur but est d'ailleurs double: ils se proposent également de promouvoir la littérature policière en général au Canada français, qui a sans doute pris un certain retard par rapport aux autres littératures comparables.

Il est certain que ce volume ne fera pas date dans les annales de la littératurs policière. Il confirme que c'est un genre qui au Canada français en est encore aux balbutiements. Mais les huit auteur(e)s réuni(e)s à cette occasion font preuve d'assez d'esprit d'invention et de savoir-faire pour que l'avenir du genre se présente sous de meilleurs auspices sous ces latitudes. C'est déjà beaucoup, dans le cadre si étroit qui leur a été imposé, de pouvoir composer des intrigues qui se tiennent, que ce soit du côté de l'horreur, du mystère, des traumatismes individuels ou collectifs etc. Ce qui manque le plus dans la plupart de ces récits, c'est l'effet de surprise si nécessaire au bon fonctionnemnt du genre. Du point de vue de l'écriture, il y aurait également à redire, car le genre policier est au moins aussi exigeant à ce propos que les genres plus à l'honneur. Comme il fallait s'y attendre, ce sont les auteurs les plus chevronnés comme Gilles Pellerin et Maurice Gagnon

qui s'en tirent le mieux, y compris sur le plan stylistique. Leurs coéquipiers font pourtant preuve d'assez de courage, d'esprit d'invention et d'habileté pour bien mériter la mention honorable et laisser bien augurer de la suite.

Canadian Experience?

John Richardson

The Canadian Brothers or The Prophecy Fulfilled, A Tale of the Late American War, Donald Stephens, ed. Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts Series; 9. Oxford $12.95 pa.

Reviewed by Mary Lu MacDonald

The Canadian Brothers is the ninth in the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts' series of meticulously researched and edited volumes of pre-Confederation literature in English. No manuscript of the novel has survived, and only one edition appeared in Richardson's lifetime; as a result, the choice of a copy-text presented no difficulty. This text was then compared with the chapters published in advance in the *Literary Garland* and with the later "American" version entitled *Matilda Montgomerie.* In addition eight extant copies of the 1840 Montreal publication were computer-compared, revealing a total of eleven differences between them. The scholarly apparatus resulting from this research is detailed and complete. The Explanatory Notes which follow the text are not intrusive and, in the main, provide useful supplementary information, although they sometimes raise more questions than they answer. Either in the Notes or in the Introduction more information on the War of 1812 context, beyond that necessary to explain Richardson's specific references, would have been helpful.

Since the purpose of the CEECT project is to provide an authoritative text in a form inexpensive enough to be used in university classrooms, the Editor's Introduction is crucial. It will go into the hands of students, carrying with it the aura of being the final word on the subject. John Richardson presents a particularly difficult problem for an editor attempting to provide a biographical summary before entering on a critical introduction, since the documented evidence about Richardson's life is sparse,—we do not even know for sure where he was born, or what was the cause of his death. The result of this paucity of biographical detail has been that many critics tend to read autobiographical references into his fiction, picking and choosing at will from all the possible scenarios provided by the novels. As editor, Stephens' point-of-view is clearly stated in a Preface which relates his own emotional connection with the work, as well as in the first paragraph of the Introduction: "It [*The Canadian Brothers*] was also, and more importantly, a fictionalized chronicle of actual events, people, and places from Richardson's childhood and adolescence that both revealed the psychology of the author and helped create seminal mythologies about his country." Stephens is therefore firmly in the school of those who see autobiography in Richardson's fiction. With Richardson, who was capable, in self-justification and self-dramatization, of fictionalizing parts of his own autobiographical works, this can be a dangerous attitude for the editor of a text intended to be definitive. The lack of biographical documentation also allows controversy to arise, as in the case of Richardson's supposedly Indian maternal grandmother. The existence of this person is taken as fact by most critics, although Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman in their Introduction to the Canadian Poetry Press edition of *Tecumseh* point out that there is no real evidence to support this claim, which was certainly not made in Richardson's lifetime, and that much of the supposed "evidence" is contradictory. Stephens accepts the story of the Indian grandmother without question and

the relevant footnote refers only to controversy over her name and tribe. Rather than producing a general introduction which takes an uncritical view of the man and the novel, it would be more useful to students and teachers if the editor also pointed out the biographical gaps and the critical disagreements.

Where Richardson has entered into our seminal mythologies is not in the historical background to his Canadian works, but in his complaints about the hard life of a writer in Canada, complaints which have struck a sympathetic chord in twentieth century writers and critics. Stephens has sympathetically quoted all the usual Richardsonian lamentations, ignoring the fact that the 250 copies of *The Canadian Brothers* sold was a very respectable number for a book published in Montreal in 1840, and that Richardson was charging double the going price. That the reception of Richardson's work did not meet his expectations should not be interpreted as a failure of Canadian culture, circa 1840. Except where the publishing history of *The Canadian Brothers* is concerned, the information contained in the Introduction summarizes material already available, rather than introducing new insights. The focus of the Introduction is on the Canadian relevance of the novel, and no attempt is made to give an overview of Richardson's writing, or more than a sketch of his life. There is no bibliography, either of works by Richardson or of works about him, which would encourage further reading. Although we should all be grateful that a good modern edition of *The Canadian Brothers* is now readily available, joining CEECT's *Wacousta* and the Canadian Poetry Press' *Tecumseh*, those using this edition for teaching purposes will need to supplement the Introduction with reading in other sources.

The major difficulty with critical analysis of Richardson's life and work is that it has been centered on his Canadian experience and on the "Canadian" works, despite the fact that he lived more than half his life outside Canada and that the non-Canadian works outnumber the Canadian ones. Would we read *The Canadian Brothers* if the author were not Canadian? Should we read *The Canadian Brothers*? Stephens ultimate conclusion is that the "...triumph of *The Canadian Brothers* itself is the unflinching honesty of its documentation of this tragedy [the battle of Queenston Heights] that demands to be told about a past that cannot be changed." The time has come to look at Richardson's life and work as an entity within the international context in which he lived and wrote. What we need is a scholar, emotionally distant from both Richardson and Canadian culture, who will sift all the biographical material for hard data, and who will read all his extant works,—poetry, history, autobiography and fiction,—before producing a synthesis that is not culture-bound.

Translations

Herwig Friedl, Albert-Reiner Glaap, Klaus Peter Müller, eds.
Literaturübersetzen: Englisch. Gunter Narr Verlag n.p.

Hildi Froese Tiessen, Peter Hinchcliffe, eds.
Acts of Concealment. Mennonite/s Writing in Canada. U Waterloo P $18.00

Reviewed by Gabriele Helms

The translation of literary texts is the common theme of the fourteen papers in *Literaturübersetzen: Englisch.* The editors have compiled a reader of essays that develop concepts of and perspectives for the practice and didactics of literary translations, as they document responses to and experiences with the programme "Translation of Literature" ("Literaturübersetzen") that

was established at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1987. In this four-year-programme students study three subjects: two foreign languages (English, French, Italian, or Spanish) and their target language German. The volume provides information about areas of study and current research within the subject of English. It should be noted, however, that only one contribution is actually written in English. The text is aimed at those interested in the transfer of literature and culture and is meant to give a representative idea of what the training and work of the translator entails. Unfortunately, Klaus Peter Müller's informative and crucial introduction to the programme is buried in the third section of the collection ("Übersetzerausbildung-Übersetzerwissen: Facetten einer Einführung in die Literaturübersetzung"). This overview, develops a useful framework addressing issues such as the interdisciplinary nature of translation, the role and status of the translator in society, and the theory and history of translation in the context of language philosophy.

From a wide range of topics representing the areas of linguistics/ literary studies, theory and practice of translation, and professional issues, let me mention only a few. Christa Buschendorf's paper on the German translations of Walt Whitman and Hans Peter Heinrich's study on recent translations of Shakespeare's sonnet no. 2 are fascinating in their attempts to reconstruct the problems of translation and the processes of finding solutions. In comparison, Charlotte Franke's description of the difficulties she encountered in translating Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye* is somewhat disappointing. She convincingly introduces some of the characteristics of Atwood's style that are difficult to translate into German but then leaves the reader with fourteen pages of examples without further comment. The passages from the original and from the translation are interesting to compare, but some explanation of her choices and preferences could have made this an intriguing contribution. Worth noting is also the final section related to professional concerns. It comments on the practical training week at the European Translator College in Straelen and Bärbel Flad makes many practical suggestions concerning work opportunities, contracts, negotiations and so on.

Rainer Schulte's "Translation Methodologies: Re-creative Dynamics in Literature and the Humanities," the volume's only contribution in English, develops the idea of "translation thinking" that sees all acts of communication as acts of translation. Schulte suggests that translation studies may be "an essential field of scholarship to revitalize literary and humanistic studies in the 1990s". For Schulte, translation thinking could enact a paradigm shift by moving to a systemic view of the world that emphasizes integration, interactivity, and interconnectedness. Translation aims at the reconstruction of the totality of the text in its human and historical context, which Schulte sees as a possible solution to the mechanistic outlook on the world, to "any reductionist approach to the interpretation of literary works", and the fragmentation of literary criticism in general.

The problematics of translation, of language in general, and of seeing "writing itself becoming an act of translation" are also among the recurring issues discussed in *Acts of Concealment*, a collection of essays, poetry, and short stories that chronicles the May 1990 Waterloo conference on Mennonite/s Writing in Canada. As Hildi Froese Tiessen says in her acknowledgments, this volume draws to a close the activities connected with the conference, while at the same time opening the way for "new perspectives on and approaches to the literature of Mennonites in Canada". I expect that readers both with or without

Mennonite background will find this volume stimulating reading. The editors' decision to combine academic papers with poetry and stories adds to the volume's appeal and comprehensiveness, and attempts to bridge the often artificial gap between academics and writers.

The collection manages to give a sense of the broad range of writing done by Mennonites in Canada, but also of the range of topics and perspectives currently addressed in research. The establishment of a literary tradition of this minority culture is an underlying concern in Al Reimer's paper on "The Role of Arnold Dyck in Canadian Mennonite Writing," Harry Loewen's exploration of "The Beginning of Russian-Mennonite Literature in Canada, with a Focus on Gerhard Loewen," and Clara Thomas' essay on "Western Women's Writing of "The Childhood" and Anne Konrad's *The Blue Jar*." At the same time, many myths integral to much of the earlier literature, together with the myth of constructing a coherent literary tradition, are questioned by other contributors. Both papers on the father image in poetry by Victor Doerksen and Magdalene Redekop's exploration of images of the mother expose fundamentals on which the Mennonite community has depended for a long time but that are challenged by many contemporary writers. One of the foremost concerns of many papers is language, how it has been used and colonized, and how it can be decolonized by Mennonite writers. Viewpoints differ concerning the purpose and implications of using (Low) German phrases or syntax in a predominantly English text, of using plain speech and/or the art of "derjche Bloom räde," a form of conversational irony ("literally, speaking through the flower,"). According to Hildi Froese Tiessen, for example, the use of (Low) German adds to the creation of barriers that separate Mennonites from the contemporary social order, while W.J. Keith argues for the "non-verbal message" of the German insets whose meanings—or so he suggests—do not really matter. A similar tension is created between the need expressed for autobiographical writing and the self-conscious look in the mirror (Magdalene Redekop, Di Brandt), versus those who warn against too much navel-gazing (Rudy Wiebe) or an over-valuing of one's community at the expense of seeing literature as art in the world (David Arnason). Overall, the reader will discern different, often competing directionss: a literary community trying to set itself apart, attempting to integrate itself into the mainstream, and/or negotiating given literary categories themselves.

Cultural Transformation

Samuel Hynes
A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture. Bodley Head $39.95 cloth

Elizabeth A. Marsland
The Nation's Cause: French, English and German Poetry of the First World War. Routledge $93.00 cloth

Lynne Hanley
Writing War: Fiction, Gender & Memory. U of Massachusetts P $24.95 cloth; $12.95 paper

Reviewed by Evelyn Cobley

Samuel Hynes's *A War Imagined* is a painstakingly researched study of the social and cultural transformation produced by the events of the First World War. Hynes documents this transformation through well-chosen examples from fiction, newspapers, parliamentary debates, art criticism, diaries, letters, poetry, drama, painting, film, and music. From the arrangement of his examples there emerges a picture of the first three decades of this century whose comprehensiveness does not interfere with the narrative power of the story he tells.

The emphasis of *A War Imagined* is mostly on the things which unite cultural practices. Hyne's examples from various cultural productions document the disillusioning effect of the Somme offensive of 1916 on British consciousness. Of particular interest is Hynes's argument that the canon of war books constitutes a myth of the War which was reconstructed retrospectively. *A War Imagined* is an important book because it constructs a social and cultural history which concentrates on the way the war impinged on the consciousness of a whole society. Hynes analyzes not only documents directly related to the War but also works of major authors (Lawrence, Eliot, Pound, Woolf) which indirectly reflect the impact of the War on the artistic imagination. In particular, he shows in highly complex terms that the War came to be seen as a gap in history, contributing to the modern conception of history as a discontinuous process. Hynes's approach is primarily descriptive. Although he draws critically sophisticated conclusions from the material he has collected, the scope of his cultural history leaves no room for in-depths analyses of individual texts. The literature is often treated quite superficially so that the reader is unlikely to learn anything startling about Graves or Sassoon. In addition, Hynes's social and cultural analyses remain fairly narrowly confined to the patterns that emerge from the material he uses for documentation. There is no philosophical or theoretical concern with embattled concepts like modernism, history, or representation. Nevertheless *A War Imagined* is undoubtedly a major text in social and cultural history; it is lucidly argued and very readable. It should be of interest not just to those interested in the First World War but to all those concerned with English culture as such.

The comparative approach of Elizabeth A. Marsland's *The Nation's Cause* is a welcome addition to studies confined by national boundaries. Although Marsland quite correctly stresses the homogeneity of this poetry, some of the more interesting aspects of her investigation are nevertheless the differences. It is important to realize, for instance, that "English patriotic poets celebrate heroic death as frequently as the French, but with an emphasis on immortality rather than martyrdom". Marsland establishes both similarities and differences through a primarily thematic approach. Having sorted through a large body of war poetry, she chose to arrange her material according to familiar themes and topoi like attitudes to the enemy, civilians, women, heroes, martyrs, victims, death, battle, patriotism, and so on. Although her focus on propaganda poetry is a welcome corrective to the popularity of protest poetry, it is not entirely clear to what end Marsland examines the themes of these poems. Marsland's detailed description adds little to our historical understanding of the period. At best we may get a sense of the sheer volume of aesthetically inferior poetry which had been produced.

Although *The Nation's Cause* is thoroughly researched, Marsland relies for her critical analyses on unexamined notions of common sense. She seems most comfortable when paraphrasing the poetry itself; she grows fuzzy as soon as she tries to speculate on the socio-cultural significance of the themes under discussions. A more theoretical perspective might have permitted Marsland to explore her promising subject in more complex terms (she acknowledges that her study "cannot be termed a work of literary theory"). On a more basic level, her point that poetry for and against the war was motivated by propagandist impulses relies once again on rather undefined categories. She assures us that propaganda poetry was spontaneous, overlooking the concentrated attempt by the British government to enlist the support of the country's best literary minds. One would at the

very least have expected her to be familiar with Peter Buitenhuis's book on war propaganda, *The Great War of Words. The Nation's Cause* can be recommended to those inclined to take a leisurely stroll through a neglected body of poetry; however, the more demanding reader may find Marsland's faith in her own common sense somewhat irritating.

Hanley's *Writing War* combines critical essays with her own short stories in an excellent attempt to break down the boundary between critical and fictional writing. Both the short stories and the commentaries on Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, and Joan Didion pound home the thesis that men are bellicose while women are nurturing. While this argument may be reassuring to women readers, it is also rather reductive in its simplicity. Not only does Hanley's polemical identification of bellicosity in male writing and behavior itself border on the bellicose, but her rigid opposition between bellicose men and nurturing women essentializes and mythologizes a feminine subject position which deserves more careful investigation. If she had not rather simplistically dismissed deconstruction as yet another act of male aggression, she might have argued from a theoretically informed feminist position which holds that her kind of binary thinking remains caught up in the patriarchal system she attacks. Hanley's lively style and energetic argument communicate an always timely reminder that the patriarchy is indeed in need of being restructured along more feminine-identified forms of thinking. But her anti-theoretical animus and her essentializing tendencies strike an outmoded note in feminist conceptions of gender. At the very least, the implicit suggestion that the nurturing attributes of women would spell the end of war rather naively overlooks the dependence of the capitalist system on the military-industrial complex.

Surfaces and Depths

Beverley Daurio
Hell and Other Novels. Coach House $12.95

Anne Dandurand, Claire De, and Helene Rioux, Trans. Luise von Flotow
Three by Three. Guernica n.p.

Reviewed by Julie E. Walchli

Beverley Daurio's collection of ten unrelated short stories reads like a procession of heavy, sensuous details. Hailed by critics as *the new gothic* because, in contrast with traditional gothic in which horror and mystery are at the heart of the story, the characters' commonplace lives conceal a yearning for solitude and redemption, Daurio's collection is characterized by an obsessive attention to objects at the expense of character and plot development. This attention is both the strength and weakness of the book.

In the first story, for example, "Big Oz," strange details lurk beneath commonplace objects. The third-person narrator — the dominant voice in the collection — traces the unhappy life a young woman who lives in Toronto with her "university teacher" boyfriend, a life she tries to improve with drugs, alcohol, and affairs with other men. The plot is, for the most part, clichéd, but the connections that unfold between the protagonist and a young woman who is found washed up on a beach outside the cottage at which the protagonist stays make the story compelling. The dead woman is found wearing the protagonist's clothes, and the image of the corpse becomes a kind of fetish, an image of warmth and peacefulness that the unhappy protagonist strives to find. The idealization of death is disturbing, but in "Big Oz," as in most of the other stories, the goodness of life wins out, and the tension is resolved in a reunion of the protagonist and her lover.

Daurio's art relies on the tension between depths and surfaces that characterizes the

gothic genre; however, while the stark details of the settings are appealing, her characters are, for the most part, bare and unformed. As a result, the stories seem to blur together into one depressing canvas of the alienation caused by urban life and by the the oppression of female sexuality and anger. An exception is the title story of the collection, about a woman whose adult son has gone missing in Vancouver while she must wait helplessly in Stratford, Ontario for any details of the police investigation. The story is richly detailed, both in the descriptions of setting *and* character, and although this ending too is one of temporary promise and reprise from "Hell," it is thought-provoking and challenging because it leaves the reader to weave the strands of violence in 16th century England and 20th century Canada together.

While female sexuality and rage are only glimpsed in the urban settings of the characters in Daurio's stories, in *Three by Three*, a collection of three stories from each of the Québécois writers Anne Dandurand, Claire Dé and Helene Rioux, female desire and anger are given complete rein. The collection, from a new generation of Québécois women writing very consciously against the theoretically based writing of authors such as Nicole Brossard and France Théoret, claims to "represent a move away from *L'ecriture au feminin* towards a more urban-based narrative," as the translator Luise von Flotow writes in her introduction. Flotow suggests that "although feminist elements are implicit in the work of these three authors, in their strong women, their assertive use of language, and the angry treatment of the less savory aspects of 'patriarchy,' their work is geared to a wider public". While I think the project of creating a new kind of experimental writing which attempts to articulate female sexuality and anger is exciting, the stories in *Three by Three* are horrifying and disturbing because the expression of female desire is repeatedly tied to pain, suffering, and death.

Anne Dandurand's "The Theft of Jacques Braise" is the most light-hearted piece in the collection. She tells the story of a Haitian/Cree woman, Jacinthe-Pierre O'Bamsawe, who is a forty-five year-old witch. When a man she meets at a Montreal bar refuses to go home with her, she embarks on a journey to create a magic potient which will enslave him and make him her "love zombie." The potient works by obliterating his soul and leaving only the body, but as she ironically comments at the end of the tale, "in this *fin de millennium* what more could I have hoped for?". While the story seems to repeat a bad stereotype by casting a woman of colour as a witch, the fantasy of revenge that is the result of female desire is told with a good deal of humour and irony in the first-person voice of the Haitian/Cree protagonist.

However, the collection becomes more and more problematic, as the desire for revenge on unfaithful men and the need to express the women's previously oppressed sexuality become increasingly dark. In Claire Dé's story, "Kill," the protagonist is a manic-depressive who kills eight people while out buying croissants to feed her unfaithful lover because "I couldn't resign myself. To you no longer loving me", and Helene Rioux's award-winning "The Man from Hong Kong" tells the story of a self-styled "Charles Mansonesque" mass murderer who preys primarily on women and children because "he liked they way [their] suffering was true...was real". While thse stories claim to celebrate female pleasure, the stories, apparently unintentionally, suggest that female pleasure is still bound up in violence.

Eco-Criticism

D.M.R. Bentley

The Gay]Grey Moose: 'Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry 1690-1990. U of Ottawa P n.p.

Reviewed by Francis Mansbridge

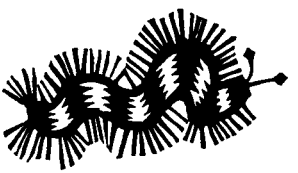
Bentley's book is a fascinating if eccentric collection of essays that till the soil of mainly earlier Canadian poetry. His theory melds new criticism with phenomenology to form a uniquely Bentleyan blend. The goal is lofty; he hopes that his "ecological" approach can foster "the connection, through poems, between man and nature", and thus help criticism perform a much needed humanistic function of helping heal the wounds caused by our alienation from nature. In the enemy's camp are those aspects of deconstruction, feminism, post-structuralism and post-modernism that are the amoral facilitators of consumer capitalism, "hostile to nature, history, locality, individuality".

The moral mission of literature is resurrected in a late twentieth century ecological context; "It is essential that we ask of any poem whether it shows contempt or respect for the natural and human world". His phenomenological parallel between poetry and landscape assumes "a brain that is no less material . . . than anything else involved in the poetic process". The ideal poet is not the inspired romantic or even the voyager into the realms of the unconscious, but the sensible (and socially responsible) reflector of his or her culture.

While the book sustains a high level of scholarship and contains many perceptive readings of poems, his attempts to formulate the connection between poetry and its environment meet with limited success. Poems are slippery customers and often foil Bentley's attempts to snare them in his theoretical net. In his view the sparseness of lines in some prairie poetry reflects the low density of population in that region. What then do we make of the sparse lines of Chinese poetry? Line length is said to relate to the speed at which the speaker or subject is moving; "the slower the speed the longer . . . will be the line". But are not the long lines of E.J. Pratt and Robert Service often more conducive to speed? Elsewhere minimalist lines are said best to represent the austerity of the prairie landscape, but two pages later the long lines of Anne Marriott's "The Wind Our Enemy" reflect "the expansiveness of our prairies". So which is it?

Bentley's comments are more illuminating when he sets aside his ecological axe. He writes at length on many long neglected early poets, convincingly arguing their importance in understanding the development of our literature. "Calibanned" provides an illuminating context for viewing the early writing on Canada's aboriginal peoples, and his analysis of the implications of F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith's modernism is brilliant—" The golden bough and the golden arches have more in common than may first be apparent".

While few would deny that poetry is intimately related to its environment, defining that relationship is tremendously complex. Bentley's book is a courageous but overly sanguine attempt to reveal a seamless web in a world that may be rent beyond repair. But it is an area that needs more discussion; his provocative scholarship could well generate some much needed debate within the Canadian academic community that will sharpen the ideas of all concerned. The best thing about this book is that it is so unashamedly unfashionable.



Spirit of the Flesh

Audrey Poetker-Thiessen
standing all the night through Turnstone Press n.p.

Reviewed by Beth Janzen

In Audrey Poetker-Thiessen's first book of poetry, *i sing for my dead in german*, the speaker says:

> christ christ
>
> tell me the difference
> gramma between the curse
> & the prayer

Poetker-Thiessen's second collection of poetry explores more fully the ambiguity between curse and prayer, the dynamic between the sacred and the profane, but elevates the significance of the discussion from the individual level to that of the community. In *standing all the night through*, the personal, sometimes confessional speaker of the first collection is replaced by a persona which takes on many roles, some of them from within a revisioned Mennonite heritage. The speaker is "...the preacher / the daughter of menno / the storyteller to grandfathers / the teacher of old women" ("who is this coming from the wilderness"). The speaker is elevated to the status of prophet, without losing her individual concerns or her physical presence. The individual's spiritual and sexual longing to be "found" is mirrored by the community's physical and spiritual search for "home". Poetker's collection seeks simultaneously to blur, erase and bridge the gap between the physical and the spiritual, and succeeds stunningly.

Poetker-Thiessen's concern with the relationship between the physical and the spiritual is effectively announced in her epigraph from the Song of Solomon which also serves as the title for her mini-epic of twenty-six parts entitled "who is this coming from the wilderness". She invokes the rich, sensual imagery of the Song of Solomon in this poem and throughout the collection. Both the Bible and the history of the Mennonite people serve as a narrative basis for Poetker-Thiessen's poetry. Just as the speaker occupies many positions and has many faces, "menno" occupies many places. Is he Menno Simons, the early leader of the Mennonites, or does he have other more nebulous identities as well? The persona tells us that he is "samurai", "kamikaze pilot", "a tribe without samaritans / that devours its people", "a joyful singer", "a red flower / blossoming from grandmother's / black hat" ("who is this coming from the wilderness"). Menno is both a spiritual leader and the lover who ultimately betrays the speaker. The blurring of the role of spiritual redeemer and lover reveals Poetker-Thiessen's interest in the gender politics which come to the fore in discussions of the interpretation of The Song of Solomon. What is the significance of woman's body in the Bible? How does her body influence her relationship with God?

The blurring between the sacred and profane is seen clearly in Poetker-Thiessen's use of language. Harry Loewen comments in "Leaving Home: Canadian Mennonite Literature in the 1980s":

> Some of [the new Mennonite writers] seem to believe that a provocative language and crass images are the only means of changing their elders' attitude toward art and literature....These writers sometimes overstate their case and make pronouncements rather than write good literature.

In the case of *standing all the night through* let there be no mistaking that the poet's use of "slang" is not a gratuitous attempt to shock, but an integral aspect of the work's design in both theme and technique. Through her control of rhythm and cadence, she effectively combines the register of the biblical language with that of the "profane":

> menno bruder you have held

us up daily at the point
of your prick before him
whom prostitutes foretold
who births himself of woman
& is pulled bloody every day
from bloody thighs messiah
of women emancipator
son of woman

The presence here of both Low German and contemporary profanity in Poetker-Thiessen's poetry suggest an interest in "translating" metaphysical problems into a "vernacular".

The answer to the metaphysical quest for home can be found in the physical: the speaker says, "my lover's thighs are two straight roads / that lead only home" ("where the thistles grow & dandelions"). Likewise, the speaker in "who is this coming from the wilderness" says to menno:

i would

fuck you dry
of your pilgrim song
& pour it out
on troubled waters
to smooth the way
for your children
to come home

i would come home too

Her reference to menno as "pilgrim" refers back to her epigraph from *Pilgrim's Progress* in which Atheist laughs at Christian for his journey, and tells him he's likely to only have "his travel" for his pains. On the book's back cover, Victor Doerksen comments that "[Poetker-Thiessen's] Mennonites are men and women, more sinning than sinned against, but on the heavenly journey nonetheless."

Audrey Poetker-Thiessen's second collection of poetry explores the space between the "wilderness" and "home", the "stranger" and the "lover". The mythology she rewrites is not only the "unspoken mythology" (back cover) of the Mennonite community, but also the mythology of Western Christianity and Western Canada, as is illustrated in the poem about the first woman and the first man and their naming of the world which is the prairie world ("out of the earth"). This poetry, which might be termed "ethnic" by some critics because of its use of Mennonite history and low german, beautifully addresses the concerns of Poetker-Thiessen's particular identity and community (see "here is abram paetkau's place"), and is also accessible to a wide audience through its concerns with personal mythology and memory. (The glossary at the back is helpful too.)

One hopes that conservative readers both inside and outside of the Mennonite community will put aside their predictable shock at Poetker-Thiessen's fascinating blend of "the language of men" ("who is this coming from the wilderness") with the language of the Bible and will explore her subtle truths and paradoxes. Like the lover who describes menno's lips as "cracked open / sunflower seed / by my tongue..." ("& i want to hear menno"), the reader must gently pry apart Poetker-Thiessen's metaphors and motifs; the result is pleasurable for both the flesh and the spirit.

Direction & Clarity

Russell Ferguson
Discourses: Conversations in Postmodern Art and Culture. MIT $16.95

Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Summer and Patricia Yaeger, eds.
Nationalisms and Sexualities. Routledge $19.95

Reviewed by Bernard Selinger

Many believe that post-modern thought has provided little more than irresolution and confusion. These two books, however, suggest that post-modern thinking just may be providing us with a fair amount of direction and clarity.

Discourses is a fine collection of interviews and discussions, all of which were

previously published, mostly in the mid to late 1980s. The editors put this volume together to remind us that works of art and the artists (defined in the broadest sense) who create them are very much a part of the world around them. Consequently, the many different voices in this text, from the realms of photography, film, performance, music, academia, and architecture, address most of the larger concerns of our day—colonialism, feminism, representation, appropriation, ideology, power. The term discourse is defined in the Foucauldian sense as "a `great surface' of mediation rather than `an ideal, timeless form.... a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies.'" Indeed, many of the 100 artists, theorists and critics represented here draw on contemporary critical theory to inform their work and most would agree with Foucault and Deleuze that theory is always practice—it is an "activity conducted alongside those who struggle for power, and not their illumination from a safe distance." Several of those in this book make formal theory an essential part of their practice: the Sankofa Film/Video Collective and the Black Audio Film Collective, the two most significant media groups to come out of the British workshop movement of the 1980s, draw from Foucauldian, psychoanalytic, Afro-Caribbean, and post colonial discourse in order to explore, in their "film essays," how radical (Black) politics and (several Black) aesthetics might converge; filmmakers Laleen Jayamanne, Leslie Thornton, and Trinh T. Minh-ha pepper their conversation with references to Foucault, Lyotard, Bhabha, Said, Deleuze and Guattari, Jameson, and so on, as they move toward a definition of post-feminism as "a resistance to Woman and to monolithic Feminism." Then there are contributions by the theorists themselves. Julia Kristeva, Gayatri Spivak, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Jane Gallop.

Some other discussions do not as explicitly rely on theory, but many of the most salient points that arise are informed by the language of contemporary theory. In the lengthiest exchange in the book, Museum of Modern Art curator, William Rubin, who comes to represent the modernist aesthetic which favours the relocation of art objects of other peoples from their original location and function in order to emphasize certain stylistic affinities, takes on critic Thomas McEvilley, who is unrelenting in his critique of that particular co-optive, colonizing impulse of modernism.

Nationalisms and Sexualities is an excellent collection of twenty three essays; twenty were initially presented at an international conference held at Harvard University in June 1989, and three were previously published. The idea for the conference came from George L. Mosse's *Nationalism and Sexuality*, one of the first studies to treat sexuality and nation as inseparable units, and many of the essays were influenced by Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, which contends that the term nationalism belongs with kinship or religion and not with fascism or liberalism. The collection covers a wide range of geographical areas and historical moments in its attempt to show us how powerful these two discourses are in shaping our present day notions of identity. Like gender, the editors write, "nationality is a relational term whose identity derives from its inherence in a system of differences. In the same way that 'man' and 'woman' define themselves reciprocally... national identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not." The editors conclude, along with Mosse and Anderson, that since nationalism favours a "distinctly homosocial form of male bonding," and since no nationalism on earth has ever allowed men and women the same "privileged access to the resources of the

nation state," national and post-colonial studies must necessarily be informed by feminisms.

All of the articles in this varied collection are useful and significant in some way, but several are particularly noteworthy. Four of the essays give an idea of the range of topics and approaches. Julianne Burton's entertaining piece on the making of the quite bizarre 1945 Disney cartoon movie, *The Three Caballeros,* shows how Hollywood's attempt to construct its "Other(s)" in Latin America proves the rule of "cross-cultural borrowing as self-aggrandising appropriation." She also demonstrates that when cultural expression itself becomes feminized, socio-cultural exchange with an imperial power takes the form of male heterosexual conquest. Lee Edelman uses media-reportage of the Jenkins affair (a public washroom scandal concerning LBJ's chief of staff) to examine the interpenetration of American nationalism and homosexuality. Cindy Patton details the attempt of Western medicine, represented by AIDS-control workers, to maintain a distinction between an "African heterosexual AIDS" and a "Western homosexual AIDS" by inventing and promoting the "African monogamous bourgeois family" (which disempowers both women and the community) as Africa's only solution to the catastrophe of African AIDS. Rhonda Cobham argues that the transformation of the anti-imperialist struggle in Africa into a nationalist movement heightened a crisis of individual and collective identity that is elaborated in recent African novels. In addition to articulating this crisis, Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* calls into question some of the most cherished myths of modern Africa, "from the `natural' moral superiority of oral pretechnological cultures over literate cultures . . . to the inevitability of certain gender and ethnic categories."

Several contributors are particularly effective at punctuating the complex relationship between women and nation. Their approaches contain a blend of the theoretical and the pragmatic modes of feminist criticism(s); they are perhaps more thoroughgoing than most of the other contributors to the volume at questioning the ways gender has been constructed in different cultural (con)texts. R. Radhakrishnan, dealing with post-colonial India, underlines the need to resist the nationalist rhetoric which makes "woman" the "pure and ahistorical signifier of interiority." He argues that feminist historiography, along with other discourses, must secede from the structure of nationalist totality, not to set itself up as a different and oppositional form of totality, but in order to "establish a different relationship to totality," since no one discourse should have the "ethicopolitical" legitimacy to represent the total field of contestations and relational dialogues. In a similar but less intricate argument Geraldine Heng and Janadas Devan, assessing Singapore's "Great Marriage Debate" which was prompted by the state's governing (Mandarin) Chinese elite, conclude that women "and all signs of the feminine, are by definition always and already anti-national." In her difficult essay on a story by Mahasweta Devi about a female tribal bonded-labor prostitute in India, Gayatri Spivak focuses on the space that exists prior to the movement from old colony to new nation. The political goals of the new nation are determined by a "regulative logic" derived from the old colony but "with its interest reversed: secularism, democracy, socialism, national identity, capitalist development." For Spivak and Devi there is always a space, which does not share in the "energy of this reversal," that is simultaneously the habitat of the subproletariat or subaltern and the female body: this shows us that it is possible to "consider socio-sexual (in)difference philosophically prior to the reversal of the establishment codes" and hence the *Aufhebung* of colony

into (hegemonic) nation (alism) is undone. Analyzing novels by Arna Bontemps, Sam Greenlee and Ismael Reed, Joyce Hope Scott tracks the movement of the Black female from her earlier vocality and centrality to a position of silence as the vision of the Black Muslims and the advocates of Black Power "relocate the black woman in the margins of the struggle for freedom and equality in the United States." Similarly, Valentine Moghadam shows how revolutionary change in Afghanistan and Iran highlighted the problematic nature of Islamic gender relations.

Many post-colonial theorists, fully aware of the need of colonized peoples to achieve identity without the influence of Eurocentric or universalist concepts (if that is still possible) regularly lapse into simple dichotomous thinking—imperialism versus nationalism, internationalist versus nativist perspectives, and even male versus female. This is not the case with the contributors to *Nationalisms and Sexualities* who, true to the title, recognize that ideas and constructions of nation and gender are multiple and contradictory. Consequently, this collection is an important addition to the field of post-colonial studies, and it is entertaining to boot. The collection would have been greatly enhanced though by a contribution or two by aboriginal writers. Certainly many of them would suggest that we are being overly optimistic in our use of the term post-colonial, given their colonized condition. Others, like Thomas King, would argue that aboriginal people were never really colonized because they had fully developed cultures before the appearance of Europeans.

Two Perspectives

Gary Evans
In the National Interest: A C hronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989. University of Toronto Press $85.00 cloth/ $35.00 paper

Suzanne Clark
Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word. Indiana University Press $39.95 cloth/ $14.95 paper

Reviewed by Judith Plessis

Although I have enjoyed National Film Board productions most of my life, the title of Gary Evans' book intimidated me. Would this be a boring chronicle of endless names and NFB trivia? Definitely not. I discovered a detailed account of the history of Canadian cinema in the context of the NFB and the international film scene. *In the National Interest* is an important reference book for Canadian film specialists, providing factual and interesting reading. However, the author has a traditional approach to the organization and presentation of the institution's history, and ther is a dated look to the black and white photographs throughout the work. This 400 page volume plays on the words "national interest" in terms of the Film Board's mandate during the last 50 years and the changing Canadian "nation" during that time. Evans meticulously documents the meaning (for the French and English) of the term "national" and the many challenges and problems the Film Board has encountered in post-war Canada. Evans' writing style is clear, simple and authoritative: he brings each period to life with stories and comments from observers of the Film Board who are important Canadian personalities. The historical analysis of the social, economic and political happenings in Canada illustrate that the successes of the Film Board arose from the types of films created and the refusal by individual

Canadian artists to comply with a single doctrine. Names, places and production costs of each film give the work authenticity and a certain objectivity, while anecdotes about the Canadian and international film scene make it stimulating reading. The paraphrased storylines, although tedious at times, help us understand the broader concepts of the films. I recollected my own childhoood experiences in Canadian schools through Evans' book. Having grown up with animation films like Norm McLaren's *A Chairy Tale* or Yvon Mallette's *Métrofolle*, I realize how much the NFB's commitment to both French and English production allowed me to take for granted my own bilingual perspective in Canada.

Evans examines the period that marked the intellectual fermentation and revitalization of postwar Quebec. The author traces the Duplessis years to the Révolution tranquille and modern times using the original French quotations from each period to describe the struggle for funds and the control of the famous French unit. Modern Quebecois cineasts such as Claude Jutra, Gilles Carles and Denys Arcand were part of the French unit in the 1960s and Evans points out that some of Quebec's most distinctive cinema has been produced through the funding and sponsorship of the Office National du film, including the 1986 internationally acclaimed feature film by Denys Arcand, *Le Déclin de l'empire américain.* Evans also keeps the world-wide political implications of the NFB's English production in the foreground of his analysis. For example, he attributes Ronald Dick's documentary *Black and White in South Africa* as "one of the ancillary factors that tilted Canada to take the lead in driving South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961." Likewise, Terri Nash's *If You Love This Planet* was labelled as a political propaganda film in the United States in 1982 because of its strong anti-nuclear message.

Yet, by limiting itself to a chronological exposition, Evans' book has the limitations of many historical works which are constrained by a linear and patriarchal perspective. It is true that the National Film Board has been a male-dominated institution (confirmed by a list of the commissioners and directors provided in Appendix 6.) However, the perspective of the National Film Board has greatly changed since 1949. Appearing at the end of this historical chronology, the latest film commissioner, Joan Pennefeather, is described by Evans as "demure" and "quiet-spoken" yet "utterly competent," a very different description from "forefather" founders such as John Gierson, a "mad, frenetic, feisty, vibrant, idealistic Scotsman." While Evans delves into the complexities of the political and linguistic situation of a dual nation, he glosses over the under-representation of women within the NFB's cinematic and administrative past as well as the significance of the formation of a women's unit in 1974. He could have given more insight into the socio-economic history that caused such imbalance as well paid closer attenion to women directors and female subjects.

Suzanne Clark presents a very different perspective when writing about the modernist period of literature. Using a case study format, she is able to escape the limits of linear writing while remaining factual, concise and analytical. The reader participates in the exploratory process as Clark asks questions and develops her arguments. Her chapters consist of an in-depth look at the lives and works of women writers and activists who have been neglected or misunderstood in the traditional study of modernism: Emma Goldman, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Louise Bogan and Kay Boyle as well as contemporary writers Annie Dillard and Alice Walker. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in feminist criticism, modernism or twentieth century theory.

Clark sensitively reexamines being female and a writer during the modernist period and eloquently continues her thesis to the study of feminist discourse today .

For example, Clark refers to current feminists Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, whose views differ, but represent "a similar hope of joining feminism and the avant-garde in a literary practice that would rupture the phallogocentricity of language from within the discourse of the Western tradition." We are left with unresolved questions about "écriture féminine" and the modernist reaction against sentimintal female writing. However, Suzanne Clark illustrates effectively, through the style of her book as well as that of the female writers she studies, the dialogism in literary texts.

The Morning After

Sean Stewart

Nobody's Son. Maxwell MacMillan $15.95 (cloth)/$10.95 (paper)

Reviewed by J. Kieran Kealy

All begins quite predictably. Shielder's Mark, an awkward, illiterate commoner who has been abandoned by his father, is about to complete his quest to break the evil spell that hovers over the Red Keep. He has "no magic sword, no giant's arm, no pack of tools," just his courage, dogged perseverance and natural cunning. But this, not surprisingly, is enough, as this stereotypic "little man" rather effortlessly accomplishes what Swangard's greatest heroes have failed to accomplish: he breaks the spell and claims the magical sword that validates his feat. His task accomplished, Mark rides away to claim his heritage, his happily-ever-after. And all of this occurs in one chapter. Unfortunately for Mark, it is the first chapter.

It soon becomes apparent that Sean Stewart's newest novel, *Nobody's Son*, is not to be another stereotypic fairy tale. Rather, his tale begins when Shielder's Mark discovers what a "bloody joke" happily-ever-after stories can be. His return to Swangard evokes not a royal welcome but disdain, as the court refuses to recognize this shaggy, unkempt, uncouth commoner. Though the king must ultimately grant him the one wish his accomplishment traditionally deserves, the hand of his daughter, Princess Gail, he does so grudgingly. And to make matters worse, this is not an ordinary princess. She is not tall, willowy and golden-tressed; rather she is short, stocky, opinionated and fiercely independent, clearly a woman who has little affinity with the Sleeping Beauties and Snow Whites who traditionally fulfil such a role.

Shielder's Mark's breaking of the Red Keep's spell, it soon becomes apparent, is but a brief prologue to the real quest this hero must face, that of becoming a man, of discovering an identity, of proving that there is a place for one who, like him, is "nobody's son."

Initially he must simply learn the intricacies of being a gentleman. More important, he must contend with the political intrigue that necessarily surrounds one who is suddenly a contender for the throne. And finally, he must face the demons that all men face: "grief, age, death, abandonment, hollowness and desolation." He must learn to accept his fallibility, his mortality, and realize that all eventually will turn to ashes.

Clearly Stewart has chosen to challenge and redefine traditional expectations. This is not to be a Tolkenian conflict between good and evil; rather it is an existential drama in which man must face and learn to accept his limitations. Stewart's characters refuse to accept stereotypic boundaries and, as a result, become breathing, clearly individualized characters. His princess refuses to allow expectations to define her; in particular she refuses to consummate her marriage lest she be placed in the cage of motherhood.

And then there is Shielder's Mark. One's first impression is that somehow a character from Salinger or Kevin Major fell asleep and awoke to find himself in a medieval fantasy, for he always seems more a troubled adolescent than an Arthurian warrior. His reactions to the courtly world that unfolds before him are often crude and always frank. His first impression of Gail, for example, is not based on her ethereal beauty, but: "What lambs a man could make of such a ewe." His favourite expression is "shit," or more properly, "shite," but he is working on cutting down on his swearing. He also wonders aloud on the problems of learning how to "swive a princess." His frankness, however, is not really offensive, nor is it included as a bit of titillating sensationalism. Rather Mark is simply reacting as any boy would who is not yet a man. As a neophyte, he must learn the value of love, of his wife, and finally of himself.

Eventually Mark must return to the Red Keep, for his initial breaking of the spell has unfortunately unleashed ghostly apparitions. And he must confront the cause of the evil: a patricide that took place long ago, in the "grandfather days." His return also forces Mark to come to terms with his feelings about his own father, the man whose abandonment left him without a name.

Sean Stewart's award winning first novel, *Passion Play*, introduced a new voice to Canadian fantasy fiction. If anything, *Nobody's Son* is even more successful. Its narrative style, a delightful combination of first and third person, and his attention to recreating not only the feel of this magical past but its language make his world a thoroughly believable and attractive one.

There are problems. The plot is occasionally a bit improbable and confusing, and several minor characters, such as Lerelil, the Ghost King's queen, and Husk, the hagcrone who sets Mark's first task, deserve fuller development, but these are minor quibbles, for, above all, *Nobody's Son* provides a thoroughly engaging portrait of a man trying to discover his uniqueness and discovering that we are all, inevitably and inexorably, on our own. We are all nobody's son. With his second novel, Sean Stewart clearly emerges as one of Canada's most important fantasy writers.

Prophetic Voices

Stewart L. Donovan
Maritime Union: A Political Tale. Non-Entity Press n.p.

Miriam Waddington
The Last Landscape. Oxford $12.95

Reviewed by Hilda L. Thomas

One reviewer describes Stewart L. Donovan's satiric novel *Maritime Union: A Political Tale* as "a perfect gift for your away relatives in Calgary and Toronto". Or, one might add, Vancouver. Western readers will have little difficulty in finding parallels to rival the whacky Maritime politics targeted in Donovan's irreverent tale.

Set in the 21st century, *Maritime Union* uses the bluntest of weapons to attack the perennial topics of political patronage, Maritime union, the causeway, tourism, and the collusion between old money and new entrepreneurs as they scheme to exploit the people and the resources of the Atlantic provinces. Donovan relies entirely on the Techniques of burlesque: grotesque exaggeration, puns, absurd acronyms, and broad caricature. His hero, native Halegonian Paul Doyle-Doncaster, is an ex-seminarian and peripatetic hack whose naiveté is matched only by his appetites. Doncaster is easily seduced by journalist Victoria Peelsticker, a.k.a. Vanity Sufferville and Susan Numb, author of the *Kitchener-Waterloo Guide to the Maritime Provinces.* He is also made the dupe in a plot by

Victoria's uncle, the devious Senator Albion Hackington to blow up the newly constructed East Northumberland Underwater Mall Tunnel, brainchild of Dr. Highcheek-Bevington and P.E.I. Angus MacDougall-Doyle (known as Big Mac).

Also prominent in the cast are the Iwin family—Ulyoosa Iwin, her niece Yorlanda, owner of the 4,000 acre Deep Dish Farm on P.I.E. and exporter of Deep Dish Wine, and her three daughters, Oilivia, Greaselda, and Gasandra. Gasandra is the producer of *The Ancestors of Anne: An Island Epic.* Directed by Karuro Kitusano, the film tells the story of Grannyann, the Japanese great-great-grandmother of Anne of Green Gables, and her Jesuit lover, Dan Maloney.

And so forth.

Happily, *Maritime Union* is as brief as it is broad. As Dryden suggests, a perpetual grin can easily become tedious, and "there is a vast difference between the slovenly butchering of a man, and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place". Donovan's novel makes no pretence at fineness. Rather, it chops its victims into messes. Whether readers should be grateful that Maritimers can still laugh at the destruction of their culture.

To take up Miriam Waddington's poems after Donovan's light-hearted dystopia is to turn from the prolusory to the genuinely prophetic. In all her poems Waddington strives for a transparency of language, for directness and simplicity in expression. But the poet who assumes, as Waddington surely does, the moral obligation of poetry must balance on a vibrating wire, continually risking a fall into mere preachiness on the one side, or, on the other, into silence. And falls undoubtedly there are in *The Last Landscape.* The poem "Futures", for example, is at once flat and curiously inexact in its language—"the long sunny autumn/of being thirty", "it simply stands there waiting", "the frowzy worn-out path/to death". The brief poems "A few Things" and "Peace Notes" fail to achieve the haiku-like clarity and immediacy that is surely intended. In some of the poems—for example, "The Hurly Burly Arcade", written in the third person—the narrative voice speaks with an almost clinical detachment of the isolation and loneliness of women facing the reality of old age and death:

> she would
> eat her lunches on benches downtown
> or at McDonald's where they give old
> women free coffee.
>
> After all her travels
> she would end up with this
> small wisdom; how to find
> warm places and free coffee.

At their best, however, the poems in *The Last Landscape* recall that early persona, the visionary poet who "went out into the autumn night/to cry my anger to the stone-blind fields" ..."held/in a... seize of hate" (*The Glass Trumpet* 1966). Fierce, biblical, uncompromising, the poems are a lament for all those women who dream "against guns/and hunger whose words/turn into songs as they/climb into higher/and higher skies", women who come "to warn you/of future Guernicas" and to awaken "your broken promises your/ancient righteousness" ("The Woman in the Hall"). They also cry out against injustice, against the hypocrisy and destructiveness of power.

Waddington is also acutely aware that, as Geoffrey Hartman puts it, "To live in truth is to live in that temptation toward silence, toward aphasia, yet to maintain the imperative of the word":

> Locked in our separate
> trances, we joined
> the invisible procession
> towards what was still
> undisclosed; and the angels
> with the red lanterns
> hovering over us, their wings brushed us
> with silence and the silence

was the silence
of the angels who sweep.
("The Angels who Sweep 11")

Of the three stories in *The Last Landscape*, "Klara and Lilo", "The Writer", and "The Bouquet", only the first seems to belong with the poems. But if this is truly the "last landscape" (Waddington is now in her mid-seventies) that is perhaps sufficient reason for including them. And surely it is also time for a reassessment of Waddington's substantial contribution to Canadian literature—her stories, her critical studies, and her thirteen volumes of poetry.

In Pain

Anne Cameron
A Whole Brass Band. Harbour Publishing $16.95

Lee Maracle
Sundogs. Theytus Books $12.95

Reviewed by Robin McGrath

Anne Cameron's new novel, *A Whole Brass Band*, is the story of Jean Prichard, a single mother who loses her job, her apartment and her father all in one devastating week. Instead of giving in to despair, she packs up and heads back to the small B.C. fishing town where she was raised. Despite some initial resistance from her children, the family settle in and start rebuilding their lives. The death of a daughter, and a crippling accident, slow down Jean Prichard's progress towards a better, fuller life, and by the end of the book she realizes that there is no way to escape the pain of living, nor would she want to.

One of the more disappointing aspects of this novel is that we get none of the documentary detail that can make fiction so compelling, even when the plot and the characterizations aren't particularly gripping. Here we have a primary character who runs not one, but two fishing boats, and we learn little or nothing about fishing, although learning to fish is central to Prichard's development and the strengthening bond within the family. The wharfs and the boats that are so central to a fishing community here are as vague and unrealized as fuzzy photograph, but you always know what people are eating. We are given recipes for hot chocolate, fancy mashed potatoes and 30 second Italian salad dressing, all of which which suggests that the author might be more comfortable in the kitchen than on the high seas.

Language and dialogue have been identified as Cameron's strengths in the past, but here, too, there is little to praise. All the characters sound alike, with the exception of one daughter who irritates her family, and the reader, by "*speaking in italics*" all the time. The compound words the author is so fond of (helluvan, buttinski, buhzillionaire, etc.) fail to snap, crackle or pop, and the tired, cliched spoonerisms slide from the pages in exhaustion. Nor do the endless stream of "folkisms", the farts in the mitt, and the shit on the stick that made an earlier appearance in *Kick the Can*, have any life left in them at all.

According to the publisher's biography that accompanied the review copy of *A Whole Brass Band*, Anne Cameron began her career at the age of twelve by writing on toilet paper. How appropriate for an author whose aim, in this book at least, seems to be to identify a hundred and one ways to say "shove it up your ass". Cameras, toilet brushes, shotguns, sand, tranquilizers, the list of items various characters are invited to insert in their anuses seems endless. If every "fuckcrapChristfrigginfartshit" were excised from this book, the work would be shorter by about one third its length, and a good thing too. Certainly we hear language like this in the streets and in our homes every day, and it adds to the realism of the dialogue, but in *A Whole Brass Band*, even the third person narrator averages about three obscenities a page and it gets incredibly tiresome.

The Canada Council and the Cultural Services Branch of the Government of British Columbia both contributed to the funding of this book. They were robbed.

If Anne Cameron did not serve her reader's well with *A Whole Brass Band*, Theytus Books did not serve Lee Maracle well when they sent out uncorrected review copies of her new book, *Sundogs*. Despite the disclaimer pasted on the cover of an otherwise very professional looking publication, the host of fragmented, misspelled, unpunctuated sentences make an otherwise fairly engaging book a very frustrating read. Frustration turns to irritation when, halfway through the book, a key character's name switches randomly from Paul to John and back a number of times. Some of the errors seem to be the author's—"shoes" are confined to spike heels, when it is obviously "feet" that were meant, and reference is made to the eve of a niece's "death" when it is the eve of the funeral, a day or two after the unexpected death, that is intended. *Sundogs*, Maracle's first novel, centres around the summer of 1990, and the effect that the events at Oka had upon native people in other parts of the country. Marianne, the central character, is a protected, rather pampered young native woman, a self-described "social idiot". Surrounded by a huge family with its full share of problems, led by a mother who talks back to the television, she slowly wakes up, politically and emotionally, and joins the Run For Peace that sets out across the country in support of those behind the barricades.

The strength of *Sundogs* lies in the descriptions of family and community interaction, rather than in the long section on the Run For Peace that serves as Marianne's initiation into the real world. The closeness between relations, the attitudes towards whites, the strong sense of "Us and Them", the combination of hope and despair, that are all part of life for native Canadians every day, is very strongly delineated in the opening passages of the book. You get an intimate sense of who these people are, and why their lives take the turns they do. However, even if the novel is subject to the ministrations of a keen and capable editor before it makes it into the bookstores, *Sundogs* will still resemble a fine stew that needed a lot more cooking. Maracle needed more time with this book.

Philip Milner, *The Yankee Professor's Guide to Life in Nova Scotia*, Lancelot P, $9.95. Milner is "not saying that Maritimers have smaller egos than Ontarians or Americans," but he does say "that people formed [in Antigonish] are less likely to let themselves get away with visible self-celebration, less likely to fall into certain forms of affectation." Milner's essays typically step back from the ponderous and settle for that venerable form of Maritime diffidence — the sketch. As an outsider (he's from Indiana) who often finds himself surprised to be on the inside, Milner observes small-town life with a deft mix of affection and irony. He is perceptive on the seasonal rhythms of the undergraduate classroom, and hilarious on how to eat lobster. His tribute to Father MacSween, former head of St. Francis-Xavier's English Department, and founder of *The Antigonish Review*, is filled with understanding of the essence of teaching — because it is confident enough to apologize, albeit posthumously. He writes movingly about his profession and his inability to use English to speak effectively to his own daughter. Thoreau's *Walden* is the most insistent intertext: telling of the strong New England connections in Nova Scotia life, and contextualizing Milner's glimpses of natural rhythms and his "less visibly aggressive," Canadian, moralizing. L.R.

Nature Notes

The nature essay has taken on a new status in the environmentally conscious post-natural age. It's more evidently, or inevitably, political, and *nature* extends well beyond plants and animals to geology, history, and sociology. Conger Beasley, Jr., in *Sundancers and River Demons: Essays on Landscape and Ritual* (U. Arkansas P, $24.95 US), indicates even in his subtitle that "sensitivity to the nuances of topography" should imply a simultaneous reading of ethnographic nuances. According to Beasley, "the way we perceive landscape can have a direct bearing upon the way we preceive society and the human being who comprise it. Dismissing a landscape because it does not conform to preconceptions is a prejudice as galling as dismissing people because of the color of their skin or the beliefs they profess. It violates the biological urge toward multiplicity and diversity that energizes our planet." Conger's nature/travel essays search out, consequently, landscapes and people which preconceptions would dismiss: the apparently stagnant Grand Turk Island, or the bleached austerity of Santa Cruz Island. The most moving of the essays is "Country to Make You Weep," which sculpts the contours of the South Dakota Badlands by muffling and truncating the story of an old Sioux woman whose daughter has died. The bleakest of Conger's bleak landscapes is "Point Center: Cairo Illinois," where a young boy dies in the street: Conger's feel for the poetics of nature writing where the middle is a void, and landscape is absence, should have a particular resonance for readers of Canadian literature.

John A. Murray's anthology *A Republic of Rivers: Three Centuries of Nature Writing from Alaska and the Yukon* (Oxford: $24.95) touches Canada at its northern boundary. This chronological selection of short excerpts also demonstrates the new politics of the nature essay: an excerpt from Captain Cook's journal, and Georg Wilhelm Steller's closely observed account (ca. 1741-42) of the now-extinct Steller's sea cow frame the anthropological concerns in Richard Nelson's recuperation of the Koyukon's ecologically balanced subsistence cycle, and the problematics of translations in transformation legends of the Haida and Inupiat. Two of the best contemporary nature writers are represented with journals of river journeys: Barry Lopez concentrates not on "the vegetation...but its presentation," as he follows the Charley and Yukon Rivers, while Edward Abbey advances a more cynical politics by quoting a construction worker: "'We're here for the megabucks, and nothing else.'" But Murray's anthology is too deliberately historical, and too inclined to the two-or-three page excerpt to make as satisfying reading as Beasley, or indeed as Wayne Grady's anthology *From the Country: Writings About Rural Canada* (Camden House, $12.95), which in its sea (Atlantic) to sea (Pacific) to sea (Arctic) organization inclines to such writers as Edna Staebler, Alistair Macleod, Norman Levine or Heather Robertson, who have both a keen eye and some flair for language. In

some ways the selections are predictable: Wallace Stegner's "The Question Mark in the Circle" provides the—still remarkable—prairie centre, but Grady's sense of reading the landscape by focussing on the people living in it, provides a different take from meticulous description of flora and fauna. An excerpt from Edith Iglauer's loving portrait of her fisherman-husband (from *Fishing With John*), for example, measures the *worker's* way of reading the Pacific Ocean.

Working and "worked" geographies also fascinate Stephen Hume. His collection of journalism *Ghost Camps: Memory and Myth on Canada's Frontiers* (NeWest, n.p.) contains essays on the Crowsnest Pass country as expressed in the tough jaw and black irony of Joe Brown, coal miner, and on the westcoast of Vancouver Island as it is risked by the halibut fishery and remembered in the legends of countless shipwrecks. In "The Heartwood of our Present," Hume pleads for the preservation of the archival and documentary resources which, even in their absences, contain "the landmarks of Canada's culturally distinct future." Another such preservation—of oral as much as documentary sources—is Peter S. Schmalz's *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario* (U Toronto P, $24.95 / $60.00), a book which might be called a political history of a people since European contact, if we allow, with Schmalz, that "political" here is more a matter of linguistics and culture than of rulers and ruled. Nonetheless, I found this book a little too bound to a textbook concept of *history* as compilation of facts and dates (however welcome in itself); despite the author's claim that "of all Indian groups, the Ojibwa have produced the greatest number of Indian authors," little of Basil Johnston's wit or Duke Redbird's song finds its way into the book. Few reviewers in 1992 could attempt such a brief summation without acknowledging, self-consciously, its naive and culturally-determined concepts—of Ojibwa, of poetry. Nonetheless, I had something of the same reaction reading Adolf Hungry Wolf's *Teachings of Nature* (Skookumchuk, B.C.: Good Medicine Books, $9.95), a slim book described as "a handbook of outdoor knowledge from various native tribes of North America." Although I longed for some variation of sentence structure, or some more concrete verbs, I welcomed the several catalogues of flora and fauna, their uses and significance in native cultures, particularly where the transliterations of the native terms were included—violets called "blue mouths" and grouse called *kitssitsum* or "looking like smoke" in Blackfoot.

"Outdoor knowledge" is a favourite with publishers eager to find a place on the bookstore shelves now inevitably labelled "Environment." Among the many picture books that should show cover-out there are *Celebrations of Nature* (Goose Lane, $29.95), an album of black and white photographs by Reg Balch, one-time director of the Federal Forest biology laboratory in Frederickton. Balch's emphasis is on the human role in biotic communities, and where his eye for the amusing does not pick out people, it picks out the transformations of the physical world that originate with humans. Two BBC publications, spinoffs from television series, include a great deal more text, and amount to combinations of picture book and reference work (with quite detailed indexes). Peter Crawford's *The Living Isles: A Natural History of Britain and Ireland* (BBC Books, $34.95 CDN), a reissue of a 1985 work, is organized by different ecosystems (pasture, stream, tidal zone), whereas Robert McCracken Peck's *Land of the Eagle: A Natural History of North America* (BBC, $39.95 CDN) is organized by region. *The Living Isles* is a great deal more alert to biotic interdependencies, and seems to me, partly because the sites are less familiar, a good deal more useful. Besides, *Land of the Eagle* treats Canada

(north, wilderness) as *one* of the regions, and shows scant awareness of this country in its chapters on the Rockies, Great Plains, or Northwest. Tony Oppersdorf's *Coastal Labrador: A Northern Odyssey* (Nimbus, n.p.) assembles some sweeping photographs of this largely unwritten part of Canada. The photos of icebergs, and the effective use of inset photographs, caught my attention, but essentially this is a book for quick scanning, where the issues of human economy, military presence and wildlife preservation raised in the Introduction have little resonance. The patient compiling of data to determine which areas of the Canadian north are richest in wildlife is a central story in *The Kazan: Journey into an Emerging Land* (Yellowknife: Outcrop, $21.00), edited by David F. Pelly and Christopher C. Hanks. In this record of an expedition of scientists and 24 young people from 11 countries, the photos and drawings are rather minor. For seven weeks the group travelled along this river west of Hudson Bay; the text records in a casual, almost random way, their attempt to identify and record species and to discover their interdependencies. Scott Cazamine's *Velvet Mites and Silken Webs: The Wonderful Details of Nature in Photographs and Essays* (John Wiley, $29.95) balances photographs and text more carefully. Each close-up photograph—of lichen, icicles, a flea, a male frog bloated with his mating call—is accompanied by a three-page essay, both personal and informative, an unusually literary epigraph, and a short list of further reading. Cazamine tries to tell stories which convey a great deal of biological information: the format makes intriguing browsing.

To put some of the concerns of these large-format books into context, I suggest beginning with Roderick Frazier Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (U Wisconsin P, n.p.). Ranging from St. Francis of Assisi to Aldo Leopold, and from Magna Carta to the Endangered Species Act (U.S. 1973) and beyond, Nash compactly and intelligently traces the ideas which have coalesced in the greening of late twentieth century culture. It is a valuable place to begin. Application of environmental ethics to Canadian landscapes, particularly to the grassland prairies, can be found in the short journalistic pieces of Stan Rowe's *Home Place: Essays on Ecology* (NeWest, n.p.). Rowe's personal reflections are readable enough, and I can't help but be sympathetic to his memories of a prairie boyhood, but a much more challenging work, if still very readable, is David Cayley's *The Age of Ecology* (James Lorimer, $16.95), transcripts of broadcasts on CBC Radio's *Ideas* from 1986-1990. This is an absorbing work, especially because of its multiple voices. One passage from the concluding essay may suggest its provocative teaching: "Arguments must take a logical form; but as [John] Livingstone says, 'the existence of the whooping crane is not logical.' This is why arguments for 'environmental ethics' always turn tautological and end up chasing their own tails....Environmentalism, finally, becomes its own enemy by arguing away exactly what it intends to conserve: the independent existence of nature." More vernacular versions of this anthropocentric contradiction are found in Jennifer Bennett's *Lilies of the Hearth: The Historical Relationship Between Women and Plants* (Camden House/Firefly Books, $14.95), a book I found useful for its cataloguing overview but frustratingly frenetic and lacking in analysis, and in Alexander Wilson's *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto: Between the Lines, $24.95/$19.95), an energetic and entertaining multidisciplinary look at the cultural assumptions implicit in built landscapes from road signs in P.E.I. to the architecture at Expo 67 and such TV shows as "Wild Kingdom." L.R.

Last Page

Where? Place in Recent North American Fictions (Aarhus Univ. Press, Aarhus, Denmark DK-8000; 121 Dankr.), edited by Karl-Heinz Westarp, opens with the tentative wisdom of Patrick Lane's poem "Indian Tent Rings", and includes (among its 10 essays) Ellen W. Munley's "Spatial Metaphors in Anne Hébert's *Les enfants du sabbat*: Within and Beyond the Confines of the Convent, the Cabin, and the Quotidian." But the essays of most general use to students of Canadian literature are likely to be James I. McClintock's outline of Gary Snyder's environmental poetics, and David Kranes' introductory essay "Space and Literature: Notes Toward a Theory of Mapping," which provides background and succinct guidelines for discussing the use(s) of space in literary texts. A perceptive piece of complementary criticism—not explicitly North American, but ultimately just as relevant—is Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (Routledge, $74.95/$18.95). Bate reacts against recent criticism which politicizes Wordsworth, or laments his lack of political engagement, not by returning to aesthetic hermeticism, but by discovering in the poet a different ecological-politics. *Romantic Ecology* is a short, taut, yet relaxed, new take on Wordsworth, which, in such chapters as "The Moral of Landscape" and "The Naming of Places" centres Wordsworth as the author of the *Guidebook* rather than of the *Prelude*.

David C. Miller reminds us, however, of the limitations of Wordsworth's versions of nature by quoting Aldous Huxley: "Wandering in the hothouse darkness of the jungle, he would not have felt so serenely certain of those "Presences of Nature," these "souls of lonely places," which he was in the habit of worshipping on the shores of Windermere and Rydal.'" This passage might have been an epigraph for Miller's *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Cambridge UP, n.p.), a wide-ranging, generously illustrated cataloguing of the metaphor of the swamp (and marsh and jungle) in American painting, writing and folklore. Miller's attention both to the physical shapes of particular landscapes and to what artists project on to a landscape makes the book a useful extension of work in a Canadian context by Dick Harrison, Robert Thacker, and Gaile MacGregor, while the far more theoretical investigation of "the picture-making capacity of words" found in Murray Krieger's *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (John Hopkins UP, $38.00 U.S.) establishes for such an investigation a wider context of philosophical history.

"I am accustomed to regard the smallest brook with as much interest for the time being as if it were the Orinoco or Mississippi," wrote Henry David Thoreau in 1850. This principle of concentrated close-up attention to the apparently unremarkable— Wordsworth's world in a grain of sand—permeates nature writing and much environmental writing. For the armchair urban biologist, large-format photo albums often provide the main means for looking close up. Judging by the number which reach *Canadian Literature*'s offices, publishers are detecting an expanding interest in such books. We are often, in a journal devoted primarily to literature, more interested in the text in such books than in the photographs. In this sense, Kim Stafford's *Entering the Grove* (Layton UT: Gibbs Smith, $34.95 U.S.) sets an exceptional standard. Surrounding Gary Braasch's moody photographs, poet Stafford's essay-stories discover sermons in forests and tongues in trees. *Wings Over Water: Water Birds of the Atlantic* (Nimbus, $27.95) is at the other extreme. The text (by Stuart Tingey) is utilitarian, conveying little sense of discovery, while the photos (by Wayne Barrett) provide the close-ups—of a com-

mon murre still entangled in shards of the gillnet from which it has managed to escape, of the splash of a diving murre at the precise moment its head hits the water. Tim Fitzharris's photographs in *Forests: A Journey into North America's Vanishing Wilderness* (Stoddart, $39.95) also allows us to appreciate four frosted willow leaves and a grouse feather as nature's abstract art. Fitzharris's own short essays, introducing the Pacific Forest, the Eastern Forest, etc., while hardly conveying Stafford's magic, attentively follow the traceries of complex ecological interdependencies. Fitzharris is also the photographer of *Coastal Wildlife of British Columbia* (Whitecap Books, $39.95) whose extensive text, by Bruce Obee, attempts a good deal more than captions and filler—he has obviously taken some time for research, and has used it (he is particularly his alert to Native lore and legend) to write something of a journal of Pacific Coast culture. On the culture of the farther north, we have Stephen J. Krasemann's *Diary of an Arctic Year* (Whitecap Books, $39.95) whose close-ups of purple lupine and a white-winged crossbill digging seeds from a spruce cone, is enhanced, as the title indicates, by excerpts from the photographer's own diary. This sensible solution to the problem of picture-book text permits Krasemann to provide personal contexts without excursions into the pseudo-profound or self-righteous. The dream of the Arctic is alternately documented in *Northwest Passage: The Quest for an Arctic Route to the East* (Key Porter/*Canadian Geographic* $35.00), a history of the search for the Northwest passage (and for Canadian sovereignty) with serviceable text by Edward Struzik, and some unexpected photos—for example, of Inuit children riding a yellow dune buggy—by Mike Beedell.

Finally, three books slightly at odds with the tenuous "theme" of this gathering: first is Canadian photographer Courtney Milne's *Sacred Places* (Western Producer Prairie Books, $60.00), a photo album interpreting the mountains, rivers, and buildings, that have been holy to many peoples. The results of this global record of mythologically resonant places is not landscape photos, or postcard overviews; Milne's work is more abstract, as his camera looks for a detail, an angle, a hue of light that will reveal the mystical potential of Avebury or Delphi or Chile's Valley of the Moon (but the text is mere declamatory ecstasy). Second is Joseph Leo Koerner's *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (Yale UP, n.p.). This study of Germany's best-known Romantic landscape painter I enjoyed greatly because Koerner's detail can educate a non-specialist into subtle details of composition, and of painterly technique without being either condescending or tedious. Koerner's account of the definitive cliché of the solitary sublime, "Wanderer above the Sea of fog," makes that painting completely fresh again. Third, this survey of environmental writing should mention *Statistical Record of the Environment*, compiled by Arsen Darnay (Gale Research, n.p.), whose 850 pages, including detailed index, will tell you, mainly for the United States, the number of pounds of hazardous waste generated by an average home each year (15), the number of personal checks that can be produced from one cord of wood (460,000), and the percentage of its wastepaper which a country recycles (Canada: 20%, compared to Sweden: 40%).

No writer is more often cited when nature writing, environment, and landscape are discussed than Henry David Thoreau. And I have already, in these notes, quoted from Thoreau's *Journal 3: 1848-1858* (Princeton UP, $39.50), the tenth volume of Thoreau to appear under the auspices of the Center for Editions of American Authors. (The manuscript journal for 1850 incidentally has 42 leaves missing, the gap where Canada should be, apparently removed so that Thoreau could prepare his

lecture "Excursion to Canada." Nonetheless, the detailed index shows that five references to Canada still survive.) In that same entry, for November 16, 1850, Thoreau writes his own manifesto for an ecopoetics: "A truly good book is something as wildly natural and primitive—mysterious and marvellous, ambrosial and fertile—as a fungus or a lichen—suppose the muskrat or beaver were to turn his views to literature what fresh views of nature would be present. The fault of our books and other deeds is that they are too humane, I want something speaking in some measure to the condition of muskrats and skunk cabbage as well as of men—not merely to a pining and complaining coterie of philanthropists." L.R.

Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945*, U. North Carolina P./Scholarly Book Services distr., $62.95 Cdn. According to Dorman's argument, during the interwar period a generation of Americans born rural found themselves growing up and then growing old in an inescapably urban world. As secularism seemed to replace Christianity, and the bureaucratic supplanted the participatory, a continent-wide regional revolt emerged. Fundamental to this movement was a vision of a society founded and re-established on the basis of folk traditions which are distinctive to particular regions. Extending this notion of decentering the centre, the regionalists developed a political agenda based on an organic synthesis of geological region, flora and fauna, and culture. It was a 1920s version of the ecological movement. Although Dorman is a historian, and his emphasis is on regionalism as a 'political' movement, it is clear everywhere in this dense and diligently documented study that the regional revolt was at its heart an aesthetic movement, not only in its being lead by writers and artists, such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Mary Austin, Lewis Mumford, and Henry Nash Smith, but also in its ultimate emphasis on the creative artist inherent in each person. For students of Canada, the thoroughly American intellectual history reconstucted here will be, perhaps, only intermittently applicable. But regionalism, literary, cultural or political, is not a subject which has been very extensively effectively theorized—in Canada or elsewhere. This book provides a thoughtful, challenging history of ideas of regionalism which could be a great benefit to Canadian study of the subject. L.R.

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The University of British Columbia Medal for Biography, 1993

J.L. Granatstein
The Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War
(Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Company, 1993)

The adjudication committee had high hopes when the 1993 biographies first began to arrive; they ranged across a wide assortment of human endeavours—the athletic and the academic, the media and the military, the poetic and the political. Despite such an array of offerings, however, the readers found that that elusive spark of human spirit was missing or diminished in many, and disappointments were piled up in company with the books read. That is not to say that interesting subjects were not attempted; they were. The lives of major female social activists were examined, as were those of prominent movers on the political scene. And, possibly because we are at the half century point since the second world war, there were several books with that conflict providing the context. But, when the reading and evaluating were done, one volume clearly stood out above the rest and that was J.L. Granatstein's examination of, among others, Andy McNaughton, Harry Crerar, Tommy Burns, and Guy Simonds, Canada's chief army commanders during the second world war. The author has clearly demonstrated his mastery of this subject in a thoroughly researched and superbly written study of the backgrounds of these soldiers, their wartime triumphs and tragedies, and their human strengths and weaknesses. In particular, Granatstein has rescued Guy Simonds from near oblivion and restored him to his proper place in our military annals. This volume is a most enjoyable piece of work from a distinguished Canadian historian. C.H.