

Canadian Literature

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

Winter 1995

\$15

147

Marx
and Later Dialectics

Classical and Modern Literature:

**A
QUARTERLY**®

CML seeks submissions on all aspects of Classical and Modern Literatures that reflect the knowledge and depth of the scholar's own discipline used to examine problems recurring in both a Classical and a Modern Literature.

CML Subscription

Please check one of the following:

	Individual	Institutions	
1 year	\$20.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	\$24.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	AMOUNT
2 years	36.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	43.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	ENCLOSED
3 years	54.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	65.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	(U.S.)

Countries outside U.S. add \$5.00 to each year's subscription to cover postage.
Residents of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin add appropriate Sales Tax.
CML is published in October, January, April, and July.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Address all correspondence, subscriptions, and submissions (SASE) to:

CML, Inc.
P.O. Box 629
Terre Haute, Indiana 47808-0629
U.S.A.

Classical
and
Modern
Literature:

**A
QUARTERLY**®

Canadian Literature / Littérature canadienne

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

Number 147, Winter 1995

Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Editor: Eva-Marie Kröller

Associate Editors: Margery Fee, Iain Higgins and Laurie Ricou

Editorial

Pine for No Knotty Quotes	4
---------------------------	---

Articles

<i>Christian Bök</i>	
The Secular Opiate: Marxism as an Ersatz Religion in Three Canadian Texts	11
<i>John Z. Ming Chen</i>	
Re-reading Grove: The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and <i>The Master of the Mill</i>	25
<i>Dean J. Irvine</i>	
Between <i>The Intervals</i> : Stuart Mackinnon's Dialectics	48
<i>James Doyle</i>	
Margaret Fairley and the Canadian Literary Tradition	77
<i>Evelyn Cobley</i>	
Postmodernist War Fiction: Findley's <i>The Wars</i>	98
<i>Penny Van Toorn</i>	
Building on Common Ground: An Interview with Neil Bissoondath	127

Poems

<i>James Lowell</i>	9	<i>Russell Thornton</i>	75
<i>Lorna Crozier</i>	10	<i>Betsy Struthers</i>	76
<i>Christopher Patton</i>	23	<i>Robert Steckling</i>	93
<i>Allan Brown</i>	45	<i>Harold Rhenisch</i>	125
<i>Shyamal Bagchee</i>	46		

Books in Review

Doug Aoki	136, 138	Susan MacFarlane	174
Guy Beauregard	139	I.S. MacLaren	176
Dale Blake	141	Patricia Merivale	178
Deborah Blenkhorn	143	Robert James Merrett	179
John Xiros Cooper	145	Joshua S. Mostow	181
Peter Cumming	147	Miguel Mota	183
Arnold E. Davidson	149	Peter Petro	185
Danine Farquharson	151	Lisa Pottie	186
Susan Fisher	152	Norman Ravvin	188, 190
Tom Hastings	154	Alain-Michel Rocheleau	192
Tim Heath	155	William J. Scheik	194
Philip Holden	159	Judy Z. Segal	195
Jenifer K. Hood	161	James Steele	197
John F. Hulcoop	163	Steven Taubeneck	199
Lorna Marie Irvine	164	Peter A. Taylor	201
Wanda Kelley	167	Paul Tiessen	202
Hildegard Kuester	169	Aritha Van Herk	157
André Lamontagne	170	J.R. Wytenbroek	205
Maurice Lebel	172		

Publications Mail registration
number 1375
GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature*
is assisted by the University of British
Columbia and the SSHRCC

Canadian Literature is indexed in *Can-
adian Periodical Index* and *Canadian
Magazine Index*. It is available on-line
in the *Canadian Business and Current
Affairs Database*, and is available in
microfilm from University Microfilm
International, 300 North Zeeb Road,
Ann Arbor, Michigan USA 48106

For subscriptions, back issues (as avail-
able), and annual and cumulative
indexes, write: Circulation Manager,
Canadian Literature, 2029 West Mall,

University of British Columbia,
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z2
TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780
FAX: (604) 822-9452
<http://www.swifty.com/cdn_lit>

SUBSCRIPTION: \$40 INDIVIDUAL;
\$55 INSTITUTIONAL; PLUS GST IN
CANADA; PLUS \$10 POSTAGE (INT-
SIDE CANADA

ISSN 0008-4360

Business Manager:
Sandra Christensen
Design: George Vaitkunas
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

Canadian Literature welcomes submissions of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada, and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers. The journal does not publish fiction.

Articles should be submitted in duplicate, and addressed to The Editor, *Canadian Literature*, 2029 West Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z2. Submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed return envelope, either with Canadian stamps or accompanied by International Postal Reply Coupons. Submissions without SASE cannot be returned.

Articles should follow MLA guidelines for bibliographic format. All works accepted for publication must also be available on diskette.

Pine For No Knotty Quotes

Does anyone know what Margaret Atwood is working on currently?

QUERY POSTED TO CANLIT-L
5 SEPTEMBER 1995

I first heard of Earle Birney's death via the Canadian Literature Discussion Group—a listserv established by the National Library of Canada.¹ My title comes from a punning allusive toast to Birney posted to the list that same morning by Rod Anderson. Because Birney's death marked for me the first time that usergroup news was 'new, the incident became a defining moment, my personal delight—and shudder—about the entangling net.

This journal is knotting that net as well. This issue of *Canadian Literature* announces the establishment of our home page. Sandra Christensen has done much work to establish us on the World Wide Web—her introduction to Canadian Literature's home page concludes this editorial.

For someone just over 50, who still prepares first drafts with pen on paper, I assume the same entitlement to skepticism—and to being wrong—that my parents felt about Elvis and television 40 years ago. In my office, e-mail has become almost as insistent as the telephone. When I see a new posting I find it almost impossible to resist clicking on, and almost as difficult to resist replying immediately. When I turn back to what I was doing, it takes several minutes to resume momentum, by which time Eudora may be telling me there is another correspondent pulsing somewhere out there. Hence, the skepticism: the culture of the NET promotes restlessness, and quickies, rather than sustained contemplation and considered revision.

In two months of following the Can Lit list, I have compiled a list of Maritime stage plays suitable for a high school drama club, and Canadian

mystery novels; I have followed a short amusing thread searching for the “most anachronistic contemporary Canadian novel” (initiated by an enthusiastic claim for Annette Saint-Pierre’s *La fille bègue* (1984)). I’ve been unable to answer questions about which poem was read at the opening/closing ceremonies of the Calgary Olympics, or where to find bpNichol’s computer poems, or Susan Swann’s papers. When I posted my own query for this editorial, asking for instances of the value of the Internet to researchers and teachers in Canadian literature, I received something about Turkey, and a glowing self-promo, but, at first, few specifics.

All this suggests that the Net is useful for quick inquiry, but unreliable: a posting to a news group is no guarantee of comprehensiveness, and no complete substitute for more conventional means of search, even if you can get to Library catalogues a lot more quickly. The only other list I subscribe to is ASLE, the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment.² Certainly on any given day this makes for much more engaging reading than what I’ve seen so far for Can Lit. This list trades info and queries, but it also has its poets, its cynics, its curmudgeons, who will debate the nature of nature, the death of the lyric poem, or the wisdom of the wise-use moment for weeks at a thread. Maybe I just don’t know about the best of the Can Lit lists. Certainly this journal would be happy to help by publishing a list of lists and putting them in our web site. Let us have the information at our e-mail address: feedback@cdn-lit.ubc.ca

As one of my friends says, e-mail is like living in a 21st century version of *Pamela* or the *History of Emily Montague*, where letters are written and picked up and delivered in a morning, and replied to by dusk. The demand to reply doesn’t leave you time to forget. On the other hand, usergroups may be more for people who prefer to talk—and not to listen, to display rather than to make dialogue.

My skepticism about all this extends to the virtual classroom. The nuance of the gesture, the intimation, the eye contact, is too important to me. Yet, among responses to my own query, those on the possibilities for teaching were the most persuasive, most intriguing. Here is a sample of what I’ve discovered is going on:

“I have expanded my circle of writing friends through Internet listservs, and one of these literary roundtables has led to my being offered a writer-in-residence job here at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota (my home is in Ottawa). One pleasant duty here is to teach a half-course in Canadian Literature, which wasn’t

offered at Concordia before I arrived. My students are benefiting from a listserv originated by Will Garrett-Petts at University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops, which enables students in different countries and regions to exchange ideas and perceptions about the Canadian literature they are studying. So far, my American students have received the impression that Canadians are people who worry about what being Canadian means. For them, possessors of that American 'blank unselfconsciousness' Clark Blaise mentions in an essay we have read—"The Border as Fiction"—this has already been a learning experience."

Colin Morton (morton@gloria.cord.edu)



"Will's list, called Canliterati, links his Canadian literature class with mine in Moorhead and Joan Dolphin's in Thunder Bay. To subscribe, send e-mail to MAILSERV@CARIBOO.BC.CA and leave the message SUBSCRIBE CANLITERATI."

Colin Morton (morton@gloria.cord.edu)



"Greetings again from South Dakota!

We're now embarking upon our semester of Canadian literature in our state reading series, in which scholars discuss literature with series participants in approximately 30 communities across the state. With the help of this group, we have selected Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* and Thomas King's *Medicine River*, and Carolyn Redl has put together a fine study guide for us.

Since I begin with Laurence in Kadoka on Sunday, and in *Deadwood* the following Saturday, I thought now would be a good time to ask people on the list who might have taught these books what approaches they have taken and what questions are good to ask.

In a few words, what do you think is important to convey to them and to ask them about these books? How could we help them relate the books to their own experiences and attitudes?

I've volunteered to relay your responses back to the 20+ discussion leaders, so please know that you are providing a great service for more than a few of us."

Michael Day (mday@silver.sdsmt.edu)



"I operate a teaching home page where I post information for my students, mostly the kind of things that you might photocopy and hand out, but I'm experimenting with using hypertext for poetry analysis. You can check out my page at: http://130.179.92.25/Arnason_DE/Arnason_DE.html

As well, I create local newsgroups for my students where they are able to post questions and comments on the various courses. You get some very interesting and wide ranging discussion. The key advantage is that people who don't like to talk in class will write great long diatribes at 3 am. It helps to frame the conversation by setting up discussion topics every couple of weeks. The downside is that almost no women take part in the electronic discussion groups, and most of the

women in my classes have no access to the Internet and are afraid of setting up accounts, even when they have the hardware to do so.”

David Arnason (arnasn@cc.umanitoba.ca)



David Aranason writes that the Net is going to be the university of the future, and most scholarly publishing will move to the Net. If this journal, while it clings to paper format, can extend the Can Lit classroom as here outlined, we would be happy to help.

E-mail and electronic bulletin boards will certainly help those who would rather write than phone. And, perhaps, as Colin Morton's note implies, their potential anonymity may appeal to some absence in the mythic Canadian psyche. Or it might unsettle—what with the impossibility of identifying electronic authors, and the creation of electronic texts too mutable to be cited—as in any other carnival. L.R.

Canadian Literature on the Internet's World Wide Web

Where can you find *Canadian Literature*? If you have a web browser, type <http://www.swiftly.com/cdn_lit> at the prompt to retrieve CLs home page. CL is part of the Swiftsure Arcade, which claims to be putting BC culture on the Internet; this site includes directories, lists, information and creative productions—all of which are interactive.

What will you find at CLs home page? The journal's history, recent and forthcoming issues, ordering information, submission guidelines and advertising information. We have also included writing samples: an article, poetry and book reviews. Future use of our “space” on the Internet will include an indexed archive of out-of-print issues, as well as links to information about our editors, beginning with our founding editor, George Woodcock. To check out this resource: when you are at the home page, click “*About Canadian Literature*,” then scroll down the page to “History of the Journal” and click George Woodcock's name (highlighted). All feedback is welcomed and encouraged.

In this new world of infinite recall we are creating, where all can be stored, and nothing can be forgotten, regardless of how profound or banal it might be, originality will be an additive and transformative process. The focus will be on collaboration and the development of deep interconnected

relationships, but not just relationships with our contemporaries. For instance, *CL* will be able to remain connected to its roots by keeping alive the words of its earliest contributors. The passion, surprise and insight of George Woodcock can be a challenge to future contributors of *CL* when they “recall” his words and are able literally to link their own words to his. By maintaining an archive of, and links to, resources that continue to inform Woodcock’s contributions to *CL*, it will be possible to build on his knowledge in new ways, to carry it forward with each new issue of *CL*. s.c.

¹ to subscribe to CANLIT-L, send the command SUBSCRIBE CANLIT-L to MAILSERV@NLC-BNC.CA

² to subscribe to ASLE, send the command SUBSCRIBE to ASLE@unr.edu.



Terminal Day

The long night's ride to Acadia.
Race to the ferry.

The road that brought us wound itself
through flat lands and canyons

taking us with it as if we were fallen
leaves on the black back of a new moon river.

The dashboard's ghostly green
dials turned the imagination; we were soaring

in a makeshift shuttle. Father roared
like thrusters when we missed the exit.

In that muzzy half-kingdom of exhaustion
he abridged our travels:

How the island was changing.
How too many tourists would come.
How discovery itself was becoming lost.

We saw no dolphins returning home.

Naming the Light

Naming the light as the Innu
the snow. The light around my father's

hands as he lay dying, his worn
fingers curled. Unborn animals, sleeping.

Womb-light and the glow of dreams,
they slow you down like water.

My father's body flew up in smoke,
ashes under my nails. Ten moons

rose from my fingers above the lake
where we scattered him,

the shore luminous with alkali
and lichen-splattered stones.

His brief shining in the air
I hold to me now in this place

where winter nights are darkest
because there is no snow.

The Secular Opiate

Marxism as an Ersatz Religion in Three Canadian Texts

Proletarian literature in Canada often produces ideological misgivings in Marxist critics, particularly Robin Mathews in “The Socio-Political Novel” (146), Bruce Nesbitt in “The Political Prose” (175), and Clint Burnham in “The Dialectics of Form” (101), all of whom suggest that few noteworthy Canadian texts, if any, present Marxism in a way thematically palatable to a revolutionary consciousness, and even writers with leftist reputations often portray Marxism in a context that can easily undermine the political philosophy to which the writer purports to subscribe: for example, *Down the Long Table* by Earle Birney, *What Is To Be Done?* by Mavis Gallant, and *In the Skin of a Lion* by Michael Ondaatje, all present problems to a Marxist critic seeking a completely positive affirmation of a socially viable politics rooted in dialectical materialism. Misgivings in such a Marxist critic may arise in part from the depiction of the labour movement as a kind of ersatz religion, a secular cult, that acts as its own opiate and thus prevents meaningful social reform. While Marxism has striven to establish itself as a rationalist discourse, its terms in these three texts lie couched in a mystified discourse, one that might bring an unsympathetic reader of the texts to dismiss Marxism as an ideological delusion that already contains the seeds of its own political defeat: after all, the texts appear to suggest that such a political philosophy, despite its utopian idealism, if not because of its utopian idealism, is actually an experiment doomed to failure, and the era of *perestroika*, with its global abandonment of Communism, can only lend support to this readerly response. When pro-

letarian radicalism is not satirized, it is portrayed in an almost tragical light, with some kind of commentary upon the apparent inability of the movement to transform human nature, so that consequently all three texts in effect end with a social vision that almost seems to confirm the political irrelevancy of Marxism in Canada.

Collective, political pessimism about Marxism seems at first glance to be a particularly surprising trait among these three writers, given their varied, political experience: Earle Birney has demonstrated the greatest personal involvement in Communism by virtue of his own active participation in the Trotskyite movement during the Depression; Mavis Gallant has demonstrated a less explicit, more flirtatious, involvement with Communism by virtue of her experience in sociopolitical journalism; and Michael Ondaatje has demonstrated almost no explicit, personal involvement whatsoever in Marxist politics. Despite these varying degrees of commitment to some brand of Marxist ideology, however, all three writers produce texts that recount the stories of failed revolutionaries and aborted revolutions: the protagonist Gordon Saunders in *Down the Long Table* fails in his attempt to consolidate the splintered Communist factions on the West Coast; Molly and Jenny in *What Is To Be Done?* fail in their attempt to sustain a spirit of revolutionary idealism during the War; and Patrick Lewis in *In the Skin of a Lion* fails in his attempt to commit an act of political terrorism against a monument of capitalistic exploitation, the Toronto Waterworks. Moreover, each text's degree of ironic commentary upon the labour movement is directly proportional to the degree of each writer's engagement in political activity: Birney and Gallant undercut proletarian radicalism, reducing it to pathetic absurdities, while Ondaatje almost romanticizes it, elevating it to heroic dimensions. Nevertheless, all three writers portray the movement in terms potentially incongruous with the rationalist discourse of dialectical materialism.

Robin Mathews in "The Socio-Political Novel" argues that, unlike American writers, whose formula for sociopolitical reform consists of pitting the anarchistic individual against the bureaucratic community, Canadian writers have, until recently, rejected anarchistic individualism, equating it with capitalistic materialism, and have suggested that the individual can only find freedom through an enlightened alliance with the community (134-35): "[t]o contest the ideological presumption that the individual is more sacred than the group is—in Canadian critical terms—to write political novels, propaganda novels" (134). Birney, Gallant, and

Ondaatje do indeed appear to write texts that stage a political argument for communal solidarity; however, none of the texts can escape a romanticized individualism; the texts in fact present revolutionary ideology as itself potentially oppressive, an ideology of which the protagonists must always beware in order to sustain their individual humanity. Mathews also argues that, while political idealism in Canada has sometimes been connected with interests of the dominant classes, such idealism has nevertheless been the basis of sociodemocratic politics and has contributed to an extension of rights for certain minorities, both religious and ethnic (133). Birney, Gallant, and Ondaatje do indeed appear to subscribe to idealistic visions of social reform; however, none of the texts can escape a tragic pragmatism; the texts in fact present political idealism as an obstacle to political reform, even as the texts appear to portray such idealism with a kind of nostalgic sympathy. Mathews complains that “‘Left’ characters are regularly presented in Canadian literature as sick, uncertain and unstable” (146), and these three texts are no exception: the protagonists are often politically ineffectual and subscribe to a revolutionary vision that often resembles religious conversion. The mystical portrayal of revolutionary ideology is perhaps no coincidence, given that the dominant classes have at times marginalized such ideology to such a degree that it has had to operate as an underground organization, as a secret society—a metaphor that lends itself well to religious allusions. Birney in *Down the Long Table* draws implicit parallels between the Communism of the Depression and the monastic factionalism of the Middle Ages; Gallant in *What Is To Be Done?* draws implicit parallels between wartime Communism and Sunday School instruction; and Ondaatje in *In the Skin of the Lion* draws implicit parallels between the labour movement and primitive cultism. Implicitly, all three writers distinguish between what Graham Greene in the *The Comedians* has called the Marxist *mystique* and the Marxist *politique* (353): the three texts privilege visionary idealism over dialectical materialism, the *theorein* of utopia over the *praxis* of reform, and although any parallels between the rational and the mystical are not necessarily to be condemned, their presence in the three texts may pose a problem to a Marxist critic seeking a proletarian literature that attempts to offer a dialectical, not psychological, analysis of Marxist failure.

Earle Birney in *Spreading Time* recounts his devoted commitment to Marxist ideology, what with his extensive readings of left-

wing philosophers (26), his participation in leftwing clubs (27), and his contributions to leftwing magazines (29), all the while fundraising, proselytizing, and pamphleteering. Birney in “On ‘Proletarian Literature’” has gone so far as to say that at times such political commitment must take precedence over artistic commitment: “I would[...]not allow my reading of *proletarian* literature to interfere with the much bigger job of helping to organize my fellow workers towards the establishment of a society where writers will be free to express themselves without starving or turning intellectual traitors” (2). Birney in “Proletarian Literature: Theory and Practice” reaffirms this point more polemically by declaring: “the worker-writer must be ready to sacrifice his own artistic fruition in order that the heritage of past cultures, bourgeois among them, may be rescued and preserved and a finer society attained—a society which will unfold no earthly paradise but in which the artists of the future will have room to build upon the creative achievements of mankind” (60). Birney has argued early in his career that the writer must be prepared to forfeit writing in the present so that he or she may be able to write in the future, and while his politics have become less strident over the years, this devoted commitment provides the context within which *Down the Long Table* is written.

Birney has had experience as both an academic medievalist and a political revolutionary, a combination that may account in part for the frequent appearance of monastic allusions in his novel. The text opens with a McCarthyite hearing that frames the tale—a hearing whose overtones all too closely resemble a medieval inquisition, with the senatorial interrogator asking political questions couched in the terms of a “moral code” (4). “Do you preach internationalism,” the senator asks (5), and in an attempt to respond to such loaded questions Saunders—“an arena Christian” (3) and a “Man of Sin” (20)—offers only an inarticulate description of his own brand of Marxism:

‘I—if I could fit it coherently into, into expression, it would be a work of philosophy, I suppose, a book, or a’—not a bible, be careful—‘religion.’ (4)

This McCarthyite hearing merely parallels the earlier trial of the protagonist before the Social Problems Club in Toronto, a club situated in the Sunday School room of the Twelfth United Church (69), a club where Stalinites, the “Black Monks” (193), meet to hold what Roberts calls a “seance” (66). Club members not only participate in scholastic debates about Communist

dogma, but also act out, in Saunders' case, a kind of political inquisition, in which such "counter-revolutionary" viewpoints as Shavian fascism (77), Mosleyite trickery (83), and Trotskyite imperialism (85) are all condemned and their proponents summarily excommunicated: the eviction of Saunders from the Club causes his newfound friend Bagshaw to conclude that Communists "have a Religion without any, well, Ethics" (95), "[I]ike having a Longer Catechism and no Bible" (95).

The Marxist allegory, the "ponderous sermon" (115) delivered by Saunders at the Stalinist meeting (70-76), in fact represents an almost mystical interpretation of Communist dogma, an interpretation that owes more to the *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon than to the *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx: Saunders' tract, with its metaphorical Island, Swimmers, and Bathers, offers a utopian vision of Marxist philosophy without any Marxist materialism. The Stalinist rejection of this allegory only causes Saunders to declare that "it looks as if I'm not going to be joining any of the new orders, the political Friars" (93), but within a week he becomes a full-fledged Trotskyite, "a convert" in the words of Thelma, his future fiancée (105). Moreover, Saunders' trip from Toronto to Vancouver in order to establish a Trotskyite league becomes tantamount to the pilgrimage of a political missionary, a "prophet" (184), in search of other "prospective converts" (185). Saunders even recognizes his virtually sacred role in a moment of religious irony when he thinks to himself:

These, your precious 'politicized' few, they're just working for a new boss and mouthing a new religion. Everything, for them, has already been thought and written down somewhere by Saints Marx or Engels or Lenin or Stalin or one of their attendant priests. But through this road they may come to me.

You! Are you a Christ? You're only an imp of Trotsky, their Anti-Christ.

I'll make them read Trotsky.

They won't. They read only to be confirmed. (198-99)

Saunders' epiphany in this last line perhaps offers an inadvertent explanation for the subsequent failure of his Marxist mission to revolutionize society on the West Coast.

Mavis Gallant has admitted in the *Canadian Fiction Magazine* interview that she has at times had experience as an "intensely left-wing political romantic[...], passionately anti-fascist" (30), not only having raised money for striking workers (30), but also "having believed

that a new kind of civilization was going to grow out of the war" (39), and she stresses her continued, political commitment: "I'm *extremely* interested in politics" (33); "[m]y writing is permeated with politics" (33). Gallant in in *The Canadian Forum* interview goes on to admit that she has been an avid reader of "the Gollancz publications; the Left book club with the yellow covers" (23), but confesses that she has not adequately understood the Leninist pamphlet whose title is shared by her play *What Is To Be Done?*: "I knew what that little pamphlet was, but it was full of names I had never heard and didn't understand" (23) since "[y]ou have to know Russian politics" (23). Gallant in effect expresses an interest in leftist issues, but unlike Birney she has not become passionately engaged in a comprehensive understanding of the international left: whereas Birney expresses more interest in political *theorein*, Gallant has expressed more interest in political *praxis*; however, both writers prefer to use their fiction to examine political contradictions between theory and practice, contradictions that manifest themselves at the level of private experience. Janice Kulyk Keefer in *Reading Mavis Gallant* points out that Gallant insists upon highlighting the disparity between what people study and what they live, between the Marxist promise of freedom and the Marxist reality of sexism (122), and indeed Gallant agrees with Barbara Gabriel, who comments in *The Canadian Forum* that, within the play *What Is To Be Done?*, "women are completely earnest about the left-wing ideals [that] the men affirm, but all the men want to do is get them in bed" (27).

Gallant's exposure to the Communist movement may be less formal than Birney's experience; however, her play uses similar religious motifs to depict the Communist movement in Canada. Gallant's ironic commentary upon proletarian radicalism begins even in the opening scene, in which the two heroines Molly and Jenny take an informal class in Marxism, a class taught by Willie, a man "*dressed for a Bible Society meeting in a damp chapel*" (10), and by Mrs. Bailey, a staunch Communist with the same matriarchal authority as Mrs. Barstow, the maternal Trotskyite in *Down the Long Table*. When reciting the monotonous litany of Communist slogans, Molly concludes that Marxist instruction "*is something like Confirmation class*" (14), and indeed such religious overtones are emphasized by Mrs. Bailey's own soliloquy, in which she remarks:

The natural movement goes[...]*from religion to politics. That's a natural*

movement. Where's love? Before religion, if you like. To one side. A kind of bypass. Somewhere. But not between. Not between religion and politics. For one thing, there's no room. (34)

Molly's Russian pamphlet by Lenin is accorded the kind of reverence normally reserved for a sacred text (26-27), and the group of Jehovah's Witnesses stoned in the street outside Jenny's window (50) almost become a religious parallel for Communists similarly oppressed because of their secular beliefs. Gallant not only blurs the distinction between religion and politics throughout the play, but also suggests that the failure of the labour movement stems in part from its resemblance to a religious diversion.

Mrs. Bailey, for example, may remove the word "GOD" from the slogan "GOD BLESS THE RED ARMY" (53) during the Second Front Rally, but the visit by the Russian dignitaries cannot escape the overtones of a religious revival meeting, complete with its own brand of political hymns and "doleful keening of the righteous" (52). Jenny weighs the success of this diplomatic visit against the success of the diplomatic visit made sometime earlier by the Archbishop of Canterbury (54), and although nobody understands the Russian speech, Jenny responds with a rapt faith, more appropriate in a church: "What matters is what I felt when I believed. When I thought it was true. I've never been so happy" (59). When the two heroines discover, however, that Willie's heroic friend, the political prisoner Karl-Heinz, is in fact a Trotskyite, someone whom the women have been taught to regard as Fascist, they lose some of their trust in the representatives of the movement, and eventually Molly concludes: "Stalin is waiting for the war to end so that he can enter a monastery. He was always a mystic. Essentially" (93). Just as Gordon Saunders in *Down the Long Table* fails to sustain his Marxist idealism in the face of petty, political factionalism, so also do Molly and Jenny eventually fail to sustain their Marxist idealism in the face of the Armistice when the social structure between men and women threatens finally to return to normal without any meaningful, social transformation. Keefer accounts for this ending with a biographical commentary, arguing that Gallant "has obviously divested herself of[...]the kind of naive emotional[...]immersion in a cause that promises a simple, straightforward solution to injustice and exploitation, a solution that cannot tolerate, never mind deal with, the existence of its own inherent contradictions and complexities" (122).

Ondaatje also writes about politics in a similarly religious tone, but unlike the other two writers, he has often tried to disavow the sociopolitical implications of his writing. Ondaatje expresses this political disengagement during the 1972 *Manna* interview, where he declares: “I’m not interested in politics on [a] public level” (20); “[t]he recent fashion of drawing journalistic morals out of literature is I think done by people who don’t love literature or who are not capable of allowing its full scope to be seen” (20). Ondaatje later admits in a 1975 *Rune* interview that he has an interest in “the destruction of social violence by the violence of outsiders” (46) and that “[t]he whole political thing has been obsessing me this last year” (51); however, he tries at the same time to deny any alignment with a systematized politics by stating:

I avoid reading books on[...]politics. It’s a funny thing, political theses I find impossible to read. I have to be affected emotionally or in a sensual way before something hits me. (51)

Ondaatje professes his own admiration for the proletarian poet Tom Wayman because “he talks about politics, about history as it happens to himself” (52), but at the same time Ondaatje betrays a potentially embarrassing, political naiveté by confusing Trotsky with Marx (52)—a curious, educational blindspot, given that *In the Skin of a Lion* appears to exemplify a political sensitivity to the plight of the proletariat. Ondaatje in the 1990 *paragraph* interview declares: “[n]ovels that give you the right way to do things I just don’t trust any more” (5)—and he makes this statement even as he laments the lack of canonized texts that feature the political involvement of artists (5): he is more interested in “human character as opposed to politically correct behavior” (5); yet nevertheless, he wishes “to write about that unofficial thing that was happening” (5) during the era of proletarian radicalism. Ondaatje in fact expresses a burgeoning tension throughout his career between two conflicting, artistic impulses, the will to social retreat and the will to social contact. Ondaatje may have no professed interest in social politics, but just as Birney and Gallant show the way in which the *mystique* of Marxism can affect idealistic personalities, so also does Ondaatje use *In the Skin of a Lion* to explore the private response of the individual to public politics, a response largely mystical in tone.

Ondaatje makes this mystification of political experience immediately apparent in his text: for example, Patrick Lewis in his childhood has a virtu-

ally surreal encounter with the skating loggers, an encounter in which “[i]t seemed for a moment that he had stumbled on a coven, or one of those strange druidic rituals” (21), an encounter that merely prefigures his later, proletarian encounter with the secret society that gathers illegally in the Toronto Waterworks, a veritable “Palace of Purification” (103) that, to the workers, embodies all the byzantine grandeur of a medieval cathedral, a building where “[e]very Sunday they still congregated” (158) in order to watch the theatrical performance of an agit-prop allegory—a puppet-dance that not only recalls the mystical character of the political tract read by Gordon Saunders, but also the religious character of medieval miracle-plays performed by village guild members. Moreover, the leader of the movement, the key actress Alice Gull, who tries to “convert” (125) Lewis to the revolutionary cause, is in fact a church member incognito, a former nun saved by Nicholas Temelcoff during the accidental fall from the Bloor Street Viaduct earlier in the text: the revolutionary, political leader is cast as a reformed, religious leader—a charismatic figure whose eloquent call to arms, with its explanation of class disparity, does not draw explicitly upon political philosophy, but relies more upon the mystical notion that, because people are “terrible sentimentalists” (124), “[y]ou reach people through metaphor” (123), through allegory—an idea that, Gull argues, is proven true by the compassionate reaction of Lewis to her suffering role in the agit-prop miracle-play (125).

Linda Hutcheon in *The Canadian Postmodern* points out that such mimed miracle-plays dramatize the silence of the proletarian classes, a silence imposed upon them by the dominant classes, a silence that embodies not an act of political rebellion, but an act of political surrender (97): “[s]ocial commentary challenges the separatist aestheticism of art that denies history and human pain—but, in a typically postmodern paradox, we learn this through art” (98). Gull accuses Lewis of retreating from social issues into a realm of romantic privacy (123), an accusation to which Lewis responds that “[t]he trouble with ideology[...]is that it hates the private” (135); “[y]ou must make it human” (135): while the political thinking of Lewis appears at first glance to oppose the political thinking of Alice, both positions are in fact similar, in that they both privilege the *mystique* of ideology over the *politique* of ideology. Lewis remarks: “I don’t believe the language of politics, but I’ll protect the friends I have” (122); however, his revolutionary sentiments derived from a sense of communal loyalty are not

enough to forestall the historically consistent, anticlimactic ending, in which the traditional structures of power are merely reaffirmed by the subsequent failure of Lewis to destroy the waterworks. Ondaatje, like Birney and Gallant, is not so much interested in the effects of political *theorein* upon public experience as he is interested in the effects of political *praxis* upon private experience: all three writers in effect privilege the integrity of the individual over the integrity of the community.

Birney, Gallant, and Ondaatje represent disparate political views, but all three writers imply to some degree that Communist politics represents a kind of secular supplement for the experience of religious community. Richard Crossman in *The God That Failed* attempts to explain the reasons for this recurrent relationship established in Communism between the secular and the sacred:

The emotional appeal of Communism lay precisely in the sacrifices—both material and spiritual—which it demanded of the convert. You can call the response masochistic, or describe it as a sincere desire to serve mankind. But, whatever name you use, the idea of an active comradeship of struggle[...]has had a compulsive power in every western democracy. The attraction[...]of Communism was that it offered nothing and demanded everything, including the surrender of spiritual freedom. (11)

Detractors of Marxism may simply dismiss the labour movement on the grounds that such religious associations merely invalidate the principles of dialectical materialism, and indeed the respective failure of each protagonist in the three texts is in part attributed to a misplaced, visionary idealism—an idealism developed in terms of a religious discourse. Implied in the criticism of such detractors, however, is the notion that, while committed engagement to an actual religion may be appropriate, perhaps even beneficial, committed engagement to a secular ideal is somehow inappropriate, perhaps even self-defeating. Birney, Gallant, and Ondaatje, however, do not try to invalidate Marxism so much as try to examine the ideological contradictions that almost always arise between the political realms of theory and practice, and the three writers go on to imply that, while Marxism may define religion as a species of ideology, of false consciousness, Marxism often fails in the end to take into account the fact that even its proposed alternative, its dialectical materialism, is itself necessarily “false” in the sense that it is equally ideological.

Bruce Nesbitt in "The Political Prose" complains that "[t]he absence of serious leftist scholarship in Canadian literature is both a reflection of a milieu and an indictment of the academic community" (175), and this lack of intelligent, Marxist analysis perhaps still remains to be redressed. Mathews observes that "the amount of genuine ideological analysis, even in novels of protest, is depressingly small" (147) for three possible reasons: first, the Canadian development of Communism has historically had its course directed by institutions outside the country; second, the media controlled by capitalistic interests has long presented proletarian radicalism as an antipatriotic expression of selfish materialism; and third, writers in this country have had to appease the dominant classes in order to gain any socioeconomic mobility (147). Mathews concludes in effect that the Canadian left is politically parochial. Clint Burnham in "The Dialectics of Form," however, argues that Marxist interpretations are rare in Canadian literature because of the success of social democracy in Canada, a movement that has compromised its idealistic agenda for pragmatic gains (101); moreover, "[t]he aesthetic conservatism of the Canadian left[...]has served to isolate and prevent the emergence of leftist critics, poets, and novelists" (101) since the left is insulated from any consideration of the necessary role that radical aesthetics plays in the formation of a radical society. Burnham concludes in effect that the Canadian left is not simply politically parochial, but also artistically parochial.

Whereas the protagonists in *Down the Long Table* and *What Is To Be Done?* are often depicted as absurdly naive, the protagonists in *In the Skin of a Lion* are depicted as heroically noble: all three texts in the end, however, reflect the attitudes of writers who have at one time or another forsworn some brand of definitive, political engagement, be it Trotskyism (as in the case of Birney), wartime socialism (as in the case of Gallant), or simply politics in general (as in the case of Ondaatje). Birney and Gallant appear to deploy satirical, religious motifs in order to express not so much a disenchantment with the *mystique* of Marxist theory as a disenchantment with the *politique* of Marxist practice, and indeed both Birney and Gallant portray visionary idealism in a sympathetic light, while at the same time criticizing the misapplication of material philosophy; on the other hand, Ondaatje deploys more serious, religious motifs in a way that reflects his own distance from the Marxist milieu, a distance that offers greater room in which to romanticize the mystical grandeur of proletarians who agitate for

social reform. Each text perhaps reflects the continued attraction of each writer to the *mystique* of revolutionary politics—an attraction qualified, however, by the unwillingness of each writer to engage such a *mystique* at the expense of individual integrity. While the texts tell stories about people who yearn for a sense of socially responsible community, the writers betray misgivings about the longterm effectiveness of this idealistic desire, and as a result the texts threaten to reify the bourgeois argument that, as a viable form of radical politics, communist philosophy in the era of late capitalism has done nothing but prove its own innate ineffectuality.

WORKS CITED

- Birney, Earle. *Down the Long Table*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975. First published in 1955.
- . "On 'Proletarian Literature.'" *The Link* (1936?): 2.
- . "Proletarian Literature: Theory and Practice." *The Canadian Forum* (May 1937): 58-60.
- . *Spreading Time*. Montreal: Véhicule, 1980.
- Burnham, Clint. "The Dialectics of Form: A Marxist Reading of Kroetsch's *The Ledger*." *Open Letter* 7.8 (Summer 1990): 90-103.
- Crossman, Richard. "Introduction." *The God That Failed*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950. 7-16.
- Gallant, Mavis. *What Is To Be Done?* Dunvegan: Quadrant, 1983.
- . "Fairly Good Times: An Interview with Mavis Gallant." With Barbara Gabriel. *The Canadian Forum* 66.766 (Feb. 1987): 19-67.
- . "An Interview with Mavis Gallant." With Geoff Hancock. *Canadian Fiction Magazine* 28 (Nov. 1978): 19-67.
- Greene, Graham. *The Comedians*. London: Bodley Head and William Heinemann, 1976.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *The Canadian Postmodern*. Toronto: Oxford University, 1988.
- Keefer, Janice Kulyk. *Reading Mavis Gallant*. Toronto: Oxford University, 1989.
- Mathews, Robin. "The Socio-Political Novel." *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*. Ed. Gail Dexter. Toronto: Steel Rail, 1978. 131-147.
- Nesbitt, Bruce. "The Political Prose of Earle Birney: Trotsky and the 1930s." *Perspectives on Earle Birney*. Toronto: ECW, 1981. 174-183.
- Ondaatje, Michael. "An interview with Michael Ondaatje." With Sam Solecki. *Rune* 2 (Spring 1975): 39-54.
- . *In the Skin of a Lion*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989.
- . Untitled Interview. *Manna* 1 (March 1972): 19-22.
- . "Where the Personal and the Historical Meet: An Interview with Michael Ondaatje." With Cary Fagan. *paragraph* 12.2 (1990): 3-5.

Freighters

Cows in a blue field.
Noon. Flanks beaten brown by the sun. Seagulls
dip and rage like blowflies
over them. No tails flick.
No hooves to scrape scars in the grass.

On the bus last night I fell in love
with that metaphor
across from me. When she tossed her hair
a white gull came out.

How to overturn the tyranny of *thing*?
Below the foam of matter
we are all food—sand & wave, professor & undertaker, bee
wing & flea. At midnight I sat
crying on a tree, stripped of branches and needles,
whittled into half-life and blown
by a blue-green force onto the sand.

I picked up a mussel shell
with a half-moon
chewed out of it. Sand sat in its little cup
the colour of dough.
I asked my metaphor what love was, she said
I could be somewhere else.

And all night the sea unravelled
its hemline. On the gravel path
an old newspaper coughed in the breeze,
its handkerchief-white
blown to the colour of piss.

Gulls, morning's rag of cloud, and grain freighters
loading, cows drowsy in the sun's
cornflower field. She has left me
and bread is running through my hands like water,
blonde grains of wheat, black
rounds of pumpernickel, the morning's
ruddy bowl of light—

When my parents split up
my mother opened
into the downpour and the chlorophyll,
the in-turned gaze of dying things. And
my father, he became
that quality of sunlight
before rain
when the source has almost vanished but hasn't.

Re-reading Grove

The Influence of Socialist Ideology on the Writer and *The Master of the Mill*

The handmill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist.

KARL MARX, *The Poverty of Philosophy*

The motive of human society is in the last resort an economic one.

SIGMUND FREUD, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence.

VOLOSHINOV, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*

Recent years have witnessed a revival of interest in F.P. Grove's freshly unearthed, creative and critical works.¹ This has been paralleled with an increasing number of papers that reassess and recanonize older texts within the framework of specific theories.² Accordingly, this paper adopts a neo-Marxist position in an attempt to shed new light on Grove and specifically on *The Master of the Mill* (1944) (hereafter *Master*).³ My purpose is three-fold. First, by challenging traditional non-political critical practice, I fill in the gaps left (unwittingly or intentionally) about the influence of socialist theory on Grove and his works. Second, my Bakhtinian study of *Master* and other relevant works legitimizes and valorizes ideas and theories presented in the novel; not only does this paper explore social contradictions and ironies in relation to the "threshold figures," it also examines Grove's appropriation of multiple discourses. Finally, I focus on Grove's stark imagery of industrialization and his vision of alienation. The latter, I submit, was inspired by Hegelian-Marxist dialectics, which for better or for worse, eventually supplanted Grove's bent for ideological dialogism and led to a single political choice—utopian socialism.

Critical Encounter: Gaps and Silences

Pluralist we [Canadian critics] may strive to be, but the politics of influence continue to preclude the influence of politics.

(LARRY McDONALD 434)

Conventional Grove scholarship has tended to ignore the influence of ideology and politics. In 1976, Desmond Pacey's lengthy introduction to *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove* (hereafter *Letters*) mentions Karl Marx as one of several great thinkers who influenced Grove. But ironically, the first book-length criticism on Grove that fails to mention the possible influence of "sciences of man" (Marx) on Grove, is Pacey's 1945 *Frederick Philip Grove*. The chapter on *Master* accuses Grove of confused ideas and structure. In response to Pacey's devastating remarks, Grove wrote to C. Stanley: "I am almost indignant about Pacey and could wish to write a paragraph against him myself" (*Letters* 488). Since Pacey's study remained the only one of its kind until Ronald Sutherland's slim *Frederick Philip Grove* (1969), Pacey is partly responsible for much of *Master*'s unfavourable criticism. Conceding his initial oversights, Pacey later apologized that his chapter on *Master* was "somewhat inept," and said, "I should now be prepared to commend the novel much more warmly; and to note complexities in it which completely eluded me at that time" (*Letters* 488).

In "What was Frederick Philip Grove?," published in 1974, Sutherland comes closer to identifying the central issues of *Master*: "problems of labour relations and the effects of automation which are only now beginning to be generally debated in Canada" (9). Sutherland's main purpose was to identify Grove as a naturalist rather than a realist, given the dominant deterministic elements in Grove's novels. Regrettably, no mention is made of Marx, or Marx's economic determinism for that matter.

Margaret Stobie's *Frederick Philip Grove* (1973) mentions "Rousseau and Thoreau, Froebel and Herbert, Darwin, Bates and Belt, . . ." (188) as Grove's influences. But Marx is omitted. Strangely, Stobie makes light of Grove's wide range of knowledge with her disparaging remark that he made "pretensions to experience or knowledge that he quite clearly did not have" (189). This view is clearly contradicted by Pacey's comment that, "It seems to me that there is quite sufficient evidence in these letters to indicate that Grove was by far the most erudite Canadian novelist yet to appear" (xxi). My research has convinced me of the truth of Pacey's judgement.⁴

One critic who considers the structural and ideological aspects of *Master*

is Stanley McMullin. His “Evolution Versus Revolution” does interpret *Fruits of the Earth* and *Master* in terms of structure and philosophy and throws much light on the complexity and totality of history. Yet, because McMullin wrote his article in 1974, he was necessarily handicapped by the dearth of information on Marx’s influence. This probably explains why, by McMullin’s admission (78), the article’s Spenglerian perspective is some sort of guesswork.

Clearly there have been critical omissions and deficiencies in past analyses of Grove and *Master*. My claim that Grove seriously considered Marx’s economic and political theories is supported in his unpublished diary, “Thoughts and Reflections” where Grove described himself as giving “intellectual assent to the doctrines of socialism or communism” (Mathews 1982, 242). This ideological stance immediately evokes one of his characters’ considered choices in *Master* (226, 314). Nonetheless, as Mathews rightly points out, “the political Grove has never been examined” (1982, 242). It is imperative that Grove’s life and writings be evaluated within a political and ideological context.

The Power and Authenticity of Grove’s “Lived Experience” (Althusser)

We are alienated from our economy in Marx’s sense, as we own relatively little of it ourselves; . . .

NORTHROP FRYE, *The Modern Century*

Though I cannot identify a specific year, Grove’s initial curiosity about socialist ideas and politics began as early as the 1920s. During his lecture tours across the country, he had many opportunities to meet prominent people of the left-wing persuasion. In Grove’s letters, readers are privileged to glimpse, as Pacey has perceptively remarked, the “spontaneous, unrevised expressions of the writer’s feelings and thoughts” (ix). Take, for example, this relevant correspondence reinscribing Grove’s genuine enthusiasm and palpable pride when he met the Left in politics. Grove wrote to his wife, Catherine, on 12 March, 1928: “I have many and powerful friends in Ottawa. . . . Met Woodsworth and the whole left wing of the House of Commons” (*Letters* 94). Two days later, he dropped her another line: “The left wing of the left side of the House of Commons has invited me for lunch today at the Parliament Buildings” (100). James S. Woodsworth was the founder of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. It started with the workers’ and

farmers' immediate interest in mind, but developed to encompass many other economic and political goals. Ivan Avakumovic thus has characterized the CCF:

Although electoral considerations caused the adjective "socialist" to be relegated to the background, the leaders and staunchest supporters of the CCF-NDP advocated and envisaged a social order which, on closer examination, would display many of the characteristics associated by most socialists in the Western world with socialism . . . (v)

Grove's long-term personal contacts with the left wing and his sociopolitical activities exposed him to socialist ideas and drew him into the political movement, despite "curious hassles" (Stobie 1973, 159). Though initially somewhat reluctant (*Letters* 296), Grove did stand for the CCF in the Ontario election of 1943. In other words, he was not merely satisfied with the discursive power of socialist theory to "interpret the world in various ways": he meant to take concrete actions and to "change it," to quote Marx (Singer 32).

Grove's personal life also led to serious brooding and questioning of the means and motives of capitalist production on the Canadian scene. As disclosed by Spettigue (1983, 325), Grove underwent a traumatic experience in his role as president of the Ariston Press in Ottawa. His partner deceived him, thereby appropriating control of the press from Grove. This gaining of money, power, and control by ill means was perhaps an experience that Grove later skillfully translated into Sam's discovery of his father's fraud. Grove's job in a canning factory also brought him face to face with the exploitative and parasitic nature of capitalist production. The boss does not earn his money by labour; his motives lie in making money by money, simply because he is in possession of the capital whereby to hire and exploit the worker. In view of these shocking and thought-provoking experiences, Grove's open appeal to the Canadian public should not come as a surprise:

Canada has had to stand the pressure of capital: One eighth, they tell me, of the industrial enterprises within its borders are owned by the United States interests. Canada has stood the pressure of the example given by the shallow ease of the life led by the industrial masses across the border. . . .
 ("Nationhood" *It Needs to Be Said* 146-7)

In Grove's view, capital is *ipso facto* evil; no less so money. Work, on the other hand, "is the only title to life". As Stobie correctly suggests (1986, 228), this was a new revelation for Grove and he clung to it tightly.

Grove's reading and translation also point to his perennial preoccupation

with current international socialist movements and revolutions, either Russian or Chinese. First of all, Grove's reading materials on the Russian Revolution show that he longed to possess sufficient knowledge about modern socialism inaugurated by Lenin, readings he described as "interesting" (*Letters* 307). Though Grove was once rumoured to have visited Siberia (Pacey 1945, 4-5), Spettigue's research has proved the rumour to be groundless (1973, 192). Unwittingly, Spettigue's new and more convincing discovery credits Grove's socialistic concerns rather than detracting from them because though Grove had *not* been to Siberia, he still had the suffering inhabitants in mind. Second, Grove's research speaks for his intense socialist interest. While preparing for *Consider her Ways*, Grove came under the direct influence of the Russian Revolution through his perusal of *The Ants of Timothy Thummel*, a satiric work in which the "workers overthrew their rulers and established an egalitarian society" (Stobie 1986, 228). Hence, one can surmise that he was considerably informed about the first socialist state and its new praxis.

Another useful fact, unknown to many, also testifies to Grove's socialist disposition. As early as 1929 he translated from the German a thick book, *The Legacy of Sun Yatsen: A History of Chinese Revolution* (henceforward *Legacy*) and published it. This work has rich political implications. First, Grove unequivocally informs us in the "Translator's Note" that the reason for this ideologically committed project is to present "a picture of a great subversion in modern history." Subversion, as confirmed by the authorial voice in *Master* (315), goes hand in hand with revolution. Equally worthy of mention is the intimate connection between Marx, Lenin, and Dr. Sun (83-84). Anyone sufficiently acquainted with Marx's life would immediately recall that Marx had described himself as "the Prometheus of the proletariat." It could hardly have been a coincidence that Grove, too, used the same term to attribute this liberating and salvaging quality to Dr. Sun, "the greatest man of our [Chinese] country" (57). Furthermore, if the dates "1930-1944" (*Master* 332) provided by Grove are considered reliable, then he started *Master* fresh from translating this work on the Chinese and Russian revolutions. Indeed, the presence of both Marx and Lenin is strongly felt in Sam's and Edmund's respective economic and sociopolitical discourse, despite Grove's typical strategies of camouflage.⁵ Finally, Grove's concern with the Chinese revolution remained much the same even two decades later. His "thinly disguised quasi-autobiography" (Mathews 1978, 63), *In Search of Myself* (1946), called for the acquisition of a "universal outlook"

which includes the Chinese as a unit of mankind “embarked upon the expedition of life” (193-94). Again, given the dates of its composition, the fate of the Chinese people remained close to Grove’s heart to his last days, because they were shaking off semi-feudal and semi-colonial chains and establishing a socialist state (*Legacy* 1-11).

Grove’s correspondence also demonstrates his assiduous study of socialist theories, either Utopian or Marxist. In one letter, Grove shows himself capable of passing judgments on some critics’ comments regarding Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*. Further, he read not one but two versions of *Utopia* and compared them (312). Grove’s correct use of the word “Utopian” in *A Search for America* (379) clearly indicates not only that he really understood its meanings, but also that he had no wish to conflate a utopian socialism with a Marxist “scientific” one. This much can be said here: Grove’s ideological sensitivity is to translate into a dialogic element *within* the socialist discourse in *The Master of the Mill*. To enhance his knowledge of Marx’s or Marx’s followers’ theories of capitalism/socialism, Grove wishes to read at least one of them twice (*Letters* 307). His pre-knowledge of socialism is impressive. For instance, he asserts that the works he read were “the clearest and most accurate definition of Marx’s position” (*Letters* 308).⁶ This observation suggests that he must have had previous thoughts about other books by Marx because he could already draw his own conclusions. As suggested by Pacey, Grove does not bluff in his letters: he simply makes assessments on the basis of his accumulated knowledge. Significantly, Grove read works on Marx and Russia at the same time, perhaps for the purpose of checking Marx’s theory with its praxis in the former Soviet Union. Grove, we may speculate, takes an open, warm but sober attitude toward the theory of socialism; he is equally interested in its social practice.

**“The Very Idea”⁷ of Socialism and Multiplicity of Discourses;
Contradictory Social Reality, the Figure “on the Threshold,” and
“Images of Ideas”**

They talk of capitalism and don’t know what they mean; they
talk of socialism and know still less what they mean. . . .

The Master of the Mill 226

While privileging individual and psychological characterization, early Canadian critics were in general wary or incapable of dealing with ideas, theories, and politics in literary works. The cases of Pacey and others elo-

quently illustrate this tendency.⁸ However, with Grove, ideas are indispensable to a novel. He declared his views openly: “[t]he novelist is in the everlasting dilemma between a novel, which must be a living life, and an argument. Every novel, of course, *is* an argument if it is a novel” (Quoted in Woodward 40). Indeed, this position reasserts itself in his repeated emphases on the necessity of “interpretations” and on the “subjective nature” of art (*A Stranger to My Time* 201, 208). Moreover, Grove’s readiness to embrace the didactic and ideological dimension falls in line with his notion about the social function of literature. In “The Novel,” he further exhorts Canadian writers to select the “*socially significant* material from the mainstream of life,” and to ground the “crisis and characters involved in it in the social conditions of the period” (Monkman 7; Grove’s emphasis). With these polemical statements in mind, I suggest that, given the complex capitalist mode of production, Grove must have felt drawn to Marxist theory of socialism—a new interpretive paradigm known for its social concerns, political commitment, and ideological visions—in analyzing capitalism and contesting it with socialist theories.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s discourse on the relations between ideas and ideology and the novelistic form best illuminates the nature of Grove’s views. In *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin emphasizes the fertility and power of an idea, or “form-shaping ideology” (92-3), since on the one hand it is systematic and independent and on the other, related to personality (“two thoughts are already two people” 93). Furthermore, for Dostoevsky, the contradictory nature of social reality during the Russian transition from capitalism to socialism became a potential polyphonic element; he depicted his character as enchained to “duality” (35), or caught in a “threshold” space, and made puzzled and undecided (34-37). Similarly, Grove’s protagonist Samuel Clark is strategically placed in the same epoch of ideological transition, an epoch of multi-voicedness.

A map of Grove’s field of ideological dialogism in relation to characters would begin with the fine sensitivity of an artist-ideologist; Grove brings into dialogic relationships a multiplicity of four identifiable discourses (in Bakhtin’s sense 1984, 184-5) in two major ideologies—capitalism and socialism. Until the very end of the novel at least three of these discourses contend simultaneously. For Grove, socialism is by no means a monolithic, unitary discourse: Sam’s utopian version interacts and vies with a radical Marxist one championed and practised by “radical leader[s]” such as

Watson (171-172), Mr. Birkinshaw (277-280) and the millers. Nor is capitalist ideology homogeneous or fixed: Rudyard's theory and practice of early, competitive capitalism is contrasted not only with Edmund's late, monopoly capitalist (or imperialist, in Marxist parlance) discourse, but also with Sam's utopian-socialist vision and capitalist practice. Indeed, by foregrounding ideologies, Grove turns all of his main characters—Rudyard, Sam, Edmund, and, to a lesser degree, Watson—into ideologues (Bakhtin 1981, 429), or still better, “images of ideas” (Bakhtin 1984, 90-93), since their various discourses are juxtaposed and set against one another in dynamic interactions. Their personalities are not separable from their respective discourses; individual psychology is reinterpreted within an enlarged framework in which social, economic, political, and ideological forces all have a role to play. Second, Grove actualizes ideological dialogism chiefly by employing the strategies of double voicing (particularly the devices of stylization and hybridization) and carnivalization (Bakhtin 1984, 359; 166-67). As a result, the two salient qualities—a new socialist discourse confronting an old one of capitalism, and unresolved social contradictions between capital and labour, as reflected in an undetermined, wavering personality—stand out; they contribute to an appreciable measure of ideological dialogism.⁹

Grove wastes little time in employing the very idea of socialism to enact sociopolitical and ideological dialogues and set character development in motion. No later than Chapter One, the generational problems between Rudyard, Sam, and Edmund (22) are put forward as ideological: Sam is said to be a “dreamer” (26); Grove footnotes: “Theoretically he [Sam] would, in his old age, say that he and Miss Dolittle had been socialists; and socialists are dreamers” (38). Elsewhere, Grove again pinpoints Sam's “socialist leanings” (45). Obviously, Grove is more than eager “to name the system,” to use Jameson's words (1991, 418), in singling out “the ruthless capitalism” (21, 192), as socialism's other. Grove's remarkable act is to present Sam as being poised or positioned “*on the threshold*” (Bakhtin 1984, 61; original emphasis) between two major ideologies: he is given rare opportunities to cross ideological boundaries at crucial historical junctures, and he repeatedly falls short of realizing his grand socialist plans. In fact, Grove employs an identical term—threshold—by positioning Sam at the “threshold of a new era” (40) of ideological dialogism.

Grove entertains no separation of personality and ideology, for he places

Sam's utopian discourse in relation to other characters and to their discourses. The first tension stems from his father, Rudyard, and from the laissez-faire capitalist discourse he establishes. Different from the over-used oedipal complex that is sexual at source, the father-son conflict proves to be a predominantly economic and political one. Here, Grove activates ideological dialogism by deploying the strategy of double voicing, since he explores "one discourse with an orientation toward someone else's discourse" (Bakhtin 1984, 198-99). Rudyard's capitalist practices have hardened into a system that permits no change; his instructions, regulations, and guidelines have become a rigidified discourse. Against these, Sam first feebly and secretly, then assertively presses his utopian socialist discourse. Because the latter is vital to an understanding of Grove's ideological dialogism, it merits a lengthy citation:

His [Sam's] father, with his secretive ways, had never allowed him a glimpse into anything that was not a matter of public record; and public record was fragmentary. . . . He had dreamt of many things; above all of the Terrace, that vast flat covered with *cottages* in which the mill-hands lived. . . In their agglomeration they were a horror. . . . All these he would *change*. . . . He would raise wages and give the men a *voice* in the administration. He had dreamt of the farmers whose wheat was bought by *the mill*. His father . . . had raised the price of his product to the consumer by every means in his power: by price-agreements with other producers; by price-wars eliminating competitors; by refusing to let dealers handle his flour unless they agreed to handle no other . . . All that he, Sam, was going to *change*. . . . Producers, mill-hands, and consumers, *all* were to *profit*. That has been his dream. (39-40; italics mine)

Note, in particular, the utopian socialist thrust of Sam's discourse: Sam's desire to change the primitive capitalist *status quo* established and perpetuated by his father is coupled with his willingness to listen to the voice of the workmen and to engage in meaningful dialogue with them. Also present is the urge to redistribute wealth and redress inequality. By the devices of juxtaposition and contrast, Grove places Rudyard's capitalist practice and his discourse of laissez-faire, competitive capitalism side by side with Sam's utopian socialist blueprint. The two ideologically opposed discourses interact and collide. Rejoinders to one another, they are not so much exclusively referential to social reality as directed to each other as discourse.

An intertextual comparison of Sam's ideas with Phil Brandon's in *A Search for America* provides a definitive answer to Grove's utopian and Marxist discourses. After delivering scathing criticism of American selfish individualism and rampant materialism, Brandon enumerates several

things he would do were the young millionaire Mr. Mackenzie's property to fall into his hands. He would provide the farmhands with shelter, recreational facilities, and proper work, and "divest" (379) himself of his property. He concludes summarily that "collective ownership" or "limitation of wealth" would lead to a "real democracy" (380). This political agenda certainly has a close affinity to the one in Sam's dream. However, whereas in *A Search for America* Grove offers one version of socialism in a unified literary discourse, in *The Master of the Mill* he employs double-voiced discourse to keep ideological dialogism alive.¹⁰ He refrains from imposing his own authoritative and monologizing voice upon his characters. Instead, the latter are allowed much freedom to employ a discourse of their own, as exemplified by Sam's utopian socialism, or the workers' and the unions' radical or Marxist socialism.

What need to be emphasised are the discursive differences between two versions of socialism, since a sustained dialogue also exists between them. Branden describes his ideas as "Utopian" (379), as does the introspective Sam (171). Both utterances remain utopian, since they can be distinguished from the "scientific" socialism Marx and Engels advocate. The latter not only locates the social, independent force capable of overthrowing capitalism and changing ownership in the working class, rather than among the capitalists, but also believes in violent class struggle or revolution.¹¹ Owing to his concentration on capitalist charity from above, Grove does not treat the working class as a material force to usher in an age of socialism; this partly explains his repetitions of "theoretically" (38, 45) in reference to Sam's socialism.

But this focus surely enables Grove to initiate Sam's utopian socialism vis-à-vis the trade union leaders' Marxist socialism. Grove dramatizes Sam's utopian socialist impulses and urges by contrasting his half measures, which earmark an ideological liminal state of affairs with the radical means of Marxist socialism. Grove's strategy is to set off the discursive differences contrapuntally: the first has to do with profit-sharing or distribution of wealth (171-172). Sam is ready to surrender some, but not all, of his profits to the dispossessed working men because throughout his life, he has been living mainly on their sweat and labour. In Grove's ideological vision, Sam is preconditioned to be parasitic and exploitative both by Rudyard's mentality and by his capitalist discourse (103-4). The second discursive divergence concerns ownership of property. Sam's own ambivalent attitude

toward the Clark private property becomes a stumbling block. What he calls public ownership remains, in actuality, partial, not total; by contrast, a Marxist socialism requires unconditional public ownership (cf. 278-279). By keeping Sam's allegiance to utopian socialism and making him a threshold figure, Grove maintains the dialogic interplay between two socialist discursive forces until the end of the novel.

In much the same manner, Grove fully exploits Sam's failure to extricate himself from the contradictory nature of the capitalist mode of production and go beyond ideological liminal space. This is easily demonstrable in Sam's relation with Edmund and with Edmund's imperialist discourse. Grove's device allows Edmund the fullest voice possible before totally silencing him with death. In Grove's scheme, Edmund not only articulates this new fascist-imperialist discourse most eloquently and systematically but also merges with his notorious discourse to become the Bakhtinian "image of idea" (1984, 91-92). At times, he even threatens to usurp the role of the narrator/author, and Grove gives up his own interpretive or controlling voice entirely (e.g. 310-313). Meanwhile, as befits the Marxist holistic or totalistic view of capitalism, Grove has Sam meet Edmund on every front to sustain the ideologically dialogic relations. Sam moves beyond the economic and local into the sociopolitical and national spheres; with a point-by-point counter-discourse he further opposes Edmund's enterprise of establishing an empire of the Machine against the state of the proletariat (327-329). It is more than a little ironic that Edmund dies at the very peak of his national fame and political influence. No doubt, Grove orchestrates his death to signal not only the collapse of his anti-human "state within the state" (228, 287) of the empire of the Machine fed by capital, but also the bankruptcy of his imperialist discourse.

Grove appropriates Marxist economic and sociopolitical vocabulary chiefly by the Bakhtinian devices of stylization and hybridization (1984, 189-90). He mainly borrows or imitates Marxist vocabulary and blends it with his own, with no apparent intention to parody or travesty. Thus Marxist discourses become an integral part of Grove's characters' vocabulary; his characters turn into "author[s]" (Bakhtin 1984, 184) of their own new economic discourse. The economic domain constitutes the very area in which Hugh Garner finds middle class Canadian writers wanting.¹² But in *The Master*, at every turn one is confronted with terms such as "wages," "profits," "by-product," "exchange-value," "outputs," "strikes," "methods of pro-

duction,” “labour,” “capital,” “exploiter.” Indeed, such professional borrowings sometimes fill his pages to the point of saturation (330-332). Much like Marx researching *Capital*, Grove’s effort to detail the milling process and profits must have been painstaking. A palpable sense of Marxist economic determinism can be felt.

Furthermore, in depicting Sam or Edmund in the process of grasping various discourses of socialism and capitalism, Grove admirably intermingles the sociopolitical and ideological with the literary and renders the novel almost encyclopedic in content and hybrid in style. The degree of complexity of political thought is increased in the second part of the novel; one frequently runs across such words and phrases as “socialist” and “capitalist” (*passim*), “proletarian revolution” (321, 328-9) and “state within the state” (228, 287). Occasionally, Grove borrows whole ideas or theories from books of sociology or politics he has read and probably noted.¹³ Parts of *The Master* form sophisticated expositions on sociological theories and assumptions (314, 327). Others provide intricate socio-psychological and political analyses of class mentality and power relations (246, 255, 326), while still others present informed discussions of possible proletarian revolutions and ideological breakthroughs (108-9, 310, 321, 329). Indeed, as Bakhtin points out, only the novel, with its incomplete or unfinished form, can accommodate such various discourses (1981:3-40). Grove dares to experiment and the multiple discursive elements contribute positively to his central purposes of encompassing the history of three generations, as well as dialogizing whole relationships of society—social, economic, political, and ideological.

Images of Power and Domination—the Mill and the Mansion, the Vision of History as Alienation, Dialectics and Dialogism

The perception of things is facilitated, above all, by means of antithesis. FELIX PAUL GREVE, QUOTED BY E.D. BLODGETT

Grove seems to have been impressed by Marx’s crude but pithy statement about the decisive role of the mill and turned it into an image central to both parts of his novel.¹⁴ With a firm grip on this industrial symbol and its sinister effects on human life, Grove not only adopts a Marxist historical division but also stresses the primacy of productive force—or tools and technology in current parlance—in capitalist development. Thus, parallel with the two-stage capitalist development in the Marxist classification—the

competitive and monopoly or imperialist—is the advancement of productive force crystallized in the image of the mill. Similarly, Part II focuses on Sam's contending and colliding with his son, Edmund, on how and when to mechanize the mill completely with minimal unemployment. Thus, in the competitive as in the monopoly stages of capitalism, all personal, economic, and social relationships hinge upon the methods of operating the mill. The Marxist view of the mill as capital incarnate comes through most clearly when Grove has it bear the brunt of the workers' attacks. In addition, the same inexorable logic detected by Marx in the development of productive force—the mill—bears down upon the capitalists. Just as the mill renders the feudal lord ex-centric and peripheral, so the capitalists now become increasingly submerged in and dwarfed by, the overpowering mill.

Grove's images of the Clark mansion and the cottages throw in sharp relief the highly visible gap in wealth and possessions between the capitalist and the working class. In view of the urgency in Sam's hidden socialist agenda to replace the "cottages", Grove may have been inspired, again, by the much quoted passage from Marx:

A house may be large or small; as long as the surrounding houses are equally small it satisfies all social demands for a dwelling. But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut . . . however high it may shoot up in the course of civilization, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied and cramped within its four walls. (*Wage Labour and Capital* 259)

Indeed, the first riot of the workmen erupts precisely because they spot the tremendous disparity in housing. In Grove's vision, the Clark mansion stands for the crystallization of the profits of the workmen's labour. To put it mildly, the spatial metaphor is implicit. To the workers living below in cottages, the mansion perches literally on top of the hill as a constant reminder of economic exploitation and social hierarchy. Both Marx and Grove employ juxtaposition and contrast as rhetorical strategies.

What Grove assimilates most significantly in shaping the final artistic vision is, of course, the Hegelian-Marxist philosophical discourse. "Every system is born with the germs of its death in it", Grove's character declares dialectically (312); this citation about "antithesis" from Grove (Greve) himself further confirms his dialectical bent. This latter may be interpreted as either a curse or a blessing. On the one hand, it leads to a closing off of dialogic

play of meanings. Dictated by the logic of dialectics, Grove has to make a choice, to find *one* solution only as what Jameson terms a “symbolic act” (1981). Consequently, ideological dialogism eventually disappears. On the other hand, Grove’s novelistic closure facilitates the understanding not only of his ultimate ideological position, but also of his quasi-Marxist, expressionist belief in the function of literature to effect “spiritual/social transformation” (Grace 1989, 22).

Grove adopts the dialectical view of history as a process of alienation—man’s products ousting man (as species) from the production line and rendering him useless¹⁵—to interpret the nature of modern man in capitalist society. In keeping with his socialist allegiance and class bias, Grove does make a distinction between capitalists and the workers by holding out some hope for his millers and by revealing, paradoxically, the utterly helpless state of his capitalists. Since Grove focuses on the capitalist Sam’s sense of alienation, he fails to select a representative of the “emergent” (in Raymond Williams’ sense) class—the proletariat—as an agency to fulfil the socialist mission. Grove’s solution cannot but be ambiguous. On the one hand, Sam’s socialist bent pulls him towards the side of the mill hands by delaying the automatic process. On the other, as the head of the Clark family and master of the mill (however ironically or nominally), he is driven by the motives for profits to use machines both to reduce the cost in hiring labour and to raise productivity. And yet, with the installation of machines and with the reduction of workers, culminating in the virtual no-man’s land of Arbala, Sam feels desolately isolated from humanity. He has helped to create the mill, but it has ousted his workers and become a force against him. Whereas the workers are alienated only from their own products—products as commodity or as machinery—but not from humanity, Sam, circumscribed by his capitalist status, feels doubly alienated, both from humanity and from the machine. Jameson illuminates not only the nature of the capitalist cult of technology and scientific management, but also the sense of alienation:

We live temporarily enthralled to what may be the most inverted reality yet—one in which the very subjective faculty of socialized labour is laid prostrate before the pure fetish anonymity and subjectiveness of “scientific management.” The intellectual tasks vested in . . . management are not seen as representing the worker’s mind, but as deriving directly or indirectly from science and scientific technology (1988:xxiv)

According to this view, whatever Sam’s mill produces should be re-

interpreted as the products of the workers' labour and creativity, since they put it into operation in the first place. Consequently, they should have legitimate share in the mill's subsequent huge profits to achieve disalienation. Though Grove's capitalists are spell-bound worshippers of technology, he does identify certain rebellious or carnivalesque qualities in his millers paralleling what the Hegelian Marx calls the "diggers" of the graveyard for capitalism from the inside. Grove's chief textual strategy lies in the staging of carousing, riots, industrial sabotages, arson, shooting, and strikes in the form of carnivalization as defined by Bakhtin below:

It proved remarkably productive as a means for capturing in art the developing relationships under capitalism, at a time when previous forms of life, moral principles and beliefs were being turned into 'rotten cords' and the previously concealed, ambivalent, and unfinalized nature of man and human *thought* was being nakedly exposed. Not only people and their actions but even *ideas* had broken out of their self-enclosed hierarchical nesting places. (1984, 166-67; Bakhtin's emphasis)

Grove's millers employ this subversive tactic almost exactly in Bakhtin's sense. Ignoring class boundaries, they ridicule and chase the upper-class Mrs. Sybil Carter right to the door of the Clark house; shattering sexual prohibitions, they leer and jeer at the half naked Clark ladies swimming in the huge pool; wilfully defying and indeed turning upside down bourgeois decorum and mores, they take to public drinking and exchanging wives right beneath the imposing mill. In this context of the carnival one can best appreciate why Grove unsparingly depicts scenes of workers actually destroying the machine or sabotaging the automatic system (169, 320-322). Of course, the most powerful acts of carnivalization take place in the political arena. When the workers realize that "trade unions were the solution" (134), they organize their unions and strikes effectively, thereby challenging and subverting the authority and hierarchy of capitalist *status quo* through extreme measures. Not only do they repeatedly threaten capitalists like Sam and Edmund with death, they succeed in doing away with Edmund's life. In Grove's semiotic system, Edmund's death is not merely biological; it symbolizes the collapse of the most rigid and monolithic empire of "the mechanical age" (Benjamin) and the bankruptcy of the imperialist discourse. It also signals the workers' disalienation, however ephemeral, by applying the principle of carnivalization.

In theme, imagery, and ideology, *Master* recalls the Expressionist film

Metropolis by Fritz Lang, Grove's German countryman.¹⁶ In the first place, both works concentrate on the theme of industrialization and alienation, and the images of the mill or machinery are "distorted, . . . violent images of reality" (Grace 1989, 21-22). They are so monstrous, inhuman, and gigantic that they shatter any sense of conventional realism. Ideologically, the novel and the film also seek to oppose the "social structures and assumptions of a complacent bourgeoisie" (21-22). The workers in Langholm and in the Metropolis organize themselves and challenge the Master's capitalist practices and discourse. In artistic vision, both appeal to the conscience of the capitalist (Grove's Sam or Lang's Frederson) against rampant materialism that denies the "godhead in mankind" (Grace 25). They also envision an apocalyptic future where reconciliation, mediated by women as "hearts" (i.e., Lang's Maria and Grove's Miss Dolittle) between the heartless capitalists and the suffering labourers can be achieved.¹⁷ Rather than adopting a Marxist violent class struggle as a strategy, the novel and film resort to romantic idealism or utopian socialism. The facile triumph of the workers over the machine and the capitalist, of "hands" over "mind"; the convenient deaths of Edmund, Hel, and Rotwang and the subsequent birth of a socialist community, preceded by the carnivalesque images of fire (in *Master*) and water (in *Metropolis*), suggest Bakhtinian ambivalence (1984, 126). The frantic but euphoric storming of the mill is more utopian and symbolic than realistic resolutions. In the final analysis, the two works go beyond Lukacsian realism, resist pessimism, and provide what Jameson terms "imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (1981, 79).

Both Grove's life and writing are indelibly marked by the combined influence of utopian socialist and Marxist ideologies/philosophies. His personal career as a school teacher, like Phil Braden's in *A Search of America*, served a communitarian purpose; his socio-political activities as a CCFer helped to alleviate the inequality and injustice of Canadian society. He emphasized not only the dignity of work and labour over capital and money, but also cherished an egalitarian ideal in resistance to capitalist society where poverty is writ large against the background of the rich few. As a translator, he disseminated Marx's and Lenin's theories of revolution, socialism, and imperialism.

As a writer and critic, Grove stresses the social and spiritual function of literature. Socialist ideology is used to challenge materialism, individualism,

and consumerism, the common tenets of a liberal society. By appropriating Marxist economic and political theories, he enlivens his own novelistic discourse and increases ideological dialogism. Grove identifies alienation as a modern malaise, and discerns a utopian socialistic cure.

However, Grove fails to believe that the working class under capitalism is capable of liberating itself from the margins. Instead, a change must be initiated by those with power at the center—the capitalists. Grove does not endorse class struggle, nor the gory, violent revolution championed by Marx or Lenin, nor the state of the proletariat. Rather, he advocates partial concession or compromise from both the capitalists and the workers, reconciliation of class conflicts, and amelioration of economic disparity. Grove does draw on a considerable degree of ideological dialogism through *Master*, but his own utopian socialist world view, tempered by the Hegelian-Marxist historical-philosophical vision, prevails at the end: dialectics he opts for, dialogism he ill affords. A unified, finalized, and hence monologized rather than open-ended, dialogical vision results. Grove ultimately negates the Marxist socialist vision, but his utopian socialism is placed in a dialogic relation with it. Since *Consider her Ways* (1947) continues the same critical thrust against capitalism,¹⁸ he would have probably agreed with Terry Eagleton's witty comment—"the only reason for being a [socialist] is to get to the point where you can stop being one" (1990, 7).

NOTES

- 1 A ready example would be D.O. Spettigue (1992). See P. Hjartarson (1986) and H. Dahlie's *Varieties of Exile* on two Groves, or one Grove, another Greve, 77-86.
- 2 See, for example, Irene Gammel (1992); see also *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature* (1986) edited by John Moss.
- 3 This perspective is to be interpreted as arising mainly from the discourses of 20th-century (neo-)Marxists—L. Althusser, M. Foucault, M. Bakhtin, T. Eagleton, R. Williams, F. Jameson, G. Spivak, J. Kristeva, L. McDonald, R. Mathews, and J. Steele.
- 4 Stobie's 1973 work does comment on Grove, the CCF, and J.S. Woodsworth. But she fails to relate socialist ideas to Grove's literary works; see 159-60 and 182-3 on the CCF; and 121 and 174 on Woodsworth. I wish to thank Fred Cogswell for sharing his knowledge about Grove and Woodsworth.
- 5 One could not hope to have a better title than *A Stranger to My Time*, edited by P. Hjartarson, whose "Preface" reveals Elsa Greve's part in her husband's "suicide." See also J.J. Healy (1981) and Blodgett (1982) for Grove's strategies.
- 6 D. Pacey suggests two books of the early 1930 vintage, G.D.H. Cole's *What Marx Really*

Meant (1934) and S. Hook's *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation* (1933); I have checked both to examine key concepts and images and shown some of the parallels in Grove's work.

- 7 I borrow this emphatic phrase from the title of W.H. New's "Editorial" to *Canadian Literature* (No. 135, 1992); it coincides nicely with Bakhtin's focus in "The Idea in Dostoevsky," *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 78-100.
- 8 See J. Moss (1978 9-10); see McDonald (1984; 1987) and Steele (1978) respectively on the Canadian critical tendency to psychologize and mythologize; see also Bakhtin's discourse on social contradiction and personalities in relation to personal psychology (1984, 36-37).
- 9 See Sherrill Grace on Grove's monologic tendency (1987, 123) and on possible application of Bakhtin's dialogism to a study of vying ideologies (123, 133). See also Cavell on the ideological dimensions of Bakhtin's concepts (207).
- 10 W.H. New perceptively points out Grove's various strategies of masks and disguises that make for a "double vision" (462) in *A Search for America*; for further information, see his "Afterword" to the 1991 edition.
- 11 For the concepts of (dis)alienation and of Marx's socialism described as "scientific" (as distinguished from Utopian, Fabian, or Christian socialism), see *The Communist Manifesto*. See also "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" by Friedrich Engels in Feuer (1959).
- 12 See H. Garner (25); see also D. Livesay on middle-class writers' avoidance of working class concerns with making a living, 175.
- 13 See M. Stobie's "Grove and the Ants" on Grove's methods of working (1986).
- 14 Marx stresses the importance of productive force, that is, in today's parlance, the use of technology. The quotation in the epigraph highlights a modern tool—the mill. See "The Growth of Capitalism" in Cole's *What Marx Really Meant*, 46-69.
- 15 See "Alienation as a Theory of History" in P. Singer (1980), 29-34; "How Men Make History" in Chapter VIII in Cole; and Chapter XI, "The Materialistic Concept of History" in Hook.
- 16 Grace encapsulates the dialogic elements of Expressionist works in Figure 3 (1989, 42); Grove's *Master* shares some of these features, but does not end dialogically. Grace does not discuss Grove in relation to Lang, but I submit that many of her comments on Lang are also relevant to Grove.
- 17 A socialist-feminist study is yet to be conducted on Grove's female characters, who are marginalized, fragmented, and exploited by capitalist patriarchy.
- 18 Grove's criticism of capitalism continues in this allegorical novel. The city of New York is criticized by the Head Ant for its gross materialism and selfishness.

WORKS CITED

- Avakumovic, I. *Socialism in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- . *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: Minnesota P, 1984.
- Blodgett, E.D. "Alias Grove: Variations in Disguise." *Configuration: Essays on the Canadian Literatures*. Downsview, Ont.: ECW, 1982. 112-153.
- Cavell, Richard. "Bakhtin Reads De Mille: Canadian Literature, Post-Modernism, and the Theory of Dialogism." *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*. Ed. John Moss. Ottawa: U. of Ottawa P, 1987. 205-211.
- Cole, G.D.H. *What Marx Really Meant*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934.
- Dahlie, Hallvard. *Varieties of Exile: the Canadian Experience*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1986.
- Eagleton, Terry. *The Significance of Theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Modern Century*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1967.
- Gammel, Irene. "'I'll Be My Own Master': Domestic Conflicts and Discursive Resistance in *Mauernmeister Ihles Haus* and *Our Daily Bread*." *Canadian Literature*. No. 135 (Winter 1992). 15-31.
- Garner, Hugh. "An Interview with Hugh Garner." *The Tamarack Review*, No. 52 (1969). 19-34.
- Grace, Sherrill. "Listen to the Voice": Dialogism and the Canadian Novel." *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*. Ed. John Moss. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1987. 117-136.
- . *Regression and Apocalypse: Studies in North American Literary Expressionism*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989.
- Grove, F.P. *Consider Her Ways*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. [1947] 1977.
- . *In Search of Myself*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1946.
- . *It Needs to be Said*. Ottawa: Tecumseh, [1929] 1982.
- . *The Master of the Mill*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., [1944] 1969.
- . *A Search for America*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., [1924] 1971.
- . trans. *The Legacy of Sun Yatsun: A History of the Chinese Revolution*. Gustav Amann. New York: Louis Carrier & Co., 1929.
- . *The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove*. Ed. D. Pacey. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1976.
- . "A Writer's Classification of Writers and Their Work." *A Stranger to My Time*. ed. Paul Hjartarson. Edmonton: NeWest, 1986. 199-210.
- Hjartarson, Paul. ed. "Preface." *A Stranger to My Time: Essays by and about Frederick Philip Grove*. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986. iv-xii.
- Hook, Sidney. *Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx: A Revolutionary Interpretation*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933.
- Jameson, Fredric. *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986*. vol. 1. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988.
- . *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981.
- Livesay, Dorothy. *Right Hand Left Hand*. Erin, Ont.: PressPorcepic Ltd., 1977.
- Marx, Karl. "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy." "Manifesto of the Communist Party." "The German Ideology." *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on*

- Politics and Philosophy*. Ed. Lewis S. Feuer. Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1959.
- Mathews, Robin. "F.P. Grove: An Important Version of *The Master of the Mill* Discovered." *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Vol. 7. No. 2 (1982). 241-257.
- McDonald, Larry. "Psychologism and the Philosophy of Progress." *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Vol. 9, No. [2] (1984). 121-143.
- . "The Politics of Influence: Birney, Scott, Livesay and the Influence of Politics." *The Dalhousie Review*. Vol. 67. No. 4 (Winter, 1987-88). 425-435.
- McMullin, Stanley. "Evolution Versus Revolution: Grove's Perception of History." *The Grove Symposium*. ed. John Nause. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1974. 77-88.
- Monkman, L. and D. Daymond. eds. *Canadian Novelists and the Novel*. Ottawa: Borealis, 1981.
- Moss, John. ed. "Introduction." *Here and Now*. Toronto: NC Press, 1978. 7-15.
- . ed. *Future Indicative: Theory and Canadian Literature*. Ottawa: U Ottawa P, 1987.
- New, W.H. "Editorial: The Very Idea." *Canadian Literature*. No. 135 (Winter, 1992). 2-11.
- . "Afterword." F.P. Grove. *A Search for America*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.
- Pacey, Desmond. *Frederick Philip Grove*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1945.
- Singer, Peter. *Marx*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1980.
- Spettigue, Douglas O. "Fanny Essler and the Master." *A Stranger to My Time: Essays by and about Frederick Philip Grove*. Ed. Paul Hjartarson. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986. 47-64.
- . *FPG: The European Years*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1973.
- . "Felix, Elsa, Andre Gide and Others: Some Unpublished Letters of F.P. Grove." *Canadian Literature*, No. 134 (Autumn 1992). 9-39.
- . "Frederick Philip Grove." *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Oxford, 1983. 324-327.
- Steele, James A. "The Literary Criticism of Margaret Atwood." *In Our Own House: Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature*. Ed. Paul Cappon. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1978. 73-81.
- Stobie, Margaret R. "Grove and the Ants." *A Stranger to My Time: Essays by and about Frederick Philip Grove*. Ed. Paul Hjartarson. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1986. 227-242.
- . *Frederick Philip Grove*. New York: Twayne, 1973.
- Sutherland, R. *Frederick Philip Grove*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1969.
- . "What Was Frederick Philip Grove?" *The Grove Symposium*. ed. John Nause. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1974. 1-11.
- Voloshinov, V.N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Trans. I. Matejka and I.R. Titinik. New York: Seminar P, 1973.
- Williams, Raymond. "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory." *Debating Texts*. ed. Rick Rylance. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987. 204-216.
- Woodwards, K.A. "Towards a Marxist Analysis of Grove: Maurermeister Ihles Haus and The Master of the Mill." M.A. Thesis. Dept. of Comparative Literature, U of Alberta, 1981.

All Hallows, 1972

for E. P.

An angel came to Elsinore.

My life
is neither proven nor disproven by
your death.

I stole those images of night
wind and the heaved shadow
fearfully . . . and then I tried
to give them back, but could not recognize
object for subject, or whatever changed
to th' evering slyly slips away.

In
primavera exposes that "acorn
of unspeaking light": a piece or two
may further yet our several
imaginings, and all that meets the eye
said into again this most
unlikely place they've dapperly become.

*Ezra Pound died on 1 November 1972. The phrase "acorn of light" is
from a draft of Canto CXVI.*

Best (Woman) Mind

*Incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind
leaping toward poles of Canada and Paterson....*

*I saw the best [male] minds of my generation destroyed by madness....
—Allen Ginsberg, HOWL*

in the ordinary coffee lounge, glass encased
and looking out onto ancient trees
now topped heavily in green, he sat
listening to the best mind of the generation;

a woman—a poet—you guessed right,
nervous, brilliant, and hardly seeking to be cool:
“even here, in my own country, i’m never really at home,
feel like a stranger at all times;
my friends don’t understand,” she said simply
between puffs of cigarette smoke, hands shaking
but searching eyes clear and unreservedly frank.

elsewhere, that summer afternoon in new england
the grizzled bard mellowly howled
to thin-haired sabbaticants,
to bright-faced tenure hopefuls
—like her, like the mildly protesting ginsberg,
all america-born.

he was glad to have skipped the reading,
to have been allowed the incomparable
intimacy of blind streets
between the poles of canada and boston;
and having no answer, he wondered
as the world at large would—say, as a bengali
or a canadian must (and he was both,
thus doubly related and doubly named)—
how one can be anything but a stranger
in a nameless homeland borrowing a metonymic label
from the near or far contiguity
of yukon, belize and argentina;
and what can one say any way

to one hemmed-in within a self-gazing horizon
where birney and lamming are equally voiceless,
waddington or kamala das unheard of?

no matter how hard he tried, he wouldn't know
what it might mean, in a united this of that,
to be alone and secretly passionate, a woman
with a leaping mind full of shuddering poems,
and be lashed to a land hooped by purchases,
put together somehow by bankers
movie ladies and soda-pop makers.

*when some weeks later
he found himself in paterson,
williams's fluid passaic a mere trickle
between grim-jawed factories
and a muscular industrial museum,
and watched horrified a single canada goose
mateless in the filthy pool below,
he mailed a postcard
to the lovely woman with a mind all her own.*

Between *The Intervals* Stuart Mackinnon's Dialectics

In his long poem *The Intervals*, Stuart Mackinnon defines the presence of time, or the absence of time, through the denotations and connotations of the “interval.” The tension between the “interval” as a space of time or place intervening between two points, and time or place measured only as the two points themselves which define the intermittent space of the “interval,” is the tension that creates a compelling dialectic in *The Intervals*. The “interval,” therefore, is defined by its essential “betweenness,” and its meaning is derived from both temporal and spatial terms. Underlying MacKinnon’s dialectic is the philosophy of Heraklitos: “Things taken together are whole and not whole, something which is being brought together and brought apart, which is in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity, and out of a unity all things” (frag. 10; ctd. in *The Presocratic Philosophers* 191). In Heraklitean philosophy, the appositional dialectic constitutes cycles of time (e.g., day/night, winter/summer); MacKinnon, however, recognizes that time, like history, is not wholly cyclical, yet it paradoxically generates itself out of a cyclical dialectic and moves forward. In the “Statements by the Poets” collected at the end of Ondaatje’s *The Long Poem Anthology*, MacKinnon illustrates this paradoxical structure of time as the underlying structure of *The Intervals*:

I wished to avoid the temporal narrative of simple cause-effect logic, so I tried to write discrete pieces that would go together as a longer work, trailing bits of themselves into each other and harking back, not by repeating actual lines as in a chorus, but serially, as in visual puns. Hark back not like going back to an earlier time, but as if history were something carried forward, or cyclic with a twist in the end which is the spiral forward.¹

For MacKinnon the dialectic of time is warped: the form of *The Intervals* cannot sustain narrative continuity through traditional lyric devices such as the chorus or the refrain (since this technique could effectually be termed cyclical), nor can a linear narrative convey the discontinuous structure (that is, a serial poem divided into “intervals”) of his long poem. *The Intervals* is defined *in part* by what Dorothy Livesay calls the “documentary” tradition in her essay, “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre”: “a conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet” (267). Livesay’s idea of the dialectic process in the long poem is accompanied by her recognition of the essential heterogeneity in the long poem: “[T]he Canadian longer poem is not truly narrative at all—and certainly not historical epic. It is, rather, a *documentary* poem, based on topical data but held together by descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements” (269). As a correlation of Livesay’s concept of the dialectical process and aggregative form of the long poem, Smaro Kamboureli, in *On the Edge of Genre*, offers her own reading of the contemporary Canadian long poem.² “[T]he long poem,” she writes, “although not necessarily narrative in form, has the ability to absorb into its large structure... disparate elements, thus creating a textual process of ‘betweenness’” (77). As I have noted above, this “betweenness” is what defines the interval; *The Intervals* encompasses a world of (inter-)textuality; it comments on the very process by which MacKinnon gives the “interval” form and meaning as the substance of his long poem; it is, in short, his literary dialectic “with a twist in the end which is the spiral forward.” *The Intervals* exist in the (inter)textual space, in the interval between the objective space of previously documented sources (i.e., the sources that comprise part of MacKinnon’s text) and the subjective space of the poet’s mind. For MacKinnon, *The Intervals* spins in a vortex, spiralling through, or rather between, the points in time and space that shape his long poem.³

The text of *The Intervals* opens not with MacKinnon’s own definition/interpretation of the “interval,” but rather with a pre-script taken from Paul Valéry’s *Poems in the Rough*:

We must say that these exist
since here are the names for them,
and we are aware of the intervals
between things, and the silences
between sounds. (46)

In the context Mackinnon places this quotation from Valery, it operates as a commentary on the title of his long poem which appears on the title page. Thus *The Intervals* must exist since Mackinnon has already named them in his title; it follows that *The Intervals* are indeed something “between things,” as is the passage from Valery: it exists between the title page and MacKinnon’s own text. Valery himself gives a partial definition of the “interval”: first, in terms of space (giving voice to Mackinnon’s placement of Valery’s text within his own poem), and second, in terms of the sound (articulating the way in which a serial poem such as MacKinnon’s is read as a continuous long poem, yet divided into sections and/or “intervals”). Valery’s definition of “the intervals,” with its implied coalescence of space and sound, describes the very act of MacKinnon’s poetic act, for *The Intervals* exist in the (inter-)textual space of the poem, but they also have a voice, they resonate—in a space of time—with the sounds of the persona’s voice as it emerges from the subjective space of the poet’s mind.

The interval is presented in the pre-script as something which evades definition; in the “Notebooks” that are appendices to *Poems In the Rough*, from which MacKinnon draws his quotation, Valery comments that the interval “is a thing that does not exist... What is a void?—who could paint a beautiful lacuna, a nothing, an absence?... There is quite certainly such a void that this terrible name fits it only as an empty analogy, since it presupposes a certain presence and a thought...” (301). It seems that MacKinnon has accepted the challenge that Valery puts forward in 1943; he may not paint the “interval,” but he may sculpt the intervals as spaces, as sounds in his long poem. The latter half of the passage I have cited from the notebooks also prompts MacKinnon’s enterprise as a “documentary” poet, for *The Intervals* “pre-supposes a certain presence” of Valery’s *Poems in the Rough*. As I have noted, the passage is not taken from the *Poems in the Rough*, *per se*, but from the “Notebooks”; Valery’s text then is a post-script, a text which exists in the marginal space of Valery’s collection of prose-poems. As a pre-script, MacKinnon too places Valery’s text in the margins of his long poem. The form of Valery’s text has also been altered by MacKinnon, for the *Poems in the Rough* are prose-poems, and MacKinnon has cast their type as *vers-libre*. The overall displacement (in terms of form) of Valery’s text, therefore, creates the possibility of “betweenness” in MacKinnon’s long poem, placing it in the interstices of (inter)textuality. That is to say *The Intervals* exist in the timeless space of the “void,” the “lacuna” of Valery’s

idea of the “intervals.” *The Intervals* are “all the existence one could wish, including non-existence itself, in the form, say, of an idea” (*Poems in the Rough*, 301).

The first “interval” (i.e., the first section of MacKinnon’s text) perpetuates the theme of “betweenness” as the persona enters a physical interval. The persona comes into the interval “after ten years of travel” (47), which suggests the persona, as a traveller, is always between places, and further, that the persona, like Odysseus who returns home “after ten years of travel,” alludes to the poetic tradition of *nostos*, or the long poem of the hero’s return home. *The Intervals*, however, is not *within* the *nostos* tradition, but rather *outside* the tradition: it is placed by MacKinnon in the time “after” the persona’s voyage. In *The Intervals*, then, the persona (dis-)locates himself in a specific “interval,” one which is defined by both time and place:

Another time and place I’m new to
this city this narrow park
sixty feet wide of grass and cement
making a long corridor
between the hospital and prison (47)

In this instance “time” and “place” are analogous “intervals” in which the persona finds himself. As “place,” the “interval” refers, etymologically, to its Latin root: “*intervallum*, orig. ‘space between palisades or ramparts’” (*OED*, vol. 8, p. 1). The physical “interval,” therefore, if its etymological root is divided into its constitutive parts (i.e., *inter*, “between” and *vallum*, “an earthen rampart”), is a compound word which implies not only the space between things, but also the things themselves, the physical edges which shape the intermittent space of the “interval.” These endpoints, the hospital and the prison, are at once the concrete parameters of the “interval,” as well as the thematic points of reference in *The Intervals*.

The archaic denotation of “interval” as a geographical phenomena is later evidenced by the persona’s uncovering of some local history about the park itself: “This park was built on old fortifications/ that stick out under water like drowned cannon” (48). “Cannon” obviously denotes the artillery of a garrison; however, “cannon” connotes one of MacKinnon’s “visual puns” (*Endnotes* 314), or a homonym: as a “canon” or body of literature—perhaps that of the ancient texts, the “old fortifications” of history, that the persona will explore throughout the body of his own text. The persona/poet becomes a literary archaeologist; he not only submerges himself in the literary

“canon” represented in *The Intervals* itself, but also imagines himself in the original topography of the park as a sunken fortification. Thus the visual pun merges the topographical and literary “interval.”

While the persona locates himself in a physical “interval,” MacKinnon expands this image of the poet-as-archaeologist so as to encompass a self-reflexive image of the poet-as-cartographer viewing *The Intervals* on the page as a map, though in conjunction with a physiological metaphor: “On a map the lakes resemble/ an empty womb” (47). This “map” of *The Intervals* fuses the the topographical “interval” (an external space) and the bodily “interval” (an internal space), or the space of time that one spends in the womb (which is, significantly, an unmeasured portion of one’s life-span). The persona/poet, then, enters into the internal space of an “interval”; he is drawn into the space of the poem; he is borne into the “empty womb” surrounded by amniotic fluid and living in the space of his own metaphor:

how did I get here
 living as usual
 anywhere but in the present
 treading air in an interval
 a period of time between events
 also intervalle (48)

At this point the persona explicitly offers his own definition of the “interval”: “a period of time between events.” This definition reads like a dictionary entry; it is, in fact, *verbatim* the first entry given under “interval” in the *OED*. MacKinnon presents his definition in these formal terms so as to clarify the various denotations of “interval.” As in a dictionary entry, MacKinnon offers a variation on “interval,” that is “intervale,” which is a collateral form based on popular etymology (see *OED*, vol. 8, p. 1).

“Intervale” is popularly associated with the geographical “interval”; in *The Intervals*, however, “intervale” is the transfiguration of “interval” in a physical locus, though executed in the poem as a graphological word-shift: “harking back, not by repeating actual lines as in a chorus, but serially, as in visual puns” (*endnotes* 314).

Linguistic play in *The Intervals* is not only limited to the valences of “interval(e),” but includes topography as a whole in an attempt to find what is an “interval(e)” and what is not. MacKinnon’s quotation from Valery, “We must say that they [the intervals] exist / since here are the names for them” (47), is a recognition of the instability of language; even though the

word “interval” exists, the word itself is changeable, and its meanings indeterminate.

Similarly, as in “documentary” poetry, MacKinnon’s evocation of texts, and citation of texts procures a dialectic, as Livesay writes, between the objective and the subjective; yet this dialectic between the “original” text and the “documentary” text is not necessarily a smooth process. For instance, in the eighth “interval,” the inaccuracy of the “documentary” poet’s imagination is indicated by the break-down in line length:

in the flat places
they build mounds
it’s hard to tell
a drumlin
from a mound
all the earth
moved and dumped
sometime or other (60)

In the way MacKinnon writes of the landscape in the first “interval,” “as if a stare could make it mean” (47), the persona here states that his “stare” cannot give the landscape a precise definition, nor impose meaning upon it. The persona’s gaze cannot read or interpret the landscape as one can a map, or a text. Although MacKinnon apparently explores the “intervale” in this passage, the variations of land formations produce uncertainty in the persona’s mind as to the categorization of geological structures. The ambivalence whether the topography is glacially formed—as in the case of a “drumlin,” “a long narrow hill often separating two parallel valleys” (*OED*, vol. 4, 1083)—or whether human interaction has produced the landscape—as in the case of a “mound.” The distinction is in itself unimportant, except that the persona’s recognition of the array of geological structures, as well as the array of semantic variants in apparent synonyms—and the difficulty of segregating them—leads into the text of W. O. Raymond’s *History of the River St. John*.

The shift in locus, from “a public park in Kingston, by the lakeshore, between the Hospital and the Kingston Penitentiary” (*Endnotes* 314) to the place and time of Raymond’s text, marks the gap between the document and the documentary text. As Kamboureli writes, “These gaps between the poems [in a serial structure], these absences, suggest the erasure of the binary complexity that threatens to lock the poet between the landscape he visits and the mindscape of his language” (*On the Edge of Genre* 123-4). So

the introduction of Raymond's *History* provides a break in MacKinnon's dialectic, a twist, which carries history forward into the inter-textual space of *The Intervals*.

MacKinnon introduces the text as an exploration of an early 20th century historical text, as well as a archaeological exploration:

Besides mounds, there are walls and special sites, like this Malicet town on an intervalle of the St. John river, as W. O. Raymond described it in 1905:

...the intervals were admirably adapted to the growth of Indian corn—which seems to have been raised there from time immemorial. ⁴ (61)

This opening passage captures the timelessness of natural regeneration. However, in regard to the human presence in this “intervale,” Raymond comments on the ability of humanity to erase history, to obscure their own traces of settlement:

The spot is an exceedingly interesting one, but, unfortunately for the investigator, the soil has been so well cultivated by the hands of thrifty farmers that little remains to indicate the outlines of the old fortifications. (61)

The Indian settlement marks a space in time, an “interval” that has all but vanished from the geographical “interval.” At once one recalls the resemblance of these “old fortifications” with the submerged “old fortifications/ that stick out under water” (48) in the first “interval.” Interval(e) as place, then, provides a textual locus, linking the historical remnants of intervals at the site of the St. John River and the interval(e) in which the persona locates himself. As the “documentary” persona, one might say that he occupies both the historical text and his own text in simultaneity. Furthermore, the work of Raymond, as an archaeologist, is aligned with the work of the poet; both uncover and record “intervals” of place and time. As Kamboureli recognizes, “[r]ecording geography, a scriptive but *polyvalent* act, is a primary component of the long poem” (*On the Edge of Genre* 123; italics mine). The archaeologist, however, in contrast to the indeterminacies of the poet's work, provides specific measurement, literally mapping the topography of the “intervals”:

The site of this ancient Maliseet town is a fine plateau extending back from the river about fifty rods, then descending to a lower interval, twenty rods wide, and again rising quite abruptly sixty or seventy feet to the upland. (61)

Raymond's text provides what the poet's gaze cannot; the map of *The Intervals* both includes Raymond's textual map and integrates it into its own textual topography. The rectilinear type-setting of Raymond's prose

within the ragged lines of MacKinnon's poem sets the text apart as a map, a diagram (there is one in the original). It is as if MacKinnon's linear typography represents the remnants of an "interval"—that is, the text as an archaeological site—but being careful not to disturb its original form.

MacKinnon quotes further from Raymond, elucidating the relationship between poet and archaeologist/cartographer by way of a description of the burial ground on the "interval":

The only place where the old breast-work is visible is along the south and east sides of the burial ground, where it is about two feet high. The burial ground has never been disturbed with the plough, the owners of the property having shown a proper regard for the spot as the resting place of the dead. It is, however, so thickly overgrown with hawthorne as to be a perfect jungle difficult to penetrate. Many holes have been dug there by relic hunters and seekers of buried treasure. (61)

MacKinnon's integration of Raymond's document in *The Intervals* is in itself a piece of literary archaeology since the text dates from 1905. However, MacKinnon's work is far more than the random digging of "relic hunters and seekers of buried treasure." Typography and topography are mirrored in MacKinnon's textual representation of an "interval." *The Intervals*, as a "documentary" poem, does not follow a linear structure—like the furrow of the farmer's plough, or a historian's words—for the "interval," and *The Intervals* itself, generate a textual nexus of referentiality like tangled hawthorn bushes.

The graphological interplay between "interval" and "intervale," and the idea of MacKinnon's text as textual representations of intervals is developed in MacKinnon's first typographical variation on the page as he arranges the connotations of "interval" in a column, perhaps even a "long corridor" (47), for the eye to travel along:

So many names for this state
so many meanings

interval
interregnum
hiatus
winter of the heart
halcyon days
lacuna

they all express this gap I'm sitting in (48)

Here MacKinnon expresses the valences of meaning, the nexus of connotations and/or synonyms, connected to the word "interval." Heading the column

of words is the textual/semantic origin, the word “interval” itself; the column is contained within the frame of a visual “interval” on the page, and so the frame places the words in a specific context. At the head of the frame, MacKinnon plays upon the word “state”: (1) as a personal “state of affairs,” and (2) as a geographical term in which an area of land is demarcated by borders on a map (which recalls the “map” earlier in “interval”¹). In this second sense the “state” is analogous to the topographical “interval” (and *intervallum*), which is defined as a physical space between two points of land. The two connotations of “state,” however, equally shade the “meanings” of the column of words. Also, the bottom of the frame expresses the essential paradox of the “interval”: that it is at once a “gap,” an absence, and yet it exists as a physical, inhabitable place (as in the second connotation of “state” and its relationship to the topographical “interval”). Within these textual/semantic parameters, the “interval” is also defined by the interconnections between “so many meanings”: (1) “interregnum,” “[t]he *interval* between the close of a king’s reign and the accession of his successor; any period during which a *state* is left without a ruler...” (*OED*, vol. 7, p. 1134; italics mine); (2) “hiatus,” “[a] *gap* or interruption of continuity in a chronological or other series; a *lacuna* which destroys the completeness of a sentence, account, writing, etc.” (*OED*, vol. 7, p. 203; italics mine); (3) “winter of the heart,” a metaphorical phrase which, like the “interval” itself, evades specific definition and can only be defined by an inadequate paraphrase; its anomalous presence among such a list of “definable” terms is therefore significant; (4) “halcyon days,” “is associated in Greek myth with the winter solstice. There were fourteen ‘halcyon days’ in every year, seven of which fell before the winter solstice, seven after: peaceful days when the hen-halcyon built a floating nest and hatched out her young” (Graves, *The White Goddess*, 186-7); (5) “lacuna,” “[i]n a manuscript, an inscription, the text of an author: a *hiatus*, blank, missing portion” (*OED*, vol. 8, p. 577; italics mine). Thus, the polyvalence of meaning, or rather the “betweenness” of meaning that manifests itself in the word “interval” informs the essential indeterminacy and evasiveness of the “interval” that had pre-occupied Valery, and so MacKinnon.

While the denotations of the words show an obvious interrelationship (as indicated by my emphases), and the column of words are associated by shades of meaning relative to the frame of this textual “interval,” there is a subtext to this arrangement of words. As noted above, the

“interval” is the textual origin. “Interregnum” is a political application of an “interval” (also relative to “the names for this state”); but this kind of “interval” is particularly associated with political unrest, which anticipates the events of the Kingston Penitentiary Riot in the later sections of the poem. “Hiatus” is both a temporal and spatial (textual) usage of the “interval,” which is particularly associated, in terms of textual space and time, with the form of MacKinnon’s long poem as a discontinuous serial poem. “Lacuna,” too, reflects upon the act of writing itself, but writing which precludes the possibility of its own “non-existence” (*Poems in the Rough*, 301). Furthermore, the etymology of “lacuna,” like “interval,” originates in topographical terms: that is, “[L]atin *lacuna* a hole, pit, F[rench] *lacus*, lake” (*OED*, vol. 8 p. 577). Again, the idea of *The Intervals* as a map is intimated by the “lacuna” as a lake on a map—just as they are described earlier in “interval” 1—and thus derived from both the etymological origin of “lacuna,” as well as the geography of the “intervale” itself, for it is located at the edge of a lake.

“Halcyon days” is an allusive phrase which extends its mythological origins into the influential texts of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* and Charles Olson’s “The Kingfishers.” The ambiguous phrase “winter of the heart” is therefore—by its juxtaposition with “halcyon days”—layered with inter-textual references to Eliot’s and Olson’s use of the halcyon/ kingfisher myth. If the phrase “winter of the heart” is divided into its constituent parts, “winter” might be seen in relation to Eliot’s lines at the beginning of *Little Gidding*: “Midwinterspring is its own season. . . / Suspended in time between pole and tropic” (1, 3). MacKinnon’s “winter of the heart” also echoes Eliot’s phrase, “In windless cold that is the heart’s heat” (*Little Gidding*, 6). “Midwinterspring,” in Eliot’s terms, is a correlative to MacKinnon’s “halcyon days,” as they both relate time as it is “suspended” at the seasonal instances of winter solstice and spring equinox. Time in *The Intervals*, therefore, is “suspended” in a continuum of “betweenness.” But “time” is not measured here by a calendar; it is measured by the “heart”; it is a psychosomatic progress of time—in other words, time which is not chronological or linear, but time which is measured in a subjective space. As MacKinnon writes in the “Statements by the Poets”: “The *place* worked its way into my consciousness until it became the central metaphor of the interval, which could expand and contract, taking moods, incidents, people into its structure” (314; italics mine). The subjective space of the poet’s

mind, as well as the persona's physical presence, becomes enveloped in the metaphor of the "interval," and so both become enfolded in the textual space of *The Intervals* itself.

As an intertextual link to Eliot's halcyon lore, MacKinnon's also alludes to Olson's "The Kingfishers," reflecting upon the compositional process of the long poem, and the textual space and time which the long poem shares and occupies, as Olson himself articulates:

The message is
a discrete or continuous sequence of measurable events distributed in time

is the birth of air, is
the birth of water, is
a state between
the origin and
the end, between
birth and the beginning of
another fetid nest
(*"The Kingfishers"* 4. 1)

The echoes of Eliot's *Little Gidding* ("This is the death of air . . . This is the death of water . . .") in Olson's "The Kingfishers," and, in turn, the resonances of Eliot and Olson in *The Intervals*, represent the intertextual relationship between "the origin" (*Four Quartets* and "The Kingfishers") and "the end" (*The Intervals*). Yet the "state between/ the origin and/ the end" recalls my previous statement that the word "interval" is the textual/semantic "origin" of the column of connotations of the "interval"; it follows that the final word in the column, "lacuna," is, textually, the "end," or (as I have defined "lacuna" above), the absence of text. The column, then, exists in the textual space between the "interval" and the "lacuna," between presence and absence. These "states" or "meanings" of the "interval" are therefore between intervals themselves; they all express a space between things, spaces (in a Heraklitean sense) through which "all things flow" (qtd. in *De Rerum Natura* 238). MacKinnon's column is, to use Olson's words, "a discrete or continuous sequence"; the words themselves are not ordered in a hierarchy, but interactive in a dynamic of upward and downward flow. To quote the fragment Eliot extracts from Heraklitos for his epigram to *Burnt Norton*: "The path up and down is one and the same" (frag. 60).

The intellectual approach (in the first "interval") towards defining what an "interval" represents, is countered by an anti-intellectual approach in the second "interval," as the persona falls into an "interval/ of comatose seclu-

sion" (50). He enters a state of what could be called "winter of the heart" at the moment he encounters a deaf-mute in the "intervale":

I thought of Ruth
who took us into
times the memory rejects
the long dull waiting
those minds that society rejects
children idiots fools
who have no memory (51)

At this point the persona enters into an mnemonic dialectic, in that the erudite poet who can intersperse so many connotations of the "interval" is confronted by his fear of mental incapacity: a fear of being forgotten in an "interval" of social procrastination, caught (or stereotyped) in a space of time. Emphasized by the parallel structures, the dialectic occurs between the storyteller (Ruth) who takes us "into times the memory rejects," and her antithesis, the mental invalid who "society rejects" and "who [has] no memory." The poet/persona lies in the area between the two poles of the mnemonic dialectic. In this state he is reduced to a level of primal fear that he might never go beyond this "interval" of "times the memory rejects."

In the third "interval," the persona is again confronted by his fear of mnemonic/ intellectual loss as he imagines himself in the same state as the deaf/mute he had encountered earlier:

I began to put together
times before I'd had this fear...
I was looking at a self portrait
Sally's optical colour flashes
went into a trance
and dreamed I was a simpleton (52)

The mental process of assembling "times before" reflects the process of poetic composition; in particular, the process resembles a serial structure, as in *The Intervals*. The persona, however, recalls times before his "interval" of fear (not unlike the process of the documentary poet). The persona is drawn into the "self portrait" he holds in his hands—just as in the first "interval" the persona is drawn into the map. As a self-reflexive gesture, then, the photographic "self-portrait" mirrors *The Intervals* itself.

For the most part, the "self-portrait" in the third "interval" portrays a static image, but not wholly, for the "optical colour flashes" suggest movement within the frame of the photograph. Later in the poem (interval 17),

the photographic “interval” reoccurs as MacKinnon evokes the specific context of serial photography:

broken into frames between trunks
hand held for split second after second
all the motions of the runner
strung out like Muybridge for viewing (68)

MacKinnon’s evocation of Eadweard Muybridge, whose photographic studies of human anatomy in motion would involve taking “a succession of automatic exposures at intervals of time” (*Animals In Motion* 14).

MacKinnon, however, constructs his analogy to Muybridge out of the topography of the “intervale,” an act which absorbs the persona into his own photographic metaphor. The Muybridge photographs capture the idea of motion within a framed space, the state between the kinetic and the static—that which is the essence of the “interval.” As the persona states in the thirteenth “interval”: “Anything to break the pose” (64).

Beyond the photographic metaphor, the persona’s interval of fear is re-evoked textually as part of an intellectual dialectic. In the seventh “interval,” MacKinnon introduces a philosophical inquiry from Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura*, with what appears to be a child’s question: “Where do good thoughts come from/ where do bad thoughts come from/ out of mommy’s tummy?” (57). The question recalls the persona’s entrance into the metaphorical womb (a physiological interval, perhaps as long as the period of gestation) in the first “interval.” More important, the question counterpoints the intellectual inquiry posited by Lucretius’ text:

As Lucretius in *The Nature of Things*
‘What thing is it which meets us
and frightens our mind when we
are awake and under the influence
of disease, and when we are buried
in sleep’ (57)

MacKinnon has omitted the lines that follow this passage, which he has quoted from a translation of *De Rerum Natura*: “The replicas of those who have left the light/ Haunt us and startle us horribly in dreams” (4. 38-9; trans., Rolfe Humphries). Lucretius’ images of the dead are born from the imagination; these figures of the dead are, in MacKinnon’s translation,⁵ “things” which are neither alive nor dead, for they are undefinable, existing as non-entities in an interval state of being, in the void of an “interval” of

sleep or a fevered dream. Sleep or disease, then, is a medial state between a waking or healthy life and death. Furthermore, MacKinnon adopts Lucretius' philosophy that we see the world through a child's eyes: "...just as children, fearing everything, /Tremble in darkness, we, in the full light,/Fear things that really are not one bit more awful/ Than what poor babies shudder at in darkness" (*De Rerum Natura* 6. 37-40). MacKinnon's persona, aligned with "children idiots fools" (51), is thus the same as Lucretius' subject in *De Rerum Natura*. For Lucretius, the dead are metaphorically reborn in the imagination. Therefore, it is possible that Lucretius' images of death, in the literary space of inter-text, are reborn in the womb-like imagination of MacKinnon's persona; or, perhaps (alongside Heraklitos) the phantasmal images are metaphorically reborn as part of the poem MacKinnon has reset on his page as an invocation of ancient philosophy.

MacKinnon's alteration of Lucretius' text (taking into account the flexible boundaries of translation) presents a curious typographical variation which is reminiscent of the changes of Valery's *Poems in the Rough* in the pre-script of *The Intervals*. In contrast with Humpries' translation, MacKinnon's arbitrary (and unusual) line breaks appear as poetry (as in the original), although the pedestrian rhythms indicate that the translated passage is in fact prose. Thus MacKinnon's typographical variance effectively places Lucretius' text in an "interval" between prose and poetry.

In *The Intervals*, MacKinnon's evocation of ancient texts is gauged against hierarchical philosophies such as Plato's. MacKinnon refers to Platonic thought cynically, whose order of Forms or Ideas the persona envisions as if strung on "the clothesline of god/ Or Plato or whoever/ in the sky holding up/ our menial delight" (63). He speaks of the decline of Platonic thought and the pre-eminence of atomist philosophy (i.e., pre-Platonic Heraklitan and post-Platonic Lucretian) in *The Intervals*: "from another better world/ these hierarchies began to yaw off slowly" (63). The persona, in contrast with the elitism of Platonic thought, effectively recognizes the value of the perspective of the deaf-mute:

I had been asking myself
was there an order behind things
under the appearance
looking for the pattern
and I knew there was no order
for him but the ones his eyes made
no order no plan no end (63)

Although the dialectic is fundamental to Platonic thought, its hierarchical perspective, as a linear construct (“the clothesline of god/ or Plato”), must have an end; MacKinnon, however, is concerned with continuity, the reflexivity of dialectics as in Heraklitean thought. So the presence of the deaf/mute emphasizes a non-elitist perspective in as a polemic opposite to Plato; and thus MacKinnon perpetuates his intellectual dialectic.

Like Eliot, however, MacKinnon is indeed an erudite poet, and his contemplation of time in *The Intervals* reflects upon the problematic situation of solipsism, of living in “such personal allegories” (67). In “interval” 14, MacKinnon’s recognition of “intervals” of time bears comparison to Eliot’s meditation on time in *Burnt Norton*. Without naming them, Eliot writes of “the intervals between things, and the silences between sounds”:

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach the stillness . . .
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. (V. 1-5, 7-12)

Mackinnon, however, is not so positive that we may occupy a perpetual present in language or in music; or that if we may, the consequences are that if we obliterate past and future that we can only live in the self-enclosed space of an “interval”:

Not by any conscious act of will
can we inhabit tense . . .
wandering
wholly in the present
only by surprise
stunned into awareness
forgetting for a moment past and future
living so close to things
that we forget time and are united
to the gross particulars (65)

Time, in a perpetual present, i.e., at the moment of Eliot’s “stillness,” is relative to Epicurean and Lucretian time: “a sensation we get from bodies in motion or at rest” (*De Rerum Natura*, Endnotes, 238). MacKinnon’s persona, as a

passive figure, lives in a time and place between events, enclosed within an “interval.” Yet MacKinnon employs a typographical technique in this passage, breaking the syntax of the lines, infusing visual energy into the language—which is written in the progressive present tense—that would “inhabit tense/ wandering/ wholly in the present.” Thus, typographically, the continuum of time is fragmented: time is lost in the incoherent plurality of things. To paraphrase Eliot’s own words, it is the form, the pattern of MacKinnon’s text which dispels the possibility of uniting past and future in one tense.

Instead, MacKinnon sees time as a tension between things, like the interval itself which can be seen as a cyclical space in time (“wandering/ wholly in the present”), or as an intermittent series (“united/ to the gross particulars”):

I would live there
but haven’t the strength to fasten myself
to such a wandering wheel and live instead
these periods of dull interspace
away from the shock
until time gets heavy (65)

“The wandering wheel,” the idea of cyclical time, relates to the archaic belief embraced by pre-Socratic thinkers such as Heraklitos, who believed time to be a cosmic cycle (i.e., day/night; winter/summer). MacKinnon, too, embraces the cyclical dialectic of Heraklitean philosophy. However, there is no possibility to enter into or exit from these “intervals” of cyclic dimension; there are no pauses between the cycles of a strict dialectic. Yet the pauses are the “intervals” themselves. In these pauses, “time gets heavy,” as if the persona is in a state of sleep or dream; also, “time gets heavy” suggest the shock quality of the *zeitgeist* or spirit of the times in the modern era. Thus, the “interval” (of text) must necessarily be active, charged with physical energy to alleviate the lethargy of time, so that the poet/persona may interact with his own time. MacKinnon suggests the tension between repetition and change produces the infusion of energy necessary for emergence out of an “interval”:

by sleep by dream
by repeating this walk to the park
like a chant
or by changing houses jobs friends
living months of unrelation
until a new shock a new atrocity
a new lover offers me
that taste of living (65)

The chant itself exemplifies poetry of repetition—as in a cycle of time, of words, repeating themselves in patterns, as the persona does, textually, by way of paramoion (repetition of phrases equal in length). One might say that the persona has returned (as in a cycle) to his original stance in the first “interval.” This return in thought is typical of the cyclical pattern of an “interval,” and characteristic of the structure of *The Intervals* as a whole.

It is the deaf mute, then, who returns to prompt the persona away from his “interval(e)” of isolation. But now the deaf mute, as in a reversal of roles, is the leader, not the one being led out of the “interval(e)”:

he began to lead me slowly out
with plenty of time to see
the soft rich place beside the lake
the interval of comfort and security
the park in a city of walls
the middle class I belong to (67)

The emphasis placed upon the slow passage of time in the social “interval,” perhaps representative of the slow process of social change, is particularly effective in anticipation of “the unpredictable changes” (67) which give rise to a seeming acceleration of time in the letter describing the central action of the poem—the Kingston Penitentiary riot of 1971.

The letter form of “interval” 20 is a perplexing, yet cogent form, in that MacKinnon is able to convey his perception of the prison riot through the immediacy of language and excitement of expression possible in a personal letter. This sense of immediacy is pointed to by the dating of the letter, “April 21” (72), since this date would place it one week after the commencement of the Kingston Penitentiary riot on the evening of Wednesday, 14 April 1971 (*Kingston Penitentiary*, 126). The letter, therefore, explicitly states its own historical time; even the journalistic style of the letter places it in the immediate context of the prison, for its “naive revolutionary rhetoric”⁶ is not unlike the language that would have appeared in the Kingston prison periodicals of the 1960s and 1970s, *The K. P. Tele-Scope*, or *The Tight-Wire*. (If one notes the use of dashes, as opposed to conventional punctuation, even the textual presentation is suggestive of a revolutionary grammar.) This letter, then, presents what would conventionally be called a “documentary” text (in the sense of non-fiction journalism). To reiterate Livesay’s words, *The Intervals*, as “a documentary poem,” is “based on topical data” (269)—i.e., the events of the Kingston Penitentiary riot—but as a long

poem it is neither objective, nor non-fiction “documentary.” So the letter exists as another “interval” text—one which is between the borders of genre.

MacKinnon’s assimilation of a prison periodical style effectually aligns his persona’s voice with the *ethos* of the rioting prisoners and their social “interval” of imprisonment. This process of assimilation can be seen through the initial reference to time at the beginning of the letter—“They’ve been at it four days now” (72)—which seems to distance the persona from the events since he may still share something of a middle-class *ethos*. But then, as if drawn in by the hysteria of the riot, at the end of the letter he takes a position of alliance with the rioters: “four thousand men eighty-eight hours under the dome taking collective vengeance on the capital classes for a short while liberating the prison—Yours till we are all liberated/ *Stuart*” (72). The movement from a passive reference of “four days” to the precise reference of “eighty-eight hours” represents the evolution of the persona’s thought patterns as they are encapsulated by expressions of time. For I would argue that the writing of the letter is part of the process of the deaf-mute leading the persona out of his middle class “intervale of comfort and security” (67). In the letter he re-evokes the Lucretian image of death (primarily associated with the deaf-mute) as he has experienced it and transforms it, distancing it from himself; thus the persona’s personal dream “interval” is projected upon the “spaces of the citizens” (67) (the “interval(e)” between the hospital and the prison), and so simultaneously, upon their collective psychological “interval”: “that’s their nightmare the fear they live with and suppress and are reminded of each time they pass the pen...” (72). Ultimately, the persona’s voice in the letter (and afterwards, as he voices his imagined courthouse speech and his “coma dream” in “intervals” 22 and 23 respectively), therefore, is revolutionary, as he employs another visual pun, a double-entendre likening himself to the prisoners in the “pen[itentiary]” while he writes, metaphorically, with his “pen” to “start riots/ in the pen” (76).

These resonances of a revolutionary voice following the letter indicate a counter-turn towards the completion of *The Intervals*: “as if history were something carried forward, or cyclic with a twist which is the spiral forward” (*Endnotes* 314). In one sense, the historical context of the Kingston Penitentiary riot in April 1971 is carried forward in MacKinnon’s “documentary” text. But in another context, the persona, in his shift from passive con-

temptation within the “intervale” to the kinetic “interval” of political action embodies, in himself, a Heraklitean dialectic of contraries which propels him forward. The letter, in a Heraklitean context, is an “interval” of political change in conflict with the permanence of the status quo.

Change and permanence become the poles of MacKinnon’s dialectic in the final stages of *The Intervals*. In the only titled section of *The Intervals*, “The Halcyon” (“interval” 21), which recalls the earlier reference to “halcyon days” in the first “interval,” the tension between change and permanence is manifest in the typography of diagonally aligned blocks. In contrast to the immobile, statuesque column in “interval” 1, the form of “The Halcyon” depicts the text at once in a medial process of change, inhering in new shapes and forms, reiterating the same connotations of the “interval”:

In the year at winter’s worst
in the heart stunned
after the end and before the beginning
the worst part of change (73)

The form itself expresses the balance of the seven days before and after the winter solstice, the “halcyon days.” Within “The Halcyon” the threat of division is inherent, for the form is

not in itself permanent
but what it refers to:
Eternal change
the too strict forms
must give way (73)

The form of “The Halcyon,” therefore, is Heraklitean: “something which is brought together and brought apart” (frag. 10, *The Presocratic Philosophers* 191). The resonances of Heraklitos didactic voice are assimilated in MacKinnon’s voice as he explicitly (and exclusively) refers to the philosopher himself in “interval” 25:

The permanence you seek
the order you wish to classify
lovely Heraklitos the first to ride chaos
seeking in change
permanence
in conflict
rest
Harassed T. S. Eliot the last to try (78)

We might wonder why Heraklitos is not directly quoted in *The Intervals* since his dialectic philosophy is fundamental to MacKinnon's long poem. Is it that MacKinnon wishes to avoid the pedantry of "harassed T. S. Eliot" and his *Four Quartets*?⁷ Nevertheless, the fragmented typography of MacKinnon's text represents the juxtaposed anomalies of change/permanence/, conflict/rest; perhaps MacKinnon's fragmented text even imitates Heraklitos' *Fragments*. Yet the answer as to why MacKinnon avoids direct quotation may be found in "The Halcyon" itself, as he re-evokes Olson's and Eliot's kingfisher mythography, in addition to the work of Robert Graves (*The White Goddess*) and Jessie L. Weston (*From Ritual to Romance*):

Olson Eliot Graves the Greeks first
then Weston commenting on them
how to figure the rise and fall of states
the installation of a new king
or the change of any social order
work and rework myth

Mythographers historians iconoclasts
refurbish erect pull down
the story remains the same
not itself permanent
but what it refers to: (73)

As mythographers compile many extant variants of the same myth (e.g., the kingfisher/ halcyon), and historians assemble many versions of the same story, MacKinnon too composes *The Intervals* as variations on "interval." To answer the question of allusion versus direct quotation, I would say that for MacKinnon there is no one text that will define the "interval," since its various connotations and denotations are in themselves in constant flux, but there remains one continuous and unifying *idea* of the "interval" throughout *The Intervals*. However, as iconoclasts tear down (with words) the idolatry of conventional religion (as do both Heraklitos and Lucretius), MacKinnon too threatens breaking apart the unifying image of the halcyon in *The Intervals*. "The Halcyon," then, is an example of Heraklitean flux, that "Things taken together are whole and not whole" (frag. 10 *The Presocratic Philosophers* 191). As an "interval," "The Halcyon" integrates and condenses the various interconnections between the idea of an "interval" throughout *The Intervals* and expresses them in a discrete "interval" of the long poem as a whole; but it also expands the intertextual space into which *The Intervals* reaches.

MacKinnon's relationship with Olson's and Eliot's kingfisher mythography has already been discussed; his evocation of Weston and her book on the Grail legend addresses the idea of variations on a single myth, in her case, of the Fisher King; his allusion to Graves in this context, however, summons a specific passage from *The White Goddess* on the legend of the halcyon/kingfisher:

[S]o the legend (which has no foundation in natural history, because the halcyon does not build a nest at all but lays its eggs in holes by the waterside) evidently refers to the birth of the new sacred king, at the winter solstice.... (187)

That the halcyon legend is not grounded in natural history is not an issue MacKinnon would raise; that the halcyon legend refers to the historical situation of the interregnum, or "installation of a new king," and specifically the birth of that king recalls the persona's entry into a metaphorical womb in the first "interval." Perhaps the space represented by the textual instances of "halcyon days" in the first "interval" and "the Halcyon" is indicative of the interval period of brooding of the kingfisher. The persona, therefore, as he is lead out of the "interval(e)," is also reborn as "The Halcyon," "featherbedding it/ across the plains/ in northern winter" (73). Yet the persona simultaneously embodies two connotations of the "interval" set out in the first "interval": he is both the halcyon of "halcyon days" and new king (perhaps in reference to Weston, the Fisher King) at the end of an "interregnum." His identity is thus balanced in a medial state of "betweenness."

As the persona identifies himself with the halcyon, MacKinnon turns away from the hierarchical class structures of society, for his mind instinctively follows the gravitational pull of the winter equinox into the courthouse and the trial of the prisoners after the riot:

The wind is getting up equinoxial
equal strength of day and night
equal pull of the dialectic
blows me all the way back
to the courthouse (74)

At once the dialectic of day/night recalls the cyclical dialectic of Heraklitos; and again MacKinnon's condemnation of the hierarchies that are inherent in a court of law recalls his earlier refutation of Platonic hierarchies. In the "Statements by the Poets" MacKinnon reiterates his polemical opposition to Platonic idealism: "Thus Heraclitos is chosen over Plato, dialectics over idealism, and political action over passive contemplation" (315). So in

“interval” 22 MacKinnon reconstructs his geographical “interval” to be one of political action set between the courthouse and the prison. And in contrast to his self-involved manner in the “interval(e)” the persona imagines himself addressing the judge:

If you stretched a cable
from the courthouse dome to the prison dome
and you hung these men from it
that would be as obvious
as the way you’re doing it now
also if the wind got up a little higher
the strain in this credibility gap
might pull down both your houses (74)

The “cable,” as a symbol of hierarchical order, resembles the “clothesline of god/ or Plato” (63); its presence, however, creates an “interval” (associated with dialectics) between the courthouse and the prison. However, this “interval” is a “credibility gap,” an absence which subverts the hierarchies of the institutions which serve as the interval’s boundaries. The “wind,” representing the equinoctial tension (of “The Halcyon”) or “equal pull of the dialectic” (74), places strain on the hierarchical structures represented by the courthouse and the prison; thus like an iconoclast, the persona’s dialectic voices his will to tear down not the symbols of religion, but of social hierarchy.

Adopting a public, even didactic voice in the aftermath of the prison riot and trial, the persona directly addresses the reader in “interval” 24:

You who enter an interval
of time of space of music...
Who enter a valley a gap a winter...
Who enter unaware
the empty space between events
remember from one who knows it well
that your state of trance is like standing in traffic
which blurs and blurs the vision
as you wait to cross to
subliminal glimpses (77)

Also, in “interval” 25, the persona directs himself towards “T.S. Eliot . . . your voice over the moving water is desperate” (78), as he spins away from the inter-textual space and the echoes in his own voice the reader sees and hears from Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. While Eliot is spun off from the text, the reader is introduced into its textual space. The passage above reads like the

persona's re-vision of his own text, perhaps as a conclusion to *The Intervals*. Even though the images summon to mind several "intervals" of his long poem, MacKinnon's use of the second-person pronoun transposes these pre-existing textual "intervals" into the context of the reader entering not only into the text, but the physical experience of being in an "interval."

The persona's "state of trance," expressed purely as a visual phenomena—like an accelerated vision of Muybridge photography—re-evokes his experience of the deaf-mute and translates itself into the experience of the reader of *The Intervals*. Since the persona has left the "interval(e)" and the deaf-mute behind, he projects his didactic voice towards the reader as an example of the liberation of his aural and vocal tracts. Therefore, the dialectical dynamic of this "interval" operates between the persona/poet and reader, whose space of separation is bridged by words. This dialectic between text and reader, between silence and sound, between text and voice, is the inter-text of persona and reader, whose reciprocal acts of writing and reading are expressed by MacKinnon in terms of an "interval... of music" (77).

In the final lines of *The Intervals*, MacKinnon develops the idea of a musical "interval" which is defined in the OED as "[t]he difference of pitch between two musical sounds or notes, either successive (in melody) or simultaneous (in harmony)" (vol. 8, p. 1). As a gesture of harmonics, and movement away from the didactic voice of "intervals" 24 and 25, the persona includes "us," the reader, in his final phrase:

The intervals are the silences which make sound distinct
the stretch of pitch that makes harmonics
The intervals are the time of rest or privacy
the space between the steps
that take us to the future (80)

As one reads these lines, their cadences repeat with the rhythmic succession of a chant. The presence of the musical metaphor in these final lines repeats the beginning of *The Intervals*, as in the cyclic repetition of a chant; they return to the pre-script, and Valéry's *Poems in the Rough*: "we are aware of the intervals between things, and the *silences* between sounds" (46; italics mine). For without silence there could be no music, only noise; without space there could be no movement, only stasis. The musical metaphor resonates afterwards as a visual image cannot; so these are the "intervals," the silences which are measured in time, which are analogous (as in the "steps"

of a musical scale) to “the space between the steps/ that take us to the future.” *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music* notes that the relationship between pitch in an musical interval is an example of “spatial metonymy” (399); the sound of a note, as a sign, is measured in spatial terms, just as the poet/persona’s voice is expressed spatially as text. As text, therefore, the structure of *The Intervals* can be expressed in musical terms: the long poem develops *melodically*, or in successive “intervals” (i.e., sections of *The Intervals*) correspondent to space between individual pitches; and *harmonically*, or as the existence of simultaneous intervals, as in the whole apparatus of *The Intervals* as a serial poem. On the musicality of the long poem, Ondaatje, in his introduction to *The Long Poem Anthology*, quotes a passage from Robin Blaser,

There is a further special analogy with serial music: the voice or the tongue, the tone, of the poem sounds individually, as alone and small as the poet is... but sounded in a series, it enters a field.

“The Practice of Outside” (in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*) (3)

In this way *The Intervals* is both didactic and introspective, public and private, the voice of “you” and the voice of “I.” Perhaps the voice of the long poem is in an intervallic state between these changeable voices, shifting in and out of each other in the co-existing silences and spaces within the (dis-) continuous structure of *The Intervals*. Out of this melodic and harmonic tension emerges what Phyllis Webb in *Talking* calls “the total music of the poem” (from “Polishing Up the View”), which I interpret as the consonant and dissonant structure of “intervals.” In the words of Heraklitos, the voice of *The Intervals* is “something . . . which is in tune and out of tune” (frag. 10, *The Presocratic Philosophers* 191).

But the inhering structure of *The Intervals*, in light of MacKinnon’s resistance of a linear or temporal cause-effect narrative, is a narrative that is expressed by a spatial metaphor, for he observes that “writing in longer forms . . . had to do with the shape a figure makes as it moves in time” (*Endnotes* 314). For MacKinnon this shape is a spiral, the revolution of an appositional dialectic of time moving through space: “the state referred to as the interval works technically as a sculptural effect, moving through and around, sometimes calmly observing, sometimes passionately involved, moving between forces that pull and distort the eyes, bend the light” (*Endnotes* 314). The narrative of the long poem is located “between forces” in the interstices of the dialectic. Time, in *The Intervals*, is relative to the movement of the narrative line; it is a narrative of kinetics and stasis, that

winds its way through multiple texts, places, and endings, taking the reader not to an end point, but “to the future” (80). And so history and time become non-linear, that is “not like going back to an earlier time,” but inhabiting the space between time, “as if history were something carried forward, or cyclic with a twist in the end which is the spiral forward” (*Endnotes* 314). MacKinnon’s metaphor of light, which describes the figure that *The Intervals* generates as this process of time spiralling through space, also suggests a continuous motion: as a ray of light is refracted with a change of direction, but continues in a forward motion. The spatial metaphor of a spiral of light reflects the narrative process of *The Intervals*: it bends in a process of refraction, turning in upon itself in a motion of self-reflection, turning outwards in a motion towards the reader. The narrative process thus represents the process of change in the long poem, the shift in direction at the end “which is the spiral forward.” Ending *The Intervals*, then, cannot offer resolution but rather re-direction; it is a problematic situation, for narrative time in MacKinnon’s long poem, like a ray of light, can have no endpoint, no finite pattern:

I was looking for the changes
to anticipate some end
or make some pattern
and saw only a succession of
calm and movement
that made intervals (80)

The persona is confounded by his attempt to find an underlying and permanent order to *The Intervals*: there can be no predicable pattern in an infinite process. Whether the persona explores the etymologies, or connotations, or variations, of the “interval,” he must accept that any definition will remain between co-existing definitions of the “interval.” “Betweenness,” is therefore the essence of the “interval” as either geological structure, historical era, mythological ritual, textual construct, photographic exposure, or musical nomenclature, for their apposition and co-existence bridges the “intervals” between gaps of meaning in the long poem and (dis-)continuous structure of the serial poem. The “intervals” are the spaces in which the process of composition and reading *The Intervals* occurs; they are the absences in a structure which are brought into being by the scriptive act and reading act; they generate themselves out of a dialectic between presence and absence, persona and reader.

- 1 "Endnotes" will denote all subsequent references to the "Statements by the Poets" in *The Long Poem Anthology*, ed. Michael Ondaatje. (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1979), 314-15.
- 2 Kamboureli, unlike Livesay who calls the Canadian long poem a "new genre," suggests that "the long poem transgresses not the limits of a single genre but the limits, the frames, of various genres, such as those of the lyric, the epic, the narrative, the drama, the documentary, and the prose poem" (100). I am suggesting that MacKinnon's long poem draws from several genres (also including historical prose non-fiction and non-literary texts such as the personal letter) but should be seen in terms of genre which avoids fixity and has fluid boundaries, like the idea of the "interval" itself.
- 3 As MacKinnon recognizes in the "Endnotes," his concept of the spiral, or vortex, is indebted to Hazard Adams's book *Blake and Yeats: The Contrary Vision*, in which the author comments on "Blake's attempt to rid his communication of temporal and spatial chains by creating a single image. The result is a certain disregard for narrative sequence.... He breaks down his narrative into a cyclic pattern so that any one cycle can stand for any other, and then he strongly implies that each cycle (or the single cycle) is itself a point rather than a wheel, a single archetype—the timeless and spaceless reality" (104).
- 4 I have altered the type-size here as MacKinnon does as a visual emphasis for the division between Raymond's document and MacKinnon's "documentary" text.
- 5 I am suggesting that MacKinnon's translation of *De Rerum Natura* is possibly his own; I have searched translations exhaustively and not found a corresponding rendition of this passage. The translation I have chosen is Rolfe Humphries' *The Way Things Are* (Bloomington: University of Illinois Press, 1968).
- 6 I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Stephen Scobie for his comments I have quoted here on the rhetorical style of MacKinnon's letter: (University of Victoria, January 1993).
- 7 Another possibility is that Heraklitos, as G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven (in light of Diels' *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*: Berlin, 1954) suggest in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, "wrote no consecutive book, but merely gave utterance to a series of carefully formulated opinions" and therefore no source text could be quoted in MacKinnon's text. However, the absence of quoted material is by no means an inconsistency of MacKinnon's poem, but rather a subtle variation on the approach taken by poets such as Eliot and Olson.

WORKS CITED

- Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems 1909- 1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.
- Kirk, G. S. and Raven, J. E. *The Presocratic Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957.
- Lucretius. *De Rerum Natura* [or] *The Way Things Are*. Trans., Rolfe Humphries. Endnotes by George K. Strodach. Bloomington: The University of Illinois Press, 1971.
- MacKinnon, Stuart. *The Intervals*. cited in *The Long Poem Anthology*. Ed., Michael Ondaatje. Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1979.
- Olson, Charles. *The Distances*. New York: Grove Press, 1960.
- Raymond, W. O. *History of the River St. John A.D. 1604-1784*. St. John, N.B., 1905.
- Valery, Paul. *Poems in the Rough*. Trans., Hilary Corke. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970.



Oriste

In every market and shop and taverna
they are saying "*Oriste! Oriste!*"
meaning "May I help you?" or "At your service"
but not so nice or courteous-sounding,

literally, "I'm listening"
and when translated into English
for the benefit of non-Greeks,
"What do you want?"

More assertion than question,
a word without wavering in it,
without pretence, without false graces,
like a perfect form,
like a marble column,
the sheer lines cutting the light.

Not a plea, and not a prayer,
and still, a word like an act
of clear, hard love
for the God who is everywhere and does not exist,
who cannot be described or conceived of,
who is revealed in every stranger who walks in.
"*Oriste!*" What do you want? I'm listening.
Larissa

In Sites Made Sacred

Hear the sea, restless, reflecting every nuance of gray the sky can show it,
paring available light in slivers, silver on the tide's dark spell.

Spill of sunlight through a canopy of leaves, the lush tangled musk of woods
beckons us deeper, hushed, hand in hand, away from the shore

the sure edge of waterline and dunes, the predictable advances and retreats.
Dwarfed by the archaic muddle of green we go back

beyond what we remember to a circle of sun, a stone table, water cupped
in a cracked hollow ringed by wildflowers, blooms bowed.

We kneel to read the runes etched in lump and groove: starred phallus,
haloed womb, figures twined and twinned, some dated last year,

some tens of centuries ago. Sensing us, a mantis raises thin green arms
in defiance, in prayer for mercy, in fear of what looms over all of us

exposed here on the naked earth. Heat wavers over stone, a shiver
that translates these signs we touch into a breath:

breeze fingering bared neck, a quiver down the spine, a whisper
that beckons, that won't leave us yet alone

Margaret Fairley and the Canadian Literary Tradition

In an article published in 1954, Canadian editor and critic Margaret Fairley (1885-1968) insisted that in contradiction to current opinion, Canada possessed a lively culture. In the field of literature, she cited several anthologies and literary histories that revealed a vibrant tradition emerging in the English Canada of the early nineteenth century and stretching unbroken to the present ("Our Heritage is Rich"). In the rather passive and desultory cultural milieu of the 1950s, Fairley was one of a small minority of commentators who defended Canada's literary achievements in historical terms. But her comments went largely ignored, not only because of public indifference but also because of her political loyalties. From 1936 until her death, she was a member of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). For most of her lifetime, her writings were confined almost entirely to Communist-sponsored periodicals and books. Her only successful bridging of the political gap was her edition of selections from the writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, published by Oxford University Press in 1960.

After several decades of neglect, Fairley has recently been rediscovered, not by Canadian literary history, but by a historian of Canadian left politics. David Kimmel, in a 1993 article in the journal *Left History*, has documented the main facts of Fairley's life and career, and defended some of her writings as significant contributions to the understanding of Canadian culture. However, Kimmel sees Fairley not primarily in terms of the Canadian literary tradition, but in terms of the socio-political subjects on which she wrote as a theorist and propagandist. In attempting to place Fairley in a literary

context, Kimmel focuses on Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, presenting Fairley's work as a qualification to Atwood's generalization that before the 1970s little scholarly or serious popular attention was paid to Canadian literature. In fact, Fairley's development as both an editor and promoter of Canadian literature was simultaneous with the flowering of scholarly and pedagogical interest in the subject in the twentieth century. Her career as a critic and teacher of Canadian literature was not a prescient anticipation of later developments, but the consequence of numerous antecedent and contemporary influences.

Like most other Canadian critics and scholars who emerged in the 1920s, her ideological assumptions and aesthetic tastes were formed by a bourgeois anglophile cultural tradition. Her family background, which at first glance seems to be at odds with the radicalism she eventually espoused, contributed to her political and aesthetic development. Her father, the Reverend William H. Keeling, headmaster of Bradford Grammar School in England, absorbed the principles of social reform then growing in the Church of England, especially in the northern industrial centres. He was committed to progressive ideas in education, and in 1875 established a girls' grammar school in Bradford (*Victoria History* 473-74). As a student and later as tutor of English literature at St. Hilda's College, Oxford, Margaret Keeling was attracted to the revolutionary aesthetics and ideologies of the nineteenth-century English romantics. Her earliest scholarly achievement was an edition of selected works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems of Nature and Romance 1794-1807* (1910), and an annotated *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1912), both published by Oxford's Clarendon Press. The literature of the early nineteenth century, Keeling declared in her introduction to *Poems of Nature and Romance*, constituted a reaction "against such sides of eighteenth-century life and thought as had been unadventurous and complaisant," and she stressed the influence of the French Revolution, Rousseau, Godwin, and Paine on Coleridge's thought (30, 42).

These two editions were more than the ephemeral exercises of a neophyte literary scholar. As late as 1983, a survey of Coleridge scholarship praised the edition of *Poems of Nature and Romance*, singling out Keeling's introduction as "excellent" (Crawford and Lauterbach, 2: 69). The two Coleridge volumes were in fact the beginning of Fairley's career as an editor/anthologist which was to climax in Canada with the Mackenzie edition—appropriately published by the Canadian branch of the publisher that had brought

out her Coleridge work in England fifty years earlier. Keeling thus began her career with solid commitments to a well-established academic tradition of English literature. Her acknowledgements in her edition of *Poems of Nature* include expressions of gratitude to two distinguished Oxford literary scholars, Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. The influence of Darbishire is particularly significant: in an alternative world, Keeling might have followed Darbishire's example and become one of the pioneering Oxbridge women literary scholars of the early twentieth century.

But Keeling was not happy with British academia, especially because Oxford did not grant degrees to women, and the segregation and enforced celibacy of the women's colleges offered little opportunity for advancement or personal fulfilment. Justifiably offended with a tradition that limited professional ambitions on the basis of gender, she embarked for Canada, where she soon discovered that her Oxford education, with or without the degree, put her much in demand in that scholar-starved country. Almost immediately, she was offered an instructorship in English at the new University of Alberta, and appointed Dean of Women—a not very onerous position since female undergraduate enrolment numbered about thirty at the time. From the old-world asceticism of an Oxford women's college, Keeling passed rapidly into new vistas of professional and personal prospects in Canada. At Edmonton, she met and married a twenty-five-year-old instructor of German, another recent immigrant from the north of England, Barker Fairley.

In accordance with academic regulations of the time, the new faculty wife had to give up her teaching position. By the same set of social assumptions underlying such regulations, her husband's academic career took precedence over hers, although this precedence was supported by the strength of Barker Fairley's doctorate. In 1915 Fairley accepted an appointment to the Department of German at the University of Toronto.

In Toronto the Fairleys were absorbed into an active and stimulating cultural life. In 1917 Sam Hooke of Victoria College founded *The Rebel*, with the assistance of the Fairleys and others. In 1920 Barker Fairley assumed the editorship, and converted the intramural publication into a national magazine, retitled the *Canadian Forum*. For both the *Rebel* and *Forum* Margaret Fairley wrote articles and reviews that were informed by moderate feminism, Fabian socialism and pacifism, and indebted to such

literary sources as George Bernard Shaw, Leo Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, and Olive Schreiner, all of whom she alluded to, quoted from, or reviewed. She had also begun slowly to discover Canadian literature and the rich vein of political criticism that it contained. A review in the March 1919 *Rebel* of the latest book by the humorist Peter McArthur expresses a fondness for what is probably McArthur's best-known work, *In Pastures Green* (1915), which uses the dry and homely voice of a farmer/narrator to satirize Canadian society's neglect of the rural life that should have formed the essential socio-economic basis of the nation. Fairley's interest in McArthur and his emphasis on the importance of reconciliation between modern industrialism and Canada's agrarian past leads directly toward her attraction to the social criticism of Mackenzie.

In the early 1920s she also began to study Marxism and Russian Communism, encouraged by a Professor of Mathematics at the university, Alfred Tennyson DeLury (1864-1951), a multi-talented scholar whose expertise included the poetry of W.B. Yeats, recent Russian history, and Marxist economic and social theory. "I first knew DeLury in the early twenties, on the committee of the Open Forums which used to meet on Sunday afternoons," Fairley wrote in a 1951 obituary of her former mentor. "I can remember the respect we all had for his understanding of the Russian Revolution and its meaning for Canadians. . . . For him the march of events was moral and artistic, as well as economic and political, and I think he will be remembered especially for this rich, balanced approach, which helped us who were far behind him in understanding" (Fairley, "Prof. A.T. DeLury").

Fairley was also influenced by the emerging scholarly and pedagogical emphasis on Canadian literature in the 1920s. Scholars from whose work she learned much include James Cappon, whose books on Charles G.D. Roberts (1925) and Bliss Carman (1930) were part of an output of biographical and historical research in Canadian literature that Cappon began to publish in the first decade of the century. In placing the post-Confederation poets in the context of the national and international literary currents and influences of their time, Cappon revealed his debt to the French historian Hippolyte Taine's theories about the influence of *race* and *milieu* on the creative imagination, as expounded in his *History of English Literature* (1863). Other Taine-influenced Canadian literary scholars produced important historical surveys of English-Canadian literature in the 1920s. Archibald MacMechan's *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924) placed a strong

emphasis on nationalistic and nativist movements, while J.D. Logan's *Highways of Canadian Literature* (also 1924) was more aware of international influences. Lionel Stevenson's *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (1926) searched for unifying themes in Canadian writing, and found a pervasive fascination with and resistance to nature that prefigure the ideas of Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood.

Some or all of these works undoubtedly helped shape Fairley's conception of Canadian literature. Although she had not yet committed herself to Marxism, her socialist inclinations would find congenial the academic literary historicism of the 1920s, with its emphasis on the continuity between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, and on the influence of environment and the sense of communal identity on creative writing.

Even more important for Fairley's development as an editor were some of the anthologies of Canadian literature that appeared in the 1920s. *The Voice of Canada: Canadian Prose and Poetry for Schools* (1927), was edited by A.M. Stephen, a schoolteacher and labour activist who, like DeLury, was much interested in the Russian revolution and remained a sympathizer of Marxist Communist ideology, although he never joined the party. Stephen's anthology emphasized the poetry of nature and nationalism prominent in late nineteenth century Canada. His prose selections included essays of social criticism by Joseph Howe and Thomas D'Arcy McGee, as well as a short excerpt from William Lyon Mackenzie's 1834 address to the "Reformers of Upper Canada," which might well have been Fairley's earliest exposure to Mackenzie's writings. Another anthology, which Fairley read and continued to recommend years after it had gone out of print ("Our Heritage"), is the *Book of Canadian Poetry and Verse* (1926), co-edited by E.K. Broadus. Broadus was an American, invited up to the University of Alberta in 1910 to establish and head the English department that Margaret Keeling was shortly to join as a young lecturer. Originally from Virginia, Broadus seems in both art and politics to have been a combination of conservatism and radicalism. A scholar of British poetry and a poet in his own right, whose work appeared in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, his interests ranged from English Renaissance literature to recent experiments in imagism. In spite of—or perhaps as a result of—his cosmopolitan perspective on literature, Broadus expounded a view of writing in Canada that stressed nationalistic and historical coherence. "Much of the best of Canadian literature has been either directly inspired by the Canadian scene or has reflected the effort to

recreate the historic past,” the editors observed in the Preface to the anthology (vii). *Canadian Prose and Verse* also includes a section entitled “The People,” with selections representing “a picture of the past and a panoramic view of the varied aspects of Canadian life to-day” (viii). Although Broadus obviously uses the word “people” without any partisan political connotation, it is easy to see a degree of consistency between his conception of Canadian society and the Marxist views of his former colleague.

The development of literary studies in Canada, carried forward so hopefully by scholars like Cappon, Stevenson, Stephen and Broadus, came to a halt with the Depression, as university budgets were slashed, publishers avoided Canadian books as unprofitable, and the promotion of a national literary tradition was preempted by more pressing concerns. Similarly, Fairley’s development as a Canadian writer and editor was disrupted in 1931, when Barker Fairley was offered the headship of the Department of German at Victoria University in Manchester, England. Almost from her arrival back in the economically devastated north of England, Fairley found herself homesick for Canada, but the years in Manchester were not wasted, for amid the poverty, unemployment and radical political activism of the region she confirmed her commitment to Marxism, and joined the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Soon after the University of Toronto had lured Barker Fairley back with an offer of the headship of the department of German in 1936, Margaret Fairley joined the Communist Party of Canada. The year 1936 was a time of intensive activity, as well as impending crisis, for the CPC. Throughout the 1930s the party had struggled against police harassment and imprisonment of leaders to defend the rights of the workers and unemployed. As the Conservative Dominion government of R.B. Bennett, the RCMP and city police forces struck out against the party with oppressive legislation, raids and padlockings, the party fought back in court and through its newspaper, the *Daily Clarion*.

Canadian Communists of the 1930s were not as culturally active as their British and American counterparts, but a literary magazine entitled *Masses*, sponsored by the party, had appeared in Toronto between 1932 and 1934, and most local parties had arts clubs. In 1936-37 the independent “popular front” magazine *New Frontier* attracted a number of party members as editors and contributors, including Margaret Fairley, who contributed several

book reviews. Having just returned from England, she was assigned books by British writers of leftist leanings, including Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism*, and Vera Brittain's novel *Honourable Estate* ("Not much as a work of art; might have popular appeal," observed Fairley of the work of the socialist Brittain [Feb. 1937: 20]).

But plagued by financial problems and the hostility of police and government toward left-wing activity, *New Frontier* closed down in October of 1937. In the last two years before the outbreak of World War II, the only national outlet for Communist writing was the *Clarion*. But Fairley did little writing for publication, keeping busy with her family responsibilities and with a routine of meetings and other Party activities.

In 1939, as war loomed and liberal democratic countries like Canada, the United States, and Britain continued to ignore the fascist threat, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty with Nazi Germany. When war broke out in the fall, the Hitler-Stalin pact gave Canadian police and government the excuse they had been looking for. Armed with the argument that the Soviet Union was an ally of the enemy and that the connection with the Comintern made the Communist Party of Canada an agency of a hostile foreign power, the RCMP began a series of raids and closures of CPC property, including the *Clarion* offices. Various party functionaries were arrested and interned without trial, mostly political leaders and union officials, but including many others selected with such an apparent randomness and vindictiveness that party members and sympathizers went about their lives in fear, and many were forced into hiding. As her daughter recalls, Fairley gathered her family about her to warn them that she was in danger of being arrested, and to advise them of possible courses of action if the worst happened (Ann Schabas, interview).

Fairley was not interned, although the arrests continued through 1941 and engulfed many journalists and writers. In spite of this repressive atmosphere, a courageous group of journalists banded together to create a new weekly newspaper that would serve as the voice of radical socialism in Canada. Carefully emphasizing its status as a "journal of democratic opinion" independent of any political party or other organization, the *Canadian Tribune* was launched in Toronto in January of 1940. Although watched by police, and even closed down briefly in 1941, the newspaper flourished as the journalistic voice of Communism in Canada.

Fairley immediately began writing for the paper, and was soon appointed

book review editor. Over the next four years she reviewed a wide variety of volumes, ranging from books of literary history and criticism to works on British colonialism, many of them with a Canadian focus. In addition to doing a great deal of reading about Canada, she had contacts with many Canadian writers and scholars, at the University of Toronto and through the network of contributors to the *Tribune*. The most important of her new contacts was Stanley B. Ryerson, a Marxist historian who had embarked on a reinterpretation of Canadian history in his books *1837: The Birth of Canadian Democracy* (1937) and *French Canada: A Study in Canadian Democracy* (1943), published by the party's Progress Books. Encouraged by Ryerson, Fairley began planning a literary anthology to remind Canadians of their rich cultural heritage. Just as Ryerson was rewriting Canadian political history, Fairley hoped to begin the process of rewriting the country's literary history, and especially to bring the old Taine-influenced view of the subject into line with Marxist thought. The book was issued by Progress in early 1945, under the title *Spirit of Canadian Democracy: A Collection of Canadian Writings from the Beginning to the Present Day*.

The volume included short prose extracts interspersed with lyric poems, and was arranged into three sections: "From the Beginnings to 1850," "From 1850 to 1930," and "From 1930 to the Present." Topical subsections illustrated the evolution of democratic traditions in Canada ("Responsible Governors," "Civil Liberties," "Education"), with the modern section highlighting the protest movements of the Depression years. The book was strongly anti-Nazi, emphasizing Canadian ethnic and cultural diversity as opposed to German claims of "racial purity." But Fairley also used her selections to reveal alternatives to the bourgeois liberal bias of most histories of Canada. Like Stanley Ryerson, she avoided such conventional war-time sentiments as the glorification of the British Empire and British parliamentary traditions, in favour of an emphasis on Canada's ability to stand independent and self-sufficient among nations. "Democracy" was not identified with imperial unity, nor with the anarchic individualism of the United States, nor with the capitalist ideal of unrestricted economic opportunity. Rather, it was related to the liberation from economic and political authoritarianism of disadvantaged people such as native Indians, French Canadians, refugees, and workers.

Fairley also emphasized the continuity between socialist literary activity and other writing of political and economic protest. From earlier centuries

she chose writers in the radical reform traditions such as William Lyon Mackenzie, Louis Joseph Papineau, Louis Riel, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Peter McArthur, and Archibald Lampman. In the modern section she did not limit herself to Marxist writers, for it was her purpose to reveal a national cultural "united front," comparable to the international political front that had fought the fascists in Spain and was now fighting the totalitarianism of Germany and Japan. From the twentieth century, her writers included non-partisan social critics such as Leo Kennedy, Morley Callaghan and Frederick Philip Grove, socialists like Kenneth Leslie, and even the Trotskyist poet Earle Birney, as well as Communists such as Norman Bethune, Joe Wallace and Dorothy Livesay.

With its diverse representation of writers and ideological positions, as well as the brevity of the extracts and variety of subject matter, the book was designed to appeal to a wide popular audience. Predictably, however, non-Communist newspaper reviewers ignored *Spirit of Canadian Democracy*, as they ignored everything published by Progress Books. The *Tribune* gave it enthusiastic promotion, but it achieved limited sales among the comparatively small Communist readership, and was blacklisted by the Ontario Department of Education (Kimmel and Kealey 255).

Fairley was not the sort of person to be discouraged by the failure of her book. In fact, like other Communists in 1945, she was generally optimistic, for it seemed that the world was entering a new era of international cooperation and political tolerance. In 1943, the CPC had changed its name to the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), in part to deflect government and police hostility, and in part to enhance its image as a conventional political party. By 1945 a few Labour-Progressives had been elected across the country at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Party membership was growing, with the support of influential unions such as the Canadian Seamen's Union and the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Soon after the end of the war, however, a darker side of the new era emerged. In the fall of 1945 Igor Gouzenko, a Russian cipher clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, convinced Canadian authorities that the embassy was an operating station in a Communist spy network, and his revelations were followed by the arrest of Labour-Progressive MP Fred Rose and sixteen others. In 1946, the Canadian government flouted its own immigration laws to allow into the country a convicted criminal from the United States, Hal Banks, to

smash the Canadian Seamen's Union and replace it with a U.S.-centred anti-Communist union. The RCMP began a vigorous program of intimidation and harassment of party members. The cold war had come to Canada.

In March 1949 Fairley went to a Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in New York, a conference attended by a variety of distinguished artists and scholars, including Aaron Copland, W.E.B. Dubois, Lillian Hellman, the Canadian poet Kenneth Leslie, Thomas Mann, F.O. Matthiessen, Arthur Miller, and Paul Robeson (printed programme, Fairley Papers). But shortly after her arrival, Fairley was expelled from the country by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, acting on the conviction that the peace movement was a Soviet-backed Communist plot ("Culture Sessions").

She was much too busy, however, to brood over any personal sense of injury. In the spring of 1947 the LPP had established a national cultural commission, under the direction of Stanley Ryerson, to explore ways and means of increasing party activity in literature and other arts ("The LPP and the Arts," mimeographed bulletin, Fairley Papers). Fairley eagerly participated in commission activities. By 1950 she was teaching creative writing in extension classes organized by the commission's Toronto Cultural Group, and writing short plays for amateur productions sponsored by the Group (course prospectuses, play typescripts, Fairley Papers).

By early 1951 she was involved in plans to establish a "new Canadian cultural magazine," as the *Tribune* described it, dedicated "to the building of a Canadian people's culture in a world at peace" (30 July 1951). The first issue of the quarterly, with Fairley as editor, appeared in January 1952. *New Frontiers*, its name a deliberate echo of the independent leftist *New Frontier* of the 1930s, was arguably the most distinguished literary publication that the party produced. Although edited in Toronto, the magazine was a national periodical, drawing its readers and contributors from regions and ethnic groups across Canada. In an editorial in the first issue, Fairley emphasized the possibilities of expanding the national cultural heritage by encouraging the creative potential of immigrants, native people, and the younger generation. The intention was especially to compensate for the shortcomings and political biases of the few Canadian culture magazines then in existence, and to provoke the Dominion government to implement the recommendations of the Massey Report and provide financial support for artists.

With limited circulation and resources, Fairley did a remarkable job of attracting a variety of visual and literary artists to *New Frontiers*. The contributors were mostly Canadian, but occasionally there were works in translation from eastern Europe and Asia, including poems by the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, and a short story by Yuri Ritkheu, identified as the first Chukchi (Siberian Inuit) writer.

Canadian contributions included historical reprints of work by Norman Bethune, Pauline Johnson, Isabella Valancy Crawford, and E.W. Thompson. Contemporary contributors included established authors in the socialist tradition, such as Kenneth Leslie, Wilson MacDonald, and Joe Wallace, as well as younger radicals such as Milton Acorn (whose first published poem appeared in *New Frontiers*) and George Ryga. *New Frontiers* anticipated by fifteen years the anti-war literature inspired by Vietnam, with short stories and articles protesting the Korean conflict. The magazine was also far ahead of its time in recognizing the cultural achievements of aboriginal and ethnic communities.

Among the prominent features of *New Frontiers* were the vigorous editorials which started off each issue. Besides protesting the cold war commitments of the Massey Report, Fairley expressed her opinions on current issues such as the firing of the "Symphony Six," the members of the Toronto Symphony who were dismissed in 1952 after being refused entry to the United States because of their alleged involvement in radical causes (Editorial, *New Frontiers*, Fall 1952). Another theme was the domination of American junk culture on the emerging Canadian television network. She also attacked expatriate Canadian writer Thomas B. Costain for the alleged racism of his representations of Canadian native peoples in his popular history *The White and the Gold* ("Costain's White Supremacy," Summer 1954). When the government announced in 1953 its intention to form the Canada Council, Fairley warned that "the Council might be used as a blind pretense, or as a body set up to control, instead of to stimulate, our cultural institutions," especially if U.S. business and political interests succeeded in their efforts to ensure Canadian subservience to American economic and political goals ("The Canada Council," Winter 1954: 2). And in 1955, Fairley launched a vehement protest against the granting of the Governor General's Award to Igor Gouzenko. Gouzenko's novel, *Fall of a Titan*, was a clumsily written piece of anti-Soviet propaganda, and as many Canadian writers both Communist and non-Communist believed, the prize was "not for the

recognition of genuine literary merit, but a reward for political services” (“Cold War Award,” Summer 1955: 2).

But in spite of the vigour of its editor and her little band of supporters, *New Frontiers* was not a financial success. The non-Communist literary establishment ignored it, most book and periodical dealers boycotted it, and the relatively small number of party members interested enough in cultural matters to subscribe fell far short of what was needed to break even. The spring 1956 issue appeared much reduced in size, and printed on less expensive paper. The summer issue began with a strong plea for financial support, but it was too late: the magazine was discontinued with this issue.

The main reasons for the disappearance of *New Frontiers* were economic, but it is more than a coincidence that the last issue appeared only a couple of months after the international Communist movement, which was so frequently assailed from without during the Cold War, received a severe shock from within. In the spring of 1956, Nikita Krushchev’s speech to the Soviet Congress of Deputies attacking Joseph Stalin was released in English translation. The Canadian party, which had been intensely pro-Stalinist, was devastated. Hundreds of members resigned. Fairley’s faith in Communism remained secure, but like others, she must have been badly shaken by this blow to the international party’s credibility.

The failure of the magazine plus the disarray in the Communist movement at large would have been enough to discourage a much younger person. Far from having any intention of slowing down or withdrawing from her political and cultural commitments, however, Fairley at age seventy-one continued busy as ever. Turning to her historical research, she resumed her work on the Canadian historical personality who had fascinated her for years, William Lyon Mackenzie. Interested especially in establishing Mackenzie’s reputation as a journalist and essayist, she searched the backfiles of the various papers which Mackenzie had edited or contributed to, and his manuscripts in the national, provincial, and Toronto archives. By the summer of 1959 she had ready for the press *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie 1824-1837*.

Emphasizing Mackenzie’s work as an essayist and travel writer, the *Selected Writings* presented a new perspective on the controversial journalist and rebel, and provided an illuminating complement to Mackenzie’s repu-

tation as a political figure, which had been re-established in William Kilbourn's recent biography *The Firebrand* (1956). The book was less obviously partisan Communist than most of Fairley's writing, and with its Oxford imprint it was distributed and reviewed internationally. But her focus on Mackenzie's career up to the rebellions of 1837 suggests a historical view consistent with the Marxist concept of the inevitability of revolution.

Mackenzie's observations of his contemporary society can also be fitted into the Marxist critique of capitalistic systems and the economic injustices they create. Speaking on behalf of the farmer, small merchant, artisan, and worker, Mackenzie frequently denounces government support of speculative land companies and exploitative industrialists, and government manipulation of the rights of the free press and franchise. Through personal narrative sketches of travel and observation Mackenzie evokes a close-up view of the "people" as seen by one of themselves. His sketches also convey impressions of an overriding coherence and unity in the ethnically, religiously, and occupationally diverse society of Canada: whether members of fringe religious sects like "the children of peace," mechanics and labourers in the growing towns and villages of York County, or aboriginal natives settled on land grants on the Credit River, the inhabitants of Canada speak with one voice in resistance to autocratic authority. Mackenzie's language, as Fairley emphasizes, prefigures Marxist rhetoric when he identifies labour as "the true source of wealth": "The farmer produces Wheat—the Miller converts it into Flour—the Labourer breaks Stones and Macadamizes Roads and these roads with the aid of Steamers and Boats convey the Flour to the place where the Foreigner will buy it at the highest price. The owner of the Flour receives his money, be it one thousand or ten thousand dollars—this is wealth; it was wealth before paper money was in existence—and I hope it will be so considered when a paper currency shall be no more" (215-16).

Non-Communist reviewers of the *Selected Writings* either failed or declined to see Marxist connotations in Fairley's work, for the reviews were very favourable. Robert Fulford, in the *Toronto Star*, hailed it as a "worthy companion" to Kilbourn's biography; Kilbourn, in the *Globe and Mail*, was equally enthusiastic about "this first readily available anthology of Mackenzie's writings." Carl Klinck, writing in the *Canadian Forum*, praised Fairley for establishing Mackenzie's reputation as a man of letters, and included Mackenzie in his article "Literary Activity in the Canadas, 1812-1841," in the *Literary History of Canada* (1965). In England, the *Times*

Literary Supplement hailed the “well-edited and handsomely produced selection.” In August, 1961, after being ignored for years by the city, provincial, and national cultural establishments, Fairley was an invited guest of the Toronto Historical Board at an open house to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Mackenzie’s death (“Board Planning to Hold Open House,” clipping, Fairley papers).

With the Mackenzie volume completed, Fairley turned to various projects, including a proposed anthology of workers’ autobiographical narratives that she had been working on since the early 1950s (but which she did not live to complete), and editorial work on the *Marxist Quarterly* (renamed *Horizons* in 1966), a socio-political journal published in connection with the Marxist Study Centre of Toronto.

In her articles and book reviews for the new magazine, Fairley continued the assertion of her deeply held faith that the true “spirit of democracy” could be discovered in the historical continuity of the struggle of the people of Canada for a bearable existence free of economic and political compulsion. Unlike other Marxists who conceived history as the evolution of abstract political and economic principles, Fairley saw history in terms of human experience. In “Roots of Patriotism in English-Speaking Canada Before Confederation” (Winter 1963), an essay obviously related to her research into Mackenzie’s writings, she contrasted the community spirit of nineteenth-century Canadian settlers to the anarchic frontier individualism of the pioneers in the United States. In “The Moral Responsibility of the Communist” (Winter 1966), Fairley insisted that the Communist must reject class privilege, racism and other false systems of values that support capitalist society.

In this essay, Fairley briefly quotes from Betty Friedan’s *The Feminist Mystique* (1963), a work that was to have a major influence on the women’s movement of the late twentieth century. The quotation is a general reference to the possibilities for human moral improvement, but the fact that Fairley was reading recent feminist work suggests that her interests were moving in new directions—or perhaps she was returning to earlier interests, when in the 1920s she read such authors as Virginia Woolf and Olive Schreiner. As a Communist, Fairley’s compassion was directed to all segments of the population whose disadvantages were primarily definable in social and economic terms. But some of her Communist writings indicate

an awareness of the exploitation to which women can be subjected. As the new women's movement developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Fairley might have become increasingly committed to it.

By 1966, however, she was eighty-one years old. Increasingly frail, she managed to continue to devote attention to her cherished cultural interests. Finally, she suffered a stroke that left her bed-ridden for over a year, until her death on 14 February, 1968. At her request, there were no funeral services. Little notice was taken of her death by the capitalist press, but her many friends and associates within and without the Communist movement mourned, and tributes to her appeared in the *Canadian Tribune* and *Horizons*. "Culture, for her," wrote Stanley Ryerson, "was not something 'added' to the movement of Communism but of its essence" (1). Her sense of the importance of culture, he continued, grew out of her "basic attitude of commitment"—a commitment to the belief that all human beings can achieve high levels of refinement and cultural sensitivity when the weight of economic and political domination is lifted from them. Thus the "cultural worker" must work to help the people rise to such levels. "To look outward, to enlarge experience," Fairley wrote shortly before her death, "that is, and always has been, the first job of the artist" ("The Cultural Worker's Responsibility" 5). With her lifelong commitment to the cultural improvement of people, Margaret Fairley was by these criteria a true artist, whose place in the Canadian literary tradition should be at least as secure as the many nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers she championed.

WORKS CITED

- Broadus, E.K. and E.H. Broadus. Preface. *A Book of Canadian Prose and Verse*. Ed. E.K. and E.H. Broadus. Toronto: Macmillan, 1926.
- "Culture Sessions Center of Conflict of East and West." *New York Times* 27 March 1949: 1.
- Fairley, Margaret. "Books at Random." Rev. of *The Red Cow and her Friends* by Peter McArthur. *The Rebel* 3 (March 1919).
- . "The Cultural Worker's Responsibility to the People." *Horizons* 25 (Spring 1968): 4-6.
- . "Moral Responsibility of the Communist." *Marxist Quarterly* 12 (Winter 1966): 68-72.
- . "Our Heritage Is Rich: But How Can We Find It?" *Canadian Tribune* 28 June 1954: 7.
- . Papers. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.
- . "Prof. A.T. DeLury—A Resolute Champion." *Canadian Tribune* 19 Nov. 1951: 5.
- . "Roots of Patriotism in English-Speaking Canada before Confederation." *Marxist Quarterly* 4 (Winter 1963): 1-6.

- , ed. *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, 1824-1837*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1960.
- , ed.. *Spirit of Canadian Democracy: A Collection of Canadian Writings from the Beginnings to the Present Day*. Toronto: Progress [1945].
- Fulford, Robert. "Books." Rev. of *Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie*. *Toronto Star*, 9 Dec. 1960: 20.
- Keeling, Margaret A. Introduction. *Poems of Nature and Romance*. By S.T. Coleridge. Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1910. 7-49.
- Kilbourn, William. "The Many-Sided Character of Our Rebellious First Mayor." Rev. of *Sel. Writings of WLM*. *Globe & Mail* 25 March 1961: 22.
- Kimmel, David. "The Spirit of Canadian Democracy: Margaret Fairley and the Communist Cultural Worker's Responsibility to the People." *Left History* 1 (Spring 1993): 35-55.
- and Gregory S. Kealey. "With Our Own Hands": Margaret Fairley and the 'Real Makers' of Canada." *Labour/Le Travail* 31 (1993): 253-85.
- Klinck, Carl A. "Turning New Leaves." Rev. of *Sel. Writings of WLM*. *Canadian Forum* April 1961: 20-21.
- "Makers of a Nation." Rev. of *Sel. Writings of WLM*. *Times Literary Supplement* 5 May 1961: 269.
- New Frontier*. 1936-37.
- New Frontiers*. 1952-56.
- [Ryerson, Stanley]. "Margaret Fairley." *Horizons* 25 (Spring 1968): 1-2.
- Schabas, Ann. Personal Interview. 14 July 1993.
- Victoria History of the Counties of England: Yorkshire*. 1907. London: U of London Institute of Historical Research, 1974.



The Horse War

(Inspired by Timothy Findley's *The Wars*)

In memory of
Earth and Air and Fire and Water
Robert R. Ross
1896-1922

Prologue

They set another order: Now the horses had to be
Killed

'No,' said Robert
His mad eye sifted through the order
Scratched away the authority
Its logic
Pushed it aside

No—Robert would save them

His hands are knotted to the reins. They bleed.

He still knew what to do
Despite them

He knew the truth

One

The truth

It sat far and away, watching, in wait for him

Often Robert went running, at dusk, along dark
Earth, approached it
Found coyotes who showed
Him his claws

It stood near
Behind him, in wait for him to
Turn around, see
It lay under his feet
Padded soles, in black boots
Helped Robert balance

It gave strength

Two

*The mud spread wider over his thighs. It began to
make a sucking noise at the back of his legs.*

Dear Jesus—he was going to drown.

His hands
Clawed through the muddy, screaming *water*
Sucking him down the dike

Thrusting his pelvis up
Climbing, faster, harder
Inching up, and onto the dry clay
Overcame the water
Tamed it
He stood over it

*It tumbled over the edge and began to spread out
over their heads—drifting on a layer of cold, dank
air.*

Jesus.

Gas.

Robert could resist
The poisoned wind which strove
To bend him, and follow its direction
Force him away from the gates
And not let the horses free
Defy the morbid *air*
Crystallize the wind as they ran through it
Along the snow

No
He blushed the wind down

There were flames all around him.

He faced the *fire*
Fighting to feed on him

All his life, he decided
Against the flame,
Against them
Heather Lawson
Mrs. Ross

Captain Leather
'Soldiers of the Queen'—
the 'ruling' flames
Their weave of orders
He pushed them away
Beat off the carnage
Protected the horses
From the hunger

Three

Eyes bright
Hands fisted
Lips parted
A pistol hanging from his fingers
Between his legs
Absolutely still

Harrowed

Yet
He withstood
He succeeded
Each time

Not only with horses
With rats
 toads
 Poole

With rabbits

Four

'W e
A re
R ight
S ir'

'No.'

He knew the truth

Five

They set another order: Now the horses had to be
Killed

‘No,’ said Robert

His mad eye sifted through the order
Scratched away the authority
Its logic
Pushed it aside

No—Robert would save them

His hands are knotted to the reins. They bleed.

He still knew what to do
Despite them

He knew the truth

(His eyes, seeing his hands.
Then the flames.
Footsteps. Charges through.
Reaches it.
You will live.
Pulls the handle.
The gate swings open.
They go.)

Burned
But alive

Even after
When, in the end
Marian whispered
‘Do you want me to help you die?’

No
‘*Not yet.*’
He didn’t live for that

Epilogue

Today, in dark old rooms, some who remember
When asked, say
'He's dead.'
'That bastard.'
Or they weep

In the same room, someone interviewing these
survivors, tape recorder and photographs in hand
Remarks
'What he did was terrible. . .and brave.'

No
It was natural



Postmodernist War Fiction Findley's *The Wars*

Since the most celebrated accounts of the First World War were produced by combatants,¹ it has generally been assumed that only those who had actually been at the front were authorized to reproduce the experience imaginatively. It is not surprising, then, that Henry de Montherlant's *Le Songe* (1954), set at the front in 1918, was discredited as soon as it was discovered that the author himself had never been near the front. To this day, we find a lingering conviction, exemplified in Paul Fussell's writing on the two World Wars and Vietnam, that any commentary on war has to be grounded in firsthand experience.² Written sixty years after the First World War, by an author who had no war experience of any kind, *The Wars* obviously contravenes this precondition of personal suffering. Fussell might well ask what right Findley has to write about a war which was incomprehensible even to combatants. The assumption behind this privileging of experience is that an event loses some kind of spontaneously given "truth" in the process of reinscription. *The Wars* has been critically acclaimed not only because of its literary merits but also because poststructuralist thought has deconstructed such unproblematical reliance on historical origin. However, most criticism has situated the novel in the context of Canadian literature or postmodern metafiction.³ Although I agree that the plural in the title invites an analysis of the novel beyond the narrow historical confines of the First World War, I would, nevertheless, suggest that the specific war context has been too easily ignored. In this paper, I wish to analyze *The Wars* in relation to narrative reconstructions of

the First World War experience by combatants; the emphasis will be on *formal* rather than *thematic* connections. In view of Findley's postmodern tendencies, a comparison of his narrative devices with those favoured by First World War writers may help to clarify both Findley's indebtedness to and transformation of the war genre. Where earlier war accounts sought to conceal their "constructedness," *The Wars* foregrounds its mediated status as a retrospective reconstruction. Instead of claiming authenticity for being grounded in firsthand experience, *The Wars* relies on intertextual references to speculate self-consciously on the story it narrates. As Diana Brydon puts it, "the narrator is obsessed as much by the paradoxes of how we know as by the horror of what we know" (76).

By analyzing such narrative devices as description, documentary evidence, narrative perspective, and symbolic patterns, I hope to generate a greater appreciation of *The Wars* as a highly skillful continuation and simultaneous subversion of the war genre. Findley's postmodern strategies acknowledge that all narrative practice involves mediating processes; this foregrounding of mediation demystifies the illusion of the text as a direct reflection of reality which is still operative in traditional First World War literature. In the end, I want to suggest that Findley's formal choices constitute a postmodernist disruption of the ideological assumptions of modernity which the First World War writers, adopting the strategies of nineteenth-century realism and high modernism, continued to uphold in spite of the fact that the war itself was in the process of showing that modernity failed to deliver the promise of universal human emancipation.⁴

Description

Faced with an unprecedented historical event, those seeking to convey the horrors of trench warfare relied heavily on description. For them, the unknown could only be rendered by integrating it into familiar cognitive patterns. The conventions of nineteenth-century realism seemed best suited to name the unnameable in the most immediate and authentic fashion. Relying on long descriptive passages, the First World War writers invoked a stock of familiar knowledge so as to make the unfamiliar less strange. Since most war accounts devote relatively little time to dramatic battle scenes, the accumulation of descriptive details was a particularly attractive means for conveying the often monotonous routines of everyday life at the front. What is depicted, often at exhaustive length, are such mundane activities as

eating, drinking, sleeping, marching, moving through trenches, enduring fatigue duties, going on patrol, dealing with lice and rats, receiving letters, going on sick or home leave. Because Findley is able to rely “on the reader’s knowledge of World War I” (Vautier 23), *The Wars* both invokes and breaks with this obsession with “telling it as it really was.” At first sight, *The Wars* appears to situate itself squarely in the tradition of documentary realism. Critics do, of course, recognize the novel’s symbolic dimension, stressing that the “narrator’s imagination tends to insinuate mythical and poetical images into what would otherwise be a matter-of-fact history” (Klovan 63) so that the novel’s “imaginative impact goes beyond the effects of verisimilitude” (Pirie 79). But they never seriously question the critical assumption that an “almost documentary realism seems to seduce the reader into accepting the authenticity of the account” (Pirie 70). *The Wars* is said to achieve “the immediacy of personal experience” (McKenzie 395) and to demonstrate that Findley’s “extraordinary intuitiveness allows him to approximate the ‘reality’ of war as effectively as has been done by many of those whose memories are based on actual experience” (Drolet 149). However, such praise for the novel’s “verisimilitude” and its “almost documentary realism” (Pirie 70) signally fails to account for the ways in which Findley also subverts nineteenth-century descriptive conventions.

Description has traditionally been considered the inferior “other” of narration. Where narration is dynamic in its temporal forward movement, description is static in its spatial contemplation of objects. It is the non-dramatic backdrop to the “action,” it conveys information incidental to the plot, it moves in random patterns, it reactivates an already available stock of knowledge. In short, description is often seen as a necessary evil, impeding narrative progress and delaying dramatic moments. Description is tolerated primarily because it helps to authenticate the narrative world of imagined figures and events. Pointing to the world as we know it, descriptive details reassuringly ground the text in “reality.” Ideally, descriptive passages would act as an *objective* window on the world; they therefore constitute the text’s locus of referentiality. Since the aim of realistic narratives is to convey the “facts” with the least possible interference by an interpreting consciousness, they tend to eschew a language which draws attention to itself. At the same time, though, language cannot reproduce objects without being selective. When Findley tells us that “[Poole] was covered with freckles and his hair was the color of sand” (74), we may well ask ourselves why these physical

details are privileged rather than some others. Not only are “freckles” and “hair” arbitrarily singled out, but the list of Poole’s attributes could be infinitely extended. The arbitrary selection process of description undermines the claim of description to be reflecting things simply “as they are.” Faced with the virtually unlimited potential for discursive expansion, the describer of a war scene is invited to demonstrate both his knowledge of the world and his knowledge of words. In description, then, the utilitarian and the playful meet in uneasy antagonism, paradoxically making it the locus of both referentiality and lexical (or aesthetic) ostentation. For the realist tradition, the fear has always been that colorful or metaphorical language destroys or lessens the impression of objectivity the narrative aims for.

Autobiographical and documentary in orientation, First World War narratives tend to avoid lexical ostentation, accumulating descriptive details in the apparently random order in which objects and people supposedly appeared in the narrator’s field of vision. Objects are listed simply because “they were there,” people appear never to be mentioned again, villages are named without playing any role in the action. It is not that individual objects or people are described at great length; on the contrary, they are usually sketched with a few selective details. The impression of descriptive density is created through the sheer volume of randomly accumulated details. In an effort to familiarize the reader with the front, narrators inform us about “reserves of rations, rifle ammunition, grenades, reels of barbed wire, planks, screw pickets, wire netting sandbags” (Blunden 92), “150 mm. howitzers” (Barbusse 209), “Cuinchy brick-stacks” and “Sausages” (Graves 1960, 96). We are introduced to an inventory of items soldiers carry in their pockets and on their backs (Barbusse 1917, 143-56). And we are familiarized with the landscape of Mailly-Maillet where there “was a branch road to Auchonvilliers; the main road, running straight through the town, was in the direction of Serre, which the Hun held; and a third road on the left went off to Clinamps” (Manning 175). First World War narratives rely heavily on a technical knowledge of equipment, a military knowledge of strategy, a geographic knowledge of locations, a social knowledge of class structures, a psychological knowledge of men under stress. The overriding desire is to inform the reader, to add to his or her existing stock of encyclopedic knowledge. However, as David Jones’s *In Parenthesis* demonstrates, this referential orientation is easily transformed into a demonstration of playful lexical ostentation. *In Parenthesis* delights in choosing terms not so much for what

they designate as for how they sound. We encounter such relatively unfamiliar and mysterious terms as “butt-heel-irons” (16), “private ditty-bag” (17), “gooseberries” (35), “picket-irons” (935), “starving as brass monkeys” (52), “toffee-apples” (90), “Woolly-Bears” (148). Lexical ostentation is reinforced through distorted syntax and refined expressions: “Where the road switch-backed the nearer slope, tilted, piled-to-overloading limbers, their checking brakes jammed down, and pack-beasts splayed their nervous fore-legs—stiffened to the incline” (140). Referential utility is clearly no longer the dominant motivation when Jones speaks of “chill oozing slime high over ankle” (41), of someone vanishing, “mandrill fashion, into his enclosure” (91), or of “the inward abysm” (109). The high modernism of Jones uncovers the pull toward lexical luxury which already inhabits the referential insistence of documentary realism.

Findley’s *The Wars* exploits the paradoxical possibilities of description in a direction which was not available to First World War narratives. On the surface, Findley seems to endorse the kind of economical (pseudo-)objectivity advocated by the realist tradition:

Also at Bailleul there was a large, now emptied school for girls where the troops were often billeted. (72)

There was a horse-railway, too, leading back to Wytsbrouk and flat-car-loads of wounded were being drawn away by huge black horses or pushed along the track by walking wounded. (115)

Bricks and sandbags and hay and straw had to be moved about on wheels and parts taken up to the guns. Every morning they cleaned the stable. (83-84)

Findley’s style is remarkably prosaic, avoiding lexical ostentation in much the same way as documentary narratives of the First World War. Although he may allow himself the occasional simile—“The Signal Office, in a farmhouse, was as busy as a stock exchange in a falling market” (115)—Findley rarely expands descriptions beyond the most economical limits. However, the effects of this strategy are quite different from those of his precursors. Because of the openly retrospective position of the research-narrator, Findley acknowledges that referential gestures are always disguised intertextual allusions. The stock of knowledge Findley invokes is not that of the real world but of our familiarity with First World War literature, photographs, and film. The following description, for instance, immediately conjures up an image we are already familiar with: “Several men were asleep on the fire

steps—leaning back with their mouths open and their rifles stuck up between their legs” (85). If we have not actually seen pictures of men asleep on fire steps, we probably think that we have. Findley is able to allude to codes of knowledge as they have already been mediated by prior textual inscriptions. Descriptions in *The Wars* are economical because they allude to what is already known. The first view of the front, usually a signal for an elaborate descriptive expansion in First World War narratives, is in *The Wars* reduced to just a few lines: “The front, after all, was rather commonplace. Two long parallel lines of trenches, each with its separate network of communications ‘ditches’—a great many ruined farmhouses and some villages” (83). Although most commentators on the front tend to come to the same conclusion (the front is commonplace), they do so only after lengthy descriptions. Depending on the reader’s prior knowledge, Findley can begin with the conclusion and virtually dispense with supporting evidence. It could be said that Findley *designates* rather than *renders* what life at the front had been like. Whether he gleaned his knowledge of conditions from his uncle’s letters⁵ or from research into the First World War, he appeals to the reader’s *intertextual* rather than *referential* knowledge. The reader could say that much of what he or she reads is already familiar, thereby occupying a position not unlike that of the researcher in relationship to the photographs: “Part of what you see you recognize” (11). Where descriptive details in realistic narratives function as connotators of reality, Findley’s designations could be defined as connotators of his desire to connote reality. Instead of pretending to be reflecting, like a transparent window, “things as they really were,” *The Wars* signals an awareness that “reality” is always deferred through layers of (inter)textual mediation.

Structural narratologists (Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, Philippe Hamon) help us better understand Findley’s transformation of descriptive strategies. According to Barthes, descriptive elements like a barometer in Flaubert or a door in Michelet, apparently unnecessary to the narrative, “say nothing more than this: we are reality” (1968, 88; my trans.). If Findley mentions men “asleep on the fire steps,” destroyed “dugouts,” or “a German who had lain out in No Man’s Land for four days” (85), the referent is not so much the landscape or the soldier but the “real” because, as Genette contends, the unnecessary detail is “the medium par excellence of the referential illusion and therefore of the mimetic effect: it is a *connotator of mimesis*” (1980, 186). If description is to connote reality directly and spontaneously, it

must do so without acknowledging that the details are selected and arranged by and interpreting consciousness; we are thus treated to *someone's* reality. Seemingly objective descriptions do, in effect, indicate how they are meant to be read: "[Devlin] was a tall, frail man with a drooping moustache and a slightly receding hairline, despite the fact he was only twenty-seven. He tended to carry his head thrown back, which gave him at first glance a superior look that might have indicated snobbishness or grandeur" (86). Although an interpreting presence can already be detected in evaluative terms like "tall" or "frail," by the end of the passage we are told what Devlin's appearance *means*. We are not just "given" the facts but manipulated into accepting a specific view of them. There is thus a tension between description's ability to act as a connotator of reality (authenticating the narrative as a spontaneously given reflection of the world) and its tendency to subvert this aim by veering either into commentary (identifying the narrative as a subjective construct) or into lexical ostentation (foregrounding the narrative as a self-reflexive textual web).

Findley's tendency to use the realist conventions of First World War narratives in a "playful" postmodern fashion is particularly obvious in his appropriation of what Hamon calls an "empty thematic." Analyzing how narratives motivate descriptive elements, Hamon demonstrates that descriptions tend to be "framed" by demarcators introducing and ending them. If a garden is to be described, the description starts when a character pauses at a window to contemplate the flowers and trees outside, and it ends when he steps back into the room. The pause at the window, says Hamon, justifies the description and gives it a pseudo-order because the position at the window organizes the items in the list according to a fixed, and in this case elevated, perspective. The movement to the window and the contemplative "action" of the perceiver's gaze integrate the description into the narrative. Hamon identifies three descriptive topoi: seeing, speaking, and doing (180-223). I will discuss only the "seeing" topos, since it is most frequently used to create an illusion of reality. In the example of the garden, the character steps up to the window in order to *see* what has to be described and then to *speak* (or *think*) about it. In First World War narratives, descriptions of the devastated landscape are always motivated through the seeing topos. Although no narrative adopts all the ramifications of this topos, theoretically a description of no-man's land is motivated by the introduction of a newly arrived soldier who has no war experience. He is

naive and ignorant and, best of all, he is curious to know what no-man's land looks like. The new arrival demonstrates a desire to know. He then needs to be put in a position where he can actually see the devastation of the landscape. A gap in the parapet or, more commonly, a fire-step and a pair of binoculars prepare the description. At this point, it is quite customary to allude to some source of light (sun, moon, dawn, dusk, flares) that makes the scene visible. So far the new man has a desire to see and has the ability to see. For the description to be fully motivated, he now needs to speak about no-man's land and is therefore given an audience of veterans. The veterans, who already know what the new man describes, may embellish, modify, or contradict the new man's appraisal. In either case, the veterans constitute only a pseudo-audience since the description is really provided for the reader's benefit. Once the man steps down from the fire-step, the description has ended. A description therefore engenders what Hamon calls an "empty thematic" whose sole function is to motivate and narrativize descriptions. A new arrival appears because a description of the devastated landscape requires his presence.

Findley quite frequently resorts to markers of this "empty thematic"; in the following examples, for instance, he alludes to light sources in a conventional manner:

All he could see was the shape of Poole... (76)

This scene was lit by the moon. (61)

The fog began to lift in places. The shape of the dike was perceptible... (79)

Through the fog he saw a man... (81)

Then, because the tarp had fallen at an angle, light began to filter through from the fires outside and Robert could see... (110)

All of this could be seen and not seen. (114)

He shone his torch at the mud...and he saw there was a body... (176)

Although the markers of the "seeing" topos often function conventionally, at other times they introduce not a descriptive elaboration but draw attention to its *absence*. We are told that there is something to be seen, but Findley provides us with few or no details. The following sentence, for instance, appears at first glance to be a particularly striking example of Hamon's "seeing" topos: "The light was so good they were able to see some very interesting sights behind the German lines from the Observation Post" (84). We have here a light source and a perspective from an elevated position. But, instead of proceeding with a description of these "interesting sights," we are treated to Robert's meditation on *hypothetical* Germans for

the benefit of the newly arrived Levitt: "It made being up there important, somehow, if you could look out and say: 'Do you see that man right there with the blue scarf round his neck...?'" (84-85). The elaborate set-up for a description leads to a hypothetical German who, to make matters even more "unreal," wears the kind of "blue scarf" Harris is known for. Another marker of Hamon's "empty thematic" occurs when Robert and Poole walk away from the devastated front line: "It was a clear, blue day and the air was cold as ice. You could see for miles" (134). Once again, this motivation for a description creates an expectation which the text has no intention of satisfying. Findley does not elaborate on what exactly could be seen on this day when one "could see for miles." He seemingly relies on the reader's knowledge of the First World War to fill in the details which the text promises but refuses to deliver. Though still relying on descriptive techniques to create an illusion of reality, Findley draws attention to the artificiality involved in this process. Produced and consumed in a postmodern age, *The Wars* is indelibly marked by a narrative self-consciousness which restructures the role of description.

Findley's descriptive technique undermines the assumption that reality is open to observation and classification which the First World War writers still subscribe to. Their reliance on an Enlightenment self-understanding of the human subject as a rational agent capable of making sense of an essentially transparent objective world suggests that modern civilization can accommodate even the madness of war. Moreover, Findley's restructuring of description has repercussions for the larger structural articulations of the novel. Ideologically, the "seeing" topos is the metaphor *par excellence* of an Enlightenment tradition which postulates a universal reason allowing the human subject to achieve moral self-realization as well as social and political emancipation. First World War writers sought to make sense of the inexplicable horrors they had witnessed by imposing on them the comforting *Bildungsroman* paradigm, thereby suggesting that the war could be interpreted as a deplorable but necessary stage on the road to a better future. Carossa's epigraph (recurring throughout the text) typically enjoins us to "steal the light out of the throat of the snake." *The Wars* challenges this Enlightenment paradigm. The "seeing" topos not only withholds what is promised but problematizes the economy of observation either by defamiliarizing the object of observation or by preventing the subject from seeing. In the famous scenes of Robert watching Taffler and the Swede through the peep hole in the whorehouse and of Juliet seeing through an open door

Robert and Barbara making love, the observer apparently (mis)interprets what is presented as a *fragmented* vision. In both instances, the “seeing” topos introduces a partial picture, and sex is mistaken for violence. According to the Russian formalists, defamiliarization forces readers to *see* in a new light what they had habitually simply recognized in an automatic fashion. Although perception is made difficult, the object is eventually seen clearly. *The Wars* offers this kind of defamiliarization in the dike scene when Robert gradually works out that the sounds he could not identify were those of crows feeding on dead bodies. The process of perception is prolonged so that the final shock of recognition is all the more powerful. However, in the two scenes where sex is perceived as violence, defamiliarization does not involve the simple correction of a mistaken identification. Working out that the two scenes connote sex rather than violence only foregrounds a profound connection between two acts we conventionally consider to be fundamentally different. Contrary to the assumptions of modernity, “seeing clearly” means staring into the abyss of radical ambiguity.

A more obvious, but perhaps more powerful, example of Findley’s tendency to disrupt the ideological assumptions of modernity is the denial of sight as such. During the rape scene in the bath-house, Robert is in complete darkness, unable to identify his attackers. What is surely one of the novel’s most disturbing scenes can be interpreted as an extension of the “empty thematic” which characterizes Findley’s descriptive style. Straining to “see,” Robert is met with impenetrable darkness; violence is symbolically situated beyond the comforting paradigm of Enlightenment. This point is reinforced by Robert’s blindness at the end of the novel. The war having robbed him of the ability to see is analogous to the war demonstrating the failure of the Enlightenment metanarrative of human emancipation.

Documentary Sources

In addition to descriptive strategies, realistic war narratives conventionally resort to documentary sources in order to reinforce their sense of reality. References to letters, diaries, official reports, copies of orders, press cuttings, and labels signal a desire to reassure readers that the narrative can be trusted. In a rather cynical comment on his methodology in *Goodbye to All That*, Graves confirms that he included “plenty of letters because they make the story read true” (1930, 16). Such sources constitute, of course, the basic tools of historians who create their tableaux precisely through the accumulation

of documents and eyewitness accounts. Ironically, the personal and usually autobiographical stories written as alternatives to official histories nevertheless reproduced the legitimating strategies of just such histories. Anxiety about the documentary accuracy of the war accounts usually surfaces in the need for distinguishing, within the text, between hysterical anecdotes and historical facts. Anonymous “rumors” or “the usual loose talk that one heard at the Base” (Graves 1960, 155) are typically contrasted with believable second-hand stories which are attributed to named sources. “True” stories are presumably legitimized by the assurance that their mediator can be trusted. Documentary evidence is obviously meant to guarantee the narrative’s authenticity. Paradoxically, of course, documents and eyewitness accounts cannot help but reveal, precisely through this pointed reassurance, that the narrative cannot, in fact, be trusted. The inclusion of documents and eyewitness accounts accentuates a constant struggle between asserting the possibility of factual accuracy and the impossibility of escaping fiction.

Unearthed photographs (as well as taped conversations with eyewitnesses) in *The Wars* can be seen as an updated duplication of the documentary impulse manifesting itself in First World War narratives. These “documents” are mediated by a researcher-narrator who interposes himself between the reader and the already technically reproduced reality they denote. This double mediation signals an acknowledgment of fiction-making which the earlier war narratives sought to ward off through documentary guarantees. Since the researcher-narrator does not tell his own personal story, he is in the position of the historian who retrospectively puts together a picture based on traces of the past. Much has been written about photography in *The Wars*. For York, photography “becomes a type of surrogate memory” (1988:85), “fixing the past in order to celebrate it” (1988:84). In her view, photographs are necessary to preserve “memories of life-sustaining acts of courage such as Robert Ross’s desertion” (1988:85). In a less positive vein, Kröller asserts that not all photographs have a “consoling quality”; the crucial image of Robert Ross riding toward the camera after the burning of the barn could be seen as “traumatic” (68). She then focuses on the *camera obscura* as a metaphor for enclosed spaces like the whorehouse, the hold of the ship, the shell crater, the bath house. Depending on the critic’s view of events, photography can be interpreted in either positive or negative terms. More often, though, critics point out that the researcher’s struggle to assemble the pieces of Robert Ross’s story becomes a question-

ing of the readers' "assumptions about authority and the nature of knowledge" (Brydon 77).⁶ For Brydon, "facts prove less reliable than fictions" (77) and for Palmateer Pennie the "layers of intertextuality" demonstrate "the greater truth value of the fictive" (54). Such affirmations of fiction implicitly assume that there is a factual ground against which the fictive receives its value. A closer analysis of Findley's use of photography reveals a more complex interpenetration of fact and fiction than is acknowledged by those asserting either historical verisimilitude or the primacy of fiction.

Unlike the autobiographical commemorators, Findley stresses from the beginning that he is representing a *representation* and not a reality. "You begin at the archives with photographs" (11), says the researcher. But that is not where the reader begins: we read descriptions of photographs or "image[s] of an image" (Sontag 5). In spite of the high visibility of this mediating process, photography is "a pure deictic language," expressing what Barthes calls "the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency," or, in more concrete terms, "the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real" (1981, 4). In short, "the referent adheres" (Barthes 1981, 6). Among the many effects of photographs in *The Wars* remains the conventional one of reassuring the reader of the narrative's authenticity. On the simplest level, the researcher's descriptions of photographs ring true because, as York points out, "Findley's analysis of the role of photography during those years is historically accurate" (1988, 56). York only confirms what Findley himself has already drawn attention to: "There were lots of photographs in our house, in boxes and albums. That was the period between 1895 and 1925, I would say, when the still camera was the number, and everybody had one, and people took pictures of virtually everything" (Aitken, 82). The reader is encouraged to accept the actual existence of "snapshots" showing Edwardian fashions, the "Boys' Brigade with band," families "sitting overdressed in Packards" (11-12). Then the war intrudes with women "throwing flowers and waving flags" and with trains "pulling out of stations" and ships "sailing out of ports" (12). The photographic record can further be trusted to document how Ypres changed the way people felt about the war (12). Like description, photography activates an already existing stock of knowledge. According to Sontag, the photographic document is necessarily retrospective: "There can be no evidence, photographic or otherwise, of an event until the event itself has been named and characterized" (19). And like the descriptive detail or "fact," photographs "cannot themselves explain any-

thing,” but are “inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (23). Although photographs can create an *inventory* of the world, they cannot produce an *understanding* of the slice of reality which they so arbitrarily and discontinuously present.

The researcher appropriates the photographs not only by selecting them but also by highlighting their significance. They make his “point” about the social atmosphere into which Findley then introduces photographs of the fictional Robert Ross. As the researcher moves from “public to private fact” (York 1988, 81), the author asks us to accept an imagined character as a historically real person.⁷ The first photograph of Robert Ross⁸ depicts him “*riding straight towards the camera*” (12). But the scene of Robert in burning uniform leaning along the black “horse’s neck” is almost certainly *imaginary*.⁹ Not only would I agree with Hulcoop that it is unlikely that a photographer was present to take pictures but shutter speeds were too slow to allow such a “*fiery image*” to be captured without significant blurring. Inserted between the public photographic record of the period and the private one of Robert’s life, an imaginary photograph warns us against trusting documentary evidence unquestioningly. That the “real” and the “imaginary” contaminate each other is reinforced in the next photograph of Robert. This time, the researcher’s gaze zooms in on him “standing on the sidelines” of a crowd listening to the Band playing “Soldiers of the Queen” (13). A fictional character is almost imperceptibly slipped into the margin of what is presented as a “real” photograph. Although marginalized, the fictional character offers the possibility of understanding; animating the photographic inventory of public fact, Robert Ross supplies the speculative dimension which alone leads to deeper meaning. At the same time, the intrusion of the imaginary into the real undermines the ontological stability of the text’s documentary legitimation. Although we tend to assume that the “real” photographs are meant to guarantee the authenticity of a fictional character, it could also be argued that the fictional character imbues the documentary inventory with a reality it could not otherwise hope to achieve. The fictional character’s entry into the historical record reinforces the postmodern point that the center (the historically real) is not only threatened by the margin (fiction) but also dependent on it for its truth claims.¹⁰

What makes matters even more complicated is Findley’s tendency to surround Robert Ross with historical figures of sometimes mythical dimen-

sions. Such references to historical reality are neither frequent enough nor sufficiently sustained to characterize *The Wars* as an illustration of Hutcheon's "historiographic metafiction." Her Findley example in *The Canadian Postmodern* is indeed *Famous Last Words* rather than *The Wars*. Nevertheless, through the protagonist's proper name, *The Wars* establishes a symbolic connection with Oscar Wilde's lover of the same name¹¹ and thereby with a discourse of the socio-sexually improper. Moreover, as York has documented in some detail, Siegfried Sassoon takes his place "as a mythical figure in the world of *The Wars*" (1991, 47). Other historical figures alluded to are Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Tom Longboat, Virginia Woolf. For Linda Hutcheon, the inclusion of such historical personages in the fictional text constitutes a generic marker for what her postmodern poetics identifies as "historiographic metafiction." She raises the issue "of how the intertexts of history, its documents or its traces, get incorporated into such an avowedly fictional context, while somehow also retaining their historical documentary value" (1989, 82). At the very least, *The Wars* breaks down the opposition between history and fiction, foregrounding that the real is accessible only through (inter)textual traces. Paradoxically, in the very act of reinforcing the fictional text's grounding in the historically real, the document or the historical figure cannot but acknowledge the process of supplementarity which this grounding is meant to contain.

The interplay of verbal and visual representations in *The Wars* dramatizes this postmodern acknowledgment of supplementarity. Going back to the early pages of the novel, we recall that Robert Ross reaches us through the verbal representation (the researcher's text) of an exemplary visual representation (a particular photograph of Ross) of a prior visual representation (the photographs of the period). This chain of substitutions indicates that the meaning of a scene cannot be located in any particular moment so that there is no origin to authorize the discourse. The meaning of the First World War resides neither in the historical record consulted by the researcher (and the author) nor in the speculations provided by the researcher (and the reader). Standing in for an event which no longer exists, the photograph subverts presence in two contradictory ways: it fixes the image of an absence at the same time as making it infinitely reproducible. Paradoxically, of course, an image becomes recognizable (or fixed) only because it can be repeated. Identification or naming depends on the recurrence of an event or object. Duplication (and hence duplicity) is therefore at work in the very process of

naming which is meant to ensure singularity and stability. In *The Wars*, the use of photographs alerts us to the slippery ground on which all meaning is produced. This is graphically demonstrated in the researcher's attempt to describe a photograph of Robert in his new uniform:

Dead men are serious—that's what this photograph is striving to say. Survival is precluded. Death is romantic—got from silent images. I lived—was young—and died. But not real death, of course, because I'm standing here alive with all these lights that shine so brightly in my eyes. Oh—I can tell you, sort of, what it might be like to die. *The Death of General Wolfe*. Someone will hold my hand and I won't really suffer pain because I've suffered that already and survived. (49).

The researcher's verbal representation of a visual representation (the photograph of Robert in his new uniform) is followed by the researcher's verbal speculation that Robert believed death to be romantic. This speculation is reinforced by an allusion to a painting of General Wolfe dying. The representation of Robert in the photograph is thus explained by another representation (General Wolfe) so that the reader deciphers the representation (the text) of a representation (the photograph) of a representation (the painting). It is most fitting that Findley should have chosen the theme of death to illustrate this process of sense-making as a process of substitutions. "Photography is an elegiac art," contends Sontag, for by "slicing out [a] moment by freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt" (15). The photograph confers immortality (the picture continues to exist) at the same time as it acts as a reminder of mortality (the event has ended). As a "memento mori" (Sontag 15), the photograph always alludes to "the return of the dead" (Barthes 1981, 9). That Findley is well aware of such connections is borne out in comments he made in an interview. Speaking of how "mysterious" photographs are to him, he emphasizes that in photographs "one never, never, never dies." There is in photography "a will to project, to bring life back that's gone, and dissect and keep the dead alive" (Aitken 83). But neither verbal nor visual images can recuperate what is lost; they can only interminably speak their nostalgia for the traces of the past.

If the photograph is "both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence" (Sontag 16), then it speaks to the supplementarity that prevents the thing-in-itself from being fully present to itself. According to Derrida, "*mimesis*, mimicry, imitation" are all other "titles" for what he calls the "aporetic paradox" (1992, 31), the non-coincidence of the thing and its representation. To re-present is thus the attempt to fill in the gaps or aporias which separate

the perceiver from the thing perceived. Where the First World War writers sought to conceal or deny the “aporetic abyss,” Findley celebrates its impact on his narrative practice. I have already commented on his tendency to hollow out the conventions of description, thereby undermining the authenticating function they still enjoyed in First World War narratives. Along similar lines, he uses the photographic document not to guarantee factual accuracy but to foreground the process of supplementarity inherent in all movements of signification. *The Wars* seems characterized by the contradictory desire both to assert and to contest the power of conventional literary devices. First World War narrators represented the experience of war without seriously doubting the ability of a self-present subject to reflect reality directly and honestly. But, as Brydon points out, Findley’s researcher “questions his readers’ assumptions about authority and the nature of knowledge” (77). The reader is empowered to suspect the narrator’s capacity to trace and interpret the past. Instead of focusing events through a central consciousness, Findley offers conflicting views through a variety of witnesses and readers. We are not treated to “facts” (or “experiences”) but to interpretations. The researcher often delegates narrative authority to witnesses like Marian Turner and Juliet d’Orsey. He or she is in turn spoken by an extradiegetic narrator or structuring principle. In addition, Robert Ross reaches us through a host of further mediating secondary characters who either “read” Robert Ross himself or the conditions he endured. There are direct interpretations of Robert Ross’s actions by Stuart Ross who rejects his brother or by Mickle who “decided that, plainly, he was dealing with a man gone mad” (185). There are also less direct “readings” of Robert Ross. Taffler’s reading of the war as a manly contest contrasts with Rodwell’s reading of it as the brutal slaughter of innocent creatures. Then there is Levitt, the literal reader of *On War* by Clausewitz, whose interpretation of war as an ordered minuet is so at odds with reality that he goes mad. That interpretation is a tricky business is borne out when the researcher, looking at a “photograph of the ocean,” discovers an arrow “pointing to a small white dot on the far horizon.” Above the arrow, “written in bold black ink is the question: ‘WHAT IS THIS?’” The researcher immediately identifies the white dot as an iceberg¹² and comments: “Why whoever took the picture failed to verify this fact remains a mystery” (15). But what guarantee does the reader of *The Wars* have that the researcher’s identification of this “fact” is accurate? Contrary to the assumptions of modernity, every interpretive act necessarily risks missing its target.

Symbolic Patterns

Findley's postmodern anxiety about narrative authority is perhaps most pointedly illustrated in his use of images and echo scenes. Critical opinion is perhaps most split on the question of how effective the abundance of symbolic patterns in *The Wars* really is. Reacting against a reviewer's contention that "the excessive accumulation of images" constitutes a "flaw," Laurie Ricou, for instance, defends Findley's ability to "manipulate" images and build "symbolic patterns" (134-35). From a postmodern perspective, Findley's excessive reliance on symbolic patterns appears once again both as an endorsement and as a critique of an earlier narrative tradition. In addition to undermining the documentary truth claims of realism, *The Wars* also problematizes the modernist assumption that symbolic patterns offer access to a higher form of truth. Traditionally an image has been defined as an object, person, or incident which takes on a meaning beyond its objective or literal substance. A text's symbolic dimension superimposes what structuralists identify as the paradigmatic axis of meaning onto the syntagmatic chain of signification. Instead of taking its significance from the linear forward movement of the narrative (its metonymic axis), the text establishes a network of associative links (its metaphoric axis). Most documentary First World War narratives are predominantly metonymic, eschewing metaphorical ostentation for fear that poetic license would distort their supposedly objective accounts.¹³ However, those First World War narratives with specifically *literary* aspirations—Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers*, Mottram's *Farm Trilogy*, Aldington's *Death of a Hero*—tend to communicate a deeper meaning of the war through symbolic structures. Since the most celebrated modernist war novel is undoubtedly Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, it will serve as a test case against which Findley's postmodern practice can be measured.

Through symbols and echo scenes, Hemingway creates powerful emotional effects, making "people feel something more than they understood" (quoted in Miller, 5). The most frequently debated "symbolic effects" in *A Farewell to Arms* are "the weather, the emblematic people, and the landscapes" (Baker 34). Among the "natural symbolism" (Baker 33), we find rain which is associated with disaster and, more specifically, with Catherine's death. Not only is it raining when she watches Frederic return to the front and when she rows with him up the lake, but we are told that, in a dream, she sees herself dead in the rain. However, as Reynolds emphasizes, the

logic of the symbolism is at bottom at odds with the logic of events. "It comes as no surprise," he argues, "when Catherine tells Frederic that she is pregnant. Once the predictions of her pregnancy are fulfilled, there can be little doubt that Catherine's prophecy that she sees herself dead in the rain will also be fulfilled. There is nothing logical in these predictions of death; there is no apparent cause and effect at work. However, both the pregnancy and her death seem inevitable by the time they are achieved" (239-40). The doom associated with rain makes us react to Catherine's death as a sign of the times (war) and as an indicator of existential anguish (fate). This symbolic reading is contradicted by the logic of the story since Catherine dies not because of the war but because of Frederic's sexual self-indulgence. But this logical reading of Frederic as a self-centered male is only available once we resist the novel's overt symbolic understanding of him as a romantic anti-hero who, at the end of the story, stands in glorious isolation facing an existentially doomed world. Similar aporetic effects occur in Hemingway's skillful use of echo scenes.¹⁴ *A Farewell to Arms* is particularly impressive in its "tight synchronization" of the "cycles of nature, love, and war" (Reynolds 267). Through "the seasonal cycle of the land and the seasonal cycle of the war" Hemingway is able to show that the destructiveness of the war cycle is dependent upon the same seasonal weather changes that regenerate the land" (Reynolds 263). Since destruction is an integral part of the fertility cycle, the war is shown to renew its destructive energy in the spring when nature also renews itself. Similarly, since sex as the life force has for its consequence the pregnancy that kills Catherine, love and war are "two sides of the same coin and the coin has a death's-head on either side" (Reynolds 265). Echo scenes throughout the five parts of the novel produce a network of balances and ironic reversals, a symbolic pattern which imbues events with a necessity they do not logically possess. In a totalizing gesture typical of high modernism, *A Farewell to Arms* both opens and then limits the play of signification. Until recently, readers have quite unquestioningly accepted the symbolic (romantic) understanding the novel promulgates. At a time when New Criticism flourished, readers were generally prepared to accept Romantic notions of the symbol as a unifying synthesis of disparate moments or phenomena. Poststructuralist reaction against our Romantic heritage now allows us to read symbolic structures more skeptically, deconstructing their unifying gestures by focusing on the narrative's aporias.

Findley, too, uses nature symbolism to create an "imaginative impact"

which “goes beyond the effects of verisimilitude” (Pirie 79). Unlike Hemingway, though, he seems acutely aware of the problematic status of symbolic structures. Although *The Wars* evidently invites us to construct a symbolic reading of events, it simultaneously seems to question the legitimacy of this invitation. Critics have been quick to pick up on the self-interpreting inscription “earth and air and fire and water” (190) on Robert’s gravestone and on the many echo scenes connecting disparate moments in Robert’s life. Indeed, *The Wars* relies more readily on symbolic structures than any other narrative about the First World War. Virtually everything in the novel seems to link up with everything else. In Hemingway’s novel, symbolic structures were supposed to help readers arrive at a higher truth about the war. It is only now, in a poststructuralist climate, that we are increasingly suspicious of Hemingway’s attempts at narrative closure. Whether intentionally or not, Findley foregrounds the fundamental instability of paradigmatic associations. Using symbolic structures with a vengeance, he draws attention both to their power and to their limitations. He not only appropriates this modernist device but also stresses its duplicity.

Alerted by the gravestone inscription to the recurrence of images associated with earth, air, fire, and water, readers have tended to interpret *The Wars* according to the “traditional symbolism of the elements” (Klovan 66). Klovan shows, for instance, that the fire which eventually destroys Robert is foreshadowed by allusion to Villiers dying of burn wounds, the chimney fires of the Ross factories, the burning Parliament Buildings, the train the Indians call “fire horse,” St. Eloi (the saint of smiths and metal workers), and living “under fire” at the front. Aside from his final trial by fire, Robert endured trials by earth and water (drowning in mud) and by air (gas attacks). Klovan stresses that these images work ambiguously; water, for instance, carries positive connotations when the coyote leads Robert to the well and negative ones when Robert crosses the ocean or the broken dike. Klovan’s interpretation of the gravestone inscription as an indication of the “elemental nature of Robert’s journey through the war” (65) overlooks the complex ways in which images criss-cross throughout the novel. According to the romantic aesthetic tradition, images transcend the ordinary meaning of words, achieving a higher sense of harmony by reconciling contraries and resolving incoherences. No matter how ambiguous images may be, the reader is able to take away from the text an impression of unified meaning. The critical consensus about the images in *The Wars* seems to be that war

inverts and perverts life-giving elements into death-dealing traps. The new critic, this inheritor of the romantic tradition, is able to achieve the illusion of narrative closure (determinate meaning) while also affirming textual ambiguity and complexity (unity of opposites).

Findley's novel obviously authorizes this kind of "closed" reading, but its network of associations also far exceeds such a reductive interpretive frame. A close analysis of *The Wars* reveals that various chains of images overlap, crisscross, loop back on themselves, and undermine each other. Starting anywhere in the text, readers can enjoy unraveling image associations and echo scenes, only to discover that one loses one's way in the textual web instead of reaching a satisfying destination. Entering the text quite randomly where Robert recalls that the Indian name for a train is "fire horse," I am in a position to trace paradigmatic associations in a dizzying slide toward epistemological instability. On the most obvious level, the train links up with the often documented chain of fire images and with that of horses (and animals in general). "Indian" suggests Robert's fascination with Longboat and hence with (marathon) running. We may also recall that Teddy Budge hits Robert with one of "Robert's Indian clubs" (25) and that the Swede is said to have had his tongue cut out by Indians (42). During her ruminations about Robert having bruised himself skating, Mrs Ross further compares him to "a savage painted for the wars" (27). But Longboat also invokes a series of running images. We need only think of Robert's marathon attempt around his city block and his jog in Lethbridge with a coyote. Aside from such literal running, the image suggests Robert's desire to escape from the war; he wishes he could "run away" (93) while lying awake in the dugout, and he eventually deserts. Since running foregrounds breathing, the reader is invited to pursue the many references to breath and breathlessness. In the whorehouse scene, for instance, Robert is described as "breathless" as he stares through the peep hole. Then he is shown to hear Taffler and the Swede "breathing." Robert then comments that the two men "breathing in tandem" are "just like two people running side by side" (44). The train itself was in fact "breathing" in that "Great clouds of steam billowed out around its wheels" (18). Among other things, breathing is prominently associated with Harris who cannot breathe because he caught pneumonia by inhaling the cold air on the ocean voyage. In hospital, Harris claims that he can breathe only under water but chokes in the air (95-96). Now the air images join the chain of water images. Robert is constantly

afraid of both drowning in either water or mud and of choking either in mud, in airless enclosures, or during gas attacks. Meaning is disseminated along intersecting chains of associations so that the textual web can be thickened at any point in the novel. Going arbitrarily back to the bathroom scene where Mrs Ross calls Robert a “painted savage,” I could mention that it anticipates the rape scene in the bath house in Bailleul. Moreover, using the “sink as an ashtray,” Mrs Ross watches her cigarette ashes “fall down the porcelain slopes like mountain climbers tumbling to their death” (26). Robert later watches his men slide down the crater of the gun emplacement where they almost find their death. The bruises Robert soothes in the bathtub in turn connect with his fall on the boat and his subsequent involvement with Harris. The textual web I have constructed testifies not only to Findley’s consummate artistry but also to the instability of language as such. It is unlikely that Findley “intended” all the connections I have posited; it is even unlikely that any other reader would duplicate my particular meandering path. My point is that the novel authorizes links through images and echo scenes which defer rather than capture meaning. *The Wars* creates a “pleasure of the text” which joyfully exceeds the limits of the reader’s referential and conventional symbolic expectations.

The network of associations in *The Wars* draws attention to the production of meaning as an arbitrary process; in Derrida’s terms, “the letter” (language) need not necessarily arrive at its destination (determinate meaning).¹⁵ Hemingway’s relatively sparing use of symbolic structures lures readers into interpreting them as fairly stable metaphorical bridges. It is only by demystifying the romantic aesthetic underpinning his practice that the symbolic method yields up its contradictory significance. Although Findley is clearly nostalgic for this romantic aesthetic, he is too self-conscious a writer to leave symbolic structures unquestioned. By overdetermining *The Wars* with metaphoric signification, Findley in effect conforms to the postmodern insight that metaphoricity is inhabited by allegorical implications which it seeks to deny. Clarifying the difference between symbol and allegory, Todorov stresses that the symbol attracts “the full panoply of characteristics accredited by the romantics: it is productive, intransitive, motivated; it achieves the fusion of contraries; it is and it signifies at the same time; its content eludes reason: it expresses the inexpressible. In contrast, allegory, obviously, is already made, transitive, arbitrary, pure signification, an expression of reason” (206). Postmodernist theorists consider

allegory to be a less duplicitous trope than metaphor. De Man, for instance, condemns the (romantic) “attraction of reconciliation” as “the elective breeding-ground of false models and metaphors” (5), positing instead an (allegorical) rhetoric which “radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration” (10). In other words, the romantic view of metaphoricity is deceptive in that it obliterates difference and hence mediation. Allegory openly acknowledges its arbitrary process, admits that it works by analogy, and foregrounds difference and mediation. Although Findley seems haunted by the fear of not having made himself clear (Gibson 146), his narrative practice is nevertheless marked by a (perhaps unconscious) understanding of allegory as the privileged postmodern trope. An observation by Brydon points in this direction: “The dikes on the front only appear to repeat Robert’s memories of the raft at Jackson’s Point; the horse and dog on the railway track only appear to repeat the horse and dog outside Wetgoods; Lady Juliet’s love for Robert only appears to repeat her ancestor’s love for her doomed soldier. All these things are fundamentally unlike; it is only human desire that sees them as repetitions” (77). This “human desire” to connect the unlike implies a romantic desire for the work of art as a harmonious whole. However, using symbolic structures with a vengeance, Findley’s narrative practice slides into allegory. A nostalgic yearning for unified meaning and narrative closure is undermined by a Derridean metaphoricity whose exuberance constantly threatens the “proper” meaning to which the metaphoric detour is meant to return. A close look at images and echo scenes in *The Wars* reveals a vertiginous rhetorical play which questions the possibility of clear and proper meaning.

Conclusion

The Wars is marked by a self-conscious reworking of the war genre which situates it clearly in a postmodern and post-Vietnam world. The commemorations of combatants reinscribe within their form an investment in modernity which the technoscientific slaughter of the First World War was in the process of undermining. Publishing *The Wars* in 1977, Findley could no longer ignore this ideologically suspect investment in modernity. However, postmodernism does not offer itself as an unproblematical solution to the difficulties of reproducing the war experience. One of the most significant areas of the postmodern debate centers precisely on the relationship between the aesthetic and the political. Postmodernism has typically

been accused of being ahistorical and hence apolitical; according to this view, it signals a playfully irresponsible emphasis on (inter)textuality, refusing to engage seriously with social issues. Indeed, it seems that the postmodern invites a passive resignation to or, worse, a cynical reinforcement of the way things are. This negative interpretation of the socio-political consequences of postmodernism is contested by a more favorable view. Instead of understanding postmodernism as conservative and regressive, it can also be seen as a disruptive force intent on subverting the *status quo*. From this perspective, the postmodern opens up avenues for political change. Although I would acknowledge that *The Wars* does not have the kind of political impact to end all wars, I would nevertheless contend that its postmodern strategies are capable of demystifying the ideological investments in modernity which manifest themselves in earlier First World War narratives. Findley thereby disrupts the accommodations and complicities his precursors unwittingly produced by resorting to narrative strategies which remained indebted to an Enlightenment self-understanding. Through their descriptive technique, the First World War writers privileged the scientific method of first observing and then reproducing phenomena objectively so as to allow the “facts” to speak for themselves. By naming and classifying the chaos of the front, the First World War writers in effect domesticated the war, thereby integrating it into the continuist image of civilization’s progress. Reliance on documentary sources similarly reproduced the pseudo-scientific methodology of history, thereby propagating the assumption that the world is accessible through experience and amenable to rational understanding. Reacting against the “scientism” of nineteenth-century realism, Hemingway resorted to a modernist approach, holding that symbolic patterns communicate a higher truth than the mere accumulation of facts. But Hemingway’s modernism manifests a need for narrative closure which is driven by a desperate desire to control contingency and thereby impose order on the chaos of war. No matter what *A Farewell to Arms* says, formally it communicates a totalizing attitude.

Findley’s reinscription of the First World War problematizes the ideological implications the earlier war literature necessarily carries. Although presumably driven by formal rather than ideological motivations, Findley’s formal strategies disrupt the assumptions on which First World War writers based their texts. Being a highly self-conscious writer, Findley could no longer use the earlier narrative strategies without also questioning them. He

does so primarily by foregrounding the *mediated* status of literary texts which his precursors tried hard to conceal or naturalize. Instead of insisting on the referential axis of description, he draws attention to the mediating presence of an interpreter and to (inter)textual interference in the process of representation. This self-conscious contestation of literature as a transparent window onto the world is reinforced by the treatment of the photograph as a documentary source. Here the mediating process is unmistakably foregrounded as a chain of supplementary meaning which is anchored neither in some “originary” reality nor in some teleological moment of closure. The symbolic patterning of *The Wars* confirms the instability of language which disrupts the totalizing gesture of both the documentary writers (a transparently self-present reality) and of modernist writers like Hemingway (a transcendently unified higher order). Although Findley’s anxiety about making himself clear illustrates a nostalgic yearning for certainty and order, his actual narrative practice is sufficiently driven by postmodern imperatives to counteract this nostalgia. *The Wars* constitutes a significant transformation of the war genre if only because formally it demystifies the ideological investments in modernity so characteristic of other First World War narratives.

NOTES

- 1 Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War* (1928), Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930), Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Frederic Manning, *Her Privates We* (1930), R.H. Mottram, *The Spanish Farm Trilogy* (1927), Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero* (1929), David Jones, *In Parenthesis* (1937), Charles Yale Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed* (1928), Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (1929), Hans Carossa, *Rumänisches Tagebuch* (1924), Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (1920), Ludwig Renn, *Krieg* (1928), Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen Nichts Neues* (1928), Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu* (1916), Roland Dorgeles, *Les croix de bois* (1919).
- 2 Fussell maintains, for instance, that “the meaning of the [Second World] war seemed inaccessible” to an “unbombed America” (1989:268). Similarly, in response to John Kenneth Galbraith’s criticism of the American decision to drop the atom bomb over Japan, Fussell asks: “What did he do in the war? He worked in the Office of Price Administration in Washington. I don’t demand that he experience having his ass shot off. I merely note that he didn’t” (1988:18).
- 3 To my knowledge, the only lengthy discussions of *The Wars* as an actual war novel have been M.L. McKenzie’s “Memoirs of the Great War: Graves, Sassoon, and Findley,” Eric Thompson’s “Canadian Fiction and the Great War,” Laurie Ricou’s “Obscured by Violence: Timothy Findley’s *The Wars*,” and Lorraine M. York’s chapter on *The Wars* in *Front Lines: The Fiction of Timothy Findley*. These studies have been primarily thematic, suggesting that *The Wars* deserves inclusion in both English and Canadian traditions of

- war stories. In "'Tis Sixty Years Since': Timothy Findley's *The Wars* and Roger McDonald's 1915," Coral Ann Howells compares two novels by colonial authors written roughly sixty years after the conflict. Her main emphasis is on national identification marks and differences.
- 4 For a more detailed discussion of these strategies and their ideological implications in First World War narratives, see my *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*.
 - 5 In an interview, Findley informs us that the letters from his uncle Thomas Irving (Tif) Findley, who served with the artillery during the First World War, constitute an "extraordinary chronicle" (Aitken 83) of the period covered by *The Wars*.
 - 6 Kröller makes the same point when she argues that "*The Wars* is informed by the chronicler's increasing doubtfulness about the ability of fiction (and, for that matter, of writing in general) to recreate reality from the traces it has left behind in the form of maps, letters, cablegrams, newspaper clippings, and masses of 'snapshots and portraits'" (68).
 - 7 That Findley is successful in presenting a character as a "real" person is constantly borne out in classrooms where students assume that Robert Ross actually existed.
 - 8 Because Robert Ross is not described at all, I am here discounting the brief mention of a photograph of "Robert and Rowena—rabbits and wheelchairs—children, dogs and horses" (11).
 - 9 John Hulcoop raises the possibility of an imaginary photograph by pointing out that "so far as we know, no photographer is present to take pictures when Robert breaks out of the fired barn" (33).
 - 10 In order to assert its privileged status, the historically real has to exclude the fictional "other." The historically real thus depends for its identity on an exclusionary move which, precisely because it is needed, indicates that it is inhabited by the fictional other which it denies by expelling it.
 - 11 I am not suggesting that Findley necessarily intended that "Robert Ross" coincide with the name of Wilde's friend. The anonymous reader of this paper assures me that Findley once said in his "*presence and hearing* that it had never occurred to him ("I never thought of that!"). However, no matter how accidental this coincidence may be, the reader cannot help but make it part of his or her interpretation.
 - 12 This reference to the iceberg is, of course, proleptically borrowed from *The Telling of Lies*.
 - 13 Occasionally they may evoke everyday life in the trenches in terms of the familiar world at home; the labyrinth of trenches, for instance, is often likened to city streets. More extravagantly, perhaps, the nightmare world of the trenches is associated with natural catastrophes like volcanoes, earthquakes, or thunderstorms. Such images suggest reassuringly that the horrors of war are temporary eruptions in a natural cycle.
 - 14 Frederic's daydream of spending a night with Catherine in a Milan hotel room finds its ironic echo when the night in Milan marks Frederic's departure and makes Catherine feel like a whore. In a similar ironic twist, Frederic does not spend his planned leave with Catherine on the Lago Maggiore but ends up rowing along its shore during his escape with the now pregnant Catherine.
 - 14 See Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth."

WORKS CITED

- Aitken, Johan. 1982. "'Long Live the Dead': An Interview with Timothy Findley." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 33:79-93.
- Aldington, Richard. 1984. *Death of a Hero*. London: Hogarth (1st ed. 1929).
- Baker, Carlos. 1971. "Ernest Hemingway: *A Farewell to Arms*." In *Studies in A Farewell to Arms*. Ed. John Graham. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill. 27-38.
- Barbusse, Henri. 1917. *Under Fire*. Trans. Fitzwater Wray. London: Dent.
- . 1965. *Le Feu*. Paris: Flammarion (1st ed. 1916).
- Barthes, Roland. 1968. "L'effet de réel." *Communications* 11:84-9.
- Barthes, Roland. 1981. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Blunden, Edmund. 1982. *Undertones of War*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1st ed. 1928).
- Brydon, Diana. 1986. "A Devotion to Fragility: Timothy Findley's *The Wars*." *World Literature Written in English* 26,1:75-84.
- Carossa, Hans. 1978. *Rumänisches Tagebuch*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag (1st ed. 1924).
- Cobley, Evelyn. 1994. *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*. Toronto: U of Toronto P.
- de Man, Paul. 1979. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- de Montherlant, Henry. 1954. *Le Songe*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1988. "The Purveyor of Truth." In *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida, and Psychoanalytic Reading*. Eds John P. Muller and William J. Richardson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP. 173-212.
- . 1992. "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering.'" In *Derrida: A Critical Reader*. Ed. David Wood. Oxford: Blackwell. 5-35.
- Dorgelès, Roland. 1919. *Les croix de bois*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Dos Passos, John. 1921. *Three Soldiers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Drolet, Gilbert. 1981-82. "'Prayers against Despair': A Retrospective Note on Findley's *The Wars*." *Journal of Canadian Fiction* 33:148-55.
- Findley, Timothy. 1977. *The Wars*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Fussell, Paul. 1988. *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays*. New York: Summit Books.
- . 1989. *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Genette, Gérard. 1966. "Frontières du récit." *Communications* 8:152-63.
- . 1980. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Gibson, Graeme. 1973. *Eleven Canadian Novelists*. Toronto: Anansi. 115-49.
- Graves, Robert. 1930. "Postscript to 'Goodbye to All That.'" In *But It Still Goes On*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- . 1960. *Goodbye to All That*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1st ed. 1929).
- Hamon, Philippe. 1981. *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptif*. Paris: Hachette.
- Harrison, Charles Yale. 1976. *Generals Die in Bed*. Hamilton, Ont.: Potlatch (1st ed. 1928).
- Hemingway, Ernest. 1929. *A Farewell to Arms*. New York: Charles Scribner's & Sons.

- Howells, Coral Ann. 1984. "'Tis Sixty Years Since': Timothy Findley's *The Wars* and Roger McDonald's 1915." *World Literature Written in English* 23,1:129-36.
- Hulcoop, John. 1981. "Look! Listen! Mark My Words! Paying Attention to Timothy Findley's Fictions." *Canadian Literature* 91:22-47.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1989. *The Politics of Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.
- . 1988. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge.
- . 1988. *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study in Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: Oxford UP.
- Jones, David. 1969. In *Parenthesis*. London: Faber & Faber (1st ed. 1937).
- Jünger, Ernst. 1920. In *Stahlgewittern*. In *Ernst Jünger: Werke*, vol. 1. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett.
- Klovan, Peter. 1981. "Bright and Good': Findley's *The Wars*." *Canadian Literature* 91:58-69.
- Kröller, Eva-Marie. 1981. "The Exploding Frame: Uses of Photography in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 16.3-4:68-74.
- Manning, Frederic. 1930. *Her Privates We*. London: Peter Davies.
- McKenzie, M.L. Sister. 1986. "Memories of the Great War: Graves, Sassoon, and Findley." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 55, 4:395-41.
- Miller Patterson, Linda. 1990. "Hemingway's Women: A Reassessment." In *Hemingway in Italy and Other Essays*. Ed. Robert W. Lewis. New York: Praeger. 3-9.
- Mottram, R.H. 1979. *The Spanish Farm Trilogy*. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1st ed. 1927).
- Palmateer Pennee, Donna. 1991. *Moral Metafiction: Counterdiscourse in the Novels of Timothy Findley*. ECW Press.
- Pirie, Bruce. 1981. "The Dragon in the Fog: 'Displaced Mythology' in *The Wars*." *Canadian Literature* 91:70-79.
- Remarque, Erich Maria. 1983. *Im Westen Nichts Neues*. Frankfurt: Ullstein (1st ed. 1928).
- Renn, Ludwig. 1979. *Krieg*. Königstein: Athenäum (1st ed. 1928).
- Reynolds, Michael S. 1976. *Hemingway's First War: The Making of A Farewell to Arms*. Princeton: Princeton UP.
- Ricou, Laurie. 1981. "Obscured by Violence: Timothy Findley's *The Wars*." In *Violence in the Canadian Novel since 1960*. Eds Terrie Goldie and Virginia Harger-Grinling. St. John's: Memorial University. 125-37.
- Sassoon, Siegfried. 1983. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. London: Faber and Faber (1st ed. 1930).
- Sontag, Susan. 1977. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Thompson, Eric. 1981. "Canadian Fiction of the Great War." *Canadian Literature* 91:81-96.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. 1982. *Theories of the Symbol*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP.
- Vauthier, Simone. 1985. "The Dubious Battle of Story-Telling: Narrative Strategies in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*." In *Gaining Ground: European Critics on Canadian Literature*. Edmonton: NeWest Press. 11-39.
- York, Lorraine M. 1988. "'Violent Stillness': Timothy Findley's Use of Photography." In *"The Other Side of Dailiness": Photography in the Works of Alice Munro, Timothy Findley, Michael Ondaatje, and Margaret Laurence*. ECW Press.
- . 1991. *Front Lines: The Fiction of Timothy Findley*. ECW Press.

The Brothers

The sun is a bluebird now
She sits in the arms of the birch

They talk all day about Lorne
who revived a piglet mouth to mouth

yesterday that was crushed by the sow
Who has watched every one of his ewes

die in a breech birth and whose brother
fishes shrimp off of Tofino

and Hornby Island who sleeps in his boat
and has no other house on this earth

Yesterday the sun was an owl
She hid in the green veils of the night

She whispered to the roots of the aspens
that feather the air and they whispered back

about a woman with two fathers
who fish sheep on the Horse Lake Road

dragging their nets just inches off the sawdust
and who lift them together

There in the bottom of the net all crushed together
lie the pink and black piglets squirming

the sky is a sow her breath is hot her eyes are small
The fathers sort the piglets out and lay them in the straw

and cast the nets again But today
the sun is a mountain bluebird

she has slipped on her silk dress
Her skin smells of sweetgrass she stands

still with the birch at the shore all day
and sighs While under the ice the sheep mill about glowing



Building on Common Ground

An Interview with Neil Bissoondath

PVT: Tell me about your family history.

NB: Both sides of the family left India to come to Trinidad as indentured labourers to work in the sugar cane plantations. It would have been my great grandparents, around the turn of the century. And they decided to stay. The Naipaul side were from the state of Madhya Pradesh. My uncle [V. S. Naipaul] has written about a sad trip he made to the village in *An Area of Darkness*.

PVT: And you've never attempted such a trip?

NB: No, I have no particular attraction to India.

PVT: As the eldest child in a literary family, was there pressure on you to do something or be somebody?

NB: When it comes to my immediate family, there was never any pressure in particular to *do* anything. There was simply the idea that you *would* leave Trinidad, you *would* move to another country to live, and there was a good chance you would not return. I left Trinidad willingly, happily, looking forward to a new kind of life. The idea of being a writer, which was one that came to me at a very early age—around nine or ten—was something that I could not do in Trinidad, and was something that I was looking forward to trying to do in this country. But there was never any pressure. There was a sort of passive support. It was simply a question of "You do what you have to do." They let me do it with their fingers crossed. Certainly with my mother there were fingers crossed. My mother died in 1983, in fact just a few months before my first book was published, which is something that I'll never quite

get over, the fact that she never saw it. After my mother died, about a year or a year and a half later, my father remarried and they then moved to Toronto, but not long after arriving in Toronto my father discovered that he had cancer. So he returned to Trinidad and died there in 1990.

PVT: You've written a good deal about parents and children, and the tensions that exist beside strong bonds of gratitude and loyalty and love.

NB: Leaving Trinidad at eighteen, I never really got to meet my parents as an adult. My mother died before any of that could be done. And so when my father moved to Toronto, I thought, this is my opportunity to try to get to know him directly, as one adult to another, and to talk about things openly and honestly and without rancour of any kind, and with love. But of course, we could not meet on that level. My father was not the kind of man who was capable of discussing things other than politics and sports. It simply wasn't possible to meet him on the emotional level that I wanted. He was shaped by his own life. It was not a society in which people talked to each other in the way I wanted to talk to my father. But at least I had the opportunity to try. I'm hoping that I won't fall into the same traps as my father, and that I'll be able to have a different kind of relationship with my daughter.

PVT: Is Alistair Ramgoolam based on your father?

NB: The Alistair Ramgoolam in "Insecurity" was not based directly on my father. He was based on a kind of businessman that I knew in Trinidad. Whereas the Alistair Ramgoolam in "Security" *was* informed more by my father, and the kind of life I saw him leading in Toronto. It was not a successful move to Toronto. He had come out of one kind of society and tried to insert himself into another, and I don't think he was happy in the end. He started to move towards a kind of Hinduism, a kind of ritual belief, or a belief in ritual.

PVT: Was that Hindu element present in your home when you were growing up in Trinidad?

NB: No, it was not a religious household. My grandparents practiced Hinduism. My parents never did. I am very skeptical about religious belief and mysticism in general. It's not something that I understand. So many people just seem to depend on the ritual, in a hollow gesture that's unsupported by any kind of philosophy.

PVT: From your account of your father's inability to communicate certain ranges of feeling and experience, would it be valid to infer that Trinidadian society is very much a male-dominated society?

NB: Yes, Trinidad is a very macho society. Canada was different. It was a kind of liberation. I grew up in Trinidad never really feeling quite at home there. I grew up in a family that read—which was my mother, and her sisters, the Naipaul family—but very few people in Trinidad enjoyed reading or the things that concerned me. So it was a society from which I felt fairly alienated. I was born in Arima, but I never actually lived there. My parents lived in a town called Sangre Grande, and that's where I grew up. My grandfather, like all his brothers, owned a store, so my father worked for him. The store was in Sangre Grande, and I went to Presbyterian primary school that had been started by Canadian missionaries. When I was about 13 or 14, my parents decided to build a house in Port of Spain, so that we would be closer to school. I went to Catholic high school, St. Mary's College. The school in "An Arrangement of Shadows" is based on St. Mary's.

PVT: I gather that your family were in relatively comfortable circumstances financially.

NB: That's right. There are a substantial number of East Indians who have risen into the professions, so have become doctors and lawyers, and particularly businessmen. But I would think that the vast majority remain field workers. They cut the sugar cane.

PVT: Did you feel, as an East Indian, that you were part of a racial/political minority in Trinidad, despite your family's relatively privileged financial position?

NB: There was the knowledge that politics would be divided along racial lines. But you also grow up with the attitude or belief that everybody's a thief. And it didn't matter really who formed the government or who formed the opposition. It just gave you greater opportunity to steal, and whoever was in power would steal. I suppose we were very cynical about politics. Everybody knows who is stealing politically. And then, in the class, in the circles in which we grew up, we were not really aware of the rural Indians. Although my grandparents started off life working in the rice paddies and the sugar cane fields, by the time my generation was growing up, we were traveling the world. We were thinking professionally, and that cut us off from the kind of life my grandparents had known, and that the majority of Indians still know in Trinidad.

PVT: *A Casual Brutality* reads at times like autobiography.

NB: There's an autobiographical connection in almost everything that I've written, but it's autobiographical on different levels. It's not the story of my

family, which remains to be written I think. But the people I've depicted are based on a variety of people that I knew when I was growing up in Trinidad. The grandmother, for example, is the archetypal Hindu Trinidadian grandmother. Everybody had one.

PVT: One of the things that novel seems to do is say farewell to Trinidad. Was there any sense in which you wrote *A Casual Brutality* to explain to yourself, or to anybody else, why you left?

NB: That's a very interesting question. I've never thought of that. I felt when I'd finished that book that I had written it out. I was dealing there with things which had obsessed me for a long time throughout my growing up to the age of 18 in Trinidad. And then after that too, just hearing from family what was going on there. It's also things like the invasion, the take-over, on Grenada.

PVT: So you're running various places together.

NB: Yes, Casaquemada is not simply Trinidad. It's a mixture of Guyana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Grenada. What I've tried to do in creating Casaquemada is to create an island that will remind people of many places. The reason I didn't use a real island in the West Indies was to get away from any particular identification with one island and its particular problems, to try to internationalise it.

PVT: *A Casual Brutality* has been criticised for precisely this lack of historical specificity.

NB: That would have come from someone who assumed that I had some kind of political agenda. I have no political agenda.

PVT: Has your experience of Trinidadian society and politics shaped your views on Canadian multiculturalism?

NB: Absolutely. Absolutely. When you look at the kind of life that I had in Trinidad, the kind of upbringing, the attitudes that were offered of other races, the way various races viewed each other, I understand the kind of vision that creates apartheid, and I abhor it. I have seen people insist on dividing themselves for racial reasons, and religious reasons, and ethnic reasons, and I reject any idea of division. My reading of multiculturalism as practiced here in Canada is that it is a policy of division. It's a policy that falsifies the vision it pretends it wants to preserve. I find it simple-minded at best and I think it holds some dangers for us if we continue with it.

PVT: But surely the political implications of division depend on whether it is voluntary or imposed, and even then, the outcome can be ambivalent.

Secession can be a way of avoiding being swallowed up by another society, but it can also trap people on a lower stratum of the vertical mosaic.

NB: Yes, it's very complicated. I have to say that the criticisms that Bharati [Mukherjee] has leveled at Canadian multiculturalism I wholeheartedly agree with. I disagree, though, with her view of the United States and the melting pot. The American system likes to pretend that it is possible for individuals to shrug off their past, to pretend that it does not exist, and assume a new identity. Whereas the Canadian one says that it is possible to freeze the past, and maintain it as it used to exist, while the country one left, by the way, continues to evolve. The melting pot and the mosaic—they're equally false. There has to be a middle way. And the first part is to have governments and bureaucrats get out of it. I feel very strongly about that. And so my attitude, simply put, is leave it to the individual. Tradition is all very important, but it is up to the individuals and their families to preserve these things. When you start getting Government policy shaping this, we're entering some very dangerous waters.

PVT: You view Canadian society in a more positive light than, say, Himani Bannerji or Aruna Srivastava. Do you see the racism they speak of as being bound up with sexism?

NB: That's very difficult for me to say. It may be. It's very difficult for me to talk about, because racism exists. I know it does. I keep thinking, my God, I grew up with more racism in Trinidad than you would find in this entire country. I have seen racism. I have lived with it. I grew up with racism. I know what racism is about. One of the areas in which I disagree with Bharati Mukherjee is where she talks about her preference for the United States because Canadian racism is always so polite—"You'd never know he's racist." Whereas the American racist is up front and direct. But my response to that is that I would rather have a racist who ignores me, or who says "Good morning" and then turns away, than one who puts a gun to my head and kills me.

PVT: You've seen that in Trinidad.

NB: Exactly. I have seen the brutality, and I would rather live in a society where racism is unacceptable enough that even racists are not quite prepared to proclaim it openly. That isn't to deny that racism exists but that's how you deal with it.

PVT: Having grown up in a highly racist society, do you ever find yourself falling into racist patterns of thought?

NB: Yeah, I do at times. We all catch ourselves at different moments. Sometimes I hear my father's voice in myself. I don't like it, but I know where it comes from. For example, when you hear reporting from the Middle East and I think, my god, those damned Arabs. And I think, No, wait a minute, think about this.

PVT: One critic has accused you of turning your back on your people.

NB: Who are my people? I fear the automatic assumption of racial allegiance. My friends are of different colours, genders, sexual preferences, religions and so on.

PVT: As a writer, do you see yourself as part of any group of community, or as participating in any particular school or tradition?

NB: I think I'm on my own path. When you get right down to it, when you're sitting in front of the typewriter or computer, you are working on your own path and no other path matters. Yet at the same time I've rather enjoyed belonging to one group I've been put into, and that is the group of writers who have emerged from the former British colonies. What is it—the empire strikes back? Although the only thing that unites us is the fact that we have a certain similarity of historical background. Apart from that, when I'm asked how I describe myself, I respond, "I am a Canadian writer," for the simple reason that that entails so much. It's a wonderful big box. You can put just about anything into that. Anything smaller would make me feel, I suppose, sort of enclosed.

PVT: You once mentioned that you dislike experimental writing.

NB: I don't know why people would bother to not use periods or commas for example. I rather like paragraphs. I like a page that looks like a page. When people start using visual tricks on the page, I feel I'm being cheated, and I feel that this is somebody who has to stand on his head to transmit what he wants to say, and I don't think that's really necessary. I get irritated very easily by these kinds of things. And I cannot now read most of the Latin American writing. Mario Vargas Llosa is one exception. I love his work.

PVT: What are you trying to accomplish in your detailed descriptions of houses, streetscapes, and landscapes?

NB: In the descriptive passages I'm trying to get as precise a feel for the place in which my character is as it's possible to get. What I'm interested in is individuals in a context, and the context is as important to me as the individual. The context informs the individual, and so the description is important to understanding the character, because what you're seeing is

description not through Neil Bissoondath's eyes but through the character's eyes. How the character sees things tells you a lot about the character.

PVT: Do you see your descriptions functioning on symbolic or metaphorical levels as well?

NB: No, I don't think on those levels at all. I'm not aware of them.

PVT: How do you think your work has changed or evolved since the stories of *Digging Up the Mountains*? In *The Innocence of Age*, your immediate focus moves away from the Caribbean, yet some of your earlier themes and preoccupations—things apparently derived from your Trinidadian background—remain.

NB: Well yes, there are universal themes. The universality of human emotion in the end will inform all of my writing. The writer in Afghanistan whose son is killed by a Russian bullet, she feels the same pain as the mother in Latin America whose son is killed by an American bullet. That pain is the same. And where the damn bullet is made makes no difference. And this is the universality. When you strip away all the exoticism of different societies, you come down to the same basic naked emotions.

PVT: When so many people are striving to assert social difference, you're working in the other direction, looking for the common ground.

NB: I think it's very easy to split people apart. I'd like to think I'm looking for the common ground. And I think that's more difficult. I get accused of all kinds of things. I've been called all kinds of nasty names. There's this controversy over appropriation of voice. What is amazing to me is that a lot of the people who are saying that one does not have the right to appropriate another voice—to use their word—are also the people who march against apartheid. Those who would keep voices apart in literature are the ones who want to bring them together by getting rid of apartheid. There are basic contradictions in this stand. We spend our lives appropriating. And it's a basic human thing to do. It's one of the ways we learn from each other, and we learn to get along.

PVT: Some of your critics have taken issue with your portrayal of women. They say the women in your stories aren't real.

NB: Well, I disagree with that. I like to think that my women are very real. A number of women—most of my readers seem to be women—have come up to me at readings and various functions, to talk to me about my women characters. A story like "The Cage" for example, about a Japanese woman, it's one that people still comment on continuously and positively. After reading

that story, one woman from Malaysia told a friend of mine “I’ve never met him but it’s as if he understood something of my own life.” Now all I can do is go on that kind of reader reaction. I like women, and in fact I think that sometimes my female characters are more convincing than my males.

PVT: In *The Innocence of Age*, the women were more real. I guess I found Jan in *A Casual Brutality* a little less...

NB: Yes. Jan has brought up a lot of adverse comment. One person said, “God, what would Canadian women think of the portrait of themselves through Jan in *A Casual Brutality*?” But my point is I am not writing about Canadian capital-W Woman. I’m writing about one woman, and I insist on that always, that my characters are individuals unto themselves. They are not representative of any group, any race, any culture, any more than any of us is. I’m not a representative of my gender. I’m not a spokesman for my race, and my characters aren’t either. Jan happens to be the kind of person she is. She may not be a very nice person, but, hey, I’ve met some people who aren’t very nice, and some of them are Canadian women. Some of them are West Indian women, or West Indian men, or American. The problem is that this kind of criticism is almost a misunderstanding of what fiction, from a novelist’s point of view, is all about. I’m writing about individuals.

PVT: Has having a daughter changed your perception of what it means to be a female in this world?

NB: I don’t think it’s changed it. I think it’s sharpened it. I don’t think I ever had any illusion about what it means to be a female in this world. And I think every man continues to learn. You can’t live in Montreal where the Polytechnic massacre took place without appreciating what it is like. You can’t grow up in a family of women as I did—with many aunts and a working mother—and not realize what it’s like in a society like Trinidad. When our daughter grows up I want her to learn karate, because I want her to be able to kick the balls out of any guy that tries to take advantage of her. I have lots of friends who are female and professional and you hear lots of stories of what goes on. It’s unbelievable what goes on even among the most supposedly educated and liberal and open and professional people. I am determined that our daughter will do whatever she wants to do, will have none of these barriers put in her place, otherwise I’m going to have to kick a few balls myself.

PVT: Do you confer with anybody when you write?

NB: I write completely alone. But the first person to read it once I’ve done

it and am completely happy with it is Anne, my partner. And I listen to her very carefully. She's a very good reader. I trust her opinion. It's wonderful to have someone that you can actually trust. It's indispensable. I've made some significant changes on her advice.

PVT: Where do your ideas about writing and literary value come from?

NB: I think they have just come up from my own reading and writing—being forced to think about it because people like you ask me questions. There's no formal thought behind it. It just evolved. I never studied English literature at university. In high school in Trinidad, the teaching of English literature was horrendous. There are writers I still cannot read. Like Henry James. The teachers at high school took these books, these things that I loved, and forced us to do autopsies on them, and of course you know what happens at the end of an autopsy. What are you left with? Certainly not anything that's living and breathing. And so when it came time to decide what to major in at university I decided to go for French for the simple reason that I liked the language. I'd studied it in high school, and I was determined never to take the chance again of having my love of English writing destroyed.

PVT: You studied Spanish at high school as well.

NB: That's right.

PVT: And English was always your first language?

NB: That's right.

PVT: Was Hindi ever spoken in your home?

NB: Not a word. Never. The only people who spoke Hindi in Trinidad when I was growing up were my grandparent's generation.

PVT: When were you last in Trinidad?

NB: In 1983 at my mother's funeral.

PVT: Ten years ago.

NB: God yes, ten years. A long time ago now.

Readings Awry

Christopher Johnson

System and Writing in the Philosophy of Jacques Derrida. Cambridge \$22.05

Slavoj Zizek

Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture. MIT P \$17.45

Reviewed by Doug Aoki

A glance over these titles would likely light upon the two *Jacques*, and thereby suppose that Christopher Johnson and Slavoj Zizek are working towards very similar ends—the explication of the thought of one or the other of arguably the two most significant poststructuralist theorists. However, even a little reading proves that each writer is instead more faithful to the differences between their titles. Johnson commits himself to system, and proceeds accordingly to construct a sober argument for a general Derridean theory of writing (*écriture*), while Zizek only pledges to look at Lacan the “wrong” way. Johnson’s scrupulously academic text enlists the usual supporting cast of Hegel, Heidegger, and Freud, while Zizek, casually dismissive of the “academic reception” of Lacan, prefers the company of Stephen King, George Romero, and Werner Herzog. Johnson constantly intertexts his argument with passages from Derrida (although, curiously, the English translations are regularly one sentence longer than the corresponding French), while Zizek declines quoting directly from Lacan in favor of lavishly referencing Hitchcock. Johnson proceeds with a prudent, if unre-

markable reading of Derrida, only to get Derrida wrong in the end, while Zizek accomplishes the freshest and most radical reading of Lacan in decades.

To his credit, Johnson acknowledges early on that formalizing Derrida is problematic. Yet he is quick to attribute potential criticism of his project to an interpretive orthodoxy, mobilizing on his own behalf Derrida’s pronouncement that the very non-formalizability of a programme is itself formalizable. Johnson takes this as an authorial endorsement of his reassertion of the “second moment” of Derridean thought: the general theory of writing that Johnson claims has been overlooked because of the customary emphasis on deconstruction as critique. His project is therefore a manifestly positive one, well in excess of any explanation of non-formalizability, and that positivity ultimately translates to failure.

Johnson traces the general transformation of the modern episteme through familiar paradigm shifts: from language to writing, in linguistics, and from energy to information, in science. He thereby convincingly argues for the affinity of *écriture* with both cybernetics—through information as difference—and biology—through the articulation of the body and the dissemination of genetics. He concludes that writing, cybernetics, and biology are all instances of a general systems theory, exemplified by Bateson and the somewhat dated Bertalanffy. Johnson’s depiction of writing as an open system is apt, but his subsequent equation of deconstruction and

natural selection is as suspect as his hierarchical privileging of the trace, within an *écriture* he theorizes as “the condition of possibility of the transmission of information.” He would be well advised to reconsider given Derrida’s own compelling dance outside systemization in his recent eponymous collaboration with Geoffrey Bennington. Anyone seeking after system, writing, and Derrida would be better served by that book than by this reading gone awry.

The Village Voice Literary Supplement hails Slavoj Žižek as “the Giant of Ljubljana.” Of the six books on Lacan he has published in English in the last five years, *Looking Awry* is the most accessible, though hardly so much so as fully to merit its *Introduction to Lacan* billing (VLS rates him as “semi-accessible”). Despite its periodic density and complexity, this book is surely the most intriguing and entertaining way anyone could engage Lacan for the first time. Such affability makes *Looking Awry* invaluable in the mid-nineties, when Lacanian theory, despite its scandalous opacity and abstruseness, is gaining influence well beyond its traditional niches in film theory and literary criticism—witness Butler’s work in lesbian and queer theory, Bhabha’s in post-colonial theory, Silverman’s in gender theory and semiotics. What makes Žižek uniquely engaging is his dexterous execution of what he identifies elsewhere as the quintessential postmodernist gesture: the estrangement of the everyday through its tactical confrontation with the theoretically recondite. Hence, *Looking Awry* reads Stephen King’s *Pet Semetary* as inverting *Antigone*, with the living dead returning to collect some unpaid symbolic debt; Groucho Marx, in *Duck Soup*, as enacting the definitively human deception of feigning to deceive; Spielberg’s *The Empire of the Sun* as shifting repellingly from reality to fantasy space. While the general practice of estrangement

is effectively deployed by others, notably Derrida and Foucault, it has a peculiar significance for Žižek, inasmuch as Lacanian psychoanalysis turns on the unreal real of the *unheimlich*:

Our common everyday reality, the reality of the social universe in which we assume our usual roles of kind-hearted, decent people, turns out to be an illusion that rests on a certain “repression,” on overlooking the reality of our desire. This social reality is then nothing but a fragile, symbolic cobweb that can at any moment be torn aside by an intrusion of the real.

Here the “real” signifies the most crucial and the most refractory order of Lacan’s recasting of Freud’s psychic topology. The other two consist of the symbolic—the order of reality, society, and language—and the imaginary—the order of image, illusion, mirroring, and identification. The real is, by definition, impossible to define: Lacan, in his characteristically unhelpful way, says that the real is the impossible. It is most readily apprehensible as the negative limit of the symbolic and the imaginary, as the hard kernel of resistance, so it is best to look awry to catch a glimpse of it. And yet, Lacan maintains that subjectivity, as well as reality itself, is radically contingent upon, though different from, the real. Consequently, Žižek performs a virtuoso elucidation of the phantastic necessity of the real; its different modalities, renderings, and evasions; and its consequences for understanding ideology, politics, and Alfred Hitchcock. The result is often delightful, sometimes difficult, always provocative, and ultimately vastly important. As Andrew Ross observes, Žižek reconjures “what was genuinely exciting and revolutionary about the Parisian school.”



Mourning Becomes Derrida

**Geoffrey Bennington
and Jacques Derrida**

Jacques Derrida. U Chicago P \$35.75

Mark Wigley

*The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's
Haunt.* MIT P \$40.80

Reviewed by Doug Aoki

J. Hillis Miller writes that literary criticism "is not the detached statement of a knowledge objectively gained. It is the desperation of a bet, an ungrounded doing things with words . . . followed by the exegesis that is the consequence of the bet." As one of the leading figures of the "Yale school," it is fitting that he articulates the motif of *Jacques Derrida*, which is co-authored by Geoffrey Bennington, the prominent English translator of Derrida, and Derrida himself. As the anonymous preface explains, the book arises from a friendly bet: "G.B." would attempt to exposit the general system of "J. D.'s" thought, and "J. D." would subsequently attempt to expose the exposition as doomed from the start. Hence the book immediately becomes two, and then three, books, intimate in their separation. As if diffracted through a *Glas* laid on its side, Bennington's *Derridabase* runs across the top two-thirds of each page, and Derrida's *Circumfession* responds obliquely below. Following both of these is *Acts (The Law of Genre)*, a Derridean bio-/biblio-/iconographical catalogue also compiled by Bennington.

One cannot help feeling that the game is rigged, that Bennington, unlike, say, John Searle or Richard Wolin, is both certain that he will lose and always already pleased at the prospect. This may merely be the most reasonable response given his rather desperate circumstances—who could be eager to debate Derrida on Derrida when Derrida is guaranteed the last word? And yet, Bennington plays his losing hand

exceedingly well. He straightforwardly—and therefore stylishly—fulfills his contract to produce a systematic and accessible exegesis. Programmed into 32 lapidary chapters and intricated with precise references, *Derridabase*, supplemented with *Acts*, is simply the best user's guide to Derridean thought that I have yet encountered. Of course, such excellence is also rigged: if Derrida's elusion of Bennington's totalization is to succeed, in a wider sense, that totalization must be of the highest order.

Circumfession does indeed succeed. Despite the book's disingenuous claims to the contrary, this has nothing to do with surprise, which the book's conceit makes impossible. Rather, that success pertains to astonishment, to the audacious grace with which Derrida moves to raise the stakes. The common complaint that deconstruction is immaterially textual has always been silly, and in this text, there is nothing outside the body. A brazen metonymy of circumcision and "the sublime gate of fellatio" glissades into a long death-watch of Derrida's mother, who passed away after the text was finished but before it was published. In this way, suffering is introjected between old and fuzzy black-and-white snapshots, and mourning becomes Derrida. In entomology, he tells us, "mourning" designates beings that are both black and white, and "half-mourning," the black/white butterfly whose other name he takes as his own: *satyr galatea*. "It only happens to me, so it is enough to pivot 5 words," he writes, "it only happens to me, and you have the whole of this circumfession, the sieving of the singular events that can dismantle G.'s theologic program." Yet that textual singularity only continues the recapitulation of another "theologic" pivot, the death of Augustine's mother:

She returned to consciousness quickly and looked at me and my brother as we stood by. Rather like a person in search of something, she said to us, 'Where am I?'

Then, seeing that we were overcome with grief, she said: 'Bury your mother here.' I remained silent and restrained my tears.

To which Derrida circumfesses: "I have spent my life teaching so as to return in the end to what mixes prayer and tears with blood."

Sometimes it seems that Derrida has unintentionally spent his life providing the transcendental signified for a whole academic cottage industry, one that is still churning out variations on *Deconstruction & . . .* Mark Wigley's *The Architecture of Deconstruction* begins by reprising that gesture, discovering architecture as the Derridean subtext. This can surely surprise no one by now—is there anything left that is *not* the Derridean subtext? Yet Wigley, like Derrida and Bennington, is skillful enough to exceed such an unpromising gambit.

The book structures itself through two concomitant metonymic chains. The first is architectonic, and reticulates architecture, space, ground, abyss, tower, home, and so on; the second is writerly, and links Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Heidegger, and Derrida (with the glaring omission of Henri Lefebvre). These metonymies and their immediate intersections are unremarkable in themselves, no more than the automatic fallout of writing *deconstruction* and *architecture* together. They only become engaging through Wigley's estrangement, through entering the haunted house via a detour through the crypt and an unsettled gastrointestinal tract.

Vomit and death—"throwing up architecture," in Wigley's terms—iterates the condensation initiated by *Glas*, "which is everywhere concerned with the intersection between the house and mourning." The *oikos* is at once house, room, and tomb, the "domestico-familiar" and the "domestico-funery." The home is correlatively uncanny in its homeliness; in Wigley's terms, it is always *para-sitic*, the site of something else, so that the hearth of the

family is the hearth of hearths is the crematorium. In the *oikos* of the body, digestive movements—assimilation, ingestion, interiorization—produce the subject, rather than being its actions, but insofar as the subject is also concomitantly produced by her indigestion through a "spacing out"—exclusion, foreclosure, rejection—of what cannot be assimilated, the encryption of the unassimilable in nausea, body, death, and the institution becomes key to rethinking the very idea of the subject. The crypt is overdetermined as the "non-place" of indigestion, the "non-place" that enables a ghost to haunt the subject, and the very figure of desire; "Mourning work," Derrida says, "comes down to *throwing up*." Hence his preoccupation with "survival and *revenance* [haunting], living on and returning from the dead," and hence the cogency of Wigley's recasting the *unheimlich* homecoming of the subject within the architectural resonances of the haunted house. Wigley ultimately succeeds by demonstrating that Frank Lloyd Wright, who averred that we seldom escape the indigestion of the house alive, was not nearly radical enough: no one gets out alive, or unhaunted.

Stones and Expatriates

Ken Mitchell

Stones of the Dalai Lama. Douglas & McIntyre
\$14.95

Lesley Krueger

Poor Player. Oberon \$15.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

These two novels tell in very different ways the stories of Canadians abroad: Mitchell departs from his usual Canadian prairie setting and places his fast-paced novel in the town of Bismark, North Dakota, and later, in quick succession, China, India, Nepal and Tibet, while Krueger's much more ponderous first novel takes place in

Mexico. The contrasting pace of each narrative measures the pace of the characters' lives abroad. Krueger focuses on expatriates, "misplaced Canadians" who are stuck in Mexico, while Mitchell's characters rush from one exotic locale to another.

Stones is an action-packed quest in which the narrator Bob Harlow, an academic, forms an unlikely pair with Vern Cugnet, a mechanic who originally comes from Moose Jaw. Together they go to Tibet to return the sacred stones Bob had thoughtlessly pocketed on a previous trip, and which have presumably been responsible for a series of terrible accidents in his family.

The quest smacks of the homosocial bonding found in any number of Hollywood "buddy" movies. Make no mistake about it: this is a *man's* trip. Sure there are women around, but they are there to leave behind (Yvonne, Bob's wife, originally suggested the trip but can't make it), to have sex with, or, in the case of the Chinese woman Jong Jing, to provide some Oriental temptation for the men and translate on the side. How urgent is it to read through Vern's relentless obsession with breasts, or Bob's paranoid fear as a beleaguered white male academic that the university will replace him with a feminist from women's studies?

The sexism proffered by Mitchell's male characters is gradually supplemented with an equally troubling homophobia. Why else would Bob and Vern stop over in San Francisco on their way to Tibet if not to parade the most obvious misconceptions about AIDS? Even more problematic is the homoeroticism of the novel's climatic scene: a surreal episode in the mountains of Tibet in which Bob, appearing naked with Jong Jing, finally returns the stones, described as "testicles in the leather bag" hanging from his neck. Vern shocks himself by being more obsessed with Bob's penis than with Jong's "tail," and comes to the enlightened conclusion that "All that macho stuff's bullshit! I'm a fag! It's like a

blindin' vision! I'm liberated!" Bob treats the newly "out" Vern as a pest, while Vern himself immediately begins to worry whether Bob will mention the episode back in Vern's favorite Bismark strip bar. All of which leaves me wondering what the hell is Mitchell's point.

Several episodes in the novel are considerably less addled than its conclusion, and they hint at what Mitchell may be doing with his characters' sexist and homophobic attitudes. Shifts in point of view (for instance to that of an Indian working at Tibet House, or that of a Tibetan hermit) invariably emphasize the ignorance and stupidity of the foreigners, and allow Mitchell to comment on his characters without moralizing directly. He also provides a number of terrific ironic transitions to make similar points. In one memorable example, Vern's illicit black market dealings in Nepal are immediately followed by a list outlining "The Eightfold Path of Buddha," a juxtaposition which not only comments on crass materialism, but also neatly undercuts the high seriousness of inserting Buddhist philosophy within such a fast-paced narrative.

Krueger's novel certainly aims higher than Mitchell's—she refuses to pander to sexist "comic" conventions—yet its plot and commentary on foreign intervention in Latin America have an unfortunate tendency to become mired in the pompous musings of its narrator, a freelance reporter named Hugh Bruce. While Mitchell is able to deflate his occasional forays into metaphysics, Krueger's narrator can't resist dropping an alarming range of names and references: biblical, Shakespearean (the novel's title; the recurring references to *Romeo and Juliet*), Freudian, and most embarrassingly, postmodern. Rather than suggesting additional layers of meaning, or revising and re-placing the "authoritative" sources in a post-colonial context, Krueger's hotchpotch of references continually draw attention to their own superficiality.

Krueger is certainly aware of how pompous some of the references sound. Hugh himself is likely to end one of his theoretical expositions by giggling, and other characters take the role of impatient readers by asking "So what?" Hugh even tries to anticipate a derisive readership by preempting ridicule:

don't try to tell me you haven't been giggling at my absurdity . . . ; that you've been able to keep yourself from laughing at the sight of this ridiculous little man bringing to bear all the wisdom of his underlined Aristotle, of his half-digested Heidegger . . .

Hugh may be onto the fact that his pretensions are a joke, but his awareness doesn't make the joke any more fun to read.

Which may be the point. Krueger's pretensions become palatable by recalling that her narrator is a *reporter*, and that he is mediating events in Latin America (plane crashes, drug wars, the eviction of peasants from their land) for North American consumption. Hugh's desire for the "true story" is inevitably undercut by the distortions demanded not only by his editor's patronizing advice to see things in a "global" (read "American") context, but also (and perhaps most tellingly) by his own personal obsessions.

Hugh's pompous references thus serve the crucial function of foregrounding (if never quite unpacking) his own cultural baggage, and allowing us as readers to recognize that this "tale told by an idiot" does *not*, as Hugh fears, signify "nothing," but rather the problems inherent in signifying across cultures. The "deep cultural gap" between Jack the Canadian and Maru the Mexican; the lack of mingling between *gringos* and Mexicans at Maru's All Soul's party; and Jack's recognition that he's "Going where [he's] not wanted": all emphasize the distance between Canada and Mexico. Krueger's narrative makes the gap between cultures extremely clear, and, for better or worse, her novel leaves it intact and unbridged.

'New' Voices Finally Heard

Penny Petrone, Ed.

Northern Voices: Inuit Writing in English.

U of Toronto P \$19.95

Ovide Mercredi and Mary Ellen Turpel

In The Rapids: Navigating the Future of First Nations. Viking \$26.00

Reviewed by Dale Blake

Northern Voices dispels any notions of the Inuit as childlike primitives, introducing instead a fascinating culture whose works ought to form an integral part of "Canadian" literature. Petrone includes four categories of Inuit writing, each with an introduction and photos: oral traditions; early contact literature; personal narratives, letters, and transitional literature; modern writing.

The book begins with intense and direct Inuit poetry, often in the form of incantations and songs. These are interspersed with examples of Inuit myths. Unusually (and refreshingly), these legends, so commonly bowdlerized, retain much of their usual violence and sexuality, though little of their pervasive scatology.

The second section gives glimpses of stories hitherto obscure, including poignant tales of Inuit transported to other countries, like the unfortunate Minik Wallace, taken to New York by Robert Peary in 1897 with his father and four other Inuit. After his father's death, he witnesses a bogus burial:

They lowered a big box into the ground and told me to say goodbye to him. That box was filled with stones, and father—my father—his body even then was in the museum being prepared for exhibition.

Northern Voices just touches the surface in its third section. Of over 700 Inuit works published before 1981, more than one quarter are primarily autobiographical. Many of interest, like Anthony Apakark Thrasher's *Skid Row Eskimo* or Washburne's and Anauta's *Land of the Good Shadows*, receive no mention here.

According to Petrone, the most noteworthy theme of Inuit autobiographical narrative is the natives' unique sense of the land. Their stories might support the idea of topographical obsession in Canadian literature. However, Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality" does not appear to apply here: the Inuit respect and at times fear nature, but they also embrace it, insisting on living in harmony with it. Although we learn of Igjugarjuk's ordeals of cold and hunger in becoming a shaman and of the desperate Monique Atagutaluk's cannibalism on Baffin Island, we also read Labrador mixed-blood Lydia Campbell's 1894 description of "the snow glistening and ice and trees and me—poor old mortel—drinking in all the beautiful scenery."

By far the longest excerpts selected emerge from modern writing, informing us of a still evolving native culture, caught between white and Inuit, mixing oral and written traditions. Natives like Inuit leader John Amagoalik speak for themselves now:

In a world so full of greed, we must share. . . . When I talk about the future and try to describe what I would like for my children, some people sometimes say to me that I am only dreaming. What is wrong with dreaming? Sometimes dreams come true, if only one is determined enough.

Petrone, an academic honoured for her work in native literature, validates those dreams with *Northern Voices* even as she raises questions and dismantles stereotypes. Her book foreshadows yet another native voice, sharing common concerns, but with a proud insistence on its own uniqueness.

In The Rapids showcases that voice, presenting the opinions of Ovide Mercredi, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. An introduction and sections giving historical background (italicized) are written by First Nations law professor Mary Ellen Turpel, the rest by Mercredi, and the

conclusion co-authored by both. Turpel points out that much of this book began as speeches, and Mercredi's work appropriately displays a strong link to native oral traditions. His straightforward and sincere tone, disarmingly combined with First Nations politicking, effectively projects a charismatic presence. The poverty and mistreatment of native peoples are calmly reiterated in a readable, clear style combining practicality and spirituality. Although often addressing non-native readers as he speaks of treaties between "your ancestors" and First Nations tribes, Mercredi also makes broad appeals to native pride. Assertions of diversity amongst natives are counterbalanced by blanket statements of general native connections to "Mother Earth," underlining a call for rebirth of First Nations in a "new world" based on harmony and tolerance.

Mercredi's philosophy is bolstered on the one hand by the "profound influence" of Mahatma Gandhi and his principle of non-violent resistance. On the other lies the counsel of First Nations Elders, an Elder described by Turpel as "a judge, religious leader, comedian and psychotherapist all rolled into one." Such combinations and contrasts lend a good deal of interest to *In The Rapids*. Old spiritual beliefs project surprisingly smoothly into contemporary scenes. Mercredi's speeches, often moving in their simplicity, emphasize cooperation and the power of healing in the modern world. This unashamedly romantic native voice may strike the non-native reader as overly sentimental and optimistic:

. . . we want the right to be different. We want to be able to survive as distinct peoples, to pursue our own dreams as peoples who have been here since time immemorial. . . . We have much to contribute, but we need space to be different in order to belong with Canada.

Mercredi acknowledges non-native perplexity:

Those who have not experienced life under the Indian Act cannot understand why we react the way we do, with the strong emotions that we feel when we are told how to live, how to be civilized, that our ways are inferior.

The authors try to clarify their points, comparing the spiritual and political journey native peoples face to a dangerous canoe voyage. *In The Rapids* seems to avoid some of the biggest boulders as it negotiates the choppy waters of broken treaty promises, the Indian Act, self-government, the Charlottetown Accord, and First Nations' views on Quebec separation. Certain issues like native women's concerns, violence at Oka, and gambling on reservations are not deeply explored in this work. Yet the persuasive voices of Mercredi and Turpel offer a laudable and informative effort to bring better times to native peoples. Their book represents a call for unity to support First Nations' stubborn resistance to "Canadian" rules.

Canadiana Resurfacing

Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman (eds.)

Letters of Love and Duty: The Correspondence of Susanna and John Moodie. U Toronto P \$35.00

Carrie MacMillan, Lorraine McMullen, and Elizabeth Waterston

Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists. McGill-Queen's UP \$39.95

Reviewed by Deborah Blenkhorn

The recovery of texts critical to our understanding of the evolution of Canadian culture in the nineteenth and previous centuries is a vital aspect of current literary scholarship in this country. And scholars from many disciplines agree that public and private documents which have resurfaced in recent works on Canada's cultural history are particularly exciting when they promise

a fresh approach to the people and the issues that have shaped a national identity.

Reclaimed material from a well-known and well-loved source is, in most cases, inherently intriguing; certainly this is true of a recent collection of the Moodies' letters edited by Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins, and Michael Peterman. *Letters of Love and Duty: The Correspondence of Susanna and John Moodie* presents a previously unknown body of work, discovered by the authors after their publication of *Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime*. In this new collection are numerous letters written by John Moodie, pertaining to his military and civic career, and a host of missives—tender and otherwise—exchanged between husband and wife over a lifetime together.

The new material does, as its editors claim, shed new light on the relationship between Susanna and John Moodie, and on the events and personalities that became Susanna Moodie's classic *Roughing It in the Bush*. The diverse phases of their lives, including courtship, immigration to Canada, public life, spiritualism, and retirement, all fall within the scope of this prolific correspondence. The letters are exhaustively footnoted with socio-historically relevant data, and, in pointing to further archival and bibliographic references, provide a valuable research tool for those interested in the Moodies and their world.

Other aspects of the contextualization of these letters are, however, less satisfactory. The editors' professed attempt "to restrain the urge to overshadow the correspondence with biography" is more understandable than it is effective, for the letters themselves constitute neither the sort of epistolary novel prototype suggested on the book's jacket, which promises to reveal the "love story" of Susanna and John, nor a cohesive body of historical material. The commentary which the editors do provide, like the domestic correspondence of Mr. Moodie himself, is disappointingly suggestive of a watered-

down Austen novel (without the edge).

The forecast in the introduction to *Letters of Love and Duty* that this is “more in John’s than in Susanna’s words” may serve as a warning to the reader; Susanna’s skills and appeal as a writer far surpassed those of her husband, as this collection demonstrates all too clearly. Much more disturbingly, the collection chronicles a marriage troubled by financial hardship, illness, and long periods of geographical separation. That the financial hardship was exacerbated if not caused by John Moodie’s irresponsibility, that the illness of his wife and children met with his minimal and ineffectual response, and that his absence from the domestic scene left Susanna in a practically untenable and spiritually desolate state—these truths are surely deserving of some commentary by the editors of the collection; Susanna herself was (usually) reluctant to lift a finger of reproach.

Shortly after marrying John, Susanna Moodie announced that her “blue stockings” had “turned so pale” that they would “soon be quite white.” Living in the context of a marriage in which she had virtually to beg for compassion, financial support, and company, while her husband plodded through a career that was largely uninspiring even to him, this woman exerted humour, friendship, and forgiveness. Moreover, she exercised a talent that has made her an icon in Canadian literature. A judicious selection and analysis of the Moodies’ correspondence can and should demonstrate Susanna Moodie’s remarkable resilience and achievement; *Letters of Love and Duty* leaves this task, along with that of assessing the writing talents of Susanna and John Moodie, to the reader.

Although the women who are profiled in *Silenced Sextet: Six Nineteenth-Century Canadian Women Novelists* did not acquire the stature of a Susanna Moodie in the Canadian literary tradition, this collection of essays by Carrie MacMillan, Lorraine

McMullen and Elizabeth Waterston places these women’s lives and works firmly and deservedly in the context of the Canadian canon. At the same time, their introductory remarks point out that “[Susanna] Moodie’s publishing in the *Literary Garland* and founding and editing of *Victoria Magazine* created a model as well as a medium for later aspirants.”

Here, the authors have chosen to study six women writers who exemplify the “phenomenon of Canadian women who achieved great popularity as writers of fiction but subsequently disappeared from view.” These women were Joanna E. Wood, Margaret Murray Robertson, May Agnes Fleming, Susan Frances Harrison, Margaret Marshall Saunders, and Rosanna Mullins Leprohon. They shared the common concerns of women’s roles in nineteenth-century Canadian society, which they expressed through the “power of communicating (and subverting) the patterns of myth and romance.”

The writings of these women span the period 1847–1927, and emerge from disparate backgrounds. Each constructed narrative from her unique perspective as teacher, wife, mother, socialite, musician, or social historian. Each was isolated from a supportive network which would have heightened her consciousness of other women writers and their projects.

Since these women were unknown to each other, the term “sextet” may seem either artificial or ironic, although the authors of these literary-biographical essays make a good case both in the general introduction and in the essays themselves that this group does constitute a cultural community of sorts. We can even see them, as the conclusion to this work states, as “six writers playing on the theme of creative energy,” although in such broad terms the connection becomes more tenuous.

Certainly, the writings of these women “can, to a point, be read as illustrations of

some general themes about women's use of narrative structures"—but here, again, the theory may be too broad to be useful. A significant strength of *Silenced Sextet* is its celebration of the individual talents of these writers, achieved through the inclusion of brief and appealing excerpts from their works.

Strange Births

Leon Surette

The Birth of Modernism: Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and the Occult. McGill-Queen's UP
\$34.95

Steven Watson

Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde. Abbeville Press US\$19.95

Reviewed by John Xiros Cooper

Steven Watson prefixes an amusing epigraph to the Introduction of *Strange Bedfellows*. It is a quotation from Charles Vezin, President of the Arts Student League in New York commenting on the variety of participants in that landmark moment of modernism, the 1913 Armory Show in Manhattan:

"There rest under the same blanket (or rather, toss feverishly) anarchists, terrorists, degenerates, rowdies, scavengers, dreamers, poets, liberators, patriots." Professor Leon Surette would now like to add to the list, assorted theosophists, Swedenborgians, illuminati, astrologers, Gymnosophists, psychical researchers, and occult images of various hues. *And* he wants to put them at the head of the queue.

Surette's extraordinary new book takes the study of the emergence of literary modernism in the early decades of our century down some rather obscure and rarely travelled paths. His "radical revision of the standard view" repositions literary modernism as a product of occult traditions, expanding the theosophical-Neoplatonist-magical culture of the late nineteenth cen-

tury, which we normally associate with W.B. Yeats, to embrace Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot as well. About Yeats's dabbling in theosophy and other occult disciplines there can be no doubt. Surette does not spend very much time on him, certainly not in sustained scrutiny of any of Yeats's works. He is far more interested in recruiting Pound and Eliot to the occult; Yeats is already there.

Surette asserts that Pound's *Cantos* were conceived as "an articulation of a theosophical understanding of history." Of course, the serene, inner unfolding of the poem's esoteric wisdom was rudely interrupted by such events as the First and Second World Wars, the economic depression of the 1930s, the rise of Fascism, Pound's imprisonment in Pisa, and so on, but these were mundane impediments to what Surette insists is the occult story the poem tells. As a result, the poem becomes a contribution to that long (and copious) tradition of esoteric discourse that goes back to the religions of the ancient Greeks. *The Cantos*, then, like all occult texts, must be examined as a disemic text: a surface meaning for *hoi polloi* and an encrypted meaning for the initiated. According to the *Birth of Modernism*, the vast majority of scholars have stopped their ears to the siren song of the occult in the poem; among the scholars, only Surette himself, and one or two of his former students at the University of Western Ontario, are seen to have been able to crack the code and penetrate the Poundian arcanum.

The author would like to say, ditto for *The Waste Land*, but he is a little more circumspect about the work of T.S. Eliot. Eliot's orthodox Christianity poses something of a problem. Eliot is also a more difficult nut to crack because he seems, rather more than Pound, ready to convey his thinking more conventionally in sustained and continuous fashion (and therefore be more singular, determinate, and end-

directed in his meanings). Pound's ratiocinative style, not so much thinking as cognitive surging, with its spurts and geysers of images, sentence fragments and expletives, lends itself more easily and suggestively to a wider diversity of possible meanings. His magnificent, open-textured morphological cubism has always been especially seductive for critics with an interpretative agenda.

About Eliot's early masterpiece, Surette cautiously advances the novel view that Pound's editing of the original drafts and fragments went far beyond matters of verbal style and structure. Eliot, in fact, went to Pound for advice about the occult, because "he knew Pound to have some competence in occult theories and beliefs." This line of thinking forces Surette to inflate the impact of Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, itself an occult work, on the poem, well beyond what critical opinion has come to accept over the many decades of Eliot scholarship.

Nevertheless, the book's thesis is a bold one and one that self-consciously flies in the face of most scholarship on the modernists. As a result of the revisionary intent and the author's suspicion that most scholars of modernism will dismiss his labour as the work of a tenured crank, the book is written with a kind of wary, even surly, pugnaciousness, which is certainly not very charming, but which makes a welcome contrast to the usual tortured blandness in which most criticism gets written these days.

However, it seems to me that Surette exaggerates the resistance among scholars to such views. Perhaps they did twenty-five years ago, but today no-one is going to tell anyone else to put a sock in it because it may be possible to show that Pound, like Yeats, actually believed in ghosts. Resistance to the occult thesis in this particular book will come because the connections Surette tries to make may seem extraordinarily flimsy for the amount of scholarly ordnance he trains on the subject.

Steven Watson's *Strange Bedfellows*, the profusely illustrated paperback edition of his very engaging account of the origins of American modernism, in and around the time of the Armory Show in 1913, is a rather different kettle of fish. The story of the development of the first American avant-garde, primarily the Greenwich Village bohemia of 1913 to 1917, emphasizes people, places, love affairs, quarrels, the making and breaking of small magazines, and a myriad of other matters of personal and communal life. It is written in the style of *haut bavardage* with wit, charm, and the jocose shrewdness one finds in the better sort of gossip.

Watson reconstructs the community of interests, personal, aesthetic and financial, which brought together his cast of characters in Manhattan, with their alliances in other centres of modernism, London, Paris, Chicago, Boston, and so forth. Particularly useful are his people charts that show the personal connections among the protagonists of his story. They put before the reader in a single glance the tangle of ties which helped create the art hothouse from which so much innovative work and so many revolutionary ideas grew.

But precisely on that point, Watson's book tends, finally, to disappoint. As enjoyable as *Strange Bedfellows* is to read, it does not engage with the intellectual history that is the life and soul of all these comings and goings, intimacies, feuds, and endless conversations. The book suffers from the limitation of its focus on personalities. Unlike Walter Adamson's more intellectually substantial re-construction of modernist Florence in the same era, one puts down Watson's book remembering little more than amusing stories about quirky individuals. The characters he puts before us seem, at the end of the day, the exotic, but irrelevant, inmates of a dada menagerie: Amy Lowell, for example, travelling to Egypt to float down the river Nile trying to lose weight by profuse sweating and by eating

only tomatoes and asparagus, or Man Ray in the Village recording on film and for all time Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven shaving her pubic hair.

Lovers in a Dangerous Time

Rai Berzins

Cerberus. Goose Lane \$14.95

Peter McGehee

Sweetheart. HarperCollins \$12.95

Reviewed by Peter Cumming

In Bruce Cockburn's words, both these works of fiction explore "lovers in a dangerous time." While the gay, seropositive characters of Peter McGehee's posthumously published novel, *Sweetheart*, urgently seek connections in a world ravaged by AIDS, the men and women of Rai Berzins' short story collection, *Cerberus*, stumble into miraculous, if tenuous, connections in their otherwise lonely worlds.

Written while McGehee (1955-1991) approached his own AIDS-related death, *Sweetheart*—the second novel of a projected trilogy—cannot help but have extra-textual resonance. McGehee's comic depiction of Zero MacNoo, his dead friend Randy, and his new lover Jeff has inspired reviewers and publishers to label his work "zany," "wacky," a "Comedy of Manners in a Time of Troubles." Without wishing to sound like Zero's mother (amazed to "think you can even joke about" AIDS), I wonder if *Sweetheart*'s non-stop farce, camp repartee, and obsessive sexuality ultimately undo the politics of the book.

Sweetheart is political in its very representation of a traditionally invisible community. McGehee's gay utopia has its own humour (Searcy considering wheeling the "Celebrity AIDS Person" on stage though he has just died); language ("Miss Virus," "the Widow Alan," "That's enough to make an old girl moist"); even a gay heaven: the

afterlife is "more of the same. . . breakfast with a bunch of the Toronto boys . . . Tim, the three Bills, Tom, Dan . . .". The novel's most powerful moments are those which poke through its glitzy, comic surfaces: "A man passes me in the crowd. . . . We both try a flirtatious smile, but it doesn't quite come off. We are losing." At the novel's best, Zero and McGehee cut through the narrative decorum separating character, author, and reader, text and world: "Fuck it. I'll just forget about it until my next set of results. Now, would you call that denial, or would you call that practical? Write me. I'd really like to know."

Too often, however, the novel reduces its dialogical potential to caricature, making *Sweetheart* just another *Love Story*. Names become tiresomely predictable—gay "Randy" and "Lance," lesbian "Big Ellen" and her daughter "Mary Bull," Zero's heterosexual brother, "Norm." Subjects are a sum of their one-liners; intersubjectivities are painfully absent. Nobody changes: Randy's mother is *always* understanding, even of her son's promiscuity; Randy's father is "a pig . . . an absolute Neanderthal." Norm and Zero talk without dialogue: "God! I wish someone would tell me why homosexuals feel they have to be so belligerent about everything." 'Because we all come from families full of assholes like you!'"

Sweetheart's frantic transitions from ashes to asses and lust to dust become difficult to accept. Love is invariably reduced to sex, trivializing death more than it defies it:

"Can't you think of anything but sex?"

David asks me.

"Sure I can. World peace, hunger, human rights, . . . life, death—I can think of a lot of things besides sex."

"I can't," says Jeff, squeezing my toes.

"I was counting on that."

". . . [A]bsence makes the cock grow harder."

But then, I may be reading the novel as Zero's mother: "Honestly, [Zero], you

make it so hard for somebody to care!"

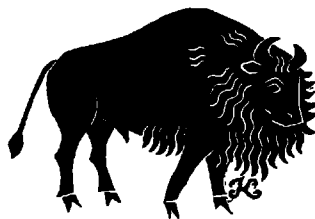
Rai Berzins' characters don't make it hard for us to care, though many of them are not only losing but "losers." To the contrary, Berzins' stories are small miracles (reminiscent of the secular parables of Leon Rooke), turning up single, unexpected moments of hope for people doing their best in a hostile world.

Like McGehee, Berzins (tapping into his experiences as psychiatric aide, security guard, and group home counsellor) represents otherwise "invisible" men (and women). Remembering an article about "all men being potential rapists," the protagonist of "Cerberus" concludes that "we are also potential saints, salesmen, and everything in between." Berzins gives distinctive voice to these "everything in between"—bored security guards, obsessed academics, confused criminals, lucid psychiatric and stubborn geriatric patients, dead end buddies, skid row alcoholics, alienated and loving fathers and sons. Without erasing rapists, Berzins' stories foreground gently pre-sexual men: in "Sea of Tranquility," the *other* psychiatric aide boasts of sex with patients while Rudy stares at a helpless sleeping woman, wondering "[h]ow many beers it will take" for him to sleep on that peaceful sea.

The variety of voice in Berzins' stories is complemented by a structural experimentation which makes his stories both challenging and rewarding. In "Cerberus," an academic's "mind unmoored" clutches for order in a list of "a" words down one side of the story (abasia absorption abulia); in dreams of Beckett's Lucky, Frankenstein's monster, and Queequeg; and in recollections of petty, departmental squabbles. "Tango" is a virtuoso performance told completely in dialogue of the conflict between a rural couple and hippies next door. And the potential cliché of a "frame story" in "Vacuums" (a young father rocking his son triggers the memory of another

man missing his dead son) works powerfully, echoed by the "sun [rising] twice those early winter mornings" because of two mountain peaks.

While Berzins' characters are often individually destabilized, in relationship with others they discover themselves. In "Common Sense" (selected for *The Journey Prize Anthology*), when Pearl is propositioned by a jerk in a car, "Hey baby, wanna sit on my face?," Berzin might easily have cut straight to Pearl's clever rejoinder, "Thanks . . . but I got a toilet at home." Unlike McGehee, however, Berzins always chooses the complex moment. Between setup and punch line, he both deconstructs the boy's masculinity and explores the self of Pearl: "This sort of question always threw Pearl. If she sat on his face would he finally find peace? satiation? companionship?" Brilliantly structured with three heroes and three points of view, "Common Sense" allows the reader to participate in the same fluidity of interrelationships which Pearl, her cab driving friend, Cecil, and Cecil's mother, Wanda, experience: "Wanda looked from Cecil to Pearl. . . . Enough they were here with her. . . . Enough she hadn't looked at their cards. . . . She might have said a prayer of thanks. . . . Instead, she just sat there in the middle of that moment, feeling quite positive, given the world." "The first sentence of every novel," wrote Michael Ondaatje in *In the Skin of a Lion*, "should be: 'Trust me . . . there is order here, very faint, very human.'" Just such "faint, human" order beautifully unfolds in the stories of Rai Berzins.



Columbdrums

Marc Giacomelli and Yuri Rubinsky

Christopher Columbus Answers All Charges.

Porcupine's Quill \$11.95

Thomas J. Ferraro

Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in

Twentieth-Century America. U Chicago P

\$40.00/\$15.95

Reviewed by Arnold E. Davidson

Christopher Columbus, in Marc Giacomelli and Yuri Rubinsky's rendering, may have answered all charges but he has hardly dispelled them, and no one, after perusing this work, is likely to read or remember, say, Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* or Kirkpatrick Sales's *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* or Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America* differently than he or she might otherwise have done. Neither did I find myself lamenting the fact that I had not suitably celebrated another centennial anniversary of the Admiral's first voyage to the New World and vowing to do better next time. If anything, the novel as an attempt to set Columbus "right" again constitutes a left-handed demonstration of how valid the unsettling prompted by recent revisionist histories, such as those just named, has been.

Much as the title of the work effectively evokes the *Crossfire* context of current Columbus historiography, so too—but less effectively—does the form. Bracketed by "A Few Words of Preface" and "A Few Words of Epilogue" are seven categories of charges and responses that constitute themselves a loose overview of Columbus's career. After *Accusations General in Nature* (such as "That I knew not whither I sailed" or "That I was secretly a Jew of Venice") come accusations directed largely at his youth and preparation for his mission of discovery, at each of his four successive voyages, and

then at his forced retirement back in Spain and his overall "Divine Mission." Each of the sections, however, is much the same: a charge followed by a denial or defense, a series of 'tises set against 'taints. And between "That I was ill-prepared for my voyage of 1492" as compared to "There is nothing that God or I could have done to prepare me better," there is not much grounds for preferring one proposition over the other.

Other claims of the defense, however, seem simply inadmissible. "Now all the Christian lands will flock together to bring the Peace of Jesus to the Indian peoples," Columbus asserts in reference to his first voyage and oblivious to the countering historical perspective that he, in his retirement, could bring to bear on this patent absurdity (the reader of course also has the perspective of five hundred years of subsequent history). Or we notice how the narrator justifies his advocacy of enforced slavery (hardly "the Peace of Jesus") as both a "temptation" to which he "succumbed" in a moment of weakness and as a sound plan of double salvation whereby he could physically and spiritually save the more peaceful Natives first from their cannibal neighbors by sending the latter as slaves to Spain and then by having the "converted slaves . . . return to the islands as Christian teachers, ministering to their fellows." The less tenuous benefits that Spain and Spaniards might derive from this same slavery are, of course, entirely omitted from his moral calculations. Furthermore, the conjunction of very different kinds of charges serves to reduce them all to an assortment of odd complaints. Thus the matter of advocating slavery is followed immediately by the accusation that "he slept inconsistently and at the wrong time of the day." Indeed, the nadir—or the peak (it is all a matter of perspective)—of this process comes when Columbus considers the charge that he stole the credit for inventing swimming and can consequently

present himself as “a man more swum against than swimming.”

The text, however, is not without more substantial ironies. Columbus, for example, can assert that he is not “jealous of Americus Vesputius for the ease [of his] success” by claiming that “there is no finer sailor than Vesputius . . . and history will give him his due.” History, of course, will give him much more than his due, naming the bulk of the new world after the later arriviste, not the prior one. But Columbus also regularly discounts “history,” for history, he is quite certain, will run out in another hundred and fifty years, with the arrival of the millennium, itself brought on by the forced conversion of the world to Christianity—an end served, he insists, by his discovery of the New World. The Queen, indeed, is the better prospective historian. To his claim that he has “named cities, rivers, islands and continents after [her] and [her] saints” and that “[t]hese glories will live one hundred and fifty years, until the end of time,” she answers that “[e]ven if they live five hundred years, Admiral-who-is-no-more, there will be no glory.” She clearly gauges the duration for glory better than he does for time.

But then the final condition that Columbus envisions for himself is well beyond human history and, for that matter, human glory. Near the end of the novel he asserts that the charge of announcing himself as the Messiah “is an exaggeration.” An exaggeration, not a fabrication. And to the final charge, that he “failed in [His] mission, he responds by seeing himself finally “at the Right Hand of Jesus” where he can “intercede on behalf of all who have shown faith in [him]” as well as “forgive” all his accusers, all of them, supporters and accusers, “brought” by Columbus into a prophesied “New World” of forgiveness and redemption. His earlier pervasive rhetoric of the self-made man here gives way to a rhetoric of the self-made God. The

resulting resonance is oddly contradictory. The self-made God eclipses the self-made man even as the man also compromises, in the Epilogue, the claims of Godhood. Making his way through the maze of his garden that is also a progression of the stations of the cross, Columbus, at the end of his narration, misses the twelfth station (The Death of Our Lord—as he will not miss his own) and is last seen “standing by the thirteenth station, meditating on the Descent.”

Just how much that final stance is to be read back through the whole book is not at all clear. So the publication of this novel is roughly analogous to some community proclaiming an official Save “Columbus Day” Day. The purpose is dubious; the prospects dim; but there is still something quaintly charming in the postmodern implications of the whole retrograde enterprise, an enterprise that otherwise cannot be taken seriously, even if seriously intended. One hopes that it wasn’t.

To conclude on a more positive note and with an altogether more subtle and rewarding reading of cultural negotiations that trace back to Columbus’s attempts to conjoin the Old World and the New, I turn briefly to Thomas J. Ferraro’s *Ethnic Passages: Literary Immigrants in Twentieth-Century America*. Ferraro is particularly intrigued by what he terms “the ethnic writer’s double curse”: “damned on the one side for having become too American and damned on the other side for not being able to become American enough.” But out of that double bind, he argues, come a number of works that strikingly embody both “a ritual enacting [of] Americanization” as well as a demonstration that to be “immersed in ‘mainstream literary discourse’” is not to be carried by that discourse to the far and mythic shores of total assimilation. In short, beyond Werner Sollors’s *Beyond Ethnicity* (and Ferraro explicitly aspires to move beyond Sollors) lies ethnicity again, an ethnicity

variously defined in the discussions of the five literary texts on which this study focuses.

Of the five works assessed, the Canadian reader would likely be most interested in the chapter on Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. Ferraro early observes that American women writers of Asian descent have especially revived the novel of ethnic passage, and considering particularly Joy Kogawa and Sky Lee, a parallel observation certainly applies in Canada. Indeed, Ferraro's summary of Kingston's fictional "agenda" in *The Woman Warrior* ("not only to explore her experience of Chinese patriarchy but also to experiment . . . with forms of cultural recovery and intergenerational rapprochement, especially challenges to the legacy of female capitulation") summarizes as well Lee's agenda in *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. But beyond the always perceptive discussion of particular works and the relevance these may have for Canadian readers—whether they evoke Canadian parallels or not—Ferraro's larger focus on the complex interplay between national culture and ethnic cultures should especially intrigue Canadians concerned with their own version of that same large question and rethinking both literature (especially with respect to canonization) and ethnicity. Americans, this critic insists, must "challenge the reductive oppositions of the multicultural debate" to "underscore" both "the artfulness of what we have already taken as ethnic" as well as "the ethnicity of what we have . . . already taken as art." The polarities play out differently in Canada, as compared to the United States, but the challenge is just as valid.



Elvis is Dead

David Gurr

Arcadia We\$t: the Novel and the Storyboard from Elvis through Thomas Jefferson. Quarry Press
\$21.95

Reviewed by Danine Farquharson

What do Ezra Pound, a gender-neutral "Smart Machine," D.W. Griffiths, a cartoon rabbit, Elvis, Thomas Jefferson and a Jewish immigrant turned Hollywood screenwriter have in common? According to David Gurr, they are all icons of contemporary American 'kulchur' by way of their multifarious quests for the American Dream.

This review could be easily absorbed in a reading of *Arcadia We\$t's* cover page to depict Gurr's British/Canadian vision of what culturally constitutes contemporary America. It's pretty much all there in bold red and white banners with blue text, storyboard frames, cartoon figures, and \$ signs: Gurr's image of America is a commercialized, Hollywoodized, cultural hodge-podge of Elvis-obsessed *National Enquirer* subscribers who buy into urban myths and new age scientology, and whose cursory knowledge of Oscar winners, *Oedipus Rex*, Pound's *Cantos*, and American historiography barely qualify them as the "first Post-Literate generation."

Taking his title from Sydney's 16th century epic poem of a rustic paradise in Greece, Gurr sets one storyline in the ever-clichéd California dreamland of Hollywood in the 1940's. Myles Manyon (who is really Moishe Mantewitz disguised as an Oxonian ex-patriot) attempts to find fame, fortune and their ultimate symbol—the golden statuette—by teaming up with D.W. Griffiths to produce a cinematic representation of Jefferson's America as Sophoclean tragedy. Thwarted at every turn by greed, ambition and four wives, Manyon meanders through five decades of American history only to end up marrying the 'perfect

woman?—a latino Elvis fanatic who cooks, cleans, shops and never loses her accent—and ultimately realizing his dreams only within the realms of virtual reality.

That's the conventional plotline. In post-modern parodic fashion, Gurr attempts to weave other "multiple screens" of storylines via the computerized Yours Truly, an 'alternative' narrator, who zaps around computerized hyperspace trying to affirm Elvis as America's God-King. By about page 36, it becomes obvious that Gurr's parallel universes unite in images of American culture as shallow, transient and illusory. Unfortunately for both the reader and for Gurr, this is not exactly an original perception of the nature of American contemporary culture. I am sure Jean Beaudrillard would recognize the tone and intention of Gurr's critical portrayal of "America." As well, the comparison of American history to the fall of the Roman Empire in tragic genre has 'been done' by everyone from Eugene O'Neill to Henry Kissinger. So, on page 37 I began to envision that the medium in which Gurr has established his narratives would provide a much needed provocative edge to the 'novel.'

Unfortunately, again, Gurr as epic writer fails to adopt a style which effectively sustains his content. By attempting intellectually to challenge his readers with fractured storylines, different type faces, narrators criss-crossing through time and more literary, cinematic, political and sexual allusions than a 90's style T.S. Eliot of the 90's could absorb, Gurr ends up frustrating his vision and this reader. It is not that I could not keep up with the quick paced scene/time/narrative changes (coming from the generation born with remote control in hand) it is simply that Gurr does not know when to stop. In the end, he has produced a cliché vision within a form which never succeeds in rescuing such out-of-date analysis.

When a cartoon rabbit named Brer or Bugs depending upon which time period

he happens to leap into, comes to the startling conclusion that "Perhaps this mixture of human behaviour, represented by the crooning pudding-god now, or his earlier bizarre rocking-and-rolling, was the appropriate symbol of American devotion after all," I cannot help but echo the sentiments of Louis B. Mayer when he says to D.W. Griffiths that "there was only one problem with that movie: no pizzazz at the end." As far as *Arcadia West* is concerned, the pizzazz fizzled out around p. 46: a little *deus ex machinas* would not have gone astray.

Poets: A Sestet

Earle Birney: Portrait of a Poet (53 minutes)

Winter Prophecies: The Poetry of Ralph Gustafson (30 minutes)

F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason (58 minutes)

Poet: Irving Layton Observed (52 minutes)

Al Purdy: A Sensitive Man (55 minutes)

Still Waters: The Poetry of P.K. Page (38 minutes)

Six-part video series produced by the National Film Board of Canada \$161.70 for set or \$3 rental fee per title

Reviewed by Susan Fisher

Between 1981 and 1990, Donald Winkler (with Sheila Fischman as researcher) made six film portraits of Canadian poets. Now available as a video series, these films will be a boon to anyone who teaches Canadian poetry, and a pleasure to anyone who cares about it.

The first in the series, *Earle Birney: Portrait of a Poet*, was made in 1981 and remains a useful document. If some of the biographical detail seems superfluous, and the occasional scene looks dated, Birney's excellent readings of his own poems, and his plain-spoken manner continue to hold our interest. Birney maintains that it was "easier for someone of my gifts to be recognized in Canada;" he assesses himself as

“good, but not very good.” Is this modesty or honesty? At the end of the video, Birney says he is not concerned about an enduring reputation: “poetry is ... not an everlasting medium like marble.” But this film should contribute to preserving Birney’s reputation for at least another generation of readers.

Winkler followed the Birney film in 1982 with another hour-long work, *F.R. Scott: Rhyme and Reason*. He chose a biographical approach, which seems inevitably to favour the political, rather than the poetic, Scott. Poems are used to reveal Scott’s frame of mind, rather than to demonstrate his creative achievements. “The Canadian Authors Meet” (read delightfully by Scott) reveals his European-trained scorn for local pretension. “Old Song” marks his new commitment for Canada, and his turning towards the landscape of northern Canada, a place which he says “became a magnet [and] had almost a religious impact on me.” “Overture” demonstrates the tension he felt in the 1930s between the satisfactions of art, and the moral imperative of political involvement.

In his visual treatment of the poems, Winkler demonstrates here, as elsewhere, restraint. He resists soft-focus leaves, glistening dewdrops and waving wildflowers. Landscape poems such as “Old Song” do call for scenics, but Winkler uses them lightly; an “idea” poem such as “Overture” he handles imaginatively, combining an eerie still of an old-fashioned parlour with archival footage of labour unrest.

After Scott’s decorous modesty, Irving Layton’s vatic self-importance seems almost un-Canadian; I wanted to turn down the volume. In *Poet: Irving Layton Observed*, a 1986 film which follows Layton on a trip to Greece, he is seen both on and off the podium, but always uses the same declamatory register. But if his manner is at times self-consciously, annoyingly, Zorba-like (especially on location in Greece), Layton is nonetheless compelling. The camera follows as he wanders about a ruined amphithe-

atre, making notes for a poem, muttering to himself, the creative process unimpeded by the watching film crew. But maybe he is always on camera.

The film ends as it begins: Layton, bleary-eyed, descends to the kitchen, pours coffee and shuffles back up to his desk. I think the intent of using this sequence twice is to remind us of the very great craftsmanship and industry that underlie Layton’s verse. In public, he is all passion, talk, grand gesture. But at home alone, he works.

Unlike Layton, Al Purdy does not seem happy in front of the camera. In *Al Purdy: A Sensitive Man*, there are moments when he seems to stop, and gaze off into a private middle distance. Winkler uses Dennis Lee and Margaret Atwood to discuss Purdy’s work, because Purdy won’t. He declares that he “doesn’t analyse poems” and has nothing to say about his methods: “A poem is an accident.” The most effective part of this film is Purdy’s reading of his poetry, especially “The Country North of Belleville.” The final line—“we must enquire the way of strangers”—is surely one of those “incandescent moments” Purdy says make writing poetry worthwhile.

Winter Prophecies: The Poetry of Ralph Gustafson is a quiet, interior film. Sitting in the garden, walking with his wife, playing Chopin, Gustafson seems enclosed in a small world. The selection of poems used in the film reinforce this impression, for they deal primarily with nature observed in the Eastern Townships. Winkler’s choice may reflect the difficulties of finding appropriate footage for other kinds of poems, or perhaps the critical view that these later poems are his best work. Gustafson’s final comment—“Poetry is a very wonderful pleasure”—is borne out by this concise, modest film.

The most recent of the six, *Still Waters: The Poetry of P.K. Page*, is similarly modest, and effective. Winkler seems to be aiming at a greater intimacy and directness with

Page. No one else comments on Page's work; she speaks for herself. The interviewer (one assumes it is Winkler) is never seen, but his off-camera questions are left in. I like this technique: one never forgets that Page is actually speaking to someone, not just holding forth to an anonymous camera. She describes her childhood in Alberta, her life as a diplomat's wife, and her dual career as painter and poet; still photos are used to good effect here. In interactions with other people—fans at a reading, a friend painting her portrait—Page is warm and gracious, but in talking of herself, she seems reticent. Page's manner reminds me of her poems: under that refined, careful exterior is something fugitive and passionate.

These six poets are so well-established that it is easy to take their work for granted. What Winkler's series achieves is not merely to add to their reputations, but to send us back to the poems themselves, so that we can re-discover, and learn to admire anew, the beauty and intelligence of their work.

Hidden from History

Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds.

Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past. New American Library \$15.00

David Rosen

The Changing Fictions of Masculinity.

U of Illinois P \$29.95/\$14.95

Reviewed by Tom Hastings

From its first appearance in 1989, the award-winning anthology, *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, was welcomed as a central text in the now burgeoning field of gay and lesbian studies. The anthology's thirty essays (including nine original ones) cover a broad historical spectrum that begins with readings of various ancient Greek texts and

ends with a discussion of queer life in contemporary San Francisco. Such an impressive scope of analysis clearly reflects the "unprecedented outpouring of scholarship in lesbian and gay history in the last decade," as the collection's editors proudly point out. Gathered from sources as diverse as the popular gay press, the academic press, and various oral history projects, each of these essays is the work of some of the most important gay and lesbian critics in the fields of history, literature, and cultural studies. Essays by David M. Halperin, Paula Gunn Allen, and Robert K. Martin are especially impressive for their lucidity and persuasiveness. While some might find the theoretical tone of these collected essays uneven because of their disparate sources, I find that the volume's main strength is its juxtaposition of such divergent readings under one cover. The two opposing readings of Plato's *Symposium*, for example, create a dialogue that engages the reader far more effectively than any singular reading ever could.

For its editors, this collection summarizes the latest research in what they call the "first phase" of gay historiography: each essay focuses primarily on the "historical reclamation" of a "history suppressed almost as rigorously as gay people themselves." Thus, we read essays such as Erwin J. Haeberle's chilling account of the Nazi persecution of German homosexuals. After the concentration camps were liberated, Haeberle explains, the Allied powers continued to incarcerate those individuals with the pink triangles as they considered their imprisonment by the Nazis justifiable. In Esther Newton's essay on Radclyffe Hall and her classic lesbian novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, Hall's own problematic notions of gender and sexual identification are established as the basis of group- and self-identification for succeeding generations of British and American lesbians. As such, then, many of these essays are as much

about issues of identity, both individual and communal, as they are about history and sexuality.

If, as the editors of this important and necessary collection suggest, "gay history helps constitute the gay community by giving it a tradition, helps women and men validate and understand who they are by showing them who they have been," then this anthology is a welcome respite in a time when notions of history and identity are in a constant state of flux.

David Rosen's study of masculinity and male experience in six "classics" of British literature, attempts to explicate an identity that has often been understudied, misunderstood, and, even, maligned: 'man.' Although one of feminism's greatest strengths, as Rosen points out, is its attention to the ways in which we 'read' gender, it has tended to focus almost exclusively on femininity while relegating masculinity to the unwieldy category of patriarchy. Such a move is commonly repeated by men who continue to "define masculinity in opposition to a femininity they construct." Either way, this "impulse to binarism" is dangerous for its essentializing implications as well as its inability to understand the multifaceted and insidious ways that the categories of masculinity and patriarchy suppress women and some men. As Rosen indicates: "the collective known as 'men' is not singular or simple....Studies of masculinity show that no definitive masculine ideal exists." It is, therefore, "time for men also to begin decentering old gender ideas about themselves."

Rosen's critical focus, he admits, is narrow: "What I write about here is the English male heterosexual of fiction in a tightly limited time-culture span, from Beowulf to Paul Morel." In detail he examines six "works of the 'received' male canon" as they are, he writes, "most likely to encode the masculine ideals just because they are promulgated as truths about humanity."

Hamlet's famous soliloquy is re-read as a troubled young man's desire both to be and not to be a man, while *Beowulf*, the "archetypal story of masculine heroism," is re-read as a text about the instability of the category of the masculine. In the chapter on *Hard Times*, Rosen thoughtfully describes the tension between Dickens's surprisingly progressive view on gender and the regressive ones of his own times.

Although many of Rosen's critical comments are insightful, his study constantly bogs down in a mire of thematic criticism. By analyzing theme upon theme, piling image upon image, sophisticated theoretical scrutiny is forsaken for close reading. Rosen's fleeting comments about the male body and armour pale in light of Klaus Theweleit's discussion of masculine roles in *Male Fantasies* while his discussion of erotic relationships in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* would benefit from the rich vocabulary of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and contemporary gay male critics.

Home Places

Herb Curtis

The Lone Angler. Goose Lane \$14.95

David Lewis Stein

Going Downtown: Reflections on Urban Progress.
Oberon \$25.95/\$12.95

Reviewed by Tim Heath

At first glance, Herb Curtis' novel, *The Lone Angler*, and David Lewis Stein's book-length essay, *Going Downtown: Reflections on Urban Progress*, seem as different and as distanced as is the Miramichi from Toronto. However, Curtis through his fictional Miramichiers, and Stein through his recollections on the growth of metropolitan Toronto, both demonstrate that to live in a place is to be caught up in a complex tension between the desire for a habitation and improvement, between changelessness

and change in the name of improvement.

The Lone Angler follows two of Curtis' earlier books that are set in the Miramichi, *The Americans are Coming* (1989) and *The Last Tasmanian* (1991), and continues with the same group of characters from the fictional village of Brennen Siding. Among the many stories and characters within the novel, the three key figures are the brothers Palidin and Dryfly Ramsey, and Dryfly's friend, Shadrack Nash, all of whom are now grown to maturity and ready to leave Brennen Siding, albeit temporarily. Palidin heads for Texas to sell his secret for catching fish to the rich and eccentric owner of a large sporting-goods retail chain. Dryfly and Shad go to Connecticut and New York to see Dryfly's true love, the wealthy and beautiful Lillian Wallace.

These trips to the United States condense a larger, uneasy alliance between the backwater New Brunswickers, many of whom work as fishing guides at the Cabbage Island Salmon Club, and their American clients. At stake in this relationship is the future of the Atlantic salmon, which will be in peril if Palidin is successful in selling his unfailing fishing secret. Palidin's get rich scheme, undertaken because he wants to pay for his sister's education so that she does not "grow to become a baby-maker and nothing else" is the chief means by which Curtis explores the private and public, as well as environmental cost of progress.

Although it is possible to imagine that *The Lone Angler* is little more than a folksy Miramichi tale, Curtis shows a haunted and worried side of Brennen Siding and its inhabitants which serves to make the book's otherwise sturdy and folksy humour both piercing and fragile. Curtis has an astute ear for dialect and his inventive phrases (a resolved Dryfly Ramsey waits for the light of day "with all the patience of a peach in a rusty can"), make the book a delight to read. The story courses along with same laminar flow as its centrepiece, the Dungarvon

River; amongst the current differentials of the story, you will hear echoes of Mark Twain's river boys blended with the mystical river of Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*. Such a spectrum sounds unbelievable—a fish story told about a fish story—but Curtis' book is simply so good, and, without giving away too much, so magnetic, that it is difficult not to be swept along with it.

If Curtis's Palidin Ramsey can whisper to himself, "No tears for Toronto," then David Lewis Stein's *Going Downtown: Reflections on Urban Progress* shows why outsiders, let alone those who live there, can be so dispassionate about Toronto. Stein's most recent book on Toronto recalls some of its recent and major transformations—the rejection of the "blue laws" of the 1950s, the "apartment wars" of the 1970s, the real estate boom and the stock market crash of the 1980s, and some of the recent battles over market value assessments—with the intent of examining the conflicting interests of developers and dwellers over the issue of urban progress.

To the extent that Toronto can be considered a paradigmatic city, the issues that Stein discusses are applicable to the larger question of "urban progress." However, it must be stressed that despite the allusion made in the subtitle, Stein is not discussing the larger economic and political forces that drive urban development; rather, he is producing what must be considered a situated and local history of Toronto. Herein lies the chief problem with *Going Downtown*: the subtitle is patient of two different understandings. If one takes "reflections" to suggest a careful examination that necessarily combines several disciplines (economic, sociological, geographic) into a rigorous treatment of urban political economy, then Stein's book is a disappointment. If, on the other hand, one understands "reflections" as anecdotal recollection of events with occasional hints at analysis, then Stein's book is an engag-

ing, even personal account of the progress of Toronto into the 1990s.

Clearly, *Going Downtown* is the latter sort of reflection. Because Stein is both a resident and a journalist in Toronto he is well-qualified to do this sort of work. However, because he is also a creative writer and a trained urban and regional planner, it seems fair to expect that the writing and the analysis in the book would be both more consistent and more penetrating. Stein has the ability to occasionally write choppy prose and a habit of overusing physical descriptions to characterize the men and women that people his story of Toronto. One more quibble—the whole of chapter three is a verbatim repeat of a column that Stein wrote for the *Toronto Star* in June of 1971. Given the fact that the entire book is just over one hundred pages long and that much material in the book reiterates information from Stein's 1972 publication, *Toronto for Sale: The Destruction of a City*, such duplication seems an uneconomical, indeed poor, use of words. Balanced against these faults is Stein's ability to write beautifully and touchingly about his family and their history in Toronto.

Pain, Power & Language

Margaret Atwood

The Robber Bride. McClelland and Stewart \$27.95

Reviewed by Aritha Van Herk

In this terrifyingly astute examination of the nature of friendship and loyalty between women, Atwood incises a surface of lies and belief, theft and possession. The mixture of the domestic and the fiercely combative that Atwood employs in her novels is as familiar to readers as her always acerbic analyses of the motivations of human behaviour. But *The Robber Bride* is even more piercing in its return to an

ongoing preoccupation of Atwood's fiction, the temptations of victimhood.

Atwood negotiates this tricky ground through a brilliant usurpation of the fairy tale *The Robber Bridegroom*, about a "rich and handsome stranger who lures innocent girls to his stronghold in the woods and then chops them up and eats them." Reversing the robber from bridegroom to bride, or hex more than bride, Atwood constructs a morality tale that is firmly tongue in cheek, less an exploration of friendship as a puzzle to be solved than a devilishly clever exhumation of human possession and relinquishment.

Roz, Tony, and Charis are friends by default more than intent, intimates because each has suffered considerable damage at the hands of Zenia, a knockout femme fatale with silicone breasts and a nose for opportunity. The three friends are contemporary versions of *Macbeth's* three witches. Not quite settled in either body or mind, they epitomize different kinds of knowledge and innocence, but altogether represent a gluttonous victimhood that relies on Zenia's usage. Roz is an intrepid businesswoman pretending to be impervious, ready to make deals on anything; Tony is a "proof addict," a dyslexic professor of military history who reads everything backwards; Charis is a leftover hippy who believes in a crystal-driven new-age version of reality. These are post-feminist women, with careers and solid ambitions and experience, but they are women who must frown in order to make themselves feel substantial. And they are most afraid of losing themselves by losing a battle—(what battle, what cause?)—to another woman.

They are united by Zenia, their mutual fear of Zenia, the tall, fatal, and ruthless beauty (the Robber Bride) who has wrought terrible havoc in their lives. Zenia's "malign vitality" is of the sort that never dies, that merely re-assigns itself to another moment. So despite Zenia's having

another moment. So despite Zenia's having been officially dead for five years, her three cohorts are uneasy enough to be unsurprised when she suddenly reappears, portentously intact, in a trendily down-market restaurant called the Toxique where they meet for their monthly lunch. When the three women see their arch enemy, whom they believed consigned to the deep of bad memories and worse experiences, *The Robber Bride's* plot of discovery and revenge is set in motion. This novel is a reprise of *Lady Oracle*, where another character arranges her own death, participating in its enactment in order to undergo a rebirth. But unlike *Lady Oracle*, Zenia is given no opportunity to enjoy her resurrection, which is brief and bitter.

Like all of Atwood's fiction, *The Robber Bride* is exquisitely morbid. In embroidering Atwood's incremental analysis of victimhood, it asks the question: "Who is the victim and why?" These characters take turns being victims, but their immersion in the role is shadowed by Atwood's epigraph, from Jessamyn West: "A rattlesnake that doesn't bite teaches you nothing." Zenia, the victimizer, represents the myth and mystique of the powerful but unsavoury woman, ruthlessly sowing death and destruction. But if Zenia is destructive, her real crime is that she makes all of them—Roz, Tony, and Charis—feel tenuous, unsteady, not quite real. Like any good fiction, she forces them to question themselves. If victimhood is a matter of cosmic exchange, the rapacious Zenia is a manifestation of these women, just as the three witches manifest for Macbeth his naked ambition. Zenia represents an aspect of each of these women that they must come to grips with; Roz and Charis and Tony are all parts of Zenia, as Zenia is a part of each of them. She may be the manufactured woman, the loathed woman for them, but like Macbeth's witches, they conjure up the very horror that they disclaim.

"War is what happens when language fails," says Tony. The war in question is a battle of the sexes, not *between* men and women, but *over* men, with Zenia as its double agent. For each of these characters, a man is something to catch and to hold on to, an object shaping one's life; the dreadful miracle of men is that they are the source of desire and all its discontents. And Zenia, the Robber Bride, steals other women's men, eats them raw and spits them out again. Bobbing about on the high seas of this battle are the fragile boats of these men, their angular bones, their carefully exposed jugulars, their helplessness. They claim to be children, they claim to be without protection against the terrifying wiles of the fatal woman. They claim innocence.

The lesson that Roz and Tony and Charis must learn from the rattlesnake is obvious. They believe their husbands and lovers to be their most precious possessions. In reality, their most precious possessions are themselves. For are the men—alternately itinerant, boring, abusive, unfaithful—worth it? Not one of these women needs protection or support; they caretake their men, who are hopeless, inept, and easily manipulated by Zenia's blackmail, calculation, melodrama. That both Roz and Charis lose their men is only appropriate—the men are less than ideal partners. But these women feel invaded by Zenia's holding up the mirror of their mates' worthlessness, and they blame her for their losses.

For Atwood, lying is the *crème de la crème* of art, the reflection of fiction. *The Robber Bride* resonates with theft, in war, in love, in daily commerce; lying and theft are woven together in the elaborate intricacy of stealing as a survival tactic. Every character has a history in some way associated with theft, and Zenia steals from them all, soul and money and men, with love secondary to money: "She's the kind of woman who wants what she doesn't have and gets what she wants and then despises what she gets."

But if Zenia's lies and disguises are so thorough, then perhaps they aren't disguises; perhaps she is simply a manifestation of her victims' suppressed desires. The resultant turbulence and its violent contradictoriness resounds with the happy morbidity of Zenia as demon lover, witch, thief, but ultimately epitome of a woman who takes her destiny into her own hands, is willing to use every possible weapon to fight for her own survival.

In the end, Zenia is a powerful anti-heroine, the only voice who dares to tell a host of unvarnished lies, but also the unvarnished truth. In her perverse destructiveness, she becomes an emblem of empowerment. Roz and Charis and Tony are her alter-sisters, skirting the edges of her curses but nevertheless fascinated. They would like to be Zenia, they want to cheer her on, "to participate in her daring, her contempt for almost everything, her rapacity and lawlessness." Survival means colouring the self to suit one's environment, participating in the disguising mythologies of kindness, love, faithfulness. Zenia is a scapegoat, hung for sacrifice. While the three friends are relieved that she is at last well and truly dead, they know that killing Zenia is a metaphorical way of turning into Zenia. And beneath their relief is the recognition that they should all be grateful to her, for her death releases them into their lives.

Atwood does not permit the banal binary moral of good triumphing over bad. Like fiction, the stories that are told and the energy that is stolen is a measure of our human need to shape the world to our purposes. No one is innocent, pure of intention, without stain or ambition. For Atwood's women, fictional or otherwise, the epiphanic moment can be heard in the echo of *Surfacing*, looping directly into *The Robber Bride*, twenty years later: "This above all, to refuse to be a victim. Unless I can do that I can do nothing. I have to

recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt anyone." Pain, power, and language collude to bring about a new position, a new dissection of the human heart eternally in conflict with itself.

In truly Atwoodesque style, *The Robber Bride* is terse, clean, and funny, a magnification of a language problem and "the malign contagion of the material world." Atwood's implacable ear, her disdain for the welter of sentiment or easy resolution, makes her fiction as bracing as a winter storm, and as exhilarating. For all its wolfish reversals, *The Robber Bride* is still a piercing lesson on the selectivity of memory, the rubble of responsibility, and the perverse contagions of victimhood.

Sexual Histories

Judith Butler

Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex." Routledge US\$49.95/15.95

Domna C. Stanton, ed.

Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS. U Michigan P US\$14.95

Reviewed by Philip Holden

Since its publication in 1990, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* has become the canonical work on identity politics in contemporary gender studies courses. The author's most recent book, *Bodies that Matter*, revisits familiar territory. *Gender Trouble* ends with a formulation of identity as performance, and an almost utopian endorsement of making gendered bodies "the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself." *Bodies that Matter* explores questions that arise from this position. What, for instance, of the materiality of the body, which in Butler's works often seems to be a purely discursive phenomenon? And how might we, while discarding an

unproblematized concept of agency, distinguish between performances that denaturalize and those which merely reinscribe doxological values?

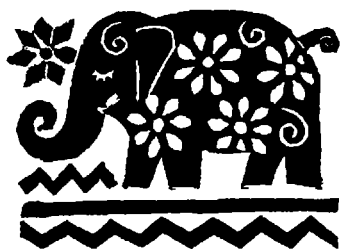
Butler's response is to emphasize that while discourse does not cause apparently material phenomena such as sexual difference, these phenomena cannot be discussed without placing them within already marked-out "discursive practices." Any effort to separate biological sex from culturally-inscribed gender, in Butler's view, collapses because "sex" is already discursively inscribed. Thus *Bodies that Matter* investigates not materiality but "materialization," the process through which a sexual subject is formed. In keeping with much contemporary queer and postcolonial theory, Butler sees the subject as constituted through a process founded upon "the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings" which form "a constitutive outside to the subject . . . which is, after all, 'inside' the subject as its own founding repudiation."

Since the subject, for Butler, is constituted through performance, challenges to gender norms occur through repeated citation and reiteration of social codes of gender, such citation producing a supplement which exceeds the putatively natural. *Bodies that Matter* contains a persuasive series of close readings of texts that work in the manner its author describes. Willa Cather's use of masculine names, for example, "cites the paternal law, but in places and ways that mobilize a subversion under the guise of loyalty." Jennie Livingston's film *Paris is Burning* similarly, in its depiction of drag ball "houses" in Harlem, re-enacts, and questions, relations of kinship. For a reconstructed materialist such as myself, however, there is still one question that *Bodies that Matter* raises but does not fully answer: "[H]ow do we know the difference between the power we promote and the power we oppose?"

Butler also contributes a paper to *Discourses of Sexuality*, a collection of essays originally given as lectures or seminars at the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities, and edited by Domna Stanton. Stanton's introductory essay is the best summary of the "new studies of sexuality" I have seen: she clarifies the relation between Eve Sedgwick's two monographs on male homosexuality, for instance, more skillfully than Sedgwick herself does. The remaining papers are, with one or two exceptions, of similarly high quality. Several feature a return to Foucault, interrogating various aspects of *The History of Sexuality*. Lesley Dean-Jones contests Foucault's representation of female sexual appetite in the Greek medical texts analyzed in *The Use of Pleasure*, while Lynn Hunt critiques the underrating of gender in the history of sexual subjectivity presented in the first volume of Foucault's study. Both Butler and Abdul JanMohamed choose the last part of the first volume of *The History*, "The Right of Death and Power over Life" as a starting point for analysis. JanMohamed investigates the manner in which the modern state's nurturing of life, which Foucault identifies as a key element in the discourse of sexuality, was matched by a deployment of death at the colonial margins. Judith Butler, in contrast, re-evaluates this nurturing in the light of the AIDS pandemic. David Halperin's essay, which performs a Foucaultian dissection of a late antique Greek text in order to denaturalize contemporary constructions of sexuality, amplifies a fault shared by many of these essays: excessive deference to Foucault. In this context, Catherine MacKinnon's dismissal of much contemporary gender theory as "orgasming" history, "the history of what makes historians feel sexy" provides a useful and challenging corrective.

Thomas Lacquer, one of the few theorists to receive MacKinnon's endorsement, contributes an essay which mixes, a little

uneasily, Foucaultian microanalysis with demography in order to show the filiations between the discourse of sexuality and the concept of the free market during the industrial revolution. Louis Montrose's essay on the Elizabethan conquest of America is a subtle exploration of the manner in which an apparently simple discursive opposition between masculine colonizer and feminized landscape is complicated by the prior presence of Spanish men, and the fact that England is embodied by a Virgin Queen. Other papers in the collection range widely and productively: Joanne Leonard's rereading of her own artwork on sexuality from the 1970s was for me the most thought-provoking. For all their variety, however, one still has the feeling that the essays represent an almost exclusively North American dialogue, supplemented by an uncharacteristically weak essay from the British social historian Jeffrey Weeks. Race, for instance, is seen only in a North American context. Classical Greece may be a rich field of inquiry, but what of Brett Hinsch's work in Classical Chinese or, for that matter, the theorizations of sexuality in Modern East Asia provided by Rey Chow and Chang Hsiaohong? One might wish to extend Butler's scepticism of origins to question the implied origin of both *Discourses of Sexuality* and *Bodies that Matter*: Aristotle. To rework the subtitle of Stanton's collection, there may be many discourses of sexuality that do not lie on the assumed continuum between Aristotle and AIDS.



Feminist Fabulations

Marleen S. Barr

Lost In Space: Probing Feminist Science Fiction and Beyond. U North Carolina P \$55.95/\$21.50

Catherine Bush

Minus Time. Harper Collins \$22.95

Reviewed by Jenifer K. Hood

These two works, while both representing what Barr calls "feminist fabulation," are not at all alike. Obviously one is fiction and the other not, but this difference is also in the quality of the writing and in the resolution of the issues surrounding feminist science fiction.

Minus Time reports that a modern mother who fails in her duty to nurture her children properly will create a child who wishes to nurture the earth. Catherine Bush illustrates rather poignantly how issues of abandonment will rear their ugly little heads if mother is too far out of reach (orbiting 300 miles above the earth, to be precise). However, while she does not exactly adhere to the strictly feminist guidelines which Marleen Barr proposes in *Lost In Space*, she is a far better spokesperson for the dilemma of the working mother. Bush's prose is lovely. She draws the reader in and holds her there, intrigued by the issues she presents and fascinated by the possibilities of their resolution. Although Bush's novel is not exactly unpredictable, it does involve the reader in ways which counter Barr's much more pessimistic feminist world view.

Bush's novel relates the story of Helen Urie, daughter of Canadian astronaut Barbara Urie and disaster relief worker and journalist David Urie. Helen was born in 1968, a year and a half before the first moon landing. By the time she is 21 (1989), her mother has achieved her lifelong dream of being an astronaut. This dream has consistently left Helen and her "almost twin" brother Paul in the lurch, experts at preparing frozen meals, adept at nurturing each

other while their parents go off in search of the meaning of life. While Bush's dating of her hero's life is way off the mark (Barbara Urie is participating in a duration in space experiment in NASA's peopled space station), and while locating Helen's father in the Silicon Valley when he goes to Los Angeles to help after an earthquake is about 400 miles off target, her expression of the feeling of loss and pain felt by the "astro kids" is right on. Throughout the novel Bush drops little literary hints, exquisitely tying metaphor to plot line. For example, "Did she feel suddenly free, as if she had jettisoned a life behind her?" Helen's desire to be someone else, someone the press will not recognize, who can do, without fear of ridicule, all the things her mother's fame will not allow her to do, is the stuff tell-all biographies by superstar children are made of. As Helen gets more and more involved with "United Species," an environmental group, her life begins to take on some measure of confused meaning. She says to her mother, "Hey, what about us down here on Earth!?" much more than she really participates in something she wholeheartedly believes in. Her absent father, who decides, shortly after Barbara has been selected to the astronaut program, to leave to help earthquake victims after the proverbial Big One in Los Angeles, is ineffectual and patently void of personality. We never really know David Urie, which may indeed be Bush's point. In addition, this plot line presents us with another "minus time" problem in the novel—surely an earthquake measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale would have been big news in 1987.

In fact, perhaps the time problems in her novel are meant to reflect a warning countdown, "minus time," to social problems that we are now facing as the world approaches the twenty-first century. Everyone in the novel is furious, as in "working furiously," and the anger implied in Bush's narrative is compelling. There is a

state of continuous social unease that goes beyond David Urie's explanation that "There is nothing to be alarmed about...but the continents are always moving, very, very slowly creaking and shifting under our feet." One gets the feeling that nothing can be trusted: water, the earth, parents, governments, not even friends. It is a world of paranoia and anxiety mitigated only by the occasional warmth of another human being.

While Bush's protagonist seems to be calling for a loving embrace between human beings (a call that seems strangely suspicious of love between women), Barr is warning against the patriarchal baiting of postmodern feminist fiction. However, Barr's thirteen chapters fall flat for me. She seems to be proclaiming her expertise a bit much. For example, she uses "aliens, airplanes and cultural cross-dressing," the title of Chapter 12, four times in the text. She also appears keen on making sure that the reader knows of her credentials, dropping hints here and there of her accomplishments. While I understand that I may only be responding to conditioning that says women should not boast, I must confess that Barr's type of personal narrative irritates me no matter which sex writes it. I begin to wonder what she wants to prove. She also, to my taste, over-cites, sometimes at the expense of her argument.

Although I did not always get Barr's connections, particularly in the chapter on "Pregnancy and Power in Feminist Science Fiction," I did agree with her that women writers of the fantastic are generally overlooked. I suspect there is something much deeper than Barr's contention that the name of the genre, "feminist science fiction," is the main reason for this oversight. My guess is that men would rather not see the creative power of women give birth to worlds where men are not in control, no matter whether one calls the genre "feminist fabulation" or "feminist science fic-

tion." Barr also has good things to say about the ways in which men are portrayed and male writers portray women in feminist fabulation. These male "fabulators" make a sincere effort to give voice to women and recognize women's power and Barr is to be commended for giving them their due. Similarly, Barr spreads around the credit for reclaiming the voice of the female child.

For example, Barr notes how Margaret Atwood in *Cat's Eye* "enables readers to see more efficiently in the dark of women's lost childhood story." She notes how the protagonist's paintings connect with not only the plot line but her character development. This offers the reader of Atwood's novel a different perspective not only on Elaine but Stephen as well. Atwood's procedure resembles the manner in which author Saul Bellow reveals Shula's life as a holocaust survivor. By juxtaposing her reemergence from the convent safe house against Sammler's rise from a mass Jewish grave in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* Bellow makes the father-daughter relationship one of "the opposite other," by which Shula becomes Sammler's "nocturnal double." Barr's view of these authors and their characters illuminates science fiction from an entirely new perspective, that of the feminist fabulator, and thus calls for a reevaluation of the entire genre.

As Marge Piercy explains in her preface to this volume, Barr "keeps asking, but how come you leave out all the fun and really inventive stuff?" *Lost In Space* is well worth reading, particularly if one is a fan of science fiction. However, I would suggest readers enter into its 222 pages open to Barr's personal (and frankly admitted) prejudices.



Lying & Living

Timothy Findley

The Stillborn Lover . Blizzard \$15.95

Reviewed by John F. Hulcoop

Lies come in all shapes and sizes, and different colours: fibs, whoppers, tall stories, moonshine, white lies, black babble and the discretionary prevarications of diplomat and politician. Homer, said Aristotle, taught us better than anyone "how to tell lies in the right way." Some fiction-makers have even called themselves liars. Timothy Findley celebrated three—Joyce, Woolf and a wooden puppet—in a 1982 article entitled "How did Pinocchio get into this?" We don't hear much of the puppet anymore, Findley says, because "we don't hear much of lies. . . . Lies that once were intolerable are now apparently the norm." Contrarily, Wilde deplored "The Decay of Lying," "Lying!" exclaims one of his duologists. "I should have thought our politicians kept up that habit." To which the other replies that politicians (like diplomats) "never rise above the level of misrepresentation, and actually condescend to argue": in other words, to defend by rationalizing the thing that is not.

"All I have written here is true; except the lies," writes Mauberley, Findley's fictionally factual novelist, in *Famous Last Words* (1981). In *Headhunter* (1993), the factually fictional psychiatrist, Marlow, is unfamiliar with his first patient, a fellow called Findley who asserts that "*Most of us are lying. . . lying and afraid we'll be found out.*" Marlow compares his work to medication because "*both promote a world of lies.*" Findley's 1986 novel, *The Telling of Lies*, is wholly concerned with the subject announced in the title. Clearly, lies, liars and lying belong in that "CATALOGUE OF PERSONAL OBSESSIONS" Findley refers to in introducing *Dinner Along the Amazon* (1984). *The Stillborn Lover*, a play first produced in 1993, confirms this obsession.

Harry Raymond, the principal character, is a diplomat. Experience has taught him that survival in the public world depends on self-restraint, negotiation, bargaining; when Public Life says "I want you just as you are," he learns to say "No—not without terms." He discovers how "to hide out in the open," an art his friends Michael and Juliet Riordon also practice. Formerly an ambassador, now the Minister of External Affairs, Michael wants to be the next Prime Minister of Canada. Diplomats and politicians: "no one will ever know about people like us," says Juliet. "We're too well hidden, our crowd." The corollary to this is that, in the public eye, they are allowed "No privacy. No private lives. No lives at all, that we can see." Thus, Harry Raymond's life as a diplomat becomes, in its own suicidal way, an allegory for the lives of homosexuals who, not only as government representatives, but also as human beings in all walks of life—in the neighbourhoods they choose, the hotels, restaurants and public world of travel, as well as in their professions—must continually negotiate, bargain, deny themselves, killing off who they are in order to keep their jobs, their personal dignity and the respect of others in a largely homophobic society.

The Stillborn Lover, Findley's third stage-play, is more like *Can You See Me Yet?* (1976) than *John A.—Himself!* (1979): by which I mean more a drama of ideas than a theatrical spectacle. Sondheim's *Assassins* is a music-drama of ideas; Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* is a theatrical spectacle. I've always reckoned *Can You See Me Yet?* one of Canada's most underrated, under-produced plays, just as I've always thought Albee, who recently won his second Pulitzer Prize for *Three Tall Women*, the most under-rated, under-produced American playwright. Findley and Albee have a number of things, including the obsession with lying, in common. I suspect that critics and theatre directors, seduced

by the seemingly seamless dramatic texture of *The Stillborn Lover*, will put it down as old hat, non-postmodern (it's no more experimental, formally, than *M. Butterfly*) and sentimental. And, if we read Harry Raymond too literally, as a Canadian diplomat in the play's specified period, and a man with a weakness for his own sex, we may feel Findley claims too much unearned sympathy on Harry's behalf. He *tells* us that Harry's first word was "No"; but the dramatic action does not evidence his ability to say it, except at the very end. As a diplomat, he should (and could) have been more canny. Read as a characteristically covert *exposé* of the homosexual's *condition humaine*, however, the play has passion and moves—in both senses of the word.

A personal post-script. In several of the new play's most powerful scenes, I hear Findley saying "No" more convincingly than the man in *Inside Memory* who proclaims himself happily reconciled with his sexuality (since the age of three), but regards himself as a hiding place for monsters.

Windows on the Past

**Lorraine McMullen and
Sandra Campbell, eds**

Pioneering Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women (Beginnings to 1880). U of Ottawa P \$17.00

Aspiring Women: Short Stories by Canadian Women (1880-1900). U of Ottawa P \$17.00

**Sandra Campbell and
Lorraine Campbell, eds**

New Women: Short Stories By Canadian Women (1900-1920). U of Ottawa P \$17.00.

Reviewed by Lorna Marie Irvine

Although the last of these collections of short stories was published first, discussing them chronologically offers several advantages. We are better able to follow the argument of the editors regarding shifts in emphasis throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, they

note changes in the connections between domesticity and women's work, and show how "maternal feminism" became more pronounced during the latter part of the nineteenth century. We get a clearer sense, too, of the intimate relationship among culture, history and narrative as we follow stories describing shifts in Canada's relationship with Great Britain, and her varying connections with the United States. We also receive a good picture of the variety and long history of women's contributions to the Canadian literary scene. Many of the women represented in these collections worked as journalists, sometimes even running their own publishing houses, as well as being, in most cases, wives and often mothers of large families. A high proportion of them encouraged their writing sisters to publish their own work. Thus, although the individual stories are by no means of uniform quality, the editors have successfully demonstrated a century of activity that belies the tendency of contemporary women to imagine their own struggles as both recent and solitary. Instead, the record established here helps all of us become part of a new literary history.

In *Pioneering Women*, chronologically the earliest of the collections, the editors have republished a number of stories that have disappeared, a fate shared by all writers, but proportionally more so by women. One story, "A Rose in His Grace," by Isabella Valancy Crawford, is anthologized for the first time in this volume. According to the editors, the earliest of the stories (the first was published in 1839) were instrumental in the development of the short story form and, more important, often used subversively to create sub-texts focused on the negative effects of paternal power on women. Indeed, the lives of the writers themselves must have been difficult. Many were mothers of large families, and often ran businesses as well as developing their writing; the biographical information is an

effective antidote to current hype about "super-moms" who, we are repeatedly told, are doing everyone a disservice by undertaking too much. Many of the stories also give important historical documentation and, in several cases, rather surprising portraits of sophisticated life styles not usually associated with Canada's pioneer past. England is the favored setting for many of the stories.

Everyone who reads the collection will certainly have favorites. The better known authors—Susanna Moodie; Catherine Parr Traill; Rosanna Mullins Leprohon—are each represented by stories that are somewhat more complex than many others. Indeed, Moodie's 1847 "The Walk to Dummer" develops what is essentially a sketch into a sophisticated form of art, using the pilgrimage as a device to link characters and setting. Leprohon, in "Alice Sydenham's First Ball" (1849), wittily plays with narrative devices such as reflections in mirrors and overheard conversations, perhaps, as the editors suggest, slightly parodying the romantic form popular at the time. Crawford's story "A Rose in His Grace" (1880) is a focused attack on the laws of inheritance as they favor male progeny.

Some of the stories collected in *Aspiring Women* (1880-1900) might remind readers of the works of the American writers Sarah Orne Jewett and the slightly later Mary Wilkins Freeman because of the self-conscious approach to language, the sensitivity to the lives of older women, the satisfaction derived from the natural world, the emphasis placed on nurturance, particularly as it is evidenced by wise women healers, the focus on female generation and the birth and raising of children, and, finally, the somewhat remote attitude to male characters. The editors point out that during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, women were finding it easier to get published. On the whole, their work tended to be more subversive and artistically varied

than many earlier stories.

The sketch continued to be a favored form, partly because it encouraged documentary reporting but perhaps also because it could be written in short segments of time, those allowed to busy mothers and wives. Now, too, more women writers were uncomfortable with female literary stereotypes and used irony to try to alter characterization as, for example, in a delightful story by Sarah Anne Curzon, "The Ill Effects of a Morning," that illustrates the foolishness of a school's dress codes for its young ladies. Although the teacher who allows the girls more freedom gets fired, the story shows that it is she who wins the affection of the students. Stories include pressing social problems such as prohibition (a number of women writers were involved in the temperance movement) or labor activity and, as the editors suggest, often reveal that "sorority and collegiality" mattered to the writers.

Several stories are told from male perspectives: Ethlyn Wetherald's 1882 "How the Modern Eve Entered Eden," in which the central male character frequently envies women's abilities and, as if Wetherald were a forerunner of the contemporary linguist Deborah Tannen, even begins to "realize that the true aim of conversation was not to gain or impart knowledge, but for sympathy, inspiration, the sense of companionship, and the exercise of one's mental vocal powers"; or the moving "An Episode at Clarke's Crossing," by Catherine Simpson, in which Daddy Pete exhibits the kind of love for his granddaughter more often associated with female relationships. Others focus on Native peoples. One of the more interesting of these is Pauline Johnson's "A Red Girl's Reasoning," in which the appalling rudeness of a white man's parents to his Indian wife results in the permanent separation of the couple. Sara Jeannette Duncan illustrates her ability to create effective dialogue, a complex

narrative line, and ironic political meanings, while Isabella Crawford (also represented in the earlier collection), in "Extradited," turns her sharply critical eye on her main female character whose vanity and jealousy make men despise her.

The third collection, *New Women, 1900-1920*, has been around much longer than the other two. It contains a number of very sophisticated stories that underline the significance of the suffrage debate, and of the role and meaning of the New Woman. In these stories, too, women are often portrayed as being employed, and several describe occupations in ways that illustrate how stories about working women can easily explode some of the generic conventions of the traditional romance. Later stories show how war affects women. We even see female characters dealing with such controversial subjects as divorce and adultery.

Certainly, the collection's twenty stories smoothly connect with those towards the end of the former volume, partly because several authors are repeated: Sara Jeannette Duncan, whose "The Heir Apparent" is a witty, tongue-in-cheek illustration of how a young woman and man make love in spite of put-downs by their older relatives, and Pauline Johnson's "The Haunting Thaw" that, like her earlier story, "A Red Girl's Reasoning," vividly describes Native attitudes towards the land. In the stories of *New Women*, women sometimes get the better of men, as in Adeline Teskey's "A Common Man and His Wife," where the woman manages to preserve her pet lamb from her husband's threats, and proves her judgement of the lamb's quality to be correct. Multiculturalism is evident too. Many of the characters of Winnifred Reeve's "Miss Lily and Miss Chrysanthemum" and Edith Eaton's "Mrs Spring Fragrance" are Chinese. Other stories dramatize the increasingly urban interests of the protagonists, as well as some of the class problems that occur when people change countries

or locations. A story such as Kathleen Coleman's "A Pair of Grey Gloves" illustrates the problems experienced by some women writers with the romance genre. Unable to fit the central, employed female character into a traditional plot, Coleman refuses her love altogether. On the other hand, Lucy Maud Montgomery's delightful "The Quarantine at Alexander Abraham's," celebrates a strong, older female character who gets the love of a confirmed bachelor without in any way sacrificing her standards or her desires.

The stories of all three volumes make interesting, often delightful, reading that is enhanced by the brief biographical sketches on each author, the encapsulated highlights from each story and the short bibliographies. Historically, culturally and politically, these stories are important. They encourage a situated approach to contemporary women's writing that helps to prevent us from discussing current literature in isolation. They remind us that women have throughout history participated in Canada's formation and, with wit, sensitivity, and intelligence, left a variety of records of their assistance.

Transformations

Sharon Rose Wilson

Margaret Atwood's Fairy Tale Sexual Politics.
ECW \$45.00

Glenwood Irons, ed.

Gender, Language, and Myth: Essays in Popular Narrative. U of T P \$55.00/\$20.95

Reviewed by Wanda Kelley

In 1971, Anne Sexton published a small volume of poems called *Transformations*, and a revolution ensued. Each piece is based on a fairy tale by the brothers Grimm; titles and plot lines are used almost verbatim: "Snow White," "Cinderella," and so on. Derivative? Banal? On the contrary. For with a phrase here, a pronoun there, Sexton pulls the patriarchal carpet from under our

smug feet, and we come face to face with the silences behind the original text: the repression of (especially female) sexuality; the veiled moral didacticism which serves to mask the narrow definition of woman's role in the fairy tale as in "real life" (as if the two were not facets of the same thing); the essential powerlessness of the invariably female victim at the hands of the brutal and omnipotent father/husband/villain.

The process of re-vision, of reseeing or transforming articulated by Sexton and her contemporaries forms the basis for Sharon Rose Wilson's convincing and detailed analysis of Margaret Atwood's work in the book-length study *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Politics*. Borrowing the title of Kate Millet's 1970 feminist manifesto, Wilson applies the term, which she defines as "power structured in patriarchy so that one group—males—controls another—females," to "the fairy tale intertexts" that Atwood uses, "modifying and usually subverting them...[,] to reveal contemporary landscapes, characters, and problems." In a modern setting, Atwood's personae struggle with the seemingly immutable stereotypes embedded in the nineteenth-century fairy tale and emerge, according to Wilson, if not exactly triumphant, then at least with a greater self-awareness and with the possibility of "movement from [symbolic] fairy-tale dismemberment or cannibalism to metamorphosis and healing."

Wilson's study is thorough and well-documented; she covers all the novels (except, disappointingly, *The Robber Bride*, presumably published too late to be included), as well as important short story collections such as *Bluebeard's Egg* and several volumes of Atwood's poetry. Wilson's prose is rich with literary allusion which adds resonance to her analysis; nonetheless, the study also manages to be strikingly original. Wilson's inclusion of Atwood's comparatively little-known visual art, for instance, is convincingly used as further evidence of Atwood's

interest in both sexual politics and fairy-tale archetypes. The plates which accompany Wilson's second chapter also allow the reader to compare the two media, offering us a new "reading" of Atwood's work.

At some level, Wilson's study functions as the recovery of herstory, redeeming and reclaiming the past even as she explores Atwood's attempts to move beyond sexist paradigms toward a sense of wholeness. The fairy-tale, as Wilson notes, was probably not of patriarchal origin; indeed, there is evidence to suggest that this type of folklore was once at least a partially matriarchal oral tradition. Thus, both Atwood and Wilson, achieve a synthesis of past and present. Atwood writes of the women of her generation: "[we were] writing in the teeth of the odds; as all writers do, to be sure, but for women there were extra handicaps . . . language . . . did not quite fit us." I think it's beginning to.

Another revolution of sorts (and I use the qualifier deliberately) can be found in the pages of *Gender, Language, and Myth: Essays on Popular Narrative*. The collection sets out to challenge the "arbitrary division between great literature and popular narrative . . . that has little to do with quality and much to do with changeable notions of canonicity." A risky proposition, to say the least. Somehow it makes me shudder to think of Stephen King and Shakespeare on a par, not to mention Jane Austen and Harlequin romance.

Some of the essays, nonetheless, are brilliantly argued and do much to disturb the reader's notions of "great literature." Irons' own essay, "New Women Detectives: G is for Gender-Bending," for example, explores the "emergence of feminist . . . detectives" in the context of changing notions of woman's role in society as a whole. Here the distinctions between 'pop art' and 'literature' begin to break down; according to Irons, feminist authors such as Paretzky are, like Atwood, subverting patriarchal tradition by

"reworking the archetypal, initiation, and return cycle of the hero into a modern myth that speaks from the perspective of a female protagonist," thus re-visioning and self-consciously commenting on the social and historical contexts to which art, be it popular or elitist, is inextricably related.

It is this link between art and reality and the acknowledgement of the constant interplay between the two which makes Irons' collection as a whole so successful. In a cultural vacuum Harlequin romance, horror film, or sci-fi thriller may seem vapid and escapist; the best essays, however, connect each genre to deep-seated cultural assumptions and beliefs (see especially essays by Modleski, Franklin, and Clover). Irons contends that "all narrative that pleases does so precisely because it is informed by powerful and important archetypes and myths," and ultimately the anthology succeeds in making this point, as well as in representing 'popular' literature as worthy of further close analysis.

It is disappointing that despite questions raised and biases examined, the collection fails to push the point to its furthest conclusion. Irons criticizes the canon on the grounds that it is "gender-biased" and elitist nonetheless, ten of the fourteen authors of the collection are male academics, and the majority of the essays deal with primarily androcentric genres: western fiction, science fiction, detective and espionage fiction. Women who write in these genres are, with the exception of Irons' own essay, seldom included. While the efforts of Irons and his associates must be applauded as a genuine attempt at re-vision, I think perhaps the canon needs to be observed from outside its own purview.



Family Serpents

Elliott Hayes

Homeward Bound. Playwrights Canada P n.p.

Dianne Warren

Serpent in the Night Sky. Playwrights Canada P n.p.

Reviewed by Hildegard Kuester

If these two plays from Playwrights Canada Press (an important source of new Canadian plays are an indication of the latest trends in Canadian theater production, one has to admit that *the* outstanding Canadian play has yet to be produced. Still, Elliot Hayes' *Homeward Bound* and Dianne Warren's *Serpent in the Night Sky* are solidly well-made plays.

Homeward Bound has received wide critical attention and is published with a foreword by Margaret Atwood. She praises this play as a "comedy of manners" in the twentieth Century—and, one would like to add, Canadian-version: it "is a comedy about death." In other words, this is a black comedy. Glen Beacham, suffering from a terminal illness, and his wife Bonnie have invited their grown-up daughter and son, along with their respective mates, for a Saturday night family dinner. Observing the unities of time, place and action, Hayes allows the audience a teichoscopol view of a typical middle-class Canadian family get-together. After an opulent dinner, Glen and Bonnie have a surprise in store for their children: while busy opening a bottle of champagne and trying to solve a crossword puzzle, they announce that Glen is going to kill himself because he wants to avoid further suffering. The audience knows about Glen's plans as early as the first scene, whereas the children only learn about it in the course of the play. Meanwhile, they are preoccupied with their own problems as well as with the trivialities of life. Whenever the audience is tempted to participate in scenes of domestic bliss or in the characters'

occasional happy childhood memories, the ideal-family-in-the-suburbs facade is torn off. At one point, for example, Bonnie destroys the cliché of the self-sacrificing mother by admitting that she isn't fond of babies and that she had decided that two were enough for her. In another scene, she reminds her critically ill husband: "Don't do your old man act."

The humorous touches prevent the play from becoming a tragedy, although the family's problems in communicating with each other, the life-lie that some of its members live have been the stuff great American tragedies of the twentieth century were made of. The ending in particular is not tragic, Glen dies a natural and quiet death. While his family are involved in discussing their personal concerns, he slumps over in his chair. The irony in this scene is twofold: though Glen should be the center of his family's attention on that particular evening, his problems are ignored. In addition, Bonnie, the only family member who has been prepared for her husband's death is also the only one who cannot cope with it. The play ends with her hysterical monologue: "I suppose it would be fair to say that I'm in shock. Not that I'm incoherent. I know what I'm saying. After all, I'm prepared for this. Well, not this specifically, but this generally. I'm only surprised, of course, because at least if he had killed himself, I would have been able to say what I wanted to say."

At first sight, *Serpent in the Night Sky* seems to have little in common with *Homeward Bound*, except that it is also a comedy. Its setting in Northern Saskatchewan, its non-conformist characters and the slang they speak form a contrast to the well-off, educated Beacham family with their preference for sophisticated word games. Duff, a young taxi driver, comes back from a ride to Montana, and brings with him a teen-age runaway, Joy, whom he is going to marry. Except for Preacher, a madman who

lies in wait for the serpent of the apocalypse, there are Duff's sister Stella, her husband Gator and their mother Marlene. The plot of the play is quite simple: Duff and Joy plan to get married, Stella and Gator interfere. The latter, true to his telling name, tries to take advantage of his simple-minded brother-in-law by involving him in illegal deals. But in the end, Joy succeeds in saving her fiancé from the clutches of Gator, and instead of leaving Duff, as she had threatened to do, she finally marries him, if only in a mock ceremony by Preacher.

Serpent in the Night Sky is an entertaining dramatization of rural Western Canada, portraying its backwardness and a way of life that has little to offer for comfort, not even in family life. Duff officially disowns his mother, Marlene, Stella denies her advanced pregnancy, and Joy has run away from home. Survivalist Marlene, who prefers hunting in the bush to a domestic existence, and the mad Preacher add a comical as well as a regional touch to the drama. But rather than providing mythical depth—as a cover blurb would have it—they are simply stock characters. Reading apocalyptic dimensions into the play, as might be feasible with Faulkner's or Watson's work, would be out of place here.

Regards métacritiques

Annette Hayward et Agnès Whitfield, eds.
Critique et littérature québécoise. Tryptique n.p.

Marie-Andrée Beaudet
Charles Ab der Halden. Portrait d'un inconnu.
L'Hexagone n.p.

Reviewed by André Lamontagne

La littérature québécoise connaît ces dernières années une véritable effervescence métacritique. Certains verront là une preuve supplémentaire de son autonomisation, alors que d'autres y liront la volonté de l'institution de circonscrire toute réflex-

ion à son sujet. Il n'en demeure pas moins que ce métadiscours permet une meilleure saisie du fait littéraire, comme en témoignent les deux présents ouvrages.

Le collectif *Critique et littérature québécoise* réunit les vingt-huit communications du colloque tenu à Queen's University en 1990. Dans une première séance consacrée aux "Pratiques de la critique," où curieusement la parole est donnée uniquement à des professeurs d'université, un consensus s'établit autour de la nécessité d'un véritable travail critique, que cette parole dispersée passe par une 'visée' (André Brochu), la faculté de jugement (Gilles Marcotte) ou par une intelligence des rapports entre un texte et la problématique de l'écriture (Louise Milot). Pour sa part, Patricia Smart attache à la critique une valeur féminine (l'écoute) ainsi qu'une exigence de responsabilité culturelle.

La deuxième section du recueil s'articule autour des étapes marquantes de l'histoire de la critique québécoise: l'émergence de la notion de "bonne littérature" dans les journaux du XVIII^e siècle, finement analysée par Jacques Cotnam; la fondation des *Mélanges religieux* (1840), périodique clérical qui, comme le montre Maurice Lemire, s'attache à redéfinir l'horizon d'attente des lecteurs catholiques; la parution en 1867 de *Bibliotheca canadensis*, un premier inventaire critique qui s'imposait mais qui a aussi pour effet, nous dit Kenneth Landry, de redistribuer les oeuvres dans le nouvel ensemble fédéral; le débat autour de la critique biographique et physionomiste dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle, que fait revivre Manon Brunet; les lieux transitoires de pratique critique qui précèdent l'apparition des revues savantes et qu'explorent Agnès Whitfield; le début du discours sur le théâtre, qui d'après Pierre Gobin coïncide avec la naissance d'une dramaturgie mettant en question le littéraire à la fin des années soixante. C'est aussi à travers certaines persona critiques que se posent des

jalons importants: ainsi Marcel Dugas, dont le cheminement complexe, qu'analyse Annette Hayward, culmine dans une défense de la modernité, ou encore Robert de Roquebrune, dont la manière créatrice marque pour Jean-Guy Hudon l'avènement d'un discours critique québécois.

Certaines des questions de réception soulevées dans le collectif prennent la forme d'une relecture: Chantal Théry découvre dans les écrits des religieuses de la Nouvelle-France un autre discours derrière celui de l'abnégation; Robert Major suggère de retourner à l'interprétation de *Jean Rivard* faite au XIX^e siècle, malheureusement occultée par la lecture idéologique subséquente de Camille Roy; Fernand Roy récuse certaines interprétations sociologisantes d'*Un homme et son péché* qui ne seraient pas sanctionnées par le texte. D'autres communications ont avant tout pour objet d'interroger l'institution littéraire de l'époque: Bernard Andrès questionne l'acharnement séculaire de la critique contre Pierre de Sales Laterrière, et à travers la réception de *Charles Guérin*, David Hayne reconstitue l'horizon d'attente d'une critique en voie de consolidation. Cette séance donne également lieu à des bilans intéressants: Neil Bishop interprète les tendances de la critique hébertienne et met en lumière quelques jugements négatifs oubliés; Anthony Purdy s'intéresse à la diversité de lectures que suscite l'oeuvre d'Aquin tout en rejetant l'idée de sa canadianisation; Claudine Potvin voit dans les réactions que provoque l'oeuvre de Jovette Marchessault une résistance des hommes à la parole de l'autre. Dans une perspective différente, André Vanasse coiffe son chapeau d'éditeur et nous dévoile les stratégies qu'il déploie pour influencer la critique.

Enfin, l'heure des bilans théoriques a sonné: Jacques Pelletier constate que de nouvelles avenues méthodologiques et historiques s'offrent à la critique sociologique; Pierre Hébert explique la relative absence

de réflexion théorique et la prégnance de l'application pratique dans le champ de la narratologie au Québec par une obsession du corpus; Gilles Thérien soutient que le temps est venu pour la sémiotique de se transformer en épistémologie. C'est également dans l'optique d'un renouveau que Louise Dupré aborde la 'critique-femme', qui doit transcender la théorie féministe au profit des virtualités textuelles. Certaines approches moins hégémoniques suscitent aussi l'intérêt: Antoine Sirois présente une nouvelle approche des romans mythologiques tandis que Francine Belle-Isle applaudit à l'émergence d'une psychanalyse orientée vers la poétique. Pour conclure, Denis Saint-Jacques se demande comment le professeur d'université peut analyser objectivement le processus de constitution d'une littérature auquel il contribue en tant que critique.

Si l'ouvrage de Marie-Andrée Beaudet partage avec *Critique et littérature québécoise* un intérêt métacritique pour l'institution, il s'inscrit cependant dans une perspective spécifique: une histoire de la vie littéraire qui s'organise autour de la trajectoire de ses acteurs. En proposant une biographie de Charles ab der Halden, premier historiographe français des lettres canadiennes, l'auteure poursuit un double objectif: éclairer le parcours—jusque-là entouré de mystère—d'un critique qui joua un rôle déterminant dans la diffusion et la promotion de cette littérature en France, et mieux saisir la nature des enjeux qui traversaient le champ culturel québécois au tournant du XX^e siècle.

L'enquête biographique, qui s'appuie sur un excellent travail de recherche, retrace les origines alsaciennes de l'auteur (qui expliqueraient en partie son intérêt pour cet autre territoire conquis que figure le Québec), ses années de formation et sa rencontre avec l'abbé Casgrain à Paris, son intense activité critique entre 1899 et 1909, puis une rupture abrupte et définitive avec

la littérature québécoise. C'est ce désintéret soudain et réciproque (car le Québec oublia rapidement Charles ab der Halden, au point de tenir mort à la Première Guerre un homme qui vivra jusqu'en 1962) qui est au coeur de l'ouvrage de Marie-Andrée Beaudet. Ce divorce, l'auteure l'explique d'abord par l'importante querelle littéraire qui éclate avec Jules Fournier suite à la parution des *Études de littérature canadienne-française* en 1904. Charles ab der Halden se retrouve alors dans une position institutionnelle inconfortable, celle d'un Français enthousiaste qui doit défendre l'existence d'une littérature face à une nouvelle génération désenchantée. Deuxièmement, le fossé idéologique qui s'est progressivement creusé entre Charles ab der Halden, défenseur de l'enseignement laïc, et un certain Québec catholique et ultramontain se manifeste plus nettement à la parution des *Nouvelles études de littérature canadienne-française* en 1907.

Les deux chapitres que Marie-Andrée Beaudet consacre à l'oeuvre critique de Charles ab der Halden permettent de suivre son évolution: depuis la bienveillance et les considérations extratextuelles des premières études jusqu'au regard plus objectif et critique des secondes, qui se terminent sur des conclusions pessimistes. A cette part métacritique—que l'on souhaiterait plus grande—s'ajoutent une chronologie et une bibliographie très détaillées, les textes de la querelle avec Fournier, ainsi qu'un intéressant choix d'écrits qui comprend des lettres à Louis Fréchette, des poèmes de ab der Halden et des extraits des *Études* et des *Nouvelles études*. Les articles consacrés à Nérée Beauchemin et à Émile Nelligan sont à signaler, non seulement pour leur valeur intrinsèque, mais parce qu'ils cristallisent la position instable de Charles ab der Halden dans le champ littéraire québécois. A juste titre, l'ouvrage de Mme Beaudet la rétablira.

La Francophonie

Axel Maugey

Le Roman de la Francophonie. Humanitas n.p.

Reviewed by Maurice Lebel

Axel Maugey, professeur de civilisations du monde francophone à l'Université McGill, est avantageusement connu pour avoir publié jusqu'ici une dizaine d'ouvrages, entre autres pour ses deux livres sur la francophonie: *La Francophonie en direct* Tome I : *L'Espace politique et culturel*; Tome II : *L'espace économique. Vers l'entente francophone*. Ces deux essais, dont j'ai fait un compte rendu dans mon volume *D'un livre à l'autre L'esprit des livres* (1993), ont paru respectivement en 1987 et 1989, soit avant les Sommets de Québec (1987) et de Dakar (1989). En publiant *Le Roman de la Francophonie*, il a fait beaucoup plus "rebaptiser" *Vers l'Entente francophone*, il en a sensiblement amélioré la présentation—elle a fait toilette neuve—, il a augmenté la bibliographie, perfectionné l'Index des noms propres, corrigé ou nuancé plus d'une phrase des 13 chapitres, fait des ajouts ou des soustractions à la Conclusion, sans oublier qu'il a remis à jour l'Introduction. Cet *Essai* comporte, au départ, le limpide et nouvel Avant-Propos du Professeur Michel Guillou, la Préface, légèrement remaniée de Pierre Laporte, Président de l'Office de la langue française du Québec, et les Remerciements chaleureux de l'auteur, originaire de la Provence au soleil.

Quant au titre, il est imagé, original et piquant. Le terme de roman est pris ici, bien sûr, dans l'acception métaphorique, car en l'occurrence il ne s'agit pas d'un récit avec intrigue, d'une histoire, d'un dialogue, d'une description de passions ou de sentiments, d'une étude de caractères ou de mœurs, mais plutôt d'une aventure livresque à la recherche de la *Francophonie*, d'un voyage d'un quart de siècle accompli par l'auteur autour de sa chambre, soit d'une analyse de 13 livres sur la francopho-

nie parus de 1966 à 1988. Autant dire que *Le Roman de la francophonie* ne se lit pas d'afilée comme un roman.

Le lecteur ferait bien de lire lentement, à dose faible, un chapitre après l'autre, pour en assimiler la substance. Il aura tôt fait de constater que 2 auteurs sur 13 sont anglophobes ou américanophobes, ce qui ne rime à rien et n'est pas à leur honneur. Il verra aussi que plusieurs se contredisent, ce qui ne manque pas d'intérêt. Variés sont donc les points de vue exprimés, ce qui justifie l'heureux choix fait par l'auteur du volume. Les 13 chapitres, dont 6 correspondent exactement au titre même de l'ouvrage analysé, se lisent comme suit:

I Parlez-vous français? II La Francophonie en péril. III Défense et illustration de la langue française (pp. 39-49). IV Appel aux francophones. V Projet pour la francophonie (pp. 62-74). VI Rencontre avec la belle clocharde. VII Lettre ouverte à ceux qui en perdent leur français (pp. 87-98). Le français pour qu'il vive. Le français à son destin.. La francophonie de la dernière chance. Un nouveau discours sur l'universalité de la langue française.

Les chemins de l'avenir. Ce que je crois. Une mémoire pour demain. Suivent la Conclusion, la Bibliographie générale sur le français et la francophonie et l'Index général des auteurs cités dans le volume.

Voici maintenant les auteurs les plus souvent cités: Thierry de Beaucé, Gabriel de Broglie, Charles de Gaulle, Xavier Deviau, René Étiemble, Michel Guillou, Claude Hagège, Philippe Lalanne-Berdouticq, Jean-Marc Léger, Philippe Roussillon, Philippe de Saint Robert, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Gérard Tougas, Auguste Viatte.

"J'aime ce qui naît," se plaisait à répéter Paul Valéry. Sans doute aimerait-il le terme de francophonie et surtout ce qu'il représente, s'il lui était donné de revenir parmi nous. Le mot ne figure pas dans le Dictionnaire *Littré*. Il fut employé pour la première fois en 1860 par le grand géographe français Onésime Reclus dans son

ouvrage *France, Algérie et Colonies*. Qu'il ait mis environ un siècle à se répandre et à s'imposer ne doit point nous surprendre; il est nouveau, lourd de signification et évolue de décennie en décennie depuis une trentaine d'années. Axel Maugey trace l'aventure de la francophonie depuis lors jusqu'à 1988 en analysant et critiquant de façon sereine, teintée d'humour ou d'ironie, les 13 meilleurs essais publiés sur le sujet au cours de cette période. Il va sans dire que pareil thème ne tire pas à la une dans la Presse écrite, orale et télévisée; le public de Montréal ou de Paris préfère de beaucoup Madonna ou la musique africaine.

Le concept de francophonie repose fondamentalement sur l'enseignement et l'usage du français, tout en encourageant le pluralisme linguistique ou le multiculturalisme. Loin d'être vindicatif, anti-anglais ou anti-américain, il vise à éviter toute hégémonie linguistique, notamment dans les domaines d'ordre culturel, littéraire, scientifique, médiatique. Il travaille à la réalisation d'un projet de société, avec les moyens *ad hoc*, fondé sur les valeurs communes à 40 pays unis par la langue française comme moyen d'expression et de vie sociale, de communication et de progrès. Il tient à tout prix à conserver et à répandre le riche héritage qui est le sien.

Au chapitre des lacunes, on me permettra d'en relever deux: 1° l'absence de table d'abréviations ou de sigles en tête du livre. Comme nous vivons dans un monde d'acronymes—il en sort au moins une dizaine par année, je connais même des gens qui ne peuvent dire deux phrases sans me déverser sur la tête BN, HEC, PRIE, HLM, CIBC, BES, ENAP, *et alia* —, il est sage de présumer que tout lecteur n'est pas aussi familier avec l'AUELF qu'avec le mot SIDA. Aussi convient-il de dresser en bonne place une liste de ces vocables ou mot-valise. 2° L'auteur, qui enseigne à Montréal depuis plus d'un quart de siècle, aurait pu mentionner dans sa bibliographie

a) le *Rapport annuel du Commissaire aux deux langues officielles du Canada*, b) les *Actes du Congrès annuel de l'ACELF* (Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française); cet organisme, qui compte aujourd'hui 46 ans d'âge, publie aussi chaque année trois numéros intitulés *Éducation et Francophonie*.

L'essai d'Axel Maugey touche à divers aspects de la francophonie et constitue une pénétrante vue d'ensemble sur le sujet dont les enseignants et les politiques, les historiens et les sociologues ne manqueront point de faire leur miel. Il soulève aussi une question fondamentale: les francophones s'aiment-ils encore? Sont-ils encore conscients et fiers de leur héritage? Sont-ils prêts à le maintenir et à le faire rayonner sur les cinq continents? L'action est toujours d'actualité. Axel Maugey prêche d'exemple. Son *Essai* est constructif, optimiste et utile. Il est aussi bien composé, bien pensé, bien rendu et bien senti.

Power Politics

**Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres
and Elizabeth Mittman, eds.**

The Politics of the Essay: Feminist Perspectives.
Indiana UP \$35.00/\$12.95

Shannon Hengen

*Margaret Atwood's Power: Mirrors, Reflections
and Images in Select Fiction and Poetry.* Second
Story \$14.95

Reviewed by Susan MacFarlane

Both of these books on women's writing concern themselves with the socio-political context of production and reception. The more focused and schematic, *Margaret Atwood's Power*, relates the development and popularity of Atwood's work to the emergence of feminism and a new professional class embracing liberal, nationalist values. Hengen's model is based on the psychological development of an individual,

and she uses the metaphor of a mirror to sketch four relations that can exist between self and other which mark stages of maturation. She relates these dualities to those structuring Atwood's texts (male/female, American/Canadian, culture/nature), describing them as antagonistic in Atwood's early works but becoming more complementary (and confused) in more mature works. Each of these four stages is represented by two books. Hengen's definition of "power" is also fundamentally dualist: "power" derives not from antagonism but synergy; it is not dominance of the strong over the weak but the complementary union of both. In Hengen's first stage, narcissistic male characters (often Americans) are a destructive influence on female characters (*The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*). Second-stage women define themselves through other women—in mothering relationships based on similitude, not difference (*Lady Oracle*, *Two-Headed Poems*). In the third stage women grow not only, and not always, through their relationships with other women (*Bodily Harm*, *The Handmaid's Tale*). The most recent stage Hengen identifies in Atwood's work is a regressive one, an apolitical bewilderment she finds in *Car's Eye* and *Wilderness Tips*. The kind of society Hengen sees in Atwood's work has become more complex and more confusing.

Hengen's argument rests on association and analogy, but the connections she makes between Atwood's work and the social context are tenuous. At times she admits this but too often she writes as if Atwood's work was some program for improving the country: Hengen claims the problem with the "argument" of *Two-Headed Poems* "is that its speaker asks readers to place ultimate faith in the power to find in Canadian history, or more specifically in the history of its typical women, codes that will guard against the American marketplace." And worse, Hengen gets so caught up in her

model that she is surprised when the texts don't fit, as when she pairs *Bodily Harm* and *The Handmaid's Tale*: in Hengen's other pairs the first book prefigures the second, marking some advance of feminism or nationalism, but in this pair "the first does not demand or enable the second but calls for its opposite." Nevertheless, Hengen strains to connect them, claiming that by setting *Handmaid* in the United States "amid a milieu which seems to represent the effects of a regressive narcissism gone unimpeded, Atwood further punctuates Rennie's isolation in mid-1980's Toronto." Supposedly through Rennie's individual withdrawal "Atwood implies that if North American women and men cannot or will not effectively meet current national and international crises, especially economic, then a state like that of the Republic of Gilead could conceivably result." This practice of drawing historical and political analogies leads Hengen to read some works as allegorical: "Marrying the Hangman" is an allegory of capitalist American dominance over Canada; *Two-Headed Poems* reflects Trudeau's national politics; even the apolitical *Car's Eye* is related to free trade and ebbing of nationalism. In this historical materialist model literature is determined by the socio-political forces under which it is produced. However admirable the concept, in practice Hengen oversimplifies, distorting both the literature and the social reality. Her sweeping panorama of psychological, social, political and historical context is vague, speculative—even whimsical. Drawing from such a huge field of comparison the connections she makes are an inadequate basis for argument, and her model seems inappropriately rigid given the expanse of her topic.

With an even broader scope than Hengen's, *The Politics of the Essay* does a much better job of comparing literary and socio-political realms. It is a collection of essays by women on non-fiction by women.

There is a historical overview (from Florence Nightingale to Ulrike Meinhof!) with particular attention to a few essayists; there is a cross-cultural mix of North American, South American and European subjects; there is attention to rhetoric, structure, racism, classism, and sexuality, among other things. Overall, the book focuses on the politics of genre, of authority, of action—and it is within these categories that the essays are arranged.

The first section—showing women's non-fiction crossing the traditional boundaries of genre—is prefaced aptly and with a flourish by Susan Griffin's "Red Shoes," a narrative/essay whose disjunctive structure invites the reader to make associative leaps between the theoretical, "public world" of the essay and the personal "inner world" of experience and emotion. This ambiguity of genre is related to an ambivalent narrative voice or an uneasiness with the pose of authority, explored in the second section with several examples of how the traditional elitist, authoritative stance assumed by the male essayist is modified or undercut in essays by women. What follows is, logically enough, a final section devoted to the essay as a vehicle for political action. While the book offers many sound reasons to view women's essays as instruments of social change, it counters these hurrahs with warnings that women can also be elitist and patronizing.

Among the problems the book debates is the question of "women's" essays. The book seems, by its very nature, to define women's essays as being inherently different from men's. Barbara Sichtermann says they're different all right, but wonders whether that's biologically innate or a result of cultural oppression. Several essays discuss women's explicit or implicit subversion of patriarchal authority, and whether women's writing is necessarily subversive. But assigning gender to essays may perpetuate stereotypes, according to Amy Kaminsky

who doesn't see essential "woman" markings in essays. On the other hand, Tuzyline Allen discusses women essayists who deny that gender is an essential component of writing (in particular, Allen is discussing Woolf's admiration for, and emulation of, male essayists), saying they are sublimating difference. With indirect debate like this, and with an effective mix of general theory and practical criticism, *The Politics of the Essay* is a dynamic and un-authoritative text offering many views and managing, unlike Margaret Atwood's *Power*, to reflect the real complexity of the topic.

Cartier's Voyages Again

The Voyages of Jacques Cartier. Introduction by Ramsay Cook. Notes by H.P. Biggar. U Toronto P \$50.00/\$16.95

Reviewed by I.S. MacLaren

Studying the genre of exploration and travel literature in the undergraduate class or graduate seminar has been expedited measurably in the past year with the appearance of Germaine Warkentin's anthology, *Canadian Exploration Literature*, and Ramsay Cook's newly introduced and affordable reprint, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier*, which was translated and edited seventy years ago by H.P. Biggar and published under the identical name. As well, Cook offers as appendices and, in many cases, for the first time in English, various documents relating to the voyages that Biggar published in 1930. This review considers Cook's reprint for its suitability for use in the classroom.

Except for some important editorial concerns and too many errors and omissions that proof-reading ought to have caught, Cook's introduction provides a strong orientation to the narratives of Cartier's three voyages to the St. Lawrence River (1534, 1535-36, and 1541-42), and buttresses it with

detailed references to current scholarship in history, history of medicine, and anthropology. As might be expected for our age, it emphasizes what Mary Louise Pratt calls the contact zone, especially the misunderstandings arising between the Iroquois and French, and some debatable displays of disingenuousness on the part of the latter. And if at times Cook's Cartier resembles more an academic researcher than an explorer—"For Cartier, a flawed ethnology brought only failure"—nevertheless, the introduction makes a welcome contribution for the most part.

However, Cook's tone sounds a rather too sure understanding of events—especially the perspectives of the Iroquois—though he repeatedly cites the work of Marcel Trudel for its display of unwarranted claims. One example ends the introduction: "These suspicious scheming intruders brought unknown illnesses, frightened native women, told lies, and shamelessly kidnapped even those who helped them. The French, Donnacona's people might have concluded, 'are wonderful thieves and steal everything then can carry off.'" Similarly, Cook is steadfastly and systematically hostile to manifestations in the French of European religious beliefs. In the spirit of the times and in counterdistinction to Biggar, Cook systematically embraces the authenticity and integrity of native lifeways over their European counterparts.

At 176 pages, this is not a long book; space, therefore, cannot have weighed significantly in Cook's decision to exclude from his handsome reprint many important items found in Biggar's edition of 1924, items that would render this a more accessible text to read and teach. The modern reader does not have the benefit of Biggar's introduction, dated as it necessarily is; but its presence would have helped to balance the above-discussed predilections of Cook's introduction, chiefly by adding a bibliographical interest, which Cook does not

display. Cook has done a good job of informing his reader of developments in the editing of Cartier's voyages in French over the past few decades, but the entire story of the editing of the texts remains incomplete without Biggar's brief (six pages) but helpful introduction, which alone provides information about manuscript sources. Moreover, Biggar's introduction offers a thoroughness of detail that Cook's lacks. For example, both introductions inform their reader that a narrative of Cartier's third voyage exists only in English and that Richard Hakluyt published it first in 1600, but only Biggar's states where Hakluyt published it: on pages 232-36, and 240-42 of the third volume of his *Principal Navigations*.

As to the first two voyages, Biggar's edition included both the original French versions as well as his English translations of them. Cook explains persuasively that, the French versions having been superseded in the last quarter-century by dependable editions, his reprint includes only Biggar's English translations, "with some minor but interesting modifications." However, departing from accepted procedures for scholarly editing in the 1990s, Cook does not indicate when he has made alterations and corrections. He does, helpfully, explain that, "apart from what appear to be typographical errors and careless proofreading," of which his introduction is also occasionally guilty, these alterations "all relate to usage. Cartier never used the words 'Indian,' 'squaw,' 'chief,' 'tribe,' or 'wigwam.'" Fair enough, but Cook's next statement is opaque: "On those occasions where Biggar used them I have reverted to translations of Cartier's terms: 'sauvaige,' 'homme,' 'gens du pays,' 'femme,' 'peuple,' 'seigneur,' 'maison.'" This leaves the impression, one which only a consultation of Biggar's edition clarifies, that appearances in Cook's edition of words like men, women, and people, in relation to native Americans, do not appear in Biggar's edition at all. Of course, they do,

but which of the instances are Cook's "alterations" and which are Biggar's original translations cannot be divined from this new edition. This is a contravention of accepted procedures for scholarly editing. Does the classroom merit a lower standard?

That lower standard is indicated as well by Cook's unacceptable decision neither to produce an index for this edition nor to edit and include Biggar's. Similarly, only five of the sixteen plates from Biggar's edition have been reproduced, and some of their captions are, by turns, erroneous, or incomplete. The frontispiece of both editions is the portrait of Cartier from de Clugny's *Costumes français depuis Clovis jusqu'à nos jours* (1936), but only Biggar's caption presents the title correctly, and also includes the reference: Tome II, Fig. 143. As to Cook's omissions of Biggar's plates, many of these display the theoretical cartography of the Atlantic coast of northern North America in the years preceding Cartier's voyages; thus, they furnish the context for Cartier's explorations that neither Cook's introduction nor his choice of plates satisfactorily provides.

Cook baldly announces that Biggar's notes "have been reduced" but does not explain his reasons for such an extreme decision. Similarly, the reprint's reader is left wondering what policy if any guided Cook's reduction of the notes: none is declared. Meanwhile, in almost every instance checked for this review, omitted notes provide important and enlightening details. Again, space cannot have been the reason behind this questionable editorial practice.

Why, it might fairly be asked, were Biggar's page numbers not included in brackets in the new edition? If readers are to be left to work between editions—Biggar's cannot be said to be superseded by Cook's—bracketed page numbers, especially in the absence of an index, would help one to locate passages in the former. Thus, this affordable and handsome text

does not permit one to bring into classroom discussion the best possible edition of Cartier's voyages. One is grateful for it but disappointed by it.

Methodically Analytic

Louise Milot and Jaap Lintvelt, eds.

Le roman Québécois depuis 1960: Méthodes et analyses. PU Laval \$34.00

Reviewed by Patricia Merivale

Each of the nineteen essays in this volume juxtaposes, as the subtitle suggests, an account of one methodology commonly practised in the francophone critical world with an analysis of a Québec novel lending itself, in principle at least, to that particular approach. Three-quarters of the texts discussed are from the 1980's: only Aquin (1969), Bessette (1975), and Roy (1977), plus Québec publishing (1961-74) and best sellers (1991) deviate from this chronological emphasis, which might perhaps have been made clearer in the title. Although the papers are the "résultat d'un colloque tenu à Groningue (Pays-Bas) et organisé conjointement," by CRELIQ (Laval) and the "Centre d'études canadiennes" at Groningen, mostly for good (but sometimes for ill), none bears the stamp of an insufficiently revised conference paper, or indeed of a conference paper at all, and the general level of competence is gratifyingly high. The editors have done an excellent job.

I read this book for, among other things, the titles of some relatively recent significant Québec novels. As a rule of thumb, I take to be 'significant,' novels considered by more than one critic: Régine Robin's *La Québécoise*; Jacques Poulin's *Le vieux Chagrin*; Jacques Godbout's *Une histoire américaine*; Anne Hébert's *Le premier jardin*; Nicole Brossard's *Le désert mauve*.

Two other books achieved 'significance' almost in spite of their critics' respective

methodologies. Marie José Thériault's "roman fantastique," *Les demoiselles de Numidie*, while seemingly quite uncharacteristic of contemporary Québec fiction, was so charmingly and fully described (by Maurice Émond), with such copious quotes, that any reservation as to whether either "la thématique bachelardienne," here restricted to the theme of the labyrinth (skilfully transposed into the watery element of the book), or the generic approach (in terms of the "fantastic") is particularly revealing may be merely churlish. (I myself would have opted for an intertextual approach, stressing the Gothic-romantic trope of the wandering ship of the Undead from Coleridge, through Poe and Wagner, to Jules Verne). Jacques Brault's *Agonie* is, likewise, revealed (by Joseph Melançon) as a powerful and intriguing work, in the course of a discussion in which the 'axiological' method obtained, as far as I could tell, no purchase on the book whatever.

The most successful essays are those in which "method" and "analysis" balance and reinforce each other; these tend to be the ones where two or more methodologies are employed in combination, in ways less arbitrary, more tailored to the requirements of the individual text, more flexible as tools of analysis, than the single grids of axiology or Greimasian narratology, et al. The editors themselves, summarizing Madeleine Frédéric's strategy in her excellent essay on Robin and Robert Lalonde, find that "l'approche narratologique... gagne à être doublée... d'une analyse stylistique." Frédéric's account of the catalogues ("figure de l'énumération") in Robin is far more convincing than Klinkenberg's methodologically similar account of the rhetoric of "dissociation" in Godbout.

Agnès Whitfield on Roy's *Les enfants de ma vie* neatly deploys a feminist narratology to turn inside out the apparently objective, explicit, account of the (masculine) 'others' in this fictive journal, to reveal the

implicit female autobiography, making up its inner surface, as the “portrait de l’artiste en jeune femme.”

Janet Paterson, on Poulin’s *Le vieux chagrin*, asks and (perhaps too easily) answers (in the affirmative) the crucial question of whether one can “deconstruct” a postmodern book that is already deconstructing itself like crazy. But she also gives an unusually clear brief account of deconstruction, along with a cogent and appropriate reading of Poulin’s book. The phrase from *Petit Robert*, “livre relié en peau de chagrin,” used to elucidate the implications of Poulin’s title might be further glossed from Balzac.

Patricia Smart on Aquin is, as so often, inspiring. She asks how one can, as a feminist, or just as a female reader, put up with the palpable and cruel misogyny of Aquin’s novels, and of *L’antiphonaire* in particular, in return for their formal brilliance. It is hard to think of a more pressing question at this particular interface of politics and aesthetics, or to find a more stylish attempt to answer it. (I notice that Smart’s book, *Écrire dans la maison du père*, is cited, in this volume, by four other essayists). Similarly, Karen Gould supplies a powerful reading of Brossard’s *Le désert mauve* as a text at the cross-roads of the feminist and the postmodern, in which, as in Smart, the implications for both fiction and history of male violence, personal and/or technological, are drawn out. Anthony Purdy on Robin sensibly links the author’s own theorizing on Bakhtin to the dialogism found in her novel, thus providing a tighter link between ‘method’ and ‘practice.’ And both Gould and Purdy, along with Smart, meditate usefully on the links that fictions can sometimes establish between Language (“la parole nomade”) and History.

As is to be expected, some “methodological” introductions overbalance or seem barely relevant to the analyses with which they are paired (Melançon, Klinkenberg); I found four essays (those inaccessible,

through combinations of specialised terminology) with abstract argument which neither clarified the book under discussion, nor was itself explicated by the particularities of the texts—an effect seemingly contrary to the distinctive purposes of this collection.

Problematizing Poetry

Jack Hammond

Northwest Quartet. Winter \$12.50

Richard Sommer

The Shadow Sonnets. Nuage \$9.95

Ken Norris

Report On The Second Half Of The Twentieth Century: Books 8-11. The Muses’ Co n.p.

Reviewed by Robert James Merrett

Given their unique sensibilities and cultural plurality, can poets comprehend the world? How can they sustain poetic traditions in view of global culture? How can they justify addressing a multicultural readership in the first person plural? Such issues underlie the volumes here reviewed. It may be true that poetry has self-reflexive, self-generating elements. What makes these volumes comparable is their desire to transcribe the world and fictionalize geography at a time when cultural pluralism, technology, and public policy weigh heavily on poetic authenticity.

Jack Hammond personally upholds British modernism even though he thinks it a tradition beyond general recall. His volume opens with “Digging Compost On A Civic Birthday,” a poem which links soil-making on the West Coast to the classical underworld and to Christian and Norse mythology. Treating Vancouver as an imperial outpost and as a port washed by seas reaching to China and the Arctic, Hammond’s references oppose single allusive sets. The obsolescence of Virgil’s Rome and Balzac’s Paris impels him to explore

ecological and cultural ruin as sources of renewal: the overgrown city will sink into chaos, to be re-founded only through natural cycles. Hammond's vision of decadence reveres artists such as Goya and Dylan Thomas. Yet insights into decadence attributed to individuals are rendered ineffective by passing time: the celebration of prophecy is elegiac.

Hammond celebrates heroism in "High Tide," a third-person narrative poem, but its detached stance and emotional close heighten tensions between citizen and poet. Unable to reconcile such roles, he adopts slogans against development: he condemns California's roadways, decries Oxford's indifference to the "cry of foreign voices," and laments dehumanizing security-systems in French banks. Conceits modify slogans, as when he imposes Haida myth on a bird in London. Yet in contrasting children playing in the Luxembourg Gardens to the nearby but remote French senate, dichotomous ideas ignore the multiple sign systems operating in the world.

Richard Sommer would avoid the sexist adoration of traditional sonnets while recounting his defence of Pinnacle Mountain. But contrivedly informal half-rhymes, casual metre and slang neither free him from patriarchalism nor let him integrate sexuality and ecology. He manifests a wish not to objectify women rather than success. Admitting broken-down analogies between sex and ecology, Sommer cannot repair them. Seeming unconcern to renew links between inner and outer life entails nonchalance about motivating diverse spheres of life. Slogans and political contempt recoil on his sonnets: the problem with claiming that politicians and development are merely transparent is a populist them-versus-us mentality and a stereotyped jargon inimical to poetic process. This stance makes one notice that he assumes a ready-made audience, relies uncritically on consumer society, and treats

male desire as natural phenomenon rather than cultural product.

His world so depends on communication systems that his anthropomorphic views of Pinnacle Mountain derive less from his making than from a cultural superiority implicit in the media. As gamewarden he identifies with hunted animals while admitting that gunsights structure violence. But he does not explore how his sonnets structure his vision. Rather he becomes absorbed with nature and women in ways that erode social action. If his strongest theme concerns gender solipsisms, his attempt to turn male inadequacy into a device by which women may construct themselves seems presumptuous. When he calls the sonnet a "man's poem" and declares that writing one is like loving a woman, he would convert male inadequacy in both spheres into an apology for poetry but his complacent first person plural aggravate problems of gender construction.

Readers keen on definition will be thwarted by Ken Norris. Emphasizing how history and geography mediate poetry, he offers himself as practitioner, not thinker. His formal procedures challenge *a priori* categories: he avoids documentary functions in diary, journal and calendar forms. Making fragments, he displaces discursive structures, employing reversible generalizations to defy abstraction. Accenting writing's problems, he insists on regressive textuality. His minimalist poetry privileges mysticism and its own essence, nevertheless.

Norris's opening "The Book of the Return" details repeatable, cyclical, recursive aspects of time to minimize diachrony. Writing personal uncertainty and mental flux, he implies that time is not graspable, vision not redemptive. To Norris, observations of the manifold world are discrete phenomena, openness to which attests that metaphysical questions are actually existential and may be answered only by eastern theologies.

His ninth book, "1984: A Year in My Life," consists of sequential but discontinuous calendar entries, followed by commentaries which, far from being secondary, are additive and intertextual. Both fragmentary sets foreground writing and disable exegesis, while asserting Zen and poetic brotherhood. The loss of self and poetic tradition escapes western contemplation because Norris is bent on displacing old orders and middle-class discontinuities. Given his multivocalism, irony lurks in his assertiveness: the categories he satirizes and imitates are more stable than relativism permits. The grounds upholding favoured religious traditions are not cleared. Also, he genders his identity by dramatizing reluctant commitment to, and objectification, of women.

In Book 10, "The Wheel," his travels to the south seas afford extensive scenic impressions. Pretending to observe life unmediated by poetry since he rejects nuanced language, he falls back on Melville's mythic sense and treats the world as backdrop to meditation. He seeks not to construct scenes but cannot help doing so. He insists that writing is process, not goal, but he cannot prevent self-discovery from delimiting his verse. He holds that mental functions dissolve into phenomena and that poetry is distinct from action, but his first personal plurals with their authoritative connotations and his universal assumptions about poetic community transform his words into action in conformity with rhetorical tradition. His sense of poetry as magic is also ironical because tradition emphasizes such unique power.

In Book 11, "Radar Interference," place-names disorient utterances, and declarations are thrust into anti-sense. Norris appropriates world travel to be mere gnomic utterance alongside such gestures as: "sometimes I help you by saying strange things"—"we lie in the arms of an exhausted culture"—and "I write the truths I cannot speak of." No less did William

Blake scorn generalization while creating comprehensive myths about the human world. Much remains to be learned from Blake's constructive relativism.

Asia in Critical Theory

Masao Miyoshi & H. D. Harootunian, eds.

Japan in the World. Duke UP \$42.50/\$18.95

Sau-ling Cynthia Wong

Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance. Princeton UP \$39.50/\$14.95

Reviewed by Joshua S. Mostow

Since at least the days of Montesquieu and Voltaire, "the Orient" has provided a privileged site for theorizing about Western culture. Yet currently, rather than the so-called "Near East," it is the "Far East" in general, and Japan in particular, that seems to be fulfilling this function. The examination of "the Asian" (as an adjective, not as a person) seems to facilitate realizations about post-modernity, hyper-reality—or corporal punishment—which can be seen more clearly in the defamiliarized setting of contemporary Tokyo or Singapore, providing insights that are then brought back to discussions concerning "the West." In a sense, then, the Asian seems to be fundamental to the critical theory of contemporary Europe and North America. This centrality can be seen in two otherwise rather different works, one on reassessing Japan's position in the post-Cold War world, and another on assessing the motifs of Asian American literature against the dominant norms of American mythology.

The Miyoshi/Harootunian volume is the latest collection of the so-called "Chicago School" of Japanese studies. Compared to the earlier *Postmodernism and Japan* (Duke, 1989), this collection has a wider range and is far more oriented towards historiography than literary studies. There are sixteen

essays, divided between sections entitled "The World," "Society," and "Culture," plus a strongly polemical introductory essay by the two editors.

The "timeliness" of this volume lies in the perceived possibility of Japan emerging from its exclusively bilateral orientation towards the United States into a post-Cold War new global paradigm of "tripartite regionalism" of North America, the European Community, and "Japan with its [sic] NIEs." Mirroring this non-bilateral possibility are articles in the present volume such as Arif Dirlik's on Chinese-Japanese relations, and Perry Anderson's "The Prussia of the East?", which move beyond an exclusive focus on the Japanese-US relationship. Nonetheless, "The World" is still primarily defined from the perspective of the United States, as seen in Bruce Cumings's "Japan in British/American Hegemony, 1900-1950," Rob Wilson's "Theory's Imaginal Other: American Encounters with South Korea and Japan," and Eqbal Ahmad's "Racism and the State: The Coming Crisis of U.S.-Japanese Relations" (though this topic is written from Ahmad's position as a part-time resident of both New York and Islamabad). In fact, Tetsuo Najita's article, which starts this section, discusses the Meiji "revolution" and the sources of its industrial policy in the theories of "public economics" formulated by Friedrich List (1789-1846) and others in regard to the American economy, a topic also discussed by Cumings (and recently popularized by writers such as James Fallows in *The Atlantic Monthly*).

The section of "Society" contains only two articles. One is by Miriam Silverberg, which appears to be essentially a prolegomena to her forthcoming study of the Japanese "consumer-subject within mass culture" of the inter-war years. Christena Turner's "The Spirit of Productivity: Workplace Discourse on Culture and Economics in Japan" is a wonderful ethno-

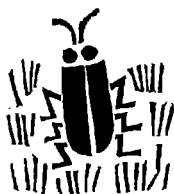
graphic de-bunking of the mythology of the "Japanese work ethic" that should be widely read.

"Culture" is the longest, and weakest, section, and the obscurity of some of the writing is in marked contrast to the lucidity of the previous historiographic essays. Not surprisingly, then, the tone is set by an article on Sôseki (or, rather, "Soseki" in English translation) by Fredric Jameson. Harootunian's contribution is a reprise of his critique of American modernization theory, already put forth in *Postmodernism and Japan*, among other places. Naoki Sakai's piece seems to be a one-chapter encapsulation of his recent book, *Voices of the Past: The Status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Cornell UP, 1991), and is more philosophical enquiry along the lines of the Kyoto school than literary or cultural criticism. It is appropriate, then, that his piece should be preceded by one on Kuki Shûzô, by Leslie Pincus.

Karatani Kôjin is represented by a very fine essay, which provides some of the sharp political focus absent in his recently translated *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Duke, 1993). The final essay, by Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "The Difficulty of Being Radical: The Discipline of Film Studies and the Postcolonial World Order," is an important contribution which in fact deconstructs the title of the whole volume, as it is exactly against such binary thinking as "Japan and the World" that Yoshimoto argues.

Sau-ling Wong's text is a wonderful work obviously born from extensive experience in the classroom teaching and discussing Asian American writing with Asian American students. While its subtitle, "From Necessity to Extravagance," might suggest some kind of chronological development, Necessity and Extravagance in fact represent the major metaphorical axis through which Wong considers four topoi: food, the Double, mobility, and play. While

this thematic approach seems drawn from the classroom, Wong's use of it is highly sophisticated and nuanced, squarely confronting the problematics of ethnic essentialism, race politics, and seemingly every other attendant issue. One of the most exciting aspects of Wong's work is her careful historicizing, showing how the definition of "Asian American" changes in response to history in general and immigration and racial exclusion laws in particular. Stories by different Asian ethnicities, from different decades from the 30s to the 80s, are carefully compared and contrasted, both with each other, and individually against the norms of the dominant culture. In this sense, despite frequent discussion of Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, Wong's is thoroughly a product of the United States. Her third chapter, for instance, "The Politics of Mobility," discusses themes of motion against the normative American myths of the frontier; upward mobility; and flight, in all its manifestations, from Huckleberry Finn to the Apollo space program. At the same time, her discussions are always fundamentally, but largely implicitly, feminist. It is this unremitting attention to detail, the complete absence of reliance on pat answers or essentializing notions of identity, that makes Wong's work so valuable, even for those without a primary interest in Asian American literature. I am tempted to say that if you are going to read only one book on Asian American literature, it should be this one. But, having read Wong's sensitive analyses, I doubt that many will be able to resist searching out to read for themselves many of the texts she discusses.



Eclectic Lowrys

Paul Tiessen, ed.

Apparently Incongruous Parts: The Worlds of Malcolm Lowry. Scarecrow \$27.50

Reviewed by Miguel Mota

Paul Tiessen has divided this volume into three parts: "Life and After Life"; "Into the Volcano"; and "Around the Volcano." In his introduction Tiessen writes that "Lowry's series of abdications and periods of self-exile reinforce for us a sense that his life was a thing of parts—of many apparently incongruous times, places, and states of consciousness, and of diverse writings offering glimpses of these. But for Lowry the seeming fragments of his life and of his art all belonged to a coherent whole." The pieces here, then—and they are, in form as in content, an eclectic lot (essay, interview, reminiscence, short story)—are collated as contributions to the process of understanding that whole (though at least one of the essays here seriously questions any discourse which would validate the very idea of wholeness).

Gordon Bowker's interview with Julian Trevelyan (published here for the first time) leads off the five biographical pieces of Part I, "Life and After Life." Trevelyan, who first met Lowry at Cambridge, was later a witness at Lowry's and Jan Gabriel's wedding in Paris, and who again had contact with him in that city in 1948 and in London in 1955, provides us with Lowrys with whom we are now mostly familiar, from the more or less moderate ("wasn't what you'd call excessive") drinker and future literary genius at Cambridge to the complex and disillusioned man of 1955 who, other drinks furtively hidden from him, would gulp down bottles of cooking sherry in his hosts' kitchen. The remainder of Part I of the volume includes two essays by Paul Tiessen, convincingly establishing Lowry's relationship to Gerald Noxon, first at Cambridge,

where Noxon “helped feed and shape Lowry’s passion for film” and later in Canada, where Noxon was instrumental in the final editing process of *Under the Volcano*. These are followed by Noxon’s own recollections of his contacts with Lowry, and finally by a short story by Vancouver writer William C. McConnell, “In Search of the Word,” first written in 1948 and recently revised, which fictionally reconstructs one of the meetings at Dollarton in the late 1940s and early 1950s between McConnell and Lowry, and transforms it into a tale of the writer’s search for inspiration and signification.

Of special interest in the second part of the collection, “Into the Volcano,” is Wieland Schulz-Keil’s discussion and defence of his choice of, and participation in, the final screenplay of John Huston’s *Under the Volcano*. The essay deserves notice if only to stand—however in need of company—in opposition to the reactions to the film of most of the novel’s readers. Also of note is Ronald Walker’s collaboration with Leigh Holt on an incisive reading of *Under the Volcano* and Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, in which they argue—correctly, I think—that the *Volcano* is not simply a modern enactment of the Faustus narrative but, more significantly, a fascinating examination of the self-consciousness of that enactment, a self-consciousness which encompasses a dialogue between the imaginative power of the Consul as sufferer and the intellectual power of the Consul as detached observer. It may be useful to question, however, whether the “humanity” that, according to Walker and Holt, the Consul in the end confronts and, indeed, celebrates even in death, is not itself yet another self-conscious rhetorical trope, constructed as yet another attempt to invest self and world with significance.

Part III, “Around the Volcano,” includes insightful essays by Ron Binns on Lowry’s identity as a writer, by Roger Bromley on

the need to historicize views of the subject as they pertain to Lowry, and by the late Brian O’Kill on the role of language in Lowry’s work. Roger Bromley’s exploration of the liminal stage deserves particular attention. Bromley argues that it is helpful to look at Lowry’s “whole project” as “fictions of transition,” that is, as the “social and cultural need for escape from and abandonment of structural commitments which have become obsolete and/or fossilized.” Positing the Consul as forever imprisoned in the marginal or liminal stage, Bromley suggests that the tragedy of *Under the Volcano* is the tragedy of uncompleted ritual, both for the individual and the culture which he represents and enacts. Bromley insists that it is only in the liminal phase that investigation of the dominant cultural discourses can take place. Here, the individual, having already passed the separation stage, is set apart from her cultural traditions and institutions and is able to see them as system, thereby liberating her from the constraints of social structure. As the representative liminar in *Under the Volcano*, however, the Consul is unable to survive the liminal phase and re-enter society as “a meaningfully constituted subject.” The Consul’s potential, in fact, is realized only in “The Forest Path to the Spring.” Whereas the Consul remains trapped within the rhetoric of an essentialist discourse, the narrator of the later story is able to undermine the notion of the unified subject and recover a “complex, contradictory, and ever-becoming subject.” Though Bromley’s essay is admirable and suggestive, I find somewhat problematic his assumption and assurance that Lowry is at some point able somehow to transcend discourse altogether. More critical consideration needs to be given to the possibility that both the struggle and the eventual freedom through the “art of becoming” are themselves already dominant “cultural commitments” shaped by discourse and therefore themselves subject to power structures.

Of the pieces which comprise Part III, Sherrill Grace's study of "Through the Panama" is, finally, the most adventurous. Though a number of these essays have about them the informal tone of the conference paper (from which some of them originate), Grace's piece challenges us to think of it in its earlier form as an oral presentation. A close critical reading which imitates the short story in its use of marginal commentary, Grace's discussion creates a productive Bakhtinian dialogic of discourses which includes not only the textual material on the margins but also, of course, in the extensive footnotes, and which, in its emphasis on the transgression of textual boundaries, positions itself in a fascinating dialogical relation to, at the very least, the other pieces in the collection. Grace's contribution only strengthens what is a varied and uniformly excellent collection of essays and memoirs, and in collating these pieces, Paul Tiessen has done the Lowry reader an invaluable service.

Satire

Josef Skvorecky

The Republic of Whores: A Fragment from the Time of the Cults. Trans. Paul Wilson. Knopf \$25.00

Reviewed by Peter Petro

In my review of Skvorecky's *The Miracle Game* in *Canadian Literature* No. 132 I pointed out how in the original Czech this work antedated the famous *Engineer of Human Souls* with which it shares Danny Smiricky, Skvorecky's main character going back to *The Cowards* (1948). Now Skvorecky's underground classic, *The Republic of Whores*, originally published in 1971 in Czech, comes to Canada (though a French translation, *L'Escadron blindé*, appeared as early as 1969). In the original, the book became one of the most sought-after

underground books in Czechoslovakia, where it was smuggled by its Toronto *Publishers* 68 before the Velvet Revolution of 1989. However, its translation had to wait, as the prolific author had other, more pressing, works at hand. Nevertheless, those who familiarized themselves with Danny and his world will certainly welcome the opportunity to see him in the alien environment of a Stalinist Czechoslovak People's Democratic Army.

Danny Smiricky is a well educated, sophisticated young man who, as a character of a satirical novel, enables Skvorecky to satirize the "system" (for the Army was a handmaiden of the Communist establishment) "from above."

This effect distinguishes the book from the classic anti-militarist satire, Hasek's *Good Soldier Svejk*, whose smart character acts like an idiot and demolishes the system "from below." And yet, perhaps naturally, Danny's presence is less pervasive than in other works, mainly because the other novels are not so clearly satirically committed as this one. At the same time, Danny does fulfill an important function in this satire: his normalcy is the measuring stick that makes characters like Pygmy Devil and, even more so, Manas satirical. A series of satirical tableaux, six in all, encapsulate the typical experience of an intellectual undergoing the compulsory military service in a Communist country: the field maneuvers, the merit badge test, the guard duty, the army creativity contest, the inevitable inspection of combat readiness, and finally, the farewell to arms that ends in a drunken orgy.

The intensely satirical and comical lens that Skvorecky trains on his subject picks up also the essential humanity of the little men and women caught in the dehumanizing machinery. Beside the caricatured Pygmy Devil and Manas, there are a number of men and women characters who—unlike Hasek's characters—do not lack redeeming features. Such is the case of a

pathetic, though hardly derisible Janinka. A man of considerable charm, Danny—like Svejek—attracts the attention of his commanding officer's wife. However, instead of the comic denouement provided by Hasek, Skvorecky ends on a minor, tragicomic, note as he makes Janinka sigh:

There was little Honza, and the canteen and the officers and movies three nights a week, and a little flat in a new married quarters, and the boredom and the emptiness and at night the tanks on the shooting range and the beautiful tracer bullets in the air, and everything was just as it should have been. And then you came into it. Why, for the love of God, why?"

Janinka, despite her ability to wax lyrical, knows she is no match for Danny and lets him know as much. For her, Danny represents an escape and a possibility for different life. For Danny, Janinka is also a form of escape and a substitute for the real thing—the love of a woman who is less accessible than Janinka.

The title of the translation differs from the original *The Tank Corps* (*Tankovy prapor*) which has obvious satiric resonance for the Czech reader, reminding him perhaps of Hasek's masterpiece. *The Republic of Whores* is a title that is removed from the actual army setting of the novel, though it is arguably a much better title. At the same time, it is far from fanciful. It comes from the fourth chapter when Danny encounters a Czech Everyman, in the ironic, satirical sense, one Mr. Hertl who thunders on:

"Is this what we spent twenty years building a country for? And we call ourselves a nation! We are all guilty! We've done this with the nation of Jan Hus and T. G. Masaryk and Jan Zizka! That's the kind of whores we are. Drop the H-bomb on us. Drop the cobalt bomb on us! I'm a Christian, Mr. Smiricky, but without the slightest compunction whatsoever, Mr. Smiricky, I'll hang every Commie I can get my hands on. And I know who is and isn't a

Commie. I'm in charge of dues in our Party cell, and I've got the goods on everyone."

This is as sharp and painful as Hasek delivered it: a tragicomic high point in this fine satire. Unlike Hasek's, Skvorecky's satire is aimed at a system which was, and in some countries still is, in operation. Hasek's *Good Soldier Svejek* by comparison anathematized an empire, that of Austria-Hungary, that no longer existed.

Points of Connection

Karla F. Holloway

Moorings & Metaphors: Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Women's Literature. Rutgers UP n.p.

Makeda Silvera

Her Head A Village & Other Stories. Press Gang \$12.95

Reviewed by Lisa Pottie

Reading these two works together is a practical exercise in not generalizing about black women's writing. Holloway's theoretical and critical examination of African-American and West African women writers uses models that are simply not appropriate to Silvera's exploration of Caribbean and immigrant Canadian experiences. The metaphor of the goddess/ancestor that Holloway uncovers in the texts she analyzes does not describe Silvera's intricate web of relations and the dissonances introduced into them by the struggle to live in racist, sexist, and homophobic societies.

This said, there are points of connection between the two works. Holloway's emphasis on language is both explicable in terms of her interest in sociolinguistics and relevant to Silvera's collection. In a recent interview in *XTRA!*, Silvera notes that "*Her Head a Village* is grounded in lives I've known, if not through my own experience, then through issues around language. How language can mute you in this kind of soci-

ety." A concern with appropriate expression is clear in the first and title story of the collection, in which the villagers inside the protagonist's head argue with her as she attempts to write an essay for an international forum for Third World women on "Writing as a Dangerous Profession." She is finally rescued by the figure of Maddie, who stands up to the other villagers, announces that "We all have to live together in this village," and then in a dream "took the pen from her head and began to write." While this story serves to operate as a frame—it structures the work as a collection of voices—it reads rather too much like the essay the narrator is attempting to write. The other stories do not suffer from the same flaw; they draw us into the myriad of experiences portrayed through varying points of view and styles that range from the poetic to the matter of fact. Unlike her previous collection, *Remembering G and Other Stories*, the range of characters here is clearly not all autobiographical. "Hush, Chile, Hush" eerily presents a child who may be experiencing sexual abuse, and the family's attempts to deal with it; the suspicion is never entirely confirmed, since it all occurs within the child's context of her "bad dream." Another frightening tale is "Baby," in which two lesbian lovers argue about being out while in the next room a man intending to attack them masturbates and then leaves without them knowing. "Canada Sweet, Girl," describes the hardships experienced by an illegal immigrant who is forced to leave in two weeks after nine years in the country, and "Welfare Line," presents a Jamaican woman's humiliating experience trying to get money for food and presents for her children four days before Christmas. Most impressive in this collection is Silvera's command of language. Dialect is used when appropriate to the character, and touches of lyrical imagery sparkle even in the most descriptive prose, as in the following observation by the nar-

rator of "Carmella," who explains why she rejected going to university: "I'd rather spend my time mastering the winding and grinding of a dance, tying and untying a turban, and discovering the length and breadth of the after-hours clubs." "Caribbean Chameleon" combines dialect and lyrical intensity wonderfully in its extended descriptions of the teeming variety on a flight from the Caribbean to Canada.

Giving a voice to those whose voices are denied or "muted" is clearly a concern that Holloway finds in the texts she examines. Her densely written work concludes that "telling is testimony that recenters the spir-its of women, mythic and ancestral, into places where their passionate articulation assures them that neither geography nor history can separate them from the integrity of the essential Word." The "essential Word" is embedded in oracy, the telling of tales, and it subverts the Western separation of myth and history in the "imaginative domains of fictional language," and its use of "three contextual perspectives" which she names "revision, (re)membrance, and recursion." If this sounds like heavy going, it is. The works she analyzes "claim logocentrism and mythology as viable replacements for the scriptocentric dimensions of history," dissolve the distinction between objective and subjective dimensions by introducing the spiritual into everyday experience through the figures of goddesses or ancestors, and consequently "decenter the Western ethic and replace its operative aesthetic (which excludes them) with one that extends from a cultural tradition characterized by alterity. . . . what appears behind the veil of the Western tradition is a shifted, alternative universe."

The individual studies of texts by authors such as Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, Ntozake Shange, Buchi Emecheta, Octavia Butler and Gayle Jones are more interesting than the grand theoretical schema, particu-

larly the final chapter, which focuses on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*. Analysis of the texts is also interjected throughout the work in an attempt to weave together theory and practical application. Nevertheless, Part I in particular does not read as it should, as a theory in process that responds to the call of the texts; the conclusions seem to be already drawn before we get to the actual analysis. More problematic is the dialectic between Western theoretical villains and African/African-American heroines; it occasionally lapses into generalizations about the Western tradition that are too easy to refute. Moreover, Silvera's collection can be used to interrogate Holloway's theory. Holloway asserts that "What connects language and creativity is that for women, biologically confronted with the possibility of creation, motherhood embraced or denied is unique to her sense of self." Holloway is careful to note that motherhood is problematic in the work of black women writers, and she argues for it "as both a physiological and a metaphysical construct," which opens up its range of possible representations. Nevertheless, her emphasis on the centrality of motherhood puts lesbians like Silvera in the position of having denied it as part of their self-definition. While Holloway accuses Euro-American feminists of having romanticized motherhood, she comes perilously close to falling into the 1970s feminist trap of identifying "womanspirit," or a "woman-centered ideology" as she calls it, with the biological ability to bear children. Short shrift is indeed given to the lesbian characters in works such as Naylor's *The Woman of Brewster Place* or Shange's *Sassafrass, Cypress and Indigo*. Silvera's work more successfully weaves sex, class, race, and sexual orientation together than Holloway's.

Nevertheless, *Moorings & Metaphors* is certainly invaluable in its relating of works that are usually examined in isolation; the

cross-continent aspect provokes fascinating connections between writers of the diaspora and of the West Africa they were stolen from. Moreover, the shift away from Western valuations does produce the sense of texts that cannot and should not be measured against the texts and standards of a Western literary hierarchy. Holloway's shifting might be usefully applied to Silvera's work, if not in terms of particular models, at least in terms of a general rule for approaching writing that articulates alterity.

Holocaust: Different Ways of Knowing

J.J. Steinfeld

Dancing at the Club Holocaust: Stories New & Selected. Ragweed \$14.95

Martin Gilbert

Atlas of the Holocaust. (Revised and Updated) Lester \$24.95

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

In J.J. Steinfeld's recent collection of stories, *Dancing at the Club Holocaust*, a single theme is repeated in almost every story. A youngish man, isolated in his work and alienated from family, is obsessed with the Holocaust. He takes his obsession out on himself—by meditating on his own unhappiness and ignoring his career—while barely reining in his anger with the world at large. This scenario recurs in stories set in Toronto, Prince Edward Island and Banff, though the surrounding milieu has little impact on Steinfeld's manner of concluding each tale. In a number of them the depressed figure turns to writing for relief. In others, the protagonist's unhappiness is focused on his dead mother, most specifically on the tattoo she was given as a concentration camp inmate. And in the third variation on a theme, Steinfeld's embittered loner acts out, challenging old Nazis, bystanders costumed as Nazis, or simply by

romping, dangerous and sullen on a Toronto back-street to the sound of his own voice, shouting, "To the gas chambers. . . . To the gas chambers."

There are artists whose work thrives on repetition, on the return to a favoured motif to focus on a shift in emphasis or tone. Steinfeld's repetition takes him back, again and again, to a portrayal of disaffection and self-hatred without ever acknowledging the point of this return. He does not satirize his leading men—the stories are often told from their own cocky, self-aware point of view. The point of these portraits seems to be that his characters *know* what they're like, and can't be any other way. Through them, the author imagines a kind of postwar anti-hero, a Jew with a bad attitude who will leave no crowd untaunted, no innocent unlectured, should the topic of the Holocaust come up.

Reading these stories consecutively gives one the feeling that it is this didacticism that is most dear to Steinfeld; that his narrative voice and the characters he sketches exist to support it and to enact scenes of bitter instruction. But the lessons offered here are shrill and at times grotesquely unreal.

As one figure after another moves "across Canada like a blind messageless carrier pigeon," the arc of this travel presents only a numbingly repetitive account of unhappy personal history. One gets the feeling that Steinfeld, like his burdened characters, cannot escape the desire to tell "far-fetched stories" and engage "in bruising memory dances."

Martin Gilbert's *Atlas of the Holocaust*, with its detailed, dispassionate text and the majority of its pages filled with intricate maps depicting German troop movements, deportations and killing sites, is a uniquely evocative and horrifying portrait of the events of the Nazi destruction of the Jews of Europe. Gilbert's work dispels the criticism that works of history must inevitably efface individual experience in pursuit of larger

abstract patterns and explanatory theses. His maps present the Nazi onslaught on Jews and the other innocents of Europe as it developed, from random killing to forced expulsion, the construction of ghettos, deportations and mass murder in the camps. But within this well-known pattern Gilbert forces the reader to examine a wealth of particular experience: the birthplace, name and age of French children deported to Auschwitz in 1943; the fate of families who escaped roundups and fled into the Polish countryside; the home towns of 133 Jews executed for aiding the French resistance.

Many of the volume's 316 maps manage to tell very intimate stories about the life and death of communities and individuals. Gilbert begins by representing the trajectory of 17 lives lost to the Nazis, mapping the birthplace, work place and place of execution of, among others, the German painter Charlotte Salomon, the Cracow poet Mordecai Gebirtig, and Harry Baur, a dock worker from Marseilles. This method of distilling distinctive experience from the overwhelming numbers is a triumph of scholarship and sensitivity. Every reader with any personal connection with the war years will learn something he or she did not know about the fate of family and friends. I, for instance, discovered that from Mlava, where the Nazis captured almost all of my mother's family, large numbers of Jews were transported to the Soviet border to be used as slave labour. Such clarification is always bleak—one more awful scene to assimilate—yet there is somehow comfort in *knowing*, in being able to say how the last days of the lost were lived.

By following the fate of single individuals and whole communities in areas as varied as the Crimea, the Baltic, the Greek Islands, and Bessarabia, the reader learns to appreciate the variety of people who fell victim to the Nazis. Those who perished are rescued from the realm of a grey facelessness

and given character, as one imagines them at home in a variety of languages, on a vast palette of European landscape, doing the work of painters, shopkeepers, rabbis and dock workers. And maps prove to be an excellent medium for conveying this varied portrait; free of sentimentality and editorial comment, they present a bare narrative of the disruptions and catastrophe that befell so many during the war.

But regardless of how valuable this volume is, it is not a book one reads from cover to cover. The weight of the stories represented, their increasing number and grimness, becomes too great. So, we follow a child from Paris to Auschwitz, tracing a finger along the rail line across Germany and Poland, and then pause.

Landscape of Memory

James E. Young

The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning. Yale UP US\$35.00

Judah Denburg

Old Roots New Trees: A Personal Midrash. Mosaic n.p.

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

In a recent *Village Voice* interview entitled "Schindler's List: Myth, Movie and Memory," James Young voiced a concern that might explain his own motivations for writing *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*:

There are a couple of gigantic institutions now, Spielberg being one and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum being another, which are defining a kind of public consciousness of the Holocaust. . . . I worry about any single memory of the Holocaust becoming totally predominant.

Through a detailed study of Holocaust memorial and educational sites in the United States, Israel, Poland and Germany, *The Texture of Memory* examines how these

sites serve a variety of political, personal, religious and artistic ends. Young repeatedly asserts that memorials should acknowledge the changing, fragile nature of memory, arguing that they must not "assume the polished, finished veneer of a death mask" or represent a "version of history calling itself permanent and everlasting." Instead, they should reflect "current memory" and be responsive to contemporary issues. Though he is attentive to survivors' responses to a variety of memorial projects, he does not address their rejection of particular artistic styles or interpretive modes in order to evaluate commemorative sites. In his guiding credo, borrowed from the American designer of the Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington, Young insists that commemorative sites should evoke memories that are "sufficiently ambiguous and open ended so that others can inhabit the space, can imbue the forms with their own memory."

Young is extremely hesitant to distinguish, among the memorials he discusses, those that fulfill this requirement from those that do not. One can assume, however, that an "open ended" memorial is one that signals an awareness of itself as a "performance space, a political stage," and that self-reflexively acknowledges its own genesis and the contested nature of the subject it means to commemorate. The successful memorial then, not only calls the Holocaust to mind, but reveals how memory is confronted and constantly contested in the shadow of the monumental sculpture and institutional juggernauts intended to give it an enduring role in postwar culture.

Young's descriptions of the conception, execution and reception of the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, the museums at Dachau, Buchenwald, Majdanek and Auschwitz, and of German "countermonuments" at Hamburg, Kassel and Münster are fascinating and deeply instructive. He is

undoubtedly right that the range of response provoked by these projects provides us with a “fingerprint” of a particular time and place, revealing a community’s “projections and preoccupations” as well as its feelings of guilt, fear and objection to facing certain representations of history. The German “countermonuments” represent a particularly unique form of commemoration, by which a country recognizes neither its heroes nor its losses on the battlefield, but the victims of its own national ideology.

The chapters in *The Texture of Memory* examining American and Israeli memorials are less compelling, since Young does not examine in any depth the complicated role the Holocaust has played in the postwar culture of these two countries. Instead, his discussion of the cultural dramas enacted during the creation of American and Israeli memorials focuses on contemporary identity politics in Jerusalem and Washington. In Israel, commemoration of the heroism of ghetto fighters is linked to the heroism of those who fought in the country’s wars; while in America arguments over appropriate forms of commemoration often turn on the question of what role the Jewish experience should play in the larger scheme of American public life. Young might have said more about the way these approaches tend to evade a thoroughgoing response to the history of the Holocaust. His one attempt at such discussion is his dissenting opinion on the trend in American communities toward building Holocaust memorials. Without the “traditional pillars of Torah, faith, and language,” he suggests, American Jews “have turned increasingly to the Holocaust as their vicariously shared memory.”

This is one of the few critical positions taken in *The Texture of Memory*. While Young is committed to portraying the particular ideological and religious motivations behind the genesis of memorial sites,

he calls for a contemporary commemorative landscape that will abandon particularist narratives in favour of those that make room for as wide a range of experience as possible. His hope is that such sites—symbolic of a diversity of historical experience—will counteract political forces that declare war against multicultural society.

Old Roots New Trees, the first collection of poems by Judah Denburg, bears the subtitle “A Personal Midrash,” suggesting that the poet’s method is influenced by the midrashic mode of rabbinic interpretation that makes room, while meditating on biblical texts, for an expression of concerns contemporary to the interpreter. Through a teasing out of sections in the Torah perceived to be ambiguous or puzzling in their use of repetition or particular words, midrash encourages subtle argument and nuanced reflection on troubling issues in Jewish life. Midrash has gained a foothold in literary studies as an exemplary form of interpretive intertextuality—what Geoffrey Hartman has called an “allusive” shuttling between texts. In the words of another critic, midrash solves the paradox of “the wish and the need to innovate and the religious maxim which states that all truth is to be found in the scriptures.”

Denburg is unswervingly true to the maxim supported by the latter half of this paradox. Many of his poems refer to the legends of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to address themes of faith, family and tribal allegiance. This focus lends his work the archaic tone that comes with the religious poet’s retreat to sites of meditation and the depiction of sacred scenes:

abraham strode at dawn
isaac was a man of dusk
waiting for dark,
the last stutter of light
when swallows swirl
at temple entrances,
wailing at walls
before descent.

Denburg's lyrical portraits of the patriarchs, of Aaron and the burning bush, are arguably more prayerful than midrashic. They present faithful renderings of age-old stories and evoke the yearning—often repeated in the liturgy—that our days be renewed “as of old.” It may be that the choice of this collection's subtitle is merely a red herring, but there is little of the midrashist's audacity in *Old Roots New Trees*. Instead, Denburg softly raises the liturgist's plea:

somewhere in sinai hidden,
we heard your voice again
promising eternal sustenance —

and now where is that song
lost, ineffable
like a dream flown?

Prose Composite

Nathalie Fredette

Montréal en prose 1892-1992. l'Hexagone \$29.95

Anne Élaïne Cliche

La pisseuse. Triptyque n.p.

Reviewed by Alain-Michel Rocheleau

Sous le titre *Montréal en prose 1892-1992*, l'anthologie présentée avec intelligence par Nathalie Fredette propose au lecteur près de cinquante textes qui ont comme sujet principal Montréal et qui s'inscrivent tous dans une histoire de l'écriture de cette ville, de ses débuts hésitants à ses prolongements plus affirmés. Classés sous six rubriques thématiques, ces textes rendent compte du développement et de la complexification des rapports entre Montréal et ses écrivains.

La première rubrique (“La ville naissante: rumeurs et bruits”) regroupe des textes d'auteurs comme Arthur Buies, Edmond de Nevers, Charles W. Stokes et Marie Le Franc qui, par des propos relevant surtout de la chronique et du billet, témoignent de la modernité naissante de Montréal à l'aube du XX^e siècle. La seconde rubrique (“La

ville disparue: monumentaliser Montréal”) rassemble les écrits d'auteurs représentatifs comme Gabrielle Roy, Lionel Groulx, Ringuet et Stephen Leacock. Tout en se rattachant au discours historique et religieux, fortement influencés par l'idéologie des années quarante, la plupart de ces écrivains évoquent un Montréal révolu dont les marques, laissées par le siècle précédent, s'effacent peu à peu. Reflets du parcours chronologique que propose l'anthologie, ces différents regards posés sur la ville introduisent les textes inscrits sous la troisième rubrique (“La ville circonscrite: points de vue et lieux-dits”). Ces derniers semblent refléter un même projet d'écriture: témoigner de Montréal au présent. Alors que des auteurs comme Norman Levine et Hugh MacLennan célèbrent Montréal comme métropole du Canada, d'autres, comme André Belleau, Hubert Aquin et André Major, questionnent à partir des années soixante le caractère francophone de l'espace montréalais.

Dans le même esprit, la quatrième rubrique (“La ville réfléchie: essais et déplacements”) regroupe des prosateurs comme Louis Dudek, Michel Van Schendel et Jacques Ferron qui s'efforcent de penser la ville, de soulever les limites comme les possibilités de Montréal en tant qu'objet de réflexion. Réunis sous la cinquième rubrique (“La ville des autres: chassés-croisés”), les textes de Patrick Straram, de Mordecai Richler, de Naim Kattan, de Jean Hamelin et de Michèle Lalonde, présentent Montréal comme un territoire où se jouent les questions identitaires, lieu de l'autre et espace altérant où sont éprouvées de manière aiguë les questions d'identité nationale et, chez les écrivains, la saisie du caractère cosmopolite de Montréal. Enfin la dernière rubrique (“La ville imaginaire: écriture(s) et invention(s)”) réunit les textes diversiformes d'auteurs comme Don Bell, Michel Tremblay, Marie-Claire Blais, Régine Robin et François Hébert qui choi-

sisent d'imaginer un Montréal singulier, tout en illustrant comment cette ville et l'écriture entretiennent des rapports de plus en plus étroits.

Pour avoir assemblé dans un même ouvrage des textes d'auteurs à la fois francophones et anglophones, *Montréal en prose 1892-1992* a le grand mérite de pouvoir transmettre à ses lecteurs une image composite et plus juste aussi de la réalité littéraire de Montréal, considérée sur un siècle d'histoire et d'écriture. La richesse de cette anthologie, tant sur le plan formel que discursif, est également visible dans le roman d'Anne Elaine Cliche intitulé *La pisseuse*.

Ce roman raconte l'histoire de Livio Violante, Juif italien et cinéaste montréalais, qui cherche à composer la séquence manquante d'un film qu'il destine à son ex-épouse, Samanta, et à sa fille, Milena, vivant toutes deux à Paris. Plus qu'une simple démarche artistique, la réalisation de ce film-vérité a pour but d'apaiser le deuil de séparation qui afflige le cinéaste, de remplacer la présence réelle des deux femmes de sa vie par une série d'images virtuelles. Chez un brocanteur, devant un morceau arraché d'un retable baroque, illustrant un Christ fléchissant sous le poids d'une croix, Livio demande à une inconnue au prénom énigmatique, Anne et Marie Francoeur, de créer pour lui l'équivalent filmique de cette prédelle.

Sans correspondre véritablement à la demande du cinéaste, la jeune femme, romancière et professeure de lettres, restera en contact permanent avec lui par l'envoi de missives et de cassettes vidéo. Ces deux créateurs s'inspireront mutuellement par leurs propos et par leurs attitudes réciproques tout en s'empruntant des idées qu'ils intégreront dans leur travail artistique respectif. Ces échanges permettront à Violante d'approfondir sa quête d'identité, recherche marquée par un dialogisme qui s'établit entre les thèmes repérables dans *La pisseuse*: dialogisme entre la judaïté et la catholicité, entre la masculinité et la

féminité, entre le religieux et le profane, entre la vie et la mort, entre la fiction et la réalité. Les intitulés, prêtés par l'auteure aux différentes parties du roman, sont à cet égard révélateurs et riches de sens: "Quand l'Annonce faite à Marie ne tombe pas dans l'oreille d'un sourd," "Épiphanie (1)," "*Confiteor peccavi*" (première partie); "Et qu'êtes-vous allé contempler au désert?...", "Lève-toi et marche," "La visitation" (deuxième partie); "Du magnificat encore," "...plus qu'un taureau..." (troisième partie); "*Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum*," "l'Annonce de la passion" (quatrième partie). Ces différentes sections, comme des panneaux narratifs distincts mais reliés entre eux, donnent au premier roman d'Anne Elaine Cliche l'aspect formel d'un retable au centre duquel se trouve, comme panneau central, le vécu parallèle et parfois synchrone des deux personnages.

Si cet ouvrage, bien écrit et sensible, renferme de grandes qualités aux plans de la forme résolument composite et des métaphores évoquées; si le discours des personnages, truffé de références autour des cultures romanesques (Céline, Chastel, Des Cars, Flaubert, Joyce, Kafka, Proust) et picturales (Picasso, Van Eyck), va tout droit à l'universel, on pourrait cependant reprocher à l'auteure de *La pisseuse* d'avoir prêté à ses deux protagonistes une trop grande technicité. Les allusions abusives aux théories de la réception, de l'emprunt et de l'intertextualité, à l'instar des connotations psychanalytiques souvent liées aux réflexions existentielles de la romancière et du cinéaste, font que ces derniers frôlent parfois les limites du vraisemblable.

En somme, parmi les ouvrages publiés en 1992, *Montréal en prose 1892-1992* et *La pisseuse* témoignent chacun à leur manière de l'activité littéraire au Québec, d'hier à aujourd'hui, et démontrent qu'une oeuvre de qualité est plus que la somme des parties qui la composent, aussi composites et intéressantes soient-elles.

Representations of Native Identity

Brock V. Silversides

The Face Pullers: Photographing Native Americans in United States Literature and the Canadians, 1871-1939. Fifth House \$29.95

Klaus Lubbers

Born for the Shade: Stereotypes of the Native American in United States Literature and the Visual Arts, 1776-1894. Rodopi US\$58.50

Voices from Home: The W.I.N.O. Anthology, Volume 1. Agawa \$9.00

Reviewed by William J. Scheick

Each in its own way, the three books included in this review concern Native identity. *Voices from Home* approaches this subject from the inside, *Born for the Shade* from the outside. *The Face Pullers*, in turn, does both by presenting photographs which represent Native identity from the outside but which also sometimes indeed "capture some aspect of the Native experience" from the inside.

The Face Pullers is a wonderful collection of photographs, dating from 1871 to 1939, shot in the central and southern parts of Saskatchewan and Alberta. They are arranged to reflect four stages in the Canadian perception of Native identity: the primitive aboriginal awaiting civilization, the idealized noble savage on the verge of extinction, the emergent "white Indian" benefiting from a Christian education, and the romanticized Native defined by legend. As these categories indicate, Brock V. Silversides is interested more in polemic than in art. Although in passing he admits to admiration for the quality of the images captured by the prairie photographers, he urges the reader to resist the appeal of their face-puller (camera) work and, instead, to detect "their suspect motives and cultural delusions of grandeur." Many of the photographs support his thesis and organizational principle, but a surprising number do not. Some of the images, in fact, are so deeply

human and intensely aesthetic that they powerfully resist a political interpretation.

In this regard, the image that most endured in my memory occurs in an oval photograph of an elderly Native woman made during the 1910s by an unknown person and now owned by Silversides. With her legs beneath her, the woman sits on the ground softened by dried haylike vegetation. The frills of the worn shawl draped neatly over her blend into this dried vegetation, an effect that implies (like the very posture of the subject) a comfortable affinity between the woman and nature. This impression is reinforced by the diagonal direction of her arms—one leisurely draped over her knee and nearly touching the ground; the other crooked on her leg and supporting her chin—and heavily veined hands, both harmonizing with the diagonally-lined wooden wall behind her. The woman's face, soft in its expression of age, radiates dignity, especially an alertness of mind heightened by her pose as a thinking person with fist under chin. What have her alert eyes seen over so many years, what wisdom has she acquired in all that time, what does she think as she silently and calmly looks at me—these are the questions the portrait of her elicits in my mind. She is Native, of course, but this feature of her identity seems a facilitator, an enhancement, to a much larger apprehension at the verge of my perception: a glimpse of something profoundly and beautifully human.

Illustrations also provide a special feature of Klaus Lubbers' *Born for the Shade*. Examining examples of fiction, poetry, drama, Fourth-of-July orations, occasional essays, school texts, peace medals, documentary art, paintings, and sculpture, Lubbers observes various changes in Anglo-American representations of Native peoples. Concerning the medals ceremonially presented to tribal chiefs, for example, he notes that over the years the white party imaged on the medal moves to the center

whereas the red party moves to the margins; and this asymmetry (subverting the theme of mutual benefit) not only prevails in other contemporary American cultural expressions but also coincides with the transformation from temporal to spatial concerns in national meliorist predictions. In Lubbers' opinion, on the subjects of friendship and integration pictorial representations of the indigenous peoples are far less accommodating than verbal representations in schoolbooks and juvenile literature.

Lubbers' range of primary evidence is daunting, and this feature alone makes his book a valuable resource for future related studies. It is unfortunate, however, that this very asset mars the overall effect of his book, which fails methodologically and organizationally to present a satisfying whole. The plethora of valuable primary data overwhelms Lubbers, whose *Born for the Shade* is far more satisfying at various points than as an aggregate. Mere enumeration and description—not to mention obvious examples of stereotyping—mingle indiscriminately with analysis and cultural interpretation, resulting in a book that lacks both a center of gravity and a consistent texture. In the absence of a particular approach and a principle of selectivity Lubbers' study only reaffirms rather than revises our present understanding of his topic. If his book lacks originality, it nonetheless provides a useful compendium of primary sources, such heretofore overlooked works as the differing schoolbook editions of *Tales of Peter Parley about America*. Likewise, if the index is inadequate, the forty illustrations are particularly praiseworthy.

Problematic encounters with stereotypes, identity, guilt, generational conflict, and violence inform the creative works comprising *Voices from Home*, an anthology of Native voices. Included are Anne Acco, Kateri Damm, Joseph Dandurand, and Armand Garnet Ruffo, all members of the

Writers' Independent Native Organization (WINO). My own limitations as a reader may account for the difficulty I experienced in sensing much of distinction in this volume, which seemed comprised mainly of explicit, plainly stated, and predictable writings. However, Ruffo's "The Storm," a poem concerned with identity, particularly lingered in my mind. On a stormy day, the narrator of this poem suddenly and irrationally finds himself compelled to leave indoor safety for the inside of a tempest, where he may hear the "language of thunder" he does not presently know. His seemingly involuntary election, during this wild moment, of black cloud over sun, nature over the city, rebellion over safety, the sky-language of thunder over the radio-voice of officialdom momentarily aligns the narrator's irrational impulse with some power beyond his understanding. In the presence of this power that can at once "create and destroy" the narrator can likewise creatively dispatch his safely compliant, artificial indoors-identity for a risky rebellious, natural outdoors-identity. "The Storm" is not only a superb statement of a present-day Native's conflicted sense of identity; it is also an excellent poem.

Medical Histories

Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski

Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture. Cornell UP n.p.

Jacalyn Duffin

Langstaff: A Nineteenth-Century Medical Life. U Toronto P \$60.00/\$17.95

Reviewed by Judy Z. Segal

While *Not of Woman Born* and *Langstaff: A Nineteenth-Century Medical Life* are works of medical history, both books, well-written and informative, will appeal to a range of readers with a variety of motives for

reading. Medical history is not just for medical historians any more.

"Not of woman born" designates the child of Caesarean section in medieval and Renaissance Europe—for the operation, an "act of desperation," was performed almost exclusively on dead women, usually for the purpose of extracting a child in order to baptize it before it, too, died. Blumenfeld-Kosinski offers *Not of Woman Born* as a multi-disciplinary response to the many complex questions raised by the procedure: "Who would decide that the mother was dead so that a Caesarean could be performed? Who was allowed to perform the operation? What were the consequences of hesitating too long or of a precipitous decision? How could the mother's or child's spiritual salvation be assured? . . ." The book is fascinating—and too short. Since the author looks at medical, religious, and historical texts as well as manuscript illuminations and woodcuts, her 142 page discussion, albeit supplemented by an appendix, notes, and a bibliography, whets more than it satisfies the appetite for a historical treatment of a procedure that, according to some reports, is now performed, in North America, for one in four births.

Its brevity notwithstanding, this book has a great deal to offer readers interested in medieval and Renaissance culture, women, medicine, art, midwifery, and the incursion of men into the procedures of childbirth. In the central portion of the book, comparing various pictorial versions of the birth of Julius Caesar (the relation between the historical figure and the name of the procedure is treated in a separate chapter on etymology), Blumenfeld-Kosinski brings to light differences in conceptions of Caesarean section over time by showing Caesar's birth redrawn in different periods to match current knowledge about and practice of the procedure. The fifteenth century, for example, rescues Caesar's mother—a move enabled by reports at the

time of Caesarean deliveries to live mothers. In the fifteenth century as well, a male surgeon is featured in a sample illumination, while "the energetic postures of the earlier midwives give way . . . to more static ones." A separate chapter treats the marginalization of women in obstetrics.

The strength of *Not of Woman Born*, its interdisciplinarity, is also perhaps its weakness. The book points to a problem of interdisciplinary treatments in general: because they cover so much ground, they may not go deep enough and their organization may be too contrived. I found myself wanting not only a longer version of this book but also a hypertextual one, a version that would allow me to follow a trail of my own making through the territory the author begins to map.

Duffin's project is better considered than Blumenthal-Kosinski's; one gets a sense of a more experienced author at work here. In her Introduction to *Langstaff: A Nineteenth-Century Medical Life*, Duffin describes her own study aptly: it is a "biography" not of a person but of a medical practice. James Miles Langstaff (1825-1889) practiced medicine in Ontario for forty years, attending his patients for infections, tumours, fractures, births, and more, and he kept meticulous records. With a computer-assisted analysis of his daybooks, Duffin provides a rare and riveting look into the work of a single physician and the medical, personal, social, and political contexts of that work.

Duffin succeeds brilliantly in what she undertakes. In my own reading of the book, I became so immersed in the lives of Langstaff and his patients that I had to keep reminding myself that I was reading this book in order to review it. Langstaff himself is an appealing character and a tireless caregiver. He might stay overnight with a patient only to provide some comfort, or visit a patient, as he did the eight-year old child of a friend, 46 times over the course

of a single illness. From Duffin's account, we get a sense, though, of the enormous prerogative of the physician (Langstaff disapproved of certain procedures, such as the administration of the drug digitalis, and approved perhaps too wholeheartedly of certain others, such as the use of forceps in assisting childbirth). Given this prerogative, we might surmise that doctors less conscientious than Langstaff could do an enormous amount of damage. Much of Duffin's own interest is in Langstaff's response to and adoption of the medical developments of his time, particularly anaesthesia and antiseptics. The daybooks, as she says, afford the opportunity to "examine if and how an individual practitioner, who rarely left home, responded to the trends of his era" Thus, she lines up the material of the daybooks with the publication of medical findings. She lines up the material as well with broader epidemiological studies, with census records, with newspaper accounts, with the public health movement, and with technological change. With respect to the last, Duffin notes, for example, the rise in the number of injuries caused by heavy machinery—as opposed to say, horses—in the 1860's.

Duffin's thoughtful organization permits a range of observations, along the lines of the following: "The most compelling evidence that [childbed fever] was spread on the hands of examiners is the apparent rise in maternal deaths during the later half of the nineteenth century in a manner that parallels the rise in physician-attended birth. It is not difficult to find cases that may have been infected by Langstaff, who visited women with childbed fever and children with apparent streptococcal infection on the same days as he attended other birthing women who later developed fever." Duffin's observations and speculations are always made carefully and with attention to the complexities of historiography. In another case, for example, noting a marked

decline over the years of practice in reported cases of the disease "chlorosis," Duffin wonders, "Was this because the condition [likely a kind of anemia] was becoming less common, perhaps for reasons of improved diet, or was it that chlorosis had been supplanted in the mind of the practitioner by other diagnostic categories?"

While Duffin extracts extraordinary riches from Langstaff's daybooks and supplies the revealing "biography" she promises, it is worth noting that her project, while analytical, is not critical. I could not help comparing her study of Langstaff's records to German historian Barbara Duden's study of the records of eighteenth-century physician Johann Storch. Duden not only reports on Storch's detailed patient records but also mines them critically for what they reveal of the history of women's bodies (see *The Woman Beneath the Skin*). Like Blumenfeld-Kosinski's, Duffin's book sets readers to thinking about other possible research projects. But certainly it is not a bad thing for books to raise as many questions as they answer.

Work Writing

Tom Wayman

A Country Not Considered: Canada, Culture, Work. Anansi \$15.95

Reviewed by James Steele

The unity of the nine essays in this book stems from the author's concern about the way in which daily work is represented—or not represented—in the culture of Canada, especially poetry. In his first essay, Wayman comments on the limited usefulness of a Canadian literary culture that overlooks work experience and leaves the occupational lives of Canadians "a country not considered." In the second, he reflects on the marginal status of the writer in Canadian society. Wayman argues that this

condition has been caused partly by colonial attitudes in academia, partly by a lack of public interest in books and reading, and partly by school and university curricula that have given students the impression that literature is "pointless, boring, or escapist" as well as quite unrelated to the "experiences of Canadians." In an appreciative essay on the work of two young Canadian poets, Sid Marty and Dale Zieroth, Wayman makes a not entirely convincing plea for the wider recognition of these two writers. For Wayman, Marty shows an admirable "mastery of descriptive detail" and speaks with clarity about the "life choices that tug at a North American man"; Marty has also spelled out his "acceptance of family joy and responsibility, of the dimensions of fatherhood." Zieroth, for his part, "takes an unflinching look at the tensions implicit in all life decisions, and especially those connected with marriage and parenting, employment, and the natural environment."

In two of his best essays, Wayman offers critical comments on the poetry Milton Acorn and Pablo Neruda. He sees Acorn as a pioneer in "the new writing about daily work," even though Acorn allowed himself to be perceived merely "as a solitary neglected artistic genius" and thus as one "sealed in the amber of his admirers' Romanticism." In the essay entitled "The Skin of the Earth: My Neruda," Wayman explains the strong influence that this radical poet has had on his own development as a writer. Although Neruda was a Communist and Wayman has long been a member of the proto-anarchist Industrial Workers of the World, the common ground between them is a belief that one's economic and political outlook can be integrated with poetics. Wayman explains that he tried to imitate the surrealism of Neruda's early work in his poem "Melancholy inside Organizations." Wayman also informs us that his own unconventional lines entitled

"Neil Watt's Poem" (which is about the life history of a 3/4" bolt used in an automotive assembly line) was inspired by Neruda's practice of writing with empathy about a common non-conscious object such as a human foot. (Wayman does not discuss a striking difference, however, between the two poems: whereas Neruda's poem about a foot is based on the reality of sensory experience, Wayman's expression of empathy with the bolt is essentially fantasy.) In two other essays, Wayman comments on the importance and relevance of what he refers to as the "new work writing" (i.e. poems that "celebrate how our work contributes to creating the society in which we all live and how our jobs shape our individual lives.")

Wayman's final essay, "Sitting by the Grave of Literary Ambition: Where I am Now in My Writing" is a whimsical, autobiographical reflection on his own process of maturation as a writer, written from the perspective of his mid-forties. Dead and buried, he tells us, is his idealistic social ambition to reform the conditions of daily work by creating a wide audience for his poetry and, through this audience, a critical awareness of the need "to democratize the hours we are employed." Dead also is his private ambition to find in his poems a means of personal "self-validation." The mature, wiser, and more Romantic Wayman has lesser expectations as he contemplates the world from the vantage point of his country estate. Like a latter-day Wordsworth, he hopes that poetry will continue to reveal rich veins of ideas for him to pursue and pledges to maintain his commitment to "certain forms and content" in his writing.

Wayman's general concern about the place of poets and the world of work in contemporary culture is not an unreasonable one, particularly as it relates to industrial conditions. What is missing in his argument is a discussion of the cultural sig-

nificance of post-industrial, “re-engineered” modes of work. This sort of employment calls for workers who are intelligent, versatile, numerate, and highly literate; it typically involves labour based on team-work, complex data-bases, information analysis, precise communication, and decentralized decision-making based on a worker’s general knowledge. The national culture that goes with this kind of employment is currently being formed, and its implications for poetry and even anarchist philosophy have yet to be spelled out. It is not impossible that this culture will require a radically new kind of school curriculum in which poetry will be taught as an integral part of what E.D. Hirsch has described as “cultural literacy.” In a post-industrial world, cultural literacy may be recognised as a defining characteristic of any competent knowledge worker. If necessity is the mother of invention, Wayman’s dream of a closer link between poetry and the world of work may yet come true.

Education & Women Today

Henry A. Giroux

Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education. Routledge \$19.95

Tania Modleski

Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a ‘Postfeminist’ Age. Routledge \$17.50

Reviewed by Steven Taubeneck

At least since 1989, the consequences of postmodernity have become visible across a range of cultures and institutions. With the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the various attacks on U.S. hegemony, the apparently fixed alignments of the last fifty years are under reconstruction. Different borders are being drawn, different assemblages are emerging, while education seems more out of step

and women face more pressure than ever. One key problem is the need for a new understanding of identity based on a sharper sense of the differences involved; yet there is almost complete disagreement over the best models to pursue. Henry Giroux and Tania Modleski enter the discussion highly critical of the contemporary situation. Though not everyone will agree with their assessments, their books also suggest important alternatives. For thinking about identity and difference, contemporary education and feminism, these are two of the most provocative studies available.

Giroux has worked, through a series of articles and books, to reform North American teacher education and public schools. Now his agenda has changed. He believes that journals and schools of education have ignored developments in other disciplines and become “increasingly irrelevant in addressing the key problems facing public schools, higher education, and the larger society.” He suggests that “wider movements in feminist theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism, cultural studies, literary theory, and in the arts are now addressing the issue of pedagogy within a politics of cultural difference that offers new hope for a deteriorating field.” Ultimately, he argues that “the concepts of democracy, border, borderlands, and difference must be rewritten so that diverse identities and cultures can intersect as sites of creative cultural production.”

To describe these movements more systematically and to elucidate the preferred concepts, the book is organized into two sections, each with an interview followed by four chapters on related topics. Giroux introduces the notion of “border pedagogy” by considering a number of post-colonial theorists and their ideas about “the language of history, power, and difference.” His argument is that if students “engage knowledge as border-crossers” in the classroom, they might help outside the class-

room to construct “a new type of politics, language, and subject, which would be both multiple and democratic.” The first section concludes by showing how ideas about identity and difference from feminism, modernism, and postmodernism can lead to a “decentering” of the canon and a rethinking of politics “beyond pluralism.” The second section extends the argument through a description of cultural studies, the “decolonization of the body,” and in-depth analyses of the film *Dirty Dancing* and paintings by Leon Golub.

Giroux wants to counter the arguments of “conservatives such as Allan Bloom, E.D. Hirsch, Diane Ravitch, Pat Buchanan, and Senator Jesse Helms” by “redefining pedagogy as a form of cultural politics and production.” He argues that “educational reformers and other cultural workers” should see the real purpose of their work against a broader set of social questions: “What kind of society do we want? How do we educate students for a truly democratic society?” While one can sympathize with these interests, two features obscure their presentation. The book would be strengthened by better editing of, for example, the commas that wander to the beginning of lines and the many spelling errors (“redundant,” “an” instead of “and”). And at many points the vocabulary becomes so shrill that one might too easily dismiss the argument as dogmatic. Throughout, but especially for example on pages 32–33, the words “must,” “needs to,” “cannot be,” and “should be” recur incessantly. Despite these problems, the book gives a useful overview of the developments in various disciplines and can be recommended for anyone interested in the reconstruction of education.

While less heavy-handed in her book *Feminism without Women*, Modleski has an equally critical argument: under the guises of “postfeminism” and an “anti-essentialist” approach, women are being delivered “back into a pre-feminist world.” Although

the “death knell” has been sounded for “the humanist notion of identity” by “poststructuralist writings,” she wonders “why women, much more so than any other oppressed groups of people have been so willing to yield the ground on which to make a stand against their oppression.” Above all, she emphasizes the situation of women as subjects. Confronted with changes in the notion of identity, Modleski seeks to preserve the basis for effective self-assertion and social improvements.

Modleski’s book is divided into three parts: “theory and methodology”; “masculinity and male feminism”; and the third on “race, gender, and sexuality.” The opening analyzes the consequences of postfeminism and anti-essentialism for feminist theory. She wants “to hold onto the category of woman while recognizing ourselves to be in the *process* (an unending one) of *defining and constructing the category*.” Her examples are drawn from theory and mass culture. She moves from an analysis of Manuel Puig’s novel *Kiss of the Spider Woman* and Jean Baudrillard’s theories of mass culture to a consideration of Janice Radway’s work on women’s romances and the theories of Stanley Fish, Annette Kolodny, and Jacques Derrida, in order to articulate the relation between women’s voices and bodies. Her point is that, despite the talk of postfeminism, “we have not come close to realizing the vision that would make the radical struggle possible.”

The second and third parts consider women’s roles in mass culture in light of gender and ethnic studies. For Modleski, a hasty commitment to the notion of “male feminism” may blind critics to “popular culture’s latest attempts to come to terms with feminism by appropriating it.” As examples of this appropriation, she describes “the misogyny at the heart of the warrior mentality” in war films; the “reconceptualization of the paternal role” in films such as *Three Men and a Baby*; the

“disavowal” of sexual difference in the case of Pee-wee Herman’s persona; and the depictions of race and gender in films such as *Gorillas in the Mist* or the *Lethal Weapon* series. She stresses that none of these has “*put into question the contempt for women that has been central*” to the patriarchal tradition. It is still necessary, therefore, to strive for “solidarity” in the face of women’s “common oppression.” Unfortunately, the presentation is also weakened by two problems: the disjunctive quality of the writing and the ambivalence of the ultimate recommendations. The examples proceed somewhat haphazardly, and the worries over anti-essentialism avoid a specific set of alternatives. Nevertheless, Modleski offers an insightful account of the difficulties facing feminists today.

In other words, both books can be recommended for those concerned with the effects of postmodernity on education and women. A response to their arguments might lead to even more creative suggestions.

Living in Nature

Sharon Butala

The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature. Harper Collins, \$22.95

Reviewed by Peter A. Taylor

Sharon Butala’s trilogy of Southwest Saskatchewan, *The Gates of the Sun* (1985), *Luna* (1988), and *The Fourth Archangel* (1992) treats of small-town ranching society from prosperity to the drought and depopulation. The present autobiographical exploration of self, nature, and community in the same region offers a rich experience for her readers as it displays knowledge matured into wisdom.

A divorced graduate student and university teacher, Butala married a middle-aged bachelor who had always lived on a remote

family ranch. After nearly two decades in urban academic life, she encountered difficulties and estrangements in adjusting to a harsh climate and the isolation of a new and close-knit community. She was deeply and surprisingly changed by the natural world of the ranch, its surroundings and its people. As Butala expresses it:

I came at last to understand my life as a part of, as a manifestation of, that larger life by which I felt myself to be surrounded. If, through nature, I came to understand more about my own life, I also came to understand more about life.

She at first felt uncomfortable among farm wives who worked as hard as their husbands, but seemed to identify only with the farm and their husbands and families. After the heady feminist challenges of the sixties and seventies, Butala felt increasingly isolated on the ranch, feeling inept at what rural women take for granted. Long walks into the high prairie that surround the ranch revealed the land and its creatures in intimate ways that led back into her childhood with nature. She had to learn from the example of her taciturn husband, her rural neighbours and from nature. She had begun, as her subtitle has it, her “apprenticeship in Nature.”

Complete with entries from her journals, she records, a dual training of the outer and the inner, a psychic quest that tapped into her childhood creativity. Keeping a journal reawakened her early interest in writing, which led her to seek a new language for both her inner quest and her outer experiences in the natural world. As her journals began to record a rich dream life, she used her dreams to understand her new experiences in nature, and her fiction to interpret both. Trying to interpret such dreams, she came to books that led far beyond her academic training. Curiously, the book offers a formal bibliography which lists Castenada, Jung and Thomas Merton along with books of history and geography like *The Plains*

Cree and Papers of the Paliser Expedition. She learned that European exploration had missed entirely her region of Saskatchewan and that it had been for native people a sacred place, as it was becoming for her. She came to trust the landscape itself to lead her on her daily walks: wild creatures would suddenly present themselves to her, and she began to find semicircles of rocks, lichen by the years, that marked sacred sites for native ceremonies. She found that natural forces were guiding her dreams, which in turn could explain her strange experiences in the natural world.

She admits, "for the urban world these things do not exist, don't happen, must be classified as madness or foolishness or romanticism." But the careful arrangement of her book reflects the shape of one kind of Romantic plot: regaining psychic health guided by natural powers, as in Wordsworth's *Prelude* which celebrates a similar return to nature in restoring health.

While she was serving her apprenticeship under the dual authority of her dream life and intimations from the natural world, Butala came to see how these define her identity as a woman. Strong female dream figures led her to see that much of the power of the natural world is feminine, and that women live their lives differently from men because they experience the world differently. She came to identify with farm wives and at the same time to urge a larger breadth of fulfilment for them. She has found a new freedom as woman, as farm wife, and as writer.

No longer alienated from the land or her community, she turns to the pressing social issue that she also explores in her fiction and her periodical essays: the decline of family farms under pressure from multinational agribusiness. She urges that those who treasure a life lived in nature be encouraged to remain and work it in ways that are in harmony with nature. Her final chapter, titled "The Perfection of the

Morning," with its edenic evocations, culminates in an earned, joyous prose lyric of affirmation and praise.

The Novelist as Poet

Kathleen Scherf, ed.

The Collected Poetry of Malcolm Lowry. UBC P
\$60.00

Reviewed by Paul Tiessen

In one of the many descriptions of bliss which Lowry posted from British Columbia to his friend Gerald Noxon in Ontario, Lowry began a letter like this: "Dear old Gerald:/Margie just went to town for a hairdo; I sit drinking coffee looking into a green sunrise with a howling gale from the north blowing an eagle a mile high down wind; gulls and wild ducks going the other way are caught in the teeth of it and a tern gives it up, is suddenly whirled a league to windward, considers joining the eagle. How the eagles fly in great circles. Nature is the most beautiful thing I ever saw in my life. Then a gibbous moon, waning, oddly comes up over Barnet, accompanied by Venus, burning mystical and mad seascape." Lowry, linking the Venus reference to Shelley's "Skylark," as read by T.S. Eliot, as reported in *Axel's Castle*, then gets in a light crack at Eliot: "Old fool! Too busy creaking around ruins (Margie said) the night before to know it was Venus as the morning star." Lowry then touches on Margie's (that is, his wife Margerie's) current writing, and runs through a lifetime of reading Joseph Conrad, before signing off to Gerald (his wife Betty, his son Nick): "We watch the post. Let us see you. Let us see you both. God bless you. God bless Betty. God bless Nick. And now the sun, terrific, a sign!/love from us both – Margie sends – Malcolm" (*Lowry/Noxon Letters*, 70-72; *The Letters of Malcolm Lowry and Gerald Noxon, 1940-1952*, published in 1988 by UBC Press).

Letters such as this one, written in February 1944, glance off some of the poems collected in Kathleen Scherf's monumental edition, *The Collected Poetry of Malcolm Lowry*. "The heagles how they fly in great circles!/Nature is one of the most beautiful/Things I ever saw in my life," are the opening lines of Lowry's 44-line poem, "Kraken, Eagles, in British Columbia" (number 140 in Scherf's edition). In "Happiness" (number 148 in Scherf) there are Venus, "the gibbous moon at sunrise," the eagles driven downwind, the terns blown backward, "A new kind of tobacco at eleven,/And my love returning on the four o'clock bus—."

The ecstasy and serenity in many of the Dollarton letters written by Lowry to Noxon from 1940 to 1944 end with the telegram announcing the June 1944 destruction of the Dollarton world (the peace, the pleasure, Lowry's first true home, many of the manuscripts) when fire razed the Lowrys' shack (*Lowry/Noxon Letters*, 92). The telegram appears as a little, 10-line poem, "Betty and Gerald Noxon" (number 446), in Scherf's edition; it is a combination of forced gaiety and suppressed pain, a record of shock and a statement of ominous foreboding. It ends: "you are saints please/do not dread." As a poem in Scherf's edition, and as a telegram to Gerald (whom Lowry called one of his best and only real friends in the world) and Betty Noxon, it more even than other poems or letters demonstrates just how right Scherf is in insisting on the deeply autobiographic quality of Lowry's poetry, from the poetically mundane and flat to the poetically exhilarating and great, from the pleasurably ecstatic to the bawdily rollicking to the grimly horrific.

Sometimes Lowry used his deeply poetic letters as a means of mounting his deeply personal poetry. Two stanzas of "The Canadian Turned Back at the Border" (the 80-line poem which is number 167 in

Scherf, and which is called "The Englishman Turned Back at the Border" in his letter to Noxon, pp. 35-36) lead Lowry to a bit of merry explication which, suddenly, ceases with his abrupt interjection, "My God, what brackish bilge is this. Thought it might make a good Venuti tune, Esquirish, however." For "Here him play" (number 449 in Scherf), Lowry tells Noxon of having found more of the kind of "bays and crannies" in British Columbia which the Lowrys liked to explore with him on his visits from Ontario. Lowry offers the romantic image of a lonely, ruined, four-story house at the top of a cliff which he and Margerie found near Dollarton, and in it there was a great wrecked fireplace and, on the top floor, a square grand piano. "You can imagine the strange chords that wind and rain must play there in the winter storms," he says to Noxon, and launches into the seven-line poem about that "sinister melody," those "weird chords" (*Lowry/Noxon Letters*, 57). On the same page Lowry's outrageous poem about what in 1943 he called "Donne's new pseudo popularity via Hemingway," mock-admiringly titled "Donne he's regular" (number 201 in Scherf), extends what for Lowry and Noxon was a conversation about a long list of contemporary and earlier poets and other writers, among whom, Lowry insisted, the voice of "a little Daylewis Auden poltergeist spending around somewhere in the isherwoods" Noxon should avoid in his own poetry (*Lowry/Noxon Letters*, 46).

That Lowry had trouble with the form of poetry, the discipline of getting "five-beat iambs" into fourteen lines appropriately related in a sonnet (see Aiken cited in Scherf, 11) was reflected in his lack of physical finesse (as Scherf says, quoting Norman Newton, 10) also with music, and with his body. Lowry made reference to the iambic when in 1940 he imagined a recipe for plotting, with Noxon, documentaries for the National Film Board of Canada: "you have

to struggle against the form but at the same time accept it much as a poet no fool for iambic pentameters but committed to them has to struggle with them and against them" (*Lowry/Noxon Letters*, 32). He never had opportunity to work with Noxon at the NFB, because Noxon ran into trouble with John Grierson, but in other writing for film certainly worked against conventional form, all the while glorying in the image. So in his poetry; the image is blistering and raw here, haiku-like there, then suddenly mocking or absurd.

Of course, and as Scherf strongly underlines and illustrates in her introduction, the poems are in conversation also with much of Lowry's prose work, and with the inner and outer conditions of his entire life, not just what he shared with Noxon. To provide elaboration on these poems in an 86-page "Explanatory Annotation" section, Scherf has invited the participation of Christopher Ackerley in her project. He provides a richly-textured and comprehensive guide in his meticulously detailed commentary, reminiscent of his and L. Clipper's 1984 work in *A Companion to Under the Volcano*. These poems from the 1920s to the 1950s are themselves such a "companion," just as they are testimony to Lowry's considerable achievement in his life-long quest to establish himself as a poet.

Malcolm Lowry, by what he produced but did not necessarily publish in his lifetime (1909-1957), invited large-scale excavation and construction projects with his work, among which Scherf's edition is exemplary. Lowry was a fabulous word-spinner who often hoarded his words and sometimes, growing careless, lost them. In Canada, from George Woodcock (and others) in the 1950s on, Lowry the loser of manuscripts has been followed and even pursued, at whatever distance, by finders of his work, and these people – like Scherf – have in recent years made more and more of Lowry available to us. So much of what

Lowry left behind after his death he left in Canada, in his shack, on the beach at Dollarton, or with friends, and so it is not surprising that many Canadian scholars (with the help especially of the UBC archive) have been foremost among those involved in the (re)construction of the Lowry corpus. Lowry lived in Canada, mainly at Dollarton, British Columbia, from 1939 to 1954, during most of his productive life.

Scherf's volume complements other developments in the past five or six years, during which time scholars have brought to published light book-length manuscripts not only of Lowry's 1940-52 correspondence with the Canadian writer Gerald Noxon but also of Lowry's 1949-50 film-script adaptation of Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, and his 1929-54 correspondence with the American writer Conrad Aiken. About to appear in 1994-95 is an edition based on the completed typescript of Lowry's early (1940) version of his *Under the Volcano*, an edition based on various drafts of his novel *La Mordida*, and a multi-volume *Collected Letters*. In 1993-94 there appeared, too, Gordon Bowker's 672-page biography of Lowry, *Pursued by Furies*, and Norman Amor's 235-page bibliographical checklist of work concerning Lowry, which is an extension of William New's 1978 and J. Howard Woolmer's 1983 bibliographies.

Of course, Canadian poet and UBC professor Earle Birney was among those from Lowry's Vancouver/Dollarton world who worked hard to give Lowry a new life after 1957, and among his incredibly energetic efforts was his placing of more than 100 of Lowry's poems in journals in the 1960s and his and Margerie Lowry's edition of *Selected Poems of Malcolm Lowry*, published by City Lights Books in San Francisco in 1962. But this edition of seventy-one poems is not only tiny compared to Scherf's, but rather flawed from a scholar's perspective. For example (as Scherf shows), Birney

(with co-editor Margerie Lowry) imposed his own structure on Lowry's overall plan for his work, and made emendations to some poems, thus hoping to "improve" them, but offered no editorial details of the changes to readers. Scherf has undone the Birney errors (while remaining aware of Birney's immense contribution in the salvaging of Lowry from self-inflicted and other ravages to his corpus) and has laid bare an immense new body of often outstanding achievement which will alter and enlarge again our reading of this novelist who was a poet.

Picture Books

Phoebe Gilman

Jillian Jiggs to The Rescue. North Winds Press
\$13.95

Burt Konzak, Johnny Wales (Ill.)

Noguchi The Samurai. Lester Publishing Ltd.
\$16.95

Patricia Quinlan, Janet Wilson (Ill.)

Tiger Flowers. Lester Publishing Ltd. \$16.95

Mora Skelton, Janet Wilson (Ill.)

The Baritone Cat. Lester Publishing Ltd. \$16.95

Reviewed by J.R. Wytenbroek

Fear and emotional hurt seem to be the underlying themes of four picture books recently released. Whether it is the fear of monsters or the fear of bullies, the fears are those that every child can relate to in some way. The emotional pain of loss and the needs that accompany a sense of loss are also explored. All four books effectively portray these emotions in ways that children will understand.

Perhaps the best of the selection above is the thoughtfully written and beautifully illustrated book *Tiger Flowers*. Concentrating on the death of a loved uncle from AIDS, Quinlan's story is both compassionate and realistic. The death of the uncle Michael is described through the eyes of his

young nephew, who knows nothing about stereotypes and prejudice. He has an uncle with whom he does a lot of enjoyable things, and whom he loves. When Michael becomes ill and dies, Joel's grief is real and immediate. So are his happy memories.

The only fault with this story is that it is, in places, a little obvious. The book would have been much better, for example, if the story had concluded one page before it actually does. However, this weakness is minor compared to the general excellence of the story and its sensitive handling of a delicate and difficult issue. The pictures by Janet Wilson are beautiful and evocative of the feelings expressed by the characters in the novel. The backgrounds in each picture are detailed, perfect settings for the happiness or pain of the characters at the forefront of both drawings and words. This is a superb picture book for any child, and it is particularly helpful for children trying to come to terms with the loss of a loved one, whatever the cause. In a world where this reality is all too immediate for many children, this book is both sensitive and timely.

Another book which centres on a particular problem is the irreverent *Jillian Jiggs to The Rescue*, by Phoebe Gilman. However, here fun and nonsense are the order of the day, as Jillian helps her sister Rebecca come to terms with her fear of monsters. The story is in rhyme, which gives it a rollicking quality. The solution indicates truly imaginative thinking and is completely satisfying. The pictures, as usual, are wonderful. Gilman's use of vivid colours and intricate detail in each scene make the book a visual feast and enhance the text in many ways. *Jillian Jiggs to The Rescue* is lighthearted fun but solves a typical childhood fear in a believably madcap manner.

Konzak's *Noguchi The Samurai* too features a serious tone. Konzak is a karate sensei, or teacher, and here tells the sort of story that teaches martial arts' students the importance of non-violent solutions, when

possible. It is a story of how an elderly samurai non-violently defeats a younger samurai who is a bully. It is cleverly told and is very evocative of the Japanese culture as well as martial arts' traditions. Unfortunately, Wales's art does not do the story justice. Drawn in an exaggerated yet somewhat abstract style, the pictures do not always match the action. Most of the faces are distorted, thus making all the characters, except for the protagonist, look shifty, deformed or wicked, although only the antagonist matches any of these descriptions. The emotions of the other characters described in the text are not often clearly portrayed by the pictures. This mismatch of picture and story is a real shame in a book with so strong a storyline.

Also mismatched are the pictures and

story in Skelton's *The Baritone Cat*, illustrated by Janet Wilson. Here, however, it is the story which is weak and the art work which is strong. Wilson's pictures show the same strength, sensitivity and attention to detail and emotion here as they did in *Tiger Flowers*. Her people are very real, with all their range of emotions, while her cats are alternatively cuddly, ferocious, aloof and afraid according to the text. Wilson depicts Sam, the hero, as a real cat with all his unpredictable moods and needs. Skelton has not decided whether Sam is cat or human. Throughout the story he shifts back and forth, until he becomes neither. Despite its important topic of loss of home and love, this book is a waste of some really excellent and telling artwork.

Contributors

Alan **Brown** lives in Powell River; Lorna **Crozier** in Saanichton; Danine **Farquharson** in St. Johns; Dean J. **Irvine** in Victoria; James **Lowell** in Needham, MA; Christopher **Patton** in Brooklyn, NY; Harold **Rhenisch** in 108 Mile Ranch, BC; Robert **Steckling** in Scarborough; Betsy **Struthers** in Peterborough.

Christian **Bok** and Norman **Ravvin** live in Toronto; John F. **Hulcoop**, Susan **MacFarlane** and Russell **Thornton** in Vancouver.

Evelyn **Cobley** teaches at the University of Victoria; Peter **Cumming** at the University of Western Ontario; Arnold E. **Davidson** at Duke University; Tom **Hastings** at York University; Philip **Holden** at the National Institute of Education in Singapore; Lorna Marie **Irvine** at George Mason University; Hildegard **Kuester** at the University of Augsburg; Maurice **Lebel** at the Université Laval; Lisa **Pottie** at the University of Toronto; William J. **Scheik** at the University of Texas at Austin; James **Steele** at Carleton University; Penny **Van Toorn** at the University of Sydney; J.R. **Wytenbroek** at Malaspina College.

Doug **Aoki**, Guy **Beauregard**, Deborah **Blenkhorn**, John Xiros **Cooper**, Susan **Fisher**, Jenifer K. **Hood**, Wanda **Kelley**, André **Lamontagne**, Patricia **Merivale**, John Z. **Ming Chen**, Joshua S. **Mostow**, Miguel **Mota**, Peter **Petro**, Alain-Michel **Rocheleau**, Judy Z. **Segal**, Steven **Taubeneck**, and Peter A. **Taylor** study and/or teach at the University of British Columbia; Shyamal **Bagchee**, Dale **Blake**, Tim **Heath**, I. S. **MacLaren**, Robert James **Merrett** and Aritha **Van Herk** at the University of Alberta; James **Doyle**, and Paul **Tiessen** at Wilfrid Laurier University.

... is at the forefront of contemporary research in the humanities. It has considerably contributed to the spreading of free inquiry, open debate, and cultural pluralism. Thomas Pavel (Princeton)

... is indispensable. I learn from every issue and the review articles and surveys of various questions and fields are as valuable as the new work it publishes. Ross Chambers (Michigan)

... consistently contributes cool reason to global and local critical debates. Here is cultural diversity presented with necessary rigour to provide a solid foundation for genuine cross-cultural research. Since its inception in the early 1970s it has been a distinguished journal for the expression of the urgent debates which have buffeted the humanities. Sneja Gunew (Victoria)

... plays an important role in the international dialogues between the East and West, between literary theory and scholarship. ... it has become one of the best journals in the field. Wang Ning (Beijing)

Some Contributors:

Marc Angenot	Claude Bremond	Ross Chambers
Yves Chevrel	Jonathan Culler	Lubomir Dolezel
Keir Elam	Earl E. Fitz	Douwe Fokkema
Lilian Furt	Frederick Garber	Albert Gérard
Gerald Gillespie	Thomas M. Greene	Suzette A. Henke
Michael Holquist	Linda Hutcheon	Elrud Ibsch
Alvin Kerman	Wladimir Kryninski	Harry Levin
Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani		Félix Martinez-Bonati
Brian McHale	Henri Mitterand	Clément Moisan
Virgil Nemoianu	Thomas Pavel	Timothy Reiss
Henry H. Remak	Marie-Laure Ryan	Siegfried J. Schmidt
Cecile Chu-Chin Sun	Darko Suvin	Mario Valdés
Wang Ning	Jean Weisgerber	Ulrich Weisstein
Rawdon Wilson	Linda Woodbridge	Paul Zumthor

The *Review* is published four times each year (one issue per year is devoted to a "Review of Scholarship," with articles and bibliographies on topics dealing with recent developments in literary scholarship). Circulation is approx. 600. The journal publishes book reviews and topical issues. For example, *Literatures of Lesser Diffusion* [Ethnic Minority Writing] (1989); *Narrative, Narrative Theory, Drama: The Renaissance* (1991); and *Reading the Signs* [Gay and Lesbian Writing] (1994). Some planned special issues: postcolonial literatures, literature and film, hypertext and virtual reality in contemporary culture, cyborgs and literature, Comparative Literature as a discipline, schizoanalysis and literature, and others. The journal also publishes books in its *Library* series (Wilfrid Laurier University Press).

Manuscripts should be sent directly to the editor (M.V. Dimić, Research Institute for Comparative Literature, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada, T6G 2E6 (Ph.: 403 492-4776; Fax: 403 492-5662; E-mail: stotosy@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca) in three paper copies. Submissions must follow the MLA parenthetical documentation/works cited format. Upon acceptance the contribution should be submitted on computer diskette.

Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue
Canadienne de Littérature Comparée

CCLA/ACLC MEMBERSHIP FORM /
INSTITUTIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Date _____
NAME (Institution or Individual): _____

ADDRESS (Institution or Individual): _____

Member, Canadian Comparative Literature Association / Association Canadienne de Littérature Comparée: Dues January to December: Regular Member US\$37.00/Can\$40.00; Student/Under-Unemployed/Retired US\$18.00/Can\$20.00; Joint Membership US\$47.00/Can\$50.00; Life Member US\$360.00/Can\$375.00. The membership also includes membership in the International Comparative Literature Association / Association Internationale de Littérature Comparée, subscription to the *Canadian Review / Revue Canadienne, Comparative Literature in Canada / La Littérature Comparée au Canada Newsletter*, the *International Comparative Literature Association Bulletin*, and the *Literary Research / Recherche littéraire Newsletter*. Tax deductible donations are welcome and receipts will be sent to donors by the University of Alberta.

INSTITUTION:
For one Year (Four Issues) US\$62.00/Can\$64.50
US\$/Can\$

MEMBER, CCLA/ACLC (Overseas members please add US\$5.00): US\$/Can\$

Single issues US\$15.00/Can\$17.00
US\$/Can\$

Issues of the journal (since 1989) are also available on IBM diskettes at US\$10.00/Can\$12.00
US\$/Can\$

INSTITUTIONAL SUBSCRIBERS please mail this form to Journals Division, University of Toronto Press, 5201 Dufferin Street, Downsview, Ontario, Canada M3H 5T8; Ph.: (416) 667-7838; Fax: (416) 667-7832; E-mail: corrigan@gpu.utcc.utoronto.ca. CCLA/ACLC MEMBERS please mail this form, together with your cheque or money order (payable to the Canadian Comparative Literature Association / Association Canadienne de Littérature Comparée) to Dr. Richard Cavell, Department of English, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z1; Ph.: (604) 822-5046; Fax: (604) 822-6906