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Editorial

Re New Editorials

> The two brash rats [in an episode of the television programe *Fraggle Rock*] pronounce in unequivocal conclusion, "The trash heap has spoken." We might remember that, when next our politicians speak. And it's advice to which even editorial writers have to listen. AUTUMN 1983

This is an editorial I would rather not write. Not because the subject is uninteresting, but because I am not an editorial writer. Like WLMK, I would rather not take sides—even though I do want them to take shape. I always want to begin the next sentence *on the other hand.* Like the stereotyped Canadian, my personal inclination is to dodge political debate, to distrust the simplistic positions it often forces you into, or maybe just to fear to be disliked. Challenged to write an editorial (if necessary) my first thought is: *but,* not necessarily an editorial.

This uncertainty about editorializing provides one measure of my admiration for W.H. New. With this issue, the end of his eighteen-year term as editor begins. In July 1995, Dr. New succeeded Dr. Alan Cairns as the Brenda and David McLean Professor of Canadian Studies at UBC, a position through which he will extend his long term commitment to studying Canada through its words, wherever they occur.

His decision to shift some (not all, we hope) of his energies away from making this journal, I would describe as a mid-career adjustment. Hardly the place to try to summarize New's scholarship, or to detail the profound professional and personal debts I owe him. But, faced with trying to follow on some six dozen New editorials, it may be an occasion to salute Bill the editorial writer. Besides, it gives me a subject that is (apparently) apolitical.

Bill New believes that literature exists in history and that careful analysis of history must be part of literary study. In 1995, it is impossible to study literature without being aware of its political content, of its evident and con-

cealed ideologies. W.H. New, following the tradition of founding editor George Woodcock, ensured that this journal recognized literature's political position before the current critical fashion. (It's a fitting symmetry that both the first and last number under Bill's editorship editorialized on Woodcock's editorial legacy.) Bill ensured that *Canadian Literature's* readers were aware of how politics was a subject of literature, of how literature refined political positions, of how power politics shaped literary production and reception. The "publishing industry and political involvement in literature," he wrote in his first editorial, were to be an important subject.

Bill New will have much more to write for *Canadian Literature*—articles, reviews, book notes, and more editorials. And, just for good measure, his final issue as editor contained *two* editorials. But while we await those next pieces, I have assembled an interim micro-anthology of the New editorial. And, why not, since Bill has been so long devoted to creating anthologies, a form continuous with his first commitment—the responsibility to teach.

Here is the anthology. And non-editorial. The excerpts encapsulate how Bill himself editorializes, always keeping the conversation open (see his tribute to Woodcock in No. 145), allowing his opinions to round on themselves (sometimes to bite their own tales), and keeping himself slightly uncomfortable.

> Regional truths deeply and various affect people's daily lives. But part of every Canadian child's national, federal birthright is that of access to both English and French. Deliberately to deny such access comes close to being an immoral act. AUTUMN 1978

> The essays [in Mark Spilka ed. *Towards a Poetics of Fiction*, 1977] take such exclusive stances as to end up being positively irritating, and it is refreshing to get to the seventh, by Walter Reed, on the problems raised by the assumption that a single methodology will open all novels to a reader. Indeed, the problem with a lot of writing (and a lot of reviewing) is that it seems to stem from a single preconception about method or value. AUTUMN 1980

> Enough of us went through Canadian Schools with American textbooks to remember that the cultural bias of texts designed outside the country will often interfere with education rather than aid it. To take an easy example: think of that question that always appeared as a writing assignment—"Discuss the role of our President." The fact that he wasn't "ours" was only mildly intrusive; and the weak teacher's simple substitution "Discuss the role of our Prime Minister instead" was only mildly irritating. Deep at the heart of the question (and the substitution) was a far more disconcerting problem of attitude: whatever role the President has in the United States, it is neither the same as the Prime Minister's in Canada, *nor do the two functions occupy the same position in each nation's set of cultural priorities.* SUMMER 1980

If the outsiders fasten on the mores and politics of the literature, they often do so with an inexactness that tells more of the culture they themselves come from than of the culture the literature directly portrays. But if they fasten on literary form, they often do so with such a precise focus that they illuminate the suppleness and subtleties of a laconic methodology that within Canada is often ignored—ignored, I think, because the natural cadences of the laconic speaking voice are familiar, therefore seem ordinary, therefore are taken for granted. SUMMER 1982

[Children] only have one chance a learning *while young,* and the best education we can imagine for them is the one we ought to be trying to provide. That means educating good, critical, demanding readers, among other things: readers who refuse to accept automatically and passively the exaggerations of "*more*" as the norms of civilized culture. WINTER 1989

The Canada I admire is the Canada that places community before irrational unbridled individualism; the Canada that chooses peace and negotiated understanding over the peacock strut of militarism; the Canada that celebrates variety and the possibilities of change rather than the uniformed neatness and emotional smugness of a simple-minded nationalism. SPRING 1991

For anyone to tell *me* that I *cannot* construct a course in Canadian literature, that I *cannot* study the literature written in my own country—with or without reference to its social, verbal, and intercultural contexts—because *their theory does not justify it* would, for example, be an absurd exercise of power. WINTER 1992

Both/and (instead of/in addition to) *either/or.* SPRING 1994

Newspapers have editorials; magazines these days, have self-congratulatory editor's notes; often scholarly journals would prefer not. That *Canadian Literature* over its 145 issues has sustained the genre is, perhaps, most significant as a gesture outside the academy, as a reminder, at the beginning of each issue, that, although the journal belongs to the university and is governed by conventions of scholarly publication, it is always a little uneasy with them. As Bill wrote, or hoped, in his first editorial, the journal "has never been bound by its academic connections. It seeks readers and writers both inside and outside university circles." L.R.

Eva Tihanyi

A Windfall Light

1

High in the Cambrian Mountains
the sheep stand, statue-still
in the slate distances

As we watch them
we are solidifying already into history,
the outlines of our changing selves
layered, traceable as fossils

Of course we know nothing of this

Nor of how we will open and close
quickly as apertures,
retain everything, accommodate
whole mountains, every nuance of light
upon their peaks

2

We return home, to another continent

The camera is packed away,
the sun closeted

She sits in her red rocking chair
fueling her thoughts with gin,
shrinking down the night

I am witness to her fear
and to her love, both large
and inadmissable

She knows this,
speaks only of the dark heavens
so much smaller and safer in comparison

Yet she moves to the window, dares
to take in the moon

For months
every shape the moon holds
she holds also, in her
something embrace-shaped and miraculous,
a female universe she carries in her
like a talisman

Even after she expels the lunar magic,
it continues to light her,
feather across her shoulders
like a gossamer shawl

3

Now, years later,
as I stare from the car window
at the empty gravel rectangle
where the house once stood, the house
where we exchanged beginnings
to take with us, to grow on,
I am sad
simply, and in a way not possible at twenty;
can't help but remember
how the sun bowed down, a windfall light
among the sadly splendid ruins,
while two women, *in the sun*
that is young once only, were young too
for a first and final time

Blanche Gelfant

Ethel Wilson's Absent City
A Personal View of Vancouver

> one wonder[s] if . . . Moscow . . . London and Washington when . . . reduced to actual people talking to each other change their identities . . . This matter of truth is really difficult and important. TRUTH AND MRS. FORRESTER

In "We have to sit opposite," a story that combines farce with a terrible sense of foreboding—that masks foreboding with farce—Ethel Wilson describes two highly repectable Canadian women travelling in Germany in the 1930s and, unexpectedly, telling ludicrous lies about the customs of their country. People eat bears, dignified Mrs. Forrester declares, and "Canadian men no longer wear trousers." Mrs. Forrester is from Vancouver and Mrs. Montrose from Winnipeg, cities that become transmogrified as the women talk about them to German travellers who sit, recalcitrantly, opposite on a Munich-bound train. Talking usually has a disturbingly ambiguous relationship to truth in Wilson's fiction, falsifying life's simple or portentous truths and creating truths through falsehoods. In "We have to sit opposite," truth would seem a straightforward matter of fact—men do wear trousers in Vancouver—but since the blue-toothed German has no immediate way of verifying facts about a foreign country, he believes the lies that inform Wilson's story.

Lies, stories, and the talk of "actual people" emerge from circumstances and mediations that shape what is being said, sometimes adjusting, distorting, or denying facts that can be readily verified, and sometimes purposefully, perhaps fatally, obscuring those that cannot. In Wilson's story, coercive circumstances, implied in the story's title, lead the women to tell tales that represent their comically valiant if vain attempt to win a contest already lost to force. Having been forced into uncomfortable seats and into postures of social helplessness, they use stories—outright lies—to chasten the overbearing

Germans. The comic clash of wills takes on ominous overtones as its political implications emerge. For Mrs. Forrester realizes that she is confronting in the German family the "collective mentality" of a nation threatening to "dominate" the world; indeed, Hitler's attempt to carry out this threat would soon precipitate a catastrophic war. But like the sleeping women, the world of the early 1930s had closed its eyes to the dangers within sight, trying to block out horrors to which it must awaken in Munich. Thus, the lies that characters tell in the story point to political truisms, if not to truth: that denial cannot defend us against danger, nor fiction against the force of fact.

In the story, "Truth and Mrs. Forrester," two women wonder whether the friends they talk to determine what they will say about a person or place, and whether places like Moscow, London, Washington—and, one might add, Vancouver—change their identities once they are "reduced to actual people talking to each other" (117). As the characters talk, they imply that talk may be reductive, identity mutable, and truth pragmatic, adjusted to fit the occasion. If the implications are valid, then neither the truths generally accepted about city life, nor a particular city's identity, would be stable and knowable—or real, if real implies a difference between actualities and the artifactual products of words, a difference hotly argued in postmodern literary theory. Indeed, the more Wilson's women talk about truth, in effect, theorizing about its apriority or secondariness, the more uncertain and elusive it seems, and the more urgently important. I begin with this urgency because I believe that Wilson's fiction is energized by a thematic quest for a definition of truth, which is distinct from a quest for truth itself. Religion defined truth as absolute, and art, as universal, Wilson believed, and yet her own art suggested that truth was created by circumstance, contingency, and the confusing effects of language as literary expression and as the ordinary speech of "actual people talking to each other."

Wilson's musings on truth and talk place her critic in an ironical position, or so I see myself. For the view of Wilson's Vancouver that I propose to present is, after all, an artifact of language—the product of a "talk."[1] Is it, then, necessarily reductive, accommodated to circumstances, only equivocally, if at all, true? And since the talk was about Vancouver as created by Wilson's language, should one ask whether the writer and her critic, as actual people, changed the identity of the city as they talked about it? As an actual woman, Wilson knew Vancouver through lifelong residency under historical and biographical circumstances that shaped her highly personal

view of the city. My own view of Vancouver is also personal, though I would claim that this transcribed talk is true to Wilson's texts, and not adventitious or merely artifactual. It begins with a recollection.

I first read Ethel Wilson's famous novel *Swamp Angel* on a plane as I was flying into Vancouver. That was twenty years ago. Since then, like Wilson's talismanic migratory birds, I have flown in and out of the city. The first trip, however, remains in my memory because of the overpowering fantasy it evoked—a fantasy of irresponsibility and escape. I had come to the end of the novel and the end of my flight, and I wanted to keep on flying, right out of the city and beyond, into *Swamp Angel*'s arcadian landscape. In my fantasy I was already on Capitol Hill, leaving behind my life as well as the city I had finally set foot in only to flee. At Pender Street I would have located the Universal Taxis stand and found the young Chinese cab-driver who now takes me to New Westminster where I board a bus to Chilliwack. From there I travel along the banks of the Fraser River to the village of Hope. I wind up mountain roads, pass streams, waterways, and the Similkameen River, and continue to Kamloops. Twenty-five miles further I arrive, at last, at my destination: Three Loon Lake or Lac La Jeune. This is the itinerary mapped precisely in *Swamp Angel* for the transforming flight that turned, or re-turned, Maggie Vardoe into Maggie Lloyd.

I recall this impulse to follow the novel's heroine out of the city because of the irony that faces me now. Now when I want to stay in Wilson's Vancouver, to inhabit it imaginatively and represent it clearly, I find it strangely absent. This is not to say that Wilson's city lacks clearly identified places set within an accurate map of streets and shops that a stranger, flying for the first time into Vancouver, could easily find. Pender, Powell, and Main Streets, and Granville where a golden retriever plays dead—these are real streets that Wilson's readers have located by following her map of the city, and with a little historical sleuthing they might, perhaps, locate other places Wilson's mentions, like The Krispin and Son Bookstore or a "little notions shop on Commercial Drive."[2] But Wilson's references to actual (or putatively actual) places raise questions they seem meant to forfend. Are the streets merely place-names dropped to create a superficial impression of city life, or are they essential to the creation of an urban atmosphere that her characters will breathe in as people breathe in the noise, excitement, and gaseous smells of Paris or New York? Are particular streets necessary for

particular actions, or can they be switched arbitrarily, as they were in Wilson's first published story, "I Just Love Dogs"?[3] Another story, "The corner of X and Y streets," suggests how arbitrary Wilson's street-names can be, for the mystical singing and dancing that may or may not have taken place in London's Soho could have taken place with as much reason, or lack of reason, in Vancouver or anywhere. One could argue that as signs in a literary text, X and Y streets are no more arbitrary than Powell, intoned like a mantra in "Tuesday and Wednesday" as the street where Mort meets his old pal Eddie and his death.[4] The exact locale of Mort's death adds a needed realism to a story that includes angels among its characters, but setting is subordinate to theme in the story, which points to the marvelous ambiguities created by an interweaving of fiction and fact, talk and truth.

Topographical specificity provides a map of Wilson's city, but whether it creates an urgent urban presence seems to me questionable. I say this knowing that I recognized Pender Street when I first saw it from its description in *Swamp Angel*—fiction supporting fact in an inversed process of validation. But I would argue that the streets one can find in Wilson's fiction and the street-car routes one can follow denote a setting that is incidental, rather than essential, to Wilson's vision of life and to the life of her characters. For Wilson's characters are neither formed nor transformed by Vancouver, a setting seemingly devoid of conditions associated specifically with city life. Density of population, anonymity and *anomie*, impersonality, alienation, indifference, materialism and materialistic desire—these signs of urbanism are strangely absent in Wilson's city. Unlike Wilson's fog-veiled mountains, her city loses contour as light, the illumination a critic hopes to bring, searches for its shape. Where should light fall to reveal the outlines of a city that is not simply background or periphery? Where is the centre of the city, the pulsating heart that gives it life? It cannot be found in crowds and scenes of hustle and bustle which Vancouver, in its early days, may have lacked. But a modern city without masses of intense and hurrying people hotly pursuing their desires seems hard to imagine or explain. Also hard to explain is a city in which characters want to look rather than to buy and have. In "A drink with Adolphus," Mrs. Gormley buys "ten cents' worth of view" by having her taxi-driver stop and let her look out at the "glory" of the world seen from the city (73). Just looking satisfies the human spirit in Wilson's city, though "just looking" usually implies shopping. But Wilson's city is curiously devoid of seductive shops and great department stores

(except for Eaton's, mentioned briefly). It seems devoid also of restaurants, grubby or romantic; of theatres, museums, and libraries, a city's cultural centres; of office buildings, factories, and hotels (the Regal Rooms of "Tuesday and Wednesday" hardly counts). How does one explain all these absences in the city of a writer associated irrefragably with Vancouver as the place she lived in, wrote about, and loved?

Also inexplicable, at least to me, is a city that does not evoke desire—the theme of modern city fiction. Always impelling in city life, desire becomes manifest in city novels in scenes of great expectations. Such scenes hold out a promise of happiness by ostentatious displays of material goods that emphasize the difference between dispossession and riches. Things dazzle the eye in the city and produce the glamorous sights—and glamorous sites—that have lured countless characters to Paris, London, St. Peterburg, Chicago, and New York, and countless readers to Balzac, Dickens, Dostoyevsky and Dreiser. In Mordecai Richter and Gabrielle Roy, the city of promise is Montreal, "the very essence of the big city" to the desirous young heroine of Roy's novel *Bonheur d'Occasion.* Poor Florentine Laclasse, a waitress in a five-and-dime, sees the city offering her "one wild chance of happiness." Like Dreiser's Carrie Meeber, another poor working-girl, Florentine equates happiness with material things and pleasures made immediate in the text by an urban iconography common to city fiction as a literary genre:

> She visualized St. Catherine Street in Montreal, the windows of the big department stores, the fashionable crowd on Saturday evening, the florists' displays, the revolving doors of the restaurants, their tables almost flush with the street behind glittering plate glass, the brightly lit theater lobbies, with their long passages beyond the cashier's cage leading up between walls of mirrors, past polished rails and potted plants, up, up toward the screen where the most beautiful pictures in the world are shown: all that she most longed for, admired, envied (8).[5]

Streets, crowds of fashionably dressed pleasure-seekers, restaurants, big department stores, theaters, a luxurious display of flowers, and factitious images of beauty—the aspects of city life elided from Wilson's fiction are all here, configured in an iconography of glitter, glamour, and desire. Wilson's iconography fixes instead upon flying birds, framing windows, and flight.

Swamp Angel begins with "Ten twenty fifty brown birds" flying past Maggie Vardoe's window and drawing her mind after them (7). This opening sentence establishes the theme of escape that twenty years ago had

drawn me into and away from Wilson's Vancouver. Though I did not know it then, *Swamp Angel* had already given me significant clues to the special but strange features of Wilson's Vancouver, and to its special fascination. Maggie Vardoe had felt this fascination. Like other characters to be mentioned later, she had "become attached to, even absorbed into the sight from the front-room window of inlet and forest and mountains" (7). This triad of "inlet and forest and mountains," seen from a window as a distant view, induces in Wilson's characters a sense of esthetic wonder, religious awe, and social indifference. For the luminous triad draws the eye away from the social circumstances of class and gender and directs attention to a providential design in which each of us is caught. Wilson's characters become aware that they are enmeshed within a design woven to include, enthrall, or perhaps entrap them. Like Mrs. Severance they come to see, and lead the reader to see, "the miraculous interweaving of creation . . . the everlasting web, " an image to which critics inevitably refer. Perhaps looking outward from a window becomes a habit of Wilson's characters because space seems free of webs and gives closed-in and entangled men and women an illusory promise of freedom. Wilson's readers are induced to look outward by the texts' insistently recurrent prepositions: *out, across,* and *beyond. Beyond* appears almost inevitably in Wilson's descriptions of places and people. Ordinary people in ordinary rooms, at cocktail parties or alone, lonely or contented, invariably look *beyond* their immediate surroundings to an endlessly changing landscape framed within a window. Thus, the sea and its freight ships, mountains and their vaporous fog and glistening snow, forests with their great trees looming in the light and receding in darkness are always close and always distant, never and always the same, and always the setting of a perpetual flight as migratory birds flew in and out.

Once critical light falls fully on these aspects of Wilson's Vancouver—upon distance and flight—it reveals the city as a point of departure. True, the characters of *The Innocent Traveller* arrive and remain, but Vancouver as a distinctive throbbing city leaves them curiously untouched. For the Edgeworth family of *The Innocent Traveller* has simply transposed to British Columbia a way of life made to order in England. The gentle matriarch Annie remains the same, exercising her sweet but implacable control; the dutiful daughter Rachel continues to carry out her duties; the handsome sons continue their support; and the irrepressible Topaz remains unchanged by a hundred years of living. *The Innocent Traveller* makes one

wonder how a new land and a new and growing city, transformed before the characters' eyes, can leave everyone unchanged. Though Wilson alludes to an historical transformation of a frontier town into a modern city, she describes neither the lawless turbulence of the former nor the vicissitudes of the latter. Like its characters, the novel's city is static, a setting for an established Victorian way of life that defies the forces of history and change. The markers of historical change that Wilson places in the text seem mere acknowledgements of well-known facts recorded in official archives. The characters see and dismiss the auguries of change the historical facts signify because they like the city as it is, or more accurately, as it was. When Topaz reads the slogan of the Hundred Thousands Club (changed in 1911 to the Half Million League), Sister Annie shakes her head at the call for growth: "No, Topaz," she says, "I like it [Vancouver] very well the way it is," and the narrator agrees that "it was a very comfortable little place to live in " (111-2). But cities are not little places, not necessarily very comfortable, and not immune to changes that "no one could stop"—except by arresting the moment in art. Wilson stops time in *The Innocent Traveller*, though she describes decades passing, as they must. During these decades, catastrophic historical events, mentioned only fleetingly, take place somewhere in the background. In the foreground is a beautiful city with "a beautiful name," changed happily from Gastown (a name derived from Gassy Jack Deighton) to Vancouver—a "very pleasant" place where people listened to the "sounds of ocean," ship sirens and sea-gulls' cries, and looked at "the contours of the mountains [that] became part of their lives" (111). Like Three Loon Lake in *Swamp Angel*, the city of Vancouver in *The Innocent Traveller* is a world elsewhere, arrested in time and recoverable only when one travels back to the past through memory and imagination.[6]

Wilson's work traces a pattern of regression, but urban fiction as a literary genre describes progress and equates it with change, the transformation of characters under the influence of the city as a place and way of life. Characters in urban novels may leave the city, but only after the city has left an irradicable mark upon their inmost selves. In Wilson's fiction, the city's influence seems indifferent, inconsequential, or secondary to the captiousness of Time with a capital T. Time is the great arranger of human destiny in Wilson's fiction, acting as a providential agent that moves plot and characters in new directions. Inexorable in effecting its ends, Time decrees an end to the time of each living creature whose stay in any place, in the long per-

spective, is brief and temporary, a tentative stop—like that of sea-birds resting on land before they are impelled to fly away. Wilson's characters also feel impelled to flight, but not because of the pressures of city life. They are trying to escape from an intricate web of circumstances that could have entrapped them anywhere; they are driven also, as we shall see, by reasons Wilson has made vague and esoteric.

A list of characters who leave Vancouver, whether permanently or for a time, would include Maggie Vardoe, Lilly Waller, Ellen Cuppy, Frank Cuppy, the Forresters, and others who take flight through an imaginative identification with departing birds. In "Lilly's Story," usually described as set in the city, Lilly Waller lives in Vancouver only long enough to get into the "Trouble" (with a capital T) that causes her to run away and stay away except for brief visits, in later years, to her daughter.[7] Ellen Cuppy of *Love and Salt Water* leaves Vancouver regularly, first to take a long sea-voyage, then to join the Wrens in London, work in Saskatoon, vacation on Galiano Island, and finally, we infer, to live with her husband in Montreal. Meanwhile, her handsome enterprising father, who had shuttled from Vancouver to far-flung places throughout the world, has moved to New York; while her brother-in-law, a member of Parliament, travels back and forth between Vancouver and Ottawa. These comings and goings seem realistically motivated by business, politics, or pleasure, but in a long digressive passage, Wilson attributes her characters' restlessness to reasons that her abstract explanations leave unexplained. Through a knowing narrator, she asserts that people of the far west live on a "periphery" that they feel impelled to leave by an incessant human need for "a place that remains (as yet) a centre." Once characters find this centre, they "can refresh themselves there with the things that a periphery cannot provide " (88). *Periphery* and *centre* are interrelated and relative terms, both of which, along with *things*, this strange digression leaves pointedly vague. What it makes clear is that Vancouver lacks a centre, however it might be imagined, and that characters must leave regularly on a quest for centrality elsewhere.

Perhaps the peculiar geography of Vancouver makes it seem all periphery, for it is a city at the edge of a country and continent. As likely, or in addition, Wilson's personal view has led her to define Vancouver by its geography rather than its sociological, economic, and emotional features.[8] Simply through elision, Wilson has stripped her city of the distinctive signs of urbanism as a way of life—the pullulating life that such city writers as

Balzac, Dostoyevsky, and Dreiser have made central to their novels and that ordinary people recognize instantly. Rather than fix her characters within the matrix of city life, Wilson has them transfixed by the changing but eternal landscape that lies *beyond.* A wonderfully descriptive writer, she is drawn to a distant vista that is all periphery, a surrounding natural environ which moves away from, and in effect denies, a centre. Moreover, she has set sights upon the transcendent rather than the immediate and mundane, and when she looks to the mundane, as in "Tuesday and Wednesday," she sees diminished if amusing human beings who by their unexpected actions evoke questions of philosophical, rather than social, significance. "Tuesday and Wednesday" is about people who work, at least sometimes, but it is not about urban class society or working-people as a class. Nor is it significantly about gender, for Mort and Myrtle, Wilson's vaudeville husband and wife, are equally feckless, both liars practicing an inverted snobbery that feeds their conceit. The story raises Wilson's familar thematic questions about the relation of truth to stories that create a truth of their own. Wilson's predilection for philosophical musings on truth, time, chance, and providential design, on abstract subjects rather than on socially circumstanced concrete issues, may help explain the vacuum at the centre of her Vancouver, an emptiness produced not by a real city that the fiction putatively describes, but by the writer's thematic interests and extraordinary powers of description. These powers become gloriously manifest in the metaphors through which Wilson precipitates the flight of characters fascinated by birds, compared to birds, and avid for a bird's seemingly unfettered freedom. The metaphoric comparison is explicit in a sentence that ends Wilson's digressive remarks on the constant comings and goings in *Love and Salt Water*: "The fact that these western people live on a periphery tempts them continually to move and return, move and return, very like birds" (89).

Surprisingly, I think, *The Innocent Traveller* devotes a chapter to sea-gulls, omnipresent birds symbolizing imminent flight in Wilson's fiction. As Rose walks along Granville Street, she follows in her imagination "the cry of a gull above the traffic, something that is not a sound but a disturbing, forgotten, unnamed desire, a memory. Java, Dubrovnik, the Hebrides. . . [Rose's] thoughts fly way as the gulls swoop and cry over the city streets. Land's End, the gusty Channel, the sun on the striped awnings at Ostend" (224-5). "Not a sound . . . but a desire," the cry

of the gull expresses a desire for flight and escape that can overcome even securely positioned characters. Social standing, family support, love, and marriage, all that holds the privileged Rose to her home in Vancouver, cannot fulfill the desire for a centre elsewhere that impels unhappy or threatened characters like Maggie Vardoe and Lilly Waller to flight. Momentarily, if only through an imagined identification, Rose has escaped the Family with a capital F, and she is free, flying with the sea-gulls into an endless, uncircumscribed space. These "arrogant, greedy birds" may seem domesticated when they land on Aunt Topaz's window-ledge to forage for crusts of bread the wily old woman pretends to have eaten. But when the crusts are gone—or when instinct prevails over hunger—the gulls reassert their freedom and fly away, "fly high, and higher, wheel, negotiate, gather and disperse," communicating their "exaltation" to the inevitable evening watchers of Wilson's fiction who lift their eyes "to the mysterious sight" (226).

The flight of birds may seem mysterious and exalting to Wilson's characters, but their own reasons for taking flight, whether into or out of the city, are usually commonplace. Even so, place may not produce the changes characters hope to see in their lives. In particular, characters who come to Wilson's Vancouver in order to escape from unhappiness, boredom, or a featureless future elsewhere fail to find the asylum they seek. In the story "Till death do us part," a young woman hopes that Vancouver will save her from a marriage she cannot avoid in Portage la Prairie, but after seeing the trap that can close around a woman anywhere, here in Vancouver, she turns for "comfort" to the suitor she had fled (195). "Circumstances" resign, rather than reconcile, her to the fate. This undramatically matter-of-fact story subverts the promise of a scintillating new life that city novels hold out to a perennial young provincial. The story ends with its narrator knowingly facing a dead-end, while the end of another newcomer to Vancouver seems imminent as an unseen murderous intruder stands over him with an arm held high, ready to strike. In "The Window," a story with a title emblematic of Wilson's fiction, rich old Mr. Willy retires to Vancouver to escape the boredom of marriage. He creates for himself a room with a magnificent changing view that opens to Wilson's eternal triad of inlet, forest, and mountain: to a "wrinkled" or placid sea, distant "spangled" shores, deceptively innocent mountains, and a sky set aglow by "a great invasion of colour," green, rose, and yellow—the Northern Lights (197-9). Surrounded by this gloriously illuminated vista, Mr. Willy nevertheless sits in darkness,

for the room that offers characters like Mrs. Severance or Mrs. Emblem freedom to be themselves imprisons him within a self become despairingly arid. Alone and bereft of belief, Mr. Willy sees an ominous reflection in his window: "The window, which was not illusion, only the purveyor of illusion, did not vanish [as the view vanishes], but became a mirror which reflected against the blackness every detail of the shallow living-room" (202-3). Looking out, Mr. Willy sees the darkness within a self separated from human society and from God. The room that gives some characters safety isolates others within a terrible solitary confinement.

Like its rooms, Vancouver's streets can be liberating or deadly. Characters who take to the streets regularly, like Mort in "Tuesday and Wednesday," or impulsively, like Mrs. Severance in *Swamp Angel*, Topaz Edgeworth in *The Innocent Traveller*, and elderly Mrs. Bylow in "Fog," may not survive. Mort meets an untimely and unforeseen death by drowning. Mrs. Bylow dies after being knocked down by juvenile thieves robbing a grocery store. Mrs. Severance has a severe fall that separates her from her beloved swamp angel, the gun she has juggled throughout her life. Topaz, the teflon character, thinks she has become suddenly paralyzed, only to discover that her knickers have fallen about her legs. In the unpublished manuscript, "The Vat and the Brew," Mrs. Grant thinks she has found a new lease on life with the birth of her grandchild, but she dies in the street, killed by the car of hit-and-run juvenile deliquents.

In a letter of 1957, Wilson described "The Vat and the Brew" as a "tract" she felt compelled to write in order to draw attention "vehemently" to "a dreadful problem in our midst": the outbreak of juvenile violence, which she linked to the neglect and sheer "idiocy" of working-class parents (Stouck, 206-7). Orginally entitled "Written in Anger," the unpublished work draws a simple cause and effect relationship between parents' lack of values and discipline and their children's delinquent behavior. In "Lilly's Story," Wilson had created a feckless young woman transformed by motherhood into a responsible parent whose sole purpose in life was to give her child respectability. The Family of *The Innocent Traveller* is so inviolably respectable that not a single blacksheep turns up among the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren listed as the Edgeworths' legacy to Canada. That legacy seems part of an obliterated past. Modern times, as Wilson viewed them, brought modern problems to Vancouver susceptible, perhaps, to simple solutions.[9] For if parents behaved properly, so would

their children, though why parent fail, other than through "idiocy," Wilson saw no need to wonder. After all, if Lilly Waller could become respectable, then so could anyone, regardless of how disorganized or brutal one's family and background. Indeed, in the midst of the city, Wilson had located a ideal family that rose above its conditions. Crowded into small, inadequate rooms and ghettoized, parents and children of the Quong family in *Swamp Angel* turn toward each other, rather than against the world. In Chinatown, an unlikely arcadian oasis in the city, the father rules with absolute but benign authority; the children obey and work. Discipline and love prevail, and everyone is happy. So idyllic does this family seem that Maggie Vardoe, bereft of her own family, employs—one might say *appropriates*—one of the good-natured, hard-working sons into the surrogate family she tries to make her own at Three Loon Lake. Families can be idyllic in Vancouver, but only if they belong either to the past, like the Edgeworths, or to another culture, like the Chinese, and if they have authoritative figures who kindly but firmly discipline their children. A disorderly urban family provoked Wilson to an anger that was heartfelt but hardly ameliorative.

Anger comes to the surface in "Beware the Jabberwock my son . . . beware the Jubjub Bird," a short story with a long title that tells of a brief encounter between two runaway husbands. The protagonist has run away from his obsessively babbling wife, one of Wilson's terrible, if well-intentioned, talking women. Ironically enough, the husband who seeks silence soon finds himself listening to the talk of a blind man who has also run away and now, like the Ancient Mariner, holds him in thrall with a long story. Interpolated between the two tales of escape from Vancouver is an idyllic account of a family that lives alone high in the mountains, far away from the city below. The idyll begins glowingly and ends in the angry repetition of the word *masses*, a term of opprobrium that Wilson uses to distinguish present from past, city from country, and flight from quest—and a term that indicates Wilson was well aware of population density, of crowds and crowding, as a distinctive urban characteristic. In the mountains that are to city-dwellers a mesmerizing distant view, parents and children live in uninterrupted happiness. No one cries; everyone is free. Children trill like birds, their young lives ideally linked with birds for whom "[n]othing was planned or arranged." "Was it like this in Arcady?," a suddenly intrusive narrator asks.[10] The question is followed by a list of indictments against the city which includes its lack of laughing loons and soughing pine trees, its dangers, and

not least, its "boredom." Through a series of negations, the indictments rise to a crashing crescendo and then end in an ellipsis that allows them to continue: in the mountain away from the city there are no dangers "except bears and occasional cougars which cannot compare with the dangers of cities. There are no traffic jams, no tall or squat buildings staring with nothing but right angles not even an inferred curve, no mass meetings, no mass appeals, no mass advertisements, no mass uglification, perhaps no mass destruction, no mass anything, no . . . " (159, original ellipsis).

Arcady is the antithesis—more emphatically, the negation—of the city. But Arcady, or Arcadia, offers an illusion of innocence and tranquillity that Wilson herself exposes. In the story "On Nimpish Lake," Wilson recreates Lac le Jeune (Three Loon Lake) as an arcadian landscape providing sanctuary to two brothers, an isolated fisherman temporarily escaping the city, and birds—sandhill cranes, gray whiskey-jacks, magpies, kingfishers, ospreys, eagles, loon, geese. Flying, diving, hitting the water, the birds create a vortex of motion. Crying, laughing, trumpeting, they become a vortex of sound. In his rowboat, the lame brother gazes up at a clamorous shaft of wild geese and feels exaltation at the sight of birds "flying and crying together on their known way" (40). The birds are free, and yet they share with each other and with us below, however blessed we may seem, "a secret pain." The last piercing phrase undercuts the scene's idyllic perfection by pointing to a secret sharing of sorrow that Wilson brings into the open in a short monologue entitled, emblematically, "The Birds." The speaker describes herself seeing on a windowpane visible signs of her recent encounter with an invisible but devastating reality. These are the marks left by the broken bodies of birds attracted to an image of the natural world mirrored in the window; the birds had flown into an illusion and been bashed to death. Thus, the window serves as an interface for two different views of the world: arcadian natural beauty on one side, and on the other, vulnerability, illusion, and death. Looking from this other side, the woman narrator (perhaps an early version of Ellen Cupppy) says: "I looked out of the window at the living birds . . . flying from tree to tree . . . and in the clear window was reflected to them the familiar sky and the flowers and the trees, and so each day some little bird flew into this familiar reflection and dashed itself against the real glass and fell, with its mouth split and its bones broken . . . and yesterday I had

bashed my head against the reality that was waiting for me, invisible, and had nearly broken my neck " (70). "A bird is so free," the unhappy woman thinks, but freedom does not assure safe flight. Wilson's world is a dangerous place, and we "always live on a brink," as Nora Peake (Ellen's sister) realizes after her little boy almost dies in *Love and Salt Water.*

Thus, Wilson's personal view of Vancouver contains a place evocative of pastoral longings which neither the city nor the far country can provide, except in fleeting visionary moments or in fantasies of escape. Wilson was too wordly-wise, as pastoral writers have always been, to suggest that an arcadian escape from human Troubles, with a capital T, is possible. At Three Loon Lake, Maggie finds the pettiness, meanness, and nagging she meant to leave behind in Vancouver—though she finds also the beatitude of work and the beauty of natural creation. The lake waters allow her to refresh her spirit through the timeless rituals of baptism and fishing. Fishing is not a trivial pursuit; rather it is, like shepherding, part of the traditional life of Arcadia.[11] Wilson's fishermen and fisherwomen engage in a serious and soul-cleansing ritual which, however, cannot protect them against the vagaries of chance and death's sudden intrusions. In *Swamp Angel,* Mr. Cunningham almost drowns while fishing, his plight explicating the ominous meaning of the phrase, *Et in Arcadia ego* (Panofsky, 295-320). Through a sophisticated muddling of topoi, Wilson creates an imperfect Arcadia that reproduces the conflicts characters had faced in the city, and a beautiful city of peripheries that mesmerizes characters and readers with its surround of arcadian landscapes. Characters who dream of losing, or rather finding, themselves within these landscapes run away from Vancouver because of personal circumstances that might have enmeshed them anywhere.

Caught in a web of marriage, romance, or sexual exchange, Wilson's women leave Vancouver because they want to get away from men. Maggie wants to free herself from her husband, Lilly from the Chinaman Yow, and Ellen Cuppy from her disaffecting fiancé Huw. But bad men can turn up anywhere, Vardoe in Three Loon Lake, and inexplicably, Yow in the Fraser Valley, the second of Lilly's havens. Moreover, Maggie had found and married mean little jaunty Vardoe in Three Loon Lake; Vancouver was merely a fortuitous setting in which she saw how much she hated him and how desperately she wanted to free herself from his hold. Actually, the impersonality and anonymity of city life helped her effect her escape. She could go to a sportsmen's shop where she was unknown, as she would not be in a small-

town, and sell her fishing-flies. She could go to another neighborhood and find the Chinese taxi-driver who would help her escape. In Vancouver, her life was private; in Arcadia, privacy was invaded by gossip, and to gain acceptance she had to tell her story, revealing and concealing the truth about her life as she accommodated her talk to her audience. If Maggie had been as wise as Wilson, she might have understood that she was seeking to recover a past that was unrecoverable, except through pristine memories of childhood, family, and love, or through stories of these memories. Though Maggie finds a family in Three Loon Lake, it is not her own; and perhaps Vera Gunnarsen is not entirely at fault in resenting this city woman as an interloper whose ability to rescue others also serves to rescue herself from bitterness and inanition.

Wilson's men run away from women because they talk incessantly and their talk is boring. Babbling wives who bore their husbands may be stock literary figures, but Wilson's boring women carry a heavy if comic symbolic burden as their talk becomes synonymous with urban blight. In a unique and unflattering way, Wilson conflates women and the city by indicting urban life not for being violent, unruly, and the site of inexplicable accident and unearned pain—all of which it is—but for being insidiously boring. Women make it boring by their constant and inanely depleting talk, notably in "The Window," "Jabberwock," "Truth and Mrs. Forrester," "Tuesday and Wednesday," and *Love and Salt Water*. That talking women can be boring is a commonplace of satire and comedy, but that their talk can contaminate a beautiful city with boredom is an extraordinary indictment. Cities are famously interesting places, and places where people can find, express, and share interests beyond measure and imagination. Aside from Topaz Edgeworth, whose interests are as superficial as they are numerous, few Wilson characters find anything interesting to do in the city that they could not do anywhere—that is, other than looking out their windows at the luminous mountains and sea beyond.

Somewhere, in the landscape that lies beyond the city, there may be a dimension beyond time that will allow characters to escape into a pastoral past, or so they hope. And somewhere beyond the city, some characters do find what their hearts desire. Maggie Vardoe finds a family; Lilly Waller, safety and respectability; Ellen Cuppy, love and marriage; Frank Cuppy and Morgan Peake, power; and the Jubjub bird's husband, the promise of quiet. A solitary woman looking out from her hotel window at a transfixing

Vancouver view of inlet, forest, and mountain forgets about the excitement of cities, its hurrying crowds, glamorous theaters, restaurants, expensive boutiques and surreal department stores, its wealth and lavish waste and well-dressed people stepping into taxicabs; forgets the glitter of the city and the rush of desire in the city, the lift of the heart at the promise of happiness. The solitary woman looks out at English Bay and sees the geese form their great wheeling V of freedom over English Bay. She hears the sea-gulls' wild peremptory call. No wonder she wants to fly out of the city to an arcadian landscape beyond.

My personal view of Vancouver has been framed by an inextricable intermeshing of a visitor's fleeting experiences with indelible images impressed upon my mind by Wilson's fiction. Befitting to this fiction, my talk ends not with truth or pronouncements about truth, but with the fantasy of escape that was its beginning—a fantasy that Wilson has described and that reading Wilson's stories makes possible. For the real world recedes when one enters Ethel Wilson's vividly presented and yet strangely absent city. Once within it, one might be anywhere—in Stanley Park, on Lion's Gate Bridge, on Powell Street, at the far point of Sea Island, or on Capitol Hill. So I might step into a Universal Taxi that, like fiction, can realize a universal desire for escape. Guided by Maggie Vardoe, I might meld into the distance beyond. "'Drive,' she said." That's all I would have to say.

NOTES

1 This essay is based upon a talk given at a conference called "Montréal & Vancouver: Images et écritures de nos villes (Imagining and Writing our Cities)" that was held at Simon Fraser University in March 1993. I wish to thank Professor Carole Gerson for her kind invitation to speak about Ethel Wilson's Vancouver. Since the effects of "actual people talking" is an issue raised in Wilson's story, I have kept traces of the actuality of my talk in this essay.

2 In her essay "Companion in a Difficult Country," based upon a movingly personal talk, Helen Sonthoff has described herself coming to know Vancouver through Wilson's fiction as well as through her own explorations of the city. Wilson made Vancouver a "real" place for Sonthoff, though it seemed "nowhere much" to other newcomers. When Sonthoff drove to Hope, Kamloops and beyond, and when she settled on Galiano Island, she felt herself "accompanied" by Wilson's books which create "a space" in which readers can "wander about" (97-104). Alice Munro has also described herself discovering Vancouver through her own experience and Wilson's fiction. Writing about *The Equations of Love,* Munro says: "When I read these stories for the first time, I was a newcomer to Vancouver, and one of the pleasures I had in them was the discovery of that place through Ethel Wilson's eyes, just as I was discovering it through my own eyes"

(260-61). Munro adds that the Vancouver she had come to know "is now mostly gone." Wilson tries to recapture the city that is gone in her fiction, notably in *The Innocent Traveller*, and to do so she elides the modern city from her texts through various literary means.

3 In his perceptive essay on Wilson as elegist, Hinchcliffe called Wilson a "determinedly regional writer, ever since her first story 'I Just Love Dogs', was published in the *New Statesman* of 1937" (62). A footnote points out, however, a certain arbitrariness in Wilson's designation of streets in the story: "Alas, her [Wilson's] regionalism there was not quite as determined as one might wish," since the streets were changed from Oxford Avenue and Centre Street in the original 1937 version to Dunsmuir and Granville Streets in the 1961 collected stories (66). I am arguing that while Wilson names actual streets, she is not interested in recreating an urban way of life associated with city streets in city fiction as a literary genre—an association supported by sociological studies of city life.

4 By my count, Powell Street appears sixteen times in the episode that brings Mort and Eddie together and to their death (87-112 *passim*). On one page, Powell Street appears four times (105), and reappears on the next page (106).

5 The English translation of Roy's *Bonheur d'Occasion* (published originally in 1947, the same year, coincidentally, that Wilson published her first novel, *Hetty Dorval*) loses a sense of visionary suddenness rendered by the French: "Et soudain, elle évoqua la rue Sainte-Catherine." Sudden evocations of all that a city street holds and promises to a young suppliant are common in big city fiction; through such evocations of a street or urban scene, a character sees both actually and in imagination the possibility of fulfilling all desires, including those that the city itself generates in a hungry, wondering young woman or man. The desire for simplicity, peace of spirit, or natural beauty—for escape—that Wilson's characters feel is different from the driving desire for material things that city characters typically equate with happiness. As a geographic and historical place, Vancouver is undoubtedly different from Montreal or any other city. But cities created in and by fictions—by city novels as an established literary genre—share common characteristics and a common iconography that Roy's Montreal reproduces and Wilson's Vancouver elides. The absence of generic markers of urban fiction becomes notable and arguable in *Love and Salt Water* (1956), a late novel that deals with modern times.

6 Wilson gives her memories of Vancouver as it had existed in the past in the brief autobiographical essay entitled "Young Vancouver Seen Through the Eyes of Youth." This memoir imbues the young city with "a simplicity in life" which, Wilson concludes, "it would be folly to regret now" (139). That life had been simple represents a personal view which may not have been shared by others who differed from her and her family in social class, ethnic background, and race. In "A Monologue to a Stranger," Wilson evokes historical, rather than personal, memories in a short tribute to Captain George Vancouver and the landscape and ambient waterways he explored. In this piece, Wilson "talks" directly to her readers, recommending to them a scenic route through and around Vancouver which will reveal its beauties.

7 See, for example, the newspaper blurbs on the back cover of the Laurentian Library paperback edition of *The Equations of Love* (Macmillan of Canada, 1974), which say that Wilson's stories are "set in Vancouver" (although, as I have indicated, most of "Lilly's Story" takes place elsewhere) and present a "picture of love . . . à la Vancouver."

8 In a essay that focuses mainly on *Love and Salt Water*, I argue that the text inscribes and then ingeniously obfuscates capitalistic values and interests—that Wilson's elisions are purposeful and important. I have avoided duplicating here the extensive documentation in the Endnotes to "The Capitalistic Will" which might be pertinent to the elisions in Wilson's Vancouver. In my essay, "The Hidden Mines in Ethel Wilson's Landscape," I pointed to the presence of a violence and dislocating disorder that seemed, on the surface, absent from Wilson's fiction Here I am arguing, in contrast, that what seems eminently present in Wilson's fiction—the city of Vancouver as a physical and sociological entity—is strangely absent.

9 In Empson's well-known formula, "putting the complex into the simple" characterizes "the pastoral process" and, thus, suggests why Arcadia has an enduring imaginative appeal (22). Studies of pastoral and arcadian literature reveal, however, that "the simple" turns out to be more complex than first thought. As one critic put it, "A recourse to Arcadia . . . does not free the inhabitants of the city from their usual perplexities" and, moreover, the escapist desire to free one's self from the adult responsibilities associated with city life is not entirely commendable. Thus, "a note of criticism [of Arcadia] is inherent in all pastoral from the beginning of its existence" (Marinelli, 9-14). S. K. Heninger, Jr. sees the slippage of pastoral into satire or sentimentality as a perversion of a "pure form" for which the spatial "milieu is Arcadia" The original "purpose of the pastoral," Heninger states, was "to create an ideal existence in contradistinction to the real world" (255), which is the effect created by the sudden intrusion of a mountainous Arcady into Wilson's story "Beware the Jabberwock . . .," referred to below.

10 For a succinct and informative account of the Arcadia as a literary topos, see "Arcadia and its Transformations" in Marinelli, 37-56. See also Frank Kermode's explicit statements on the noetic link between "Pastoral" as a literary genre and the city: "The first condition of Pastoral is that it is an urban product" (14).

11 In his important study of pastoral motifs, Renato Poggioli notes that "a small place" in pastoral life has been reserved for the fisherman as "twin brother to the shepherd" (7, 234).

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Stephanie Bolster

hydrangea

what blue of sea or sky
has deranged you?

you seek an impossible
intensity and always fall paler,
azure not indigo,
always fall stranger
to the genuine blues

iris & delphinium
grow towards cloud,
making mock of you

but when blue fades you remain:
fine bones of lace,
integral, eternal
as your yearning silence

iris

your spine is a secret grief.

rooted in the inconsistency of mud,
you manage to stand, proud of your blooming,

though purple marks the perfect
white of your throat.

but cut, left alone in a vase,
you will lean

away from light, shrink
into your shadow, your

core of dryness.

Glenn Willmott

The Nature of Modernism in *Deep Hollow Creek*

I.

There may be little doubt that Sheila Watson's 1959 novel, *The Double Hook*, belongs to a cosmopolitan modernism; that it is an ideogrammic, elliptical, distilled and compressed arrangement of luminous details, shy of abstraction and commentary. But if the "cold fat" of modes of conventional representation has been trimmed from this writing, it is not so clear what remains, and whether this remainder is consistent with the objectives and values typical to this modernist tradition. Certainly Stephen Scobie, who has thought most inclusively about Watson's modes of expression in relation to modern and postmodern literary contexts, sees her work as "paradoxical" in its combination of a modernist assertion of conservative social norms and values with a postmodernist deconstruction of such norms and values in the self-reflexivity of language: "The 'traditional' elements in Watson's vision, such as her Roman Catholicism, or her scholarly devotion to Wyndham Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and the writings of 'high modernism,' have to be balanced on the one hook, against, on the other hook, the 'revolutionary' concern with self-reflexive language poised on the knife-edge of silence" (12). And upon this double hook the criticism of Watson continues to be caught—with the result that the *meaning* of her work is usually either abstracted to general conservative values (Christian redemption, for example, or subjection to family and community) or it is divorced from specific meaning altogether (in the deconstructive movement of the text, or in the aestheticist "balance" of Scobie's double hook). At its deepest level, does

The Double Hook depend on the line of a metaphysical ideal, or that of a material language?

These choices, ironically, seem far from modernism itself, which reacted against metaphysical abstraction and conventional wisdom while attempting to project alternative social forms modelled on objective correlatives of critical consciousness, rather than on the play of language or material forces. Modernism was, as Scobie says, "obsessed by the impulse to order and by the desire, in Ezra Pound's phrase, to 'make it new'" (4-5). Its stripping away of abstraction and common sense is directed toward the production of an ideological remainder that is neither abstract nor aleatory, that represents an order, but an order which is new and particular to the age, to modernity. Nowhere has such a remainder been more elusive to criticism than in *The Double Hook*.

The problem reveals itself, for example, in F. T. Flahiff's observations on the revision process applied to the *Double Hook* manuscript which Frederick M. Salter of the University of Alberta, who promoted the novel's first publication and later wrote its Foreword, had commented upon: "Watson's achievement," Flahiff relates, "put [Salter] in mind of Lear's reflections on 'unaccommodated man': she 'disaccommodates man,' he wrote in his Foreword, 'and studies him.' She had done this by withholding from her characters those resources or 'garments' that, in Salter's words, 'shelter us from the dark and the void of the universe'" (123). This Learesque nakedness before the human order, which Salter perceives at the limit of Watson's modernist compression and reduction, is an existentialist revelation—typical of the modern, post-Kantian aesthetic for which all orders of sense and of sense-making serve only to shore a wall of necessary fictions against "the dark and the void," a chaotic, indifferent, and inscrutable reality. But the modernist reduction process goes beyond even this revelation in Watson's subsequent revisions, Flahiff tells us, as these revisions withdraw yet more of the social conventions and institutions and laws, the "personal and family history and the details of national and racial origin by means of which characters sought to locate and to understand themselves and others." Most significantly withdrawn are such abstract contexts "as are suggested by 'the spaceless fields of being,' the 'abyss,' and 'nature'"—for this last reduction, ironically, cuts away even Salter's existentialist vision of "the dark and the void of the universe," supposed to be beneath the veils of fictive sense-making, as merely another projection, another mediating veil.

And if Salter's imagination, the imagination figured for modernity in the archetype of the emptied or absymal Waste Land, is also a garment to be stripped away from this naked text, what then remains? What other, more final nakedness can there be?

II.

The answer to this, I wish to demonstrate, is most explicit in Watson's earlier—and on first approach less modernistic—*Deep Hollow Creek*, for here physical reduction at once presents itself so literally and so subtly, under the cover of realism, as to obscure its labyrinthine symbolic organization of the novel. For it is precisely a mere physical *being* indicated by nakedness, or an elemental property of existence as such—which finds its figuration in nature, the body, and particularly the native conditionality of a place—that is taken as the base sign of value, the original ideologeme of this text.[1] There is no more provocative starting point than the narrator Stella's own *credo*, which we find placed at the midpoint of her twelve-part narrative:

> I believe in the body, the creator of other bodies, and in the body's body conceived by the body, born of the body, and suffering under the body—the body crucified, the body dead, the body buried—the body rising in the grass and blossoming in the hedgerow. No ghost. No church. No cummunion [sic] except the communion of the body to protect the body against the body. (VI, 76)

This mortal, creative, yet dependent body is the stage upon which the symbols and events of *Deep Hollow Creek* take meaning and place. Abstracted as such from the narrative, this *credo* might appear to share the idealism of postmodern investments in "the body" as a utopian site of values and desires eccentric to—or at least, always supplemental to or insistently more-than—forms of being and identity inscribed upon us with metaphysical authority by dominant social ideologies and their institutions. For in Stella's statement, the "body" also becomes a sign representing critical distance from existing social values and practices. It is voiced in anticipation of her brief return home to the city at the midpoint of her sojourn out in the near-wilderness of the frontier community. She has come from the city as that archetype of the Western genre, the civilized school-marm, and her expression of rebellion against this origin and identity is figured elsewhere in the same passage by two juxtaposed images—both of determination by a world of the mind, being fixed, essential, and abstract: first, the homophonic "bee" (an existentialist pun) which is preserved cut-off from, and so

without identity with the more transient grounds of its existence or becoming, its honey and comb; and second, the school compass which, echoing Blake, figures a similar, essentialist world of the mind, but grounds it in a social institution (which Stella here represents) rather than a metaphysical order:

> She had supposed that she could measure out life with a school compass. The universe pinned flat on a drawing-board.
>
> For two weeks now life would be centred again in the abstract point which had determined motion in the past. Once that past was present. But the present dies every minute, if it exists at all. It is and it is not. The mind preserves in amber the body of the bee. The honey, the comb itself, is wasted and spent.
>
> When I go home, she thought, perhaps they will still be sitting by the fire and the shadow will be reflected from the shadow on the brass scuttle. The theme unaltered. Dies Ira [sic]. The mind has failed, failed with first-class honours, with second, failed in the departments of pure and applied science *cum laude*. (VI, 76)

The mind, rational science, a *Dies Irae*, identity with one's past, one's home: all these external frames of reference have failed her, and it is in this context that her *credo* asserts an alternative investment in some bare order in existence represented by the "body."

But if this last image may be assimilable to the postmodern critical figure, it is yet incomplete without the narrative in which it is, like the bee, embedded, and which interprets it. This narrative invests the "body" with values and a logic resistant to the deconstructive order of a postmodernist aesthetic. This rather modernist sense of the "body" is best grasped, not in its epistemological aspect as a topos for critical distance, which it shares with postmodernism, but in its existential aspect as a *condition*, nearly an authority, requiring humility. For the body, too, fails. When Stella feels challenged by the men around her to mount her stray horse bareback, and is thrown painfully to the ground, a sense of mingled vanity and shame prompts her to reflect:

> There is a courage deep-rooted in fear—the fear of being thought less able in body than those who live by the body.
>
> The doctrine of equality, thought Stella, is rooted in unchristian pride and in unchristian fear. The weak pray for strength not to bear their infirmity but to cancel it—not to conquer their pride but to be equal to it. (X, 118)

On the surface, the reflection seems conservative and anti-feminist, suggesting that women are essentially weak and must conquer their pride. But Stella's challenge to the "doctrine of equality" is not to its value or practice, which is not disputed here and which, moreover, seems inextricable from

any account of the mettle and virtue of the novel's heroine. Rather it appears to be a challenge to forces which seem to her to be driving this doctrine—forces of individual fear and pride at variance, not with men, but with a larger, physical environment only partly dominated by men.

For the decision or necessity to "live by the body" carries the body's failure, its subjection to a body of existence larger and more powerful than itself, within its system of values. Thus we are told that while Stella felt pressured to prove that she could master her stray horse by jumping it rather than leading it walking across the field, her neighbour Bill "could have done either indifferently," while her neighbour Mockett, who of all the characters has the least sympathetic, most condescending relationship to Stella, would nevertheless, poignantly, in the same situation "have led the horse without shame" (X, 119). To live by the body does not, then, imply a new or old, a radically feminized or traditionally masculine mastery, but a transcending humility, a recognition of limits within physical existence. It is not only invested with the ideal of a transgressive power of resistance and creativity—always supplementary, always differing or deferring from expressions of power inscribed upon it—which is the radical ideal of a postmodernist valuation of the body. While Watson's image of the body stands for a certain critical distance from modern social life, and from the masculinist order and abstract-rationalist ideology behind it, it also stands for some other order, some other form of limitation and subjection, which resists such deconstruction in the expression of its conservative value. To believe in the body, and to live by the body, is to insist not only upon a stripping away of abstract determining logics of identity and society, of the projected gods within whose compasses the modern young woman, Stella, finds herself, but to insist also upon another existing order, with freedoms and limitations of its own.

This other order appears everywhere in *Deep Hollow Creek* under the broad rubric of Nature, as if the whole story grew out of the "mute recognition" given to Mockett that "when all was said and done nature still had the last word to say" (68). The transcendent value of Nature in Watson's text is revealed in the profound, fabular description Rose gives to the mystical place which Nicholas Farish only, of the settlers, has discovered and seen:

> He was out looking for a white stallion. They'd all seen it but no man had branded it. He got off to have a sleep and when he got off he left the bay he rode standing on the lines. When he woke up, the horse had moved off and going to

> look for him he came plumb on it—a great black lake. You couldn't see the lake, he said, only the edge falling off. And when he went to look he lay flat, for the edge went down and down to the black water. There was ledges and on the ledges there was bushes and flying over the water down in the cleft was birds and the land about him was dry and hard and there was nothing coming into the lake and nothing going out.... He says he never could find that lake again. (24-25)

The lake is removed, hidden and inscrutable, yet also present and, by virtue of its very envelopement in the land around Deep Hollow Creek, at the heart of the place; it *belongs* there. Its isolation figures it as a form of pure Nature, the particularity and priority of this landscape before those who come to it, its *life before man.* What meaning, what value it represents—for it is clearly symbolic, approached nearly in a dream or a vision—seems bound to this isolation, which is not from the place itself or even existence in that place, but only from a certain human perception.

It is not from all human perception that this mystical topos is removed: "The Indians know it... and talk about it in their own houses," says Farish to Rose (25). And the Indians are nearly as obscure to the perception of the settlers as is this secret feature of its landscape. They are another hidden part of the same topos in Nature to which the settlers are blind: "It's not as if there weren't people here," complains Mamie of Myrtle Farish, whose "man rides about the country making friends of the Indians" (37). The community of Deep Hollow Creek sees itself as a kind of isolate point, a center of human civilization surrounded by nothing:

> In the valley all things moved to a point. The road ran into the creek both ways to the stopping house—though, if one stood on the hill where the water broke in the spring, one could see the road winding like a thread the whole length of the valley. No one stood on the hill. In the valley one spoke of the road running up or down, into or out of the centre. The private parlour, and the public parlour where the Indians stood shuffling their feet waiting patiently for Mockett to take off his apron, to come from his cow, to fold up his copy of the Manchester Guardian and to unlock the store, weighing out tea, weighing out flour, pouring out coal-oil, sorting out mail—here was the centre. (19)

But, we are immediately corrected, "no one" forgets to include Rose, the outsider of the community, who knows and speaks to Stella of the view from the hill. Nor does it include the Indians, who live in the hills "crowded" round this "centre." The hills are alive with the displaced natives of the place: "Rà'tltem the Shuswaps had called their village there; they were the people of the deep hollow" (18). Nicholas Farish is the one to have seen

the mystic lake, perhaps, because he is like Rose an outsider, and a man that has befriended the Indians rather than the settlers.

Around this centre, then, as around Wallace Stevens' jar in Tennessee, is arranged an entire existential paradigm, that physis imaged in nature as wilderness, in nature as the mortal and gendered body, in nature as the animal, in nature as the people belonging to their land—in short to Nature as all that remains lacking or stripped of the properties of an expanding and modernizing Western world. The tension of the novel, and its narrative logic, is suspended between this centre and periphery. "Throw off the bands of custom," Stella imagines an "undulating voice crying" out of the wilderness: "break down the barriers. Nature stirs deep within you. I am the primitive urge, out of the blastoderm endlessly calling" (124).

The undulating voice is certainly that of Coyote, the literal and mythical animal who represents in the landscape of Deep Hollow Creek whatever conditionality and order belongs to Nature, to living by the body, and who appears and reappears intertwined with the all the motifs belonging to the paradigm of peripheral or liminal *physis*. As the animal who lends voice and image to this paradigmatic landscape, Coyote will serve in what follows as its guide.[2] Indeed according to Rose, Farish had explained of the mystic lake, the hidden sign of the existential landscape in which the settlement has situated itself, that "the Indians know it... and talk about it in their houses. They have a god, he says—one called Coyote. But I can't, he said, say more" (25). Coyote is the name of whatever order and authority allows the Nature of the place to be found, to be recognized, to be talked about; not by its settlers, but by its natives, whose houses are co-extensive with rather than a frontier asserted against its landscape. Coyote is the Logos of the condition of living that landscape, the name given to the fate, chance, and conditionality of existence precisely there:

> Coyote the god—the great god Coyote, coming in the night—coming in the hunting season—tumbling men off ledges and women in their beds—lighting his torch of bullrush at the household fire—unstoppering the corroding liniment of midnight flame—playing his tricks so that only the dark shadows spied him—dipping into other men's buckets—spitting in the lake until he made it green with poison, salt forming round the edge where the cattle drank—flesh drying on the bone which he had touched—babies dying in their baskets—the whole world turned to a Sodom of salt. (131-32)

This passage is drawn from the scene in which Stella visits an Indian

community, and a coyote is barely visible (like the mystic lake), an overseer at the margin, sitting "silent on [a] ledge like a shadow on the rock" (131). Coyote's existential power, a power over the body, is juxtaposed with the imported powers of the central settlement:

> I saw a mist rising in the valley, Annunciata told Farish. It came creeping on the ground to the door. Mockett gave me a charm in a bottle, a charm of oil, and I gave the baby the oil in a wooden spoon. Mockett is no Shaman. He is only hide and bones and thin grey hair against Coyote's mist. (91-92)

Coyote is always in the background, a momentary coalescence of nature, a barely perceivable mist or shadow. This environmental god is held responsible for things going wrong, which is not to say for mortality or evil in general, but for the ineluctable subjection of human life to mortality, evil, or mere vanity. As such the god represents an authority more of a natural than a divine order of things, and more of an existential becoming, a turning, twisting or "trickiness," than of a metaphysical being, an essence, or a centre in life.

As a scapegoat figure for all that can go wrong in life, it is appropriate that Coyote should appear at the margins, a figure blended into the background, a cry or bark from beyond the trees, for the reason that Coyote exists at the threshold of existence itself, weaving back and forth between the living and the dead, a fickle reminder of the limitations to mere physical survival in Nature. Death, or the limen where life meets death, reveals to life its own minimal conditions in a given environment, its basic needs in human and animal nature, and taking on surprising forms, like the body which demands an Indian burial: "A dead body's an awful thing in this country now, said George, Sam's boy. Summer the ground's baked hard as nails. Winters she's froze. When old McIntosh died they had to put him in a tree out of the coyotes' way until the ground thawed in the spring" (29).

Coyote, at this threshold of existence, demands an order, a pattern. Life reduced or stripped away to a minimum, a nakedness belonging to life itself, is not without order and meaning in Deep Hollow Creek. The novel begins with a description of Rose, the outsider's eyes, and in so doing states the motive in the narrative: "Her eyes, Stella thought, were the colour of Spanish mahogany, but they lacked the lustre of organic fibre. The soul had gone out of the wood, had dissipated. What was life, she asked herself, that the soul could escape so. She had come into the valley to find life for herself" (7). The liminal quality, and so the hiddenness, of Rose's ground in human life is an occulted mystery to Stella: "No animating fire within, no

reflection of the sun outside... yet somewhere there is life—somewhere there must be fire burning inward, letting the ash drop on the source of fire itself. But still, she thought, what is this fire. And again—by what refraction can one know the flame" (21). And: "Once there must have been sap, she thought," gazing at a stem of dead grass, "pondering the paradox of Rose's eyes" (106). But this mystery, this hiddenness, belongs to Stella as well, as she also becomes an outsider to the community, choosing to live on its margin, to befriend Indians and their friends, the Farishes, and preferring to live alone. Later she tells herself, in a meditation which mirrors her image of Rose, "I have grown like a plant and leafed after my kind—but here is the end. I live—she said, looking at [her dog] Juno—like a stone" (113).

But life thus reduced, the life of a stone, which is the minimal life belonging to Nature, or the life of the body, which is its minimal human form—just as Rose is an imposing body, a physical existent without any expression or "life" visible, or legible on the surface—is also a life cut off from other lives, from others. Like Rose, Stella is alienated by her independent character, a figure of tragic, self-revelation and isolation. As Stella seeks "life for herself" throughout the novel, and tests the life of the body, of the animal, of the wilderness, of physical existence at its most fundamental, she also approaches the "paradox" of Rose's inanimate, inorganic, petrified image of life-in-death.[3] It is only at the end of the novel, when Stella absently offers her dog a light for a presumed cigarette, that her independence is revealed as a fantasy, or an impossibility, and she knows she must return to the world of others, to the centre. Revealed in naked existence, then, is our ineluctable relationship with others, and this is manifested before all else in the form of language.

"After hours by herself," Stella, near the end her story, "felt the need to talk as she felt other primitive and essential desires. She would have waged battle in defence of the idea which she had come to hold with mute intensity—that man was beyond all else *animal loquens*" (113). Even at the animal minimum, Watson suggests, in our naked, physical nature, there is the need for speech, and so for others—animal, vegetable, or mineral—to listen and be listened to. This is the revelation of the "undulating voice" of Coyote, met riding on the road at dusk. She has just encountered a pair of bulls who represent to her "sheer physical strength," nothing else: "One of the bulls battered against the bank, dust spraying like a halo round his dehorned head. The other looked out from under a bang of rank hair suspiciously..."

(121). The bulls are important because they represent that minimal level of natural existence—pure physical survival—which collapses into pure individualism, expressed either in its solitary aggressivity (giving the battered, self-absorbed head a parodic halo), or in its suspicious view of the outside world. Stella respects their strength, but does not see in them an ironic mirror of her own individualistic ideal, her "life for herself." After noticing the bulls turn on each other, and shivering at Coyote's mist, moving across the ground, she hears the "undulating voice crying" for the "primitive urge" of "Nature"—and then comes a vision, too extraordinary to summarize:

> There to the left was a pile of stones, heaped from the last great road clearing. Slowly they manoeuvred into place, each a face—face rolling on face—each face a wheel, each wheel a face. Then from the cairn came a voice—thin, precise, dry —
> Taurus, tauri.
> And a stone rolling from the pile echoed —
> Lapis, lapidis.
> And the mist rose higher and the gentians burned from blue to the red of Indian paint-brush —
> Flamen, flaminis.
> And out of the bosom of the hill came a soft groan —
> Man, man.

If the mist is not enough to mark Coyote's presence, we are reminded that among these other echoes, "high up, bark echoed bark as a pair of coyotes crossed the ridge" (125). Here the *stone*, the merely physical *animal*, the *fire* of life hidden in Rose, in Stella, in all the inhabitants of Deep Hollow Creek—these reductions of existence yet have *words*. Human life cannot be reduced beyond that of a talking animal, a talking stone, or a talking light. So that even at the threshold of freedom from others or of death, there remains talking-to-oneself, as in the muteness of Rose and later of Stella, the existence of words for others even as they fail to cross the margin between silence and speech: "So Mamie talked, so Miriam wrote endless letters, and Rose lived only in the scattered moment of self-revelation" (113).

These words, in the vision nothing more than names—names "rolling" together into plurals or genitives—are not impositions of ideas of order upon an anterior dark or void of the universe, an existential chaos, but rather emanations of an order of interconnectedness in existential reality, of essential patterns of desire and need which call across the boundaries between selves and other living things.[4] It is the call of Coyote, the voice from the margins, whose appearance is always a reminder of the nearness of

life to death, and of the dependence, the subjection, the humility of the self before its own mere survival in a place, its nakedness before where and with whom it lives. The vision resonates with Northrop Frye's own idealistic assertion in his "Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*," that the modern Canadian utopia is a "peaceable kingdom" in which nature and history—or the welfare of existence and its transformation by power and progress in civilization—are united rather than conflicted (247). In Stella's vision, it is a matter of having eyes to see, and ears to hear, the natural existence—human, animal, vegetable, mineral, or energetic—which lies visibly or invisibly within human being, and our utter subjection to it, as victim and dependent, as thinker and interlocutor.

And if there is no utopia in *Deep Hollow Creek*, there is nonetheless a desire for the utopian ideology proper to a peaceable kingdom. This we see in the patterns of life Watson describes as native to the place—native, though ironically displaced to its peripheries by patterns of life instituted there by the expansion of a modernizing civilization to which it stands in contrast. One pattern of interconnectedness is the economy of the place, the pattern of exchange between people of people, animals, words and things. The scene in which Stella buys her second horse is exemplary for the contrast it draws between a native and a modern ideology of exchange. It begins with some apparently irrelevant background concerning the young seller, George, of whom we are told that when he was not working full-time on his father's ranch in the hills up out of town, he went into the centre and "down to the store and sat with the men round the stove and heard Mockett talk to Hawkins's partner about freedom, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. No one paid much attention to Mockett and his talk of Tom Paine and others of his kind. It seemed doubtful whether Mockett paid much attention himself" (57). Then the initial transaction is described: "He asked twenty-five dollars for the horse and Stella paid it. He had told [his father] Sam what he was going to do because, despite Mockett's talk, he wasn't quite convinced that he had any rights at all." Compared to the stereotypically American values displayed by Mockett, George evinces a subjection of individual rights to a sustaining social order which is stereotypically Canadian. George, not yet in the world on his own, is not sure whether he is free as an individual to make the exchange of property—to own, to transact. And he is not, apparently, for Sam soon sends George back to Stella to demand the horse back, or five extra dollars. (Sam claims the horse as his

own, since he gave it to his son "for wages," and presumably those wages will not be fulfilled until George leaves the ranch.) Sam's belated demand is petty, but one must percieve that it arises from the substitution of one kind of exchange for another: An original exchange is revealed which was of work done within and for a family, for a horse considered to be an extension of the family business. "He said, If you stay with me you will have a big herd of horses and do better than them who work for the day" (58). For this exchange among dependents living off their land, George innocently substitutes another kind of exchange belonging rather to those who "work for the day," the mercantile exchange of goods. George is a horse-dealer. Sam's raising the price merely emphasizes the new being and value of the horse as a commodity. Thus he insists upon what George can only see as an unfair profit, where such profit was not supposed to be part of the trade to begin with. Though Stella is indifferent, George resents Sam's action. "He's broke his word... It was my sweat got the colt off the range. I worked for him like he said." It becomes ambiguous whether George really has not absorbed something of Mockett's talk about individual rights after all. However, George adds a final twist to the story by substituting yet a third transaction—a restitution for the five dollars which to Stella mean nothing, but which to George mean a reassertion of his right to transact business, if not his right to the original property:

> He held a braided halter for Stella's inspection.
>
> It takes a lot of careful cutting and oiling and plaiting until it's just right. You couldn't get it [mail-order] from Eaton's for five dollars, he said, not like this. It's work like the Indians do.
>
> There are ways, he said, if a person sits down and thinks a little. There are ways which just about set a man right with things. (59)

Under this restitution, the five dollars have become meaningless except as a symbol of George's and Sam's competition for power over this transaction. The simplest thing would have been for George to have paid Stella back the five dollars, and to have kept twenty for his own. But this gesture would have been a defeat; it would not reassert any symbolic value in the mode of exchange held between George and his father. Instead, George gives Stella what he had originally given Sam, the value of his work. His reformulation of his exchange with Stella in terms of *work* reëngages Sam in his own game, so that George has now gained mastery over his own value in Sam's economy of things on the hill, not in that of the trade characterizing the centre. And

he is explicit about the native, local, and "priceless" character of his halter, in contrast to the halter which could be ordered for the same dollar figure from somewhere else, a place which is not a place but a modern business, through the system of commodity production and exchange which is regulated and represented by the centre of Deep Hollow Creek. It is this system, along with its ideology of transcending individualism, that is ultimately renounced in George's recourse to restitution through "work like the Indians do."[5]

The episode is nearly a moral tale, so clearly does it distinguish between a wrong and a right relationship to things, in this case the exchanges between people deeply dependent upon each other in a frontier settlement. Right is the exchange of words or things in an ecology of needs or wants proper to the place, according to a synaesthetic ideal of fair trade; wrong is the exchange of words or things in an individualistic economy driven by differentials of profit and power, where needs and wants arrive from an abstract elsewhere—the elsewhere of the system of modern production, distribution and consumption—whose values are abstract in relation to any given place. The abstraction of modern words and things supports the abstraction of the modern individual, the fantasy of a free self transcending its natural and social needs, the laws of its environment. The abstraction of the modern place as an "elsewhere" is suggested in the image of the centre of Deep Hollow Creek as a sort of empty centre, a place of passage only, whose element is the commodity: "the stopping house—the inn at which, after the fashion of the country, one may stop for the payment of a fee—one may stop, she thought, if one is merely a traveller or a salesman with his commodity and not, in the nature of the now and here, more than a momentary commodity himself" (13). Against the abstraction of the commodity as pure movement, as transcendental value, is posed the word or object which, while exchanged, always belongs to its place, and which in the synaesthetic reality of that place, remains part of its physical nature. When Stella completes a deal with a native woman who has worked for her, which comprises various goods and a closing demand for thirty-five cents, Stella thinks of the added currency only for its modern, abstract value—but the native woman thinks otherwise:

> With the money, thought Stella, she is in possession of an undertermined [sic] joy. It is power over Mockett.
>
> Why hadn't she asked for more, she wondered.

Forty-five cents, she suggested, prying to know, indifferently curious.
Elizabeth's eyes turned full on her. One hand reached out for the moccasins. The other arm circled the flour, the oil, the thread.
Thirty-five cents, she insisted.
What do you want to get? Stella asked.
Thirty-five cents, she intoned again.
Stella counted the money out on the table—a quarter and a dime.
She shook her head. Three dimes and a nickel.
She caught them up. (134-35)

Whatever the coins might be exchanged for, whatever it is they might come to stand for, they first of all stand for themselves. The coins are physical; their mere physical being matters. Their amount is calculated under a law of material reciprocity, not of abstract gain and its balances of "power." The episode is preceded by a meditation on such native and natural exchanges:

To those who gave, nature made return—a deer for a bullet, spuds for the planting and digging. Sometimes a grouse winged by another and fell on the doorstep. Then one gave thanks to Coyote as one gave thanks if Mockett passed a sweet across the counter to a reaching hand, slipping on the stained wood, nail following the groove back and forth—while those who had, bartered. (134)

Coyote is again the figure who symbolizes this native understanding, this hidden pattern of interdependency in the order of things belonging to existence in a place.

It is to this fundamental order that Stella strips herself down, in a modernistic reduction of past history, normative values, social and economic forms, and conventional signification—to a morbid isolation and silence. Hers must begin as an individualistic project, a stripping away of the orders and values of modern existence, as the narrative moves her further from others and from the centre of Deep Hollow Creek, isolating her in the wilderness, and at the threshold of that other, native life belonging to the hills. But this individualistic project is itself, finally, revealed to be a projection of the abstract fantasies of the world from which she wishes to escape. For at the limit of this escape comes the perception of the ineluctable life of a place—echoing names, words, work, and things back to the individual, interpellating her, implicating her in the existence and sensorium of its dependencies.

This revelation belongs to the closing image of the novel, in which we find Stella sitting alone in the evening with her dog, Juno:

> When Stella finished supper she poured the coffee. She reached for the matches to light her cigarette. She lit the cigarette absently then, bending, offered the light to Juno.
>
> When the match burned her finger she became a spectator of the scene—Juno by the chair—herself—Browne open at her elbow—the match extended—the twinge of seared flesh.
>
> I don't know, she said to Juno, I really don't know who is mad. It is time for us to get out of here, she said. Juno sat. (141)

The body is again reminded of its fragility, its transience, at the moment that its language—reduced to the mute, giving gesture of a light—comes forth to belie its dependence on others, physical and affective. Stella's *credo*, her belief in living by the body, at some existential threshold at which her modern social order has been stripped away, leads not finally to the modernist authenticity of individualism and social alienation which is the teleology of the physical Hemingway, or the affective Fitzgerald, but to the realization that such as these last are also fantasies of a modernized identity, to be stripped away from the hidden economies of mere being, within which we must render to Coyote that which is Coyote's—subjecting ourselves, and our image of ourselves, to the existence of a place.

The characters of *Deep Hollow Creek* are figures in a ground, and the ground of grounds is not an existential darkness, void, or chaos, within which a Cartesian subject begins *ex nihilo*, making values, choices, decisions—making herself, making history. The ground is a living place, an environment which demands expression in a linguistic and material economy of exchange. As such it exists no less in the wilderness than in the city; and when Stella returns to the city, she of course takes Juno, the double of Coyote, with her. It is not a new set of values merely—not a dissenting, Romantic "model" of Being drawn from the natural world—which Stella attains at the end of the narrative; rather it is a perception, a sense of contact, and subsequent contract, with an existential order of conditions between herself and what *is* immediately around her. The modernist reduction is complete when it hits this rock bottom of hidden reciprocities in mere being. "I live... like a stone," she says, but even these words depend upon the stones, and the stones call back, inescapable—the ground returning physical Echoes to a Narcissan mind.

I believe this account of *Deep Hollow Creek* sheds light on what is unique to the modernism of *The Double Hook*. For the latter is only the logical sequel to the former, in which the individualistic narrator has herself now

disappeared into the fabric of interdependent lives of a place—so that the narrative no longer belongs to the romance of an individual *subjectivity* but to the interdependent conditionality, or fate, of a fixed, physical *existence.* This is why it is possible for Flahiff to suggest that in Watson's "final, extensive revision of *The Double Hook* she moved against such guarantees as are provided by *possibility* and *causality* and *memory* in order more fully to realize that spareness and immediacy that come to characters when they have no alternative but to *be* in their time and place—when they are characters who have no history apart from the experience of their readers" (125). To believe in the *body*, and in the inescapably "naked" nature of words and things, is also to believe in the reader—he or she that, in taking the position of Juno, but as *animal loquens*, might accept the offered match, the light.[6]

III.

The "double hook" of modernism and postmodernism, upon one side of which nearly every reading of Watson's work hangs, reveals either a mythopoeic romance with conservative values (in which Coyote is usually a negative figure), or a deconstructive comedy with radical values (in which Coyote is a positive figure). *Deep Hollow Creek* should serve to disabuse us of these alternatives in regard to Watson's work, since the earlier narrative rejects and surpasses both. With this earlier model, it is more easily seen that a conservative interpretation[7] ignores the violence and inadequacy of represented traditional social forms to bring about the *communitas* which is the supposed *telos* of *The Double Hook* (I think it is rather a momentary still point). Far from nostalgic for any social or signifying forms which might be recalled, as pre-existing represention or orders, from the past, these forms remain barely representable ideals—utopian. However, perhaps because these critiques always posit community in the singular, as an eternal category rather than historical form, they find their contrast not in any *other* community but in nature—and so undervalue or anathematize forms of nature and landscape, and the native and the "regional," along with their symbol in Coyote.

Conservative interpretation also has difficulty with the self-reflexive ironies of Watson's use of language as language belongs to and is judged by its "regional" ground. Radical interpretations (such as the essays by Godard and George Bowering in the latter's collection) while attending to the trickster ironies of Watson's language, which deconstructs its represented values

and ideals back into an unsettling texture of clichés and contrasts, cannot thereby account for the insistent social vision which this "trickster" language draws from its region—its realist and referential ground. "I wanted to do something," Watson has said,

> about the West, which wasn't a Western; and about Indians which wasn't about... Indians. No, not "about Indians," because I don't even want to put it that way, I'm putting it badly now... But I wanted to take this place where I'd been put down as a stranger...

The pun on "put down" is significant—to be placed, to be humbled. As is Watson's explicit desire to write about the people *native* to that place, no matter where they have come from, and the difficulty of *being* native there, of being subjected to a place rather than being abstracted from it: "I would say that what I was concerned with was figures in a ground, from which they could not be separated.... So that people are entwined in, they're interacting with the landscape, and the landscape is interacting with them... not the landscape, the things about them, the other things which exist." This native existence must yet find representation within the displacing and replacing, abstracting movement of modern existence. That is Watson's minimal ideal, the naked form remaining after the modernist stripping away of encrusted forms of language, convention, and abstraction.[8] To *see* the nature of merely being in a place, to represent it, is to transgress, to be a trickster, to point foolishly at the *physical* shadow of the modern here and now. But this vision comes neither with faith in God nor in language: it belongs to individual perception, and like art or ritual, must be learned. "Only the practised eye," it is said of Coyote, can "see the substance in the shadow" (131).

NOTES

1 Why this ideologeme, that of a liminal *physis* under which the natural body and the body of nature produce an *a priori* threshold to social life and its meaning, should belong to Canadian Modernism more generally, is the matter of a larger study in progress; it is from this study that the present reading is drawn.

2 Criticism of *The Double Hook* is riven with debate over the positive or negative meaning of Coyote in the novel. One tradition of interpretation has viewed Coyote negatively, as a symbol of self-deception, self-centeredness, and anti-social fear and merger with an inhuman landscape (see Leslie Monkman, "Coyote as Trickster in *The Double Hook*," D. G. Jones, *Butterfly on Rock,* Margot Northey, "Symbolic Grotesque," Margaret Morris, "The Elements Transcended," Nancy J. Corbett, "Closed Circle," John Moss, "*The Double*

Hook and *The Channel Shore*," and Dawn Rae Downton, "Message and Messengers in *The Double Hook*" (all reprinted or selected in George Bowering, 1985), and Scobie and Neuman. Another views Coyote positively, either as a local type or prophet of God (see Beverley Mitchell, S. S. A, "Association and Allusion in *The Double Hook*," John Watt Lennox, "The Past: Themes and Symbols of Confrontation in *The Double Hook* and 'Le Torrent,'" and John Grube, "Introduction" to *The Double Hook* [Toronto: NCL, 1966] (all reprinted op. cit.) or as a transgressive, liberating trickster figure of the writer (see Barbara Godard, "'Between One Cliché and Another': Language in *The Double Hook*," and George Bowering, "Sheila Watson, Trickster" (also reprinted op. cit.), and Angela Bowering). A consideration of Coyote which hangs on neither of these hooks but combines them in historicist juxtaposition is offered by Steven Putzel, whose anthropological study concludes that "Watson has created a voice which resonates with the Indians' past, the settlers' present, and with prophecies of their future" (15).

3 Stella at first takes a little portion of Nature for her own, thinking it will free her: "At the moment a horse which she could ride when she chose stood for all the things implicit in Mockett's (American) murmurings about freedom, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. With a horse she could come and go without depending on others" (65). However, she and her horse are not so abstracted from each other or others, and when Stella leaves Deep Hollow Creek, the horse must be reclaimed by Rose's husband: "I'll take the palomino back, he said, any time you say—and keep him till you come again. Rose looked up and the light fell across her eyes" (138). Not only are natural and human existence unexpectedly affirmed here, the moment is emphasized symbolically by the sudden light in Rose's eyes—which, significantly, is seen to come from without, a life dependent on lives shared in their common existential environment.

4 Watson once told Stephen Scobie in conversation: "To be self-centred is an oblivion" (35). And similarly, she advised him that what he should "really be paying attention to [in *The Double Hook*] was Felix's coffee cup" (32). When Heinrich observes that Felix "sits there like a round world all centred in on himself"—recalling Stevens' jar in Tennessee—William corrects Heinrich: "He drinks coffee like the rest of us... If you think of it, he said, this case of Felix is a standing lesson for someone to think twice. A man who drinks coffee is dependent on something outside himself" (114). The cup, an image of simultaneity of present and past, of self and other, introduced earlier in the novel (29), makes of Stevens' jar, and view of art imposed upon and mastering nature, a solipsistic or "oblivious" one.

5 The five dollars is also meaningless to Sam. Later on, when Stella is preparing to leave the community, he offers to take care of the same horse for her for an indefinite period, in case she returns—a gift far transcending the added exchange value of the horse.

6 The nakedness of this position is reflected in Watson's own essay on Learesque nakedness, entitled "Unaccommodated Man," which explores Wyndham Lewis' Modernist valuation of the *wild body*: "the supreme survival that is us, the stark apparatus with its mysterious set of spasms; the most profound of which is laughter," since laughter represents "all that remains physical in a flash of thought." That this "stark" physicality is a minimal *physis* is insisted upon by Watson's further evidence from Lewis that the *wild body* "is the chasm lying between non-being, over which it is impossible for logic to throw a bridge, that in certain forms of laughter, we leap." Watson considers this *body* the "irreducible" ground of Lewis's modernism, as opposed to the metaphysically imag-

ined grounds of others such as Artaud. Lewis's interest, she argues in conclusion, is "in the present," in order "to provide a rallying ground it needs to survive" (103, 108, 114). Watson's last words already suggest the social dimension, less evident in Lewis's more individualistic figure, of an existential "present" and "body" articulated in her own work.

7 Traditional humanist or Christian values are asserted as central to Watson's texts in John Watt Lennox, "The Past: Themes and Symbols of Confrontation in *The Double Hook* and 'Le Torrent,'" Margot Northey, "Symbolic Grotesque," Leslie Monkman, "Coyote as Trickster in *The Double Hook*," John Grube, "Introduction" to *The Double Hook* (Toronto: NCL, 1966), Margaret Morris, "The Elements Transcended," and Beverley Mitchell, S. S. A., "Association and Allusion in The Double Hook" (all reprinted in George Bowering, 1985), and in Shirley Neuman, "Sheila Watson."

8 This thesis brings me in line, though in the terms of *Deep Hollow Creek*, with Angela Bowering's more extensive literary and anthropological study of *The Double Hook*, in which the "native" as opposed to "modern perception" of which I speak is figured as an occulted female symbolic tradition, in which a female modality of existential ground and origin transhistorically subtends and deconstructs an exfoliation of more or less masculinised (to the extent they are taken for complete or essential) mythologies and metaphysics; and for Bowering this female symbolic, associated with the native symbol of Coyote, indicates a hidden ground of form and value in *The Double Hook*.

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Ken Rivard

Nat King Cole

It happens just about every night. When I come home from work, my parents are downstairs listening to eight-tracks and records from the 1940's and 50's. Swing Music. Benny Goodman. Count Basie. Tommy Dorsey. Duke Ellington. Guy Lombardo. Perry Como. Most of the time, it's Nat King Cole's voice floating up the stairs like slow motion pillow feathers. And yesterday, my father told me how Nat King Cole was not allowed into many fancy hotels. Used to sleep wherever he could. Then he'd perform in the same hotel that refused him a room the night before. For a long time, Nat only played piano until his singing talents were discovered by accident. Tonight, I stand at the top of the stairs discovering Cole on my own. Unforgettable. I'm beginning to memorize the song, UNFORGETTABLE. My father hears me singing along. Sys my memorizing is BEAUTIFUL. Over and over my father says BEAUTIFUL! BEAUTIFUL! BEAUTIFUL! Then I suggest to my father that I take him tomorrow to The Crossroads Flea Market. Hunt through the stacks of tapes and records for nearly-obsolete eight-tracks of Nat King Cole. "Nat, after you do UNFORGETTABLE one more time, please remember to get up early tomorrow. Come to the flea market. Help us find you one more time for the sake of my father's beauty."

Notes of Mother Song

This time I can really hear her. I cup my ear to the bathroom door and listen to my mother's splashing in the bathtub. I call through the door. Tease her by saying she's an awfully big fish in a small sea. I hear her patented giggling and then belly-laughing after I threaten to call the Calgary Herald about the whale in my bathtub. More mother and son bantering. And I imagine my blind seventy-eight-year old mother washing off her day. Yesterday, she told me she can't get used to being shut out in her blindness. People get up and walk out of the room without telling her and she continues speaking to an empty chair. Or, people would announce their departures but they forget that my mother has only recently lost her sight. In the bathtub at least, she's alone from the start. Then I call through the door to tell my mother that I have to sort the laundry. She thanks me for talking to her, as if she'd never heard a human voice before. Starts singing one of her choir girl songs, O Come All Ye Faithful, in the middle of a July bathtub. The laundry can wait. My mother's singing can't. I hear her wet arms slicing through the water leading an imaginary choir through another chorus. She sings alto. Tenor. Even a few bass notes. The harmonies are perfect. One voice catching up to one another, like dominoes. And the bathtub sounds as if it is filling with a thousand notes of mother song.

David Crouse

Resisting Reduction

Closure in Richard Ford's *Rock Springs* and Alice Munro's *Friend of My Youth*

The writer of the realistic short story has two primary aims: first, to create a vivid and lifelike world, something that approximates the reader's idea of the way the world really works, and secondly, to create characters who move and change. These principles are taught in almost every beginning fiction class. But every beginning writer eventually becomes aware that these two aims are often in conflict, and especially so in the context of the short story, which because of its condensed form naturally lends itself to a kind of neatness which might not ring true to both writer and reader. For instance, the traditional epiphany of Joyce or Proust, with its stressing of a single clear moment of revelation, may seem forced to today's audience.

This is not to say these realizations do not exist in the real world. People do learn things they may label as truths and experience sharp moments of clarity. However, the power of these realizations may be lessened for today's audience: the moment of insight at the end of Joyce's "The Dead" may be less pointedly instructive than the omniscient-narrator-as-teacher in a novel such as, say, *Henry Fielding*, but epiphany still implies a set of fixed values, a single correct way to see the world.

Of course, all literature is instructive; people learn from any and all sensory information. The mere placement of words on a page implies a set of fixed values, the assumption that ideas can be communicated through language, for instance. But just as the story-with-epiphany showed strong doubt in the reliability of an omniscient narrator, much contemporary liter-

ature calls into question the authority of the epiphany. It's a complex world, both audience and writer announce, and moments of clarity may be attractive half-truths when viewed in hindsight.

The evasiveness of truth is no new idea, of course. Each generation of writers deals with this quandary in a new way. Epiphany itself can be seen as an attempt to escape the story as simple moral lesson: an effort to make the fictional world more complex while also showing how characters can move and change over the course of a condensed number of pages. Shifts in aesthetics and styles can be seen as developing new partial-solutions to the same old problems.

Two contemporary writers from somewhat different perspectives handle this particular problem as well as anyone: Alice Munro, who is almost exclusively a writer of short fiction, and Richard Ford, who is primarily a novelist, but who has published one collection of short fiction, *Rock Springs*, in 1987. They are writers from very different backgrounds. Ford is an American mid-westerner whose terse style is sometimes compared favourably to Hemingway's. Munro's stories usually focus on the small patch of Canadian ground where she lives. At first glance their work is as different as the regions they call home.

In their best work, however, from Ford's *Rock Springs* to Munro's *The Progress of Love* to what might be her strongest collection, *Friend of My Youth*, both writers can be seen confronting the problem of realistic closure and character growth in the short-story form. To do this, they manipulate time in a variety of ways, extending or expanding a series of events so that any one moment becomes less and less definitive. Their fictional worlds are complex to the point of confusion.

Again, it is important to understand that Ford and Munro are not really reacting against the traditional epiphany of Woolf, Proust and Joyce; Ford and Munro are a segment of a larger movement of which traditional epiphanic techniques and their newer techniques are both a part. Stephen Dedalus staring at letters scratched in a desk in *Portrait of an Artist* and Anita continuing her conversation with Margot in Munro's "Wigtime" should be seen as extensions of the same line of thought, not as fundamentally bipolar techniques. In general, this movement focuses on small moments and moves away from explanation on the part of the writer.

Placing thoughts in the mind of a character or recasting them as images and locating them symbolically in the landscape can be seen as a way of

opening up interpretation relative to previous, more narrator-dominated, techniques, just as Munro's and Ford's techniques open up interpretation relative to Joyce, Proust and Woolf; because of this, collections like *Friend of My Youth* and *Rock Springs* require more effort on the part of the reader as far as interpretation is concerned.

When the big picture is viewed, it becomes a question of methods, not aims. Ford and Munro, continuing, not abandoning, the Joycean aesthetic, put more and more responsibility for interpretation on the shoulders of the reader. Anything like this requires the use of all sorts of apparatus, of which clear epiphany is one, to make, paradoxically, the writer more invisible. Ford and Munro favour alternative apparatus, such as multiple epiphanies, time jumps, and reordering of chronology to make their stories more complicated machines; these pieces often move in more directions, present more interpretive options, and consist of more component parts than typical short fiction.

Because of this change in technique, raising questions, not answering them, becomes the central concern. The reader substitutes her own thoughts into the spaces previously occupied by clear epiphanic moments. In the ongoing redistribution of power, and the consequent movement away from clear epiphany, the questions themselves become more and more the focus. This is not just a side-effect of technique, but one of Munro's and Ford's central concerns, and should be seen as an extension of epiphanic techniques, not a reversal of them.

In Ford's "Optimists," the young narrator relates a singular event, his father killing a man, and transforms this into a reflection on his parents' relationship. In Munro's "Friend of My Youth," the narrator compares the mother of her childhood to the woman she later became, but the analysis produces many images, none definitive. These stories differ from stories like James Joyce's "Araby" in that closure opens up instead of closing down possibilities; of course, no closure can empty a story of possibilities, but the difference between "Araby" and "Friend of My Youth" or "Optimists" is one of degree.

This is also not to say epiphany is completely absent in the work of either Ford or Munro. Ford's "Communist," for example, does contain multiple and possibly contradictory epiphanies, as well as falling action which signals the story's close. The story, similar to "Optimists," revolves around a single event,

the shooting of some geese, but rather than ending with the event, Ford continues for three more pages, moving ahead in time, layering small additional events (all much less completely drawn than the central scene) over the main event, making the central scene seem muddier, although also more complex.

The narrator, a man named Les, looking back at an event in his youth, continually says things which work against clear epiphany: "I don't know what makes people do what they do, or call themselves what they call themselves, only that you have to live someone's life to be the expert" (232-233). We, as readers, can apply this to Glen Baxter, or, removing it from context, the narrator's mother, or even further, the narrator himself; we are left with the knowledge of the limitations of knowledge, how difficult it is to definitively know anything (the narrator, like ourselves, expends considerable effort in this area).

The last scene ends with the young Les on the porch with his mother. They exchange words, experiencing a moment of closeness, and although the story could end at that moment, Les continues, saying, "I tried to think of something else then and did not hear what my mother said after that" (235). Even this scene is not conclusive.

The last paragraph moves forward further in time, twenty-five years, adding another layer, muddying the situation even further by working against the closeness Les and his mother have established in the previous scene. He says, "I think about that time without regret, though my mother and I never talked in that way again, and I have not heard her voice now in a long, long time" (235). Each movement forward acts as a different perspective on the major scene, the shooting of the geese, and no single jump in time can be said to offer a definitive epiphanic moment. The juxtaposition of the contrary information produces question after question in the mind of the reader, and that is what we are left with at the story's closing.

"Great Falls" uses the central incident of a husband confronting his wife's lover at gunpoint. The scene is observed by the son, Jackie, then a young man, although many years have passed since the confrontation. After the lover drives away into the night, Jackie wonders about the conversation his parents had: "Did she say, I love you? Did she say, this is not what I expected to happen? Did she say, This is what I've wanted all along? And did she say, I'm sorry for all of this, or I'm glad, or none of this matters to me?" (44); this series of questions, not rhetorical in that they require some kind of response on the part of the reader, works to resist closure. The

reader must ask herself these questions as Jackie does, and look for information in the main incident to reinforce her conclusions, which, in the end, are really just hunches. As Jackie points out, "These are not the kind of things you can know if you were not there" (44). The story could have been concluded at this point and still would have resisted closure. Instead, Ford pushes the envelope a bit more by tacking on two more sections relating the events of the next day, when Jackie talks with his mother. This raises more questions while answering none of the previous ones. For instance, is Jackie's father lying when he says that Jackie's mother has been married previously? Is his mother lying when she tells Jackie that she hasn't?

The last section involves even more movement in time, with the Jackie of the present commenting on what has happened in the years since the incident:

> In five years my father had gone off to Ely, Nevada to ride out the oil strike there, and been killed by accident. And in the years since then I have seen my mother from time to time, in one place or another, with one man or another, and I can say, at least, that we know each other. But I have never known the answers to these questions, have never asked anyone their answers. (49)

Ford's attitudes seem to be plainly evident in the statement that opens one of the stacked sections: "Things seldom end in one event" (44). This sentiment is echoed later in the narrative when Jackie remarks, "I know now that the whole truth of anything is an idea that stops existing finally" (47). Ford offers partial truths, like his conjecture at the end of the story, but for the most part the clear, direct truth of epiphany is something that escapes his characters, and in this way, his stories are as much about not knowing as about knowing.

The techniques behind "Great Falls," "Optimists" and "Communist" are somewhat similar to Munro's "Goodness and Mercy," although Munro, in keeping with her nature, complicates matters even more. "Goodness and Mercy" is a story within a story.

The place where traditional epiphany most obviously would be placed would be at the end of the captain's story, when Averill appropriates it as her own. She, as well as the reader, realizes something hinted at throughout the story, that she harbours a secret wish for Bugs' death: "Believing that such a thing could happen made her feel weightless and distinct and glowing, like a fish up in the water" (178). All the traditional techniques are evident, the self-awareness, the masking of the realization in metaphoric language.

But Munro does not stop there. Four brief paragraphs, about a half-page, describe how Bugs actually does die, two weeks later. The reader naturally compares this actual death to the death in the captain's story, both for similarities and differences. In the manner of "Communist," another jump is then made, larger, spending another half-page on Averill's subsequent marriages. This information is inconclusive as well, ending with her pregnant, hoping for a girl. She "never saw again, or heard from, any of the people who were on the boat" (179).

The third and last section is very short, two brief paragraphs, and focuses on the captain and Averill, possibly in a kind of imagined state. They "bid each other good night. They touch hands ceremoniously. The skin of their hands is flickering in the touch" (179). These sections, especially the last, work against what has come before, opening the possibilities the traditionally-styled epiphany had closed. Does Averill pine for the captain, feel guilt over Bugs' death, or a sense of release? Is she trapped in a bad marriage, or has she escaped a bad one into a good one?

The answer is: maybe all of these. The stacking of short, vague events at the endings of some of Ford and Munro's stories forces the reader to reflect in a way that traditional epiphany does not (or close the book, which some people admittedly do).

The use of detail seems important. Munro often relies on dense use of detail, utilizing complex flashbacks and multiple scenes. Ford is more sparse, oftentimes staying close to a single well-wrought event, except in a story like "Empire." Both, however, use a somewhat minimalist style when manipulating time during closure.

This minimal release of information puts the reader in what may feel like an uncomfortable situation. For instance, she is not given enough information to judge conclusively if Averill's second marriage is good, bad, or a bit of both. Why has Les of "Communist" not seen his mother in a long time? No answer is given, although one may be inferred.

The reader must match the revelations of closure with the body of the story and develop parallels (which point at, if not definitive answers, at least a kind of understanding); these include the parallel between Averill's later marriage and the marriage of Leslie and the professor, as well as Les' comments about love not being a reliable commodity (233), which can be compared to the absence of his mother in his present life. This is how the reader becomes involved on a different, more analytical, level.

Although this is Ford's most used technique in closure (see the stories "Communist," "Optimists" and "Great Falls"), he also uses others in an attempt to produce similar general effects. Ford's "Empire," for example, ends with a kind of reverse epiphany: "[Sims] felt dizzy, and at that moment insufficient, but without a memory of life's having changed in that particular way" (148). That last clause, "without a memory of life's having changed in that particular way," takes back a lot of progress Sims makes in the previous action. Instead of constructing a clear epiphany, Ford sets the reader up for one, undercutting it when it is finally delivered. The imagery of reverse epiphany continues: "Sims felt alone in a wide empire, removed and afloat, calmed, as if life was far away now, as if blackness was all around, as if stars held the only light" (148).

However, reverse epiphany can close a story as strongly as the epiphany itself; "Empire" is a good story, but in trying to escape from epiphany, Ford may have reversed direction and run back into it. This reverse epiphany, with its emphasis on pure lack of knowledge, is as uni-directional as traditional epiphany. Stacking epiphanies does not produce a dearth of knowledge, but a substantial amount of it, a confusion of options. Reverse epiphany is just absence, which doesn't give the reader much elbow room. The body of the story, with its system of flashbacks, allows for juxtaposition and analytical thought, but in my judgment, the ending lets the reader down by closing a bit too hard, pushing the reader back into the role of passive observer. It's a little tyrannical, I think, especially given the freedom granted the reader in the rest of the story.

Although the reverse epiphany can be very effective, it is important to know that it is more sturdily connected to the traditional epiphany than one might think. It also proves that vagueness of detail is not automatically capable of creating an analytical frame of mind in the reader. Minimalistic portioning can sometimes shut down this process, if details do not work to trigger correlations. This might be what happens in "Empire."

The stories in Munro's *Friend of My Youth* never rely on reverse epiphany although some close without use of much apparatus. The ending of "Wigtime," for instance, is less adorned than those of "Friend of My Youth" or "Goodness and Mercy," mainly because Munro seems to avoid closure almost completely. Margot and Anita discuss what has happened when they were children and in the thirty years since they have last seen each other. The conversation, although marked by many small realizations, does not

end in revelation. It ends, "Margot and Anita have got this far. They are not ready yet to stop talking. They are fairly happy" (273). The searching process continues.

Munro prepares the reader throughout "Wigtime" for an open-ended closure. Different stories regarding the same miscarriage are presented, two views of one event. Theresa's version: "A customer came in and found her. Thank God, said Theresa, for Reuel's sake even more than her own. Reuel would not have forgiven himself" (248). Georgia and Margot's version: "They had heard that it happened because Reuel told her he was sick of her and wanted her to go back to Europe, and in her despair she had thrown herself against a table and dislodged the baby" (250).

Qualifiers at the sentence level promote ambiguity, as in this description of Margot and her father: "And no matter what he did, Margot laughed. She laughed, she despised him, she forestalled him. Never, never did she shed a tear or cry out in terror. Not like her mother. So she said." All of this giving, then taking back, prepares the reader for lack of strong closure.

In "Empire," as in "Wigtime," the presentation of closure is simple, as well as fairly resistant to offering insight, placing much more reliance on the body of text, which contains all of the usable comparative images. However, Munro implies that some progress has been made, and there is more to be made (on the part of both character and reader).

The simple techniques behind closure in "Wigtime" or the Ford-like stacking of "Goodness and Mercy" are atypical of Munro. Whereas Ford commonly uses stacking to achieve his aims, Munro uses framing, somewhat similar to stacking in that it involves radical time shifts, except that a sort of home base is established early in the narrative, a look-out post in the present where the protagonist can stand and look back at the past. Oftentimes this is a simple situation, such as two people talking.

Because of this framing technique, narrative is free to move between present and past, generating a kind of friction of not-quite-right juxtapositions. Ford's narrators speak from a kind of limbo. Munro plants hers solidly in situation, and closure does not involve moving forward, but returning.

Although Munro's "grounding of the machine" helps to solve logistical problems, such as creating an overall cause-and-effect relationship (an early action in the present triggering a series of flashbacks), its real strength is in the way it adds layers of meaning to the present. When the narrative "returns," the circle complete, present now resonating with the complications of the past,

the act itself generates a certain kind of closure, albeit of the open-ended variety. This closure can be left more or less alone, as in "Wigtime," or modulated with a number of complications, as in "Friend of My Youth."

In "Friend," the mother in the dream-image is different at the beginning, more straightforward, than at the end, when the image has grown to contain the rest of the story, all the actions of the past; the old image has not shifted from one thing to the next, but expanded, becoming more complicated. The narrator comments on the dream: "How relieved I was, and happy. But now I recall that I was disconcerted as well. I would have to say that I felt slightly cheated. Yes. Offended, tricked, cheated, by this welcome turnaround, this reprieve" (26). New and different interpretations of the same event or image are presented, and unable to completely erase the first memory, they exist side-by-side, even if partially contradictory.

This resonance of image is a natural effect of repetition. Flash any variety of images and the instinct will be to look for connections. Munro seems hyper-aware of this fact, which might be why she uses the frame. A relatively uncomplicated image, such as the initial dream in "Friend of My Youth," is carried through the story, in the back of the reader's mind, until it collides with the same image coming the other way, now complicated, sometimes contradictory. Closure in Munro is where these images clash, forcing the reader into a state of reflection in order to analyze and possibly reconcile differences of interpretation.

This pattern is readily apparent in "Differently," in which Georgia, remembering her dead friend Maya and the other people she used to know, plunges into a series of deep flashbacks. This recollection is triggered by a ferry visit to Maya's ex-husband Raymond. Establishing a kind of base camp in the present, Munro can move deeper and deeper into the past. Yet, because of this base camp, the story will be able to return to the current Georgia quickly without jarring the reader, who has already been familiarized with the situation in the present tense. This situation may be hinted at, such as the dream in "Friend of My Youth," or more concrete, such as the conversations in "Differently," "Five Points" and even "Wigtime."

Munro can use this added mobility throughout the story, but it can be especially useful in closure. In "Differently" all the major events occur in flashback, but when these are completed, and Georgia and Maya's friendship has ended, the narrative moves back to the present for three brief scenes.

The first focuses on Raymond's dialogue. "I did all I could do," he says (241), and Georgia's judgment of this statement is noticeably absent. In fact, she is absent from the entire section. The reader makes the judgments on Raymond's dialogue, comparing his statements to the previous flashbacks. "I didn't scoot off and leave her, like her Prince of Fantasy Land," Raymond concludes (241). It is left up to the reader to decide how much she believes this and other statements.

The second section, a shallow return to past, contains exactly the kinds of assessments absent in the previous section. "She had been happy there, from time to time. She had been sullen, restless, bewildered, and happy. But she said most vehemently, Never, never. I was never happy, she said" (242). These judgments, however, are not aimed at Raymond, but at herself; self-judgment, which can be seen as a by-product or cause of self-realization (or both), is an integral part of epiphany; it could be said that this is the most epiphanic of the sections. "People always say that," Georgia thinks, "People make momentous shifts, but not the changes they imagine" (242). The section ends with a reversal of Georgia's previous statements, but also with a kind of vague conclusion on her part.

But even this is undercut by the next juxtaposition, in the third section. It begins, "Just the same, Georgia knows that her remorse about the way she changed her life is dishonest. It is real and dishonest" (242). This is initially a rather hard contradiction of the previous statement, but Munro uses the second sentence as yet another juxtaposition; the word "real" softens the original contradiction, forming a long line of statements which work against the previous one, like gears rotating against each other to make a larger machine move forward.

A brief goodbye with Raymond follows, an awkward kiss "whose intention neither one of them, surely, will try to figure out" (243). Georgia leaves, the friction of past against present having offered up some nice insights, although some amount of confusion is still present, and none of the insights are as clear, as revelatory, as traditional epiphany; the undercutting of the insights by each subsequent insight, the juxtaposition of partially contradictory information, works against that.

"Five Points" uses this framing technique as well, although it is not as complex a story as "Differently." "Five Points" is a departure in that its focus is on the present (often, as in "Friend of My Youth," "Wigtime," or "Differently," the focus is on the past). It is typical in that the story of Maria

acts as a juxtaposition to Neil and Brenda's situation, not an exact parallel but nonetheless a likeness, except that the use of juxtapositions is simplified, more straightforward than "Differently," more in keeping with "Goodness and Mercy." The most interesting thing about "Five Points," though, is that it doesn't just do less work in muddying things up, it does more work in clarification. When Neil says, "I got forty dollars, which, compared to what some guys got, was just nothing. I swear that's all, forty dollars. I never got any more" (48), this brings the past clearly into the present. This piece of dialogue does a lot of work to align the juxtapositions that in other stories the reader would have had to align herself. This is not to say that the story is not a success (I think it works very well), but that it gives off an impression of conventional parallelism much more than any other story in *Friend of My Youth* ("Goodness and Mercy" runs a close second, but Munro works a little harder in that story to mess up the easy correlations).

Related to this parallelism is its offer of a more clear idea of knowing, much more than "Differently." At the end of the story, the narrator comments: "He has lost some of his sheen for her; he may not get it back. Probably the same goes for her, with him. She feels his heaviness and anger and surprise. She feels that also in herself" (49).

The parallelism finds its way even into the insights during closure. Their feelings run neatly parallel, heaviness, anger, and surprise, and although this may be her superimposing these feelings on him, little is done to make this seem as if it could be a possibility; Munro offers few contradictory juxtapositions, and the reader is left with the feeling that these insights should be taken at face value. The story ends with one of the most definitive closures in *Friend of My Youth*: "She thinks that up till now was easy" (49), an ending similar to that of Ford's "Going to the Dogs," in which the narrator remarks, "I realized it was only the beginning of my bad luck" (108). Closure in both stories tends to push in a single direction, much different than closure in "Communist" or "Friend of My Youth." Some might say this makes the stories less weighty; others might say they are focused and effective.

This debt to tradition becomes even more apparent in the recent work of both authors. Ford's "The Womanizer," a novella printed in a 1992 issue of *Granta*, and one of Munro's recent pieces, "The Jack Randa Hotel," a story printed in the July 19, 1993 issue of *The New Yorker*, are not as densely layered as "Communist" or "Friend of My Youth," or possibly even "Empire" and "Five Points."

"The Womanizer" and "The Jack Randa Hotel" are notable because the compression of time is largely absent. The authors are content to move from event to event more systematically. Each piece is more ordered from opening to closure, and there is less space for the reader to fill with her thoughts and judgments. Both pieces work well on their own terms.

Stories such as "Five Points" and "The Jack Randa Hotel" show that Munro is not sweeping the tradition of epiphany away with the back of her hand. Instead, using her framing technique, she builds around epiphany, just as Ford uses multiple endings to build on top of it.

An epiphany is a flash of self-knowledge which acts as narrowing of distance between character and reader, and closure is the name we give to the closing of this space, the point at which character knows what reader knows, and both stand on relatively equal footing (this is not true in absolutely every case, but it is often how it works). In the best stories of Ford and Munro, most effectively in much of *Rock Springs* and most of *Friend of My Youth*, the act of closure is not a reduction of irony. Reader searches in a similar manner to character, not watching from above, but involved as a participant, and because there is less distance between character and reader, there is less distance to narrow in closure.

Again, this can be a question of degree. In "Five Points" there is somewhat more distance than "Differently," and closure does narrow in that case. Overall though, closure is not the moment at which possibilities are whittled to a sharp point: epiphany. In the way that clear epiphany moves the burden of knowledge from narrator to character, Ford and Munro move this same burden now to reader.

Some readers may feel uncomfortable with this burden, finding the techniques utilized too cumbersome, the use of detail too confusing. Ford works against this criticism by staying close to one dramatic scene; it is clear that the scene is important in the larger scheme of the character's life, but not exactly how it is important. Ford also carefully modulates tone, the way a verbal story-teller might, so that non-closure washes over the reader.

Munro's framing technique helps her convey the complexities of closure without unnecessary jarring, in that the cause-effect relationship it establishes early on has a simple logic that acts as the foundation for the story. Still, it seems reasonable that some readers may feel dissatisfied with closure in stories like "Communist" or "Wigtime."

In "Differently," Alice Munro writes:

> Georgia once took a creative writing course, and what the instructor told her was: Too many things. Too many things going on at the same time; also too many people. Think, he told her. What is the important thing? What do you want us to pay attention to? Think. (216)

I think it is not a question of what to pay attention to, but that Munro and Ford want us to pay attention in a different way. Epiphany condenses complexity into a single moment; Ford and Munro spread this moment out, sometimes over years and years, dispersing the knowledge, diluting it with doubt. Although this technique still results in a simplification of the real world (there is no literature that isn't), it does move closer to yet another kind of realism, a realism in which all knowledge is tentative. In an age when over-abundance of information turns knowledge into a kind of pollution, when people in general find the world harder and harder to understand, Munro and Ford are writers crafting fiction which reflects the time we live in.

In the end, the underlying theme to Munro and Ford's most distinctive work may be this: that what each of us sees as the "real" world is also a kind of fiction, as manufactured as the books we read. This may initially seem pessimistic; ultimately it is positive, because it is a perspective which liberates the observer and acknowledges an audience's ability to make meaning.

When Munro's and Ford's fiction is described as movement toward realism, this implies that realism is the finish line of the race, and writers take steps toward it, passing a baton from one generation to the next. This is not the case; realism is a label connected to an aesthetic. Depending on the given audience's aesthetic, any fiction can conceivably be labelled as realistic. Like all aesthetics, Munro and Ford's doesn't necessarily progress, but rather shifts.

None of the previous analysis should imply that realism is necessarily a positive goal for the fiction writer, or even that Munro and Ford have it as a concern. It is a truism perpetuated by everything from fiction workshops to one's grandmother that fiction makes sense out of a confusing world through careful selection of detail: the idea of art putting a frame around a small section of the universe. The meta-fictionalists, to whom Ford and Munro owe no small debt, reversed this idea: not art as mirror, but art as itself, completely self-contained.

Ford and Munro find themselves somewhere in between these two perspectives, conscious of their work as a fictional artifact but also aware that it must still have the internal consistency the meta-fictionalists denied. Ford and Munro play the game of the realist, but use many of the meta-fictionalist's tricks. The important thing, then, is to ask ourselves as an audience what we think is realistic, and then to see how this particular aesthetic works on the page.

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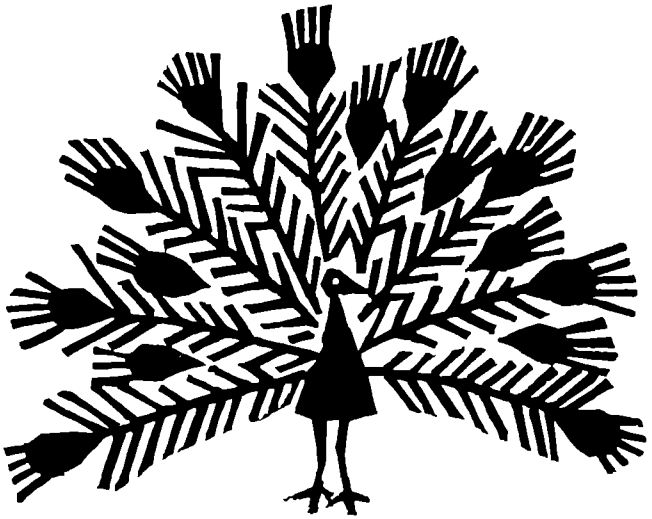

Memoirs of An Almost Expedition

Winterkill
was the reason you left
the dusty green of the farm
you were running
from water
the botanical gardens
you grew in the 50 gallon drum
of rainwater
behind the house

every house had one

and went north
into the perspiring white
hectares of fallow ice
where you could stand and
look south of your shoulder
to the subliminal treeline
and you liked the glassy
look, the liquid
space where you felt
baroque and
residual

You have been
to winterkill
and now you're haunted
by the colour
of your eyes

you didn't come here
to grow things
your insides turning
to glass, tongue
sticking to the ribs

if you leave
if you leave it will be
because the cold leaves tubers
sprouting along your spine
bruises of light
that flower on your skin

this isn't why you came

to find growth rings
in a section of your arm
the galvanized air you exhale
becoming just like you
and if you had known
that the ice too is a garden
for black fungi
you would have been mining
for water instead
you would have borrowed
a ladder
lowered it and climbed in
to preserve the shape
of the spleen
the bird
panting in your chest

socks

If your name was Alice and your face was yellowing from cancer and you had only a few weeks to live, you would be exchanging your daughters' socks at the BiWay—time would be exchanging these socks, time would be having brief meetings with your friends over pie and coffee, noticing small signs of spring, hugging your daughters and casually telling them of your love so as not to alarm—socks must be taken back to the store, the right sizes procured, the right words secured for their peace of mind and their futures, faces staring with big eyes of love and concern, while in the day to day, dinners with family and friends, candles and laughter, slumping on couches over tv and school work—this precious life contains socks, like fish hooks, your children's needs, their smiles, their bathtub singing, such smooth sides to this, and hard edges and good smells of soap and toothpaste and fresh coffee and flannel night gowns—there is no end to hook and hook, no end to tear and tear, no end until the end.

Michelle Gadpaille

If the Dress Fits

Female Stereotyping in Rosanna Leprohon's "Alice Sydenham's First Ball"

The pages of *The Literary Garland* (1838-1859), one of Canada's early literary periodicals, echoed with romance, sentiment, melodrama and "taste." Amongst the poetry "of Victorian gift-book calibre," (*Oxford Companion* 454), and the ornate engravings, fiction appeared mainly in serial form, for example, Susanna Moodie's *Jane Redgrave : A Village Story, Literary Garland,* (1848), but also in short tales, moral anecdotes, and descriptive sketches which skirt the borders of fiction. Buried in the "plethora of formulaic romantic-historic fiction" (*Oxford Companion* 454), one story transcends formula, giving to the Cinderella fairy tale both a contemporary social setting, and an ironic tone worthy of Austen. "Alice Sydenham's First Ball," by R.E.M. (*Literary Garland* January 1849:1-14) conceals a subversive discourse on the ideal heroine beneath the "formulaic restraints" (Baym) of a conventional romantic overplot.

Behind the initials (R.E.M.)[1] is Rosanna Leprohon (1829-1879), a prolific contributor to the *Garland,* and subsequent author of *Antoinette de Mirecourt: or Secret Marrying and Secret Sorrowing* (1864). With this novel and two others, *Le Manoir de Villerai* (1859) and *Armand Durand* (1868), Leprohon achieved remarkable popular success in the Anglo/French literary world between 1860 and her death in 1879, but her shorter periodical writing vanished from the literary canon for over one hundred years. In the 1970s selections from Leprohon's work began appearing in various anthologies, including two of her short stories: "Alice Sydenham's First Ball"[2] and "Clive Weston's Wedding Anniversary"[3].

Appearing in mid-century (1849), "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" is a pivotal document; it retains the didactic intent of much magazine fiction intended for young women readers, while anticipating the changing mood of fiction *outside* the magazine, with a new social realism, a more rebellious and self-aware heroine, and a newly ironic relation to the reader inscribed in the text—the narratee. In keeping with the *Garland's* stated mission to instruct and uplift, the story offers moral and social lessons for the unsophisticated young woman, retaining the "conduct book" trappings that served to make fiction palatable to a conservatively Protestant reading public. Its main lesson seems to be the futility of false appearance in social climbing; in this it parallels other lessons inculcated by *Garland* fiction.[4] A close look at the text of "Alice Sydenham's First Ball," however, reveals that it contains contradictory messages, details that subvert its own prescriptions. While the plot codes the heroine (and implicitly the ideal young woman) as dutiful, passive, and male-dependent, Leprohon provides a sub-narrative, a dialogue between narrator and sophisticated narratee, which looks ironically at such a code, and ends by glorifying what the story purportedly deplores, by calling attention to the female initiative, action and power that its conventional plot denies.

What is conventional in "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" is its Cinderella pattern.[5] The plot changes Alice from nobody to somebody, with careful attention to the role of costume in such a transformation. The story's three stages mimic the triangular form of the fairy tale: the initial situation of the heroine (genteel, poor, half-orphaned); the complicating action (attendance at a ball, social humiliation, rescue by a male character); and the happy ending (Alice is rescued both morally and financially, gaining lessons in conduct together with economic backing from a long-lost uncle). This pattern corresponds to Nina Baym's conception of "overplot"—the heroine's struggle in nineteenth-century American novels. A virtual rehearsal for this plot occurs in Leprohon's earlier *Garland* serial, *The Stepmother.* A comparison of this earlier version of the Cinderella story to Leprohon's later treatment in "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" reveals much about the possibilities of layering subversive meaning beneath a hackneyed, sentimental plot.

The heroine's initiatory ball forms only one episode in the longer text of *The Stepmother* (in the second instalment, Vol V #3), which follows Amy Morton for more than six years before conferring a happy ending, Amy's marriage to Charles Delmour. Over the course of five instalments, Amy is

pitted against her stepmother, Louisa Morton, who, if not the wicked stereotype of fairy-tale, is unquestionably an undesirable role model. Amy attends a ball with Louisa, and is made to wear undesired finery, a costly bracelet that Mr. Morton had given Louisa (*Stepmother* V (3):136). Uncomfortable in the lavish social setting, Amy is subjected to ordeals of unwelcome flirting and of overheard scandal about her beloved cousin Charles. Like Alice, Amy has her vision of the world altered by experiences at a pivotal ball. Unlike Alice, Amy makes discoveries about other people, whereas Alice's are primarily about herself.

The girls' experiences are alike, however, in several ways. First, both are led to the ball by false female mentors: Amy's worldly stepmother, and Alice's snobbish chaperone, Mrs. Graham. This betraying female figure has her origins in the wicked stepmother of the fairy tale (Huang 13). Leprohon's heroines both dress plainly, Amy from choice (V (3):135), Alice from economic necessity. To offset this plainness, each young woman adds a borrowed trinket, involuntarily assumed at the last minute. At the heart of each story is a social ordeal imposed by ballroom society, and a social "death" for each self-effacing young woman. Also similar are the age and character of their male rescuers; Colonel Westly, a friend of Amy's father, anticipates Uncle Weston of *Alice*. Both heroines are thus rescued from social distress by comfortably unthreatening male figures. In the course of this rescue, each young woman comes to see her fancied Prince Charming in a new and unattractive light. Alice finds Henry St. John to be rude, snobbish, opportunistic; Amy hears gossip linking Charles with her despised stepmother in a past liaison. At the end of the ball, each heroine confronts her image in the mirror, Alice to see the failure of her toilette, and Amy to find herself "wan" and "corpse-like" (140) because of her double "death," both social and emotional, at the hands of malicious ballroom gossip. Slain by the casual word, each heroine is resurrected by a male mentor and restored to family, identity and a potential happy ending.

These similarities are sufficiently numerous to confirm that one ballroom episode is the literary rehearsal for the other, and that both are indebted to Cinderella's ball. In *The Stepmother*, Leprohon uses the motif without irony as a serious illustration of Amy Morton's simple virtue and of the evils of malicious gossip. In its second incarnation, the ballroom episode is layered with contradictory messages, one for the conventional "romantic reader" or the seeker of acceptable moral lessons, and the other for a more sophisti-

cated narratee, at whom the subtleties of narrative mediation are directed. Leprohon's revision of Cinderella's ball exploits the "decidedly bourgeois" (Huang 8) concerns of the literary fairy tale, while harnessing the "essentially ambiguous and dialogic" strengths of the folk tale beneath (Huang 28).

The episode at the Wentworths' ball is curiously unsatisfactory in *The Stepmother.* The reader is frustrated with the dangling detail of the borrowed bracelet; even its significance as index of Louisa Morton's vanity and lack of care for her husband is eclipsed in the next instalment when a tiara becomes a much more serious bone of contention. The Wentworths' ball is only one of three important ballroom events in *The Stepmother;* Amy does not attend the second, choosing to stay home with her dying father. Closure of the incomplete ball motif awaits the final episode of the serial, when attendance at a third ball reunites Amy and Charles after several years apart.

Such narrative irresolutions do not mar the revised version of the incident in "Alice Sydenham's First Ball"; though relatively short (less than 33 pages, about 6000 words), it includes both a complete "overplot," and an undernarrative which challenges and betrays the moral and social certainties of the main story. With a minimum of narrative moralizing, Leprohon creates considerable ironic distance from her conduct lesson and from her heroine, allowing humour and satiric social comment to enter the gap between the conventional expectations of the heroine and the actual figure of Alice.

"Figure" here can be taken both literally and metaphorically, for, unlike other heroines in the magazine fiction around her, Alice occupies a body that extends below the neck. Using the vocabulary of female costume, Leprohon legitimizes areas of discussion normally taboo to the mid-Victorian audience, and briefly foregrounds the heroine's body as the locus of conflict between social expectations and physical realities. In a serial of the same period (*Florence, or Wit and Wisdom , Literary Garland,* February to December 1849), Leprohon articulates her concern with revising the "figure" of the heroine. Florence is presented as anti-romantic, despite her conventional role in the plot:

> It may sound very well in romances, especially those of the sentimental school, to discourse about aerial form and pale interesting faces, but place one of those heroines and all her delicate languor, her elegant listlessness, in real contact with a rival of less poetic mould, whose bright pure tint and sparkling eye so eloquently speak of health and animation, and in whose favour will the contrast be? (Vol. 7, May 1849: 209).

Like Florence, Alice Sydenham is made in that "less poetic mould," a consciously revisionist heroine. Her flawed ballroom *toilette* has more than one layer of meaning: on one level it is simply admonitory, condemning vanity, romantic dreams and filial disobedience. On another level, it admonishes, not the heroine herself, but the society that demands such artificiality in all female costume. This double intention places Leprohon in an ironic relation to her own material, and divides her readers into the conventional and the initiated. Her attention to the relationship between *costume* and *custom* signals Leprohon's revision of the Cinderella motif, and her awareness of the distance between the fairy-tale world of sentimental didactic fiction and the mid-nineteenth-century world of change, compromise and covert meaning in which her layered narrative unfolds.

A precis of the plot of "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" reveals Leprohon's debt to the earlier serial, *The Stepmother*, as well as its descent from the Cinderella story. Alice is poor and socially marginalized as the story opens, living in genteel poverty with her mother in Montreal. Rescue from the sidelines seems imminent with the arrival of an invitation from a former school friend of a higher social station. Alice's mother is reluctant to give permission for Alice to enter society, fearing the expense of outfitting the girl for a formal ball, as well as the unrealistic social expectations it may arouse in her. Unlike the stepmother, Louisa Morton, of *The Stepmother*, Mrs. Sydenham is not presented as vain and frivolous. She functions less as blocking parental figure than as assistant fairy godmother, ultimately facilitating the transformation that will allow Alice to appear at the ball.

The ball, however, proves a painful experience for Alice, whose dress and decorum both wilt under social snubs and female rivalry. At the height of her discomfort, she discovers a male protector, not the Prince Charming of the fairy tale, but an irascible old man, who proves to be her long-lost and conveniently wealthy uncle, James Weston, from Britain. Saved from social oblivion by a male relative, and offered an escape-route to European society, Alice is pushed by the plot in the conventional direction, towards Europe, economic security, and a role defined by the patriarchal family, whether as wife or niece. The precarious social identity assumed for the evening of the ball dissolves in the horrific whirl of the ballroom, a dissolution imaged in the disintegration of her makeshift toilette and the loss of a

borrowed trinket, and is restored only with this connection. As in the fairy-story, the "Prince" redresses old wrongs and confers the new social identity that validates the heroine's own intuitive sense of self-worth. This précis of its plot seems to place "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" squarely in the tradition of sentimental magazine fiction, offering wish-fulfilment to female dreams, along with salutary lessons in female duty.

Here, however, Leprohon steps away from the conventional to take an ironic look at female wish-fulfilment and its fairy-tale archetype, to cast doubt on the efficacy of the standard lesson of female duty, and, most important, to revise the picture of the heroine. The first two revisions are closely connected. In didactic magazine fiction, the fulfilment of the heroine's dearest wish usually comes only after she has exhibited the requisite sense of duty, and decorum. Leprohon's Alice expresses the lesson of duty taken from her misery at the ball:

> Poor, unpretending as we are, how wrong, how foolish of me to thrust myself into a scene so utterly removed from our present sphere; but I acted contrary to mamma's wishes, her earnest remonstrances, and I have been justly punished. (115)

Despite this conventional voicing of the lesson learned, Alice is far from fully penitent. She still feels resentment at the injustice of her treatment, and protests vehemently to Weston: "But surely, I have not deserved the entire, the bitter contempt I have met with" (115).

Together with this rebellion on the part of the heroine is the rebellion of the plot which contrives to *reward* Alice for precisely the qualities most denigrated in the voiced moral: wilfulness, spirit, and a sense of humour. Her discovery of rich uncle Weston is the direct result of her disobedience. The positive impressions of her character that Weston receives at the ball are all based on nominally prohibited character traits: her show of pride (117), her sense of humour (115), her common-sense and hearty appetite (114). The normal heroine of contemporary magazine fiction was, on the contrary, rewarded for her superior spirituality.[6] Towards the end of "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" Leprohon tries to mitigate the moral rebellion of her plot by appending an additional moral in the mouth of Weston himself: "Truly, Alice, may it be said that out of seeming evil springeth good. . ." (125). In the story's final paragraph, Leprohon's narrator also steps in to curb the subversive tendencies of the plot by making the ball into "an antidote against . . . vanity" (127) in Alice's future social career. Even this final

paragraph, however, cannot conceal the fact that Alice is transformed by that ball into the member of high society she so wished to be, fulfilling her dreams by disobeying her mother, showing her spirit, and setting a new standard for the behaviour and form of the heroine.

Alice is the most spirited of Leprohon's heroines, in contrast to the rather priggish Amy Morton, and begins her rebellion against the social norms to which she nominally aspires even as she plans her attendance at the ball. Side-lined by poverty, she has to scrounge the materials to approximate the correct "toilette" for a ball. The resulting imperfections in the outfit are predictable, and serve to highlight the poor fit between Alice herself and customary appearance and behaviour that the outfit represents. Not being made in "the poetic mould" of the heroine, Alice finds her new dress too tight:

> Slight, graceful as Alice's figure was, the milliner had thought fit to improve on it, and accordingly had made the dress so tight that, when strained to the utmost, the lower hooks were still nearly an inch apart. (101)

The socially-approved tiny waist imposed by the milliner reflects mid-nineteenth-century pressure on women to be small, sickly and helpless. The "stylish circumference" (Banner 48) of the heroine's waist was 18 inches.[7] "Why, it [the balldress] would not fit an infant" exclaims Mrs. Sydenham (101), voicing the standard—infancy—along with her criticism of it. The fairy-tale Cinderella usually conforms to this exacting standard of female delicacy; the smallness of her glass slipper makes it a unique motif of adolescent sexuality (Huang 3)[8]. Even in the early nineteenth century, the feminine ideal of beauty included a heavy element of infantilization (Banner 53), against which both Alice and her mother rebel. Alice, despite the "slight" form, is robust and healthy, and her physical dimensions challenge the confining waist, just as her moral sensibility and sense of self rebel against the passive role imposed by her sex and her poverty. Going to the ball means adopting the costume of confinement, infancy and helplessness.

The milliner functions as an ironic fairy godmother, possessed of no magic wand, and fumbling her way towards the imperfect version of the society ball-gown. The scantiness of the garment can also be seen as reflecting the prick of female poverty, and the resultant shortage in the purchased dress length. Like Mrs. Sydenham in the household, and Alice with her dress hooks, the milliner too strives to "make ends meet." This almost physical pun is typical of the subtle allusion Leprohon makes to the interrelation of costume and custom.

Alice's embonpoint is the happy result of her unfashionable appetite. Having fasted all the day of the ball, she displays a healthy hunger at evening's end, when Weston offers "coffee and chicken" (114). Leprohon, tongue in cheek, draws attention to this improper display of womanly appetite: "we beseech our romantic readers to close their eyes to this passage, for 'twill shock every sentiment of their exquisitely refined natures" (114). Hunger is out of place in the world of the Victorian heroine, not just because it leads to unfashionably ample waistlines, but because of its associations with vulgar, lower-class behaviour, and more covertly, with unmentionable sexual appetites. "Hunger," as Michie points out, "is both dangerous and potentially liberating . . ." (Michie 18-23). Contemporary women did deplore the cult of slenderness and the gentrification of hunger, their very protests serving to underline the tenacious stereotype of the "fragile and submissive maiden" (Banner 45).[9]

Seemingly ignorant of or uncaring for such stereotypes, Alice partakes "heartily" (114) of the food at the ball, and thus magnifies the chink in her social armour to a yawning gap, refusing the bodily annihilation that should (according to the dictates of ballroom justice) accompany the social murder that she has just suffered at the hands of the ballroom belles. Alice has courted social danger, but may have thus achieved a degree of liberation that we are quietly expected to applaud. Leprohon's aside, by evoking the "romantic" reader, in effect classifies us as the normative *non*-romantic reader, and so engages us in a conspiracy of approval of Alice's appetite, managing to suggest that the contrary attitude is old-fashioned, and relegated to a dated realm and genre of "romance." As in *Florence,* Leprohon claims new generic ground, with new parameters for the heroine's face, form, and activity.

Revealed more and more as a healthy, modern young woman, and not as the wasting heroine of romance suggested by the story's title, Alice flouts other romantic conventions too. Further problems with her toilette serve to highlight the futility of social hypocrisy, normally the mainstay of the ballroom society she strives to enter. Her sash, for instance, proposed by the desperate milliner as a remedy for the gaping waist of the dress, proves inadequate to its task of concealment: "Sure, Miss," advises the milliner, "you can hide it [the gaping waist] with your sash" (101). The result, however, is "ungraceful" and "awkward" and the "subterfuge of the sash" is revealed as ineffective. The attempt at social deception produces social awkwardness, not the grace which is natural to the unspoiled Alice. Her gloves, too, reflect

the impossibility of self-transformation through clothing, that staple of the Cinderella story. The gloves are of poor quality (101); one finger tears immediately and has to be mended, but the flaw remains evident. The contour and complexion of a lady's hands were still leading indicators of social class in the nineteenth century[10]; here, the attempt to conceal that condition and thus to pretend to higher social rank ends in failure and ignominy.

This complete failure of the hoped-for sartorial transformation dawns on Alice when she confronts her reflection in the mirrors of the ballroom (106). Here she sees the ramshackle social self hastily constructed for the evening, displaying all its awkwardness and artificiality against the background of other flawless toilettes and more practiced social masks. She also finds her appearance reflected unfavourably in overheard remarks such as, "Ciel! Quel tournure!" (106).

This double mirror of the self is painful to Alice, who sees only too well the falsity of her transformation. Ironically, Mrs. Graham, her chaperone, had earlier declared a monopoly of the mirrors to be a decided advantage of their late arrival at the ball: ". . . we shall have the mirrors entirely to ourselves. That is some consolation" (103). Alice, in contrast, had left home without even a glance in the mirror, revealing the spontaneity and naturalness which are initially punished and then rewarded by the unfolding plot. With hindsight, Alice sees the ironic truth in Mrs. Graham's remark, for she is the only woman at the ball to see herself reflected so clearly and honestly: "One ill-dressed, flushed, awkward-looking girl, with long black hair, hanging in immense uncurled masses around her neck and shoulders" (106). One glance has shown the faulty dress, the unladylike display of emotion, and the inappropriate coiffure. Other belles at the ball sport "ringlets" (108), but Alice's luxuriant locks are not tamed in this manner. Their very abundance and vividness in colour hint at undesirable wells of passion and spirit in their possessor.[11] The failure to discipline her hair into the approved shape is a crime which threatens to expose the pretences underlying the whole code of courtship behaviour. Alice must be ostracized because her very appearance threatens the psycho-cultural construct of sanitized, sexless femininity.

The revision of the heroine extends to behaviour as well as appearance. Seeking refuge from a wallflower's fate, Alice retreats to an ante-room and hides behind some curtains at the approach of other partygoers. Concealed

behind the draperies, she is forced to eavesdrop on her own social condemnation (108) and to overhear a conversational anatomization of ideal female behaviour. She hears nothing about herself that the mirror has not already shown her, but she does gain new insight into social hypocrisy. Her marginalized social position is cleverly imaged by Leprohon in the isolated "recess" (108) with its "small opening in the fold of the curtain" (108) through which she listens unobserved as the other belles audition for the role of perfect heroine.

The scene Alice witnesses from her recess contains details which direct attention away from the didactic intent. On one level Leprohon teaches Alice the cruelty of society, but on another level, she anatomizes that cruelty, showing its origin in the restrictiveness of the code of female behaviour. This radical proposition subverts the story's overt lesson of proper feminine behaviour.

All the characters in the group are playing roles: even as the young women discuss the ridiculous figure of Alice in the ballroom they are gesturing in self-congratulatory tones towards their own figures. Thus one belle exclaims "My ringlets are all out" (108), and uses this pretended self-denigration to call attention to the beauty of her own "glossy auburn" tresses, even as the group collectively condemns Alice's "abundant locks" (108).

Beneath the general jockeying for the men's attention, a discourse is conducted on the proper figure and role of a young society woman, advancing and rejecting three possible feminine roles: child, ingenue and damsel in distress. In the course of the story Alice plays all three roles; here Miss Templeton tries out the mask of the child, the pattern of infantilization in behaviour as well as in physical dimensions, that the age legitimized:

> "Nay, let us not leave this sweet spot so soon," returned Miss Templeton. "I really shall change the hangings of my morning room, and adopt this beautiful shade. And what a charmingly mysterious recess! Do you remember the words of the old song,
>
> I'm weary of dancing now, she cried,
> Here tarry a moment, I'll hide, I'll hide.
>
> Shall I follow her example?" and with the graceful etourderie of a child, she sprang forward, and grasped the purple draperies in her small hand. (110-111)

Miss Templeton's forced gaiety and spontaneity are not received favourably by the company. The sophisticated Miss Aberton goes so far as to feel "disgust"

(111) at the "*enfantillage*" (111) of the other. Even as Henry St. John defends Miss Templeton: "Nay, do not check Miss Templeton's delightful enthusiasm" (111), Leprohon makes it clear to all levels of the audience that he is being sarcastic. Such a mask of naturalness and "naive eagerness" (111) is unconvincing in such world-weary company; the infant's role for the heroine is dismissed by the company and the narrator alike.

Miss Templeton passes on to the role of the ingenue, offering a sarcastic description of Alice Sydenham to pique St. John: "Ah! she indeed is a bright specimen of that sweet, silent sensibility, that fascinating, rural timidity, so highly eulogized by boarding -school teachers and middle-aged people, and so signally distinguished by Mr. St. John" (111). The alert reader must penetrate layers of irony to locate Leprohon's attitude towards the ingenue with the "sweet silent sensibility" which is asserted as the feminine ideal. Clearly we are not meant to approve of Miss Templeton, nor to admire what she admires; Miss Templeton is, however, being sarcastic—*she* does not really admire such sweetness and timidity, but is validating a set of opposite values, despite her earlier play-acting. If the feminine ideal being asserted here is precisely the "sweet silent sensibility" of the Victorian "angel in the house," it accords with an appropriately didactic reading of the conversation. Leprohon, however, complicates the irony by having Miss Templeton name the admirers of such a female type: "boarding school teachers and middle-aged people." Clearly Miss Templeton does not admire or identify with that group. Is the reader therefore meant to align herself with those groups in defining the feminine ideal? Leprohon's tone suggests not; she is doubly ironic, exposing Miss Templeton while also questioning a received idea. Leprohon's ideal reader shares her sense of humour, and willingly engages in a conspiracy to find current views of feminine behaviour old-fashioned. Like Alice behind the curtain, the reader is eavesdropping on a re-definition of the heroine; the roles of child and ingenue are rejected by characters and narrator alike, in a double irony which problematizes the sweetness and silence of Alice in her recess.

Before Alice's emergence, the bantering belles advance the third female role—damsel in distress—accusing Viscount Howard of being Alice's "*preux chevalier*" (112). She is mockingly imagined as sending "signals of distress" (112) from a "remote corner." The surface dramatic irony deflects attention from another level of irony; Leprohon ridicules the courtly rescue itself in the un-romantic figure of Uncle Weston.

In the course of this overheard dialogue, Leprohon fulfils the didactic imperative by giving Alice "her first terrible lesson in the world's ways" (112). Beneath the moral, however, Leprohon poses a question about the ideal female role, advancing and rejecting three possibilities, under cover of her condemnation of Miss Templeton's "egotism" (112). None of the roles—child, ingenue, damsel in distress—is adequate for either Alice or the other belles. The conversation reveals that the belles share a covert awareness of the hypocrisy of these stereotypes. In this ballroom society there are gaps between the manifest ideal of female behaviour, and an actual condition of latent discontent with its restrictions. The seemingly incidental dialogue actually serves Leprohon's purpose in revising the heroine's role, as she uses familiar scenes and characters from sentimental fiction to ironize the icons of that fiction.

Having rejected the prevailing model of the "sweet" heroine, Leprohon's subtext is firmly established in opposition to the dominant codes, both didactic (rebellion = punishment; submission = reward), and romantic (sweetness = lovableness = marriage = happy ending). Some attempt is made to explore an alternative mode of the female heroic, as Alice reacts to her ballroom experience, but Leprohon's story succumbs ultimately to the imperatives of the conventional plot.

Although Mr. Weston is the plot mechanism through which she is returned to social status and identity after her humiliation, Leprohon does allow Alice herself some agency in the recreation of the self after its disintegration. Once more she uses dress as a metaphor for the social self, allowing Alice to strip away her social pretensions, as she strips the traitorous dress of its ornament. "Despoiled" (126) of its ribands on the next day, the dress images the healthy self-healing that follows the painful ordeal of social dissolution. Its materials are saved "to some more useful purpose" (124) in a phrase whose ironic undertones show Leprohon once more with her tongue in her cheek. The ironic tone calls into question the very notion of "useful purpose" in female costume. For the naive reader, the simple moral lesson is still available: Alice would have spent her money more "usefully" on the books and music (99) she originally intended to buy. On another level this lesson is ironically undercut by our knowledge that books and music would never have led Alice to Uncle Weston and his money. Once more the overt moral of the story is subverted by the pattern of events.

Alice's voluntary shedding of the social costume shows her moral health

as well as the intact sense of self preserved through the dissolution of her image in the ballroom mirror. The involuntary stripping at the hands of the belles begins the process, but Alice takes ultimate control of the costume change that follows the ball.

This is just one of the story's ironic alterations of the Cinderella archetype. Alice's active role in the figurative return to "rags" from "riches" runs counter to the instantaneous, midnight reversion of Cinderella in the French literary version of the tale. It is closer to the resourceful costume changes of the earlier folk-tale Cinderellas—Germany's *Aschenputtel* or Scotland's Rashin Coatie (Opie 118). Even the initial transformation in preparation for the ball is rife with ironic details, all serving to distance the story from the fairy-tale idiom and bring it closer to nineteenth-century "realism" than is usual in the magazine story of the time. Possessed of no fairy godmother, Alice must make do with the inadequate substitute of the cheap milliner, the "priestess of fashion" (Leprohon 100), and two maternal aides: her real mother and Mrs. Graham[12]. The latter proves a false maternal ally, whose chaperonage conceals her real enmity towards Alice and her cause. Leprohon's version of Cinderella then, needs *three* ordinary women to take the place of one fairy godmother. In a further ironic distancing from the world of fairy-tale, Alice must *herself* assume the role of fairy godmother, contributing part of her own costume, the gloves, shoes and flowers. As the gloves tear and the flowers are trampled by Alice herself (113), the story comments on the impossibility of magical transformation in the real nineteenth-century ballroom. Clumsily destroying her own rose, Alice sees the destruction of the "roseate" visions of social success she had entertained before the ball. Again, Leprohon allows one set of readers a standard moral reading of the incident, stressing "mortification" and "humiliation" (113) as the natural result of social pretension. Another layer of meaning, however, accrues to the reader who catches the irony in Leprohon's tone as Alice continues across the ballroom:

> Half blinded by [tears], she hurried on. At length her haven was all but won, when suddenly—how closely is the sublime blended with the ridiculous, the mournful with the mirthful, in this changing world of ours—in her feverish haste, she stepped on the outstretched foot of [Mr. Weston]" (113-114).

The close association between trampling a rose and trampling Mr. Weston's foot produces a humour for which the initiated narratee has been prepared

by the ironic phrasing that links the sublime to the ridiculous, in a parody of incidental moralizing. Such humour and irony assert the difference between this story and other didactic pieces, especially the earlier version of the ballroom episode in *The Stepmother.*

The conflicting impulses in the story seem to pull in three directions characterized by didacticism, wish-fulfilment and irony. Leprohon never resolves the contradictions, retaining each layer of meaning with its separate audience. The conjunction of "conventionalism and protest" (Foster 11) has been identified as common in mid-Victorian women's fiction, showing the unease of the female author in the face of an ideology contravened by her own act of writing. [13]

The strong imperative of the romantic plot pulls Alice towards the happy ending, even as the didactic impulse resists rewarding her disobedience, and the ironic voice questions her aspiration towards socially-sanctioned female roles. The amassing of didactic vocabulary in the story's final paragraph (*profited, bitter lesson, taught her to value, proper worth, antidote against . . . vanity, trials and humiliations*) may be Leprohon's attempt to rein in alternate readings by appeasing those very boarding-school teachers and middle-aged people earlier scorned by the text. The valour of the effort, however, suggests how fully Alice had escaped from the acceptable bounds of the heroine of magazine fiction. Beneath the verbal endorsement of the sweet, silent heroine, the story rewards Alice for a contrary set of heroine's qualities: common sense, robust health and appetite, spirited intelligence, determination and rebellion. Recent scholarship suggests that this dialogic presentation of the heroine may be inscribed in early versions of the Cinderella tale:

> [T]he Cinderella myth has functioned as a double-edged (or multi-edged) ideological weapon. On the one hand, the code of propriety is carefully woven into a myth that romanticizes women's subordinate and domesticated role within the patriarchy; on the other hand, the Protestant individualism that is simultaneously programmed into the plot inevitably arouses in women . . . a sense of individual dignity and an urge for self-realization" (Huang 25).

In presenting a heroine who is "resourceful rather than remorseful" (Stone 231), Leprohon posits a narratee eager to accept such a re-vision of female roles, in direct contradiction to the conduct-book lessons of the surrounding magazine fiction.

Perhaps Leprohon's most surprising contravention of the code of senti-

mental fiction is her hint that ballroom vanity and egotism also spring from latent rebellion against prevailing ideals of sweetness, silence and sensibility for young women. The plot itself reveals the futility of such qualities in the battle for a husband. The ruthless economic imperative of the "good" marriage dictates strategic subversion of the moral norm for young women, and places the successful heroine in a necessarily oblique relationship to the dominant code. To conceal the "imperfection" of the heroine, then, becomes the imperative of the narrative voice, an aim which Leprohon fulfills by layering her narrative signals. The vocabulary and character stereotypes of conduct-book fiction, satisfactory to the keepers of propriety, coexist with (and are undercut by) ironic details appealing to other narratees. It is Leprohon's apparent unease with the "sweet, silent sensibility" of the model heroine which creates this layering of narrative address and brings us the lively and surprisingly modern heroine of "Alice Sydenham's First Ball,"

NOTES

1 R.E.M. stands for Rosanna Eleanor Mullins; Leprohon is the name of the author's husband. At the time of her first contribution to the *Garland*, Leprohon was only 14 years old and unmarried. The initials (a common form of signature in the *Garland*) are thus the conventional barrier between the young lady and public life. See Mary Markham Brown, *An Index to the* Literary Garland: *Montreal 1838-1851.*, p. v.

2 *Nineteenth-Century Short Stories*, ed. David Arnason (1976).

3 *The Evolution of Canadian Literature: Beginnings to 1862*, ed. Mary Jane Edwards (1973).

4 For example, the destructiveness of female wit in *Florence, or Wit and Wisdom, Literary Garland* 7(1849); or the perils of vanity and materialism in *The Stepmother, Literary Garland* 5(1847).

5 Marian Cox defines the basic pattern of the Cinderella story as requiring an ill-treated heroine and eventual recognition by means of a shoe. Though Alice's own shoes do not figure largely in the plot, her uncle's *foot* does.

6 See Joseph Satterwaite's study of fiction in *Godey's Lady's Book*: "The Tremulous Formula," *American Quarterly* 7 (Summer 1951):99-113.

7 See Michie for a discussion of the "aesthetic of deprivation" (20-21) by which fictional heroines effected their own erasure from the text by bodily diminution.

8 The material of Cinderella's slipper varies from version to version of the tale, but is always unusual and precious: gold, satin, fur, red velvet. Glass may have been a clever variant of the French storyteller Perrault, intuiting the narrative and symbolic effectiveness of a slipper which *could not be stretched*, (Opie 121)

9 Anna Jameson in her *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838) deplores the then current male idolatry of the fainting female, excoriating those men who "cannot endure to see women eat" (258). Harriet Beecher Stowe notes a similar tendency in American society: "We in America have got so far out of the way of a womanhood that has any vigour of outline or opulence of physical proportions, that, when we see a

woman made as a woman ought to be, she strikes us as a monster" (Quoted in Banner 47).

10 Michie describes the heroine's hands as "one of the centers of value in the nineteenth-century novel" (Michie 98).

11 Michie notes that hair often functions in the description of the Victorian heroine as a synecdoche for sexuality (99-100). See Banner for a discussion of the propriety of curled hair for nineteenth-century women (Banner 37).

12 Binary maternal figures—kind godmother, evil stepmother—occur in many versions of the Cinderella tale (Huang 13).

13 See Susan K. Harris for an analysis of similar contradictions in American women's fiction of the same era.

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Dangerous elements

I've steamed until tender the purple eggplant,
cooked brown rice, sliced a medium tomato,
taken thyme from the shelf

and suddenly I see you
riding your mountain bike, legs pumping like pistons,
helmet a white carapace guarding your head

crammed with statistics, facts
about the power of plutonium, variables that test
strength of metals in the reactor

at Chalk River. (Is rain falling? A strong headwind?)
I should be layering steamed eggplant,
setting the oven at medium. Why did I see you

heading north on the highway, were you in danger
from traffic, was the morning pavement slick
after late frost, was I afraid your skull could crack

with so much data, the brain fail
to digest that rawness, heart falter at the height
and breadth of probabilities? You may never reach

Chalk River. The recipe calls for Swiss cheese
for which I substitute low-fat,
sugar which I omit, my head telling me to

go easy. No use speeding, hurtling headlong
into pounding rain,
riding

blindly against the wind, against the body's limits,
dodging time and space,
defying dangerous elements.

Tea Cosy

You've ordered asparagus
crepes without the bechamel
sauce and a green salad
on the side. I
choose the tuna sandwich, no mayo
peppermint tea

and remember my mother
toasting home baked bread
steaming asparagus
fresh from her kitchen garden
until it bubbles in the pot.
I watch as she arranges buttered
toast on a plate, piles it with tender green
tips of asparagus, chopped boiled eggs
quickly as if she's *running out of time*
pours hot sauce
extravagantly over everything.

Not having heard the words
  cholesterol
  crepes
  hydrogenated
  bechamel
not knowing food is poetry
and dangerous, she serves it
plain on unmatched plates
and sitting with her innocent children
pours thick cream into the black
coffee in a chipped cup.

Diane L. Tucker

Louise, lost to Alzheimer's

Lately, you've noticed the weeds keep creeping back
into your well-tended gardens, hiding the roses,
choking the carrots and beets.
Being a faithful gardener, and diligent,
you plunge into the undergrowth, determined to pull every one.

We lost you, somehow, in the high grass and dandelions.

In your mind you are young, a long-necked pioneer girl,
holding in your heart visions of your rough green island:
slicing with slender arms the surface of the lake,
sun parting the clouds as you break the surface.

And even on your dismal quest you won't forget
home, son, grandchildren,
watching for you at the edge of the brambles.
But the weeds grow higher.
Every leaf, every vine looks the same as every other.
Only roses haunt your thoughts now.
Somewhere there must be roses.

I picture you breaking through at last,
torn arms smashing the wall of thorns,
eyes narrowing at the sudden light,
widening again to soft grass and bushes,
branches heavy with blooms.
The scent makes you dizzy and you fall to your knees,
still, gazing on the numberless roses,
silent, a garden spread just for this rest.

Matthew Manera

The Act of Being Read

Fictional Process in *Places Far From Ellesmere*

Ellesmere as epiphany. As temporary home. As safe place to detonate "genre as product" (VI 38). To assault "the dictatorship of product [so that] [t]ext becomes process, reading and writing participants in text's process" (VI 153). To reverse the reading process: "unreading, the act of dismantling a text past all its previous readings and writings" (VI 4). Refusal to be genred, to be canonized. Willingess to be un/read. A composition of fragments, "like pieces of a jigsaw, broken up into their separate shapes": "this geografictione, this Ellesmere" (PE 113). A text—being dis/mantled by a fictioneer re/travelling through Edberg, Edmonton, Calgary on the way to Ellesmere and Russia—preceded by warning signs: *Places Far From Ellesmere* (the title), *a geografictione* (an invention/denial of genre), *Explorations On Site* (a subtitle), "For Ellesmere, that it will stay, eternally, mysteriously, its own geografictione" (a dedication), contents page, three quotations (Levi Strauss about memory as place, Foucault about discursive formation as space of multiple dissensions, Camus about the need for deserts and islands because there are big cities), a square bracketed authorial synthesis of the three quotations. Postscripted by an apology: "Writing is an act of appropriation."

Geografictione: a neologism. An addition to the language, to the theory of literature. A re-signifying of place and fiction. Place as person. Memory as fiction. Any place you were but are not now is fiction. Anyone you were but are not now is fiction. Because it is memory. Only here and now are not fiction, but as soon as they are fixed they move into the past or into the future: into fiction. Place, person, memory, fiction—no longer nouns but participles, past and present: a re-signifying of language. Reading as writing as reading as process. As the activity of connection, the mutual creation and

murder of place, person, memory, fiction. And text. The illusion of text: "you are not reading me but writing, not me but yourself; you are not reading writing but being read, a live text in a languaging world" (VI 10).

Such eternal process, such absence of stasis is frightening/seductive, thus the desire for home: some place that does not move, that is safe/predictable. Place can only be home once you have left it, once you have released it into fiction. "An asylum for your origins, your launchings and departures, the derivations of your dream geographies" (PE 13). "Dream yourself a place: Edberg" (20). Read this sentence to mean dream about Edberg as a place; read this sentence to mean dream that you are a place called Edberg—"not quite so arid as Sinclair Ross' Horizon or Robert Kroetsch's Big Indian/not quite so far away from Ellesmere"(22). In other words closer to epiphany, closer to the next home. Closer to the realization that you were once a fictional inhabitant of a fictional Edberg. As fictions, both can be collapsed:

> Who's done it? Collapsed this careful edifice, this dreaming? The telephone? the car? the road? airplanes? weather? Can you permit it to remain upright (on its tired feet laced into farmer's boots), or will it fall flat onto its high-fronted face? Edberg imagining itself a presence . . . (34)

Read this last sentence to mean Edberg imagines that it is a presence; read this last sentence to mean Edberg imagines that there is a presence somewhere in it. Texts read/dream/imagine and are read/dreamt/imagined by each other; texts unread/murder and are unread/murdered by each other—there are no natural births and no natural deaths.

> And will it [Edberg] hang black crêpe over the same strings of Christmas lights before it dies: will it read past its own murder: un/read its eagerness to read the future: read its certain demise, its accidental blood and sweat. (35)

You have left your Edberg murders behind . . . (46) Read murder: Edberg (as past, present and/or future Edbergs) is murdered; read murder: Edberg murders itself. To read is to create or to murder; it is not simple observation of process—it is process.

From Edberg to Ellesmere via Edmonton and Calgary: a spiral movement, constantly/simultaneously receding from and moving toward home; re/inventing it, reading it from afar, being read by it as you pass through:

> Edberg: this place, this village and its environs. A fiction of geography/geography of fiction: coming together in people and landscape and the harboured designations of fickle memory. Invented: textual: un/read: the hieroglyphic secrets of the past. Come home. (40)

This unrelenting focus on place and home is the stuff of autobiography, the act of un/reading a tangent of post-modern auto-reflexivity, the controlled movement from A through B through C to A1 and epiphany a perfectly acceptable novel form, the attempted rescue of Anna from the "peasant/writer/Tolstoy" a turning of the author's reading into a natural act of "ficto-criticism." A second person singular narrative. A singular narrative that strains its connection to autobiography (where first person singular is the canon and third person singular creates an amusing distance), that pushes "beyond the border of anywhere, in this generic of the post-partum, post-modern, post-colonial, post-patriarchal, post-mortem . . ." (VI 14), that disqualifies itself as a novel, and that finally creates another set of neologisms: ficto-criticism—a space inhabited by fictioneers.

What *Places Far From Ellesmere*/Aritha Van Herk/the reader does (is forced to do) is remove the restriction of text as product only, collapse the walls between writer, text and reader—which might seem to be the granting of unprecedented freedoms—only to re/institute a symbiotic relationship among writer, text and reader *and* place, memory and fiction. Since the act of reading is at the centre of these relationships, there would seem to be an obvious connection to (or comment on) reception theory. Any of us can be the implied reader of this book, but the reader most implied, indeed explicitly implied by the use of the second person singular, is the author/writer herself. Her statement on the illusion of text can (and should also) be read as follows: I am not writing me but reading, not you but myself; I am not writing reading but being read, a live text in a languaging world. For her the act of writing has become the act of her reading her writing; what is more, it has become the act of her writing reading her.

This act of reading is the most powerful force in the book, and goes beyond all traditional concepts of the process of reading. Here, reading is the act of creation and of murder; it has the power not only to fictionalize, but to real-ize. Just as Edberg and Edmonton and Calgary—and consequently those who inhabit those places, including the author—*become* fictions, in the sense that they are places and persons remembered, so Anna Karenin and Princess Myagky can be *released* from fiction—after all, they do inhabit a place in the past—to be real-ized on Ellesmere, to converse with Aritha Van Herk. There is always this double movement: reading and unreading at the same time, reading and being read at the same time. This symbiotic relationship between fiction and reality takes the two beyond the

mutual exclusivity of binary opposition, beyond even the fluctuating balance of a yin-yang relationship, into the relativity of time and space: depending where you are in time or in space will determine whether you inhabit fiction or reality. Although the obvious connection here would seem to be to Iser's theory of aesthetic response, Van Herk moves far beyond Iser's simple communication between fiction and reality.[1] Whether one agrees or not with Iser's assumption of the immanent structure and meaning of the text, his theory of repertoire and strategies is applicable, to a certain extent, to what Van Herk is doing: "The repertoire of the text is made up of material selected from social systems and literary traditions. . . . [T]he ultimate function of the strategies is to *defamiliarize* the familiar" (86-87). What is being defamiliarized in *Places Far From Ellesmere* is autobiography, the novel, post-modernism (inasmuch as it can be said to be familiar), and traditional criticism.

What is most applicable from Iser's theory of reception is his perspective on what happens in the reading process: "When we read a text, we are continuously evaluating and perceiving events with regard to our expectations for the future and against the background of the past" (Iser 90). For Van Herk, this process is at work in how she tries to read the Edberg of her past in comparison/collision with the Edberg she returns to:

> You went to a dance in the Elks Hall in Edberg only a few years ago and you were surprised at how staid it decanted itself, how careful, how cautiously polite, when you had been led to expect such wild revelry/such drunken staggerings/such furtive gropings of instant hands and bodies in the long grass beside the building, all of your fiction etched to a never readable page. Saved from your own story. (PE 26)

Iser's "dialectic . . . between illusion-forming and illusion-breaking", and "continual oscillation between involvement and observation" (127-128) is Van Herk's "live text in a languaging world."

In the process of un/reading and being un/read, the author, the text, and the reader not only "create" and "murder" each other, not only affect the relativity of time and space which determines what Bakhtin would call "the simultaneous difference" of fiction and reality, but they all—especially the reader—engage in a journey into themselves so that the concept of division is shifted from that between text and author (or text and reader, reader and author) to that between who the reader is/was and who the reader is/was not: "there occurs a kind of artificial division as the reader brings into his

own foreground something which he is not" (Iser 155). Van Herk would argue that this division is not artificial but inescapable; it is what is at the heart of what the reading process does. She does not set out, as Iser believes is a necessary in any text, to correct or overcome the asymmetry between text and reader which derives from the reader's desire to correctly understand the text or to determine its intent.

If there is any asymmetry to be found in *Places Far From Ellesmere*, it would be in the Bakhtinian sense of asymmetric dualism. For Bakhtin "self/other is a relation of simultaneity." Self/other could be read here as reader/writer, reader/text, or writer/text; what is more, even "self" is dialogic. The differences that Iser would overcome are unresolvable for Bakhtin, but not in a negative sense: "Bakhtin insists on differences that cannot be overcome: separateness and simultaneity are basic conditions of existence" (Holquist 20). Dualism is simultaneous difference on a sliding scale, and therefore asymmetrical. Furthermore, "there is an intimate connection between the project of language and the project of selfhood: they both exist in order to mean" (Holquist 23). This is another way to understand Van Herk's "living text." Edmonton is the place between Edberg and Calgary: movement from and movement towards at the same time. It is also the introduction to the division/project of self: creating fictions, murdering fixity. Returning to Edmonton is a telescoped, intensified version of returning to Edberg; the time in Edmonton did not allow it to be anything more than a pretended place:

> Swearing you will never return to your sites of seduction and rage, to the baffling problem of an eternal long division of the self, this Edmonton, still glazed with ice, pretends to be another place than it pretends to be. (53)

As Van Herk is seduced more and more by words, the inhabitants of her Edmonton are remembered/fictionalized as absent words; Edberg/home is re/read as an island, and though Edmonton is too brief a place to be re/read, it does launch Van Herk in the search for another island/home—the search for epiphany as logical consequence of conversion:

> Dis/criminate these absent words: your brevities of Edmonton. Six years fore/shortened, refuse to be re/read. Conversion/metamorphosis/seduction. The criminal conversations of burial consigned to a potential desert woman, an island sublimation. (54)

What makes Calgary a growing graveyard is its murder of/by language. Language is no longer a process depending/dependent upon text and writer

and reader; in Calgary it is the handmaid of money. Money turns process into tautology—it goes nowhere, it does nothing but attempt to justify itself: "The declensions of Calgary insist on money, although money rejects declension (banking on itself, receivable)" (62). Naming is an exercise in euphemism—a sort of bastardized tautology: "Abattoirs have become Meatpackers" (62), "Dressmakers have altered themselves to designers, clothiers, tailors and fashion consultants" (63). In the end, money, unlike language, fails to communicate: "There are seasons of money, houses bought and sold and never lived in, land surveyed into inches, buildings flooring themselves into Babel" (65). The concept of home has no place, fictional or otherwise, in such a language: "(What does home mean?)" (66), "Where is home" (71)?

The focus on the process of reading as creation/murder continues into the last chapter, "Ellesmere, woman as island", though this chapter could exist as a separate book. It is the place of epiphany, but it is also an island unto itself. Part of the reading process requires the reader, as new information is presented in the text, to constantly revise forwards and backwards, to change expectations and review perspective on what has gone by. To see the last chapter as an island unto itself is to understand that, although Ellesmere is a literal/literary island, Edberg, Calgary and Edmonton are also islands in what has now become a geografictional archipelago. Van Herk island hopping her way to discovery:

> Discovery. What to call the first moment a place lodges in your memory, what to call the first moment place emplaces itself in naming. Edberg was always there, an initial seeing that you don't remember. . . . Edmonton, that city as initial. . . . And Calgary, the first time you saw Calgary you were ten? Twelve? You cannot remember its announcement, only prescient presence, and the mountains past it, the way you read it now, as a well-groomed cemetery.
>
> Ellesmere will appear like a languid body below you, the island only waiting finally to float into a geografictione, like Anna waiting so long backstage on the yet-to-arrive, the interminably delayed train. (86-87)

Still, Ellesmere the chapter stands out not only because of its size but because it is the only island/chapter that is a ficto-critical one. Anna Karenin could not escape nineteenth century Russia or the shadow of Tolstoy or the confines of the novel unless there was an Ellesmere to go to, unless Van Herk decided to "[r]ead her again, give her a second chance, another life, a different fiction" (77), to not trick her as Tolstoy did: "Anna

can invent herself in an undocumented landscape, and undetermined fiction. That is the temptation Tolstoy holds out to her" (125).

> You must free her from the constraints of the novel she has been imprisoned in, shake her loose from the pages of her own story so that she can float over the landscape her in this landscape of a woman, this northern body, waiting to fall in love. (131)

The interesting paradox/contradiction (or perhaps a spatio-temporal simultaneous difference) is that Ellesmere, being the here and now and the place to which Anna is escaping, this place where anything is possible, is not itself fiction: "In fiction anything is possible. But Ellesmere is no fiction" (105). A reception theorist such as Jauss would point out that the problem confronting Van Herk is that of reading *Anna Karenin* a hundred years later, the resolution of which is addressed in his fourth thesis:

> The reconstruction of the horizon of expectations, in the face of which a work was created and received in the past, enables one on the other hand to pose questions that the text gave an answer to, and thereby to discover how the contemporary reader could have viewed and understood the work. (Jauss 28)

Given that Van Herk has written a *geografictione*, she sees the problem of reading Anna not as one concerning the text as novel, but as one of un/reading and re/reading Anna the person; neither is the problem one in terms only of time, but also, and more importantly, of place:

> But whose invention is she? Tolstoy's? The nineteenth century's? Russia's? The novel's? Yours? She is the north's invention, her figure only dreamable when the eye swings towards the polar star. But how then to read her? Is it possible to read her in the south, from the south? In that blindly south-faced reading, is it possible to read at all? You are closer to Moscow than you are to Edmonton, to Edberg, to Calgary. You are closer to Russia than to home: reading is a new act here, not introverted and possessive but exploratory, the text a new body of self, the self a new reading of place. . . . [T]he closest you can get to reading and still know story is this undiscovered place: the farthest possible reach of all reaches, this island paradise, this un/written northern novel, this desert un/kingdom. (113)

Anna becomes the pivot for the act of un/reading and of re/reading, for the criticism of "this male historiographical fiction" (84), and therefore for re/writing fiction/history: "she is source, text and the reading act itself" (136).

> Anna, poor Anna, dead before she begins, the end already read. You know where she is going, have pre/read that destination. But re/reading her, in Ellesmere a/new, reading her whole, you can re/write her too. (83)

Read "reading her whole" to mean reading her whole story; read "reading her whole" to mean making her whole for the first time: "You are on Ellesmere Island. You are in Russia. You are free to un/read yourself, home, Anna, the rest of Canada, all possible text" (91).

Anna is the confluence of place, person, memory and fiction. And text: "Take her [Anna] with you to Ellesmere. You're sure she's never been there, no one else is likely to have carried a woman as difficult, as lengthy, as god-damned heavy as she is along" (85); "One thing about Anna: she is not . . . a slim, streamlined adolescent, but a woman on the verge of flesh, with a full figure, solid. . . . And Ellesmere is a fat island" (96).

Finally, Van Herk becomes Ellesmere's text. The more she un/reads and re/reads Anna, the more she herself is read. In the end *Places Far From Ellesmere* is a reading of Aritha Van Herk: "You know you are a character in a larger novel, a novel of geography and passion, reading yourself as you are being read by a comprehensive reader" (118). This comprehensive reader takes on a more eerily powerful presence than Iser's implied reader or Riffaterre's super-reader. Van Herk's process of un/reading Anna as text and as island is ultimately reversed: "Anna reading this book you are in, this book of the north, un/read because mysterious, this female desert island and its secret reasons and desires" (130).

In *Places Far From Ellesmere* Van Herk has reformulated the parameters of reception theory. The reference point is no longer the difference between the reader's horizon of expectations and the appearance of the text, nor is it the asymmetry between text and reader; it is the asymmetric dualism, the simultaneous difference of fiction and reality: it is the power of the act of reading.

NOTES

1 "If fiction and reality are to be linked, it must be in terms not of opposition but of communication, for the one is not the mere opposite of the other—fiction is a means of telling us something about reality" (Iser 53).

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Oatmeal Cookies

Cinnamon, brown
sugar. Butter.
These are defences
the woman has chosen.
She employs them with precision,
wooden spoon, the yellow radiance
the plastic mixing bowl makes against
the white counter.
No more children.
She will not think that.
Heat from the oven.

No rosemary, that's for
remembrance.

Sweet spices, that's what she's after
this raw winter morning,
the way
her brother's child filled his arms;
completeness of motion, the boy in constant
scrambling delight against his father's chest.
The tatami room at the restaurant,
the child's golden head.
The boy is sixteen months.
He eats California rolls,
bangs on walls, beams
at his own noise.

The woman beats in egg, adds
vanilla, mixes in
all the dry ingredients.
—*Gentle, gentle,* how she unclenched
the boy's hands from her eight year old's hair—

She slides the first batch
of cookies
into the oven.
The smell of baking comforts her.

The boy in his father's arms
gurgling,
her kind, pregnant sister-in-law,
are still seated across from the woman,
figures in a gold-stroked
Japenese screen.
The tatami room gradually becomes awash
with possiblities.
The openings are there,
mesh spangled with
cheeriness
in the dreary December rain.

The boy breaks free from his father. The sister-in-law laughs.

In her kitchen, the woman stays with warmth.
She refuses to believe in anything
but the sure way
her life fills up with good,
runs over.
All that love.
Her cookies,
the smell of cinnamon
rich
in loosening air.

Shannon Hengen

Towards a Feminist Comedy

"To profane, through laughter, the forbidding symbols of divine and political power is to expose them as *merely* symbols, and thus to throw into doubt the tragic and sacrificial world-view which they enshrine (91)," writes Anthony Gash in his discussion of the carnivalesque. What I propose is that Ann-Marie MacDonald's recent dramatic work, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, opens Canadian feminist comedy to exactly such profaning through laughter which Gash associates with the potential for real social or political change. Before showing how *GD (GJ)* partakes of elements of the comic carnivalesque I will summarize the larger theoretical debate concerning comedy's power to transform audiences.

While throwing into doubt the tragic world-view has always been comedy's goal, theorists have disagreed on the permanence of the overthrow. One side would argue that comedy is ultimately a conservative force allowing the audience to play with freedom for a time, but then ensuring that the status quo is restored at play's end, thereby acting as a kind of purgation of chaos (Eco, Cook, Dolan, Nelson); the other side asserts that comedy revives and excites revolutionary forces that lead not only to social renewal on stage, but also to an awakening of subversive energies in the audience (Bakhtin, Frye, Turner, Santayana). Absent from these theoretical speculations is discussion of plot, characterization, and the audience's accompanying emotional responses, the very starting points of the Aristotelian study of tragedy still underlying traditional scholarly analyses of that genre. By giving attention to the effects of plot and characterization, we can propose that dramatic comedy is sometimes

conservative and sometimes radical in its cultural work, depending upon what happens in each play, to whom, and how the audience responds.

Surely a play like *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* in which an English professor named Constance overcomes her diffidence and begins to show both sexual and professional power has a different meaning from a play in which an English professor named Constance gives in to her diffidence and quits her job, marrying a nice man (perhaps a dentist), and starting a family (in Mississauga). And if the English professor is, say, aboriginal or disabled or lesbian, certainly the play's meaning is altered yet again. I suggest that plays in which marginalized women gain success and audience empathy explicitly through allying with other women to ridicule and best powerful figures in the mainstream, and that create a joyful mood, might form a sound basis for evaluating the radical potential of Canadian women's comedy; clearly, the borrowed theories noted above, however progressive or sophisticated, have not considered such plays.

But even to such drama specialists as Erik MacDonald, Elin Diamond, and Kate Lushington who do consider women's plays, my discussion of a Canadian feminist carnivalesque represents something new. I can most clearly locate my approach within existing theory with reference to the kind of eclecticism Sue-Ellen Case advocates in her *Feminism and Theatre*:

> For theatre, the basic theoretical project for feminism could be termed a 'new poetics,' borrowing the notion from Aristotle's *Poetics*. New feminist theory would abandon the traditional patriarchal values embedded in prior notions of form, practice and audience response in order to construct new critical models and methodologies for the drama that would accommodate the presence of women in the art, support their liberation from the cultural fictions of the female gender and deconstruct the valorisation of the male gender. In pursuit of these objectives, feminist dramatic theory would borrow freely . . .. (114-115)

But in promoting a specific structure for plays I am working against the latest trends of postmodernist theatre as described by Erik MacDonald in his *Theater at the Margins*: "the post-structured stage remains on the selvage of continual disappearance, for, in resisting its own institutionality, it pulls the rug out from under the foundations, as it were, of aesthetic, or canon-forming, processes" (174). Canon-forming of another kind, for example discovering such a new genre as that ably described by Elin Diamond as "hysterical realism" (68), seems closer to my project although the play I discuss would perhaps appear—because of its accessibility—too close to the familiar realist-naturalist tradition.

In supporting a popular feminist theatre that borrows from the comic carnivalesque as does *GD (GJ)*, I look forward to a success for feminist theatre like that of its triumphant heroines. My very definition of popular feminist comedy, however, strikes Kate Lushington—Artistic Director of Toronto's Nightwood Theatre (discussed below) from 1988 to 1994—as problematic:

> Getting there [to material success] you have to do the male thing, the white thing, and then where is your community? Where are you? The price is huge for that kind of material success. Fewer and fewer people are making it; we have an alienated left. That's the problem with material success. (personal interview 1993)

The larger community, however, has less difficulty with material success and that community must be hailed by comedy in order to be moved and changed by it. Hence my tolerance for a play which because popular may strike other drama specialists as conventional, but which in fact through the power of comic inversion may both attract and renew its audiences.

Ann-Marie MacDonald's comedy about an English professor named Constance qualifies as feminist comedy by my definition above because the white, middle-class Constance is at least slightly marginalized (eccentric, probably brilliant) and yet she stirs audience empathy. To the extent that Constance is mocked, the play undermines its radical potential, but more importantly to the extent that Constance herself learns through other women to laugh at her oppressors and so reclaim her power, providing hopeful closure, the play shows progressive force. Theorists (Freud, Purdie) have posited that laughter provides us with at least a momentary sense of superiority over the person or thing being laughed at, and so critical commentary upon who laughs at what or whom in women's comedy such as *GD (GJ)* and its audiences, and who seems to gain by the laughter, should provide a key to the play's potential as a power for or against cultural change. I have chosen MacDonald's comedy as a sample not only because of its popularity before and since the national tour in 1990— Ottawa, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto (see reviews by Crook, Coulbourn, Hunt, Branswell, Friedlander, Charles, Dykk, Bemrose, Nicholls, Crew, and Conlogue)—but also because of the theatre which first produced it, Toronto's Nightwood Theatre, whose consistent success at promoting feminist comedy merits further attention. The paper will not attempt to survey Canadian feminist comedy, or the theatres that produce it, but rather to use *GD (GJ)* and Nightwood as representative examples of where Canadian women's most promising dramatic comedy now stands.

Some theories of feminist dramatic comedy have studied alternative happy endings of plays, thereby supplying that firm basis in plot absent in theories of mainstream comedy. Susan Carlson in her responsible treatment of the history of dramatic comic theory, including that of contemporary British feminists, writes that overall "women's theatre has irrevocably been established as communal," and "these communities intensify women's tendency to write plays grounded in joy" (284-285). The recent tradition of feminist comedy in England, as in Canada, thus seems closely linked to the collaborative methods of feminist theatre. Collaborative methods of course pertain to the North American alternative theatre movement in general, not just to women's alternative theatre (see Johnston, Fraticelli). But in a short article updating statistics from Rina Fraticelli's report on the status of women in the Canadian theatre, Bronwyn Drainie suggests that women's alternative theatre now provides the kind of cultural leaven that Canadian nationalist alternative theatre provided twenty years ago.

Although Ann-Marie MacDonald's play, her first solo creation, takes feminist comedy in a new direction in terms of its individual authorship, its vision remains hopeful in that—significantly—the central female figure triumphs. "[I]t is such positive vision," Carlson writes, "that distinguishes the women's work [from contemporary male comedies rooted in despair], even more basically than the formal innovations or the novel subject matter. In other words, the difference in women's comedy depends on optimism" (307). Regina Barreca corroborates Carlson's theory that feminist comedians' independence from the established dramatic tradition emerges in part through the endings of their plays, observing that the "endings of comic works by women writers do not, ultimately, reproduce the expected hierarchies, or if they do it is often with a sense of dislocation even about the happiest ending" (1988, 12). Such "dislocation" seems inevitable as hierarchies are overturned and the comic carnivalesque does its usual work.

Carlson sees several ways in which contemporary British feminist comedy eludes audiences' expectations about the return to order which endings in conventional comedy have promised. The group protagonist, for example, challenges the audience's concept of an individual hero and his or her lover who, typically in romantic comedy, overcome obstacles to their union and marry at play's end. In her informed discussion of several feminist endings which overturn established generic conventions, such as the preference for birth as closure (240), Carlson writes: "plays that conclude with groups

of women usually drop both men and marriage from their definitions of happiness" (238). Other common elements among women's comedies are "disregard for stage realism" (205), casting against gender and number, intrusive musical interludes, and women's cabaret/laughter (213-244), the first two of which appear in MacDonald's work, described by her as a "'classic adventure-mystery-fairytale-comedy'" (qtd. in Branswell).

Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)

PhD candidate Constance Ledbelly, lecturer at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, reaches the lowest point in her career and emotional life near the play's opening, but not before developing her brilliant theory about two of Shakespeare's tragedies having been comedies in their sources. What Shakespeare struck from each original text, Constance argues, was a witty fool, the very figure Constance herself will become later in the play when a flight of fancy will take her into the worlds of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Newspaper and magazine reviews focus on the play's humour and theatricality, but little attention has yet been given the work in academic journals. Mark Fortier's otherwise favourable article in *Canadian Theatre Review* concludes that

> [t]he play completely elides the issue of race . . .. There is little in the play about class . . .. None of this is necessarily to fault MacDonald's work; her task has been to express humanism with a woman's face, and that's what she has accomplished. (51)

Her "humanism with a woman's face" might inhere in Constance Ledbelly's theory of comedy, never referred to in any critiques of the play but deserving of serious attention, for it is this theory that redeems Constance and endears her to her audience.

Early in Act I Professor Ledbelly reads the following from her incomplete doctoral dissertation entitled "*Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*: The Seeds of Corruption and Comedy":

> Fate seems too generous in both plays. In both plays, the tragic characters, particularly Romeo and Othello, have abundant opportunity to save themselves. The fact that they do not save themselves, tends to characterize them more as unwitting victims of a disastrous practical joke—[Romeo the undelivered message, and Othello the handkerchief]. (1.1)

Constance thus sees the humour in two of the most revered tragic texts in the traditional canon, foreshadowing her potential for mockery of the powerful, oppressive icons in her personal life.

She then meets and becomes acquainted with the female heroes in order to determine whether they should be read as tragic characters doomed by a fortune they cannot control, or comic figures redeemed by self-knowledge. In the end Constance herself becomes a kind of hero of Shakespearean romantic comedy in that she gains status in her own estimation, while Shakespeare's women, although they do not transform their tragedies, are at least permitted to gain a knowledge of self like that which Othello, for example, is allowed by Shakespeare to gain. And Constance herself, through her encounters with Desdemona and Juliet, is able to see finally that she has been manipulated by the man she "loves," an academic promoted to Full Professor as a result of having persuaded the astute but distracted student Constance to write his articles and reviews for him, and she seems to have gained the necessary insight into her thesis topic to know how to conclude it as well. Having been just a fool at the play's opening, laughed at by the audience and other characters, she thus becomes the witty fool.

Such triumph, marginal as it is, seems perfectly suited to the academic climate of southern Ontario of the 1990s where the feminist agenda, far from having produced reverse discrimination, has had little effect on the fact that "married women teaching in universities have been more likely than their male counterparts to be employed in part-time positions at low salaries with few benefits" as a result of their giving time to families rather than careers (Lyons 15). In MacDonald's play, Constance seems at first in a vulnerable professional condition because of the low status and esteem allowed her by the one male academic who appears in the play. Although she is not married to Claude Knight or anybody else, she wants to be married to Knight, and her behaviour towards him is slavish in the extreme. But Constance's liberation through alliances with other women—women who explicitly lead her in attacking Knight (Desdemona) and replacing him in her desire (Juliet)—and her avoidance of the kind of reestablishment of the social order through marriage typical of traditional comedy, permits modest hope. In a personal interview, MacDonald stated that "there is a marriage [at play's end]. It's a marriage of Constance's selves. She marries herself." And audiences seeing MacDonald's play seem more likely to be moved to joy at this marriage than the one Constance had initially yearned for. Perhaps in a still more subversive feminist comedy she would marry a woman of colour (a dentist?) and become Queen's University Principal, but the audiences who have made *GD (GJ)* so popular are perhaps not yet entirely ready for such a plot.

MacDonald senses the revolutionary potential of feminist comedy as is clear from her response in a personal interview when asked why she continues to write comedy, as opposed to tragedy:

> You can go into more dangerous territory, or more challenging territory for the general audience than with something that isn't comedy. That is not a value judgment. . . . I happen to do the kind of comedy that I hope challenges but invites people of diverse backgrounds and identities to an experience that they might be prejudiced against at first. But I somehow am going to make it possible for them to enter an experience that they thought they had no sympathy for. And in the end they find themselves identifying with people who they thought were perverse or alien or deviant, and that's my crusade if I have one.

And in an interview with Rita Much she states that "[f]or me writing comedy is inevitable . . .. I am also obsessed with redemption and can't bear the spectacle of unremitting suffering" (135). Echoing the British female playwrights in Carlson's study referred to above, MacDonald continues in the Much interview that "[p]oking fun at institutions is iconoclastic and girls are not supposed to be rebels . . .. I take something people identify with or revere, like Shakespeare, and say, 'Excuse me, while I turn this upside down.' I would never lampoon something that I hated" (136). But in an interview with Judith Rudakoff for *Books in Canada* she adds, "I don't sit down to write a funny play. I always have a very serious [perhaps even revolutionary] intent" (25), an intent which clearly fits the strategies and purposes of the carnivalesque.

Nightwood Theatre

Described in the 1989 edition of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre* as "[t]he most influential feminist theatre company in Toronto" ("Feminist Theatre"), and by Vit Wagner as "the highest profile feminist troupe in Canada" ("By Women"), Nightwood began in 1978 through the collective efforts of Cynthia Grant, Kim Renders, Mary Vingoe, and Maureen White. Its original mandate was not that the theatre be either feminist or comic but rather, in the words of Cynthia Grant, "a theatre of images . . . which would devote itself to explorations in style and content" (45). But Renate Usmiani writes in a study of the alternative theatre movement in Canada that "in alternative theatre the emphasis is shifted from the play itself as a work of art to the audience and its involvement in the theatrical process" (1). Like other Canadian alternative theatres, Nightwood was originally, and perhaps remains, defined largely by its relationship with its

audience, in addition to the style of work it produces. More on the subject of alternative theatres, Susan Bennett writes:

> Instead of a desire to work up to the "status" of a company who can perform in a building designated for theatre performances and for audiences who are able to pay an economically-determined ticket price to enjoy a period of leisure, these companies have avoided what they often see as a white middle-class ghetto. Instead these groups foster audiences across different and broader sections of society.

I would suggest further that the more powerful the voices in Nightwood's audiences, the more obvious and effective the social and political aspects of the theatre's work will be, since it is precisely those empowered voices who need to experience their ideal worlds turned upside down on stage in order for the feminist comic carnivalesque to thrive.

Nightwood inevitably changes over time, having for example established a board of directors in 1985 to replace the "loose collective" (13) by which it had been run since its inception, to borrow Susan G. Cole's wording in her article on Nightwood's first ten years. "How does a theatre company remain true to its alternative roots while fulfilling a political mandate of reaching out to a large audience?", Cole asks (12). Starting in 1985 with the employment of Mary Vingoe as Nightwood's first artistic coordinator, the theatre has opted, Cole writes, to

> concentrate less on collective work and more on developing individual writing talents. With less than 17 per cent of Canadian productions written by women (and even less directed by women), Nightwood could significantly alter the face of Canadian theatre by producing women's work. (15)

Although Nightwood's plays are still often experimental in form, the theatre's primary concern is "to nurture radical voices" (Cole 15), working since 1989 with an explicitly anti-racist mandate. Diane Roberts, Co-Artistic Director since spring of 1994 (with Alisa Palmer), states that, while some women are gaining success in mainstream Canadian theatre, they are not necessarily advancing her voice as a Black woman:

> Plays being done by women in mainstream theatres fit into their mandate. I don't feel that my voice is being advanced. It's still our theatres with no money that are pushing to have these new strong voices with a different take on the mainstream, like Nightwood and Buddies in Bad Times [also in Toronto]. We're taking risks. (personal interview).

The program for the 1994 Groundswell Festival of works in progress by women (discussed further below), a festival produced by Nightwood and

directed in 1994 by Roberts, includes the following statement entitled "About Nightwood Theatre, unique feminist theatre from diverse cultural perspectives":

> Nightwood Theatre has been creating, developing, and producing unique plays by women for 14 years. From its initial explosion onto the Toronto Theatre scene in 1979, Nightwood has been recognized for its risk-taking approach to new play creation. Widely known for the 1990 production and subsequent national tour of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet,* Nightwood Theatre creates alternate visions of the world, offering a woman-centred theatrical space to encourage new playwrights and expose new ideas.

Because of the relatively small but devoted houses which most of Nightwood's low-priced productions have drawn, the theatre remains alternative, while that status must be tempered with reference to the mainstream success of such Nightwood productions as *GD (GJ).* Continuing to provide a visible forum for feminist theatre artists through its two successful annual revues, Groundswell and the exclusively comic Five-Minute Feminist Cabaret (FemCab), Nightwood nevertheless has also come to represent the chance for women artists to achieve success with larger and more diverse audiences, especially through comedy.

States former Nightwood artistic coordinator Kate Lushington, who in 1988 became the theatre's first coordinator from beyond the original collective of four women:

> "Some people are saying Nightwood is going soft: 'They used to do plays about violence against women (*This Is For You, Anna*) and now they're doing a play about a university lecturer who finds herself through visiting the worlds of Shakespeare [*Goodnight Desdemona* . . .].' Those people want to plug us into their stereotype of what a feminist theatre company should do. But Nightwood is about exploding stereotypes. And that involves knocking conventional ways of thinking sideways a bit—our own as well as other peoples." (Wagner "By women")

The function of Nightwood Theatre and its popular comic successes in recent years has, I believe, been integral to the promotion of a radical feminist comedy in Canada. To continue the development of the genre, critics might seek out and publicize comedies that show marginalized women laughing at the powerful and overcoming them, leading from these studies of plot and characterization to a theory of the power of feminist comedy for social or political change. Such a comedy need not be cruel, but it must be hopeful and bold, eliciting feelings of empathy and joy in the audience; therein lies the route to dramatic celebration of our most marginalized women's experiences, and perhaps further to their celebration in the culture beyond the stage.

Lushington has commented freely on women's theatre and comedy, as follows:

> Comedy has been traditionally the way of dealing with oppression, the best way. It's a way of working out contradiction because comedy is based on contradictions. There's lots of contradictions within what women from different perspectives face every day. What Nightwood hopefully can do is provide an environment where women can laugh at our experience, at our sorrows, laugh at ourselves. . . . I think it's very important, too, to spread some kind of hope. (personal interview 1992)

Laughing at themselves is what feminists can do when working together; when working against the inertia of the powerful, however, it seems feminist comedy will need to laugh at and win over them.

Reprise: *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Lushington's idea that contradiction underlies comic structure perhaps refers to the traditional view of the genre that its characters are deceived until the resolution: audiences perceive the disparity between what players think they are and they deserve, and what they in fact are and get. Constance Ledbelly follows the pattern in MacDonald's play, while she also finally expresses some kind of hope, perhaps like that which Lushington mentions, thus moving beyond the traditional comic ending. And her new indeterminacy concerning sexual preference is unconventional indeed.

MacDonald's plot, to summarize, entails Constance's triumphant confrontation with a romantic servitude that has suppressed her identity; the triumph remains subtle and psychic, however, rather than clear and material. The play opens with the disclosure that the man she loves is not only leaving her, and with another woman, but also firing her from her job as his ghost writer. He has achieved the kind of success that might be granted the comic heroine herself were audiences to encourage it—promotion to Full Professor, the offer of a visiting lectureship at Oxford, and engagement to a Rhodes scholar. She would need, moreover, to win her success by joining forces with other women to obviously best a more mainstream colleague, perhaps but not necessarily a man.

As is in MacDonald's published script, Constance's growth in power is never really shown. She moves from the abjection of the early lines—"I'll call the Dean and resign. I'll go back to my apartment and watch the plants die and let the cats copulate freely. I'll order in groceries. Eventually I'll be evicted. I'll smell really bad and swear at people on the subway" (1.1)—to this final

revelation: "I've had it with all the tragic tunnel vision around here. . . . [L]ife is a hell of a lot more complicated than you think! Life—real life—is a big mess. Thank goodness. . . . [I]f you're lucky you'll always feel somewhat confused" (3.9). Meanwhile Claude Knight is off in England enjoying his prestige, his teaching post, and his lover, apparently without remorse.

Although MacDonald's protagonist wins by acknowledging and accepting the "opposites" (3.Epilogue) that constitute her newly recovered identity, she remains a lonely Lecturer with an unfinished dissertation and, courtesy of Claude Knight, a job in Regina. Still, the muted lesbian sexuality of Act III, Scene vii may linger in viewers' minds, the scene perhaps closest to MacDonald's idea that her comedy allows audiences to sympathize with what they "might be prejudiced against at first," might consider "perverse or alien or deviant" (qtd. above). Juliet's eloquently poetic seduction of Constance—for example, JULIET "O touch me with those hands that held thy quill / before I learned to read and write my name . . ."—and Constance's simple acquiescence—"Okay"—suggests an unrealized radical potential for MacDonald's play.

But the plot of *GD (GJ)* does not end in heterosexual marriage, the female hero gains some power through her alliances with other women while audiences feel empathy for her and rejoice in her final hopefulness, and the play is popular. Professional theatres in many Canadian cities have produced it, as has the Classic Stage Company in Manhattan and other US playhouses. And to produce or applaud such theatre, theatre with roots in the comic carnivalesque, is to enter the theoretical debate on the social effects of comedy, on the side of those who defend those effects, for to support the psychic and/or material successes of a vulnerable woman like Constance, to share in her joyfulness, is to question the status quo not only of a conventional comic ending but also of the world that endorses it.

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Gail Johnston

Good Fences

Take two hands make
v's out of index and
middle fingers make
the v's interlace see
as legs layered in
love a cariboo
corner rails resting
one upon the other
mine above yours above
mine above yours or
the other way either way
our bodies extend in
and out in
the classic directions love
lies along the length of us we
make a good fence not
nailed together but
solid sturdy not
invincible weathered
not decayed yet
we'll stay together barring
earthquakes of too
great a magnitude a
possibility of course
considering we live
on the edge
of a fault inside the fence
our little daughter runs and
climbs not over yet but
soon

Psychanalyse

Elisabeth Roudinesco
Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985. U Chicago P $52.00

Teresa Brennan, ed.
Between Feminism & Psychoanalysis. Routledge $22.50

Jane Flax
Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, & Postmodernism in the Contemporary West. U California P $19.05

Reviewed by Doug Aoki

In its original, best-selling French edition, *Jacques Lacan & Co.* is the second volume of Elisabeth Roudinesco's monumental *La bataille de cent ans: Histoire de la psychanalyse en France.* Both titles are fitting. As the English translator, Jeffrey Mehlman, observes, this book is "nothing so much as a Lacaniad," an epic, 766 page chronicle of a psychoanalytic culture dominated by Lacan, and drawn by him into the grander sweep of structuralism and poststructuralism. Nonetheless, this is not a serious biography of Lacan—that would be Roudinesco's next project—nor a serious analysis of Lacanian theory, despite its occasional exegeses. Instead, this is literally a history of the internecine battles that swirled around Lacan and engaged, principally or tangentially, an expansive *Co.* of not only five generations of French psychoanalysts, but also a host of figures prominent outside of institutional psychoanalysis: Althusser, Bataille, Foucault, Irigaray, Jakobson, Kristeva, Lévi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and even Mao, to name a few. Here is Lacan, reading Saussure "with Lévi-Strauss on one side and Heidegger on the other," and then driving a speechless Heidegger at a hyperbolic *300* kph to the cathedral at Chartres; here is Derrida relating a dinner party anecdote about himself and his young son, and Lacan appropriating it for an unflattering lecture illustration of the *grand Autre*; and here is Lacan inviting Ricoeur to his *séminaire*, only to become enraged when the philosopher first declares him "completely impenetrable" and then misrepresents him in *On Interpretation.* Ultimately, the strength of *Jacques Lacan & Co.* is that range of extraordinary, if very partial, glimpses of Lacan with and against those thinkers, and not its depth, despite Roudinesco's sometimes numbing recitation of minutiæ, nor its probity, given her disconcerting penchant for referring to Lacan as "our hero."

What Roudinesco does do superbly is thick description, which serves as admirable background for the fourteen theoretical papers of *Between Feminism & Psychoanalysis.* In this anthology, derived from a 1987 Cambridge seminar series and edited by Teresa Brennan, *psychoanalysis* is generally read as *Lacan*, and generally read with sympathy, although by no means uncritically. The book includes contributions from Spivak, Irigaray, Jane Gallop, and Toril Moi, among others, which range from Naomi Segal's reconceptualization of gaze, mirror, and voice via the myth of Echo and Narcissus, to Parveen Adam's relation of reality and perversion in lesbian

S/M. For the most part, that diversity is provocative and well considered. The texts are oriented along four major axes: "the status of the Lacanian 'symbolic', sexual difference and knowledge, the bearing of essentialism on feminist politics, and the relation between psychical reality and the social." Perhaps the major accomplishment of *Between Feminism & Psychoanalysis* is its repeated demonstration of how Lacanian theory maintains a highly charged, multivalent, and deeply problematic force along each of these four vectors. For example, Jane Copjec's description of the relation of the Symbolic to the subject—"It is not the long arm of the law that determines the shape and reach of every subject, but rather something that escapes the law and its determination"—is also acutely synoptic of the relation of Lacan to feminism. There is a very Lacanian gap or disjunction in the differences and engagements between feminism and psychoanalysis, but insofar as feminism continues to recognize that "one's desire may not be one's own," that gap will continue to be as productive as it is troubling.

However, this is not a recognition that Jane Flax would be willing to make, at least in its Lacanian form. She presents her *Thinking Fragments* as an open-ended "conversation" between psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism, but her dialogue turns invective when she limns Lacan as afflicted with not only profound anti-feminism, but also an infantile narcissistic grandiosity. Now, there is some limited substance to this latter allegation—even Roudinesco remarks on Lacan's excessive need to be loved—but it becomes less credible when it is likewise leveled at Derrida. Despite being explicitly drawn to postmodernism, Flax tars deconstruction along with French psychoanalysis, by deploying examples from her own psychotherapeutic practice to deplore their mutual abstraction. To that end, and unlike the feminists in Brennan's anthology, the psychoanalysis that Flax finds useful for feminism is not the Freud of Lacan's celebrated return, but the renovation of Freud through D. W. Winnicott's object-relations theory. Yet her argument is marred by its specious confidence in the "concrete"—typical of too many attacks on postmodern theory launched under the banner of the "real world"—and by her reliance on two master tropes—conversation and storytelling—that never rise above simplistic deployment. Thus, Flax even reduces the metanarrative of the Enlightenment to a pedestrian formation of plot, character development, and moral. Flax's ambition of bringing together the discourses of psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism is commendable, if hardly original, and she works diligently at her storytelling, but in these stories her reach for the theoretical exceeds her grasp of the concrete.

Core Samples

Christopher Dewdney
The Secular Grail: Paradigms of Perception.
Somerville House $17.95

Reviewed by Christopher Brayshaw

Christopher Dewdney is an Ontario poet whose works "inventory a personal, regional identity directly informed by natural history." He is also one of the most critically neglected Canadian writers in recent memory. Though his works are unquestionably postmodernist—non-linear poems interspersed with Barthelmeesque collages and essays which investigate how language simultaneously shapes and restricts conceptualization—Linda Hutcheon makes no mention of him in *The Canadian Postmodern* (1988), and reviews of his work in the popular press have been polite but largely baffled. Dewdney's best critics to date are his fellow poet-theoreticians Steve McCaffery and Christian Bok; a third, Stan Dragland, is no poet, but his chapter on

Dewdney in *The Bees of the Invisible* (1991), is the most scrupulous, fair-minded piece of Canadian criticism I have ever read.

The Secular Grail is a collection of "condensed, essentialized statements" which read different aspects of Western culture in the manner of Barthes' *Mythologies*. These short prose fragments are grouped in modular units of ten or more fragments each, with titles like, "City States," "The Planet's Dream," and "Concrete Technical Reality." All are ultimately informed by what Dewdney calls "an indivisible mystery at the heart of existance." Those who know their Frye will immediately think of the "Polemical Introduction" to the *Anatomy of Criticism*, where Frye argues that belief in "some informing power from an ineffable mystery at the heart of being. . .seems vague," and offers in its place a "totally intelligible" theory of literature founded in a systemic discourse which is logical and internally consistant.

Frye's criticism is incisive, and far closer to the literature it discusses than much contemporary theory.

Still, any critical discourse is ultimately limiting insofar as it can only master the phenomena it describes through reduction and exclusion. *The Secular Grail* can be read as Dewdney's counter-polemic to canonical notions of critical form: the book is playful, thoroughly subjective, closer to poetry than critical prose. Dewdney says there is "little of literary or scholastic convention in [it]"; we would be wise to take him at his word.

Here, as in his earlier writings, Dewdney dramatizes the extent to which consciousness apprehends the natural world through overlapping perceptual paradigms. His writing incorporates the technical vocabularies of biology, geology and astronomy in the hope of linking disparate fields of knowledge to "affect personal models of reality. . .in much the same manner as a star bends light." This approach is most successful when describing natural phenomena like limestone stratification, or the wind, which constantly oscillate between the tangible and the more abstract:

> The wind is neither uniform nor constant. It is a turbulent concatenation of billows and vorticies, of twisting strands and planar surfaces. It rolls into irregular cylinders and is at once quick and viscous, full of spirals and interwoven eddies. The shape of the wind can be seen in many things, in flags and smoke. Gusts can be watched as they traverse water, and zephyrs imprint their transient shapes in sheets hung out to dry on clotheslines. Kites calibrate gusts as they pass, and you can see waves of wind as they move through the crowns of distant trees.

These lyrical, faintly elegiac evocations of "Concrete Technical Reality" offer points of entry into Dewdney's longer, more technically complex poems, like the multiple volume *Natural History of Southwestern Ontario* (1978-89?).

Less successful are the fragments grouped as, "Intimate Strangers," and "The Planet's Dream," which deal with social psychology. "Of some lovers the world is envious; it would destroy them out of jealousy." Further on, the male mid-life crisis is likened to the death throes of an aging star. This is all delivered completely straight, without a trace of the irony and playfully flaunted artifice which informs works like, *A Palaeozoic Geology of London, Ontario* (1973), or the more recent—and very rare—chapbook, *Recent Artifacts From the Institute of Applied Fiction* (1990). "Intimate Strangers" and "The Planet's Dream" seem clumsily executed; Dewdney's spectacular metaphors simply cannot conceal the run-of-the-mill observations hidden within. "Certain couples seem to implode, enhancing and reinforcing each other's weakness. They fall through themselves into each other." The dysfunctional individual troped as black hole or other destructive natural

force has been done to death in recent post-modernist fiction—see, for example, Martin Amis' *London Fields* (1989), or Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990).

Better by far are Dewdney's stylistic homages to writers and visual artists he admires. As he says in *Spring Trances in the Control Emerald Night* (1978), "Certain people seem to stand behind one." Literary homage is particularly evident in the first section of *The Secular Grail*, "City States":

> Brazilian children run through the market crowds on a warm summer evening. Dusty sunlight through an old streetcar window on the first warm sunset in February, the streetlights flickering on, purple against the incandescent gold of the bank towers. The first breath of wind from an approaching subway train not yet audible or visible.

This is from a fragment in "City States" called "Chronopolis," in which I hear echoes of William Burroughs' often-unacknowledged lyricism (e.g. *Cobblestone Gardens*). Another fragment, "Riot Command," reads like an out-take from *Nova Express* filtered through the detatched, ironic voice of British New Wave science fiction writer J.G. Ballard, from whose collection of short stories "Chronopolis" takes its title. Best of all is Dewdney's silent tribute to the late Greg Curnoe. Aphorisms are broken up and scattered through the text à la Curnoe's series of rubber-stamped paintings, *True North #s 1-5* (1968). Most of these sound like vintage Curnoe, too ("GENUINE FAS / CINATION CO / UNTS FOR / MO RE / THAN EDU / CATION").

Dewdney's obsessive fascination with the natural world permeates *The Secular Grail*. More importantly, the book's fragmentary perceptions reconnect with his other poems in surprising, thought-provoking ways, and help illuminate a common thematic core.

Romances of the North

Anton Wagner, ed.
A Vision of Canada: Herman Voaden's Dramatic Works 1928-1945. Simon & Pierre n.p.

Reviewed by Kathy K.Y. Chung

A Vision of Canada is a welcome addition to the growing literature on Canadian theatre and its history. Scholars have long acknowledged Herman Voaden as a significant playwright, director, editor, and arts advocate in Canada but many factors have limited greater public recognition and critical appreciations of his work have been limited due to many factors.

Until recently, there had been few revivals of Voaden's drama. Little of Voaden's work has been published and that which has is to be found scattered in theatre journals or anthologies. This is why the present volume of thirteen Voaden plays, ranging from his earliest realistic dramas to his later symphonic expressionist pieces, is so valuable.

Anton Wagner's editorial work is exemplary. In addition to the performance texts, there are a good introduction to Voaden's drama, a complete chronology of Voaden's dramatic writing, a list of his directorial work, and two bibliographies of works by and about Voaden. There are also Voaden's comments on each drama discussing his sources and influences, and his thoughts both at the time of composition and during the compilation of this anthology. Finally, there are priceless photographs of the original productions, lighting and set design drawings, and musical notations which help the reader to envision Voaden's work in performance.

Voaden's dramatic vision is highly nationalistic, romantic, and ambitious. It is also intensely personal and spiritual. Like the Group of Seven whom he admired, Voaden felt that the defining character of Canada was to be found in the challenge and the spiritual purity of the Northern

wilderness. In this landscape of the soul, Canadians who love and worship nature will find strength, beauty, and spiritual enlightenment.

This anthology allows us to trace Voaden's search for ways to represent his vision. He begins with realistic plays set in northern Ontario such as *Northern Storm* (1929) and *Western Wolf* (1930). In *Northern Song* (1930), he experiments with the use of extended soliloquies to reveal inner thoughts, a technique used by Eugene O'Neill in *Strange Interlude* (1928). *Symphony* (1930) is a "painter's ballet" Voaden created with painter Lowrie Warrener, where there is no dialogue and the narrative is told by the use of music, lighting, set design, and gestures. The stylized dialogue used in *Fragment* (1931), and the plot and philosophical ideas from *Wilderness* (1931) are combined with music, lighting, and dancers in *Rocks* (1932), the first of Voaden's successful "symphonic theatre" pieces which would unite music, poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, light, and architecture.

The remainder of the plays in the anthology show Voaden refining his theatrical form and his romance of the North, oscillating between the greater abstraction of *Earth Song* (1932) and *Ascend as the Sun* (1942), and the greater realism of *Hill-Land* (1934) and *Murder Pattern* (1936). In the process, Voaden's drama became technically more ambitious as the cast and crew grows from a few principal characters to include in *Ascend*: a narrator; allegorical figures personifying "Life," "Death," "Earth," and "The Universe Spirit;" choruses; dancer; musical score; and a lighting crew of six technicians.

This anthology also shows the extent to which Voaden has consistently mythologized and staged not only the country but himself. He can be found in every questing, visionary, archetypal male character in his drama. An image of his wife, Violet Kilpatrick Voaden, can be glimpsed in every beautiful, wise, supportive, archetypal female character. In his work their relationship is magnified and dramatized in every death-defying transcendent love between man and woman. It is interesting to learn just how significant Violet Kilpatrick was to the drama of Herman Voaden. She was not only his muse and model (one wonders what her personal response to these roles were) but her experience as a young teacher in the rural communities of northern Ontario was a major source for the actual people, places, and events which form the realistic basis of Voaden's drama.

A Vision of Canada not only contextualizes Voaden's work but allows us to look back and contextualize, in turn, later Canadian dramas such as James Reaney's *The Donnellys* (1973-75), Sharon Pollock's *Generations* (1980), and Wendy Lill's *The Occupation of Heather Rose* (1987), which explore similar themes of rural murder and family feuds, the relations of three generations of Canadians with each other and with the land, and the romance of the North.

Power Relations

Deborah Cherry.
Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists.
Routledge $55.00/$19.95

Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis.
Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung. Fifth House $26.95

Reviewed by Susanne Goodison

Insistence on the complexity of power relations at a given historical or cultural moment increases the subtlety of any critical project. Such insistence is particularly helpful for analyses of work by non-canonical Victorian women artists; thus, Deborah Cherry's *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* benefits from her respectful and subtle approach. She offers a

history of Victorian women artists in which she carefully analyzes these women's manipulations of the evolving Victorian definition of femininity.

The theoretical framework of the book, introduced at the beginning of each section, rests on a notion of difference. Cherry asks, "What are the differences, then, of women's works?" She does not proceed with an essentialist reading of women's art however. Instead, she sets out to delineate the material effects that this concept had on women artists' lives. What is exciting about Cherry's work is the subtlety and inclusiveness she brings to her analysis. Cherry listens to other feminist scholars particularly those scholars who call attention to the continuing erasure of women of colour from critical discourse about the period. Cherry divides her book into two sections—each its own attempt to answer a particular aspect of the question she has posed.

First, she specifies the conditions of the artists' material existence through an investigation of women artists' backgrounds. She discusses "the importance of the family as a social institution in shaping women's desires and aspirations." If a woman's family were artists, she was more likely to receive training within the home. Similarly, a woman's marriage to an artist could facilitate her own work. Despite these advantages, women did not receive the same level of training as their brothers or their fathers nor were efforts as appreciated. Cherry's historical analysis of the art education women struggled for and of their reception by the art institutions shows the recurrence of this type of discrimination. Cherry notes that whenever women gained access to one aspect of the art world they were reinscribed into the hierarchy of gender difference. For example, the success of women's fight to receive professional training was mitigated by the refusal to admit them to life classes. These classes were considered necessary for historical paintings—the genre which marked professional achievement. At the same time, Cherry indicates that women artists, connected through kinship and friendship, provided support for each other. These networks contributed to the formation of these women and further indicate how women adjusted to, or thrived in, or altered their material conditions in order to create a place for themselves to work.

Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis's biography of Nellie McClung raises and begins to answer questions similar to the ones raised in Cherry's book; namely, how did McClung interact with the social definition of femininity, how did she alter it, and how did she interact with her friends and family to do so? Hallett and Davis have written a biography which offers both social and personal history. In each stage of McClung's life, she was involved in the social issues of her community: suffrage, temperance, and the war effort. The authors present the historical background for these issues and thus provide the reader with a sense of McClung's context. Consequently, their argument for a re-reading of her novels and her autobiography is strong. The strength of this biography is also its weakness however; the authors' critical approach creates a distance between the reader and the subject. Further, while the connection between social and personal history is respectful, it is not complex enough to bridge that distance—the result is that Nellie McClung appears in this book only as her public persona and the questions this book sparks remain unanswered.

Metafiction

Karen R. Lawrence, ed.
Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons. U Illinois P
US$42.50/$15.95

Donna Palmateer Pennee
Moral Metafiction: Counterdiscourse in the Novels of Timothy Findley. ECW n.p.

Reviewed by Rosemary J. Jolly

Karen Lawrence's collection unifies a number of disparate essays by deploying "decolonization" not as a precise term to describe post-colonial creative, theoretical and political praxis, but also as a metaphor for the marginalization of women, 'secondary' white male figures of the Western canon, and texts that have at some point defied mainstream British processes of cultural legitimation. This lack of discrimination results in a fascinatingly diverse book; but it also leads to problems. Any number of footnotes, explanations and quotation marks will not account for the violation involved in referring to writers such as Ng_g_, Armah and Head from Africa, or Nourbese Philip, Harris and Brodber from the Caribbean—to take the most extreme examples—as writers who demonstrate the "new views of twentieth-century 'British' literary canons" of the title.

The collection is divided into three sections. The first, entitled "The Politics of Genre," looks at the engenderment of genre (Lillian Robinson on myth; Celeste Schenck on the epithalamium) and the marginalization of the adventure tale (Martin Green) and of H. G. Wells in the terms of canonical modernism (Robert Caserio). Green's essay is possibly the weakest of the collection, not, I hasten to add, simply because I disagree with his thesis—that the genre of adventure literature has been marginalized precisely because of the canon's desire to exclude its attendant masculinist and imperialist aggression. He makes no reference to Brantlinger's extensive work on the body of literature he discusses. There are generalizations such as: "Women writers have always been widely read and discussed; Colored writers like V.S. Naipaul welcomed and awarded." Is he ironic, or does Green have no sense of the heated controversy surrounding Naipaul's attitude towards his birthplace?

The second section is much more specific, dealing with the issue of cultural legitimation in the cases of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *The Waves*. The final section, the longest one, is entitled "Postcolonial Configurations" and consists of five essays on various aspects of post-coloniality and its relation to issues of canonicity. Marilyn Reizbaum's article, "Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing," and Derek Attridge's piece, "Oppressive Silence: J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* and the Politics of the Canon," explicate and counter the problems generated by the occasional facile categorization found elsewhere in the collection. Reizbaum's notion of the "double cross" stands as a critique of the superficiality indicated by the practice of referring to marginalization in national terms, racial terms and those of gender oppression as "colonization," and of the concomitant problem of referring to all counterdiscursive manoeuvres as "decolonizing."

Like the Reizbaum article, Derek Attridge's piece on Coetzee and canonicity demonstrates that individual essays in a collection can not only 'survive' the rhetoric which rationalizes the collection as a whole; they can also critique the basis of their own inclusion. What Attridge calls for is not the inclusion of hitherto marginalized texts on the basis of what Green refers to as a (worthy) "sacrifice" of "real method" and "discipline" in literary studies, one which will "exact a certain price" by rendering "critical standards, the idea of such standards, much vaguer." Instead Attridge, carefully conscious of the canonicity which Coetzee

himself wields, argues that Coetzee deliberately invokes canonical forms—Shakespeare, Defoe, Dante (with Coetzee the list is endless)—in order to interrogate the process of canon-making as one which rests not only on the conferring of authority, but also on the silencing, to different degrees and in different ways, of a number of discrete others.

One final comment: the institutionalization of canonical reform jeopardizes its own effectiveness when it clusters together a barrage of words without thinking through, properly, the connections between them. There is a tendency in some of the articles of the collection to align postmodernism and post-colonialism as equally and similarly aware of a number of different kinds of margins. I would be cautious of any approach which implies that "postmodernism's assault on the universalized subject of humanism" is undertaken in the same ("postmodern"?) context as feminism's, or post-colonialism's, attack on that subject, and to the same end. Thus I find Marcus' identification of "Woolf's postmodern practice" as one which invokes a "postcolonial reader" problematic, and McGee's identification of "the self-conscious understanding of the political functions of language and literature" in the African novels he discusses as "postmodern" confusing, especially in view of his otherwise careful critique of the deployment of aesthetic hierarchies in apparently self-critical Western theoretical discourse.

The work of Donna Pennee, like many of the essays in the Lawrence collection, exhibits that awkward conjunction of an enthusiasm for margins accompanied by an occasional inability to distinguish properly between different kinds of margins.

Pennee is uneasy with the commonly-held notion that metafiction is by definition either politically neutral or inherently subversive, regardless of the context in which it is deployed. This uneasiness appears to be the motivation behind her recently published study of the novels of Timothy Findley: a project whose goal I admire, but whose terms remain sufficiently unscrutinized, so that its primary task—the identification of Findley's work as encouraging, simultaneously, both a multiplicity of interpretations and a response which is above all ethical in character—is rendered, on more than one occasion, inherently contradictory. It is not that Pennee is unaware of the dangers of interpretive fundamentalisms. Indeed, she locates the ethical dimension of Findley's narratives precisely in their attempts to structure an indeterminacy for their readers. This indeterminacy does not consist in a kind of postmodern anarchy, but in a description of that anarchy as symptom: it confuses, deliberately, the concept of the 'correct' moral choice as easily apparent, by constructing "those grey areas between sanity/insanity, dream/nightmare, reality/myth, fact/fiction, truth/lies, past/present" as a complex space worthy of the reader's reflection, rather than as a set of oppositions from which the reader 'should' choose the term already privileged for her or him by the author.

The problem comes when Pennee invests both any act of interpretation, *and* one in which the author/reader picks the least violent interpretation in a specific context, with the same, ethical significance. On the one hand, then, Pennee's own frustration with those who invest the mere recognition of metafiction's capacity for multiple interpretations with an inherent ethical value is evident in her claim that "we must not resist ... the provisional closure that comes with choosing one interpretation over another...." On the other hand, however, Pennee often neglects her own, most valid insight: that any act of interpretation, any act of creating meaning, is not, in and of itself, moral. This is the fallacy on which the postmodern anarchy I spoke of earlier is based, and one whose language Pennee, most unfortunately, imports into her

rhetoric, thus eclipsing its own primary argument. The sentence immediately following her claim for provisional closure functions as an example of such obscurity: "the novel requires that we invest existence—and this includes the 'absent' existence found in fiction and in history—with significance." Yet surely her point has been that it is not only the act of consciously investing existence with significance—but *what kind* of significance we choose to invest it with—that manifests the potential, not fundamental, morality of metafiction?

Because of her occasional essentialism, Pennee does not always allow her reader the same range of choice in interpreting Findley's characters that he allows us in his metafiction. The result is gender essentialism—she characterizes certain narrative traits as male (the fascist reading model exemplified by Noyes) and others as feminine (the rejection of patriotic war narratives, for example)—and also a fundamental textual essentialism: the chapter on *Not Wanted on the Voyage* tends to label Genesis, rather than certain, privileged readings of Genesis, patriarchal. But when she does face the implications of the fact that all writing—be it fascist, or Findley's, or her own—"like Noah's rainbow and whale, is made of paper," Pennee on Findley is certainly worth reading.

Maintenance & Meditation

Mary Lu MacDonald.
Literature and Society in the Canadas 1817-1850.
Edwin Mellen P, $79.95

John Lennox and Janet M. Paterson, eds.
Challenges, Projects, Texts: Canadian Editing: Twenty-fifth Conference on Editorial Problems, November 17-18, 1989. Défis, projets et textes dans l'édition critique au Canada: Vingt-cinquième Congrès sur l'édition critique 17-18 novembre 1989. AMS P, US$29.50

Reviewed by Heather Murray

The appearance of these two divergent but equally useful books confirms that there has been a turn in Canadian literary and cultural studies, with attention lifted away from the particularities of literary texts to the circumstances of their production and reception. (This "turn" dates perhaps a decade earlier in Quebec than in English-Canada.) These critics are concerned less with the assumed intents of individual writers or with the atemporalized meanings of isolated texts than with questions of the development of readers and writers, and with analysis of the institutions through which texts are elicited, printed, evaluated, taught and studied. It is an injustice to earlier bibliographers, researchers and archivists to classify such work as "new," but recent work differs by assuming that this historical and editorial endeavour is not supplementary to the interpetive task once considered the core of the literary disciplines. On the contrary, the question of interpretation is deemed always referrable to an historical understanding of the text and of its maintenance and mediation.

This historical turn is of course more broadly shared across the critical world: such work, however, has at times proceeded prematurely, based sometimes on a paradoxical lack of concern (paradoxical since textual instability is often assumed) with editorial questions. The study by Mary Lu

MacDonald, and the collection edited by John Lennox and Janet Paterson, act as corrections *avant la lettre*, reminding us that understanding of Canadian literature requires, in the first instance, careful research and an inflected concept of the transmission of texts. Further, both books maintain a thoroughly comparative English-Canadian/Quebec perspective, putting texts and problems into an interestingly synergistic relationship.

Mary Lu MacDonald's book breaks new ground in several ways, primarily with its overview of early literature in the Canadas, based not on a narrow canon of republished texts, or even on lesser-known monographs, but on the poems and stories found in newspapers and reviews which formed the bulk of literary producution. The years 1817-1850 bracket the study, beginning with the resumption of cultural life after the 1812-14 war, and ending with the first flourish of fiction writing in French and the death of the *Literary Garland*. The choice of the Canadas presents both a fresh and a comparative field for research, since much work on early English-Canadian literature has concentrated on the Maritime provinces.

If for no other reason, the sheer dimension of MacDonald's study—a survey of 125 books and pamphlets of the period, as well as the literary offerings of 116 periodicals and newspapers—will cause scholars to refer to it for some time. She also provides useful overviews of the history and demographics of the period, of writer and reader expectations of the literary, and of educational and cultural structures. (MacDonald appears slightly to underestimate the importance of organized group literary activity, which was more widespread than the clubs listed would indicate. Missing, for example, are associations in Ancaster and Niagara [listed Fleming #846 and #1188] and a debating society in Preston founded in 1842.) The strength of the study, however, is the way it demonstrates the inscription of early Canadian social concerns in the early literature. MacDonald finds not the transplanted literary conventions and concerns which critics have identified in the more canonical writings, but a vivid depiction of manners, mores, contemporary issues and communities. (Thus MacDonald's findings should have an impact on the consideration of the early Canadian literatures from the perspective of colonial and postcolonial studies.) While MacDonald is happily now incorrect in characterizing our attitude to the early literature as "dismissive"—witness Germaine Warkentin's new anthology of explorer writings, and a number of studies and collections on nineteenth century women authors—her book should stir further interest in the this period which, predating systematic education, produced a literature distinguished by its immediacy of response and its "eclectic imagery."

For the second time in its thirty year history, the University of Toronto Conference on Editorial Problems has turned its attention to Canadian texts, and selections from the 1989 colloquium, edited by John Lennox and Janet Patterson, provide a sense of the range and depth of editorial projects across the country. Jacques Allard gives a history of the undertaking to edit the voluminous and various works of Hubert Aquin; Sherrill Grace discusses the Malcolm Lowry letters collection; Zailig Pollock reports on the long-running A.M. Klein editorial project; Jean-Louis Major discusses the Corpus d'éditions critiques, which is preparing authoritative editions of important Quebec literary texts; and Gwendolyn Davies recreates some of the conundrums in preparing *The Stepsure Letters* for the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts. While these stories of the politics and problems, cruxes and crises, of editing are interesting in their own right, each paper also responds to current debates

in the editorial world (outlined in a lucid fashion by Paul Wyczynski in a concluding essay on the art and science of "textology") and raises questions that have ramifications beyond "Canlit" considerations. While Malcolm Lowry is arguably "Canadian," the editorial problem he has left behind, of editing texts whose generic status is uncertain, is undeniably so. (Similarly, the case of Aquin demonstrates the problems in delineating between the "textual" and "paratextual.") The definition of a copy text based on final authorial intent, undermined by a current interrogation of the notion of "intent," is further compounded in the case of Klein. Establishment of an intended text is also difficult given the productive complexities of the colonial situation, evidenced by the circulation of McCulloch's versions through correspondence, in and out of printing houses, and across oceans, or by the sprawling and sometimes fragmented text of Henriette Dessaulles's *Journal*, as edited by Major. Wyczynski considers reconciling of a variety of competing editions for the case of François-Xavier Garneau. Whether editorial decisions are referrable to "internal" textual questions, or to the intellectual and cultural environment of the text, occupies all of the contributors; equally, decisions may well be determined (as Pollock demonstrates) by the narrativizing tendencies of the editors themselves. In this case, and in Major's words, editing is as firmly balanced in the present as in the past: "Ainsi s'accomplissent, dans et par l'édition critique, l'inventaire et l'invention d'une littérature, le passé retrouvent valeur d'actualité."

Six Reaches After Verse

Gilles Cyr
Andromède Attendra. l'Hexagone Poésie $14.95

Ramabai Espinet
Nuclear Seasons. Sister Vision Press $11.95

Gilles Hénault
À l'Écoute de l'Écoumène. l'Hexagone Poésie $14.95

Patricia Keeney
The New Pagans. Oberon Press $11.95

Michel Muir
Les fleurs du siècle à venir. Éditions du Nordic $10.00

Kathleen Wall
Without Benefit of Words. Turnstone Press $8.95

Reviewed by Anthony Raspa

At a moment in the history of verse when the art of poetry has no obvious living immortals, it should not surprise us that the troubled globe we call the earth should produce aspirants to sit on the seats of the gods. After all, somewhere, there is room for everybody, including poets. But that the geographic space we call Canada should squirm in both English and French with so many pretenders to the title of poet is a happy confirmation that the reach of the human imagination after metaphor never ceases. It is also a reminder that the human imagination is stronger than all the forces of technology that militate against it. The six little volumes of verse under consideration here are an indication of this strength. In a world in which both poets and their readers cut solitary figures, these haunting little books of verse are the proof that the seeds of poetic culture are always with us. Courage, then!

For, the virtue of courage is one that the poets have, foolhardy though they may be at a juncture in time that does not like abstractions like virtue. In the books under consideration, perhaps a theme recurs played against the background of such courage. This theme is that the aspirant to

poetry must define his inspiration and its source as well as the nature of his lines. There appears to be no received tradition for him. We read in Michel Muir's "Lampes et lèvres,» in his *Les fleurs du siècle à venir* that the eternal and the infinite are the muse of the poet. Muir writes, "L'encre de l'éternité / Au milieu des neiges ardentes. / Une lampe / s'incline vers la parole.» We continue to grapple with the immensity of time and space and attempt to congeal it into verse in order to shut eternity, as it were, into a span. The challenge is broadly the same in Kathleen Wall's "Cosmography" in her volume *Without Benefit of Words*. "You have built spaces no one has seen," Wall writes in her dispassionate descriptive style, spaces that harbor "the color of thoughts / that go blank upon themselves." And the thoughts bang about the created space until they break down the walls of human limitation. In an indifferent world, the artist is thus the prisoner and the escapee of his own making. In Ramabai Espinet's "Mama Glo" in her *Nuclear Seasons*, the process of poetic inspiration passes once more through the desire for creation to escape from the infinite into words. Espinet's description of the experience takes us back a little to Muir's sense of nature, poetic inspiration and language. Espinet's womb of verse is not the "neiges ardentes" of Muir's lyric, but "Words scooped / From mountain streams" provoking, some lines later, "This birth" that climbs "The ascendancy dark / With crystal / light." The poet in Canada and Quebec seems much concerned with reasserting the relationship of the inspiration of poetry with its images and forms.

Perhaps such a concern in the poet suggests that he comes to understand the nature of his verse as he struggles to circumscribe his role as a creator. In other poets than Muir, Wall and Espinet, like Gilles Hénault, Patricia Keeney and Gilles Cyr, such a conjunction between the artist's self and his creation is primordial. Even the more established poets like Hénault cannot resist to proclaim it. For, in "L'Amer à boire" in *À l'Écoute de l'Écoumène*, he writes, "Quelqu'un quelque part repeint le ciel en rouge / jette au feu le chiffon des mots / fait fondre les alphabets." And, once everyday language has been dissolved by the poet's creativity, Hénault continues, time—as it were—is remade by, as well as remakes metaphorically the world it moves in. Hénault writes, "recoudre l'avenir plis et tresses tissage / des jours sur la métaphore des villages." That the poet's vision is not by any means all happiness ("un lent rameur s'enlise dans la grise mémoire") is not the point at stake. What counts is the poet's understanding of his role and the strength this understanding gives him to create. In *The New Pagans*, Keeney describes this relationship of the poet's discovery of the self with the object of his creation, sometimes with great directness. In "Train and Mirror," the poet's realization of this relationship is at first uncertain. Keeney asks, "Where does it come from / the work?" But soon its source is clear and the inspiration behind it brings the poem full circle : "So we find it again / and bring it home with us / to the same rough warehouse of our art." An earlier poem in *The News Pagans*, "The Land," clarifies the issues of art and inspiration Keeney speaks of in "Train and Mirror." What the poetess addresses herself to in order to write verse is the natural world. She writes, "The sun is like a surgeon here.../ It is liberation to be exposed." And, once absorbed by what her natural perceptions have to offer, the poetess finds that her craft is somehow secondary to her inspiration; "All that art can do is frame and serve," but it is necessary nevertheless. In Cyr's *Andromède Attendra*, perception is an active participant in the poetic process too. Cyr might even be said to give the impression that perception leads him by the hand. Everything is like a book, "Au

parc / sur un banc / ... avec ce livre / lu autrefois." But for Cyr the poet's perception of, or perhaps his perceptivity for what goes on about him is not as simple as what experience at first suggests; it is not only a matter of the poet re-reading what he has already read in the book of the natural world. Reading with him over his shouder, there are vast forces for the moment ill-defined but full of implications: "le satellite / lit avec moi." Later in his volume, Cyr faces the challenge of awakening to the magnitude of his creative experience. His feet lead him to the border of the universe, "J'apercevais mes pieds / au commencement de l'atmosphère," and, if his resources hold out, the poet will walk that perceived universe, "or trépigner me va / quand les lacets tiennent."

Muir's *Les fleurs du siècle à venir* is an infinitely touching little volume of short and broken lyrics. Poems like the last in Section I show us a poet feeling his way to a viable sensibility: "Et le poème rare, / Braise charmée par le mot, / Frissonne dans l'âme." Wall's *Without Benefit of Words* is a much more thematic and symbolist work than Muir's. In the opening poem "Icarus," and later in "Descent of Inanna" and "Pomegranate, November 11," her style verges on myth, sometimes in absolute contrast to her use of domestic themes elsewhere in her poems. In *Nuclear Seasons*, Espinet, Trinidadian in origin, takes us yet further into a realm of myth than Wall, into myth that manifests itself in folk legends. We wander over fields of "fear and trembling," as, for example, in "The Word" in which emotions like "wild music" are insistent and risk to capture us like demons. Though not particularly unwelcome, the universe of *Nuclear Seasons* is often spooky. As the poem bearing the same title as the book tells us, "night mothers .../ Will nurture the / Final anger / That brings peace." By contrast to all of these, Hénault's verse is much more romantic. In *À l'Écoute de l'Écoumène*, the wind, flowers, seasons, leaves and rain are all there, in a tangible circumscribable natural world, lying in wait for the rambling poetic soul. With Hénault's lyrics, sometimes in prose paragraphs, we are never distant from the colors of the painter and the sounds of the musician. And these colors and sounds barely conceal the poet's rejection of the mediocrity of urban sentiment. Here, the poet's sensibility, perhaps fundamentally at peace with itself after a long and difficult journey, circumvents his temptation to nihilism, even if he does not completely dismiss it. In Keeney's *The New Pagans*, the nihilism occupies much more of the poetic vision than in Hénault's poems. But it is held in check nevertheless by the historical sense present in poems like "Iron and Lace" and "The Wall." One must face the coming and going of civilizations a bit like a detached tourist; and with this feeling for history in Keeney's work, there is also a feeling for place on which pivot poems like "The Hill," "The Land" and "Kitchen-Sink Poem." In the meanwhile, in Cyr's *Andromède Attendra* we return more fully than in Keeney's work to Muir's world of the itinerant poet. But the aesthetics of verse strike the reader as being less at stake in Cyr's poems than in *Les fleurs du siècle à venir*. For there is much solid urbanity in *Andromède Attendra* that undercuts the reader's concern with aesthetics. Cyr's stanzas are invariably two lines long, none of his book's seven sections and none of its lyrics has titles, and *Andromède Attendra* is of a piece that fuses disparate experiences consciously into a pattern of comprehension. The concept of poetry here is equal to its task of delimiting the experience of life.

Places Re-known

Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, eds.
Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia. U Pennsylvania P $17.95

James S. Duncan and David Ley, eds.
Place/ Culture/ Representation. Routledge $59.95/ $19.95

Reviewed by Gwen Raymond

Although it is generally recognized that our knowledge of places and peoples is constructed by means of complex interactions between the "knower" and the object of study, the conscientious application of this basic concept to traditional fields of study still can reveal assumptions or "givens" that have had profound and far-reaching implications. Armed with Foucault and a few other modern soothsayers, academicians are busy deconstructing their fields and revealing power struggles within and between the discourses that have predominated or disappeared from them. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* and *Place/ Culture/ Representation* are two such projects. The varying rates of success of the essays in these two collections highlights the usefulness of clear, appropriate and judicious expostulations of theory, and the mental fog that prevails when the theory is muddled or applied indiscriminately.

The ten essays in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament* draw attention to complexities in the relationship between the "Orientalist" and his posited "Orient," and question the simplistic binarism that portrays the so-called "West" as well as the "East" unrealistically. Several essays point out that Orientalism changed as the West's needs changed. Often, an orientalist picked some observation about Indian culture and then fed it back to the objects of his study (and subjects of his rule) in a more straightened form, creating a vicious cycle of increasingly rigid classifications and divisions. Most of the essays explore specific instances of such interactions and how they have have influenced the way both Indians and Westerners see themselves and others.

This book is informed by the works of Said as well as Foucault; in fact, eight of the ten essays begin with references to Said, and most establish themselves in relation to his work, claiming to explore the grey areas that Said had left out. The Foucault-Said sensitivity to the slippery dynamics of knowledge and power is generally productive. However, it does lead to the rather strange experience of seeing Colin Mackenzie getting points for *not* learning any Indian languages: by remaining ignorant, he gave greater voice to his native informants and translators.

One essay, by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, stands out as a delight to read. She points out that English and Indian literatures have influenced each other and contain many depictions of the Other, and she draws attention to the complex levels of empathy and understanding that are engaged when an Indian student then studies these literatures. For that reason, she proposes an "interliterary" instead of "Comparative" approach to the study of English and Indian literatures, claiming that "...in the postcolonial context, the teaching of English literature can become critical only if it is intimately yoked to the teaching of the literary or cultural production in the mother tongue(s)."

Some of the other essays are harder to be enthusiastic about. Several approach their themes sandwich-style: theory at the beginning and end, specific information in the middle. Not only does this technique confuse and stultify development of the author's arguments, but also it leaves us to discover new and unsubstantiated claims at the end. Worse are the attempts to inject a theme into an otherwise disjointed paragraph with phrases like, "my point in analyzing

them has been...." and "I have argued in these pages...." Although stylistically grating, they do serve a purpose: without such helpful clarifications, we really might not have known what the theme has been.

For the non-specialist, the timely preoccupation with crises of discourse and representation that permeates this book may not be enough to hold the attention. Lurking behind the prose of these essays is an important call for recognition of the complexity of relations between orientalist and Orient, knowledge and power; however, it may be just as useful to go back to Said and Foucault and make one's own critical rereading of their works instead.

In terms of theory, the cultural geographers in *Place/ Culture/ Representation* also have leapt into the fray, but in terms of essay writing, they seem to have been better able to keep their feet on the ground. "If the chapters in this book hold a single objective, it is the view that landscapes and places are constructed by knowledgeable agents who find themselves inevitably caught up in a web of circumstances—economic, social, cultural, and political—usually not of their own choosing," write Duncan and Ley in the epilogue. It is that theoretical viewpoint, and the various fashionable critical approaches that accompany it, that bind together an otherwise wildly varying group of largely well-written essays on subjects ranging from the 19th century Sri Lankan kingdom of Kandy to co-operative housing in Vancouver, from Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* to recent elections in Italy.

The theorists invoked here—such as Foucault—are familiar, as is the self-conscious sensitivity with which the authors examine the human agency behind "truths." Some of the subtitles of Duncan and Ley's introduction underline this approach: "On Representation," "The Critique of Mimetic Theories of Representation," "Postmodernism," and "Hermeneutics."

The essays stress that social, moral, economic, cultural and political factors and discourses influence the way in which landscape is represented. Furthermore, they stretch the concept of landscape to a more abstract definition that better fits the wide-ranging interests of cultural geographers. Many metaphors and theoretical approaches from other fields, such as literature and the theatre, are applied in new contexts here; others, such as the traditional gendering of landscape, are put into question.

Readers who are not die-hard theory enthusiasts will be tempted to skip over a few of the essays that wend their way through complex abstractions with the help of linguistic obfuscation. Such essays are sheep in wolves' clothing; for example, a detailed analysis of Gramsci, Benjamin, and Bloch's writings concludes that "geographers should also pay attention to landscapes of leisure [such as Disneyland] to make sense of our popular cultures."

One of the clearest and most engaging essays is James Duncan's "Representing Power: The politics and poetics of urban form in the Kandyan Kingdom." He first describes the intimate relationship between landscape, religion, and political power as it traditionally had been understood, and then examines the different interpretations given by the king, the nobles, and the peasants that arise after a rift occurs in the traditional order. Not only does this example make clear the multiplicity of discourses that can be used to describe a landscape, but also it draws attention to the ways in which these descriptions represent a struggle for power. Furthermore, because the three groups used these discursive strategies as responses to one another, one can clearly see that "difference" should be seen as "relational," as Duncan argues in another essay.

Place/ Culture/ Representation is interesting, if eclectic, reading, and opens a space

of its own for discussion of a wide range of issues. The theoretical approach here is timely, and the subjects diverse. Because many of the subjects straddle other fields, such as art, literature, architecture, sociology, and history, this book may be informative and thought-stimulating for many readers whose interests lie outside the traditionally understood boundaries of "geography."

Old Habits Die Hard

Rhona McAdam
Old Habits. Thistledown n.p.

Meira Cook
A Fine Grammar of Bones. Turnstone Press $9.95

Theresa Kishkan
Black Cup. Porcepic $9.95

Angela Hryniuk
no visual scars. Polestar $12.95

Sharon H. Nelson
Grasping Men's Metaphors. The Muses Company $12.00

Reviewed by J.R. Snyder

Old Habits is the fourth collection by Rhona McAdam, an Alberta writer who was living in London during the composition of most of the poems; the city of London is, in fact, one of the central characters in the book. The poems are all relatively brief by contemporary standards, with forty-seven poems in the collection, none of them more than forty-four lines long. Most of the language, while highly metaphorical, is restrained, and the mood is often ruminative. Despite the cool, controlled, and sometimes almost dispassionate tone of many of these urban lyrics, though, there is an almost constant undercurrent of violence, decay, and dangerous things that scurry in the dark just beyond the uncertain perimeters of the known world. The poems are basically of two types. Either they are set in the urban—or suburban— landscape, which is seen as a crumbling fortress, about to succumb to the forces of darkness without, or they are set in the natural landscape, from which vantage point humans are seen as the threatening interlopers. In both cases, the human world is portrayed as unnatural, unhealthy, and disintegrating.

The book breaks into five rough, and roughly equal, sections. The first presents the civilization vs. Nature dichotomy/duality. The second focuses on loss and regret, but brings forward the possibility of transformation—that risking loss and living with regret is a necessary part of living a human life. The third section foregrounds the recovery process, regeneration through the willing fanning of the flames of desire. In the fourth, there is a sudden shift: the enlivening desire—which had been principally for an absent lover—begins to turn to paralysis. Images of fire and life are replaced with those of ice and death: "How / can you bury me in ice?"; "am I trapped inside this longest winter?"; and dead roses produce "love's battered petals / falling to the floor." The fifth section opens with poems about the absent lover which grow more bitter, and then final in "Remembrance Day." The poems then turn starkly violent again, and are once more placed firmly in an urban, inhuman setting. The city is dirty, unfeeling, and bitterly cold, filled with raging discontent and a palpable air of violence about to erupt. The last few poems focus on the city's unbreathable air, its incessant rain, how only the city's rodents can thrive there, the humans comfortable only when, rodent-like, they burrow "Underground." But the final poem, "Reconciliation," about returning to London to find it new and fresh again, creates an unexpected upswing in mood:

> I step into shoes
> that are warm and intimate with passages
> beyond the A to Z of my expectations . . .
> they show me
> how many streets I've failed to imagine,

how many
twist free of the grids I used to follow.

Even in the coldest of settings, and following yet another ice age of the heart, it is possible to warm oneself into humanity again, "to rediscover / a burning thing. . . ."

Meira Cook comes to Winnipeg by way of Johannesburg, and although she has been published often, *A Fine Grammar of Bones* is her first collection. As she puts it in the promotional release accompanying the book, "Writing this book was a response to the disorientation I felt as an immigrant in an alien and frightening landscape. It was a way for me . . . of confronting place—the unspeakable cold and lowslung horizon." This sense of fear, dislocation, and alienation are directly apprehensible in the content and form of the poems and prose that make up this collection. The lines of the verse are disjointed, and their arrangement is often not obviously linear. There is no punctuation, and the line breaks and internal spacing are often insufficient to clarify conclusively how the lines should be read. The words flow, lines run together, and the images—sensory fragments, often—accumulate, accrete. The language, particularly in the opening section, "The Crazy Woman Poems," is direct, visceral, and unflinching.

Many of the poems are self-referential, and an image from "with words my tentpegs" serves as a useful capsule description of her poetics:

this flapping house stands upright still
but only just as long as i
can pinion it to this blank page
with my words my tentpegs this poem is
one long
guyrope pulled taut across a world of
snow.

The struggle is to maintain some fragmentary, provisional sense of order, to avoid being taken wholly by the elemental chaos of wind and blizzard, or to be erased by fresh snowfall. One answers the challenge of the blank page by trying to make sense of/with language, but not by mastering language and controlling the chaos, but by forging a ragged sort of coexistence with the elemental forces.

Black Cup is Theresa Kishkan's first collection of poetry since 1978, although she has published regularly, and she shared the bp nichol Chapbook Award for *Morning Glory* in 1991. Her new book begins with a quotation from David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life* about the need to shed the learned self and return to elemental connections: "I must drive out my old self and let the universe in . . . . The spirit of things will migrate back into us. We shall be whole." Many of the poems in the collection are about this very process. The early poems often focus on desolation, loss, and longing, primarily for an absent lover. Even couples who are together are still ultimately single and apart within the coupling. There is, despite the sense of loss that accompanies it, a steadfast determination not to allow possessions, places, or people to claim her: "This is something to remember: / I do not belong / to this house I live in." She keeps herself unencumbered so that she might leave that life behind all the more easily. But in the latter half of the book, the poems focus on birth and rebirth: the births of her children and her own metamorphosis into a mother. These poems are direct and unsentimental, even painfully so at times when discussing the eventual and inevitable hurts and leavings of the children, and all the more effective for it.

Angela Hryniuk's *no visual scars* is a much more determinedly sombre book than Kishkan's. In her second book, despite the often playful and subversive language, the mood is typically serious, even solemn. The tension between that solemnity and the highly rhythmic cadence of the poems is very engaging. The lines move and shift (most of the time—some lines just sit there, while others stumble over them-

selves), and some of the shorter poems are so compressed it seems the lines are collapsing inwards upon themselves very effectively. Perhaps the most telling example of the often non-linear flow of words and images is the orgasmic rush of "mouthful":

> you nibble cajole awaken aliven chew
> tease nibble again my nipple my nipples
> in your mouth alive awaken from the nest.

There are many dark visions of those who live on or beyond the margins of society, and this darkness is ameliorated only somewhat by the sometimes glowing "portraits of pregnant women," many of which also have their darkness.

Grasping Men's Metaphors, Sharon H. Nelson's most recent book and second in a series of loosely connected texts, starts out as a very angry book, wresting 'woman' away from the confining metaphors of men, and chiding men for having pent her up for so long. But it ends up being welcoming, inviting men to join in the enlivening freedom from their crippling metaphors. The book begins from the premise that construction of gender, sexuality, and language are, at some level, inseparable, and that to free oneself from restraints of gender, one must begin with language. The relationship between body and text is often played upon. The traditional aproach to both is to strip it down to its essentials to find out what it means: "We have been taught / that to unclothe meaning, / to strip away the flesh of its expression, / is to achieve a *greater* / clarity." She prefers an approach that allows the flesh to remain on: "make / an icon / of the body / of a text . . . / and enter it"—instead of being the controlling, mastering pedant, the (male) critic must allow himself to enter the text/body. Some of the sparer parts of the poems are reminiscent of Webb's *Naked Poems*, and I find these more effective, ultimately, than the denser, reference and allusion-laden aspects of the poetry (one poem requires thirty-six endnotes!).

Montreal as Centre

Cynthia C. Sugars, ed.
The Letters of Conrad Aiken and Malcolm Lowry, 1929-1954. ECW $25

Bruce Whiteman, ed.
The Letters of John Sutherland, 1942-1956.
ECW $25

Reviewed by Paul Tiessen

Of the three letter writers presented in these two attractive volumes published by ECW Press, it is John Sutherland who has by far the most letters (nearly 300), letters which he sent to all his known literary correspondents—nearly forty. Malcolm Lowry and Conrad Aiken, of course, here write only to each other, Lowry in almost sixty letters, Aiken in around thirty.

Most readers of *Canadian Literature* will have heard of or even grown accustomed to the emotional and intellectual drama in letters recounting Lowry's struggles and pleas for personal and artistic survival. So it is, in a way, a shock to shift from the ecstasies of Lowry's intense performance—however framed by civil gesture and polite nod—to the muted tones of Sutherland's much more conventional letters. Yet beneath Sutherland's business-like formalities and blunt literary commentary there is also the evidence of pleading and struggle and of much that is personal. Sutherland's was a literay struggle set in the fifteen or so years between his long illness in the late 1930s and his early death in 1956, when he was only thirty-seven. It was, for the gracious but firm and often visionary Sutherland, an editor/publisher's struggle against great economic odds and vast general indifference to his personal and joint efforts to make room in the 1940s for a new Canadian literature, a determination to use the small press and the little magazine and the energy of a collective to make Canada safe for new and distinctively Canadian, largely what we might call "modern," poetry.

Sutherland, in the establishment of *First Statement* in 1942, and then the First Statement Press, in the debates between the *First Statement* and *Preview* groups, in the merging of *First Statement* (involving Louis Dudek and Irving Layton) and *Preview* (involving Patrick Anderson, F.R. Scott, and others) to form *Northern Review* (in 1945), and in his often controversial and eventually quite conservative editorship of *Northern Review* until his death in 1956, was ever having to inject his inspiration and energy within the sometimes exhilarating, sometimes frustrating contexts not only of debate but also awkward political alliances among poets fighting for particular critical and aesthetic stances that might inform a new poetry in Canada.

So Sutherland had ever to remain the lobbyist, even taking legal steps of registering *Northern Review* in the Quebec Superior Court under his own name in 1947 as he fought against co-editors Scott and A.M. Klein. In a June 1947 letter (Letter No. 45) to Ralph Gustafson he complains about the pressure from the old *Preview* group, and invites Gustafson's response to the power struggle. Then, in Letter No. 46, Sutherland has to accept Gustafson's resignation from the editorial board of *Northern Review*, following Sutherland's controversial review there of Robert Finch's *Poems*. In the meantime, he enters the wide public domain of *The Canadian Forum* to articulate a "Marxist" argument on behalf of Anderson's and P.K. Page's recent poetry, and to take issue with a review by A.J.M. Smith (only to find swift rebuke in Smith's reply—deftly summarized by Whiteman in a footnote).

Because Sutherland's letters, often somewhat stiff, even laboured, seem so very straightforward and literal in their representation of needs and ambitions, the editor plays an invaluable role as dramatist. Bruce Whiteman's commentary—on Sutherland's setting his press in a favourable light in a submission to the Massey Commission, on Layton, Souster, and Dudek establishing *Contact* magazine and press in 1952 while Sutherland, "dead as a doorknob" (as Dudek wrote to Souster), fell into an increasingly conservative attitude—helps us see the "agendas" often operating implicitly between the lines and postures. As does a harsh attack on Sutherland's enterprise by Earle Birney. Based in Vancouver where he had become friends with Lowry, Birney surveyed Canadian "little magazines" in an April 1949 CBC radio program of "Critically Speaking." Birney suggests that though the creation and success of literature in "Canada" was the ostensible goal of Sutherland and his Montreal allies and critics, there was such a "cliquishness" in *Northern Review*, such "provincialism," that it ought to be called *Eastern Review* (see Sutherland's response in Letters Nos. 52–54).

Malcolm Lowry might affect how we now read any published letters, for he has hinted strongly to readers that a letter is a means for ordering not only the writer's small affairs but also his/her personal myths. Letters are attempts at autobiography. Certainly in "Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession," where Lowry's narrator offers "readings" of Edgar Allan Poe's letters, we are reminded that Lowry held a high view of the letter (offered to its first reader conventionally enough in the guise of some kind of documentary truthfulness) as a performance art; a letter might have imbedded in it layers of simultaneously constructed posturings offering different audiences altogether different readings of the same original text, and, though sent to a single individual, might have its eye on subsequent audiences. Lowry's narrator always keeps half an eye open upon the prospect of a letter's improvement when it finds a wide public audience and thereby overcomes the banal trivializing it risks in

the private hands of a too-literal and reductive single, first reader. The "great glass case of art" described in the story, like a published collection of letters, may seem to violate the intimacy of what was once a personal cry or intimate whisper. Yet, might not the revelatory public display of deep fictions/truths even of a writer's darkest anguish be a desired completion of what was anyway designed to lead to a conversation between exhibitionism and voyeurism? As Lowry suggests in the story, might not a letter's writer in effect be complicit, conspirational, in entering upon a tacit agreement with an editor, an exhibitor, who years after the original act makes an exhibition, a broadcast, or a published collection of his or her correspondence, makes his or her letters "ten thousand times more public than ever"? So we read with a wariness supplied by Lowry's own wink that for many letter writers a multiple and even contradictory readership may lie imbedded in the very creation of the original text.

Thus, a letter is not an isolated performance in relation to its own historical moment. Rather, it has a part to play among other epistolary texts and also in a yet larger extra-epistolary universe. For Lowry, a letter to Aiken belongs to Lowry's large, unannounced dance, a family romance performed behind masks for fathers and friends all over the world. Similarly, Aiken's letters to Lowry in Cynthia Sugars' edition, and Sutherland's letters to writers, critics, opponents, editors, publishers, reviewers, translators, anthologists, and (other) friends in Whiteman's edition, bring to life the many worlds they themselves helped to animate, although their letters pepper these worlds less with Lowryian notes of personal angst than with (for Sutherland) promptings toward collective literary achievement and (for Aiken) assurances of real touch-stones of gain and loss within more or less objectifiable personal and literary worlds.

Both editors, Sugars for Lowry and Aiken as much as Whiteman for Sutherland, have admirably displayed these letters in the "great glass case of art" with their introductions and indexes and notes or "captions" that surround the original texts. These editors have become not merely the first of the "ten thousand" public readers Lowry cites in his story, but also sensitive and sensible mediating voices, introducing subsequent readers to the original writers and to some of the worlds inhabited by those writers. Specific dates and places, often necessarily added as part of the editorial apparatus, offer the documentary immediacy that anchors the letters in time and space, and give them their sense of urgency or need, ambition or desire. And each letter sheds bright light on the broad vistas of literary events; the pressures or possibilities which shaped the original writer's mood of the moment give us localised views of the bigger contexts, the literary histories, that we ourselves have in some way inherited.

So both collections of letters, in their crisp murmur, in their place in ongoing literary conversations and struggles and victories, are rich tapestries which evoke yet other tapestries, other worlds also of writers, other private and group lives. For example, the Aiken/Lowry letters written during the middle (1939- 41) period of the relationship offer a sketch of an Aiken-centered artistic world (peopled by surrealist painters Ed Burra and Paul Nash, documentary filmmaker Stuart Legg, and critic and poet I.A. Richards) which whirled, though at somewhat greater distance, also around Lowry.

But the Lowry/Aiken letters of these "middle" years invite us to imagine, too, a world in which Lowry and Sutherland might have met in—let's say—Montreal. Indeed, the Lowry/Aiken letters indulge in an odd kind of Canadian geo-literary fantasizing, taking Montreal as a strategic reference point. Upon his arrival in Canada in

1939, Lowry yearned to move from Vancouver, what he at that time thought of as "the most hopeless of all cities of the lost," to a thinly-defined "east"—simply put, a part of Canada nearer Aiken's Boston and Cape Cod. Perhaps "some small town near the border, on the Gaspe Peninsula maybe, where living would be very cheap and the surroundings beautiful," thought Lowry, or maybe, suggested Aiken, among friends in, say, Toronto, or, better yet, Montreal. By 1941 Aiken was still anticipating a Lowry move to the east, but by then the Lowrys had bought their Dollarton "supershack on the sea," and had become quite keen on staying there—at least until their fire of 1944 did send them "east," at least to a temporary home in Ontario.

Had Lowry moved to Montreal in 1941, would he have been woven into any of those rich tapestries that are ever created by Sutherland's letters? Certainly Sugars in her editorial attention to fine detail about Lowry makes sure that he becomes attached at least somewhat to the "eastern" Canadian scene: in Lowry's and Aiken's interest in developments at the National Film Board of Canada in 1941; in Lowry's attempts at writing radio drama for the CBC in Toronto in 1944; in Lowry's long friendship and, during 1944–45, visit with Gerald Noxon in Oakville and Niagara-on-the-Lake, where he finally finished writing *Under the Volcano*; in Lowry and Aiken's discussion of Gerald Noxon's dramatic adaptations of four of Aiken's works for national-radio performance in Canada, including *Stage 49*'s famous and oft-repeated production of "Mr. Arcularis."

It was in 1941 that Sutherland moved to Montreal—from a world of personal isolation in Saint John, New Brunswick, where he had spent three or four years recovering from severe illness. How might a "Montreal Lowry" have surfaced or survived without, say, a west-coast Dorothy Livesay, an Earle Birney, or, after Lowry's death in 1957 at age 47, a George Woodcock to take him in, as in the pages of *Canadian Literature* (though not before Woodcock had announced Lowry in the pages of *Northern Review* in 1954—seven years after R. G. Simpson's 1947 review, there, of Lowry's *Under the Volcano*). Whiteman in his introduction suggests that Sutherland, ever independent of the academy, might actually have become a Woodcock had he lived "long enough for his writing to acquire the breadth that Woodcock's writing exhibits." Perhaps. We might wonder, then, which "Lowry" such a "Sutherland" might have taken in!

Reading the "Body"

Lynda Nead
The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality. Routledge, $62.50/$19.95

Steven C. Dubin
Arresting Images: Impolitic Art and Uncivil Actions. Routledge, $37.95

Elisabeth Bronfen
Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic. Routledge, $74.95/$22.50

Reviewed by Amy Gogarty and Pauline Butling

Here are three books on a similar topic—the constructions of the "body" in visual art and literature—but the three writers approach the topic from their diverse perspectives, as a feminist art historian in Britain, a sociology professor from the U.S., and an English literature professor from Germany. The two reviewers share an interest in feminist issues and both teach humanities courses at the Alberta College of Art, but they work in different fields: Amy is a visual artist, Pauline a literary critic. We offer, here, a collaboration which presents this melange of commonalties and diversities to show that the books have different uses for different readers.

British art historian Lynda Nead offers a

feminist analysis of the role of the female nude in patriarchal culture. The nude, she argues, represents control and containment of female sexuality and thus affirms the Enlightenment values of mind over matter, culture over nature, and reason over emotion. Aestheticized as a beautiful object and framed as art, the female nude "symbolizes the transformation of the base matter of nature into the elevated forms of culture and spirit." Nead critiques the ideology of containment as expressed in Kenneth Clark's *The* Nude, in the discourse of connoisseurship, and in life-drawing manuals. She locates this ideology within a history of aesthetics shaped by Cartesian binaries and Kantian hierarchies which combine to privilege the rational, controlled (read "male") viewer. Public outrage over a suffragette's attack on Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus* in 1914 is cited as evidence of the high cultural value of the female nude. The incident is located historically within competing currents and anxieties reflecting the changing role of women, doctrines of purity and eugenics, Irish independence, and national pride in Britain's new art collection. Nead also analyses the sexualized metaphors of art criticism (penetrate, control, seminal etc.) to show the close connection between the nude as high art and as sexual commodity. Nead overstates her case somewhat in claiming that life-drawing manuals are rendered pornographic by their isolation in glass cases in the British Museum. Extensive critique is devoted to patently offensive examples of the manuals, whereas feminist art instructors who bravely battle the odds and use the life class as a site to expose sexist stereotypes operating under the guise of aesthetics are given only a passing reference. Pauline found Nead's book offered a useful overview for a general reader (such as herself). For Amy, it covered some already familiar ground. Part III—a discussion of the border blurs between art and pornography—was the least satisfying section for both Amy and Pauline, as Nead's account of pornography is inadequate. She equates pornography primarily with sexual explicitness rather than with violence or the degradation of women, as it is normally categorized in North America.

Drawing on a wide range of materials such as interviews, media accounts, legal documents, and case studies, American sociologist Steven C. Dubin puts forth a carefully annotated and sourced account of controversial representations of the body in American culture. Dubin points to recent battles in the art and culture wars as important markers of demographic, attitudinal, and social shifts in society at large. He connects the rise in controversies to the decline of the cold war with its easily identified enemy. Mary Douglas' pioneering work on pollution and taboo in marginalized societies is used to characterize contemporary anxiety about social boundaries and "natural categories" such as male/female, sacred/profane, and public/private. The case studies he considers include police seizure of an unflattering portrait of the late mayor of Chicago, Howard Washington, in women's underwear; the dynamics of complex funding debates involving the National Endowment for the Arts and director John Frohnmayer, and the death sentence pronounced on Salman Rushdie for the publication of *The Satanic Verses.* Dubin wisely refrains from making qualitative judgments on the art he discusses, but instead supplies adequate background information on the artists and their work, which makes the book useful for the non-specialist. Pauline found his sociological model and unbiased approach supported her own experience of contemporary culture, which often provides no stable position from which to make value judgments. Unfortunately, the book's index is inadequate, which is an irritation in a text listing hundreds of names, examples,

and incidents which are otherwise difficult to access. With this small qualification, both Pauline and Amy found this book thoughtful, provocative, and carefully reasoned—a welcome critique of the mounting opposition to the production and exhibition of controversial art.

Elisabeth Bronfen applies psychoanalytic theory to the study of selected visual and literary representations of the female corpse, which are particularly prevalent between the 18th and 20th centuries. According to Bronfen, representations of death simultaneously articulate deep-seated anxieties about death and deny its reality for the self. Bronfen maintains that these images can be read as symptoms of our culture which displace, recode, or translate in some manner privileged tropes of femininity and death. Her use of theory is scholarly and productive, and her reliance upon Freud and Lacan is understandable, given their currency in contemporary literary studies. Amy found the book went off track in its discussion of visual images: the range and cultural specificity of which are shortchanged by Bronfen's methodology. Her socio-historical analysis of death is extremely "skeletal" (sorry!) given the intensely social nature of our understanding of it; the rituals, beliefs, and sheer frequency of visual representations of death are reduced by the a-historical and anti-materialist discourses of psychoanalysis, semiotics, and deconstruction. Pauline also found the lack of connection to the body as socio-historical subject to be a major drawback. Bronfen does raise the interesting question, "How do women constitute themselves as authors within a culture which has not drafted this role, except as a blank, an aporia, a presence under erasure?" Her analysis of four novels (Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), Fay Weldon's *The Life and Times of a She-Devil* (1983), Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* (1976) and Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (1972)), in which the narrator in some way kills herself in order to invent a new self shows how some women writers intervene in the semiotic system to produce an active female self.

That the subject of the female nude is ripe for critique is demonstrated by the three book covers, all of which display images of women's bodies. Each in its way simultaneously proffers and subverts an unproblematic reading. Pauline and Amy particularly found the figures accompanying the nude to be of interest: the languorous nude in Velazquez's *Rokeby Venus* (1649-51) is admired by a beribboned cupid; Henry Fuseli's unconscious and disheveled female (1782) is straddled by the figure of a satanic erotic nightmare; while in Andres Serrano's *Heaven and Hell* (1984), American artist Leon Golub, clad as a Catholic Cardinal, turns his back on a woman who is naked, bloodied, and hanging by her hands. In the nude's long history as symbolic cipher, desirable object and sadistic fetish, the female subject herself has been alienated from her physical body by patriarchal culture.

Taking Grant for Granted

William Christianson

George Grant: A Bibliography. U of Toronto P, $39.95.

Reviewed by E.D. Blodgett

No one, it seems, who came within George Grant's orbit, no matter how great the distance, was left untouched. Because of his decision made more than once to make his home in Canada, his presence in the University life of this country, not to speak of the country's intellectual and, perhaps more so, its emotional life was profound and disturbing. This should be sufficient reason for his recent biography to be reviewed in a literary magazine. If more was required, his close association with

Dennis Lee and Scott Symons, the attention paid to him by Margaret Atwood and Eli Mandel, and his significant placement at the conclusion of W.J. Keith's *Canadian Literature in English* ought to be sufficient reminders of his bearing on literature in Canada.

Christian's biography does not, of course, endeavour to place Grant within the literary life of Canada. He seeks to tell Grant's life for itself, and the centre from which it is told is the experience of Grant's discovery "that all was finally well, that God existed." The book is a meditation on the crisis that preceded this discovery and its consequences. The risks of this decision are many, and in certain respects the book aims at canonization. Grant would probably not have approved of the gesture: he considered the life of the saint as "the denial of biography." In a revealing moment, Christian cites Grant as saying as much, and then making the comment that "George made a sharp distinction (some would say too sharp) between the saint's life and the philosopher's."

A saint is not likely to make the most pleasant neighbour, and the description of his dramatic quarrels make this evident. While sainthood may occur by chance, it is often a function of the will. It is not surprising that the exercise of the will is frequently thematized in Grant's work. For Grant, will is to be admired when it is subordinate to reason, as it is in the Platonic tradition. The modern tradition subordinates reason to will in order to make use of the world as it will. His almost unbounded admiration for Simone Weil rests upon her rejection of the "dominant tradition of Western Christianity that understands human beings primarily as the manifestation of their will." This is particularly true of Calvinism, as Grant notes, a belief that forms his own ideology. It is clear from Grant's life that God may have been its illuminating centre, but its dominating obsession was the will of his culture and personality. Grant was not one to abandon his will. This was his virtue and his vice.

Christian's biography, besides the impeccable grace of its style, has the merit of exposing all the central dramas of Grant's life. Indeed, it is perhaps better to consider his life as a play in which wills constantly assert themselves. His mother, perhaps, came closest to seeing him as such a figure when she remarked after his telling her that his ambition was to study theology: "'George, you have always been the poseur of the family, but this the worst pose of all.'" In many respects, he must have been a magnificent poseur, for he became a professor of philosophy after having taken only one undergraduate course in it. He had, apparently, overlooked it (it was a required first-year course), and took it in the summer before becoming a Rhodes Scholar in 1939.

But while Grant is always considered a philosopher (the entry in the second edition of *The Canadian Encyclopedia* depicts him as "[a] brooding philosopher of apparently implacable pessimism," he is rather a moral presence similar to Albert Camus with the addition of a sacred dimension. He may have been a remarkable teacher, but he was willy nilly an amateur in the best sense in his profession. Thus it is fitting that Christian observes that "Grant did not choose the life of a philosopher." It was a "fate that presented itself initially as a sort of consolation prize." He then became, probably by an act of will, a philosopher. Because of the lack of professional training, he was frequently at odds with fellow academics, and his career, from the time he left Dalhousie unsuccessfully for York and more successfully for McMaster through to his return to Dalhousie, is marked by efforts of his will to assert itself.

Christian does not explore too deeply Grant's psychology, other than to refer to Grant's own awareness of his Oedipal rela-

tion to his mother. This is to the author's credit, and yet one wonders whether Grant did not suffer deeply from a sense of unworthiness, despite the honours bestowed upon him at the end of his career. It is in this light that Christian's imbricating *Lament for a Nation* and his mother's death is especially illuminating. The great deprival of modernity and Canada was also personally and profoundly suffered by Grant, and one might speculate whether the grand assertions of the will were an inevitable response to the sense of deprival. It was either that or a silence of which Grant was incapable. The will, of course, that Grant would have most wanted to fulfil was the Will of the Father, and so it is that the dramatic character of his personal response to everyone and everything must be seen as hybris. Thus his life, read within the circumstances of his discovery of God, is not so much that of a saint, but that of a tragic hero. As Christian's biography lovingly demonstrates, those who suffer from hybris are not only maddening, which Grant could be. They are also disturbingly endearing.

Scopophobia

Rosalind E. Krauss
The Optical Unconscious. MIT US$24.95

Martin Jay
Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought. California US$35.00

Reviewed by Richard Cavell

Krauss seeks to argue an alternative history of modernism—modernism's repressed—focussing on those artists who subverted modernism's mastery of the visual. "'My' modernism is, of course, another name for a discursive field that, like any other such field, is structured" writes Krauss. Drawing on both Freud and Lacan, Krauss's 'psychoanalysis' of modernism is organized associationally rather than linearly, and she foregrounds her presence in the text through her musings 'with' and about critics as diverse as Ruskin, Greenberg and Fried. Thus her first sentence: "And what about little John Ruskin, with his blond curls and his blue sash and shoes to match ..."

Yet Krauss appears uneasy with the discursive style she has adopted; each chapter in this schizophrenic text is followed by a bibliography containing long notes written in an unambiguously scholarly mode. But the hegemony of the "scholarly" need not be maintained in order to make the sort of points that Krauss desires to, as Marta Morazzoni's novel about the ageing Ruskin, *L'invenzione della verità* (1988) so powerfully demonstrates.

Among Krauss's chief exhibits are Mondrian's series of *Compositions*, which make the act of viewing itself the conceptual focus; Max Ernst's *La femme 100 têtes* (1929), and Ernst's engagement with Freud's texts, to which Krauss parallels her own engagement with Lacan, particularly the seminar on the "Purloined Letter" and the *Four Fundamental Concepts.* What is missing from her argument, however, is any sense that vision is socially and politically constructed (an area in which Griselda Pollock, among others, has done significant feminist analysis). This approach would appear to have been promised by the allusions to Benjamin and to Jameson in her title, and is especially wanting in her discussion of Picasso, whose work could be considered the test case for her theory.

Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes* covers territory conceptually similar to that of Krauss, though it focuses more on the theoretical tradition supporting modern regimes of the scopic, rather than on the artists working within these regimes (with Duchamp the major exception).

This is a hefty book—632 pages and thousands of footnotes—which articulates

itself in two parts. The first of these takes us from Plato to Bergson in three chapters and rehearses the way in which vision was constructed as the 'noblest of the senses,' culminating in "the Cartesian I/eye." The remaining seven chapters focus on how this hegemony of vision has come to be challenged by French theorists such as Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Foucault, Debord, Barthes, Derrida, Irigaray and Lyotard.

Jay is quick to point out his awareness that the theorists about whom he is writing "tend to be obsessed with visual phenomena"; his point, however, is this is an "ocularphobic" obsession. Thus Jay, like Krauss, may find that Duchamp's work focuses on the erotic, but unlike Krauss, Jay finds this focus deceptive; the erotism here is not "straightforward" but "masturbatory."

Jay *does* agree with Krauss that the Surrealists represent a significant moment in the history of scopophobia; his central exhibit here is the work of Bataille, whose scopophobic bias Jay links to the the blindness of Bataille *père*. Blindness returns as a theme in Jay's discussion of Sartre's wish for "self-transparency"; in his treatment of an exhibition called *Memoires de l'aveugle* which Derrida curated at the Louvre in 1990/91; and as the focus for the last chapter, called "The Ethics of Blindness and the Postmodern Sublime."

This thematicism weakens a book that sets itself up as an intellectual history. It is in fact too narrow for that, however, and Jay would have done better by acknowledging at once that his interest was in a particular moment in French theory rather than the formulation of a general theory of the visual in the twentieth century. His book would have been more productive if he had devoted himself to the paradox which from time to time he acknowledges: that the denigration of the visual takes place in a profoundly image-based culture and through a visual medium, writing. This in turn would have led him to give more careful consideration to the work of McLuhan (and this critique can be extended to Krauss as well), who placed the denigration of the visual in the larger intellectual and social contexts which Jay's study consistently lacks, and whose work was a major influence on a number of the theorists Jay discusses. Jay might also have considered alternatives to scophobia, such as Barbara Maria Stafford's series of books (most notably, *Body Criticism*) which make a compelling case for the visual, and articles published in the journal *Visual Anthropology Review* (where, ironically, one of Jay's chapters was previously published), a number of which have recently been collected under the title *Visualizing Theory*.

Des Plumes De L'oeust

Paul Genuist
(avec la collaboration de Monique Genuist). *Marie-Anna Roy, une voix solitaire*. Les Editions des Plaines $22.95

Carol J. Harvey
Le cycle manitobain de Gabrielle Roy. Les Editions des Plaines $22.95

Reviewed by Estelle Dansereau

La critique régienne se fatigue-t-elle? Espère-t-elle toujours trouver du neuf dans les marges de l'oeuvre et de la vie de Gabrielle Roy? Ou se ranime-t-elle grâce à des courants critiques qui provoquent de nouvelles questions? Certaines, récemment posées, provenant de l'analyse du discours, du féminisme, de la pragmatique et de la psychanalyse, nous permettent d'aller au-delà de la biographie, de la thématique et de l'univers symbolique, tous amplement commentés, pour considérer d'autres dimensions de l'oeuvre. A la veille du cinquantenaire de la parution de *Bonheur d'occasion*, les livres de Paul Genuist et de Carol J. Harvey signalent que la vie de l'auteure et son activité créatrice continuent de

séduire la critique qui dispose maintenant de sources et d'outils considérables.

Le débat face à la fiction autobiographique—comment le vécu s'inscrit-il dans l'oeuvre et est-il transformé par l'artiste—sous-tend ces deux études. Ce fut là le conflit entre Gabrielle Roy, la cadette devenue auteure célèbre, et sa soeur aînée Marie-Anna Adèle, la marraine réduite, après une "vie d'errances," à "un être déçu, aigri, animé de désirs jaloux et vengeurs." S'appuyant sur une étude des oeuvres publiées et manuscrites de Marie-Anna Roy, oeuvres romanesques et historiques et fragments de chroniques, Paul Genuist identifie non seulement le conflit professionnel qui mène à la rupture entre les deux soeurs, mais il revendique le mérite de la description fidèlement captée par Marie-Anna de "la vie des pionniers manitobains ou albertains, paysans, prêtres, instituteurs et autres gens des lieux perdus de colonisation." Par sa description de la persévérance de cette "femme rebelle", Paul Genuist introduit les éléments biographiques qui créent le contexte pour l'élégante étude de Monique Genuist sur "La place de la femme dans l'oeuvre de Marie-Anna Roy" qui termine le livre. Rebelle à la fois en rejettant le rôle traditionnel de la femme et en désirant s'affirmer par l'écriture, Marie-Anna anticipe, selon les Genuist, "quelques aspects du discours féministe" dans sa représentation historique de la condition féminine.

En insistant sur le caractère documentaire et autobiographique des écrits de Marie-Anna, sur sa vision prosaïque de l'écriture, Paul Genuist souligne la différence essentielle et conflictuelle entre ces écrits et ceux de Gabrielle. De fait, bornée par son souci de ne rien embellir, Marie-Anna était incapable, comme le montre Genuist, de voir la différence entre la véracité des faits et la vraisemblance, distinction fondamentale à toute activité créatrice. Et la soeur cadette en était tout à fait consciente: "cette histoire que je raconte est presque entièrement inventée. Mais cela est inventée pour exprimer le vrai mieux encore que ne le fait la réalité." L'idéologie de ces deux écrivaines, alliées par un passé commun, ne peut être plus divergente: l'une fondée sur une représentation absolument fidèle aux faits, l'autre convaincue des stratégies nécessaires à l'intensification du réel. En fin de compte, les Genuist nous persuade que le talent de Marie-Anna Roy, observatrice fidèle d'une période révolue de l'Ouest canadien, la destinait à la vocation d'historienne ou de chroniqueure.

Ce même principe, que la réalité est transformée par la création artistique, sous-tend l'étude de Carol J. Harvey: "la réalité est librement investie d'imagination et le temps et l'espace extérieurs se plient aux exigences du regard intérieur." Elle tente de montrer que l'expérience authentique pouvant être capter dans un récit autobiographique passe toujours non seulement par des figurations constitutives, mais d'abord et surtout par la délégation de l'autorité narrative. Terrain assez bien tracé par Ricard, Gagné et Lewis il y a de cela vingt ans déjà, la fiction autobiographique régienne est soumise ici à un examen particulièrement attentif aux thèmes de l'enfance et du rôle de la femme dans le but d'élucider "l'évolution esthétique à partir des techniques d'écriture." Harvey limite son étude aux trois fictions autobiographiques du cycle manitobain: *Rue Deschambault* (1955), *La route d'Altamont* (1966) et *Ces enfants de ma vie* (1977). Encadrant ainsi des recueils publiés chacun à une décennie d'intervalle, elle peut cerner avec finesse l'évolution de la sensibilité littéraire de Gabrielle Roy, ce qui augmente nos connaissances de l'écrivaine. Harvey introduit des nuances, par exemple, aux observations de la critique sur l'enfance; au sujet de *Ces enfants de ma vie*, elle écrit: "son discours sur la misère enfantine fournit un contrepoint à l'enfance heureuse. En épousant le point de vue de l'enseignante

solidaire avec les enfants, elle prend position implicitement contre le système sociopolitique des années trente; elle dénonce les structures qui permettent l'exploitation des minoritaires et des marginalisés; elle révèle surtout les conséquences déplorables pour les enfants."

Nonobstant cette reconnaissance d'une conscience sociale, Harvey conclut que les préoccupations esthétiques sont privilégiées chez Roy. Elle inscrit le cycle manitobain dans une prise de conscience progressive de l'écriture féminine, si bien qu'elle discerne dans les récits ultérieurs un affaiblissement du souci de réalisme et un raffinement de l'écriture narrative. Intrigante est la conclusion rattachant la prédominance de la condition féminine dans les récits de Roy à sa culpabilité envers sa mère et sa vocation d'écrivain. Les procédés techniques abordés dans "Une écriture féminine"—structure non-linéaire, temps romanesque et temps narratif, images acoustiques, intertextualité, dialogues—auraient bien mérité une analyse plus systématique illustrée d'exemples. Quant au cinquième chapitre, "Un paysage symbolique", cette lectrice a bien l'impression d'avoir déjà trop souvent fréquenté pareilles synthèses du système de figures, d'images et de symboles donnant aux récits manitobains leur cohérence, bien que l'étude de Harvey s'avère plus souple que la plupart dans son exploration de la polyvalence du paysage symbolique régien.

En soulignant l'inscription des tensions présentes dans le vécu sur une vision esthétique complexe mais cohérente, Harvey avance l'enquête sur l'activité créatrice de Gabrielle Roy. Il est bien dommage qu'elle ait relégué à la conclusion le soin de soulever les questions théoriques essentielles à son projet qui, même accessoires, auraient servi à mieux orienter les divers chapitres autour d'une problématique de l'autobiographie.

Inquisitive Travellers

Kathlyn Maurean Liscomb
Learning from Mount Hua. A Chinese Physician's Illustrated Travel Record and Painting Theory. Cambridge UP £50

Helen Fraser MacRae
A Tiger on Dragon Mountain. A.James Haslam n.p.

Reviewed by Maria Nöelle Ng

Learning from Mount Hua is an elegantly produced volume which contains the travel record and a series of paintings by Wang Lü, a fourteenth-century Chinese physician and painter. Apart from the introduction and the concluding chapter, in which Liscomb discusses Wang Lü's legacy to the tradition of Chinese painting, the book is divided into two middle sections, which contain translation of Wang Lü's travel record and analyses of his writing and paintings.

Wang Lü was probably born in 1332 and died in 1391, but there is no exact record of his birth nor death. He lived through the transitional period of the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the struggle for power between factions and the Ming Dynasty, founded in 1368. He studied medicine and wrote a book on the subject, *A Collection of Essays Returning to the Sources of the Medical Classics.* In his late forties, Wang Lü decided he wanted to climb Mount Hua and to paint the mountain, as well as to learn from his travel. This combination of travelling for self-education and keeping a record of one's experience in writing and painting is quite common in the history of Chinese literature, while it gained wide currency only in the eighteenth century in Europe.

A typical entry in Wang Lü's travel record reads, "After climbing up and down a rugged path and turning westward, we reached a cave which had a small opening . . . Seated in the middle of this stone one could meditate. I regretted that I had not brought

along someone like Bendao to play the zither and express the feelings aroused by this remote place. Then I sat on the flat rock and wrote down the poems I had composed." Wang Lü's travel writing is composed mainly of observation of the scenery and of his own reflections on nature. Each of the entry Liscomb chooses forms a companion text to a painting, and following each text, Liscomb gives a description of the painting and, sometimes, the necessary historical context to the place mentioned in the text.

In the various prefaces Wang Lü wrote for his painting albums, he outlines his philosophy regarding art and nature. Although Wang Lü had great reverence for early masters of painting, he still felt it was important that he should see for himself Mount Hua and to paint its various aspects as he perceived them. He was therefore different from most painters of the Yuan period mainly because he believed in learning "directly from natural phenomena" as opposed to learning through mastery of established painting traditions. In order to find individual ways of seeing and representing Mount Hua, Wang Lü tried to discover both new physical approaches to the mountain as well as new ways of capturing its spirit.

The book is richly researched and the paintings are carefully chosen for the texts. Unfortunately, no doubt due to technical requirements, the paintings are not reproduced on the same pages as the texts. Therefore, reading the texts and trying to appreciate the accompanying paintings involves considerable flipping of pages. But the intricate subject and the scholarly work Liscomb has done greatly recompense for such minor inconveniences. I also appreciate her providing a glossary of names and terms in Chinese characters at the back; both the Wade-Giles and *pinyin* romanization systems are used. *Learning From Mount Hua* is a book which needs and deserves to be read over and over again.

The Reverend Duncan M. MacRae was also someone who learnt from his travel, although his journeys to Korea had a very different agenda from Wang Lü's. *A Tiger on Dragon Mountain* traces MacRae's work as a missionary in Korea for over thirty years. A native of Cape Breton and of Scottish descent, MacRae joined the Presbyterian Church and in the late 1890s, decided he wanted to travel to Korea for the church. He stayed in Korea until 1937, and between his first voyage East in 1898 and 1937, made twelve Pacific crossings. He brought up his family in Korea, learnt the language, and felt a deep kinship for the Korean people.

The life of the missionary was a hard one, and MacRae often had to travel to remote villages to preach Christianity to 'heathens.' In a letter to his wife-to-be, he wrote that he could identify with the Koreans as they were and not as he thought they should be. The inherent problem in such a statement of course is that if MacRae had truly understood the Koreans and their culture, he would not have felt the need to turn them away from their traditional beliefs to Christianity. To him, Koreans, like all other Asians, were living in darkness and waiting for the "light of foreign influence." He was excited by the exotic customs of the country and appreciated its ancient culture. But MacRae would have liked to see a Korea preserving in its culture only what would be acceptable to the West. In Hamhung, he was charmed by the way the ancient walled city retained its centuries-old rituals, and "feared . . . the influx of foreign cultures," but could not wait for the day to return to the city to preach to its people.

In the 1920s, Korea underwent major political and ideological changes, with the invasion by Japan and the infusion of communism. As MacRae rightly observed, young Koreans hungered for certain aspects of western culture while anti-western senti-

ments were also on the rise. As Korea struggled under the overlordship of Japan as well as its own new form of nationalism, the vocation of mission-work became less straight-forward than it was in the nineteenth century.

A Tiger on Dragon Mountain is a timely book. With the very complex political situation of North and South Koreas, and the current tension between North Korea and the American government, we all need to know more about the two countries which used to be called 'The Hermit Kingdom.'

Pizza Pizza

Robert Kroetsch

The Puppeteer. Random House, $22

Reviewed by Laurie Ricou

Robert Kroetsch's novels always pause to make you think. They make you think about truth and desire, about who tells story and what language is worth. They often make you stop to marvel at how things happen or why some machine works the way it does. I especially like the way they often force you to re-think everyday things you had never thought deserved thinking about.

The Puppeteer made me pause to ponder pizza. Pizza, I thought, is closer to a truly multinational, multicultural food than the infamous Big Mac. It is predictably, unpredictable: it can have an infinite number of toppings mixed in an endless confusion. Except when it is rectangular, it is round—both a satisfying whole and without beginning or end. Pizza is food for puppeteers.

The Puppeteer makes you think about how pizza is like a novel: "The rubble and design of a pizza, its ordered blur of colours and textures and shapes, arouse in me the collector's will to win." The design is more dependent than any of the earlier novels (except *Alibi*, to which it is both sequel and, perhaps, the field notes) on that paradigm of postmodernism: the detective mystery.

Maggie Wilder is contemplating her own murder. Julie Magnuson's car went off a cliff. There is no body. Jack Deemer is the murderer or the narrator or the detective. Manuel De Medeiros, dwarf spa doctor, is suspected of the murder. Maggie, guided by the old buzzards Ida Babcock and Josie Pavich, sets off through the mazes of Italian streets and gardens in search of the murderer. Papa B, the pizza delivery man in the Greek cassock, retreats to Maggie's attic where he tries to find, in elaborate productions of shadow puppetry, the ultimate narrative variation which will solve every mystery. *Alibi*'s Billy Billy Dorfendorf, Deemer's agent, may be Papa B. There is a design here, and the suspense of a rain-soaked westcoast mystery by Earl W. Emerson. But perhaps the suspense resides in the mystery of (the desire for) motive. You think you know what you're eating, but you keep being puzzled by this or that morsel under the mozzarella. The design of the pizza is discovered in accident and the ingredients to hand.

Many of the varieties listed on this menu will be familiar. An endlessly elusive intertext in *The Puppeteer* consists in Kroetsch's rewriting characters, motifs and incidents from his earlier work. Most of the cast of characters from *Alibi* find new alibis and aliases here; but in the blur of colours, we also readily detect the obsessive collector of *Badlands*, the out-West tall tales of *What the Crow Said*, Demeter Proudfoot's irony of biography, the puzzles of conjunction from the *The Sad Phoenician* and the garden mysteries of *Seed Catalogue*. Borrowings are overt yet puckish: in that wedge, I tasted Bowering; in other slices I found Ted Blodgett, Robert Harlow, bp nichol, and David Lodge.

The novel is a pizza of places. It evokes Vancouver's nights in dramatically rainy scenes. But it also has exquisite descriptions of the Tivoli Gardens, of the streetscapes of

Sifnos, and of the piazzas of Rome. The novel cherishes cappucino, gelati and *obiter dicta*. And it delights in the writer as *compiler*, in the language of collection. It sustains the joy of *Alibi* in collecting collections. Any collection will do as long as it is already in the form of a collection: "one hundred and twenty-four weak excuses. Portions of a tongue. Eighty-two reasons why up and down are the same thing."

That's the pizza formula: put anything in you like, don't fret over the combination, cover it in cheese and bake in a very hot oven. Presto. A novel you can read with your fingers.

Of course, you can't review a pizza by listing its ingredients, however exotic or ordinary. The best way to convey the flavour is to share a slice or two. I have persuaded myself that I can recognize a kroetschian sentence—I like to imagine that if I found a cold sentence in the refrigerator I would know if it had been baked by Kroetsch. Something like, "Maggie in that instant wanted to believe him" or "He was deaf, the man, to any kind of snooping." In the first example ambivalent love is puzzled by a prepositional phrase. Normative syntax would likely have "That instant Maggie wanted to believe him." Or, possibly, "*for* that instant." Kroetsch's sentence exaggerates the interruption between subject and predicate, between human being and desire, and the textures mixed by the drifting modifier 'in.' Kroetsch likes to focus on those nuances of connection that are prepositions. The second sentence also has a built-in hesitation, an unnecessary apposition, but also one removed from its antecedent. It offers precision and delivers confusion; it offers tentativeness and delivers wonder.

I began this review by celebrating Kroetsch's focus on the banal but beautiful detail. Imagine if one of the "poetic" and "idiosyncratic" essays in Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* had been devoted to pizza. Now expand that cynicism and delight in mass culture to novel length. *The Puppeteer* gives a comparable pleasure of style. So perhaps the best way to end a review is by chopping up some of the ingredients in Kroetsch's kitchen. Make mine a syntax special. A large please.

> Far above, something terrible was happening. Had happened. Would happen.
>
> They were in the belly of a great whale, and the whale was the shape of light, barely sustaining itself against the Pacific darkness.
>
> And if the two old women, a single moment earlier, had been little more than a pair of strangers, in the moment of Maggie's speaking they became her allies, friendly co-conspirators in a treacherous world.
>
> The floating words attached themselves to tongues.
>
> No, I am not a foreigner, but I am a foreigner, yes.

Papa B., the narrator muses, speaks pizza as if it were a language. And Robert K., I am persuaded, savours language as if it were a pizza.

Courage de femme

Louise Warren
Léonise Valois, femme de lettres. l'Hexagone
$24.95

Reviewed by Anne Scott

Dans cette biographie de son arrière grand-tante, la poétesse canadienne Louise Warren ne nous présente pas,même si nous en sommes en présence de la première femme à avoir publié ses poèmes au Québec, un "phare" ignoré de la scène littéraire québécoise, et l'on pourrait se demander au premier abord quelle intention, sinon une pieuse piété familiale, a pu motiver ce long travail de patience et d'affection. Pourquoi faire la biographie de l'auteure de vers, somme

circonstance pour les pages féminines de revues de l'Avant-guerre? Après tout, on le sait, la littérature de femmes au début de ce siècle n'était bonne que pour les femmes...

La fidélité au souvenir familial et le désir de retrouver l'authenticité de ceux qui nous ont précédés ne sont pas les seules justifications du texte de Warren. Aux détours des pages, on découvre une époque, une famille, une société et une femme de chair et de sang, une femme qui se pense et se réclame femme de lettres, à une époque où l'écrivaine n'est ni une réalité ni même bien souvent une possibilité. Léonise Valois,elle, poussa le projet d'écriture jusqu'à vouloir en faire son moyen de subsistance. Ses vers ne sont pas audacieux, mais ils résonnent d'accents lyriques lamartiniens, ils disent son amour de la nature et des autres. Ils racontent aussi de façon assez émouvante la soif d'un amour impossible et des désirs bien naturels que la vie ne sut pas remplir, et ses préoccupations, pour être celles des autres femmes de sa génération, ne la rendent pas pour autant servile.

Léonise Valois était née à Vaudreuil en 1868; c'est là qu'elle passa les moments les plus heureux de sa vie, là qu'elle venait retrouver l'inspiration de sa poésie, dans la nature simple et généreuse, au milieu des siens. Sans doute avait-elle hérité de son père le souci de la justice sociale qui se fait jour dans son travail journalistique et l'assurance que, pour elle, l'écriture est non seulement possible mais encore essentielle. Chaleureuse et sensuelle en un temps où il n'était pas de bon ton pour les femmes de l'être et encore moins de le montrer, elle trouva dans la poésie un exutoire à sa rêverie, une catharsis à ses désirs et ses peines et c'est ce qui la rend si humaine pour nous. Elle n'était pas jolie: "l'ombre du beau tableau de ma famille", lui disait sa mère, avec une cruauté qui n'est pas sans nous choquer aujourd'hui; elle ne sera pas religieuse et elle demeurera "vieille fille". Il lui restera donc le sacrifice à la famille, le travail aux Postes canadiennes, qui la fera vivre, elle et sa famille, et d'abord et surtout l'écriture, l'écriture qui lui ouvre la porte de l'indépendance, le moyen d'aider les autres et de s'affirmer.

Au cours de sa vie, Léonise Valois participe à de nombreuses revues, elle dirigera même la page féminine du *Monde* et de *La Terre de chez nous*. Elle y débattra l'indépendance des femmes, le célibat, le mensonge, y défendra les droits des femmes, mais aussi la famille, toujours avec passion, toujours avec honnêteté. Elle ouvrira ses colonnes au courrier et à l'écriture de ses compatriotes, les invitera à participer à des concours littéraires, toujours soucieuse qu'elle est de légitimer la parole féminine.

Deux recueils de poésie, *Fleurs sauvages* (1910), le premier ouvrage de poésie publié par une femme au Québec, et *Feuilles tombées* (1934), jalonnent sa vie d'écrivaine, interrompue par les deuils, le travail et un grave accident de la circulation qui la laissa soixante-trois jours dans le coma.

Ce qui reste pour moi de cette femme c'est son esprit d'indépendance et sa foi en sa vocation d'écrivaine, son courage à s'exposer aux yeux des autres, à soumettre son écriture à leur jugement avec humilité mais toujours sans fausse modestie, son humour enfin et surtout, qui l'empêchait de perdre de vue les perspectives et de survivre aux déceptions de la vie, aux coups du sort et aux regards des hommes qui traversent la femme dont le corps est livre.

Le travail de Louise Warren est honnête, précis, minutieux; fidèle, sans être servile, il est au service de son objet. Dans ce livre, Louise Warren n'est pas la poétesse ou la romancière, elle est biographe et une biographe qui s'efface devant son sujet, qui lui laisse la parole, lui ménage un espace où il peut se dire, loin des soucis de la renommée politique ou littéraire. On a là une petite miniature, un regard affectueux posé sur un coin privé de l'histoire sociale et

intellectuelle du début du siècle; pas de grand panorama, pas d'historique de l'émancipation ni de la légitimation de l'écriture féminine, mais la rencontre d'une femme courageuse et attachante, pionnière de la poésie et du journalisme féminins au Québec.

Cette enquête fidèle nous invite à repenser la question de l'écriture, de ce qui constitue pour nous le texte, la *doxa*, la tradition et les critères qui font ou défont les oeuvres.

Rien là de spectaculaire en somme, ni du côté de la vie, ni du côté de l'oeuvre, une vie simple, des circonstances ordinaires, même si elles sont souvent tristes et difficiles, mais, au-delà de la simplicité, nous trouvons l'émotion de partager la vie d'une famille, la vie d'une femme qui s'est souciée des siens et qui a eu le courage de s'affirmer telle qu'elle voulait être. Une voix parmi la foule, mais une voix personnelle, courageuse, indépendante, parfois même indomptable.

New Talent

Timothy Paleczny, ed.
Stories From Blood & Aphorisms. Gutter $16.95

Carol Windley
Visible Light. Oolichan Books $12.95

Hayden Trenholm
A Circle of Birds. Anvil $9.95

Reviewed by Rosemary L. Smith

It is always worth emphasizing that the regional presses of Canada continue, often against formidable odds, to introduce new writers deserving our attention. Three recent books of fiction serve to illustrate once more the vital function of small presses in bringing noteworthy young talent before the public.

Nineteen new Canadian writers are showcased in a collection of stories selected from the first eight issues of *Blood & Aphorisms*, a magazine which, according to the introduction, "provides the exposure writers need in order to build experience and confidence." An avowed dedication to "raw creativity" no doubt contributes to an unevenness of quality in the stories. Somewhat haphazard presentation and editing together with numerous, irritating printer's glitches may be partly attributable to budgetary constraints. These weaknesses, though, do not seriously detract from the force and vitality with which most of the stories are fairly brimming. There are fearless writers here who take some big risks. Individual styles and methods range from fantasy and "magic realism" to gritty, realistic examinations of contemporary social issues in North American and Third World settings. All the material is treated without compromise. While not for the prudish or faint of heart, many of the selections are powerful expressions of writers determined to disturb our complacency.

Far less dependent on shock value are the sensitive, poetic stories in Carol Windley's debut collection *Visible Light*, winner of the 1993 Bumbershoot/Weyerhaeuser Publication Award. These pieces recreate the atmosphere and topography of British Columbia's west coast, infusing the rugged landscape with mythic meaning. Several of the strongest stories are about people longing to retreat into a private Eden, remote and protected from the threatening world of 20th century "progress." The rain forest beckons; perhaps it is the last, best West on earth for achieving security and self-autonomy. As one character reflects, "The great beauty of this place is that you can make anything you want out of it."

As the stories show, the characters' intensely personal visions are eroded, not by the urban ills of crime and pollution, but by the relentlessly encroaching needs of other people. Edenic dreams are exposed as possessive, self-absorbed versions of the good life. Not all the stories are about illu-

sory havens in the rain forest, though all deal in one way or another with dreamers clinging to private visions. Windley is unafraid of weighty themes, which she manages with compassionate insight and a well controlled technique.

A *Circle of Birds* is an intriguing, intricate novel which won first prize in the 15th Annual International 3-Day Novel Contest, now sponsored by Anvil Press. The obligatory weekend writing marathon notwithstanding, past winners of the 3-Day have turned out some amazingly good work; this first novel by Alberta playwright Hayden Trenholm is no exception. The book is impressive in spite of what I sense as an (understandable!) authorial fatigue in the final portion.

Trenholm has chosen a complex narrative structure upon which most of the book's meaning hinges. Two stories are revealed simultaneously in alternating chapters, that of an anonymous 45 year old mental patient in an Edmonton hospital struggling with crippling memories of violence and pain, and the narrative of his father "Billy," a religious fanatic who deserted his son before he was born. Both father and son are mired in psychic breakdown, the only response to the agony of human existence of which they seem capable. The necessity to connect the narratives (is the patient inventing his father's life? does "Billy" exist outside of his imagination?) leads to a tedious over-reliance on recurring images and events which are similar or identical in both characters' stories, devices which gradually seem forced and mechanical. Although nihilistic notions of fate, time and death dominate the book, the considerable strength of this novel lies in its harrowing evocation of madness amid the tortured attempts of the two protagonists (perhaps there is only one?) to live crazy as long as they can stand it.

Romance Frontiers

Dana A. Heller
The Feminization of Quest-Romance. U Texas P n.p.

Linda K. Christian-Smith
Becoming a Woman Through Romance. Routledge $17.95

Reviewed by Sandra Tomc

Romance is probably the most copiously written, widely read and the least theorized of women's genres. Almost automatically, therefore, any study of women's romance is bound to represent a useful contribution to the field. But given that little of note has been published on this subject since the early 1980s, when Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* and Tania Modleski's *Loving With a Vengeance* carved up the field between them, we might well be expecting the appearance, surely overdue, of updated strategies for approaching the genre. Do Dana A. Heller's *The Feminization of Quest-Romance* and Linda K. Christian-Smith's *Becoming a Woman Through Romance* outline such fresh approaches?

In *The Feminization of Quest-Romance: Radical Departures* Dana A. Heller looks at twentieth-century women's rewritings of the American quest narrative, that story of masculine development and self-discovery through "lighting out" that dominates American fiction from *Huck Finn* to *On the Road.* Reading a range of women's works published over the last fifty years—Jean Stafford's *The Mountain Lion,* Mary McCarthy's *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood,* Anne Moody's *Coming of Age in Mississippi,* Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping* and Mona Simpson's *Anywhere But Here*—Heller looks at how the traditionally male quest-romance has been transformed by women writers for the purposes of articulating female self-discovery. In some cases, Heller says, the final product may not look like a quest at all. Indeed, a dominant feature

of these stories of women's travel is the failure of the quest paradigm: "a thwarted or impossible journey, a rude awakening to limits, and a reconciliation to society's expectations of female passivity and immobility." Nonetheless, if such failures have frequently featured in women's efforts to re-imagine quest-romance, they are by no means endemic or entrenched. Increasingly since the 1940s, women writers have found in female transience a powerful means of representing not failure and defeat but a widening landscape of pleasures and options. The feminized quest-romance, according to Heller, could in fact be considered "one of the most fundamental formal expressions of women's awakening to selfhood, mobility and influence" in the second half of this century.

With so auspicious a claim made for feminized quest-romance, it is disappointing to discover that Heller spends so little time explaining the category itself. Unclear, for instance, are her criteria for determining what exactly constitutes a female version of "lighting out." Heller states at the outset that she is looking for works in which the female protagonist chooses something other than heterosexual love as the object of her quest. But Heller never explains why these quests should be considered "feminized" while the quests in traditional women's romance—in *Gone With the Wind*, for example—are not; she says only, with disarming ease, that the former are more "authentic." Heller's amorphous definition of the feminized quest has its corollary in a lack of historical or contextual information around its development. Mysteriously absent from this study, for instance, are any works written in the 1970s, the very decade that saw a veritable flowering of women's stories about travel and exploration, from Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying* to Judith Rossner's *Looking for Mr. Goodbar*. In her introduction Heller mentions the importance of Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (which is, of course, only the tip of the iceberg of 1970s sci-fi by women, most of it about journeys), but she does not explain why these consciously anti-patriarchal quest-romances do not form a more central part of her book. Perhaps because of the fact that Heller's claims for the importance of the feminized quest-romance are in the first place so large, her study often seems partial and her readings inexplicably selective.

Like *The Feminization of Quest-Romance*, Linda K. Christian-Smith's *Becoming a Woman Through Romance* analyses a contemporary paradigm of female development. But the genre in this case is not what Heller would call "authentic" romance; it is rather the mass-produced teen equivalent of Harlequin romance, stories that chronicle the joys and trials of dating for a pubescent audience. Armed with an impeccable battery of interviews, questionnaires and a sample of thirty-four novels, Christian-Smith describes how teen romances socialize their readers by constructing "feminine subjectivity in terms of a significant other, the boyfriend." Christian-Smith's study has three parts. The first is an analysis of the dominant themes of the novels themselves and of changes in the genre from the 1950s to the 1980s; the second is a discussion of interviews with 29 teenage girls with diverse ethnic and social backgrounds who read the novels; the third is a (dated) commentary on the political significance of romance reading in the context of the rise of the New Right.

The detail and complexity of Christian-Smith's research are impressive. And yet there seems something wasteful about all this ethnographic effort when in the end Christian-Smith has only one uncomplicated point to make: romances are bad for women. Without exception, says Christian-Smith, they reinforce gender and class stereotypes, they mystify power relations between men and women, they teach

women to be obsessed with their bodies and their looks. Interestingly, the findings in several parts of Christian-Smith's study complicate this position. While teen romances of the 1950s and 1980s, for instance, draw their characters along stereotypical gender lines, dividing girls into "Good" and "Bad," romances of the 1960s and 1970s just as readily upset these stereotypes. Christian-Smith notes the relative complexity of the novels of "Period 2," as she calls it. Yet almost invariably, and for reasons never explained, she bases her conclusions about teen romance as a whole on the novels of the 1950s and 1980s (see, for example, p. 88). It is, consequently, the visible gap between Christian-Smith's findings and her bland generalizations that makes her study as frustrating as it is informative.

Although both this book and *The Feminization of Quest-Romance* are valuable for their isolation of themes and subgeneric trends in late twentieth-century women's writing, neither finally builds on, or even departs from, the models laid out for reading romance in the late 1970s and early 80s. And because they are derivative, both books are founded on assumptions that a more recent post-modern feminism challenges—like the unproblematic chasm assumed by both Heller and Christian-Smith to separate women's "junk" culture from "authentic" female writing. Perhaps we could say, then, that these two books lay more groundwork for studies yet to be done, effectively highlighting scholarly "frontiers," to use Heller's phrase, which they leave future scholars to cross.

Myth & Multi-Culturalism

Ludmila Zeman
The Revenge of Ishtar. Tundra Books $19.95

C.J. Taylor
The Secret of the White Buffalo. Tundra Books $13.95

Reviewed by Gernot R. Wieland

It may be a truism to say that cultures define and redefine themselves by their myths. As the times change, so do the retellings of the myths of a country: different emphases will be placed on different aspects of the one story essential to the self-definition of the culture. This truism, however, can apply only to a monocultural society; the varied, and often mutually antagonistic myths of a multicultural society would not seem to help a country such as Canada to find its identity. Nonetheless, myths are retold, and are retold for a most impressionable audience, namely children. Two recent books, Ludmila Zeman's *The Revenge of Ishtar* and C.J. Taylor's *The Secret of the White Buffalo* explore the dark regions of myth. Although *The Revenge of Ishtar* re-tells one episode of the epic of Gilgamesh, i.e. of a story set in Mesopotamia some 5000 years ago, and *The Secret of the White Buffalo* a re-telling of an Oglala Sioux legend, set in the prairies at an undetermined time before the white man arrived, the two myths come to surprisingly similar conclusions.

The Revenge of Ishtar is Zeman's second children's book on the epic of Gilgamesh; the first, *Gilgamesh the King*, appeared in 1992, and a third one is planned. In *The Revenge of Ishtar* the king Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu kill the giant dragon Humbaba; the goddess Ishtar, who had helped Gilgamesh by sending favourable winds, wishes to marry Gilgamesh, but is rejected. In fury, Ishtar vows revenge, and soon attacks Gilgamesh's town Uruk on the back of the Bull of Heaven. Enkidu and

Gilgamesh, however, work together to kill Ishtar's bull. In revenge, she sends an illness to Enkidu, who wastes away and dies. Gilgamesh vows to go on one further quest to seek "the secret of immortality."

The book is magnificently illustrated in muted colours, giving the impression of time-worn pictures. The illustrations evoke the richness of Sumerian life, and elaborately detailed frames increase the illusion of authentic Mesopotamian scenes.

The bull, or rather his North American cousin, the buffalo, also features in *The Secret of the White Buffalo*. Whereas the bull of Ishtar is a monster that brings death and destruction, the White Buffalo and his human manifestation, White Buffalo Woman bring peace to an Indian tribe torn apart by bickering and infighting. The story is the Oglala origin legend of the peace pipe, here combined with that mysterious and almost mystical yearly return of the buffalo herds. In a certain year the buffalo herds do not appear, and the arguments among the people grow louder. Scouts are sent out, and they encounter a mysterious woman dressed in white buckskin. She tells one of the scouts that the village must work together to build a tipi. When at last it is finished, White Buffalo Woman comes and presents the village with the peace pipe to remind them to remain at peace with one another. As she leaves, she is transformed into a white buffalo, and in her wake "a herd of buffalo appeared."

This book, too, is beautifully illustrated, evoking the mystery of the White Buffalo by having him appear in, or as, a cloud overlooking grassy landscapes, and in one especially striking picture having White Buffalo Woman fuse into the shape of White Buffalo. Both story and illustrations invoke the richly imaginative life of the Plains Indians in vivid colours.

How do the stories come to similar conclusions? The bull in the Gilgamesh story is enemy and destroyer, in the Oglala legend nourisher and counsellor. The symbolism of these two animals may be starkly contrasting, but the message is the same: people must unite to overcome difficulties. By fighting together, Gilgamesh and Enkidu can kill the Bull of Heaven; by working together to build a tipi, the Oglala put their differences behind them, and mysteriously the buffalo reappears.

Oglala legend and Mesopotamian myth would appear to transcend the differences of cultures, of continents, and of centuries, and despite their cultural specificity become a repository of non-cultural, because basically human, wisdom and values. These then are stories ideal for the children of a multi-cultural society such as Canada, shaping a human and humanistic rather than a culture-specific identity.

Conte, récit, nouvelle

Agnès Whitfield and Jacques Cotnam
La nouvelle: écriture(s) et lecture(s). Éditions du GREF, n.p.

Reviewed by Claire Wilkshire

York University, November 1992: a group of writers, academics and other interested parties come together to discuss the short story. One result of this gathering is *La nouvelle: écriture(s) et lecture(s)*, a collection of 16 essays which have in common two topics: the short story, and francophone literature in Canada. The three standard French terms for the short story are "le conte," which combines the meanings of story and fable, "le récit," which translates as "story" but also as "narrative," and "la nouvelle," which, as this book shows, can mean all sorts of things... In these essays the reader will also discover such terms as "la fiction brève," "l'écriture nouvellière," "le court récit," "l'histoire." All of these expressions refer to the same thing, and not the same thing: each implies a slightly

different emphasis, perhaps even a slightly different genre. *La nouvelle: écriture(s) et lecture(s)* explores the variety of genres which are categorized in English under the labels "short stories" and "short fiction;" it draws together historical surveys, meditations on the attributes of the genre, and analyses of the works of individual writers.

For readers interested specifically in the distinctiveness and possibilities of short fiction, the first two essays provide rewarding reading. Henri-Dominique Paratte's "L'architecture de la nouvelle" is a rambling essay punctuated by flashes of insight. It addresses three key issues: the difference between concision and brevity, the distinction between "nouvelle" (which Paratte privileges) and "conte," and the ex-centric position of the "nouvelle" as genre. Paratte claims that brevity is a merely quantitative notion, while concision (which he associates with the "nouvelle") implies condensation and suggestion rather than relative length. He sees the "conte" as a moralizing, totalizing genre whose purpose is to perpetuate existing social values. The "nouvelle," on the other hand, he situates at the outer edge of writing:

> La concision de la nouvelle répondait à une volonté de ne pas tenter de tout inclure (à la différence du roman), mais à une décision d'être sans cesse en rupture, à la limite du silence, comme en marge de tout ce non-dit qui ne se dirait que dans un autre type de texte, peut-être, ou en dehors du texte, ou ne se dirait, tout simplement, pas.

In "Commencer et finir souvent," André Carpentier combines his talents as a critic and story writer to produce one of the most perceptive essays in the volume. While his reflections on the story are wide-ranging, Carpentier focusses on the fragmentary nature of the short story and the discontinuity of story collections. Stories, Carpentier notes, are published in magazines or collections, and their autonomy is thus consistently undermined by a signifying context. The title of the article indicates the source of Carpentier's delight in story collections— they are always stopping and starting, not so much working against continuity as creating a process which itself initiates interruptions and new beginnings. The "nouvelle," then, is the genre of doubt and scepticism, "le genre du renouvellement permanent de sa posture devant l'écriture." Distinguishing between homogenous (i.e. linked) story collections and heterogenous ones, Carpentier expresses his preference for the latter— they allow the reader to enter into the textual dynamic, to create connections among the stories instead of relying on links that have already been established. The short story has often been called a subversive genre; in his analysis of the principles of brevity, discontinuity and fragmentariness, Carpentier is able precisely to situate its subversive characteristics.

Two further articles which work toward a distinction between "nouvelle" and "conte" are Jeanne Demers' "Nouvelle et conte" and Sylvie Bérard's "Des titres qui font bon genre." Demers contrasts the "nouvelle" as a written form with the orality of the "conte"—the article begins well but the theoretical model Demers promises does not materialize and the discussions of individual stories wander away from the topic. Bérard's essay is more specific and more successful; she argues that it is the textual apparatus (rather than any inherent features of the fiction) which often arbitrarily and inconsistently tags stories as "nouvelles," "contes" or "récits."

Further contributions include historical and regional studies such as Joseph-André Sénécal's "La nouvelle québecoise avant 1940," Marie-Josée des Rivières' "Les nouvelles de *Châtelaine* (1976-1980)," François Paré's article on the story in French Ontario, and Évelyne Foëx's on Acadian short fiction.

Individual authors discussed are Eugène L'Écuyer(Maurice Lemire) and Anne Hébert (Lori Saint-Martin). Two closing articles by Jane Koustas and Rosanna Furgiuele concern the pedagogical value of the story.

Not all the essays in this collection are equally informative. Michel Lord's "La forme narrative brève" and Claudine Potvin's "Les nouvelles de France Théoret" make simple ideas complicated; an excess of terminology and citation attempts unsuccessfully to conceal a lack of substance. Gaétan Brulotte's on endings is mildly engaging but does not contribute much of interest. It is not clear what Roland Bourneuf's article on dreams and literature is doing in this collection, since it is not about the short story or francophone writing in Canada.

Thus *La nouvelle: écriture(s) et lecture(s)* is an uneven collection, but one which offers a diversity of approaches to the short story. Its strength lies in the record it provides of short francophone narratives in Canada and in the detailed explorations of genre which will interest readers of short fiction in any language.

Looking South

S. L. Sparling
Homing Instinct. HarperCollins $24.95

W. P. Kinsella
The Dixon Cornbelt League and Other Baseball Stories HarperCollins $22.95

Reviewed by Patricia Whitney

Kinsella has said that he considers himself a "North American writer" and that "if it weren't for the medical insurance" he would live full-time in the United States. Maybe he just says these things to be irritating; maybe he just lacks charm or good manners. Whatever the case, he is nonetheless a master of sentimental fiction, *Shoeless Joe* being a case in point. This means we have to put up with his contempt for Canada, his shocking portrayal of aboriginal people in his "Indian" stories and his misogyny. Or does it? In the stories of *The Dixon Cornbelt League*, Kinsella has retained the sentimentality and the inane portrayal of women that cast a shadow over the otherwise brilliant *Shoeless Joe* and, apparently, misplaced his wonderous gift for invention.

There are nine stories in this collection. The reader will need a stretch, a long one, before reaching the seventh. "The Baseball Wolf" is the lead-off: a Latin-American shortstop is a part-time wolf. People mutter "*El lobo, el lobo*" and the wolf/shortstop says "Rowl." Magic Realism springs to mind like, well, a wolf, and one hopes that the witty connection of "*El lobo*" and Latin American writing is intentional.

"The Fadeaway" is set in the year 2000. A pitcher rises from the dead to bring the redemption of the screwball to Tag Murtagh, manager of the Cleveland Indians. Things don't work out and the club's owner, "who manufactures women's undergarments and commercial fishing nets," sends Tag off to Japan to become the team's Roving Pacific Rim International Scout. This is the sort of wit that appeals if one finds something inherently funny in underwear or, I suppose, Asians. Guess that one went right by me.

"The Darkness Deep Inside" plays with *Heart of Darkness* and comes up with a ballplayer, Griswold, who finds Christianity and loses his talent. His manager, in a dubious pun, admonishes him: "What it looks like to us is you've traded your balls for a Bible." This must be why his RBI is down fifty percent. Bibles are too hard to hit. Griswold's wife wants a divorce. She liked him when he was a "wild-eyed barbarian who talked dirty." Now he talks to the Rev. Bascombe Jones instead.

"Eggs," seems, at least in part, an excuse for a tirade about just how dreary Canada, specifically Alberta, can be, especially in

contrast to that locus of Western Civilization, southern Florida. Webb has married a beautiful Ukrainian woman and is living with her and her mother in a prairie mansion just outside Vegreville. The two women decorate Easter eggs in the Ukrainian custom. Their satisfaction in this art practice is twisted into a misogynist denial of women's assertion of self. It seems that in Kinsella's work, only post-feminist women like the sainted Annie in *Shoeless Joe* make it into the Wives' Hall of Fame.

The title story is set in that Kinsellian Promised Land, Iowa, where Mike, a ballplayer with the soul of Ray Kinsella, the protagonist of *Shoeless Joe*, finds his version of Annie in an insurance agent's daughter named, believe it, Tracy Ellen. Both the novel and the story end with baseball man and post-feminist woman on the porch on a soft Iowan night. What's going on here? Is the story a gloss on the novel or is this embarrassingly derivative? Kinsella has a major talent. He needs to stop wasting it on work like *The Dixon Cornbelt League.*

Sharon Sparling's novel, *Homing Instinct,* is kind of like *The Official Preppy Handbook* come to life. There is a fine old New England family with an elegantly shabby house on the usual rugged yet beautiful Maine coast. The characters have names like Quinn and Augusta and Thaddeus (no Tracy Ellen within miles). People do useful things such as practise medicine, or interesting things such as conduct archaeological digs or write books that earn lots and lots of money. The protagonist is the child Kathleen Church Duncan (Casey to her friends), daughter to the alcoholic yet charming Singe, scion of the Duncan family. Used to a life wandering the more daring parts of the world with her father, young Casey soon accepts her role as daughter of the house, dons her school uniform and enters Binstock Academy for Girls.

Actually, Casey is a smashing girl, all pluck and imagination. She reminded me of those wonderful "upper sixth" girls in the British boarding school books I used to devour when I was about twelve years old. (I went to a similar school myself, but we were never so bold.) Maybe that's why I liked this novel so much. It is a masterful expression of the form. These child heroines were magnificently subversive of assigned female roles. They were queens of daring in their genteel worlds, outwitting the headmistress, victorious at sport, able to solve mysteries before tea. These young women were hearty and clever and a perfect tonic to thousands of girl-children caught in the dreariness of a 1950s childhood.

What makes Sparling's novel so likeable (in spite of sloppy editing at times), is that she has written a wittily ironic book within the parameters of the woman's novel. School-girl heroine, earth mother, predatory female, prickly but ultimately wise spinster aunt, even mysterious foremothers haunt about. Sparling plays with the conventions of the Gothic, but in her work the women don't get sealed in tombs or turned into vampires. Instead they take over the storm-wracked manor and have their way with the men.

Sparling paces her narrative well, and seems to experience sheer delight in describing delicious food and babies. One dish of fiddleheads is described as "topped...with roasted slivered almonds and butter," and served with pheasants and potatoes "on a large oval platter with bluebirds flying around the rim." The child Thaddeus breaks from suckling at his mother's breast only to give "his biggest, toothiest smile." Murders, old family secrets, plenty of rousing sex, Sparling nicely subverts the Gothic as she plays with genre and irony to yield a quite delightful work. Why the novel is set in Maine is a puzzle, however. There is little of American culture here. The Duncans belong at St Andrews-By-The-Sea in New Brunswick or possibly Chester in Nova Scotia.

Feminisms?

Maggie Humm, ed.

Feminisms, A Reader. Harvester Wheatsheaf

$22.00

Reviewed by Lesley Ziegler

Edited and introduced by Maggie Humm, the Coordinator of Women's Studies at the University of East London, *Feminisms, A Reader* sets itself the ambitious and perhaps unnecessary task of defining and gathering in a single volume the "canon" of feminist writing in the twentieth century. To accomplish this feat, Humm edits the collected essays down to three or four pages each, while leaving herself ample space for a chronology and a glossary which, among its other questionable achievements, defines "patriarchy" in six lines, "feminism" in three lines and, without irony, "praxis" in twenty-six words.

Allowing an overriding sense of linear history to inform the structure of the book, Humm organizes her selections according to periods of publication. While such a manner of organization allows a limited working out of the progress of feminist thought (once again, First-Wave feminism leads to Second-Wave feminism and so on, in some unfolding master narrative), it does little to confound the notion that straight, white feminism constitutes the source and the bulk of significant gender-based discourses, or to re-establish feminism's concern with the material. A two-and-one-half page version of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and a three-and-one-half page version of Andrea Dworkin's *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* are categorized as "Second-Wave Feminism" but not as "Lesbian Feminism." Bell hooks and Gayatri Spivak are nowhere to be found. Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray are oddly located as writers on "Difference." And, structurally at least, writings on culture, reproduction, language, education and psychoanalysis all come after the "First Wave" of Virginia Woolf, Rebecca West, Simone de Beauvoir *et al.*

Perhaps more disconcerting is the way Humm has set about containing and inscribing the meanings of the extracts she includes. Each section of the text is prefaced with what Humm herself calls "a brief summary of the main issues," while each individual extract is preceded by "a brief introduction to the ideas of each writer." As a lesbian, I was both amused and disheartened to discover that, for Humm, "lesbian desire could be said to be a general feminist condition," in the face of the fact that many contemporary lesbian theorists eschew feminism altogether and balk at feminism's attempt to supplant material desire with a de-sexed (read: heterosexual) conflict with patriarchy. Likewise, Humm announces that "black feminism has a different relationship to dominating social policies than does white feminism," but promptly ignores the relationship of whiteness to power that has led many women writers of colour to forego eurocentric feminism, and explains the "different relationship" as a detached, essentialized consequence of "a black woman's family and labour market experience."

Images & Echoes

W.J. Keith

Literary Images of Ontario. U of Toronto P

$ 18.95

Echoes in Silence. Goose Lane n.p.

Reviewed by Jutta Zimmermann

W. J. Keith's study *Literary Images of Ontario* was written for the *Ontario Historical Studies Series.* According to the editors, the aim of the series is to cover "many aspects of the life and work of the province from its foundation in 1791 to our own time." What was expected of the

author, therefore, is a "theme study" in order to highlight the nature of a specific region.

From the onset, Keith acknowledges the complex interrelationship between literature and social reality and admits that "[T]his book is a somewhat unusual contribution to the series in which it appears." It is not based on so-called historical evidence but on "the evidence of literature" in order to portray Ontario "as she has been seen to be." Keith apparently feels obliged to chose a positivistic and descriptive approach towards the literature which he regards as "evidence" to be "sifted." He therefore falls prey to what Frank Davey has called "the movement [...] towards paraphrase." At times, the study is hampered by its stringing together of a huge number of quotations without providing a clear theoretical framework.

Keith is at his best when he actually tries to answer the question in how far Ontario, as fictional setting, is constructed by literary techniques and strategies and, in doing so, goes beyond using literary texts merely as descriptions of geographical, historical, and social reality. Whenever he follows a descriptive approach he implies that language can be considered a window onto the world and he therefore undermines his own project.

Keith convincingly shows that the accounts of the early British settlers were determined by "their built-in cultural attitudes and assumptions, set ways of looking at the land and 'landscape', and above all established patterns of language." He illustrates his thesis by tracing the images of the forest and the mostly decaying farm as well as the depiction of the Natives. What becomes apparent, in all cases, is that responses are varied, but that taken together, the texts display a basic ambiguity in providing both a romantic and a realistic outlook on the world. At times, a certain nostalgia comes to the fore: "We inhabit a different world, but one that forgets the ways of the past at its peril."

In "Region and Community," Keith elaborates on the conflict between romantic and realist notions in chapters which are grouped around the themes of landscape (Southern vs. Northern) and the different kinds of communities (Small Towns and Smaller Cities). According to Keith the North has become increasingly attractive to writers because Southern Ontario has become marked by technological progress. It becomes obvious that Keith's sympathies lie more with the romantic and aesthetic than with realistic renderings of nature. This could explain why the early parts of the book that deal almost exclusively with the construction of nature are the most convincing. In these chapters, Keith is actually concerned with images and the way they are constructed.

Once he turns to social entities such as the small town, smaller cities, and the metropolis, which necessarily involve social and political issues in which he is less interested, Keith largely restricts himself to quoting descriptive passages from the literary texts. Literary images become less important as texts are more and more read "in primarily documentary terms."

Although never explicitly stated, the book's guiding idea seems to be "continuity within change." Thus, Keith's thesis that "the very persistence of the small town as a focal point in the Ontarian literary consciousness is itself testimony to the continuity of all human experience." In general, Keith tries to examine the specific and distinct Ontarian quality for its potential to embody a universal meaning. Toronto, for example, "can be used as the basis for a profound meditation on the course of the twentieth-century western world." Other generalizations perpetuate the tendency to view Ontarian experience as quintessentially Canadian: "The capital, indeed, becomes an appropriate microcosm for

Canada as a whole."

In a country which is increasingly threatened by political, regional, ethnic, and ideological fragmentation, Keith's universalism could be interpreted as an ideologically motivated attempt to preserve at least part of the British culture the early settlers had brought with them for the future. In the epilogue, Keith is quite open about his own biases as a British immigrant which have had a great impact on his selection of texts. With few exceptions, they are all by authors of British descent. Keith seems to be rather astonished to find the same dominating images of ravine and bridge that are prominent in the novels by Hood, Callaghan, and Atwood, also in Michael Ondaatje, whose novel *In the Skin of a Lion* would have deserved more attention in a chapter about Toronto.

Literary Images of Ontario, a study based on an impressive number of literary texts, would have profited from a more argumentative structure and a more self-conscious reflection of its underlying assumptions. Coming from *Literary Images* to Keith's first collection of poetry, *Echoes in Silence*, the intertextual resonances between the two texts are striking. The first poem, "Prologue: Fabricated Truth" foregrounds the autobiographical content of the poems to follow. Again, Keith is concerned with construction through language, this time of his own persona. By attributing truth to poetry instead of life, Keith posits himself as a successor to the aesthetic tradition of which Oscar Wilde's statement "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" is representative.

The poems are grouped around different themes, all of which deal with past events, places, and individuals and the way they can be recaptured by memory. The same nostalgia which permeates *Literary Images* also speaks from most of Keith's poems: loss of home country and idyllic landscapes in the poems collected under the title "Memory Sequence;" the loss of childhood and naiveté in "War Sequence;" the loss of beloved people in "Family Portraits." The fourth section, "Proust Poems," pays tribute to Marcel Proust whose *Remembrance of Things Past* expresses the idea that happiness, truth, and beauty can only be experienced through memory and the art which results from the process of remembering. The same applies to the emigrant Keith who only in retrospect and by way of imagining is able to recapture things he has lost and never appreciated (at least consciously) while living through them. Poems like "Myself, Writing," "He regards his creation," and "Marcel and Mirror" express a strong wish to identify with his literary predecessor and to be inspired by him.

The last two sections, "Self-Reflecting Poems," and "Prayer, God, Silence" explore the possibilities for poetry to transcend by way of aesthetic form the sordid reality of everyday life and ultimately to reach a state of transcendence that is represented by "God." Since the speaker of these poems, however, is divided between his belief in God's existence and the suspicion that he might be a fiction created by human beings, he chooses to prefer the term "silence" for the spiritual realm.

As a whole, the poems reflect the same need to hold on to traditional values and beliefs which is also expressed in *Literary Images of Ontario*. In a volume of poetry, however, such feelings may be more legitimate and achieve a better effect than in literary criticism.

Deeper into the Forest

Robin Blaser
The Holy Forest. Coach House $24.95

George Bowering
The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe.
Coach House $12.95

Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

For many readers, of whom I am one, the publication of *The Holy Forest* is a major event. For well over three decades, Robin Blaser has been accumulating the sections (some of them published separately as chapbooks) of the grand serial poem that is *The Holy Forest.* It is, in Robert Kroetsch's words, "a life-long poem," or, to apply Blaser's own words: Not only do "[t]hese poems follow a principle of *randonée*—the random and the given of the hunt, the game, the tour[,] . [t]hey are a collected poems—that is, as far as I've gone today, 6 May 1993." Readers lucky enough to have found some of the early chapbooks, like *The Moth Poem, Cups, Les Chimères,* or *Image-Nations 1-12,* will have some sense of the stretch of Blaser's imagination, but *The Holy Forest* also contains later sequences, those larger volumes, *Syntax* (a highly ironic title: "Olson said, 'I'd trust you / anywhere with image, but / you've got no syntax' [1958]") and *Pell Mell,* as well as 60 pages of new poetry. It is a rich and challenging feast.

The very first "Image-Nation," addressing, as so many of Blaser's poems do, the fact and the problem of language, tells us that in such sites as these poems and "in such / times, the I consumes itself." In contrast to the highly personalized "I" of so much expressionist writing (and so much of our popular poetry today), the "I" of Blaser's poetry is a highly shifty pronoun, a place from which many voices may speak. And since Blaser is a very learned poet, the voices range through time and space, joining together in these poems to create a colloquium for the heart and soul. As he writes, in his Statement on *The Moth Poem* in *The New Long Poem Anthology,* "I have found in the serial poem a way to work from my displaced, uncentred 'I' in order to be found among things—relational, at least, to what I can. Recent theory tells us writers that the author is gone from his/her authority. That seemed real enough to me before theory ever hit home. And, without authority, a conversation went on." Sometimes the "I" in that conversation is one which can 'represent' the poet, as in such memory-drenched pieces as the elegy, "Robert Duncan," and "Image-Nation 24 ('oh pshaw,'"; but it 'floats' far and wide in this vast conversation.

Although this is not a poetry that reaches out and offers personal expression, neither is it a poetry lacking in emotion; it is just that it demands an active reading that is willing to engage not just the poet's imagination, but imagination itself. The emotions are in the many texts quoted and alluded to (and these 'texts' include recent and far past conversations, for certainly in these poems there is no possibility of an "*hors-texte*"), the intricate and necessarily inconclusive intertext. *The Holy Forest* asks to be read whole, for the more you read of it the more it all begins to make poetic sense; as with the great long poems of Blaser's "Great Companions," those other artists who have spoken to him across the ages, the reading of it teaches us how to read further into it. Each section, including the ongoing sequences like "Image-Nations," is what Blaser calls "one movement among many." These movements sound different and contrasting melodies of a complex, and unfinished, 'symphony.' For Blaser, "*The Holy Forest* somehow isn't a book. I don't know how to write one anymore. The covers won't close." That's a good way to put it, for once you have read through this huge volume, you will find yourself pulled back into it at different 'moments,' seeking par-

ticular melodies, particular moods. There is so much to choose from.

So just what does *The Holy Forest* offer its readers? "The Boston Poems," from 1956-1958, reveal a young writer already fully aware of the innovations of Pound, Williams, and their American followers. They are intelligent and formally alert, but they are also wholly separate works. It was with his move to San Francisco and his meeting with Duncan and Jack Spicer that Blaser found the 'way' that his work would follow into the future. As he has argued so eloquently in "The Practice of Outside," his essay on Spicer's work in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, they worked out the sense of "the serial poem," an open definition that certainly includes Spicer's various books, and also includes both the early separate sequences like *Cups*, *The Park*, *The Moth Poem*, and *Charms*, and the whole of *The Holy Forest* as it now stands. With the *Image-Nation* series, Blaser entered into a version of the *Cantos*-like long poem, as did Duncan with *Passages*, but he did not see a reason to separate it from the rest of his writing. Thus the *Image-Nation* pieces slide easily into the whole at various points in the book, although there have been some interesting changes. For instance "Image-Nation 12 (Actus" has been cut by about 6 pages from its earlier version; once again what has been elided are huge chunks of quotation, mostly, as a note to the earlier edition pointed out, from Merleau-Ponty and Foucault. I am of two minds about this: my earlier reading of the poems was excited by the quotations, which helped to send me off to the original works. Nevertheless, the new versions move faster, and yet still carry the weight of the author-companions Blaser seeks to include in his poetic journey.

The range and sweep of the writing in *The Holy Forest* is difficult to articulate. The book is a challenge—to readers actively to engage it in all its metamorphoses of form and feeling, to the kind of poetic that assumes personal expression is everything, to a materialism that refuses to admit the human need and desire for something more than a commerce degree and uncontrolled consumerism. I hope its imaginative vision will be noticed in the midst of all the commercial noise that surrounds us, for it offers readers a broad, loving, and highly intelligent, human vision.

George Bowering's *The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe* is also a book about culture and memory, but it is centred on a single figure, and is written as an act of friendship-in-memory. Bowering and Curnoe became friends when Bowering first lived in London, Ontario in 1966. The West Coast poet of the local and the Southwestern Ontario painter of the regional, who was also a Canadian nationalist, had much to argue about during their nearly three decades of friendship, but they had much more to share. For the form of his memories (rather than "memoir") of Greg Curnoe, Bowering has chosen as a "model" Harry Mathews's *The Orchard*, a book itself modeled on Joe Brainard's *I Remember* series and George Perec's *Je me souviens*. How does a writer deal with the most personal losses, the most personal feelings, except formally? As Bowering explains, for Mathews (and by extension for Bowering himself), the mode provides "a way of getting the words down in front of him to help him face the dismay caused by [his friend's] departure." So when Bowering wrote the first entry in this book in Frank Davey's house the day after Greg Curnoe's funeral, he "needed the words there and here."

The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe is a funny and loving book, apparently simple in its series of short little takes, almost all beginning "I remember . . . ." But Bowering wants it that way: "More than anything else, I wanted to keep it simple. I wanted to keep away from the twelve-

cylinder language that made Greg shake his head. I took as my other model Greg's very important work *Drawer Full of Stuff*." The simple form works both to control the emotions Bowering is confronting in himself and attempting to convey to us and to 'represent' the essential simplicity, which he is careful to demonstrate is not a lack of sophistication or cultural awareness, of his friend.

Like many of Bowering's serial poems, *The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe* uses repetitive form to push ever further into a context, in this case the long friendship and its many complex bases. I found *The Moustache* a touching work, one which made me wish that I had known Greg Curnoe. Because of the format of "I remember," Bowering's book is actually full of its author, and in it we are given many intriguing autobiographical instances. But, unlike many memoirs, where the person writing becomes the centre of attention, the form insists that Curnoe always be the focus of the act of remembering, and Bowering's presence seems neither forced nor overbearing.

Well, I have to give one small example, and why not one in which Bowering manages to recall two of the people we could least afford to lose:

> I remember Greg Curnoe the Canadian nationalist with a great sense of irony. That's not irony, George, he would say, that's just the way I see things. During the 1967 centennial celebrations, Greg entered and won the Great Centennial Cake Contest. He told me he figured no one else entered. Greg's cake was enormous, and it had orange and blue icing. The flavour was back bacon and maple sugar. For the official presentation with politicians in Ottawa, Greg went and had a suit made. It was yellow with black buttons. He wore pointed-toe black boots. This is what the blue writing on the orange cake said: Canada, I think I love you, but I want to know for sure. Both Greg Curnoe and bpNichol quoted The Troggs.

The way the final two sentences work here is one of the reasons I like this book. And, let's face it, unofficial commemorations are always both more profound and more convincing than official ones (when they occur). *The Moustache: Memories of Greg Curnoe* is a fitting memorial to an important (and properly ironic) Canadian artist. It is a lovely little gift of a book; there should be more such.

Place, Politics, & Culture

Simon During, ed.
The Cultural Studies Reader. Routledge
$49.95/16.95

Michael Keith and Steve Pile, eds.
Place and the Politics of Identity. Routledge
$49.95/16.95

Reviewed by Alison Blunt

During's *Reader* is a useful companion volume to an earlier publication by Routledge, *Cultural Studies*, edited by Grossberg et al. The length and range of the latter suggest the vitality of cultural studies, which in turn suggests both the challenges and the importance of compiling a Reader. During's *Reader* is a valuable introduction and resource for anyone with an interest in cultural studies. In addition to his introductory essay, During provides concise introductions to each of the twenty seven chapters, with his suggestions for further reading in each case supplementing the extensive bibliography at the end. In the Introduction, During traces a clear chronology of cultural studies in Britain from the 1950s to the present day. His organization of the rest of the chapters is, however, thematic rather than chronological, beginning with eight on 'Theory and Method' which range from Adorno and Horkheimer on the culture industry to

Michele Wallace on black feminist cultural criticism. The second part, 'Space and Time,' includes chapters by Soja, de Certeau, Foucault, and Lyotard, reflecting the great influence of French theoretical thought in Anglo cultural studies particularly since the 1970s. The other chapters are grouped according to the following, more substantive, topics: nation, ethnicity and multiculturalism, sexuality, carnival and utopia, consumption and the market, leisure, and media. In these parts, each chapter is as much about 'theory and method' as the first part, but, by being ordered in this way, each reflects the substantive as well as theoretical and methodological diversity of cultural studies.

In his Introduction, During defines cultural studies as 'the study of *contemporary* culture.' This definition means that he neglects work which is attempting, in the words of Grossberg et al, to 'reread history.' Partly because of this neglect, cultural studies as represented by During remains uncritically Western. Despite the inclusion of a conversation between Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Sneja Gunew on multiculturalism, postcolonial criticism is largely overlooked. In his Introduction, as well as describing cultural studies as a marginal 'other' in the academy, During writes that it is 'a discipline that has globalized itself through affirming otherness.' He refers to Edward Said briefly, but otherwise ignores the colonial and imperial power relations that any construction of 'otherness' might imply.

During's Introduction focuses on British cultural studies. Though much of the material he cites, and a majority of subsequent chapters, were written in places other than Britain, During does little to contextualize cultural studies in, say, Canada, France, or Australia. For During, work that has been influential in cultural studies seems to have travelled only one way. Within Britain itself, During could also further contextualize cultural studies. He makes only passing references to other disciplines—notably, but very briefly, sociology and anthropology—and focuses to a large extent on the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. While this is obviously a highly influential Centre, a sense of the extent to which it may have been isolated in its importance would improve an otherwise clear Introduction to British cultural studies.

During's *Reader* would have benefitted from a list of contributors, with brief biographical notes, so that their work could be located in the range of disciplines within which they were and are writing. The work of one geographer—Ed Soja—was included, and he too, writing with Barbara Hooper, has a chapter in *Place and the Politics of Identity*. Despite the increasing 'salience of the spatial' in cultural studies and politics, and, particularly, in much feminist and postcolonial criticism, the work of geographers often remains uncited. As a result, *Place and the Politics of Identity* is a timely volume which one hopes will be read widely by geographers and non-geographers alike. Overall, the collection attempts to challenge hegemonic constructions of place, politics, and identity, so that 'new spaces of politics are identified, [and] new politics of identity are located.' Unlike the summary on the back cover, which refers to '*the* interface of space, politics, and identity,' and '*the* new space of resistance and *the* new politics of identity' (my emphases), all of the essays rather suggest the complexity and multiplicity of spaces, identities, and politics.

Keith and Pile have jointly written two introductory chapters and a conclusion. They draw out three themes that the essays as 'disruptive projects' address in different ways: locations of struggle; communities of resistance; and political spaces. In their concluding chapter, Keith and Pile draw out three other important themes: ethical, epistemological and aesthetic geographies;

space, boundaries, and closure; and spatiality, hybridity, and radical politics. Most importantly, they—and the other authors—refer to spatiality as material as well as metaphorical, symbolic, and imaginary. On the one hand, this serves to remind many geographers that space is not unproblematic, 'real,' and transparent. On the other hand, it also reminds those across the humanities who use an increasingly spatialized vocabulary that space should be materially as well as metaphorically grounded.

The chapters address these themes in different ways. Some include detailed case studies, such as David Harvey's consideration of an industrial accident in Hamlet, North Carolina; George Revill's focus on Carol Lake's collection of short stories about the Rosehill area of Derby; and Barnor Hesse's discussion of the spatialization of black resistance in Britain. Other chapters, such as those by Liz Bondi, Doreen Massey, and Soja and Hooper, provide thoughtful reviews, overviews, and discussions of diverse debates, particularly, in these cases, in feminist theory. The chapter that will, I think, be most widely cited is *Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics* by Neil Smith and Cindi Katz. This chapter discusses how spatial imagery often seems ironically aspatial, and they stress the importance of the 'interconnectedness of material and metaphorical space.' Among the many spatial metaphors currently employed in much social and cultural discourse, they refer specifically to location, position, and locality; mapping; and colonization/decolonization. Highlighting two sources of spatial metaphors they refer to, first, the work of Althusser and Foucault, and, second, to what they term the underdevelopment of spatial discourses, particularly in the English speaking world. These arguments could well be developed beyond the constraints of a single chapter. Within these constraints, however, Smith and Katz have signalled clear and helpful directions for further debate. Furthermore, they achieve the rare distinction of discussing spatial metaphors without, as in many other cases, still articulating their arguments through them.

All of the contributors to this volume are working in Britain or the United States and, with one exception, their work is firmly rooted in these places. As the one exception, however, Sarah Radcliffe discusses the resistance of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo to the military junta in Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Since the volume is concerned with place, it seems strange that the editors do not explain and justify the overwhelming orientation to British and American places. As it is, Radcliffe's chapter is important but isolated. Indeed, when Keith and Pile refer to it in their second Introduction, they themselves seem to be denying the importance of place by citing examples in Britain that can be analysed in similar ways.

Finally, there remains scope for much more 'radical geography' than is included in this collection. Black politics, feminism, and gay liberation remain largely neglected in this collection.

Joined Worlds

Nick Bantock

The Golden Mean: In Which the Extraordinary Correspondence of Griffin & Sabine Concludes. Raincoast $22.95

The Egyptian Jukebox. Viking $24.95

Reviewed by Stephanie Bolster

"Where do my worlds join?" is the conundrum B.C. writer Nick Bantock, in the guise of the vanished eccentric millionaire Hamilton Hasp, asks of his readers in *The Egyptian Jukebox.* It is also the key question in *The Golden Mean,* the final volume of the innovative and wildly successful *Griffin & Sabine* trilogy.

Like its predecessors, *The Golden Mean* compels readers to open its intricately-decorated envelopes and participate vicariously in the existential love story of Griffin, a London postcard designer, and his "equal opposite," Sabine, a mysterious woman from the South Seas who has telepathic insight into Griffin's artistic processes.

Familiarity with the first two books seems necessary for appreciation of the third. While the cover flap's brief summary provides helpful plot information, it can't create the sympathy seasoned Bantock readers will bring to *The Golden Mean.* Further, this final volume makes many textual and artistic references to the previous two. I was excited to discover that one of its postcards is a negative of a card from *Sabine's Notebook*—Bantock never misses an opportunity to reinforce the trilogy's concern with parallel worlds.

For all its cleverness and beauty, *The Golden Mean* has less psychological depth than the previous two books because here Griffin and Sabine have little control over the force that keeps them apart. Now that Griffin has overcome his twin fears of intimacy and the unknown, a new obstacle arrives in the persona of Victor Frolatti, an alleged medical journalist whose obsessive interest in the telepathic bond between the long-distance lovers threatens Sabine's personal safety and the intimacy of her relationship with Griffin. Even more serious is the ensuing disintegration of the very telepathy with which Frolatti is so fascinated. But because the book does not confirm Griffin's speculation that these two obstacles are linked, the whole scenario becomes frustratingly vague and Frolatti's presence is less ominous than it might otherwise have been. Another difficulty stems from the inclusion of several of Frolatti's postcards in the book. Because I didn't know enough about him to find his communications interesting in themselves, I felt he would have been better left as a name mentioned in Sabine and Griffin's letters, a silent but resonant plot-thickening device.

Yeats' presence resonates far more fully than Frolatti's. His "The Second Coming," which Bantock has used as a parallel text to the trilogy, takes on unexpected associations in this volume. The final postcard in *The Golden Mean,* titled "And what rough beast...slouches...to be born," depicts a newborn whom we may take to be the child of the now-united Griffin and Sabine. Given the surreal, artistic nature of their relationship, this child is born more of their shared imaginations than of their bodies. The rough beast of this trilogy is imagination, and therein, Bantock seems to say, lies our salvation.

The Egyptian Jukebox confirms that Bantock's imagination is truly extraordinary. Even more than the *Griffin & Sabine* trilogy, *The Egyptian Jukebox* is not a book so much as an experience. Bantock has described it as "somewhere between The Times crossword, a museum catalogue and Where's Waldo." As the first page explains, the wealthy, missing Hamilton Hasp left behind the jukebox, with its ten cluttered drawers and its recorded mystery stories, to amuse, frustrate, and potentially reward those interested in his whereabouts. Curious puzzle-solvers must decipher a set of instructions that point to clues in each story and accompanying drawer. After "solving" ten drawers, the reader will have the letters necessary to answer the jukebox's question: "Where do my worlds join?"

This is not an easy conundrum to solve. I spent about seven hours, over a period of several months, working towards an answer. Certain key instructions, such as, "The gods stand upright and give latitude. From the yarns pluck golden songs to string across?," baffled me each time I returned to the book. I contemplated peeking under the flap on the book's last page to find the answer, then working my way backwards through the clues. But then sev-

eral key insights helped me reach that hidden solution on my own.

As might be expected, getting there is more than half the fun. The double-page photographs of the drawers' treasures each merit careful study in themselves, and many of the short-short stories are chillingly inconclusive. In the clues, Bantock can show off his wit and word-play more fully than in the *Griffin & Sabine* books. A die with a single dot is described as a "cycloptic snake," a reddish cricket ball as a "leather cherry."

I can blame most of my disappointment in the riddle's solution on my wish that the experience of reaching it had lasted longer. The solution, almost impossible to guess, is as clever and humourous as the rest of the book. Not only does it fulfill the twin promises of answering the riddle and suggesting Hasp's whereabouts, it weaves together the book's—and the title's—dual threads of popular music and ancient mysteries. And in Bantock's intertextual and self-referential fashion, it also alludes to the country of joined worlds in *The Golden Mean.*

This is a postmodern book, not only in its participatory nature but in its transformation of images into text. To solve the riddle, one must teach oneself to read Hasp's map of Chinese artifacts, peacock feathers, bingo chips. As much as a book like *The Egyptian Jukebox* can alienate readers, it can also let them into a secret world in which each detail is laden with meaning. Few adult books provide such a delicious sense of escape into mystery. After spending time with the book, I read the world more intently.

Much of my pleasure in exploring these books derives from imagining Bantock creating them. The answer to "where do my worlds join" might well be "in the books." Here is where each reader's world joins Bantock's. From all our directions, we slouch towards the same mysteries.

(M)others' Voices

Di Brandt
Wild Mother Dancing: Maternal Narrative in Canadian Literature. U Manitoba P $17.95

Lola Lemire Tostevin
Frog Moon. Cormorant Books $14.95

Reviewed by Christopher Brayshaw

"In 1976, I gave birth to my first child, Lisa," writes Di Brandt in her 'Prologue in the First Person' to *Wild Mother Dancing.*

> I had just completed an M.A. in English literature. . .under the heady influence of Northrop Frye's 'literary symbolism.' It was like falling into a vacuum, narratively speaking. I realized suddenly. . .that none of the texts I had read so carefully, none of the literary skills I had acquired so diligently as a student of literature, had anything remotely to do with the experience of becoming a mother. Frye's grand archetypal vision had given me a framework in which to make sense of the bewildering array of stories that make up the body we call literature, but it was useless for coming to terms with maternal experience.

Wild Mother Dancing is a revision of Brandt's PhD. thesis, which examines how the Western narrative tradition has previously suppressed the subject of the mother, and the recent attempts of Canadian women writers to articulate a new maternal subjectivity that "exists in creative tension and dialogue with mainstream discourse in their writing and storytelling." Brandt discusses works by Margaret Laurence, Daphne Marlatt, Jovette Marchessault, Joy Kogawa, Sky Lee, and, in the book's most interesting chapter, a collection of taped conversations with women from Manitoba's Mennonite community.

Brandt draws upon the work of contemporary feminist theorists like Mary O'Brien, Julia Kristeva and Marianne Hirsch in order to argue that the Western

literary tradition is "an ongoing lament for the missing, silenced, absent mother and her mediating, nurturing presence, in social institutions and discourse, and in story." At the same time, Brandt recognizes the temptation "to get side-tracked into discussing [theoretical] issues for their own sake," and thus "address[es] them only to the extent that they are relevant to the text." The tensions that exist between the theoretical issues she raises, and her own subjective responses to the texts at hand, form a dialogue which is as often frustrating as it is rewarding. For instance, Brandt claims "some of the most interesting examples of maternal narrative are being written by women who, in one way or another, have escaped colonization, and thus write on the very margins of Western discourse." But to my mind, choosing to work within a particular tradition does not neccessarily mean unquestioningly accepting that tradition's ideological premises. Recent maternal narratives like Ursula LeGuin's *Searoad*, Caroline Adderson's *Bad Imaginings*, and Linda Svendsen's *Marine Life* are all, in a sense, 'traditional' Western narratives, yet all oppose "the silencing and absenting of the mother as human subject within her own story." Brandt is better served by her own subjective responses to narratives than she is by theories whose rigid binary distinctions between "Western" and "Other" quickly collapse when applied to actual texts.

Brandt's discussion of Laurence's *The Stone Angel* and Marlatt's *Zocalo*, "In the Month of Hungry Ghosts," and *How Hug a Stone* are particularly perceptive. Brandt demonstrates how previous Laurence critics have, mistakenly, read *The Stone Angel* "as a confirmation of traditional, patriarchal narrative structures." Her discussion of Marlatt's work is sensitive to Marlatt's belief in "language itself as matrix, as maternal body, 'a living body we enter at birth, (which) sustains and contains us'" (which, in turn, may derive from Marlatt's exposure, via Warren Tallman, to Olson's projective verse and 'composition by field').

The most exciting chapter of *Wild Mother Dancing* discusses thirty-nine taped conversations between Katherine Martens and women in the Manitoba Mennonite community, collected in the Manitoba Provincial Archives under the title, 'Childbirth in the Mennonite Community.' As Brandt writes, these narratives "reveal a powerful body of women's experiences, rendered passionately and articulately in language." To Brandt's credit, these voices emerge from the pages of her study unmolested; I found their stories as eloquent and compelling as any of the fictions Brandt discusses.

Lola Lemire Tostevin's *Frog Moon* is, unhappily, a very different kind of book. Its epigraphs, taken from Italo Calvino and George Eliot, suggest the book is a magic realist or metafictional narrative along the lines of Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, or Stephanie Bolster's Alice poems. And the novel incorporates a dizzying array of mythological and fairy-tale forms: Arthurian myths and French-Canadian folk tales, Cree legends and Greek epic poetry. But Tostevin's handling of these interpolated narratives is unsatisfactory. Each story is *told* at length, but never dramatized or embellished; the stories meander, never rising beyond the recitation of plot elements:

> Suddenly, to the astonishment of the guests, Rose's features turned ashen and her garments began to melt away, leaving her completely nude. Her handsome cavalier was also transformed. His face now looked like the mask of a demon, and with Rose in his arms he rushed out the door and made for his impatient steed.

This scene, which should shock or move us, provokes only impatience, because Tostevin fails to supply the sensory details we need in order fully to enter the story's fantasy world.

Frog Moon is an artist-parable that follows Laura, a writer, from her childhood in Northern Ontario to her married life in Toronto. But much of this life is incompletely developed, or glossed over all together. Laura's parents are fully-developed characters, and, consequently, psychologically believable, but her husband and children are little more than cyphers. Tostevin compensates for this inadequate characterization through lengthy annotation of each character's remarks:

> "I guess they'll have to do what all immigrants have done. They'll have to choose to live in either English or French communities."
>
> Geoffrey has never had to deal with problems of language, except for the year we spent in Montreal at the time of the referendum. Along with his business partners, he'd ranted against the disasterous effect of the Parti Quebecois on the province's depressed ecomony, and his year there had been a disappointing one. He'd been unable to rediscover the charms of the city he'd known as a student. . .and I'd teased him about that.

And so on, for more than two hundred pages. Occasionally Tostevin adopts a metafictional self-reflexivity ("she trailed behind her parents like an unwinding narrative"), which seems at odds with the more naturalistic style she uses elsewhere. The novel finally ends with the revelation that the interpolated narratives are, in fact, Laura's stories. But this brief coda fails to resolve the many plot threads Tostevin leaves dangling.

Passages

Peter Oliva
Drowning in Darkness. Cormorant $14.95

F.G. Paci
Sex and Character. Oberon $29.95/$15.95

M.T. Dohaney
To Scatter Stones. Ragweed $10.95

Reviewed by Alexander M. Forbes

The stories of four characters are interwoven in Peter Oliva's *Drowning in Darkness.* Trapped in darkness while working in a mine, Celi dreams about his own life, and its missed opportunities. When awake, however, he mines the darkness of memory as he recalls the story of Sera, who had come from Italy to marry another miner, Pep, only to leave him upon finding him incapable of appreciating her own persistent search, through dreams, for her inner identity. The one person sympathetic to her search proves to be a doctor-turned-naturopath, Sunderd, whose experience of reconstructing broken bodies after a mine blast had originally motivated his own search for significance, and his separation both from his original profession and his community.

If the strands of the novel are unified by the determination of some characters to seek the significance of their dreams—to find a "world behind the world"—and the corresponding reluctance of others to engage in or be sympathetic to such a search, they are also unified by setting. The Crowsnest Pass is a symbolically rich setting for the Italian Canadians who people the novel. Most of the characters (minor as well as major) experience cultural dislocation and economic entrapment as they find themselves in the Pass, and their lives slide in a place where evidence of the Frank slide is always present. Only a few, such as Sera, come to realise that a Pass is a passageway as well as a space surrounded by obstacles, and that the passage can lead to an even

more extensive change than cultural reorientation or economic advancement. Only a few, in Frank, are honest with themselves. (Names in the novel resonate with ironic allegorical overtones.)

As the novel opens, the covert narrator permits Sera's ghost to establish the first of many varying points of view. Her ghostly eye becomes a camera, recording the details that turn the coal mine in which Celi is trapped into a metaphor for the unconscious. Currents of methane ensure that the mine becomes a place of dreams for anyone caught in its depths—and a place where the outward self dies if it does not return. When characters enter the mine, experience comes to mingle with lifelike dream.

Although the understanding and recording of historical and personal experience are subjected to metafictional questioning in the novel, such questioning does not generate a thoroughly open text. Traditional natural and historical assumptions, together with traditional narrative codes and conventions, are more strongly inscribed than contested. Excursions into magical realism, for example, are accompanied by explanations of the natural causes of magical effects. Viewpoint varies, but not all points of view prove equally reliable, nor are all endorsed by the narrator, who is given considerable traditional authority to resolve the apparent contradictions that are raised. The free indirect discourse that dominates the novel permits characters' voices to mingle with the narrator's, but it also ensures that that the speaker is ultimately identifiable in each case. Prolepses, analepses, and embedded narratives complicate narrative, but clues are provided which leave the reader in little doubt as to the relative place of each narrative sequence.

Naturalisation does not prevent the novel, however, from being a playful one. As in *Midnight's Children*, an important intertext, ironic tales insert themselves unexpectedly, images of food erupt eccentrically, obscure facts insist upon their own citation, and menippean catalogues unroll themselves with joyous abandon.

Sex and Character, by F. G. Paci, is a metafictional *Bildungsroman*, and a sequel to Paci's earlier novels *Black Blood* and *Under the Bridge*. In it the first-person narrator, Mark Trecroci, records both his own passage into adulthood as a student at the University of Toronto, and also his own attempt to write about his experiences in draft versions of what proves to be the novel itself.

Appeals to historical context are even more insistent than they are in *Drowning in Darkness*. Toronto in the sixties is described in detail, with the educational and social experiment of Rochdale a focal point. The larger historical context is less subject to conscious questioning, however, than one might expect of a novel that is at once historiographic and metafictional: it is in the narrator's specific attempt to write about an historically conditioned fellow student, rather, that self-reflexive questioning elicits unresolved problems and contradictions. When Trecroci attempts to write a novel about Patrick Murphy (whose motto, upon joining the Rochdale experiment, is "No sex, no character"), he comes to question his understanding of fiction, and of the epistemological assumptions that led him to think that he could understand character (whether another's or his own). He realises that any attempt to write about another is compromised by blind spots, self-contradictions, and self-projections, both experientially and fictionally shaped.

The novel encourages reading as much as it repays it. Ironic rewritings of Fitzgerald and Lawrence are skillful as well as significant, epigrammatic wit contributes to a tempo that never lags, and the experiments of a "new age" provoke thought while sustaining humour.

In *To Scatter Stones*, M. T. Dohaney offers

a sequel to *The Corrigan Women*, an account of three generations of women in a Newfoundland family. The novel is thoroughly traditional, combining the conventions of realism with those of sentimental fiction.

The novel fails, however, to take full advantage of the conventions available to it. The plot—in which Tess Corrigan runs for provincial office, only to meet the man she once loved, and still loves—is largely predictable. Characters grow in their passages through life, but as they are underdeveloped to begin with, they become little more interesting at the end than they might have been from the beginning. (Tess discovers that love is possible, and that she can think for herself; the man Tess loves, Father Dennis Walsh, discovers that he had ignored his feelings for her when he entered the priesthood.) Although the speech of rural Newfoundland is sometimes captured, many opportunities to report such speech are missed: dialogue, in fact, often consists of a mere record of clichés.

Counterbalancing these shortcomings is a significant ethical analysis of political campaigns, and of social relationships generally. The analysis culminates with the genuine insights that Tess brings to her decision not to employ secret information to damage her political opponent. Some interesting theses are developed, even if narrative technique falls short when measured against the conventions the novel adopts.

Same Old Deal

Ken McGoogan
Visions of Kerouac. Pottersfield $16.95

Ron Shaw
Black Light Ronsdale $12.95

Reviewed by Thomas M. F. Gerry

Lately I have been reading mostly fiction, poetry and criticism written by contemporary Canadian and American women. Now to delve into recent works by two men vigorously eradicates the notion—should anyone still persist in gripping such a notion—that an author's gender is irrelevant to fabricating a text. How this difference arises is probably irrelevant; that men and women writing in the 1990s write differently, though, is unmistakable.

The contrast, in terms of a central concern raised by both McGoogan's novel and Shaw's stories is this: knowledge of evil. Women writers know well what is evil, what evil is. Women live intimately with evil day after day in the forms of violence against themselves, their mothers, sisters, children, friends. Violence for women is a given, the obvious. For many men, if the fiction under review is an accurate indication, and I think it is, evil is startling; it's remote, exotic and exciting, a challenge to be conquered, even mocked, a scary foreboding to be mastered. Evil has not come home to these men, it seems, and their writing is weaker for it: at its worst, it is trivial, no matter what their virtuosities of style or cleverness of subject matter; at best, they are conscious of evil as something or someone external to themselves.

McGoogan's title, *Visions of Kerouac*, echoes Jack Kerouac's title *Visions of Cody*. The novel as a whole presents men who echo Kerouac more or less closely. The central character, Frankie McCracken, obsessed with Kerouac, is visiting San Francisco in 1990, checking out Kerouac's old haunts as well as his own old haunts

from when he lived there in the hippie sixties and had just begun his obsession with Kerouac. (No wonder) McGoogan is not satisfied with this narrative deck, so he shuffles in a couple of other echoey wild cards: Kerouac himself, who has recently died, and visits Frankie in 1970 at the Mount Jubilation fire lookout tower where Frankie worked at the time. Kerouac, who, in the way Frankie knows all about him, knows all about Frankie—their similar Quebec roots, travels, longings—visits because he has chosen Frankie as the writer/witness who will testify to Kerouac's having performed a posthumous miracle, in order to clear the way for Kerouac to be canonized, both in the literary, but more importantly, in the saintly realm. This canonization, by the way, bears out the thesis of the more-academic-1990 Frankie McGoogan. And that's not all. There's also the "alternative narrator" who in CAPS turns up to challenge Frankie the narrator. CHALLENGE BIG FRANKIE? Well, up to a point. SAY WHAT YOU MEAN OR I'LL SHIFT DOWN TO YOUR FONT. It's mostly cute, okay? Leading questions, a few jokes. McGoogan's way of keeping things going when Frankie the narrator is becoming, um. WHAT? Too close to McGoogan. WHAT? Well, *Visions of Kerouac* is autobiographical. The cover bio sketch makes that clear. BUT MCGOOGAN IS WRITING A NOVEL. So he says. But he can't get past himself; so he shuffles voices and echoes to disguise HIMSELF. (On a first reading, even with the different fonts for different narrators, the text is difficult to follow.)

On the Good Guys side we have Jack Kerouac bidding for sainthood, as is Frankie/Ken. Early in the novel Bad Guys are wittily finessed by Frankie. But McGoogan does provide a devil figure who does take a few tricks from Frankie: Toby, a 1960s dope pusher in Haight-Ashbury, of all the nasty fellows. Smoking Acapulco Gold with him, Frankie suddenly sees Toby as "The Devil himself." This scary revelation/hallucination causes Frankie to mend his naughty ways, and he becomes a hard-working bicycle messenger in San Francisco, then a street-corner Bible-thumping pamphleteer, then a fire-tower attendant (when would-be-saint Jack Kerouac comes to visit). Actually this encounter with the Devil himself leads to the best part of McGoogan's novel, a hilarious bit where he "quotes" Frankie's letters home to his small-town-Quebec parents. The main effects of Frankie's meeting with the Devil are on the levels of character motivation and narrative patterning, and of an almost slapstick humour.

On another level, this lightweight devil figure is an accurate gauge of the insignificance of this autobiographical novel. McGoogan is a competent writer. Before starting *Visions of Kerouac* he had lots of autobiographical material as well as a strong interest in Kerouac. To deal with the challenges of autobiography, and perceiving an absence in his own life of profound experience, he decided to piggyback his story onto Kerouac's. The bluff doesn't work. To write a life, both autobiography and fiction demand that the writer come to grips with the depths and heights of experience. Bob Dylan's advice pertains to McGoogan: "You shouldn't let other people get your kicks for you."

Ron Shaw's ten stories and a novella, in *Black Light*, are much more satisfying than *Visions of Kerouac*. Shaw draws on his experiences in Africa for most of the characters and settings of his fiction, imaginatively narrating situations and events from a variety of Africans' and visitors' perspectives. Shaw, unlike McGoogan, realizes the life-and-death struggle which writing requires and is. Whereas McGoogan's devil figure is minor, Shaw's sense of evil is more energetically developed. Evil is out there: it is active in Africa, personified often by women.

The opening stories in this ingeniously ordered collection establish in differing ways a powerful sense of mystery: something is hidden, perhaps many things; yet the visitors to Africa are in circumstances where they urgently have to cope. In "Ango Field," for instance, a small plane pilot with engine trouble lands at a remote airfield (literally a field in the jungle), arriving in a torrential downpour, and finding shelter in the home of M. DeMonk, a Belgian diamond prospector, whom, were he in Canada, we would call "bushed." With his two native wives this apparently deluded man lives in a shanty in the jungle, slowly dying of malaria and of the alcohol he guzzles to while away the rainy season. Shaw surgically exposes the dimensions of DeMonk's insanity, including his obsession with retaining his claim on the female "diamond" which is actually the source of his destruction.

While in one story, "Last Hunt," Shaw describes an old African man's last stand in his shack threatened by developers' bulldozers, he also strikingly portrays visitors in Africa, like DeMonk, during what can only be called their death throes. "Janus" dissects the miserable final days of Armand, a veritable man descended, who, the story suggests, was "losing parts of his soul as a leper, one at a time, lost fingers and toes. Clinging to symbols of life more than life itself." Part of this loss, and the catalyst for the story's immediate events, is Armand's slapping his girlfriend, Madeline, who goes off with another man.

"Bouquet," the novella in *Black Light*," vividly presents the demise of Durelle, a writer who has become ensnared in the attractions of an African prostitute, Bouquet. Similarly to many of the stories in this collection, a woman is directly implicated in the utter destruction of a visitor to Africa (or of his illusions, as in "Eight–Bar Love Affair"). Not that the women wilfully or actively do anything to bring about these men's downfalls. Rather they are channels through which the corrupting influences of African life worm their ways into the men's souls. None of this dynamic would be surprising to readers of *Heart of Darkness* or viewers of *Apocalypse Now* of course. Shaw's depicting women as being so close to the sources of the men's destruction is more extreme, though.

My impression that contemporary women's writing is generally more original, more challenging, more profoundly affecting than men's is distressing. I mean I'm glad that women are keeping writing alive, but sad about the situation that doing this review has made distinct. Here are two talented writers, McGoogan and Shaw, whose sophistication in the tools of the trade is remarkable. But all of these skills amount to not much when the chips are down. And this isn't at all a matter of political correctness. If men don't start understanding that we are largely responsible for the evils anyone can see around us, we simply aren't going to be able to write anything of significance. And the attacks on our mothers, wives, sisters, children and friends will go on.

Growing up in Canada

Douglas How
Blow up the Trumpet in the New Moon. Oberon $15.95

Don Gutteridge
Summer's Idyll. Oberon $12.95

Reviewed by Ron Jenkins

Blow up the Trumpet in the New Moon and *Summer's Idyll*, both from Oberon Press, are strikingly similar in many ways: they are both stories of coming-of-age summer vacations about boys (ages 15 and 11 respectively), they are both set in the past (1935 and 1945) in small-town Canada, and they both head towards an end-of-summer climax that transforms the future for each boy.

Blow up the Trumpet in the New Moon is a story with a couple of major themes: distinguishing the fine line between faith and self-deception, and deciding how to bring what is *good* from the past into the present. It is a pure comedy with an ending that is sweet almost to the point of being cloying, but Douglas How manages to carry it off.

The small Maritime town of St. Gomorrah is confronted with the problem of removing from the second floor of one of its buildings a horse that has mysteriously appeared there. As it is a given that horses will ascend, but not descend stairs, the horse poses a challenge to the combined equine expertise of St. Gomorrah, as embodied in the board of directors of the St. Gomorrah Harness Racing Society (SHRS). It is, as one character puts it, "'One of those problems where you either shrink or grow.'" The flow of town life is disrupted, people diverge from their paths, rules fail, and a SHRS director says he's "by no means sure the constitution and by-laws of the SHRS are flexible enough to cover the present situation, and, moreover, that the directors might be on the verge of conducting it into unfamiliar seas that could shunt it off the track it has traditionally pursued." Against these reservations rooted in the historical inertia of St. Gomorrah the horse becomes literally an overseeing and detached presence, as it looks from its second-floor window onto the main street.

The third-person narrative voice of this work is both self-conscious, sardonic and bemused, with a strong dose of genuinely good humour. The narrator's digressive style, somewhat reminiscent of *Tristram Shandy*, is well suited to the novel's theme of the relationship between past and present, since it becomes evident immediately that the present cannot move ahead without entanglements from the past, and that nothing can be simply stated since everything needs context. Thus "there develops at once a delicate and considerable argument in which everyone who speaks—and they all do—is aware that what he says has more to do with the past than with the present, less to do with the immediate question than with the webs and entanglements of unspoken loyalties, priorities and relationships, not to mention the fibres and fissures and follies of family, politics, religion and who belongs to what and who doesn't." Despite the digressions, however, this novel has a strong and ultimately satisfying narrative thread, as St. Gomorrah tries to come to grips with the anomalous.

Much of this work is about the power of language, and the narrator as well as the characters seem perpetually to play with synonyms, rephrasings, variations on a theme. In both style and content, this novel seems related to the tall tale, and the question of the power of language is built around the distinction between blarney and eloquence; characters are always pressed to decide whether what they say and hear is "gilded bullshit" or the "music of exaggeration." Thus Murphy Flanagan, the town's master of rich verbosity, finds his blarney turns to prayer, and Matthew Perkins, the boy whose search for truth eventually repairs the pains of the past, thrills to words: their feel, their inflation, and their power of euphemism. He "can almost feel something that is happening more and more: the dictionary opening in his mind." This exuberant language spills over to the characters' tendency to nickname each other, and we find a cast of actors with telling or alliterative names such as Albert Almighty, Blackbarry Babington, Cerebral Cecil, and Penelope Perkins.

St. Gomorrah, a town in mid-depression striving "to salvage and shore up its position as both the county seat, the shiretown, and as the commercial centre of a rural area" is fighting decline that began with the end of the maritime shipbuilding boom in the mid-nineteenth century. This is an

entropy embedded in the actions of characters like Dewey Caldwell, the postmaster, who, "Even as he distributes the letters, magazines and newspapers, the bills, the cheques, the notices for parcels, . . . has an ear cocked for sounds from the lobby. From instinct honed by experience, he knows there is a point at which the forces tending to disorder achieve a critical mass, and that the first warnings stem from the number and mood of those assembled to gather their mail." His desire for order is, however, unlike Maxwell's Demon in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49,* who sorts molecules into fast-and slow-moving compartments, since Dewey Caldwell is attempting to keep a lid on forces that can erupt into a life-affirming saturnalia. He instead recalls the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain, struggling to keep up the appearance of order in a system growing out of control. In all of this, the horse, Pius the Pious, is both catalytic, and, when combined the faith in truth of Matthew Perkins, restorative to a town on the cusp of either renewal or permanent decline.

Like *Blow up the Trumpet in the New Moon, Summer's Idyll* happens in the summer vacation of an overhearing child, Junior. It takes place on the interface between the adult and the child's worlds, and is a story told around a centre that terrifies and dominates the mind of the community, as a threatening "Stranger" lurks on the margins of town. It is also a story told around a void that is almost always skirted—the absence of Junior's father, who is a mechanic in the war effort. And, like the Stranger always on the outskirts, the war itself provides a context of action for the boys' play and fantasies, as well as becoming an analogy for their imaginings and fears. Thus, they pretend they are British commandos in a Nazi minefield, and live inside movie images from Saturday matinées.

The story effectively recreates a boy's world in summer, and the progress to summer's end, culminating with the annual circus that the "gang" of children plan every summer. The novel has an evocative texture of childhood details: the red-white-and-blue sponge-rubber balls; the flash of bottle caps in the slant of sunlight under water; the older boys in the gang growing apart into adolescence and occasional shaving; and the obligatory exile, Lester the Pester. It is not, however, a world of childhood innocence, but rather of the child's sense of the adult lack of innocence. Alcoholism, infidelity, mental illness, and domestic antagonism are all present. Junior can feel, for example, the rivalry between his mother and grandmother expressed in their competitions to prepare his meals. Much of this novel is about how easily children can reconstruct the adult world from the fragments that they are given, in this case images of the war, scenes from the movies, overheard conversations, and gossip. Junior's world is shaped on the one hand by the glamorous—war heroes, Betty Grable, Ginger Rogers—and on the other hand by the sinister—*The Shadow, The Inner Sanctum, Revenge of the Nile, The Mummy's Curse,* and *Revenge of the Swamp Creature.*

The adult world is often overheard, placed in brackets in the text, or latent in things such as the interpolated newspaper headlines that make a physical and generational barrier between Junior and his grandfather. It is encircling, omnipresent, and influencing, but the adults are unable to hide their world from children, who can see their fears and their problems—as when Junior sees his Gram's fear of the Stranger. Finally, death too lurks on the periphery, though hidden and sanitized until it finally stares the children face to face. Thus, Junior overhears talk of a pilot's death in war while playing the pinball game "Down the Red Baron," but it is finally a storm that washes open graves at the

Indian graveyard, and Baby Snook's drowning, that gives the children an awareness that this was their last summer of innocence.

Illusions of Not Alone

Jane Dick
Conceptions. Guernica n.p.

Carol Malyon
Emma's Dead. Wolsak and Wynn $10.00

Reviewed by Sonya Reiss

In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* we find one of the most famous articulations of isolation: "We live, as we dream—alone...." The confinement of the individual, the inaccessibility of that which is "other," has proved grist for the mill of many a literary endeavor. This theme of profound isolation from the other permeates and enriches the poetry of both Jane Dick and Carol Malyon. For Dick, whose book *Conceptions* probes into the realm of the sensual, the remote object is a lover. In *Emma's Dead*, Malyon illuminates the intricacies of a mother/daughter relationship, of the absence of mother and the daughter's ensuing quest.

"Limbo," one of Jane Dick's most intriguing poems, directly addresses the complexity of intimate relations, the impossibility of an ultimate union between two individuals: "we are together; / ah, we are / an illusion of not alone." Though concerned with physicality, this collection of poems does not solely luxuriate in the sensuality of encounters between lovers; it infiltrates the darker, more destructive elements involved in physical and emotional entanglement. With clear, direct verse and a distinctly sensual voice, Dick celebrates the glory of lovemaking while still acknowledging the fundamental inaccessibility of one lover to another: "we come together / and in coming together / reach the climax of our loneliness."

Conceptions—prefaced with poems of elation such as "Exquis" and "I am Astonished"—exalts in fleshly convergence and asserts the fecundity of such a love. Desire and consummation themselves bear fruit; the name of the lover bursts from the persona like "a birthing cry." The fertility of this pleasure, however, later succumbs to a dark and desperate sterility. For the persona, the dangers of love begin to overshadow the bliss. She fears the inaccessibility of the lover, the precariousness of relationships, and the possibility of her being inadequate, expendable, replaced.

The book is divided into two sections. The first, Kaleidoscope, illustrates both the euphoria and the degradation of sexual intimacy between the persona and her male lover(s). In the final section called Conceptions, the birthing cry—the fertility with which the book begins—transforms into the groan of an anguished mother who aborts her unborn child. Earlier poems in the section, replete with images of stillborn and aborted fetuses, convey a devastating sterility. The concluding poem of the work, "Child, or Lack of," portrays a woman burdened with pain and turmoil, plagued by the fear of motherhood in a world that she herself can hardly endure: "these walls have all they can / to hold themselves / they are intact now / though fragile."

This final section dramatically contrasts the "unborn" and the "undead." Both states of being rely on death—on non-existence—for their very definition. The battle is that of one trapped in a world cursed with futility and death: "we the undead are struggling / it's too late to be unborn." The undead, those who live, must struggle and suffer their way into the grave. Such a fate is unknown to the unborn. The persona, a would-be-mother, decides for her child that to remain unborn is better than to dwell in the realm of the undead.

In Carol Malyon's *Emma's Dead*, the pro-

tagonist, Emma, is a woman who has transcended the wretchedness of the undead and entered the numb void of the living dead. A victim of Alzheimer's disease, she lost her pain when she lost her memory and her life. Malyon reconstructs Emma's history by leading her reader from the disorienting haze of disease all the way back to Emma's presence as an unwanted fetus in the womb of her mother. A long poetic narrative containing sensitive images and startling metaphors, this work examines the failings of particular human relationships—their necessary lacks and frailties—and does so using language that touches one with its simplicity. Malyon probes into the roles memory, its fragmentation, and its reconstruction play in the search for meaning. A wry humor and keen insight into life's bittersweet ironies mingle with moments of tragic isolation.

Karen, the daughter of Emma, seeks to know and regain contact with the mother who has forgotten her. With poignant starkness and elegance, Malyon's poetry delves into the subjectivity of Emma—a woman who is but a phantom to her daughter. A deserted child with a child of her own, Karen mourns the loss of both her parents and laments the inadequacy of her past knowledge of them: "life is solid as a dream / a child wakes up one day / to find she's lost a father / & hardly had one."

Karen struggles to recapture the mother whose memory has been ravaged by Alzheimer's, to grasp the irretrievable. Her "illusion of not alone" rests in her futile search for the woman within the ghost; she hugs a shell of vacant flesh, a mother who can no longer return her embrace. The narrative, by working backwards chronologically, provides the reader with insight into the turmoil of an Emma forever beyond the reach of her daughter Karen: Emma, the daughter ... Emma, the unwanted child. Now Karen is a mother herself, but a mother unable to relinquish the stability of her role as daughter.

Emma's Dead portrays three generations of women, each with her own complex perspective on motherhood, solitude, and the burden of maturity. Karen searches for Emma as Emma searched for her own mother. They are the disinherited; each daughter longs to recover the mother beneath the phantom—the elusive other both indisputably present and painfully absent. An inexplicable, yet inextricable bond exists between Emma and Karen, between this mother and her daughter. It is a bond intensified at the very moment that it is destroyed by disease. Karen searches desperately for the mother she never knew, the mother she *did* know, and the mother she must become. Wrenched from Emma, she must embark upon the quest alone. Emma, immersed in her dark oblivion, begins her own solitary journey. Insulated by the destruction of her memory, Emma personifies true isolation. She embodies the dilemma about which Virginia Woolf wrote in *To the Lighthouse*:

We perish, each alone.

Native Women's Writing

Julia Emberley
Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory. U Toronto P $18.95/$50.00

Lee Maracle
Ravensong. Press Gang n.p.

Reviewed by Dorothy Seaton

Julia Emberley's *Thresholds of Difference* locates Native women's writing in terms of a "double session of writing," where a project of creating a (materialist) feminism of decolonization informs and is informed by an equal project of decolonizing feminism. Emberley begins with a feminist critique of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *After the Last Sky*, noting their use of the figure of

the "Oriental," Third World woman only to stage the issue of the relative power of Western masculinist discourses of the Orient and Said's own desire for emancipation from these Western constructions: "the anatomy of women's bodies," Emberley decides, "becomes a displaced site on which to map out [these] territorial affiliations." In carrying out her critique, Emberley also works to resist the simultaneous danger that her own feminist intervention might reassert a "First Worldist" feminist claim to the right to construct Third World women's realities and conflicts. She critiques Nawal el Saadawi and Gayatri Spivak on such grounds, for their construction of the "material specificity of clitoridectomy," which many Egyptian and Sudanese women suffer, as only a "symbolic register of women's oppression or ideological victimage within the production of knowledge," rather than as an instance of economic and material exploitation marking the very bodies of Arab Egyptian and Sudanese women.

Then, from such a recognition of the need to articulate the relations between several political struggles—here between feminism and decolonization—Emberley goes on to examine the work of Native women in Canada to carry out, for themselves, their own feminism of decolonization and decolonization of feminism. Their work has occurred not only on a material, political level—as in Emberley's discussion of their struggle against the inherent patriarchalism of the Indian Acts in defining Treaty rights, or their historical interaction with the exploitive work of male European fur traders. In Emberley's reading of several recent works by Native women, it has occurred on a textual and epistemological level as well. I found Emberley's reading of Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* particularly interesting in its discussion of the ideological uses to which Armstrong puts the distinction between oral and literate cultures.

Emberley's achievement is considerable, and represents a valuable contribution to all three of the disciplines mentioned in her subtitle, as well as to the discussion of their mutual relations. However, I am uncomfortable with the inconsistency with which Emberley turns a critical eye on her own place in these several discussions of textual power: she criticizes Spivak & El Saadawi's *claiming* of the material specificity of clitoridectomy for their own symbolic uses, but does not seem to include her own discussion in such a critique—her own recycling (and now mine) of the issue of clitoridectomy and of the figure of the Third World woman for use in her own First Worldist theoretical contestations. She similarly neglects to examine her own assumptions in her materialist-feminist construction of Native women according to a hunter/gatherer economy, resulting in different constructions of gender, and thus of feminism, than in capitalist economic constructions. Though much of her resulting discussion is useful in elaborating the profound differences between Native feminisms and Anglo-American feminisms, this construction relies on a nostalgic harking back to traditional Native ways/economies which, despite her discussions of recent Native women's activism and of several Metis and Inuit writers, does not adequately address the effects of several hundred years of "epistemic violence" which have (dis-)placed contemporary Native women into far more complex material relation with both their own (once?) hunter/gatherer economies and the present colonizing capitalism of "Canada."

These difficulties may point to a basic problem underwriting even the most self-conscious and well-meant approaches to Native issues and writing: that whatever the non-Native critic's efforts to dismantle the stereotypes and assumptions that have shaped European discourses of Native meaning and identity, their own (and my own)

rewritings nevertheless continue to contribute to, as much as to subvert, the fetishization of the Native as a sign in *European* histories and systems of signification.

Lee Maracle's *Ravensong* can be read as one Native writer's answer to such difficulties, as it tells the story of a crucial period of change in the history of one West Coast Native community. Caught between her disparagement of white ways, and yet her awareness of white disdain of Native ways, seventeen-year-old Stacey watches as a flu epidemic kills the most learned Elders in the community, and with them, much of the traditional wisdom and knowledge that have survived all of the previous white-introduced epidemics. Though Raven has apparently sent the epidemic (or at least allowed it to occur) with a view to forcing a reconciliation between whites and Natives, the effect is quite the opposite, as the whites across the river refuse medical help to the Natives, and the Natives' resulting loss of the Elders and their knowledge will precipitate the community's decline into the despair and destruction characteristic of subsequent decades of Native experience. In some ways, then, the novel might be read as a kind of prequel to Jeannette Armstrong's (his-)story, in *Slash*, of Native activism and struggle in the 1960s and 70s.

Ravensong returns again and again to Stacey's puzzlement at the seeming heartlessness and superficiality of white society, as compared to the deep responsibility and interconnection of the Native community, with each other and the land. The effect is to reverse—for a white reader like me—the usual paradigm by which Native cultures are understood only in relation to a white norm, and to propose the powerful possibility and necessity that Native writers speak for themselves. I would guess that for the Native reader, the work effects an equally powerful affirmation of the distinction and value of Native meanings and stories.

This novel represents a significant development in Maracle's writing as she both revisits and recasts the technique—begun in such works as "Trickster Alive and Crowing" or "World War I"—of interweaving "everyday" material reality, especially as associated with Stacey's concerns, with Native spiritual reality, as associated with her sister Celia. The opening paragraph is one of the most beautiful I have read, and throughout the novel, the movement back and forth between these supposedly separate realities is evocative of the closeness of these two worlds both in the Native community whose colonization we are witnessing, and in the act of Native storytelling that Maracle has undertaken. At the same time, I found these shifts rather confusing—though perhaps tellingly so, as a white reader—and wished that more had been done with Celia's aspect of the story. She seems oddly paralysed by her visions of the past—which might seem understandable since her visions are largely of earlier Native encounters with white violence and irresponsibility—but I also thought that her receptivity to them (while Raven clearly despairs of Stacey's obliviousness to him) might be a route to reconnection with precisely the traditions and knowledge lost with the Elders. The novel does not diminish the immediate issue of responsibility and the tragedy of white colonial violence. But its effect is equally to place the story as much within Raven's long sense of time and history—where human lives are brief, and significant change encompasses generations and centuries of these lives—as within the conventional European construction of the individual novel as capable of encapsulating the reaches of historical time. From such a perspective of patience, both Emberley and Maracle's works represent significant achievements.

Cultural Policies

David Perkins
Is Literary History Possible? Johns Hopkins UP $29.95

Peter N. Stearns
Meaning Over Memory: Recasting the Teaching of Culture and History. U North Carolina P $35.95

Valda Blundell, John Shepherd and Ian Taylor, eds.
Relocating Cultural Studies: Developments in Theory and Research. Routledge $55.00

Reviewed by John Thurston

These three books, examinations of disciplines balanced between the social and the cultural by practitioners of those disciplines, will inform outsiders more than stimulate insiders. Their attitudes towards their subjects, while generally analytical, differ. David Perkins is sceptical about the continuance of the practice of literary history; Peter Stearns is hopeful about the reform of humanities pedagogy; and the contributors to Blundell, Shepherd and Taylor's collection are, by and large, ambivalent but committed to the cultural studies project.

Perkins's title is coy, but then who would give serious attention to a book that phrased that statement in the affirmative? It is through his own experience of writing literary history that he arrives, very early in the book, at his conclusion: "I am unconvinced (or *de*convinced) that it can be done." The impossibility of classification and periodization, the unavoidability of teleology and narrative, the incommensurability of the representative and the particular, the incompatibility of history and criticism—these are some of the issue that Perkins identifies as bedeviling the writing of literary history.

The issues are not new nor would Perkins claim they are. His reason for writing the book is that "literary history is again at the turbulent center of literary studies." The book is intended as a comprehensive survey of the issues and attempts to confront them with the fact of literary history. That fact, however, melts away as each work or type of literary history falls short of a full realisation of the term. To build up enough from this negative critique for a book, Perkins himself engages in histories of the writing of literary history in general, and of American literature, the English Romantics and modern poetry.

These analyses of the practice of literary history accord with Perkins's stated empiricism. They also exemplify one of the main problems with literary history as he identifies it: the imperative for any literary historian to simplify and be selective if the job is ever going to get done. As Perkins knows, this process serves the historian's own "conceptions of causality, continuity, coherence, and teleology." His count in the requisite list of literary-historical generalizations filled, he refrains from mention of their "frequent, partial exceptions."

Perkins acknowledges but resists the reduction of his argument to a vindication of absolute relativism. Throughout the book he does not hesitate to judge various methods, movements and critics. While impossible, literary history is found unavoidable. He notes the contemporary value placed on multiplicity, heterogeneity and randomness, but quietly supports his own preferences for unity, consistency and coherence—however much they fail to correspond to experience.

Literary politics are even more important to Peter Stearns, whose liberal stance is still within speaking range of Perkins. Stearns's starting point is the contemporary ferment in the humanities, which he constructs as the occasion for radical reform. Part of his intent is to neutralize the threat of the attendant polarization that could prohibit consensus on the direction of reform. To mediate between the extremes and draw them to his own via media he writes a long,

balance discussion of the PC wars in the United States.

Concrete proposals for reform are his major concern and they finally arise in concentrated form half-way through the book. Some of these proposals are quite exciting, but their potential impact is diminished by how long it takes to get to them and their delivery with such insistent repetition. Like Perkins's, this is a book that might be more effective as an essay.

Believing that those who would simply revise the content of the curriculum to make it more inclusive are still playing into the pedagogy of memori(al)zation and passive learning he deplores, Stearns describes his agenda as "more radical than the radicals." He acknowledges the need to bring content more into line with both domestic demographics and a global economy, but what he really wants to alter is the way that content is transferred, making it more than just an end in itself. His prescriptions address a number of the problems that occupy the profession from an angle that opens up novel solutions.

Stearns sees the conflict between teaching and research, for instance, as due to a conception of the humanities as guardians of received wisdom rather than sources of new knowledge. They may have played the former role once, but "research gains during the past twenty-five years form a vital basis for redefining the teaching curriculum." He would see the humanities, like the sciences, provide "an education predicated on new knowledge and new analytical approaches." In his view, "we know more about the way societies and cultures work than we did thirty years ago." (Too bad we couldn't act on this assumption.) Humanists should not only teach this new knowledge, but should "use the study of cultures ... as tools for analysis ... for raising critical questions about how ... societies function."

It is in its continual variations on the phrases in the last sentence that Stearns's book becomes repetitive. He usually leaves what he means by the analysis of how societies work open enough to pique the curiosity without satisfying it. To be fair, one chapter does offer a list of analytical approaches, each fully deverloped, and he occasionally refers to specific social knowledge, but the phrases occur empty of content far more frequently. It also seems likely that this agenda will have far less appeal to traditional humanists than Stearns hopes. Nevertheless, he establishes a broad and interdisciplinary framework within which humanities scholars could engage in fruitful dialogue and seek new scholarly identities: "The humanities, in this vision, gain basic coherence from their ongoing attempt to formulate the data and the theoretical approaches necessary for us to grasp how and to what extent cultures construct meaning."

From the surveys of research in the field in *Relocating Cultural Studies*, it is clear that its contributors could accept much of Stearns's advice in performing their teaching duties and shoring up their own scholarly identities. These are essays by six Canadians, an American and an Australian who first delivered them at a conference at Carleton University in April 1989, although they have been revised and updated since then. The cover blurb and artwork suggest that the contents trace the migration of cultural studies from Great Britain to the United States and into its latest prime habitat, Canada and Australia, but there is only one essay on cultural studies in Canada and nothing on Australia.

Not all of the essays are worthy of inclusion. In "Why Are There No Great Women Postmodernists?," Geraldine Finn, using a few quotations from the work of a male colleague who happened to be speaking in the same session as she was, creates a "(post)modernist" straw man whom she demolishes for his universalizing pontifications. When she complains of the "tendency

in postmodern discourse ... [to] mystif[y] reality by presenting particular local and partial truths as if they were the whole Truth," one would like to think she had enough self-consciousness to see how badly she had herself been bitten by this tendency.

John Shepherd's essay is ostensibly on value and power in the processes of musical production as they contribute to English-Canadian cultural identity. When he gets away from such empty phrases as "a reality of absences and silences" he has good points and useful distinctions to make. The essay does not bear very directly on its stated thesis, however, and neither does Gail Guthrie Valaskakis's "Post Cards of My Past." The latter piece is an often exhilarating attempt to unite personal experience, cultural theory and contemporary struggles for aboriginal identity, sovereignty and self-determination; it is, however, more impressive in its pieces than as a finished work.

Lawrence Grossberg's essay, subtitled "An American in Birmingham," has had all personal experience bled out of it. As a revisionist history of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, this essay may both inform those unfamiliar with the Centre and provoke discussion among those close to it. Finally, however, in locating the question of "what is the 'modern' world?" as the centre of "postmodern cultural studies," the essay leaves an image of a discipline that is everything and nothing.

The essays by Will Straw and Jody Berland, personable and eccentric respectively, are among the most readable in the collection. Straw's essay suggests a counter-cultural, dirigiste role for cultural studies in central English-Canadian academic life that will likely provoke disagreement. Berland's piece argues that technology and communications have given us the illusion of control over the weather, and in our attraction to this illusion and rejection of the reality of a northern climate we are becoming less Canadian. This is not far from parts of Innis, McLuhan and Grant, who appear briefly in Straw's paper, and it seems Straw and Berland, as well as a few others whom they cite, are working towards a specifically Canadian version of cultural studies.

In "True Voices and Real People" Elspeth Probyn discusses a range of recent theorists working on the question of autobiography and the personal voice. This is a survey but it cogently produces the theoretical rationale for the tone and point of view of Finn, Valaskakis, Straw and Berland. The personal is not the only voice in cultural studies, however, and Tony Bennett, in his person and his work, represents an internationalist stream running through the field. His is also the most substantive contribution to the volume and the one most likely to push debate within the discipline ahead. Identifying two strands within cultural studies, one that stresses politics and policy debate and the other that stresses theory and the analysis of cultural texts, Bennett argues that, contrary to their practitioners, these two areas are, especially now, thoroughly imbricated with each other. Describing "'the cultural' as a field of social management," he claims that no cultural product can appear that is innocent of policy issues. His essay could be taken as a model of argument by most of his co-contributors, while his argument might be seen as an extension of Stearns's and an explanation of Perkins's.

Re-Presenting the Great War

Evelyn Cobley
Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives. U Toronto P $45.00

Desmond Morton
When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War. Random House $32.50

Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Loschnigg, eds.
Intimate Enemies: English and German Literary Reactions to the Great War 1914-1918. Universitatsverlag C. Winter n.p.

Reviewed by Lorraine M. York

In his introduction to *Intimate Enemies*, Martin Loschnigg speculates that "One reason for the renewed critical interest in war novels which can be perceived today is that they may serve as outstanding examples in the debate currently flourishing among literary scholars as well as theoreticians of history on the complex relations between fact and fiction in literature and historical writing." An eminently sensible-sounding hypothesis, this; still, if one surveys even recent criticism of World War I literature, for example, one finds little evidence of poststructuralist critique. Oddly enough, this observation applies to Loschnigg and Stanzel's collection as well. Why? In her poststructuralist study, Evelyn Cobley suggests several reasons for this state of affairs; in particular, she points to the relentlessly documentary and realist nature of war texts themselves. Faced with Wilfred Owen's writhing gas victims, for instance, critics of war literature have, understandably, been prone to valorize documentary verisimilitude.

Recent analyses of the 1914-1918 conflict by professional historians have tended to reproduce this same double awareness: a sense of poststructuralist methodologies nipping closely at the heels accompanied by a sturdy resistance to the consequences of those methodologies. Canadian historian Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up*, for instance, evinces a latent suspicion of the mainstream narratives of the Great War, insofar as Morton's aim, in this study, is to tell the story from the perspective of the "individuals who formed that [Canadian] army." He is aware of the ways in which class privilege, for instance, can inform the official versions of history: "How well did Canadian officers do?," he asks at one point; "Since officers or members of their class became the historians who told us most of what we now know about the CEF [Canadian Expeditionary Forces], suspicions of bias are not limited to the court-martial statistics." Nevertheless, this study, with its large-scale martialling of evidence from veterans' diaries and testimony, has not displaced the basic aim of discovering "the truth" about the war; though there are occasions where Morton points out the possible biases of his documentary sources, on many others he appears to privilege their truth-claims. As a result, this change in perspective does not occasion a change in methodology; the familiar charts, graphs, maps and statistics are still here. Of course, I need to leave it to professional historians to tell us how significantly Morton deviates from the official accounts of the First World War; as a literary scholar, I can only offer commentary on the theoretical implications of his method.

Intimate Enemies also shows evidence of a significant shift in approach which is rarely accompanied by a shift in methodology or theoretical assumptions. These papers first appeared as short conference presentations at a symposium on "The First World War in English and German Literature: A Comparative View" which was held at the Karl-Franzens-Universitat, Graz, in 1991. As such, then, they represent a rare interdisciplinary and comparativist meeting; Peter Firchow's study of "Shakespeare, Goethe and the War of the Professors," an analysis of how English Germanists and German

Anglisten mainly drew back into their nationalist camps during the war, serves as an implicit commentary on the habitual isolation of contemporary English-language and German critics of this war's literature. That said, however, the conservatism of these essays, for the most part, is noticeable. The title of Bruno Schultze's essay, "Fiction and Truth: Politics and the War Novel," would seem to promise more, and it does make some gestures in a more up-to-date direction in its opening pages. Still, when all's said and done, it is basically a study of the political background of the publication of war novels and diaries in the late 20s; as pacifism gained respectability, Schultze argues, the floodgates opened for the publication of formerly undesirable anti-war memoirs.

The section on "A Gendered Perspective of 1914-18" would also seem to promise more in the way of critical revisionism, yet very little of feminist methodology and theory enters this narrow gate. (There are 3 contributors in this section, 2 of whom are male.) Indeed, the last contributor, Walter Hobling, concludes that "only a few women writers in the U.S.A. and in Germany and Austria develop a critical or alternative 'gendered eye' in their works about World War I." So much for the rationale of this section. Alan Bance's article on "Sexuality, Gender and the First World War" has the most to offer: he sees passive trench warriors as parodies "of the imprisoned domestic life of nineteenth-century females," a "'feminized' existence" which, for Bance, presages a "war-time crisis of masculinity."

The preceding demonstrates the validity of the opening sentence of Evelyn Cobley's *Representing War*: "Critical assessments of First World War literature have so far been conducted mainly on cultural and thematic lines." In her study, Cobley draws on structuralist and poststructuralist narratology and theories of postmodernism in order to reposition war texts as sites of conflicted responses to war experience. How is form, in particular, implicated in war writers' quest for articulation of war experience? Predictably, then, Cobley is at her best in accounting for the problematics of modernist representations of war, such as David Jones's *In Parenthesis*. Cobley persuasively shows how critics of Jones's text have bent it this way and that to make it fit their critical imperatives (positive valuation of documentary realism, for example, or, conversely, of the mythic verbal icon). Her *In Parenthesis* is a more complex work, one which "expresses a far more sophisticated recognition of the contradictions and dilemmas of war than any other narrative about the First World War."

My only reservation about this thoughtful and ambitious book is that it occasionally falls into what I would call a totalizing repetition. Many a time, for instance, we hear that war texts reveal "a complicity with the Englightenment values history upholds and the war so obviously betrayed"; they are "deeply implicated in the liberal-humanist tradition at the very moment when modernity showed itself incapable of living up to its promises." This verbal repetition may have a more substantial root; there is, in *Representing War*, a tendency to totalize historical-philosophical movements (for example, "Enlightenment values") when those movements or periods are themselves sites of contradictory ideological workings. But this critical shorthand does little, in the final event, to impede the fine insights contained in *Representing War*. This book sets a new standard for conceptualizing war literature; it re-presents the textuality of war. The new terrain thus uncovered is perhaps more bumpy and resistant than the traditional topography which critics have accustomed themselves to, but it is unquestionably more challenging.

Exploration Documents

Germaine Warkentin, ed.
Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology.
Oxford $24.95.

Reviewed by Iain Higgins

Significant historical anniversaries inevitably give rise to temporary publishing booms, and the quincentenary of Columbus's first American voyage has been no exception. In the years surrounding 1992, scholars have satisfied the periodically renewed interest in the early stages of European expansion with mainly revisionary studies of its textual and ideological legacy. What they have not generally done, however, is to reissue the original texts themselves, many of which are accessible only in major research libraries. Germaine Warkentin's fine new anthology is thus a welcome exception, offering readers a chance to do their own synoptic reconnaissance of an important historical archive.

The anthologist's task is rarely an easy one, and never more so than when it involves extended prose writings. In the present case, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that Warkentin's chosen textual corpus is defined by the "exploration document," a somewhat blurry category whose boundaries she has attempted to sharpen by invoking additional cultural and historical criteria: the documents must have been written in English and must concern mercantile or scientific travel between 1660 and 1860 into the western interior territory once known as Rupert's Land (the dates define the period between initial exploration and preparation for settlement). In addition, Warkentin has had to be a kind of explorer herself, unable to consult previous anthologies that might at least have provided her with anti-models — indeed, it is startling to realize that there are virtually no recent anthologies documenting European expansion into the Americas. Her one predecessor is John Warkentin's *The Western Interior of Canada: A Record of Geographical Discovery 1612 - 1917* (1964), and the differences between the two are instructive.

The earlier anthology is concerned to document the growth of Euro-american geographical knowledge about the vast land mass between the Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains, and so consists of numerous short passages excerpted from explorers' journals and reports and focussing on the land itself. In contrast, as its title might suggest, the anthology under review is intended to establish the contours of "the first body of a literature which can in any sense be called Canadian," and it accordingly offers fewer and longer passages excerpted from the same sources and selected in part so as to reveal the nature of the documents themselves as written texts. Moreover, the excerpts have also been chosen to illustrate the nature of life in the region, including native life, and some are therefore drawn from records necessarily ignored in the earlier collection: for example, the Piegan chief Saukamapee's account of his people (as recorded by David Thompson); George Simpson's *Character Book* with its satirical portraits of Hudson's Bay Company employees; and Letitia Hargrave's letters home to England from York Fort (Hargrave was one the first English women to visit western Canada).

In order to give her selections some sort of coherence, Warkentin has arranged them roughly chronologically into five sections: "Discovery or Contact?"; "The Great North-West in the Eighteenth Century"; "Life and Letters among the Explorers"; "An Imperial Enterprise"; and "Prelude to Settlement." The better known writings receive the most space. Thus, whereas Matthew Cocking's perfunctory journal of his visit to Blackfeet Country in 1772-73 occupies ten pages, the writings of Hearne, Thompson, Mackenzie, Vancouver, Fraser, and Franklin take up some thirty pages

each. Each excerpt, whatever its length, is introduced by a helpful biographical/historical headnote and is also accompanied by a small map and short explanatory notes. The entire anthology is prefaced by an introduction which begins by noting that "the explorers of Canada were assiduous writers," and goes on briefly to define the "exploration document" and discuss the problem of reading this sort of text before offering an historical and cultural overview of the exploration of western Canada and the nature of the surviving textual record. The overview seeks above all to undo the received image of the explorer as a solitary hero, redefining him as simply one of many co-participants in an emerging culture, while the discussion of the texts as such raises matters like "the conflict between narrative art and factual record," "the problem of erasure," and the existence of "silences." Rounding out the collection are a useful list of "Suggestions for Further Reading" (mainly on literary questions) and a short index of proper names.

Warkentin first prepared her anthology for an undergraduate course in "Exploration Writing in English Canada," and it is clearly aimed at an audience of undergraduate students. The nature and scope of the selections, however, make it of potential interest to others as well: history or anthropology students and the so-called common reader. It is thus a pity that the accompanying maps are far more decorative than useful, and that the volume lacks a chronological table which would allow students to see at glance the record of French and British expansion into North America. It is also a pity that the anthology has so sharply restricted its focus in nationalistic terms. Such quibbles apart, Warkentin's collection is both a necessary and a worthy addition to the current study of the colonial past, and it ought to find and enlighten many readers in the post-colonial present.

Authentic Longing?

Gwendolyn Davies, ed.
Myth & Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture 1918-1939. Acadiensis P $16.95

Reviewed by Janice Kulyk Keefer

In her "Afterword" to the proceedings of the second Thomas H. Raddall Symposium organized at Acadia University in 1991, Carrie Macmillan refers to a paradigm shift that has occurred in the field of literary studies in Atlantic Canada, a shift that has led critics to shake off the stranglehold of modernist assumptions in their appraisal of texts, and to re-examine such devalued forms as the romance and the ideological contexts from which these forms emerged. One consequence of this shift, as evidenced by some of the papers in this volume, is a refreshing iconoclasm towards cultural figures previously treated as sacrosanct within the region, however much they may have been trivialized or ignored outside it. A signal example of this iconoclasm and also the most exciting essay in the collection is Ian McKay's analysis of the work of folklorist Helen Creighton, and the reactionary politics that inform it. McKay shows how Creighton laboured to construct a sexually (and racially) pure, culturally rich and organically unified Bluenose "folk" who were "rooted to the soil and the rockbound coast"—a soci-mythic category which excluded those Nova Scotians whose oral culture may have been as rich as that of the "fisherfolk" but whose labour was conducted in "factories, coalmines, lobster canneries, domestic service." McKay's accounts of how Creighton lobbied against those whose policies and therefore approach to folk culture were opposed to her own are especially illuminating, as is his demonstration that Creighton's construction of an idealized folk culture worked, paradoxically, to that culture's commodification. Most importantly,

McKay's essay does not diminish so much as problematize Creighton's achievement; his critique seeks to reconstitute the "*politics of cultural selection*" which allows the historian to "understand the ways in which contingent and partial readings [of a given culture] attain the status of obvious truths."

The essay which comes closest to matching McKay's for power and interest of analysis is Alan R.Young's, which takes on yet another cultural icon, Lucy Maud Montgomery. Compared to Elizabeth R. Epperly's account of how Montgomery's *Rainbow Valley* presents a conflicted rather than uniformly favourable response to the militarist ethos called forth by World War I, Young's examination of how *Rilla of Ingleside* endorses the conventional values of chivalric romance in the context of "the Great War" proves more responsive to the complexities of Montgomery's situation as a writing subject enmeshed within an imperialist culture whose values she had no desire to subvert. What happens, as with McKay's essay, is not a junking of a revered cultural figure but a necessary debunking of the mystique which has grown up around her, and which, despite of perhaps because of the best intentions of certain feminist scholars, has produced, as far as "L.M.M." is concerned, a species of bardoloatry. Andrew T. Seaman's essay on Frank Parker Day effects a similar salutary debunking; by demonstrating Day's fatal attraction, in his unpublished novels, to the simplifications of romance, Seaman shows how fine yet also how flawed an achievement *Rockbound* is.

Myth & Milieu is a multidisciplinary volume; a number of essays provide information on such products of popular culture as political cartoons, theatre and the cinema as well as on the more "refined" traditions of landscape painting (however commercialized) and music education. One could wish, however, that some of the authors of these essays had made more pointed or stimulating use of the data assembled. Carole Gerson's account of women's writing in Atlantic Canada in the interwar years is informative, but a less extensive list of names and a more incisive treatment of the issues raised by the marginalization of those writers would have been more illuminating. Elizabeth Miller's brief discussion of Newfoundland writing between the wars makes the reader wish for more extended treatment of such figures as socialist poet Irving Fogwill and novelist Margaret Duley, that disaffected daughter of the codfish aristocracy. Diane Tye's reading of oral narrative traditions as represented in Montgomery's fiction is judicious, if somewhat predictable, as in David G. Pitt's examination of the sea as a signifier in the poetry of E.J. Pratt. Alexander Kisuk's analysis of Molly Beresford's position within that patriarchal poets' clique, the "Song Fishermen of Halifax," is admirably done, although its claim to show how "canon formation in 20th-century Canada has functioned as a mechanism for the repression of desire in language" is debatable. Less theoretical but equally valuable additions to this volume are Lewis J. Poteet's account of the striking locutions characteristic of Nova Scotia's South Shore, and John Stockdale's "ruminations" on the reception of *Rockbound* by a reading public whose values were shaped by systemic puritanism.

Finally, the joint contribution by Clara Thomas and John Lennox on the work of Vernon Rhodenizer reminds us of the tremendous shifts that have taken place in this century in the criticism and teaching of Canadian literature; the emphasis on pedagogy is taken up by Kathleen Scherf in a helpful set of questions addressing the present challenges of teaching Canlit in the academy. One of these challenges had to do with the multicultural—hence multi-racial and multi-ethnic—context in which Canadian literature is written and read. And this signals a significant problem with the con-

cluding essay in this volume: Alan Wilson's tribute to Thomas Raddall's historical novels. Though he makes a fine case for the liveliness of Raddall's fictionalization of Maritime history, Wilson neglects to mention Raddall's problematic treatment of an integral part of that history—the lives and destinies of groups such as Native Peoples, Acadians and Blacks. If, as Gwen Davies reminds us in her valuable introduction to this volume, nostalgia means an authentic longing for home, then that longing must be inherently traumatic for those who have been silenced or made invisible on their own home ground. Valuable though *Myth & Milieu* is, the inclusion of essays by Native, Acadian and Black scholars or cultural figures would have made it a far richer contribution to the study of Atlantic Canada.

Memoirs

Douglas Fetherling,
Travels by Night: A Memoir of the Sixties. Lester $22.95

Myrna Kostash
Bloodlines: A Journey into Eastern Europe. Douglas & McIntyre $26.95

Reviewed by Eva-Marie Kröller

Much of Douglas Fetherling's *Travel by Night: A Memoir of the Sixties* is about a specific period in Canadian culture. At the same time this is a very American book, its hybridity reflected both in its title and its format: *Travel by Night* is a picaresque narrative of the sort initiated by Kerouac's *On the Road*, but it is also an autobiographical text drawing, despite its emphatic Bohemianism, on the Puritanical tradition of soul-searching and accounting. Indeed, the small compact size of the book suggests both a travel diary and an intimate journal, equally suited to casual jottings about everyday experience and to profound self-analysis. Some of the least successful moments of the book (and there are very few) occur when this balance is tipped one way or the other, when the narrative becomes either prurient gossip or self-indulgent navel-gazing. In one such moment, Fetherling writes about his wish to emigrate to Canada: "Some days the history would rise in the gorge like vomit, then go down slowly with my thoughts of escape. One had to remove oneself to avoid being contaminated. One had to resign. My only ambition now was to be a last-generation American and a first-generation Canadian." Perhaps a third genre should be mentioned here: together with autobiography and picaresque, the book is also a frontier narrative, one in which—as so often happens in American literature—Canada is posited as a purer version of the American dream, a kind of utopia. Fetherling begins with a gritty account of his dysfunctional family, especially his alcoholic, unstable mother, and although his description is realistic to a fault, it is difficult not to read it also as an allegory of America gone wrong, somewhat in the way in which Albee's *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* suggests a figurative reading as well as a literal one. The tone of *Travels by Night* changes radically once the narrator disentangles himself from his family and leaves for Canada: the Toronto "scene" (Anansi; Rochdale; poets such as Gwendolyn MacEwen, Milton Acorn, Margaret Atwood, Dennis Lee; the CBC) and its equivalent in Vancouver are evoked with wit and affection. There are few books that conjure up equally well the strong poetic community that existed across Canada and was by no means as split into West and East as some literary historians (or, for that matter, some of the poets involved) would have us believe. Moreover, it is almost as if, according to Fetherling, some American poets lost the "taint" of their origins by mingling with the Canadians: the book is particularly good on the informal but highly efficient

international net-working carried on by Allen Ginsberg.

There are only a few texts which evoke the 60s in Canada as movingly as this one, and none of them does it with such a generous sweep.

Also associated with the 60s is Myrna Kostash's *Bloodlines: A Journey into Eastern Europe*. Author of *Long Way from Home*, a journalistic account of the 60s generation in Canada, Kostash originally wanted "to interview writers from [her] generation, bred by the events of the 1960s, who were writing from within the opposition in their respective societies." The book became much more than that, however, for Kostash's travels through Czeckloslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Ukraine also turned into a journey in search of lost memories, both personal and ancestral. In that sense, *Bloodlines* is a logical sequel to another book by Kostash, *All of Baba's Children*, an oral history of the Ukrainians in Canada. From the point of view of genre, the result is as hybrid as Fetherling's text, and the cover blurb somewhat founders in its attempts to classify the book, variously referred to as "a heady brew of travel narrative, history, anecdote, political analysis and childhood memories" and "a collage that is equal parts reportage, memory and imagination." Things are not made easier by the numerous literary allusions that are woven through the text and by others that are conspicuously absent: the former range from Joseph Heller, Thornton Wilder, Orwell, Joyce, Raymond Carver, and Ken Kesey to Skvorecky, Dostoyevsky and Pushkin, while no mention is made of Bruce Chatwin, author of the memory-obsessed *Songlines* and of *Utz*, the latter set in a Prague very much like the one evoked in Kostash's chapter on that city. The wide range of American authors cited here represents for many of the intellectuals whom Kostash encounters a kind of free zone in which literature is seen as liberated from ideological pressures and may engage in poetic experimentation if the author so chooses: there are parallels here to Cesare Pavese's love for (and mis-reading of) Faulkner, Hemingway, and Whitman. Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, although classics both, and therefore presumably immune to criticism, are troublesome by contrast because they remind Kostash of a culture which suppressed hers. As she travels through Central Europe on the eve of 1989, Kostash experiences not only societies and borders in flux, but also re-arranges the cultural dichotomies and canons that so far have determined her life, as she gradually lays bare the roots of her heritage. Kostash visited the places she describes repeatedly, and she brilliantly uses these repetitions to outline a movement that is hesitant and gradual rather than linear. One of the dichotomies she challenges particularly strongly is that of the East as opposed to the West, a supposed contrast which strongly affects the identity and definition of Central European. About an evening in Warsaw, she writes: "We turn to face the Vistula, looking eastward to the suburb of Praga. Here the Red Army crouched for long indolent weeks while the Nazis mopped up the partisans of the Warsaw uprising before retreating to Berlin. My guide is a historian and the son of a historian. He draws my attention to the domes of a Russian Orthodox church in Praga, and I see their characteristic onion shape protruding about the banal postwar skyline. There, he says, is the frontier of Europe. There is where Asia begins! 'There' is where I come from. A moment earlier, we were colleagues. Now I am an Oriental deportee."

I recommend reading Kostash's book alongside Eva Hoffman: *Exit into History: A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe* (Viking, n.p.), which makes for both interesting parallels and instructive contrasts.

About Canadian Writers

George Woodcock
George: George Woodcock's Introduction to Canadian Fiction. ECW $25.00

Janice Williamson
Sounding Differences: Conversations with Seventeen Canadian Women Writers.
U Toronto P $50.00 / $17.95

Reviewed by Christine Somerville

These are two excellent books about Canadian writers. Woodcock's book grew out of his introductions to *Canadian Writers and Their Works*, in the ten volumes on fiction published over the last decade by ECW. The fifty fiction writers that Woodcock discusses here are major figures, or as he puts it, "big fish" in the stream of Canadian fiction from its beginnings up to the present. As he composed these introductions, two important themes developed: one was a "unified panorama of Canadian writing," and the other a kind of gospel according to Woodcock, his personal view of Canadian writing that certainly deserves to be gathered in this volume and its companion on Canadian poetry. In contrast, Janice Williamson's book concentrates on contemporary Canadian women writers who define themselves as "feminist." Yet, as the title suggests, these seventeen women represent a wide range of experience, age, class, ethnicity, race, region and sexual preference; poets, as well as prose writers, are included. Some writers, such as Joy Kogawa, Phyllis Webb, Daphne Marlatt, Bronwen Wallace and Nicole Brossard, are well known, while others, such as Elly Danica, Jeannette Armstrong and M. Nourbese Philip, are less familiar to me. When Williamson began this project, little critical interest had been paid to many of these writers. Her work will widen their audience by providing brief samples of their writing, a photograph, one or more conversations and short biocritical essays. Very much a collaboration between writers and critic, *Sounding Differences* eschews evaluation in favour of a friendly, alphabetical ordering that reflects Williamson's views of women and writing.

Broadly speaking, then, one of these books is about the canon, raising questions about who merits inclusion in it and why. The other is about writers who, despite substantial published work, are not considered "big fish." Do men like hierarchies more than women do? Is it that simple? Certainly, when it comes to evaluative criticism, trust no one more than George Woodcock, who not only has studied more Canadian literature than anyone alive, but also has studied more European, English and Commonwealth literatures than the rest of us.

Throughout his long career as a critic, he has applied consistently high artistic standards to Canadian writing. He is not fooled by pretentious dullness, which he calls here, "Grove's disease," after Frederick Philip Grove. Impatient with writers who endlessly repeat themselves, he is correspondingly delighted when they break through to something new, as when Mordecai Richler managed "a major shift of direction" in *Solomon Gursky Was Here*, which he calls "arguably Richler's best novel." Similarly, he has amended his view of Timothy Findley, not considered exceptional enough to merit inclusion in *Canadian Writers and Their Works* when it was first planned, but now a writer of the first rank. Nevertheless, he still firmly holds some radical opinions expressed in famous earlier essays, where, for example, he dared to compare Margaret Laurence with Tolstoy. Also memorable are his views on the historical development of our literature: "Canadian Literature is essentially centrifugal, tending incorrigibly towards regional, rather than national, orientations, and never so vital as when it is most varied, riding, like Stephen Leacock's Lord Ronald,

'madly off in all directions.'" Is it the modifier "incorrigibly" that reshapes the idea of what regionalism means, or is it the way he puts a spin on the sentence with that Leacock quotation?

With his interest in the different voices that make up our literature, George Woodcock will appreciate *Sounding Differences.* Williamson dedicates the book to the memory of Bronwen Wallace, one of whose comments in her interview could serve as the book's epigraph: "I see this as a big choir; everybody has her part; I'm really excited by all the different and valuable ways women are writing." A strong sense of community, of mutual support and respect among these women comes up again and again. Elly Danica shows her manuscript of *Don't: A Woman's Word* to Nicole Brossard, who astonishes her by saying that it should not be revised, but is publishable just as it is. Then, Libby Oughton believes in the book and decides to publish this incest narrative though it means risking a lawsuit against her press.

No other collection of interviews has revealed so clearly the consequences of publication and publicity upon a writer's life. Danica and Di Brandt, having broken the silence surrounding child abuse, describe their fear of how readers would respond to their work, and their joy at being listened to, and at times warmly commended, by women readers. Because Williamson interviewed most writers on more than one occasion and also allowed them to edit the conversations, we can see them changing, gaining strength from their audience and discovering in Di Brandt's words: "It's incredible to have this sense of an audience of women who are *waiting* for me to speak." Here again is an essentially feminist idea of what writing is able to do: heal the writer by offering a way out of corrosive silence and encourage other women to speak their stories.

In particular, women whose writing is seen to represent their ethnic community face special problems of balancing political and artistic lives. Native writers such as Jeannette Armstrong and Lee Maracle tell how it feels to live in two cultures. In their view, publication spells power, and, like Caribbean-born M. Nourbese Philip, they see no evidence that Canadian publishers are in a hurry to publish minority writers. While some writers feel justifiable pride in their political activism, Joy Kogawa recalls Margaret Laurence when she talks of her shyness, describing how she had to ask someone else to stand up at a meeting of the Canadian Writers' Union to ask them to support Japanese-Canadian redress. For this intensely private woman, the public role that her writing has brought is often a burden: "I have been trying and trying and trying to write this novel, but the phone rings all the time and I can't say no." Her repetition of the word "trying" will remind readers how interruptions constantly plague women, whether writers or not.

When Janice Williamson expanded these interviews, she transformed what she calls "the homely craft of the interview" from "transcriptions of a spontaneous moment" to "an exploratory series of fluid dialogues over time." In the process, the power relationship between scholar/interviewer and writer/interviewee is overturned so completely that writers can tease Williamson about her occasional lapses into academic jargon. In one exchange, Phyllis Webb says, "You're not on air, you know, just tape." and Janice Williamson replies, "Sorry, Phyllis. It's my thesis speaking!" Yet Williamson mostly uses clear, non-technical language. When she speaks in her scholarly voice, she is usually performing a service to the reader by summing up an idea or providing background information.

As I read with pleasure these two books about Canadian writing, I was struck by their differing views about the creative process. Woodcock, looking back over our

history, sees our literature evolving from imitation of Old-Country models to a growing confidence in our own vision. He dates the birth of a vibrant Canadian artistic community from the 1930s, and quotes Hallvard Dahlie's view that after World War II, writers like Alice Munro could take for granted "the intrinsic value of Canadian experience." Contrast this with Bronwen Wallace's epiphany in a Vancouver book store in 1970 when she first encountered in Al Purdy's "the Country North of Belleville" the people of her own rural Southern Ontario background speaking in their own dialect. Until that moment, she says, "it had never occurred to me that it was possible and OK to write about these people in that kind of language." For Wallace, then, twenty-five years after the war ended, confidence in her authority as a Canadian writer was no foregone conclusion. Like many of the women writers in *Sounding Differences*, she suggests that it was hard to find her voice and acknowledges the support of a community of writers, especially women writers, whose encouragement helped her to persevere.

One comment of Woodcock's about Adele Wiseman epitomizes the difference between these two books. Contrasting her with Mordecai Richler and Robertson Davies, he writes: "she has not felt in any way the need for continuous production." Obviously, the reasons why her output has been relatively small are outside the scope of his long view of Canadian fiction. Yet, for anyone wondering whether for women writers, writing is something other than a choice, *Sounding Differences* offers insight from women themselves.

Parole d'un homme engagé

Alain-Michel Rocheleau

En tant que poète du quotidien, journaliste, essayiste, éditeur et homme politique, Gérald Godin (1938-1994) n'a jamais cessé de se colleter avec le destin des Québécois. En défendant ce qu'il tenait pour vérité, cet homme, pour qui engagement et langage étaient synonymes, faisait confiance au pouvoir qu'ont les mots de tous les jours. Il a été, de ce fait, l'un des poètes les plus libres de sa génération, celle de *Parti pris*, une revue qu'il a co-fondée et dont il a dirigé ensuite les éditions du même nom. De *Chansons très naïves* (1960) à *Ils ne demandaient qu'à brûler* (1987), Gérald Godin a prêté sa voix aux laissés pour compte, au "peuple des petites misères[1]," tout en mêlant à ses propos ironiques anglicismes et régionalismes, néologismes et expressions familières. Dans un poème intitulé "Mal au pays" et publié au début des années 70, l'auteur appliquait déjà les couleurs qui caractérisent désormais l'originalité de son oeuvre:

> par les poubelles du Canada mon pays
> mon profit
> par les regrattiers du peuple
> dans les pawn-shops de la patrie
> [...]
> par les écartillés de l'honnêteté
> par les déviargés de la dignité
> par les déplottés de la vérité
> j'ai mal à mon pays[2]

A travers la simplicité de langage qu'il adoptera peu à peu, se cache aussi un grand travailleur de l'écriture et de rythmes. Godin fera d'une grande partie de ses écrits un chant consacré aux amours et à la joie de vivre, une longue ballade au coeur des mots qu'il reliera à des sentiments chaleureux et personnels. Dans un poème publié en 1967, le poète écrit:

> je me laisserai couler dans les mots d'un poème
> je croulerai sur mon tapis bariolé
> graffiti de plus dans ses symboles arabes décadents
> je jouerai mon âme aux échecs à ma reine
> et te ferai peut-être un poème un soir
> si plein si vrai que tu diras
> il est saoul le maudit[3]

Comme journaliste, Gérald Godin provoquait également la réflexion. Culture et politique furent les territoires qu'il explora avec toute la rigueur qu'on lui connaissait. Autant au *Nouvelliste* de Trois-Rivières qu'à *Québec-Presse*, il cultivait l'ironie avec une sincérité inépuisable et prenait plaisir, dans des propos souvent irrévérencieux, à confronter les politiciens au pouvoir. C'est pourquoi de 1969 à 1983, Robert Bourassa et Pierre Elliot Trudeau défileront régulièrement dans ses chroniques. À titre d'exemple, Godin écrira en novembre 1972: "Ainsi, Trudeau [...] n'était qu'un *candy* enrubanné que les «Canadians» se sont payé à l'été de 1968 [...] l'expérience de Trudeau prouve à l'évidence ce que les indépendantistes ont découvert avant tout le monde: il n'y a pas de place pour le rêve canadien-français au Canada[4]."

Sincère en politique comme dans tout ce

qu'il faisait, il voyait le Québec comme un pays souverain. Député (1976-1994) profondément dévoué aux citoyens du comté de Mercier (Montréal), ministre de l'Immigration (1980-1985) hautement respecté par les membres des communautés culturelles du Québec, Gérald Godin nous laisse le souvenir d'un homme vrai, fidèle et entier.

NOTES

1 "Demande spéciale," *Cantouques & Cie* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1991) 105.
2 "Mal au pays," *Ils ne demandaient qu'à brûler* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1987) 225.
3 "Cantouque de retour," *Ils ne demandaient qu'à brûler* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1987) 108.
4 "Messieurs les Anglais, merci!," *Écrits et parlés 1. Volume 2-Politique* (Montréal: l'Hexagone, 1993) 82.

Maria Tippett's *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women* (Penguin, $60.00) seeks to compensate for the neglect of Canadian women artists in previously published art histories. Coffee-table-sized and lavishly illustrated, the book does indeed bring to the fore many names unjustly forgotten, but too often it does little more than list them rather than carefully placing the artists in their social and cultural contexts. As research on her sister (the novelist Alice Jones) has revealed, Frances Jones Bannerman for instance came from a privileged Halifax milieu that surely had a very specific impact on her work. Such considerations will have to be the subject of more specialized studies, but researchers will be glad to have *By a Lady* as a start. Bogomila Welsh-Oucharov's *Charles Pachter* (M & S, n.p.) is marred by a pedestrian text, but the excellent reproductions make the book well worth having. The chronology reveals just how extensive Pachter's contributions to Canadian culture have been, ranging from his satirical paintings of national icons such as the Queen, the moose, the flag, to his book illustrations for Atwood and Dennis Lee and his support of Theatre Passe Muraille. A very impressive work indeed is the National Gallery of Canada's *Berczy*, the catalogue prepared for the 1991 exhibition on the painter best known for his fine portrait of Joseph Brant. The essays fill in Berczy's background and in so doing sketch a detailed picture of culture and politics in late 18th-century Europe and North America: Beate Stock writes on his work at European courts, Mary Macaulay Allodi discusses his Canadian works in painting and architecture, and Peter Moogk gives an account of Berczy's activities as colonization promoter. Few books I have seen analyse the transference of European ideals to a New World context with greater conscientiousness and sophistication. An excellent complement to Tippett's book and the Berczy catalogue and surely one of the most impressive research tools in the fine arts recently to come along is David Karel's *Dictionnaire des artistes de langue française en Amérique du Nord* (PUL, $119.00). The book lists francophone artists and art critics born before 1901 who at one time or another lived in or travelled through North America. The result is a broad ethnic spectrum, and the excellent introduction to the book defines the "actualité" of the project as arising from its contribution to changing concepts of multiculturalism. Both the introduction and the appendices provide helpful instructions to the use of the book. Groupings of artists include immigrants and travellers, military personnel, missionaries, and explorers, travelling artists, refugees and "utopistes," delegates, commissioners, and researchers; the book is arranged by alphabet, but the reader can consult the many indexes provided at the back to check which artists belonged to any one of these or other groups. Geographical

location is broken down into numerous subcategories; artists associated with specific projects or historical events are listed together; there is a long list of women, following a very brief one of "noirs ou mulâtres," style and subject provide yet another large category. Entries range from two lines (giving on occasion little more than a listing in passenger records) to several pages, and one finds well-known names such as the Europeans Degas, Léger, Duchamp, Picabia, Breton, Matisse and Tanguy and French-Canadians such as Plamondon, Suzor-Coté, Bourassa, Gagnon next to virtually unknown ones. Much recovery work is conducted or acknowledged in the latter: the entry on Jeanne-Charlotte Allamand, Berczy's wife, for instance provides welcome information. Her teaching and practising of painting, often out of economic necessity when one of her husband's extravagant schemes had failed yet again, are well documented; however, almost predictably, "aucune oeuvre n'a pu être attribuée à Jeanne-Charlotte Allemand." Nor do the entries on well-known artists provide redundant information already available in other published sources; because of its special focus, the *Dictionnaire* explores North American connections, emphasizing, in Degas's case, his stay in New Orleans (his mother's birthplace) and its effect on his work, or, in Julien Green's, on his comments on Quebec in his *Journal du Voyageur*. The dictionary describes with gusto the careers of eccentrics like Louis-Joseph Bourgeois, the designer of the first great Baha'i temple in Wilmette, Illinois, and much care is taken in analyzing the cultural circumstances of his assignment and of Bourgeois's eventual conversion to the Baha'i faith. Entries such as the one on Bourgeois have a momentum rare in reference works: the author seems to be genuinely intrigued by the subject. Another good example is the entry on Soeur Marie-Marguerite-Eulalie Lagrave whose decoration of the Saint-Boniface cathedral inspired "les femmes du pays, habiles brodeuses" who came to copy work which is also said to have had an influence on Métis design. The *Dictionnaire* is a monumental work, equally useful to the fine arts specialist and the researcher interested in more general aspects of francophone culture. E.-M.K.

Pauline Greenhill's *Ethnicity in the Mainstream: Three Studies of English Canadian Culture in Ontario* (McGill-Queen's, $34.95) wants to have its cake and eat it too. "Because the English have not been considered an ethnic group—in the sense that they are seen as lacking carnivalesque traditions—they are usually located solely in the domain of power," Greenhill explains in her introduction before proceeding herself to describe such traditions in chapters devoted to immigrants' narratives, Morris dancing, and "Selling Stratford as an English Place." In analysing these phenomena, however, Greenhill consistently tends to interpret expressions of Englishness as expressions of assumed superiority. This conclusion may on occasion be plausible (when, for example, she reports on specific cases of bigotry among the English immigrants she interviewed), but where are the control groups that would ascertain the absence of such attitudes among the non-English? Describing a citizenship ceremony, Greenhill relates how an Englishwoman, newly sworn in as a Canadian, responded to the judge's query whether she understood the implication of the oath with "Madam, I've lived under the crown all my life. I certainly know who the Queen is." Greenhill reads this scene as: "Even here [that is, during the citizenship ceremony], it is possible for an English person to consider that her entitlement is greater." Having had occasion to witness a Citizenship Judge's great condescension toward new Canadian citizens, I submit

that this woman's response may on the contrary have been a legitimate act of self-assertion. Greenhill is aware of the problems implied in her approach, but apart from indulging in the agonized self-analysis which now seems to be *de rigueur* in much anthropological and ethnographic scholarship, she does not consider some of the more obvious ways in which these problems could be tackled. Still, this is a pioneering work of sorts and one that one hopes will provoke lively debate. Also worrisome is M. Spiering's *Englishness: Foreigners and Images of National Identity in Postwar Literature* (Rodopi, n.p.) which purports to be a contribution to "imagology," the study of national stereotypes. The book gets off to a bad start with misspellings ("comparitive literature"), errors (Jim Dixon is a creation of Kingsley Amis, not John Osborne), and a dubious tale of contents which carves "foreigners" up into "Americans" on the one hand and "Europeans, Russians, and Arabs" on the other. Emphasizing the need for contextualizing in the study of rational images, Spiering rarely provides it. Waugh is a rich example of British chauvinism, yes, but one with very specific aesthetic and ideological agenda; David Lodge's campus novels, too, are fertile ground, but what about their *general* tendency (most apparent perhaps in *Small World)* toward national stereotyping? And so on. Other recent books on literature and ethnicity include Bonnie Tusmith's *All My Relatives: Community in Contemporary Ethnic American Literature* (U Michigan P, US $34.50), an unassuming and useful overview of Asian, African, Native and Chicano writers in the United States. Given the popularity of film adaptations such as *The Color Purple, M. Butterfly,* and *The Joy Luck Club,* the book doubles as a reminder of how such films sanitize the radicalism of the originals. Ethnicity is also a central issue in Alfred Hornung and Ernstpeter Ruhe's *Autobiographie & Avant-garde* (Günter Narr, n.p.), which features sections on Maxine Hong Kingston and Rachid Boudjedra. Contributions are in English and French. *Contesting the Subject: Essays in the Postmodern Theory and Practice of Biography and Biographical Criticism,* (Purdue UP, n.p.) discusses ethnicity as one of the factors disrupting traditional biographical discourse, but several of the pieces sound suspiciously prescriptive in their very effort to dismantle prescriptions. Thus, Rob Wilson's essay "Producing American Selves" proclaims that "[i]t is time for American authors to invent biographical forms that resist legitimating competition, domination, and an ethos of self-absorption that tirelessly equates success with the (symbolic) achievement of high capital," and Sharon O'Brien's suggestions for feminist biographies read like little more than playful variations on well-known themes. One of the most substantial contributions comes from Valerie Ross who, in "Too Close to Home: Repressing Biography, Instituting Authority," relates how biography was disparaged by 19th century professional authorities wanting to uphold the "seriousness" of literature as an academic discipline. E.-M.K.

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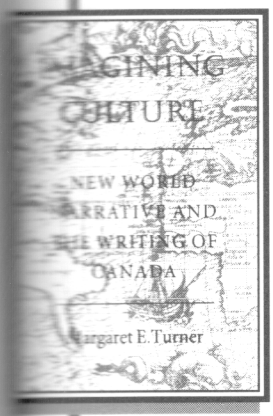

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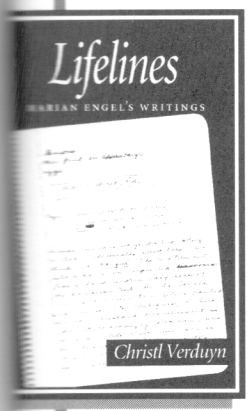

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