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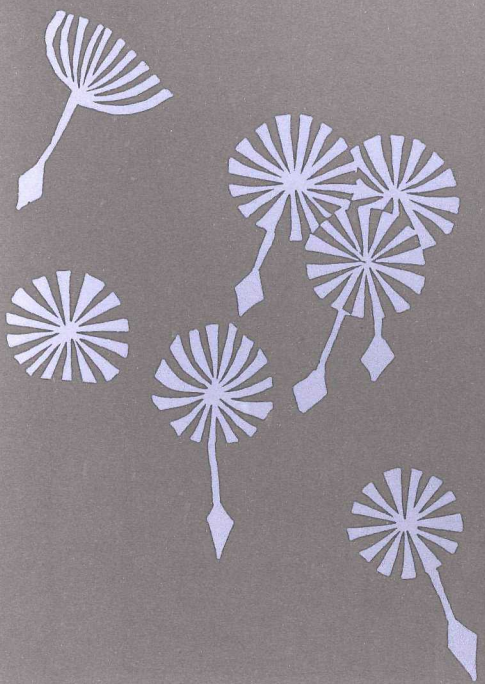

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Call for Submissions

Canadian Literature invites contributions to a forthcoming special issue on the state of the art in Canadian Poetry and poetics. Potential topics include poetry and the other media, poetry and paradigms of reality, poetry and politics, poetry and the state (especially funding), poetic regionalism/nationalism/internationalism, translation (the practice of, the impact of), influences/presences from elsewhere/abroad, contemporaries and/in the canon, the role of institutions (schools, small presses, little magazines, creative writing programmes), the poetry marketplace, innovations and outsiders, why I write/read poetry.

Canadian Literature also invites submissions for a special issue on aspects of censorship in Canadian literature. Topics to be covered may include broader political, ideological, and historical contexts, as well as the impact of censorship on the reception of individual texts, authors, groups of authors. For both special issues, contributions may be scholarly, critical, personal, or polemical, and may range in length from a page or two to about 25 pages (including notes and references). The deadline for submissions for both issues is the end of May, 1997.

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Opinions & Notes

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Editorial

In a way, this editorial puts the cart before the horse. It introduces *Canadian Literature*'s new crew not only well after their names first appeared on the masthead last fall, but also after the new associate editors, Margery Fee and Iain Higgins, have each contributed editorials which admirably illustrate the intellectual energy they have already brought to the journal. Together with Laurie Ricou, who agreed to be Acting Editor (in addition to his arduous duties as Associate Dean of Graduate Studies), Margery and Iain's collegiality permitted me to go on leave, and this is a welcome opportunity to thank all three for their generosity.

In a reflection, published in *Canadian Literature* 148, on Canada's status as "imagined community" after the Quebec referendum, Margery Fee demonstrates the intersections of history and linguistics that make her research unique. To her task as reviews editor, she brings expertise in Commonwealth and postcolonial writing, in the history of English in Canada (with a special emphasis on Quebec English), and in questions of lexicography and usage. Her work on institutional aspects of teaching Canadian literature has been particularly influential and, judging by the number of citations it has generated, appears to have almost single-handedly launched a field of research. As poetry editor, Iain Higgins draws not only on his broad knowledge of Canadian, American, and European (especially Eastern European) poetry and cultural history, but also on his own love for, and accomplished skill in, the rich complexities of language: his meditation, in number 149, on *Canadian Literature*'s traditional commitment to the study of poetry and poetics also reads like a personal credo. Possessed of a Celtic sense of irony that can be as challenging as Laurie Ricou's straight-faced prairie humour, Iain furthermore specializes in travel-writing from Mandeville to the present in research which complements Margery's focus on imperialist rhetoric and my own interest in intersections of literature and the visual arts. We have agreed that we will take turns writing editorials

for the journal. Occasionally, we will sing as a trio (discordant or harmonious, as the case may be) by looking at an issue together. As well, we plan to invite guest editors from time to time. As of this issue, we will also be able to draw on the advice of an editorial board, and we thank the national and international scholars who have accepted our invitation.

Although we all enter this new phase in the thirty-seven-year old history of the journal with considerable enthusiasm, we could not have begun our work at a worse time in publishing. As I write, massive cutbacks in government grants have forced Coach House Press (surely one of Canada's most important avant-garde presses and producer of some exquisitely designed books) to stop publishing, despite its successful efforts in recent years to turn into a "for-profit business" with innovative marketing and distribution strategies, the emphatic support of the Canada Council, and the passionate intervention of the literary community who celebrate the "courage and talent" of Coach House Press as "things that can't be measured by bookkeepers," as one of many dismayed and angry letters to the *Globe and Mail* put it (see *Globe and Mail* of July 16, 17, and 20, 1996 for coverage.) Including books by Brossard, Laferrière, LePage and Verdecchio, the fall 1996 list (which will now have to be published elsewhere) demonstrates, among other things, the commitment of the press to writing from Québec and to multi-cultural writing. Furthermore, Alberto Manguel had launched an international programme which featured translations of experimental writing by Duras, Cortázar, and others. In other words, the press provided a generous corrective to the intellectual parochialism that the rise of narrowly defined nationalisms and the currently advocated flag-waving may easily produce. As such, Coach House was instrumental in mapping out "a new 'imagined community' that really works," to quote Margery Fee once again. The press was not, as the Ontario government appears to have concluded, a dispensable luxury.

Ever closer to home, scholarly journals depending on the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada have been threatened with cuts so extensive that if they are ever fully implemented, they will spell the end for many of these publications. It is thanks to the swift action and intensive lobbying of the Canadian Association of Learned Journals and the Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada that a disaster has been averted, at least for the time being. The journals have had to make concessions to survive, and they may have to make many more. One of the more daunting prospects is the probability that, in near future,

editors will have to be trained accountants to satisfy the exigencies of politicians such as the one who concluded that the demise of Coach House signalled their inability to "compete in the marketplace" and "probably speaks to their management abilities" ("Publisher poorly run Harris says," *Globe and Mail* July 17, 1996). Another, more ambivalent, development concerns the increasing tendency of funding agencies to measure publications in the humanities against conventions and standards applied in the sciences and social sciences, apparently without recognition that the humanities march to a very different drummer indeed. Thus, journals specializing in literary criticism will be as concerned as their fund-givers to publish work of outstanding quality. They will also agree that standardized criteria are important to establish "accountability" and, at the same time, satisfy tenure and promotions committees. However, there must also be room for the unquantifiable, for the type of opinion, polemic, and reflection that cuts across divisions generated by scholarly specialization and career advancement.

In an essay on the cultural function of magazine publications in Canada, Ioan Davies comes to the depressing conclusion that specialized academic journals rarely participate in the conceptualization of Canadian culture and, at best, serve the function of reference guides. I disagree with this contention as much as I do with Davies' definition of "theory and creativity" (5) as inherently incompatible with writing in the daily press or in journals, like *Canadian Literature*, which have been known to leave their lofty pedestal to address themselves to "high schools and the 'general public'" (15). I do however think that Davies unintentionally paints a picture of the dismal things to come, if the autonomy of the humanities is not respected and if, as Timothy Findley puts it in support of Coach House, "[t]he pressures of the corporate vision of 'everything that moves is ours to manipulate' [become] overwhelming." The prospect that Findley rightly fears must be resisted, and *Canadian Literature* will do its share. E-M.K.

WORKS CITED

Davies, Ioan. "Theory and Creativity in English Canada's Magazines, the State and Cultural Movement." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 30.1 (Spring 1995): 5-19.

Ken Babstock

Authority

This chill is unmistakeably autumn, that
pinching hint of the first gust to strip
boughs, streetlights wear a cut-glass
halo and hum
as you pass. At this hour,
cabbies get reckless, the long, lemon
sedan leaning
a bend, betting on empty streets, shudder
and squeal as it straightens,
moving off—

We have shuffled our lives
to somewhere north of wanting
each other. Used
distance as anodyne. Pared
it all down to these grim-lipped
take cares on flint-grey paper. I've
just finished a longish letter
and am walking it off—

pacing the areas
mapped out for toddlers and well-trained
dogs. The blue cruisers can be seen
in the least likely precincts, prowling
past hedges, inching down backstreets,
roof lights itching to burst.
The alarms are set all over
the neighbourhood
and the cops
creep deeper into silence
as if they were on to something.

Elizabeth Brewster

Forerunners
(Gloss on four lines by George Herbert)

"The harbingers are come. See, see their mark.
White is their color, and behold my head.
But must they have my brain? Must they dispark
Those sparkling notions, which therein are bred?"
—HERBERT

Before the king comes, he sends messengers.
Tyrant or liberator, which is he?
How judge the message that the postman brings?
Promise or threat? true? false? ambiguous?
Loveletter or a summons to a trial?
Light before sunrise, shadows before the dark,
leaf-fall before the winter, floods in spring—
all seasonal changes act as prophecy
of how life works towards its destiny.
The harbingers are come. See, see, their mark.

Ah, yes, I see their mark, their many marks:
Wrinkles and liver spots and swollen veins,
skin cancers, aching muscles, brittle bones.
Once I could walk all day, but now I gasp
trudging uphill with groceries; and at night
the petty ailments cluster round my bed.
Yet still at least I read, I write, I think,
and climb the mountain ranges of my mind,
though leprous angels mark me for the dead.
White is their color, and behold my head.

Nature gave all, the harbingers might say.
It is their duty now to take all back:
eyes, ears, blood, heart, breath, beauty, bone.
Life was a loan, one well worth having,
but not an outright gift. Who can complain?
They would be just to say so. Out of the dark
earth I came, and must return
those minerals and moisture to its depths.
Before they return they seal me with death's mark.
But must they have my brain? Must they dispark

the creatures of my mind before I die,
shadows that play in forests of my dreams
or laze in pastures of my memory?
Poems are deer, wild creatures, but beloved,
sometimes half-tamed, nibbling at green in gardens,
willing with homely lettuce to be fed.
Reason is soil itself, and rhyme is water.
Wit is a flame, bursting from sullen coal.
May I not keep within my dying head
Those sparkling notions which therein are bred?

Klaus Martens

Nixe On The River
Felix Paul Greve In Bonn (1898-1901)

Accounts of the life and work of the Canadian writer Frederick Philip Grove (FPG) *alias* the German writer and translator Felix Paul Greve remain tantalizingly incomplete. These accounts include Grove's own published autobiographies, *A Search for America* (SFA) and *In Search of Myself* (ISM), as well as those of his critics. Following the findings and disclosures of D.O. Spettigue and Desmond Pacey (with J.C. Mahanti) regarding Grove's German family background and career, much remained to be clarified. Since then, a number of researchers have succeeded in filling in various blanks in Greve's biography. Significant portions, however, remain unclear or entirely obscured, such as Greve's childhood and school-years in Hamburg, aspects of the Johanneum period (1897-8), time spent in Rome and Munich, and his work for J.C.C. Bruns and other publishers.

Here, I shall concentrate on Greve's years as a student in Bonn (1898-1901), about which little is known.[1] Knowledge about this period in Grove's life may help untangle the knot of autobiographical narrative strands of the first half of ISM and parts of SFA and thus contribute to an increased understanding of Grove's method of interweaving fact and fiction.

While discussing Greve's translation of Wilde's *Intentions*, Spettigue, who has also recorded the available data of FPG's attendance at Bonn's Friedrich-Wilhelms-University, points out that Greve may have been inspired by "the hedonistic milieu he had encountered in some group of avant-garde students in Bonn, stimulated no doubt by the George reading, which apparently made a significant, if not profound, impression on him" (1973: 87).

Here as elsewhere the critic makes shrewd guesses, often, however, unwittingly conflating disparate events and unproven assumptions. For instance, I found that there was indeed a group of students to which Greve belonged. An influential poetry reading also occurred but not, as the critic has it, by George (Spettigue 1973: 58). Grove, in *ISM*, and Spettigue agree that FPG must have owned a boat (Spettigue 1973: 86). In fact, he owned more than one, but not in Hamburg. In addition, we now know about matters such as Greve's first Bonn lodgings "on Dreieck Street," about the duration of the summer and winter semesters (May to August, October to March), and we have also obtained, by way of illustration, a glimpse of the university's main building and the "chestnut trees" in front of it. But where else did Felix live in Bonn and what did he do when he was not attending classes? Spettigue also usefully lists some of the courses he took and mentions Greve's mysterious "defection since the fall of 1900" which the university's authorities had retrospectively "acknowledged to be a permissible leave of absence" (1973: 49-50).

Then, understandably preoccupied with Greve's 1903 trial for fraud, Spettigue speculates on Greve's behaviour to help explain his absence from the university: "But had his conduct been blameless? A matter of taste, perhaps, but there were rumours that Felix had gone a little wild even by college standards" (1973: 50). What were these standards, these rumours? The biographer does not say, but speculates about them using statements about Greve's spending made at his trial and paraphrased in the newspapers, quoting two statements which the critic himself considers not very reliable (1973: 95-96). Again, in the light of later developments—Greve's work on Wilde and Gide and his suspected homosexual relationship with his friend Herman Kilian—the critic assumes that "Felix's defection from Bonn in the late fall of 1900 had a specific cause, namely, the news of the final collapse and, on the night of November 30, the death of Wilde in Paris" (1973: 58). Inevitably, considering the paucity of sources available, Spettigue felt he had no choice but to be "led into speculation" and to be guided by "the thin narrative of events discernible from the von Poellnitz correspondence" (1973: 91). Today, in addition to Greve's correspondence with the Insel Verlag's manager, von Pöllnitz, we know a little more about the young author's relations with other publishers, notably with J.C.C. Bruns (Martens 1996). Spettigue thought that the Bruns papers might be "invaluable" but believed them lost (Spettigue 1973: 107). Although it is not true, as Knönagel somewhat rashly asserts, that "Spettigue's discovery raised more questions

than it answered" (1989: 63)—and Knönagel himself fails to provide significant additional answers—Spettigue's accounts from 1969 and 1973, much like Grove's own, are themselves in need of discussion and explanation.

Suffice it to say that, although much else has been uncovered since the groundbreaking initial discoveries regarding the identity of Grove and Greve—particularly the publication of the "Baroness Elsa" papers (Hjartarson / Spettigue 1992) and the discovery of Greve's correspondence with Gide and a number of German authors (Spettigue 1992), many other points remain to be cleared up or are in need of reformulation. My essay, based on new and unpublished evidence, is intended as a contribution to help answer some of these questions. It does, moreover, provide the first and only account of Greve's personal life and much of his social life during the crucial period in Bonn.

In Transit

Felix Paul Greve arrived in Bonn during the first days of April, 1898. He was entered as a student in the Philosophische Fakultät on April 20, 1898, after paying to the bursar the registration fee of 25.40 marks. Provided with sizeable sums of stipend money, he presented himself to the Bonn students not only in a new suit and tie but also as a new man: proficient in the modern and ancient languages, young, successful, well-heeled. No one would have suspected his lowly origins. *Incipit vita nova.* He would be welcomed as a desirable addition to the higher strata of town and gown. Indeed, at that very time of year, certain groups of academics were out looking for suitable additions to their circles. Greve, too, was on the lookout, and thus he was found.

Rhenus

The cover of a booklet, privately printed in Cologne (1898), bears the Greek motto ARISTON MEN ΥΔΩΡ in capital letters above the intertwined initials T and R, followed by an exclamation mark. It is the coat of arms of an arms-bearing fraternity,[2] a so-called *"Waffentragende Verbindung,"* with (water-)sports as the focus of its activities. The booklet, entitled *Semester Bericht des A.R.C. Rhenus,* contains the semi-annual report of a Bonn academic fraternity, the rowing-club ARC Rhenus on the banks of the River Rhine, for the summer semester (April to July) of 1898. Entries were made at irregular intervals by club members elected to various offices, taking turns each semester. Among these offices were those of the treasurer, the

head of the committee on boats, and the four positions filled by members elected to take charge of the club for the semester, which I shall discuss later. The entries in the log consist of summary accounts of social and sporting events, the minutes of various meetings, reports on rowing events, festive occasions, outings, accounts of the club's income, records of gifts and trophies given and received, reports on admissions and expulsions, and so on.

In the spring of 1898, ARC Rhenus proudly announced to its "inactive" members (senior members in good standing of usually more than four or five semesters in Bonn and close to their exams) and alumni (or *Alte Herren*)—mostly men with their exams well behind them—that the club had entered the new semester with the record number of eleven new *Füchse* (foxes, or new members on probation). Among the newcomers, entered into the club's membership rolls as No. 119, was "Felix Greve, stud. phil, 1. Semester, aus Hamburg." Other freshmen listed include students named Arnold Cappenberg and Hans Lomberg. There was a straggler, already entering his third semester, who was registered as No. 124 on May 13, 1898. This was "Hermann Kilian, stud. rer. nat., aus Dresden." Herman (he used the English spelling of his first name) F.C. Kilian's grandfather, Dr. Herman Friedrich Kilian (1800-1863), a professor at Bonn University, had been a renowned gynaecologist, proficient in several languages. In addition to a large body of original work published in his field, he had translated medical works from the English and Russian. There was literary talent in the family. Thus it may be surmised that one of the things that may have attracted Greve and Kilian to each other was their easy mastery of English and their interest in literary matters, an interest considered ungentlemanly at the time. In addition, photographs showing both Kilian and Greve make it plain that Kilian, a tall and somewhat sombre-looking man, sporting a drooping moustache, a tweed-cap and a suit in the English style, made much of his English family relatives, whom Greve was later to graft onto his own family tree. If Kilian surrounded himself with the third-hand aura of literature and foreign descent, Greve used literature to win friends and influence people. Translation would do for Greve what it had done for Kilian's grandfather.

When Frederick Philip Grove, many years later, created his fictional autobiographies, he "translated" himself into a semblance of the enviable German-Scots ancestry of his former friend Kilian by making his mother, a "lowly" Bertha Reichentrog, into what he considered the more reputable

"Rutherford." Some parts of *In Search of Myself,* where we read of Grove's purported travel with "Uncle Rutherford" to St. Petersburg and other regions of Russia (ISM 147; 151), may have been derived from Kilian's stories about his well-travelled grandfather. There were other sources to be tapped among Rhenus members, as we shall see. In a further effort at belated biographical *translatio* Grove also appropriated some of the reputation of Kilian's maternal grandfather; as Lord Rutherfurd Clark was an eminent jurist, this act must have seemed to Grove, a convicted felon, a form of poetic justice.

Felix Greve, just arrived from Hamburg, had now almost instantly found a haven among a new and exclusively male "family" of mostly dedicated sportsmen eager to test their intellectual and physical prowess and to distinguish themselves among young men of equal ambitions. What could have been more useful to a nineteen-year-old from the lower classes but of no modest means just graduated from the renowned Johanneum? Of course, there were other fraternities. But it would have been impossible for someone like Greve to join Bonn's most prominent fraternity, the Borussia, which counted the Emperor among its illustrious alumni, and was soon to accept the Crown Prince into its membership. The Borussia fraternity was exclusively for the sons of royalty, of noblemen and the lesser gentry, of diplomats and other rich and influential people. One of these was the turn-of-the-century collector and connoisseur of art, Harry Graf Kessler, famous even at that time. Count Kessler—like Felix Greve and also like the patron of the arts, Aby Warburg of the Hamburg dynasty of bankers—was a Johanneum alumnus. Kessler was involved in the publication of *Pan,* a major journal of literature and the arts, but also in the founding of *Insel* magazine. Is it possible that Felix Greve did not know about the Count whose family was on intimate terms with Bismarck and members of the Imperial family?[3] In fact, it appears to me that Grove's account of his fictional "mother's" travels all over Europe, the distinguished international social circles that he claimed she moved in, and the attractions her drawing-room allegedly held for such composers as Mahler and Brahms may have been derived from Count Kessler's autobiographical writings (ISM 80-81). As to a Borussia membership, Kessler confirms that "financial independence" was essential.

A Rhenus membership was less expensive. Like any other new member, Felix Greve had to deposit 400 goldmarks as security.[4] This, a very sizeable sum, was about a fourth of his considerable income, but he apparently felt

that he could (and should) afford it. In addition, Rhenus' dedication to sports apparently made it possible for a former social outsider like Greve to join, making up in performance what he lacked in real wealth and social standing. Indeed, the very fact that Felix Greve had been a student at the *Realschule* and the *Realgymnasium* in Hamburg, before entering the *Gelehrtenschule des Johanneums*, prepared him for Rhenus. Almost all Rhenus members were either active in practical pursuits or preparing for them. They were doctors, engineers, teachers, pharmacists, and lawyers. Three tobacco planters and overseas traders were also among them. Thus Felix Greve's intended path in life was, at this point, already expressed in his choice of fraternity, a choice which in the ordinary course of things would have determined his career. He later wrote: "Since university 'standing' has become the prerequisite for position in the hierarchy of the state, the institute has become too large and unwieldy; within the student body social distinctions define themselves as rigidly as they do elsewhere" (ISM 160).

We cannot help but realise the evident dichotomy—never to be resolved—between Greve's scholarly preparation and his academic and social ambitions. Indeed, one reason for Felix Greve's reckless spending even then is evident in his good fortune in coming into sums of money larger than any he (or anybody else in his family) had been used to handle, and also in his aspiration to an elevated status in society (the imaginary boyhood among the minor landed gentry in Grove's *In Search of Myself* would have prepared him for exactly such a position). His exemplary performance at school encouraged him to reach for the stars. As yet, he did not use his academic preparation for the prodigious work he was to accomplish later as an author and translator. Instead, his years at school helped him project the image of an independently wealthy man-of-letters. Young Felix Greve, it appears, had fallen victim to the widespread "romantic" image of the writer rising by sheer effort from lowly beginnings to a glamorous place in society. If this was the case, then Greve did not realise that among his contemporaries almost all great careers in letters and sciences were securely built on comfortable family incomes, especially among the members of the Berlin and Munich circles whom he was to join, including Stefan George himself. Felix Greve's essential innocence in the ways of the world of literature combined with the triple windfall of his scholarship money to ruin this clean-cut youth, just out of school.

Felix Greve, as he then called himself, also looked the model of the inno-

cent, clean-cut and promising freshman. The once poor Hamburg student now sported an elegant silk-tie and a suit of dark cloth, proudly displaying the Rhenus flag on the left lapel—blue and white with a red eight-pointed star—the outward sign of newly achieved status in society: he was a young man of quality (Figure 1).

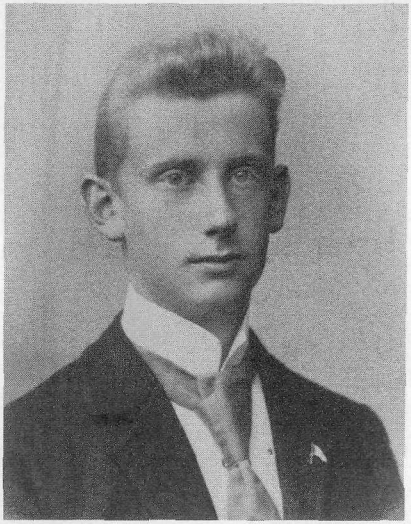

Figure 1. Felix Paul Greve in May, 1898. Professional photo, a so-called *Kabinettsbild* to be given to friends and for display among other such pictures in a kind of frieze decorating the main assembly-room of the ARC Rhenus *Bootshaus* on the River Rhine.

Athlete

Still, even Rhenus members had to be prepared to spend not inconsiderable sums of money in addition to the sizeable security deposit. The monthly membership fee itself was comparatively negligible, a mere five marks. But rowing and sailing were and still are expensive sports and, as one had to hold one's own among the other members, it simply did not do to skimp. Contributions toward the acquisition of new boats were expected. Sporting outfits—first blue, then white tricots and sweaters—had to be tailor-made. The same was true for acceptable everyday wear, evening clothes, and other formal attire, because a certain amount of ritual and tradition were an inescapable part of fraternity life.

Active and inactive members dined in each other's company, meeting for their daily lunches at the elegant Hotel Kronprinz, while they often dined at the Restaurant Hähnchen. In all seasons there were outings and picnics on

weekends, occasionally in the company of young ladies. Dances had to be attended at nearby resort hotels. One of the club's favourites for such occasions was the Hotel Mundorf in nearby Plittersdorf, upriver from Bonn in the vicinity of Bad Godesberg. One could row or walk there along the towpath, weather permitting, or one might take the train along the Rhine as far as Koblenz or other towns and villages on the way, and return by motorboat. There were many opportunities to entertain and to be entertained in style. Gifts were given, portraits exchanged in token of friendship, rounds of champagne, wine and beer bought at dances and other festivities. The most formal of these festivities was the *Stiftungsfest* usually held in early July when the club's founding was celebrated. These annual club reunions took place either at the *Bootshaus* or at the Hotel Kley in nearby Koblenzerstraße (today's Adenauerallee, studded with government offices), where also many of the club's dances, including the *Faschingparty*, were held.

As to the rowing activities proper, here, too, things were done in style. Trophies and other prizes were presented to successful members of one's own or of competing clubs. Prizes were custom-made by local craftsmen and had to be paid for by the donor. Members had to keep up appearances and sustain their real or assumed social standing inside and outside of the club circles. Delegations of other clubs stopped by in their boats and had to be accommodated, fed and entertained. During the fall break of 1898, for instance, the club established contact with a foreign rowing team: "During the fall vacations we were visited by a crew from London on an excursion down the Neckar and Rhein in their *kanadischen Kanoe*" (*Festschrift* 1906: 51). The names of the visitors were not recorded. Perhaps Greve used the occasion to practice his English and establish contacts that would have been useful from 1901-02 onwards.

Felix Greve must have been quick to grasp the social advantages provided by his new circle. If a member wanted to become popular, distinguishing oneself as a sportsman went far in compensating for other deficiencies. In this, the fraternity in Bonn, the "German Oxford," as it was called, was not unlike its contemporaries in the English-speaking world. In addition, presenting oneself on occasions of high social visibility usually payed off. One such occasion was the wake for the former *Reichskanzler*, Graf Otto von Bismarck, in Bonn's Beethoven Hall, on November 28, 1898, attended by all Rhenus members in their club finery, the three students in charge standing at attention with lowered silver-plated ceremonial rapiers, the basket hilts

padded with cloth in the Rhenus colours red, blue, and white. Felix Greve, "third-in-charge" although only in his second semester, was among the three who were certainly admired by the crowd attending the spectacle.

Rowing was the club's *raison d'être* and taken very seriously. It was done singly or in crews of two, three, four, or even five men. Boats were taken off their racks in the large lower hall of the boathouse and carried through the open wooden portals to the slip and down an incline into the river with its strong current. There certainly was a danger of the inexperienced being carried away by the swift waters or turned over and drowned if they were not good swimmers. In order to compensate for the lack of safe and easy waters for training purposes, beginners were expected to take part in regular exercises and initial "dry" training in a stationary trainer on the first floor of the boathouse in preparation for the actual rowing on the river. Although Rhenus crews took part in numerous races in Bonn, Frankfurt, Berlin, and elsewhere they had yet to score a major success comparable to the one in 1904, when a Rhenus boat with a crew of four won the Emperor's trophy at the Grünau race in Berlin.

Aside from regular rowing activities during the semester, members were expected, particularly during the winter, to engage in two hours of gymnastics on the Rhenus premises. Greve may have done those "excercises on horizontal bars"—which he claims his "father" performed at "Castle" Thurow (ISM 28)—in the boathouse yard, a kind of "open-air gymnasium," and in the training facilities on the first floor of the boathouse. If the young and agile Felix himself was not able to do the "giant's turn," others would have been able to show him. One very likely tutor, besides Fritz Schröder, the university's professional gymnastics trainer, was the muscular and heavily whiskered Theo Thiel, a widely travelled and adventurous medical doctor and an older mentor much beloved by Rhenus members. I have found a number of photos taken on these outings, either about twenty-five miles upriver from Bonn to the abandoned island and the ruined castle of Hammerstein, both of which were overgrown with weeds and therefore called a "wilderness," or, especially in the summer of 1898, to the small town of Hönningen (Figure 2).

Even more than the routine of gymnastics, the noble art of fencing, then requisite for a student in any of the *Schlagende Verbindungen*, was part of the mandatory Rhenus activities and of Greve's self-imposed training at the university. Scholars have overlooked the fact that Bonn university records

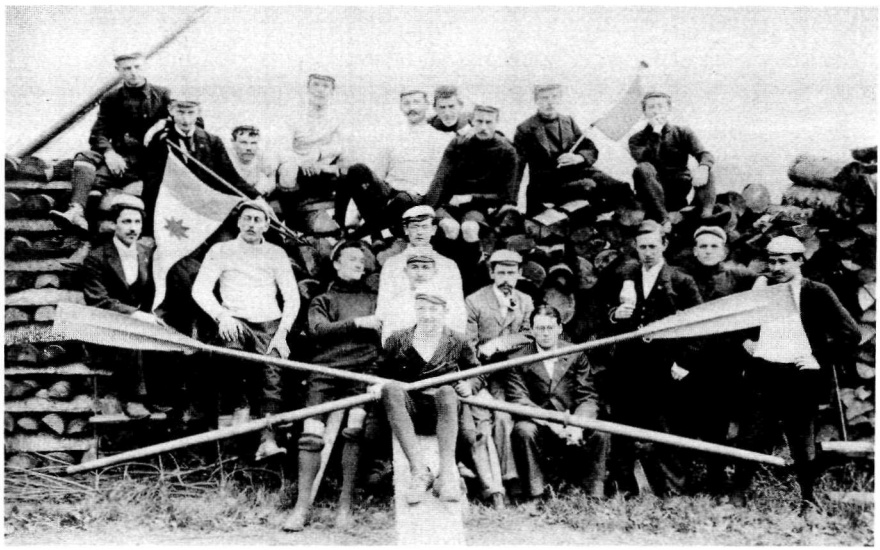

Figure 2. The club on an outing to Hönningen on the Rhine in the summer of 1898. Felix Paul Greve is the second from the left, top row, behind the Rhenus flag. His mustachioed friend and later nemesis, Herman F.C. Kilian, English-looking in tweeds and smoking a pipe, is sitting in the second row from the bottom.

show Greve to have taken a twelve-hour-course in fencing—a *Schlägercurs*—from the university's professional fencing-master, Mr. Wilhelm Ehrich. Greve's first course lasted until July, 1898 and was followed by another during the summer vacation. During the winter term of 1898-99 he took two more courses, the last one devoted to the techniques of handling the rapier.[5] Felix Greve clearly saw to it that regular professional training in fencing enabled him to hold his own when it came to passing the often rather bloody fencing requisite for being accepted as a regular member in good standing. University fencing courses were supplemented by regular practice at the clubhouse, also under the supervision of coach Ehrich (Anon., *65 Jahre* 1955: 12). These first rites of passage performed, Greve and his *confrère* Arnold Cappenberg were admitted together on October 22, 1898.

Castle Thurow On The Rhine

Although Felix Greve had a rented room in the city, the centre of his life for two years was the Rhenus boathouse, the hub of the club's activities. This impressive building had been erected in 1897 to replace a previous, much more modest structure. The first floor housed the racks that held the club's

several boats of different sizes. The house was destroyed by fire in 1945, but a number of surviving photographs of its interior, exterior, and surroundings help to provide us with a good idea of what it looked like.

The building was situated on a spacious lot about a hundred feet up the left bank of the Rhine surrounded by shrubs and bushes. The front of the large white two-storey house faced the river. On its right, somewhat set back from the front yard, was an attached three-storey square tower with a peaked turret, topped by an iron weather-vane. A footpath and boatslip led from the riverbank to the house. The second floor resembled a verandah, featuring decorative woodwork and glass. Behind the verandah, a large assembly and dining hall were located as well as the study and the library. Pennants, medals, trophies, and other memorabilia were displayed on the mantelpiece and along the walls.

There are, indeed, strong indications that Grove's purported childhood home "Castle Thurow," described at great length in his autobiography, was derived from the imposing building that was the future novelist's "home," although not his actual residence, between 1898 and 1901. Although no extensive "lawns swept down to the edge of the beach", there was a grassy slope leading down to a rocky strip of land that touched the water. The beach fronted by this turreted and gabled structure was not that of the Kattegatt or any other rocky strip of coast on the Skagerrak, but that of the Rhine. Whatever Grove meant by the "cliff-like structure" of "Castle Thurow," the large tower "flanking" the building was there, and so were the terrace and driveway. "The hall" that "was the scene of the everyday life of the household which never consisted of less than twenty people, exclusive of servants" corresponds to the large assembly hall on the second floor of the boathouse (Figure 3). The building most certainly was not "within about twenty miles from the ancient city of Lund" or "within about a hundred yards of the sea" (ISM 18) but within a few miles of the ancient city of Bonn and about a hundred yards from the Rhine, although in my view it may well be considered the basis of young "Phil's" lost home as Grove presented it to his Canadian readers. By the time Felix Greve got to the *Bootshaus*, he was—though of delicate build—already "an expert oarsman, a bold swimmer, and very self-reliant" (ISM 35), and determined to improve his talents.

On the up-river side, the house and its grounds bordered on the vast building of a commercial brick-kiln with its towering chimney. Both the chimney and the tower of the house served the rowers as useful landmarks

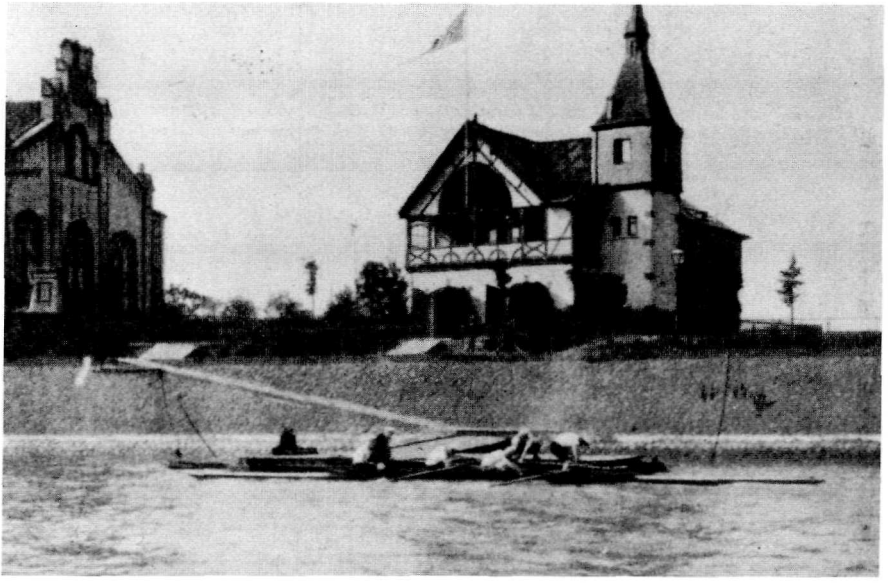

Figure 3. The ARC Rhenus *Bootshaus* on the Rhine, a more than likely model for Frederick Philip Grove's fanciful rendering of his fictitious childhood home, "Castle Thurow." The photo dates from 1899 when Felix Greve was one of the club's leading members.

for their navigation. Perhaps the chimney and tower anticipated the "lighthouse" and "tower near the beach" close to the "Thurow" estate from where young "Phil" set out on a trip in a small rowboat, risking the danger of "being swept out, through the Sound, into the Kattegatt" (ISM 36 ff.)? Anyway, the impressive new Rhenus boathouse and the many trips taken from there to various places borne on the treacherous currents of the river may indeed have given him dreams of drifting from here "into the North Sea, or the Atlantic, whence the Gulf Stream might take me into the Arctic Ocean" (ISM 39).

The *Bootshaus* must have struck young Felix Greve as a singular and imposing structure. In terms of social ambition, it was indeed the proving ground for the young man. If the university exposed him to the world of learning, then the elite society at the boat-house, with its competitiveness, its manly fencing rituals and festive celebrations, provided a sheltered entry to high society. Greve also gained access to a network of wealthy and influential men all over the world who considered the *Bootshaus* a shared home long after they had left university. To those expelled from the club or the few occasionally removed for other reasons, leaving the club not only meant

social disgrace, but jeopardising a promising future within the bounds of established society.

My Memory Is A Palimpsest

A chronological account of Grove's verifiable movements between April, 1898 and January, 1901, as far as they can be traced or inferred from the Rhenus papers, may help decipher the palimpsest that is his account of life as a young man in Germany. As far as Greve's actual presence in his Bonn apartments and at the clubhouse is concerned, the hand-written records confirm that he sought election as third in charge of the club. Thus he was present in Bonn during the spring, summer, fall, and winter of 1898. Several notes in Greve's handwriting concerning matters of business, including plans for a Christmas party, attest to his presence in Bonn for the period from October 19 to November 30, 1898. Photographs document his presence at the club's 1898 Christmas party (Figure 4).

In the fall of 1898 he took part in walking tours again to Linz and, via Remagen, to the monastery of Maria Laach and its famous lake, the Laacher See. On other occasions he and his comrades rowed past Linz and went as far as Bendorf, near Koblenz.

During his first year at Rhenus, then, Felix Greve had risen to positions of trust and responsibility and was inching ever more closely towards the top of the club's hierarchy. In keeping with his improving position, he moved to new quarters close to Rhenus and the banks of the Rhine, at Koblenzerstrasse 24. Here Greve lived close to the more wealthy among the students and to two of the rising stars among the cultural avant-garde and the young academic elite.

Drama And The Stage

In the early summer of 1899, the regular training schedule for June had to be occasionally interrupted for rehearsals for a major event in which "numerous" Rhenus members, as well as members of other fraternities, took an active part. A committee of Bonn professors and citizens had decided to honour the famous literary historian, poet-professor, and translator Karl Simrock by erecting a monument to his memory.[6] To help defray the expenses, Bonn students decided to stage two performances, on July 7 and 9, 1899 at the Bonn Stadttheater, then under the direction of Julius Hoffman, and supported by Berthold Litzmann, a conservative but influen-

Figure 4. The club's Christmas gathering in 1898. Felix Paul Greve, holding a stein, is in the second row from the top, directly under the lamp. Kilian's name may be seen on the blackboard in back at the top of a list of four names. He is the third from the left in the second row. Lomberg is immediately to the right of Greve, Cappenberg on the left, looking down into his stein.

tial professor of German (Höroldt: 400-403). No fewer than three plays were chosen to be staged on each of the two evenings, beginning at 7 p.m. and ending at 9:45 p.m.: *Philotas*, a tragedy by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang Goethe's one-act play *Die Laune des Verliebten*, and the first of the three parts of Friedrich Schiller's drama *Wallenstein*. We know that, according to the newspapers, both performances were considered great successes. The net income was 1,121.50 marks. We also know that the monument was dedicated in 1904.[7] But we have no visible proof that Greve participated in the performances or even played a part. No cast of characters has been found. However, the Rhenus log contains the following entry: "Of the Rhenus officials, three were cast in major roles, three others played minor speaking parts." At the time, Greve was "a Rhenus official." It would have been strange, given Greve's ambition, if he had not been one of the participants. One would have liked to know whether Greve had possibly played the part of "Lamon" to a young lady playing the "Egle" in Goethe's short play, with its classical presentation of two couples in love (Goethe 1968). His own *Helena und Damon* (1902), although reduced in format to a pair of actors, may have very well profited from the Bonn dramatic experience. Or did he,

like Max Piccolomini in *Wallensteins Lager*, wield the weapon he had so assiduously learned to handle? On the other hand, the classical background of *Philotas* would have suited his scholarly preparation.

I Trained For A Boat-race In Single Sculls

Felix Greve is on record as having owned two boats. Neither, however, was built in Hamburg or brought from there, but—like most of Rhenus' boats—had been custom-built in Rotterdam. The log for October-November, 1898 reports: "Our dear active member Greve got himself a nifty single scull for training purposes, which was built by Deichmann & Ritchie and has turned out pretty well." The new boat was immeditately tested on a "trip in a single scull by Greve to Leubsdorf (upriver from Linz) [,] ca. 50 km." He donated this boat, called *Nixe*, to the club during a ceremony at the club's Christmas Party on December 16, 1899, at which he presided.[8] For a student, the gift was an extraordinary demonstration of affluence. Felix owned a second single scull, called *Faultier* (sloth), which he sold to the fraternity the following year, probably before going to Rome and in an effort to collect travel-money and to rid himself of the encumbrance. From the name of his first boat Felix took his secret nickname: *Nixe*. Most club members had such "secret names" conferred upon them to be used in their closed circle only.

Nixe was a fitting name, for, as an excellent rower and swimmer, the slender Greve was a veritable water creature. In *A Search of America* he describes himself as such a creature when he saves a man from drowning by unhesitatingly jumping into the deep and cold waters of a dead arm of the Ohio River, explaining to the reader: "I am—or was—by nature nearly amphibious, swimming and diving being my favourite pastimes" (SFA 298). A "*Nixe*" is, of course, a mermaid. On the other hand, a *Nix* or *Nöck* is the wild merman or *Wassermann* of Germanic mythology. Boats more often than not carry women's names, but some may consider it proof of Greve's somewhat androgynous appeal that the name should also have been transferred to the owner of the boat.

That Felix should not object to *Nixe* as his clubname and also give the name to his single-scull (or vice versa) may, however, be explained not only by the possibly erotic implications of the nickname or its homophonic relation to his first name; as it happens, Felix followed a Rhenus tradition by choosing *Nixe* as a name for his boat. Indeed, the 1906 anniversay publica-

tion tells us, "*Nixe* was the only sailboat ever owned by the club" (*Geschichte:* 84). In addition, in the club's lists of boats owned, the first *Nixe* is specifically identified as a "Norwegian sailboat." If, by analogy, Felix's own *Nixe* and the club's sailboat of the same name are perceived in relation to his nickname, then Grove's recurrent tales in his autobiographical narratives about sail-boats that he claims to have owned, cease to appear wholly fictitious but have their factual basis here—including the Norwegian origin of the sailboat which may indeed have once been in the Skandinavian waters so often mentioned by Grove. As it happens, Grove turned his "Uncle Jacobsen" into the instrument for the "purchase of the yacht" in which they sailed from "Luebeck to Haparanda and Helsingfors; and even down the Baltic, past Thurow into the Skagerrak, along Jutland, and down the North Sea to Hamburg" (ISM 91). The old Rhenus sailboat *Nixe*, however, was not known for easily traversing the Baltic and taking the famously rough course from the Baltic into the North Sea, but for capsizing easily and providing its crew with unwanted baths. Grove may have enjoyed an inside joke here.

Indeed, in Grove's recollections, most of the episodes concerning "Jacobsen," boating and sports seem to have their verifiable roots in Greve's time in Bonn. Consider, for instance, Grove's other account of "Jacobsen's" days of sailing with him:

> Whenever we were near water, he had one of his fleet of boats shipped out from Hamburg: a double skiff, or a half-outrigger boat; and finally two single seaters with full outrigger row-locks and sliding seats. In these boats, some of them no more than sixteen inches wide, we travelled thousands of miles, on the Rhine, the Elbe, the Oder penetrating thence into the Moselle, the Main, the Neckar, the Havel. We went to England to attend the great regattas and thus saw much of the countryside. And finally he taught me to sail. (ISM 90)

Did the real Jacobsen own a small fleet of boats? We cannot doubt that back in Hamburg Felix Greve must have acquired some experience in rowing, for in Bonn he almost immediately started out in the *Vega*, a double skiff, and did only seven kilometers less than the 270 km that a crew of six consisting of the club's most experienced rowers had done in the *Fiducit* the preceding week. It appears unlikely that the real Jacobsen, who both in Hamburg and *In Search of Myself* significantly failed to contribute to the upkeep of FPG's dying mother, ever owned several different sculls; on the contrary, it is more than likely that Grove, in 1946, was thinking of the Rhenus boathouse's ground floor which in 1899 accommodated about twelve boats of various

sizes; among these Greve indeed preferred the club's double-skiff, the *Vega,* and his own "two single-seaters with full outrigger row-locks and sliding seats," the *Nixe* and the *Faultier.*

Custom-built single sculls suitable for racing ran to at least 150 gold-marks a piece. Felix Greve did not (yet) have to skimp, and he probably also did not have to approach anybody in order to borrow significant sums of money, be it from Kilian or anybody else. Indeed, Felix never even once shared a boat with Kilian on any outing or race while they were both club members. Greve could still afford to be liberal. He is on record as having donated a gas-heater for the change-room of the boat- and clubhouse. He also bought and gave away custom-made prizes for boat-races. In fact, one of his first acts after entering the club and going on his first boat-trip was to promise an expensive prize for the "crew of four to manage the longest trip upriver in one day in the course of the summer semester of 1898." A Rhenus crew that went from Bonn to Niederlahnstein and back on June 9-10, 1898 accordingly received from him "a gorgeous crystal goblet with the club's coat of arms engraved in Gothic style." The 1906 *Festschrift* states that the goblet, with the names of the winners engraved upon it, remained as a show piece in the major assembly room of the *Bootshaus.* It is believed to have disappeared in 1945. In view of Felix's sporting feats and his spectacular largesse—he also donated a stopwatch in August, 1898—there can be no doubt that he wanted to be regarded as an achiever who also graciously recognised achievement in others.

Greve's friend Kilian is not on record as having participated in any strenuous athletic activities or as having given expensive gifts to the club. He, too, rose in the club's hierarchy, although the young Greve outdistanced him on every occasion. When they were admitted as full active members to the club, Greve (not the wealthy Kilian) again made a donation: "Our dear active member Greve made us a present of two rubbings by [the painter] Mack depicting [the castles] Rheinstein and Lichtenstein," (*Semesterbericht* I, October 19-November 30, 1898). The framed pictures were hung in a prominent place to the left and the right of the huge fireplace, above the mantelpiece on which Grove's goblet was on display. These objects were destroyed in 1945, but they may still be seen in a number of photographs that survive of the assembly-room. With such gifts in mind, Grove's later statement that as a young man he soon found he "had a talent for forming the centre of certain groups" (ISM 161) is not surprising. On the same occa-

sion at the start of the winter semester, just six months after entering the club, Felix was elected "third in charge," quickly rising to "second" in April, 1899, and finally running the club as its elected "first-in-charge" or *Erstchargierter* from October, 1899 until the end of March, 1900.

When Greve became "third in charge" (of the club's finances), Kilian rose to *Fuchsmajor,* responsible for the new members. In this capacity Kilian had to instruct "foxes" in the club's dress codes and codes of behaviour and to coach them on important occasions. In the light of Kilian's suspected homosexual inclination the office may have been both a temptation and a trial for him.

Nixe On The River

During his six semesters with Rhenus, Felix Greve took an active part in five major excursions and in numerous lesser races and trips in various kinds of boats, from single scull to five-seat outrigger. The most spectacular trip occurred when Greve was one of five men—Georg Thiel, Felix *Nixe* Greve, Hans "Hanne" Lomberg, Carl Hartmann, Matthias Schmitz—who rowed their boat *Prosit* (Cheers) on August 3 to 15, 1899 from Bonn up the Rhine and Main Rivers past Wiesbaden and Mainz to Würzburg and Heilbronn and down the Neckar and Rhine Rivers until the crew reached Bonn again. This was a trip of 758 km, accomplished in thirteen days, including three days of rest. No mean feat. In fact, this achievement is still regularly cited in anniversary publications of the club.[9]

The two-week outing was not only a strenuous but also a memorable and most pleasant undertaking. The several stages and incidents of the trip are well documented. I take the following short summary from a lengthy account in which Felix *alias Nixe* figures prominently. In fact, he is one of only two participants explicitly mentioned at all. The anonymous author allows us rare glimpses of life among friends and equals in the only account we have of FPG at twenty:

> After leaving Bonn in the early morning, at noon Greve and his friends made their first stop at an island near Neuwied. Their cooking turned out to be less than successful. They were, however, saved by a friend from the club and his two daughters who brought them a decent meal, rowed from across the river. Afterwards they napped, and their visitors mysteriously disappeared while they slept. Having passed Koblenz by nightfall, they entered the mouth of the River Lahn and landed at Douqué's Inn at Niederlahnstein, in sight of nearby Stolzenfels Castle. There, they enjoyed a good bottle of wine in the cool of the

evening. They had made it their rule to drink no alcoholic beverages during the "intolerable heat" of the day. The next morning, they came near to being swamped by a steamer, but they took it all in good humour, enjoying the "refreshment." Past the bend in the Rhine at Boppard, the river-bed became so narrow between the mountains that they exchanged greetings with the people walking the towpaths and walkways. Often they landed at some pleasing spot and walked barefoot to see the sights. However, they viewed St. Goar and the Loreley only from their boats. "The heat was so intense," wrote Thiel, that "I tucked a white handkerchief under my cap to protect my neck and wrapped my legs in pieces of white cloth." Only "Hanne and Nixe"—Lomberg and Greve—"who had rowed the most in the course of this summer and had brought some 'colour' to this trip" needed no protection. They made it their rule to slow down at riverside garden restaurants about an hour before sunset, to have waiters hand them glasses of beer while they remained in their boat. There were small adventures. Beyond Oberwesel they got caught in a cable tied to a boat anchored well out in the river, losing their flag-pole in the process. One morning, having walked through the city gate of Bacharach to their boat, they "wiped the dew off the boat and the oars, stowed away their gear" and continued upstream. However, hardly had they "warmed up when they had to get back into the water; and while 'Nixe', a short way past the town, steered around a mole that extended into the Rhine and along which the water raced mightily downstream, we were suddenly stuck on a submerged rock in front of the mole. In an instant, the stream gripped the bow-end and threw it into the current. The boat took a courteous bow to larboard, and there was an audible crack. Immediately we hurried overboard, and the boat was saved; we had drifted quite a distance when we finally found ourselves, dripping, back in the boat." That evening they landed at Kostheim, near the confluence of the Rhein and Main rivers. "We sent our quartermaster 'Nixe' out as a scout, whom Mother Nature has equipped with such irregular bodily height that he cannot easily get lost. He did not come back until after we had brought the boat to safety and were busy teaching the grown youths of the village, who had helped carry the boat, the basic rules of beer consumption. Only after having walked about for a long time had he been able to find quarters, for the next day there was to be a *Kirmes* (fair). So we spent the evening with pork sausages and wine in large 5/10 glasses directly from the barrel—a new era had begun." The next day, a Sunday, they reached Frankfurt [which Greve knew well from two former races] and were spectators at a boat-race, resting for a while in the shade of huge old trees, at the invitation of a friendly local club. In the evening they landed at Rumpenheim without having to worry about a place for the night. "'Nixe" had again proven "his astonishingly fine nose, for the stout landlady with whom we stayed made an extremely reliable impression."

They then leisurely proceeded up the River Main, past the wooded hills of the legendary Spessart forest to Aschaffenburg. This was old Roman border country. One evening, probably again thanks to "Nixe's fine nose" they spent the night in a picturesque small one-room inn merely "lit by a small oil lamp." The landlady fixed beds of straw for them on the dance floor. On a rainy afternoon, they reached the ancient city of Miltenberg. They were so wet that they decided to stay and have their things "dried in the village baker's oven." For a student of

archeology like Greve, who had almost certainly been enlisted to help Professor Loeschke trace the Roman *limes* near Bonn, the stop at Miltenberg was a must. They climbed the steps to the castle and in the yard they admired the inscription on an "inconspicuous column of weathered sandstone found in the nearby woods. In almost illegible Latin characters it announces to the epigones: 'This is the border between the Teutons and the Romans.'" Thus the days passed with sightseeing and much strenuous rowing. They came to look more and more like "a real gang of robbers" but felt themselves in fine shape, going hungry sometimes, at other times "feasting on roast and baked fish and fruity red wine."

From Würzburg they shipped their boat in advance to Heilbronn while they went by train. Locating their boat at their destination and putting it into the Neckar River already in the dark, they found themselves near the ominously named *Gasthaus zur Kettenschiffahrt* (Chain Shipping Inn). Shuddering, the author says, at first they passed by the lonely and suspicious-looking place. However, only when they—tired, derelict, and dirty as they were—noticed the coat-tailed waiters at the brightly lit hotels did they timidly creep back to the inn where they received food and lodging and spent the night lulled by the rushing sounds of the stream. Leaving Heilbronn in the morning, they arrived back at the Bonn boathouse after three days of fast downriver rowing past Worms, Mainz, and Geisenheim. (*Festschrift* 1906: 176-195)

Although Greve was later to complain to Karl Wolfskehl about (fashionable, real, and occasionally timely) health impairments and Grove was to suffer from acute back problems in Canada, there always was a tendency to seek—and enjoy—physical (over-)exertion. "I am naturally an outdoor creature," Grove wrote on the first page of *Over Prairie Trails* (1922), his first book published in Canada. His rowing feats with Rhenus as well as his later nine-hour swim across Lake Garda and back, reported in a letter of August 13, 1902 to Wolfskehl,[10] are proof. His no less strenuous exertions as the driver of a buggy and horse on the wintry country roads of Manitoba could be sustained because of his early training in Germany. However, quite in contrast to the self-projected image of the loner, haughtily pursuing his ways far from the crowd, we learn from his travels with his Rhenus friends that Felix Greve did indeed have a talent for conviviality. For, clearly, he is the one who figures most prominently in the account of their two-week trip by boat. He is the one on whom the others relied for finding places to eat when they were famished, and places to spend the night when they were dog-tired. Greve was already the *primus inter pares*, and was duly elected, two months later, to the highest office the club had to offer. When we contemplate Greve's strenuous boat-trips into the heart of pre-First World War Europe, we should not wonder at the similarly boundless energy and endurance expended on another trip that Grove—then lonely, destitute,

and often disheartened—reports having taken down the Ohio River, in *A Search for America* (1927: 283-335). Here, there was a river to match the one he had rowed upon in his youth. Now, he claimed, he was a "nomad who lived off the land" (253) in tattered clothes, while then he had been an elegant lad, laughingly exposing himself to the weather as member of a genteel "band of robbers." While, formerly, he had rested among friends with girls serving lunch, he was now wakened, shivering, by a kick in the ribs, and told to "Move on, there! Or I'll have you run in. No vagrants wanted" (286). In contrast to some of the trips to the quite civilized "wilderness" on the island of Hammerstein, he had now to remind himself that "this was no pleasure outing" (289) and that drinks of water were taken not by choice but were the only ones there were to be had.

In *A Search for America*, Grove reveals an intimate knowledge of rivers rising and falling, of strange objects carried by the tide, of riverbanks shaped by the changing currents of islands in the river and the people living off it, the fishermen, the boatmen, and the rafters. All of these descriptions are anticipated in Greve's adventures on the Rhine, Main and Neckar Rivers. Possibly the very clarity of the author's memory of his youthful adventures on the river may have helped to suppress details in the Canadian narrative. The conflict between clearly remembered details in the past and their fictive use in a new setting may have been responsible for another one of Grove's curious statements that somehow promise information and manage to withold it at the same time, as in the following passage:

> The story of my trip on the raft stands out with great clarity in my memory. There was fun and disaster, comedy and quasi-tragedy enough in those two weeks to fill a book by themselves. But all that has little bearing upon the present story; I must skip. I shall, after a few preliminary remarks, explain only how my raft came to harm. (292)

Not surprisingly, the trip in the boat *Prosit* and the one on the Ohio river-raft both took two weeks. But only the European trip consisted of "fun and disaster, comedy and quasi-tragedy." The reader, appetite whetted, once again has to be satisfied with "hints." The erasures in Grove's Canadian texts hint at the "real" story hidden beneath the "autobiographical" writings.

Java, Not Far From Batavia

In late 1899, Greve, now sporting a blond moustache with upturned ends not unlike Kaiser Wilhelm's,[11] was at the midpoint of his one-semester

tenure as the elected leader of the club, officiating at its functions, for instance at the great ball on November 27, 1899 at the Hotel Kley. It was also one of his duties as the club's chief official to correspond with the "inactive" members in Germany and abroad. At the Christmas party on December 16, 1899 he must have eagerly awaited the guests. For among the several older visitors was one, Robert von Kraft, who was on vacation from his business as Chief Administrator of a tobacco plantation on the Deli railroad, near Medan on the island of Sumatra. Kraft (meaning "force"), was an imposing figure. Even more than his friend and classmate Thiel, he may have been one of the models for Grove's imaginary refashioning of his "father" who, as he claimed in ISM, was a proficient athlete in spite of being "a man weighing 225 pounds." When a younger man and "in training," Kraft was 196 cm tall and weighed 180 pounds. He may easily have gained another 45 pounds in the meantime. His colourful life as a tobacco planter undoubtedly impressed Greve and his friends and they may have listened rapturously to his tales of the huge plantation, his Chinese servant, and his prospects for the future. Kraft and Thiel had once met and celebrated a reunion in Singapore. That Christmas the club members looked at a picture of Kraft and Thiel standing near palm tree trunks, the Chinese servant crouching in front of them holding up a sign with the Rhenus coat of arms.[12]

Greve, recording the event for the club, wrote that Kraft donated "unusually valuable decorations, his collection of ancient Malay weapons," to the club. These weapons, mostly *kris*, were on display on the walls of the club's great hall until 1945. They (and part of the frieze of *Kabinettsbilder*) can clearly be seen in a number of early photographs taken during one or another of the club's festivities (Figure 5). This incident may have generated Grove's account of the "hobby" he ascribes to his almost certainly fictive "Uncle Jacobsen," that is, collecting *Kris* and other native weapons from the East Indies where he had relatives in the Dutch settlements. "This was to be of some slight importance to me a year or so later when I spent three months with a cousin of his on the island of Java" (ISM 130). Kraft's importance for Greve clearly had less to do with monetary matters than with the example he provided by his colourful personality, physical prowess, and international career. He died in Sumatra on August 5, 1900, a few months after his last visit to Bonn. There is little doubt that Kraft forms an important part of the palimpsest that Greve carefully fashioned into "Uncle Jacobsen" and "Jacobsen's" equally spurious "cousin Van der Elst, a settler

Figure 5. View of the interior of the boathouse's second floor with the main assembly hall and the library at the back. On the left-hand wall two of Greve's gifts to the club are on display, the tall crystal goblet and, framed, one of the two "rubbings by Mack" showing Castle Liechtenstein. Robert von Kraft's gift of his collection of Malayan *kris* is on display on the wall to the right of the door. The frieze of members' photos may be seen along the top of the panelling covering the lower portions of both walls.

on the island of Java, not far from Batavia" (ISM 154). Grove later ascribed to the fictive "Van der Elst" (elsewhere he mentions a certain "von Els" as one of "the parasitic young men in Europe" he claimed to have met; see SFA 40), the real Indonesian setting described by Kraft, while he depicted "Jacobsen" as owning Kraft's collection of *kris*. Much as the *Bootshaus* may have supplied Grove with the architecture of his "Castle Thurow," and at least three of the Rhenus members—Kraft, Thiel, and Kilian—supplied Grove with "family connections" and tales of travels in southeast Asia. These stories possibly also involved accounts of Kraft's travels to southeast Asia by way of Siberia, passing through Omsk, Semipalatinsk, arriving at "Nikolayevsk, which, at the time, was almost an Arctic port," followed by the "long voyage home," from southeast Asia, "via Java, the Malay Peninsula, two or three Indian cities, the Red Sea, and the familiar Mediterranean" (ISM 149-155), then, we might add, past Gibraltar and into the English Channel to land safely in Rotterdam, 400 km downriver from Bonn, after which Kraft's "Rotterdam Estate" was named. It was Rotterdam where Greve's and several of Rhenus' boats had been built to order. It was well known to him. Did Greve, in 1909, leave Europe from there? We should note here that another poet, the then much admired Maximilian Dauthendey, actually went to

China, Java, and Sumatra in 1906 and 1914, respectively. He lived (and died) in 1918 not far from where Robert von Kraft had died, in Medan, near the Deli railroad. He, too, had for a while attempted to make a living planting tobacco in the same faraway country whose possibilities had once so entranced Felix Greve that he still wrote about them in 1946, searching for yet another of those selves that he had considered adopting for himself.[13]

Nothing But Evil From The Reign Of William II

Although Rhenus, unlike Borussia, had no members of the royal Hohenzollerns among its ranks, it, too, attempted to win its own "place in the sun." It was Greve who, in October 1899, as "first" in charge moved Rhenus to join the super-patriotic and very influential *Flottenverein*, a powerful lobby group in support of the new Imperial German Navy which was meant to rival England's (in possession of its own "Naval League"). As a result, during the first three months of Greve's ambitious leadership, the rowing club attempted to win favour in high places and, in this, to catch up with its blue-blooded rivals. Greve could not have had much time to travel with Kraft or even to go to Rome then for he was busy arranging for his next coup. It was not the Pope he wanted to impress, but the Kaiser.

The occasion was the annual celebration of Kaiser Wilhelm's birthday. The preceding day, January 26, 1900, the majority of the Bonn students were to take part in a festive public event. Felix Greve's outstanding role on this occasion earned him a high degree of visibility and good marks not only among the members of his fraternity. The handwritten log proudly and tersely reports:

> On January 26 [1900] we participated in the annual *Kaisercommers* organised by the Bonn students. Although in preceding years we had been elected to the executive council we had only now been chosen to preside. Our first-in-charge, Greve's performance was in all respects commensurate with his time-consuming and honourable task as the president of the entire gathering. For this, he received recognition from several sides.[14]

What a sight Felix Greve must have been, a tall young man in the colourful red, blue, and white regalia of his office, on his head a cap with a gold border, a ceremonial sabre at his side or on the table in front of him at the centre of the raised dais. To have acquitted himself well under the scrutiny of the *crème de la crème* of city and university must have meant not only a splendid entrance into high society, but almost certainly the promise of a good career, aided by his club and his well-heeled influential new acquaintances.

After the university president's speech there were three cheers for the assembled academic youth, including the Crown Prince, who attended the ceremony in the midst of his fraternity, the Borussia.[15] For Greve to chair a ceremonial meeting in honour of the Emperor in the presence of such a distinguished crowd meant that he had, in fact, come a long way from the poor boardinghouse in a drab street of Hamburg's Old Town.

With Rhenus, Greve had attained the apex of his German career with truly astonishing rapidity. Well known and respected in Bonn, he could now move with confidence. Indeed, three years later, at Greve's Bonn trial, the correspondent of the *Bonner Zeitung* wrote to J.C.C. Bruns publishers in a matter-of-fact tone: "For a time, Greve played a major role in this town."[16]

The Dramatic Society

Greve's readings in classical and contemporary authors at the Johanneum School and, in 1899, Rhenus' involvement in the staging of benefit performances for the Simrock monument, were very probably not Greve's only contacts with contemporary literature in these early years. In fact, shortly after his arrival in Bonn he may have had a splendid occasion for being introduced to avant-garde poetry. I think it unlikely—given his later preoccupations—that he would have missed making such literary contacts.

Rudolf Borchardt (1877-1945) who had recently moved from Berlin (where Greve also had initially wanted to pursue his studies) to Bonn's Koblenzerstraße, may have paved the way for Greve's entry into Bonn's literary circles. The young poet, dramatist, and essayist had spent an unhappy year studying at Berlin University where he had made the acquaintance of a number of influential professors and promising students. Among these were the painters Reinhard and Sabine Lepsius, Botho Graef, an influential professor of archeology, and Graef's *protégé*, the gifted poet and dramatist Ernst Hardt (i.e. Ernst Stöckhardt, 1876-1947). In Berlin, Borchardt also made the acquaintance of the literary historian Richard M. Meyer who had just published a seminal article on Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan George, entitled "Ein neuer Dichterkreis" (Meyer 1897). In Bonn, Borchardt joined the board of the *Dramatische Verein*, an association of citizens, students, and professors interested in literature, which Borchardt planned to turn into a purely literary society. Such associations were not rare. They made it their business to promote the latest trends in the arts and the most

fashionable writers and composers. It was a circuit that was closely monitored by publishers. Greve's publisher-to-be, J.C.C. Bruns, for instance, regularly advertised in handouts and playbills of the Bonn *Dramatische Verein.*

In April, 1898—the month Greve registered at the university and became a member of Rhenus—Borchardt wrote a letter to R.M. Meyer in Berlin asking him to support "a reading [...] in which young Viennese poets will be heard" (Zeller 41). He also asked Meyer for the privately printed *Blätter für die Kunst,* from which he wanted to have copies made of the texts he desired. Finally, Borchardt succeeded in having Ernst Hardt invited to read poems by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Stefan George. George himself, of course, during this period never read his poems in public in Bonn, as Spettigue (1973: 58) has it, or elsewhere, but confined his appearances to selected circles of friends like those occasionally gathered in the Berlin apartment of Reinhard and Sabine Lepsius or the house of Georg Bondi, his publisher-to-be.[17] Hardt's reading was advertised in the *Bonner Zeitung* (No. 121: May 24, 1898) as "Wiener Dichter in Bonn."

The Hotel Kley, with its large assembly hall where both Rhenus gatherings and the regular meetings of the *Dramatische Gesellschaft* were held, was selected for Hardt's appearance. To judge from Borchardt's notes, the reading caused something of a scandal and was interrupted by loud complaints and the noise of angry people leaving. Hardt's own account to Karl Wolfskehl reads slightly differently:

> The evening in Bonn devoted to George's work was impressive. There were about a hundred invited guests, who came away from the evening delighted beyond all expectations. —While I was reading, I had the lights turned off, so that the candles on either side of my head were the sole source of light in the relatively large hall. The holiness of the verse resounded in the darkness so that the people may very well have imagined themselves in front of an altar—this breathless stillness is among the most beautiful experiences I have had in my life.[18]

The next day, Borchard "willingly" endured the almost universal disgrace (Zeller 43). How could Felix Greve, already well acquainted with the premises, possibly have missed the newspaper announcement in the *Bonner Zeitung* (May 24, 1898) and the lively discussions? This was his second chance at getting in touch with the new movement in poetry, a movement that, outside of the immediate George circle, consisted of a number of young academics in contact with each other through Graef, Usener, and, possibly, Hermann Diels (a former Johanneum teacher, then a professor in Berlin). Had Greve used the occasion of Hardt's reading to get acquainted with

the young poet and dramatist, one of Else Ploetz's lovers, who was himself acquainted with Richard Schmitz and August Endell of Munich, also lovers of Else? Did he know that Usener, his professor, not only knew Hardt but that both had met Karl Gustav Vollmoeller, while Vollmoeller knew Richard Delbrueck, both students in Bonn, and young archeologists, who were to be of great importance for Greve in Rome?[19] This new world of art that Greve did his best to join was, like that of the academies, a small one. Like Borchardt, Endell had recently published a volume of poems before he went on to become known as a designer of furniture and an architect in Munich (Endell 1896). Greve found in Bonn an atmosphere conducive not only to sports and studies but to the production of verse. It helped to generate the poems of his small volume *Wanderungen* and his somewhat precious dialogue *Helena und Damon*, as well as his own wanderings among this loosely connected group of artists and academics in Bonn, Rome, Munich, and Berlin.

A Death By Water

The finale of Felix Paul's career with Rhenus came almost exactly a year after his glorious appearance at the *Kaisercommers*. What happened? Spettigue, unaware of Rhenus and Greve's Bonn circle of friends, suggests that "Felix's defection from Bonn in the late fall of 1900 had a specific cause, namely the news of the final collapse and, on the night of November 30, the death of Wilde in Paris" (1973: 58). I doubt that news of Wilde's death prompted Greve's departure. The immediate cause was different, no less tragic, and much closer to home.

The Rhenus journal for December 1, 1900, contains the following laconic entry: "As has become known through our circular of October 31, we lost our dear inactive member Lomberg through a sad accident." What was this sad accident and why did it take the whole month of November until it was recorded? Lomberg had disappeared after a dance in the company of his Rhenus friends at the Hotel Mundorf in nearby Plittersdorf. The party must have included Greve and Kilian, for the winter semester was well on its way, and neither the university records nor Rhenus annals note a leave of absence in effect for either of them at that time. The Bonn newspapers carried the story of "Lomberg's mysterious disappearance" and provided almost daily updates on the search. A reward of 3000 marks was offered. The body was found only three weeks later, at Hersel, downriver from Bonn. It was a sensational affair. The handwritten Rhenus log states that

after the dance at the Hotel Mundorf some of the students took the train back to Bonn, while others (no names were mentioned) waited for the regular motor boat. Unfortunately, these had to stay over when fog prevented the boat from leaving. Lomberg, however, had "apparently" decided to walk back to Bonn. During the Memorial Service, the Protestant university pastor used his sermon to ask, somewhat melodramatically, the questions that must have occurred to all:

> How did he get into the water? [. . .] Did he lose his way in the dense fog? Did he unwittingly step too close to the steep bank and fall in? Was he stunned by the fall? Did a heart attack in the cold water put an end to his life? Or did he, an able-bodied swimmer, struggle with the flood until his strength gave out? Did he call for help when nobody heard his voice in the still night? . . . [W]e are faced with a riddle. (*General-Anzeiger*, vol XII, November 23, 1900: 6)

It has remained a riddle.

Lomberg, Greve, and Kilian joined the club almost all at the same time. When Greve became first-in-charge, Lomberg became "second." When Greve became "inactive," Lomberg became his successor as the club's "first." Kilian's only record as a rower was in a crew with Lomberg, in the summer of 1898. "Hanne" Lomberg was one of the team that travelled with *Nixe* Greve up the Rhine, Main, and Neckar Rivers the previous year. Lomberg was clearly an acquaintance of both Greve and Kilian. As a result, the following entry in the Rhenus log for the week after the ceremony for Lomberg is more than strange: "We had to expel our inactive member Kilian because of his total lack of interest and unworthy behaviour. He was neither present at the ceremony for Lomberg's body nor at his funeral. He did not write a word of excuse and in general did not take a great deal of notice of the whole unfortunate accident." Greve must have been present at the funeral. No one had been excused. Had Kilian simply been rude or had there been tensions among the threesome (if they were that close) that led to Lomberg's mysterious disappearance and death? If Kilian was the (first?) "young man, very slightly my senior in years [who] incredibly subordinated himself to me" (ISM 161), had he become jealous of Lomberg who must have had a close working relationship with Greve in their capacities as officials of the club? In any case, Kilian's behaviour on the occasion of Lomberg's funeral was exceedingly inappropriate. The club's reaction was no less extreme. It was the first time that a member was ever expelled. The evidence that led to this grave decision must have been damning indeed.

Exit

There must have been additional cause besides Kilian's absence from the funeral and the failure to write an apology for him to be summarily expelled. Either his behaviour was simply the last straw in the accumulation of previous misbehaviour (nowhere mentioned), or he was under a far darker cloud in connection with the Lomberg case. The Rhenus log remains curiously silent. I have little doubt that there was a secret to be kept.

However, one of the next entries in the Rhenus journal, the one for January 19, 1901, when read in connection with the occurrences of a few weeks before, is both laconic and eloquent in what it does *not* say: "Our erstwhile member Greve has been granted his request to leave." There is not a word of regret, no mention of his spectacular achievements for himself and the unprecedented recognition he had won for the club almost exactly a year before. The Lomberg affair had ended in sentimental funeral oratory. The mystery of his death was allowed to remain unsolved. It was as if all those in the know had formed a conspiracy of silence. Had there been an unwritten agreement—the less said, the sooner mended—to part ways with no damage to the reputation of either Rhenus or its three former members, easily the flower of the "foxes" of April, 1898? Of these, one was dead, and two departed. The sentence granting Felix Greve his request to leave, however, is not the last we hear of him in the annals of the ARC Rhenus. Mention of him in his various capacities as sportsman and Rhenus official are made repeatedly throughout the following decades. That his actual name tends to be omitted in later Rhenus records may be due not only to his trial for fraud, on May 29, 1903, but also to the occurrences of November, 1900. There is not a word in the Rhenus records concerning Greve's public disgrace. Indeed, his name is so extensively erased, he might as well have died in February, 1901.

Coda

In closing, I think it not enough to view young FPG merely as part of a small avant-garde coterie of possibly homosexual young artists and poets determined to imitate the "master," Stefan George. It also will not do to limit our reading of Greve's years in Bonn as an anticipation of his later fraudulence. The young man who allowed himself and his single scull to be called *Nixe* was also an exceptional athlete, a tremendously gifted and efficient scholar with singular powers of concentration and an unusual capac-

ity for sustained work. As the admired leader of a club of pragmatically oriented young men he seemed to have the makings of future greatness. The occasional grandiloquence of the first half of *In Search of Myself* is an echo of the powers he not only felt in himself but realized time and again by making himself new, sloughing off old skin that seemed to constrict his growth. It seems that the nobility Grove claimed by reinventing himself as the offspring of impoverished landed gentry was his way of expressing an achievement based on nobility of mind and spirit, quite independent of the material wealth he had once sought. To reinvent, as I believe he did, the Rhenus *Bootshaus* as "Castle Thurow," the River Rhine as the Baltic and its dangerous currents and shores, and his chosen friends (Cappenberg, Kilian, Kraft, Lomberg, Thiel) as "family" was to lay claim to a share of the world which would otherwise have been withheld from someone of his circumstances. Next to archeology, classical philology, writing and translation, rowing may at first sight appear a mere pastime, easily ignored. However, competitive rowing in America and elsewhere was an élite sport. This activity not only helped provide access to desirable strata of society, but was, in effect, already a visible gesture of belonging. In addition, as Thomas Eakins' painting of his friend "Max Schmidt in a Single Scull" makes clear, art and sport were not necessarily separate. Rowing and sailing had become a subject of High Art, indeed, an activity of which a budding poet and novelist had no reason to be ashamed (Stebbins et al. 1988: 266-7). A student from anglophile Hamburg, pursuing his studies at the "German Oxford," would have been aware of the connection

To conclude. The *Bootshaus*, and not an outsize "castle" somewhere on the shores of the Baltic (German or Swedish), was Frederick Philip Grove's proving ground. Bonn and the *Bootshaus* provided terrain for bodily and mental excercise as well as sympathtetic audiences for his first feats of strength and endurance. There, he learned self-reliance and to survive crises both indoors and out. Readings and play-acting introduced him to the literary scene of his day. He acquired basic skills in handling people and managing an audience. In short, Bonn and his Rhenus circle of friends helped him gain and store the expertise and the energy that would serve him well during the years to come as a settler and teacher in the Manitoba marshes. Outings from Bonn prepared him for the survival skills displayed in *Over Prarie Trails*. These skills later enabled him to style himself a "Nature-Study-Crank," a kind of Thoreauvian "self-appointed inspector of snow-storms."

Imagery derived from his Bonn experiences on the Rhine served him well in his early Canadian writings: Manitoba snow-drifts are made out to look like "the wing-wave thrown to either side by the bow of a power-boat that cuts swiftly through quiet water" (1922: 160-62). In his buggy—a "cutter"—the narrator feels as if he were in a "wind-tossed nutshell of a one-man sailing craft" (129). In a storm, the vehicle's curtains "emit that crackling sound which indicates to the sailor that he has turned his craft as far into the wind as he can safely do without losing speed" (156-57). Grove's first Canadian writings in particular feature these easy shifts in imagery. It is as if the author, living landlocked in Canada, loves to play with images derived from his earlier experiences on German waters. Such shifts subtly carry both author and reader into different realms of nature and geography and new incarnations of a person who felt equally competent on land and water.

"Oh, for the juggling of words!" Grove exclaims (166). To a lesser extent than Joyce, Greve plays with his own name: we have seen how Felix became *Nixe,* how, elsewhere, Greve became the pseudonymous Reelen and Gerden and—partaking less of Thurow and more of Thoreau—Konrad Thorer. These became Frederick Philip Grove who invented Phil Branden. Finally, we may recall how somebody called Kraft served him as one model for those powerful "family members" he searched out for himself, "fathers" and "uncles" of his own choice and making who served to carry both Young Felix and "Young Phil"—a *philologos,* indeed—away on tours of the world, real and imaginary.

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NOTES

1 For information on the aforementioned sketchy or blank periods of Grove's biography, see my forthcoming book *Felix Paul Greves Karriere: Frederick Philip Grove in Deutschland* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 1997).

2 Interestingly enough, when reversed, the monogram Grove had composed and sent, with a commentary, to Lorne Pierce on February 4, 11, and 15, 1939 bears some resemblance to the Latin letters in the Rhenus coat of arms which all members, Felix Greve included, had learned to use in signing their names, and with a flourish. A similarity between the Rhenus signet and Grove's later monogram may also be discerned in the "F" of his hand-

written signature in one of Grove's early letters to Warkentin. Many early instances of the Rhenus coat-of-arms in Greve's handwriting survive in the handwritten Rhenus log and also on the back of the photograph Felix dedicated to his friend Cappenberg. For Grove's monograms see Desmond Pacey 1976: 350 and "Appendix B" for the facsimile letter to Warkentin. On the other hand, Divay makes a case for Grove's monogram as having originated with August Endell. See Divay 1994: 184.

3 See Kessler 1988: 198-201 for an informed account of life in the elite fraternity Borussia.

4 Information contributed by Mr. Reipert.

5 Information taken from Greve's "Anmeldebuch." Courtesy of the Universitätsarchiv of Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn.

6 Karl Simrock (1802-1876) had been a professor of philology in Bonn.

7 The public announcements were placed in *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, July 6, 7, 8, 1899, and a review can be found in *Bonner General-Anzeiger*, July 23, 1899: 7.

8 "Semesterbericht II: 12" (Nov. 1899-1. Jan. 1900). *Clubnachrichten* II:2 (Januar 1900).

9 Both the *Clubgeschichte* of 1955 (p. 16) and that of 1990 (p. 12) record this memorable tour. Other Rhenus members, throughout the years, achieved uncommon distinction as German and European rowing champions in various disciplines. A detailed and lively report of the tour may be found in *Geschichte* 1906: 176-195.

10 In the context of his discussion of the Greve-Wolfskehl correspondence at Marbach, Spettigue (1992: 18) was the first to mention Greve's swimming feat on Lake Garda. He also mentions the 1902 photographs of Greve alone and with a fisherman friend sent to Wolfskehl.

11 See the cover photo of Martens, *Literaturvermittler*.

12 I have taken details regarding Robert von Kraft and Dr. Georg Thiel from a memoir contained in *Geschichte* 1906: 274-75.

13 Maximilian Dauthendey (1867-1918), a contributor to *Blätter für die Kunst*, was well-known for his volume *Ultra-Violett* (1893). His poetry in *Des großen Krieges Not* (1915) was first published in Medan. For George's problematic relation to Dauthendey, see Kluncker 1974. Kluncker also mentions Greve. For further information on Dauthendey, see Geibig 1992. Dauthendey died August 29, 1918 in Malang, Java.

14 "Semesterbericht III," *Clubnachrichten* II.4 (März 1900).

15 *General-Anzeiger für Bonn und Umgegend*, vol. 12, No. 3580 (January 27, 1900): 7.

16 Letter *Bonner Zeitung* (Th. Grah) to J.C.C. Bruns (June 20, 1903). Bruns Archive, Minden.

17 Spettigue 1973 overlooks the vital connections between the circles in Bonn, Munich, and Berlin.

18 Letter Ernst Hardt to Karl Wolfskehl. Berlin, n.d., "nach 8tägiger Abwesenheit" (Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach).

19 Karl Gustav Vollmoeller (1878-1948), poet, pilot, film-pioneer. Grove mentions him in a letter to Kirkconnell (December 13, 1927). See Pacey, *Letters*, 73, 74 n.8.

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Nicholas von Maltzahn

Masham Road

Thaw. South wind. The sky is paler
each day now as a high haze
brightens down to the white horizon.
Snow is quickening to water.
Granite becomes earth, and then again cattle.

A crow cries out in transformation:
a woodpecker and again those sparrows.
A pick-up truck revving in the mud
is first snowmobiles, a chainsaw
and that hammering, then also voices.

A jet streaming across the bluest part
of heaven, now a car on a wet road.
Hills turn to barns, spruce to birches,
valley is river, interest desire,
telephone poles branch as maples with sap.

North becomes south. The ridge-line falls
away to wide lowlands darkening with thaw.
All these fresh certainties I cannot watch easily.
Looking out from the escarpment,
catching my breath, I see how the slope
is marked by the black track of my climb.

Eric Miller

Afterblizzard

1.

First wake heavy eyelids my god who did this dazzle ouch
novas have invaded our coast was I drunk last night?
Who shared the bed with me?
I should be more careful well
a dog's surfing like salmon twitch in cataract plop dunes
with plumeous glass ruff of stars clinking like Your Health Madame

Thinking is icicle avalanche
lollop of the crusted hindquarters

Pour intensively the rebound sting of swarthiest coffee
in the snowbank torso of the morning relax
up to the chin in coddling purity

But the bushstuck birdballs are pouting calories like martyr haloes
they've retracted to circumference of eyes as valves of ice
no wings for them too broad the salt territory to defend
come donate a detonation of handthrown bread, there.

Satiated see they scuff like dog's tail's joy
snow angelically.

2.
Two phases.
First hibernation fluffed in the magnanimous heaven fat
cloaks the landscape fills the pockets moneythick
dulls prickles of the world with funny stomachs double chins

Everything a Baffin eunuch peaceful without reprisals

Eye for an eye? Come shut your rage in snugness
bough-drooping lids
but it comes angry but it comes thwarted
get me out of here obstructions pounding the clunk
blockage of veins
of the ambitious heart

My study cluttered with nullity
get the shovel where's the shovel
out of doors damned boots lace them up too tight
cut slash this is Pharaoh's quarry of nonentity
blisters this the desert of crystal suffocated zeal
out of my way you nothings out of my way

I shall trough across the waste a Grand Canal
I shall move the Mountain Quantity from Here to There

I have rolled ye stone from before ye tomb
now for a tipple of bearsnooze.

Victor-Laurent Tremblay

L'Art masculin de réussir dans *Jean Rivard*

On aura reconnu dans le titre celui du livre de Robert Major *"Jean Rivard" ou l'art de réussir*. Dans ce brillant essai qui reçut en 1992 le prix Gabrielle Roy décerné par l'Association des littératures canadiennes et québécoise, l'auteur s'intéresse au discours idéologique du roman d'Antoine Gérin-Lajoie, révélant sa pluralité "dans et sous le texte littéraire" (20). Ainsi, au lieu de s'attarder à l'agriculturisme manifeste du récit, lecture que la critique a privilégiée jusqu'à récemment, Major démontre que *Jean Rivard* est une version canadienne-française de la Quête du rêve américain. Il va s'en dire que le pouvoir ou l'héroïsme dont il s'agit dans ce roman est exclusivement masculin, et c'est à cette dimension homosociale, absente des analyses idéologiques de Major, que j'aimerais m'attarder ici.[1] Mais avant d'examiner les contrats fondateurs de l'utopie patriarcale de Gérin-Lajoie, il convient de situer brièvement le livre de ce dernier dans la production romanesque canadienne-française du XIXème siècle.

Une manière peut-être non-orthodoxe mais pratique de se rappeler globalement quels genres de roman s'écrivent durant toute cette période est de les associer à trois couleurs significatives: le rouge, le mauve et le brun. La première couleur est facilement reliée à l'influence politique des Rouges, dont les idées libérales furent à l'origine de la Rébellion de 1837-38. Mais elle réfère surtout aux écrits de cette époque qui furent grandement influencés par la première vague romantique caractérisée par des mouvements frénétiques, des goûts baroques, des passions souvent interdites et sanguinaires. Rappelons d'ailleurs que c'est en 1837 que parut le premier roman québécois,

L'Influence d'un livre d'Aubert de Gaspé fils, curieux livre où le meurtre, l'aventure et la magie s'entremêlent à une "quête de pouvoir" toute bourgeoise, qui n'est pas sans liens avec les revendications des Patriotes.[2] Cependant, le clergé de plus en plus puissant, qui s'oppose sans réserve à l'individualisme libéral préconisé par les Rouges peu à peu acculés au silence (surtout à partir de 1860, date de l'excommunication de l'Institut Canadien), va imposer ses critères moraux sur la littérature: on verra ainsi le brun, qui réfère à la terre nationale qu'il faut défendre en la cultivant, teindre complètement l'imaginaire romanesque. Il est de plus possible d'accoupler cette couleur au bleu, habituellement associé à la droite politique dont les rapports à la moralité et ainsi à la divinité céleste, à la vérité et à la pureté sont sans cesse affirmés. Célébrer le terroir et son passé les yeux tournés vers le ciel devint ainsi jusqu'au milieu du XXème siècle l'un des principaux critères pour juger de la valeur des oeuvres.

Il importe toutefois de signaler l'existence de trois romans—*La Terre paternelle* (1846) de P. Lacombe, *Charles Guérin* (1846) de P.-J.-O. Chauveau et *Jean Rivard* (1862, 1864) de A. Gérin-Lajoie—qui tentèrent un compromis entre les tendances rouge et brune. À l'idéologie dont ces livres dépendaient, on donna le nom de "mauvisme", la couleur mauve venant du mélange entre le libéralisme rouge capitaliste et le conservatisme bleu agriculturiste. Bien que ces textes, parus entre la Rébellion et la Confédération, fondent pour la critique le roman de la terre, ils se distinguent de ce genre par la volonté de réussite individuelle qui anime les héros. Ainsi *Jean Rivard* célèbre-t-il l'héroïsme au service de soi, tout en s'accommodant aux valeurs traditionnelles défendues par l'Église, celles que le vieux curé rappelle au protagoniste au début du livre (17-22). Cette position de compromis visait de façon toute pragmatique à concilier la loi du plus fort et le nationalisme canadien-français, l'essor industriel et l'appel à la majorité paysanne, le pouvoir laïque et la puissance cléricale.[3] Pourtant ce projet économique, plus ou moins défini et inspiré du modèle américain,[4] qui permettait à l'individu de poursuivre et de réaliser sa quête de puissance, n'avait rien de révolutionnaire: il ne faisait que systématiser et légaliser l'ordre patriarcal, modernisant celui-ci. Le roman de Gérin-Lajoie, par son désir d'élaborer une telle société au Québec vouée au progrès,[5] démontre particulièrement bien cette mise en place d'une réglementation des relations de pouvoir entre hommes. C'est pourquoi afin de caractériser les liens homosociaux de l'imaginaire de cette époque, je m'attarderai maintenant à définir les rap-

ports existant entre les différents personnages masculins de *Jean Rivard*.[6]

Le premier couple d'hommes qui attire l'attention est celui de Jean Rivard et de Gustave Charmenil, dont l'amitié, célébrée tout au long du livre dans les lettres qu'ils s'échangent, est considérée comme un "trésor" (116). Pourtant, on ne retrouve pas en eux les doublets romanesques traditionnels, que nous a légués le mythe,[7] mais leurs vies parallèles dramatisent plutôt l'opposition idéologique prônée par le clergé ultramontain entre la campagne bénéfique et la ville maléfique. Alors que Jean Rivard, dont le nom de famille suggère les mots "richard" et "arriviste", est le héros "terrien" du roman, Gustave Charme-"nil", dont les associations nominales sont plutôt négatives, est le protagoniste urbain à qui rien ne réussit. Cependant, dans *Jean Rivard*, ce contraste entre les deux espaces ne repose pas encore exclusivement sur une conception morale du monde, mais plutôt sur un fait économique. Si la ville est un lieu de désordre, de malhonnêteté et de vice, c'est que l'homme, sans travail et sans avenir, doit "tirer le diable par la queue"(60).[8] Les professions y étant encombrées (17), il ne reste donc plus aux jeunes gens que d'être contraints au dégoût, au désespoir et à la solitude, car ils sont trop pauvres pour se marier: telle est d'ailleurs la destinée de Charmenil.

En contraste, les deux quêtes romanesques de Jean Rivard pour le pouvoir et l'amour[9] se terminent dans l'apothéose et, comme celles-ci constituent l'essentiel du récit, il importe d'en réviser les étapes. La mort du père, qui enclenche la narration, est un lieu commun littéraire qui symbolise idéalement que le héros, devant le remplacer, a atteint l'âge adulte et qu'il est maintenant responsable socialement de sa destinée. Or, d'après les dires mêmes de l'auteur dans son "Avant-propos", Jean Rivard, étant "un jeune homme sans fortune, [... doit donc] s'élever par son mérite, à l'indépendance de fortune et aux premiers honneurs de son pays" (13). Mais comme faire de l'argent, signe de réussite, s'avère impossible, tant dans les vieux villages surpeuplés qu'à la ville, il ne lui reste plus qu'à créer de toute pièce son propre espace social. Sa quête, comme celle du héros mythique, devient civilisatrice: défricher la forêt pour fonder une nouvelle communauté correspond au passage de la nature à la culture que raconte le mythe, projet qui, on le sait, ne se fait pas sans violence.

Dans le roman, l'opposant ou l'ennemi qu'il faut victimiser pour fonder le nouveau pays est la forêt: il est, en effet, nécessaire de détruire la "sauvagerie" de celle-ci et de s'approprier son territoire.[10] L'emploi de nom-

breuses métaphores militaires illustre parfaitement la formidable bataille que Jean Rivard doit livrer pour créer son propre "paradis terrestre" (23) avec l'aide de son engagé, Pierre Gagnon et, plus tard, d'un autre travailleur, Joseph Lachance (remarquons leurs noms prédestinés à la victoire):

> [T]ous deux étaient armés en guerre, marchant ensemble contre l'ennemi commun; cet ennemi, c'était la forêt qui les entourait; et à travers laquelle les deux vaillants guerriers devaient se frayer un passage. Les travaux de nos défricheurs n'étaient plus autre chose que des batailles sanglantes; chaque soir on faisait le relevé du nombre des morts et on discutait le plan de campagne du lendemain. Les morts, c'étaient les arbres abattus dans le cours de la journée; les plus hauts étaient des généraux, des officiers, les arbrisseaux n'étaient que de la chair à canon. (45, voir aussi 23, 35, 64,111, ...)

L'un des livres de chevet de Jean est d'ailleurs une *Histoire populaire de Napoléon* qu'il lit le soir à Pierre, son compagnon d'armes, qui en est très friand. Ce dernier, en effet, en viendra à appeler son employeur "indifféremment l'Empereur, ou Sa Majesté, ou le Petit Caporal" (45) tout au long du roman, se considérant lui-même un de ses maréchaux (50). Le combat héroïque contre la nature, sauvage et dangereuse, est aussi symbolisé par la bataille que livre Pierre contre une ourse qui avait attaqué son maître. La chair et la peau de l'animal seront par la suite utiles aux deux hommes. Ce haut fait qui, souligne le narrateur, demeurera dans la mémoire collective pendant longtemps (83-84) montre, d'une part, que la collaboration homosociale est indispensable au projet héroïque et, d'autre part, qu'il faut mater la nature ennemie, la plier au désir de conquête économique. L'on retrouve du reste la même collaboration masculine dans le dessein de soumettre la forêt, tirant de celle-ci du bois de construction et de chauffage, de la potasse, du sucre et du gibier.

Comme dans le mythe fondateur, il importe aussi que le protagoniste se transforme en véritable héros afin que tous les autres hommes puissent le vénérer et le prendre comme modèle. Bien que le sujet agriculturiste ne s'y prête pas très bien, la symbolique guerrière constamment employée par le narrateur, les continuelles louanges qu'il adresse à Jean Rivard (14, 35, ...) qu'il qualifie sans cesse de héros (68, 73, 78, 86, 87, 100,...), ainsi que les nombreux honneurs et postes accumulés par lui tout en étant très jeune, hissent ce dernier au sommet de sa communauté. Cependant, au point de vue romanesque, l'anthropomorphisation des arbres comme combattants ne suffit pas à prouver la *virilité* remarquable de Jean Rivard. Bûcher ne

soulève guère d'intérêt chez le lecteur, parce que ce n'est ni un acte éclatant et courageux, ni surtout une entreprise impliquant des rapports humains, qui puisse permettre de jauger le caractère exceptionnel d'un homme en le comparant à d'autres hommes. C'est pourquoi l'on trouve dans le récit deux opposants qui mettent en valeur les exploits économiques de Rivard, malgré que l'antagonisme traditionnel entre le héros et ses ennemis ait été euphémisé au plus au point. Le premier est son père qui, bien que mort, lui sert de point de comparaison pour évaluer son succès: "serais-je condamné à travailler comme journalier, comme homme de peine, dans les lieux mêmes où mon père cultivait pour son propre compte?" (22) se dit-il au début, jurant qu'à "trente ans, [il] ser[a] plus riche que son père ne l'a jamais été" (30). L'on retrouve ce conflit de générations oedipien dans l'antinomie entre lui et le "père Gendreau-le-Plaideux" (156-57, 164,...) à qui s'allient "les plus âgés" (232). Ces "hommes arriérés", dont fait partie le notaire, s'opposent souvent, bien qu'inutilement la plupart du temps, à ses projets (219). Selon Jean, il ne faut pas "s'obstine[r] à marcher dans la route qu'ont suivie [nos] pères, sans tenir compte des découvertes dans l'ordre moral, politique et social, aussi bien que dans l'ordre industriel et scientifique" (219).

L'autre adversaire a complètement perdu son rôle d'agresseur pour n'être plus qu'un repaire négatif permettant au héros de se définir *a contrario*. L'ami Gustave Charmenil, citadin au nom plutôt péjoratif, ne joue pas en effet le rôle d'adjuvant, comme on aurait pu s'attendre, mais bien celui d'opposant en ce qu'il permet, par ses déboires professionnels et amoureux, de célébrer les réussites de Jean Rivard dans les mêmes domaines[11]. En fait, Charmenil n'est qu'une figure épistolaire qui ne participe pas à l'action: on ne le connaît que par ses lettres qui nous dévoilent d'un côté sa pauvreté et sa solitude et, de l'autre, sa célébration envieuse des richesses et de l'heureux mariage de son ami. La ville qu'il habite, lieu de castration et de féminisation parce qu'il y est impossible à l'homme honnête d'y réussir,[12] va surtout permettre, par opposition à la forêt et à la campagne, à montrer la virilité de Jean Rivard. Employant une expression de l'"Avant-propos", l'on peut dire que la défaite du "lion de ville" ne rend que plus éclatant le triomphe du "lion de la forêt" (14). Jean Rivard donnera du reste le nom de *Lion* à un cheval de luxe qu'il achètera lorsqu'il en aura les moyens, animal célèbre dans tout le canton (191) qui participera à "la gloire de son maître" quand ce dernier sera élu député au parlement (244).

Le premier couple masculin Rivard-Charmenil a permis de déterminer

qu'au-delà même de l'amitié existent des rapports mimétiques de compétition entre hommes qui permettent de définir les qualités viriles qui sont importantes pour réussir dans le monde utopique imaginé par Gérin-Lajoie. Il est toutefois un autre couple masculin qui importe autant sinon plus dans le triomphe du héros, celui composé de Jean Rivard et de Pierre Gagnon, que j'ai déjà brièvement mentionné. Sans doute pourrait-on insister sur l'entraide homosociale qui existe non seulement entre eux, mais aussi entre tous les colons qui viennent s'établir dans le canton. Il est toujours intéressant de s'arrêter à l'interdépendance et à la solidarité des relations masculines qui reposent sur les doubles contraintes fraternité/compétition et homosexualité/homophobie, rapports ambigus qui, depuis des millénaires, ont permis aux hommes de maîtriser la plupart des institutions aux dépens des femmes.[13] Mais comme les liens économiques entre Rivard, l'employeur, et Gagnon, son engagé, sont particulièrement importants dans le roman, c'est surtout à partir de ce point de vue intrinsèque au monde moderne libéral qu'il convient ici d'analyser le phénomène d'homosocialisation. Car c'est bien une "quête capitaliste" qui motive le héros de Gérin-Lajoie tout au long du roman.

Le patriarcat, on le sait, repose sur une dialectique de puissance et de fraternité entre hommes, réglementée par des lois communautaires qui empêchent la violence, et des rituels qui l'éliminent. Le processus historique, en promouvant l'individualisation aux dépens de la collectivité traditionnelle, a permis à l'homme une hiérarchisation, non plus simplement régie par les liens sanguins, la moralité ou la politique, toujours dépendants du mythe, mais sur l'avoir matériel de chacun. Ainsi l'héroïsme masculin est-il évalué de plus en plus par la quantité d'argent qu'un homme a su amasser en regard des autres et souvent à leurs frais. Rappelons que le "mauvisme", auquel se rattache le roman de Gérin-Lajoie, acquiesçait à cette vision du monde capitaliste tout en s'accommodant à une réalité sociale plus traditionnelle. Ainsi quand on examine la "quête économique" du protagoniste, derrière son paternalisme "ancien régime", il est facile de percevoir la division des classes patron/employé ou bourgeois/prolétaire sur lequel s'érige le Capital. La particularité de ce paradigme est d'être étroitement associé à la dialectique sexuée homme/femme, relation très asymétrique face au pouvoir. Aussi Jean Rivard, par sa fonction même de patron prospère, est-il présenté comme l'homme viril parfait, alors que Pierre Gagnon, un employé qui est pourtant plus âgé que lui, est, en raison

de sa position subalterne, métaphoriquement féminisé.

Si Jean Rivard n'a pas demandé à un de ses nombreux jeunes frères de participer à son oeuvre de colonisation au lieu d'engager Pierre Gagnon, c'est précisément que le degré de parenté ne lui aurait pas permis d'exercer son autorité économique, comme celle du mari sur sa femme, et ainsi de produire le surplus qui est à la base de son succès. Gagnon, qui n'est pas instruit mais qui connaît tous les métiers, qui est "d'une gaieté intarissable [...] et sembl[e] insensibl[e] aux fatigues corporelles," incarne parfaitement la classe de travailleurs qui, complètement sous l'emprise de leurs patrons, permettront à ceux-ci de s'enrichir (36). L'appellation "mon bourgeois" pour désigner Jean vient souvent aux lèvres de Pierre (87, 173, 174, 241, 291).

La prééminence de Jean Rivard sur son compagnon de travail en tant qu'appartenant à une autre classe sociale est d'ailleurs très marquée. Non seulement n'ont-ils pas la même éducation (46), mais Jean a les "habitudes de [sa] classe" (20) entre autres pour la lecture, il est attaché avec passion à sa propriété qu'il considère comme son royaume (152), il croit au progrès et à l'expansion industrielle, et surtout il fait constamment l'éloge du travail (sa devise est *"labor omnia vincit,"* 178), de la franchise, de la tempérance et de la santé morale (13, 26, 39, 52, 69, ..., 247, 264, ...). Ne retrouve-t-on pas là le credo capitaliste et puritain de la classe bourgeoise avec sa hantise du mensonge (savoir=pouvoir), son besoin de respectabilité sociale, son idolâtrie du travail productif et du rendement palpable? Finalement il importe, pour lui comme pour son serviteur, de se marier "suivant [s]on rang" (174). Jean Rivard, en tant qu'homme bourgeois, autrement dit en tant qu'entrepreneur et patron, s'avère donc incessamment relié à une masculinité exemplaire.

Quant à Pierre Gagnon, qu'il soit rattaché à la féminité en raison de sa position de subalterne ne fait pas de doute. Au début de leur association, c'est lui qui s'occupe de la maison et surtout qui est responsable de faire la cuisine (74). Pierre possède aussi une sensibilité à fleur de peau, pleurant même "comme un enfant" devant le danger de mort qu'avait couru son maître face à l'ourse (83).[14] La "sollicitude maternelle" du serviteur est de plus très accentuée: d'abord il élèvera et civilisera un gentil petit écureuil (43), symbole d'union entre lui et Jean, et, plus tard, après avoir tué la mère ourse, il prendra la place de celle-ci auprès d'une jeune oursonne orpheline, "instrui[sant] sa jeune pupille et l'initi[ant] aux usages de la société" (84). Ces animaux domestiqués représentent idéalement la fécondité homosociale du

couple masculin, dont tiennent d'ailleurs tous les produits que les deux hommes tirent ensemble de la forêt.

Le couple Rivard-Gagnon est un analogon approprié du mariage capitaliste entre patrons et prolétaires, lequel *engendre* le capital. Le sauvetage de Rivard par Gagnon des griffes de l'ourse, en plus de bien illustrer que le travailleur est prêt à se sacrifier pour son employeur, démontre que son comportement bénéficie de façon matérielle à ce dernier, à ses descendants et, enfin, à lui-même. Ainsi Pierre transforma-t-il la peau de l'ourse en "lit moelleux pour son jeune maître," voulant aussi faire de la peau de l'ourson tué une couverture pour le futur fils de Jean, mais devant l'insistance de celui-ci il s'en fit un casque d'hiver. Ce geste héroïque et l'échange économique qui en résulte prennent valeur d'exemples à suivre par la communauté, atteignant même le domaine de la légende qui, comme le mythe, participe de la loi communautaire:

> Ces deux peaux ainsi utilisées furent gardées longtemps comme souvenir d'un événement qui revint bien souvent par la suite dans les conversations de nos défricheurs et se conserve encore aujourd'hui dans la mémoire des premiers habitants du Canton de Bristol. (83-84)

Ce télescopage d'images où la nature sauvage instinctuelle et redoutable se trouve associée à un lit douillet et à l'acte de procréation n'est pas sans rappeler aussi la nature ambiguë de la collaboration homosociale, qui est à la fois compétitive et fraternelle, homosexuelle et homophobique.[15] Au niveau symbolique, la rencontre avec des animaux sauvages menaçants n'est-elle pas révélatrice de nos peurs les plus secrètes? De même, est-il significatif, je crois, que Gustave rappelle cette "aventure" avec l'animal dangereux, dans la lettre même où il raconte son aventure sentimentale ratée (90), ajoutant ainsi une connotation sexuelle à ce chapitre qui s'intitule d'ailleurs "Une aventure" (80). Enfin, que l'auteur surnomme le chapitre 24 (132-37), dans lequel il rend compte en détail de sa fortune, "Un chapitre scabreux," ne surprend guère. En associant ainsi sexualité à profits—technique qui l'assure de l'attention du lecteur—, il reprend inconsciemment l'équation que le travailleur comme la femme représente pour le chef d'entreprise un moyen différent de procréer et de retirer un plaisir: celui d'accumuler des bénéfices.

Dans la *mimétique interdividuelle* pour le pouvoir, selon les termes de René Girard (399), féminiser l'Autre n'est pas le seul moyen de montrer sa supériorité sur lui. On peut l'infantiliser ou, de façon très raciste, le consid-

érer comme étant étranger ou d'une autre race. Jean Rivard utilise indirectement ces deux autres procédés d'infériorisation par l'intermédiaire de la lecture. Non seulement son pouvoir de lire le distingue-t-il de Pierre et des autres colons analphabètes, mais la lecture qu'il fait à voix haute les soirs d'hiver à ses voisins (111), et surtout au début à son fidèle compagnon qui, par après, les racontait de mémoire aux autres (78), lui permet d'influencer les gens, comme le maître d'école qui forme ses élèves.[16] Un de ses livres favoris, *Robinson Crusoé*, tient de l'autre méthode d'assurer sa supériorité, considérant l'Autre de race inférieure. Ainsi Pierre se considère-t-il comme le Vendredi de Jean Rivard (50, 87).

Dans l'univers romanesque, les lectures favorites du protagoniste constituent souvent un motif auquel il importe de s'attarder, car non seulement révèlent-elles l'univers intérieur de celui-ci et ce qui le motive, mais elles structurent l'imaginaire même de l'auteur et, de façon plus consciente, lui permettent d'argumenter sa thèse. Le livre lu est à la fois "mise en abîme" du roman même et exemple qui illustre plus qu'il ne démontre le projet idéologique du romancier, ce dernier utilisant la renommée d'un autre écrivain pour asseoir son propre pouvoir et sa propre vérité. C'est ce que démontre les quatre livres que Jean Rivard choisit pour l'accompagner dans son oeuvre de colonisation, ouvrages qu'ils considèrent comme "[s]es premiers compagnons de travail" (264). Il est significatif du reste que ceux-ci sont des livres d'hommes, c'est-à-dire des livres qui idéalisent la fraternité homosociale, dont deux qui ont rendu célèbres les couples masculins Robinson-Vendredi et Don Quichotte-Sancho Pança, duos archétypes auxquels s'identifient constamment Rivard et Gagnon.

Gérin-Lajoie veut que son héros soit, comme Robinson, le bourgeois par excellence "qui, selon Marthe Robert, devient bienfaiteur précisément dans la mesure où il n'a que lui-même en vue [:... son] intérêt personnel coïncid[ant] avec le bien commun, le bourgeois *intéressé* est l'agent actif du progrès" (147). Quant à Pierre Gagnon, qui s'identifie à Vendredi, le romancier veut que le lecteur le considère comme le disciple, le compagnon de travail et l'ami de Rivard. Comme Marthe Robert le dit de Vendredi, "il est l'élève parfait, [...] le fils parfait, né de l'homme seul [...] l'héritier spirituel en attendant d'être capable de fonder une famille charnelle" (153). Pourtant, au-delà de cette parthénogénèse masculine, qui tient des rites de passage où les garçons renaissent à la société *via* les hommes, il faut savoir discerner le non-dit: que ce fils *rêvé* permet à Robinson-Rivard, d'une part, d'assouvir sa

soif de pouvoir et, d'autre part, de l'exploiter sans que rien ne paraisse.

Si *Robinson Crusoé* "enseign[e] à être industrieux," c'est-à-dire symbolise la "production économique" entre nos deux protagonistes, le but des *Aventures de Don Quichotte de la Manche* est au contraire de les "fai[re] rire", du moins c'est ce qu'affirme Jean Rivard (264). Toutefois, derrière les références à l'amitié entre Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança, on retrouve l'affirmation des différences de classes et aussi celle de la prédominance de la réalité et du travail sur les "aventures" qui appartiennent à l'illusion romanesque et à l'amusement. Le célèbre classique permet de plus d'aborder timidement le domaine amoureux par l'intermédiaire de la "Dulcinée de Toboso" (50) que Jean trouve grotesque (50) et Pierre trop romantique. Selon ce dernier, il ne faut pas percevoir la femme "comme un ange, une divinité, mais comme une aide, une compagne de travail, une personne disposée à tenir votre maison, à vous soigner dans vos maladies, à prendre soin de vos enfants, lorsque le bon Dieu vous en donne" (170), conception à laquelle acquiesce Jean Rivard et le narrateur (138, 192, 271-72).

La femme, qu'on épouse "suivant [s]on rang" (174) et qui vient en récompense couronner de nombreuses années de travail, demeure cependant associée à l'animalité. Jean la compare à un oiseau qui viendra "embellir et [...] égayer [...] la cage construite" (124) et Pierre donne à l'oursonne orpheline qu'il a élevée le nom de Dulcinée (84). Mais la femme, ce "beau sexe" de "nature nerveuse [et] impressionnable," c'est surtout celle qui s'occupe du "ministère de l'intérieur" en "goûtant les joies ineffables de la maternité" (149, 168, 192), alors que le mari "qu'elle avait choisi pour son protecteur et son maître" possède le monde extérieur pour s'affirmer. Le roman démontre bien d'ailleurs que le mariage participe d'un échange exclusif entre hommes: Louise Routier quittera son père selon le "commandement divin [...] pour suivre son époux" (148), Jean Rivard, alors que ce dernier fera la "grande demande" à sa domestique Françoise de la part de Pierre Gagnon, auquel de plus il servira de père le jour du mariage (175-76).

La part du roman réservée à l'univers féminin est cependant bien minime quand on la compare à celle qu'occupe la quête commune de pouvoir du duo Rivard-Gagnon, qui, devenus voisins, continueront à "se revoir presque chaque jour" (177). Cette réduction de l'importance de la femme, surtout au niveau de la vie sociale, est symboliquement marquée par le changement de nom de la jeune colonie. Alors "qu'à l'époque des amours" de Jean, la localité était "désignée sous le nom de Louiseville," aussitôt qu'elle prend de

l'importance, on la nommera officiellement Rivardville (157). Lorsque, à la fin du roman, Jean Rivard révèle au narrateur les "secrets [de son] succès," n'est-il pas étrange que celui-ci ne souffle mot du rôle joué par sa femme, même si, selon le narrateur, "il n'a rien dit par délicatesse sans doute"? Il est tout de même un domaine, en plus des travaux ménagers, sur lequel celle-ci semble posséder quelque influence, c'est celui de la religion: "Fidèle observatrice de ses devoirs religieux, elle les faisait pratiquer à tous ceux qui dépendaient d'elle" (271). Le nouveau village est d'ailleurs consacré à Sainte-Louise. Au début, avant le départ de Jean, ne l'avait-elle pas engagé à lire tous les dimanches quelques pages "d'une petite *Imitation de Jésus-Christ*" dont elle lui avait fait cadeau? (34)

Il serait cependant erroné d'accorder une grande importance à cette autorité morale de Louise, car ce dernier livre, on l'oublie souvent, est un livre d'hommes,[17] comme les trois autres déjà signalés. Ces ouvrages tant appréciés de Jean Rivard lui ont servi non seulement de guide de conduite, mais il s'en est servi comme schémas directeurs pour fonder une communauté homosociale modèle. Si Gérin-Lajoie a choisi ces écrits instinctivement, c'est que ceux-ci répondaient au projet de société qu'il avait conçu afin de rallier les divers camps idéo-politiques de son temps. Ces livres n'étaient-ils pas apparus eux aussi en réponse aux problèmes de leur époque? La vie contemplative promue par *L'Imitation* répondait aux horreurs et désordres sociaux des XIV et XVème siècles, *Don Quichotte* (1605-15) aux aberrations sociales et spirituelles causées par un ordre théocratique rétrograde, *Robinson Crusoé* (1719) à la révolution bourgeoise de Cromwell et les perspectives qu'elle ouvrait au rêve individuel, et enfin Napoléon lui-même qui offrait à l'homme moderne un modèle de réalisation de son désir d'omnipotence sur les autres.[18]

Nous avons vu que *Robinson Crusoé* et *Don Quichotte* ont permis au narrateur de statuer les relations de pouvoir économiques et matrimoniales entre le couple masculin Rivard-Gagnon. *L'Histoire populaire de Napoléon* qui, selon Jean, enseigne l'action et le courage (264) démontre que la hiérarchie et le savoir guerriers sont inhérents à la société patriarcale et que, comme le souligne Gilbert Durand, "c'est la société militaire qui fonde la société civile" (187). Enfin *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ* rappelle que la maîtrise spirituelle se réalise en se soumettant à l'enseignement de l'Église. Ces deux derniers ouvrages, dont l'un réfère à l'autorité terrestre et l'autre au pouvoir divin, se rattachent à un troisième duo viril très important dans

l'utopie romanesque de Gérin-Lajoie, celui de Jean Rivard et de son ami le curé Octave Doucet, couple masculin dont l'engendrement même de Rivardville dépend.

L'intimité de ceux-ci est en effet soulignée de façon très équivoque et c'est cet attachement particulier entre "les deux amis" (166) qui est à la base de la fondation et du progrès de la nouvelle colonie :

> En se voyant pour la première fois, ces deux jeunes gens s'étaient sentis comme magnétiquement attirés l'un vers l'autre; la liaison la plus étroite n'avait pas tardé à s'établir entre eux, [à un point tel que Rivard devait épouser la soeur de l'autre] qu'il n'avait jamais vue, mais qu'il aimait parce qu'il la supposait douée de toutes les belles qualités de son ami. (159-60) [Octave était donc] un ami de coeur dans le sein duquel il pouvait épancher, comme autrefois, ses plus intimes confidences. (162) On pouvait voir quelquefois les deux amis, seuls au milieu de la nuit, dans la chambre de Jean Rivard, discuter avec enthousiasme [...] s'entretenir avec bonheur du bien qu'ils allaient produire [...] C'étaient le pouvoir spirituel et le pouvoir temporel se soutenant l'un par l'autre et se donnant la main.[19] (166) Rivard n'entreprenait rien d'important sans consulter son ami Doucet. (181) (Voir aussi les autres rencontres la nuit pour discuter de l'éducation des enfants, 224.) [Leurs] opinions [...] coïncidaient parfaitement. (282)

D'après le narrateur, c'est bien sur cette fraternité exemplaire que devrait s'appuyer le pouvoir social. La réussite du duo Rivard-Doucet traduit parfaitement les rapports que le logocentrisme patriarcal entretient avec le divin. Ainsi, souligne le texte, "Jamais roi, empereur, président, dictateur ou souverain quelconque ne prit autant d'intérêt au bonheur et à la prospérité de ses sujets que [c]es deux amis[-là...] pour la plus grande gloire de Dieu" (166). Et, par conséquent, après avoir accumulé les charges publiques et les honneurs, "Jean Rivard devint tout-puissant" (235) et, d'affirmer Gustave Charmenil, "[Il est] notre modèle à tous" (216). Le titre d'"homme carré" que Pierre Gagnon lui donne à la fin montre bien que, par ses liens symboliques avec le chiffre quatre, Jean Rivard est relié à la stabilité du monde, la perfection divine et l'univers dans sa totalité.[20]

Dans cette "quête territoriale" que retrace le roman, le politicien Rivard et le curé Doucet remplissent le rôle dédoublé de Dieu le Père, établissant la Loi phallique fondatrice d'une nouvelle "patrie". Celle-ci repose sur le passage d'un état naturel à l'ordre culturel, le Logos sublimant, contrôlant et ordonnant la forêt sauvage, l'animalité, l'instinctuel. Le verbe étant "au commencement" du logocentrisme, il n'est guère surprenant que le roman de Gérin-Lajoie, qui se veut créateur d'un nouvel ordre culturel, privilégie le pouvoir de l'écrit. Ainsi, en plus des quatre livres favoris lus à haute voix

pour le bénéfice communautaire, trouve-t-on une description de la bibliothèque de Jean Rivard (262-64), laquelle joue un rôle important dans sa vie comme le journal et les comptes qu'il tient chaque jour. Les livres des "grands hommes des siècles passés" et les "traités scientifiques" qu'il préfère (263), de même que ses propres exercices d'écriture participent du désir phallocentrique traditionnel de maîtriser le réel[21]. La religion, les lois et, plus tard, les sciences ne sont-ils pas des moyens de contrôle?

À cela il faut ajouter l'échange important de lettres entre Jean et Gustave, la bataille livrée par Jean et Octave pour l'institution d'une école, et enfin le rôle fondateur que joue le narrateur en tant que personnage dans la dernière partie du roman, car c'est sa rencontre fortuite avec Jean Rivard, puis avec Octave Doucet et Pierre Gagnon, qui l'amènera à rédiger le roman que le lecteur est en train de lire. Ainsi ce livre, qu'on a dit agriculturiste, célèbre-t-il paradoxalement non seulement le pouvoir de l'écrit mais se termine sur l'acte même d'écrire dont il dépend pour exister. Le Logos, incarné dans le narrateur omniscient devenu personnage, se porte garant de l'union fructueuse des trois amis, de leurs liens économiques et spirituels, et le roman se transforme en un *Nouveau Testament* pouvant répondre aux problèmes sociaux de son époque.

Voulant dépasser l'ethnocentrisme habituel de la critique littéraire devant un livre tel que *Jean Rivard*, je me suis intéressé dans cet article aux divers couples masculins du roman, cherchant par une approche anthropo-culturelle à prouver que leur interdépendance est au fondement d'une société androcentrique idéale. Sans doute Robert Major a-t-il établi dans son livre *"Jean Rivard" et l'art de réussir* que le "success story" du protagoniste prouvait l'"américanité" de l'oeuvre et son caractère utopique dans un contexte québécois, mais de l'essence patriarcale de cette entreprise, il ne disait mot. Pour ma part, je crois que la thèse de Gérin-Lajoie fait suite de façon convaincante à la critique que son beau-père, Etienne Parent, adressait à l'ultramontanisme montant: que ce serait "une déplorable aberration du spiritualisme [...] à rapetisser Dieu et l'homme à la fois en se substituant aux vertus *mâles* et actives que requiert la société" (L'italique est de moi.).[22] L'analyse démontre en effet que son livre, qu'il se défendait d'être un roman, est un programme socio-économique, politique et religieux qui se rattache à une vision du monde étatsunienne, dont le phallocentrisme et l'homosocialité ont été ces dernières décennies de plus en plus dévoilés.[23]

Je voudrais terminer cette étude en signalant que les trois couples masculins

privilégiés par Gérin-Lajoie correspondent plus ou moins aux *trois registres* de l'inconscient que Lacan reconnaît à toute activité textuelle. Le couple Rivard-Gagnon, qui déterminent les relations économiques, coïncide avec *le réel*, c'est-à-dire la nécessité présente de posséder le territoire. Le couple Rivard-Charmenil, qui se rapporte à *l'imaginaire*, détermine les images et les idéaux en offrant deux pôles contradictoires (campagne / ville) au désir humain. Enfin le couple Rivard-Doucet se rattache au *symbolique* en ce qu'il soumet le sujet à la Loi, structurant son désir, et donnant du sens à la Parole. Selon la psychanalyse, le romanesque en nouant les trois niveaux se situe à l'intermédiaire entre la réalité et le symbolique qui interdisent le désir, et le monde imaginaire qui réalise le désir, ce que *Jean Rivard* démontre très bien.

Le roman de Gérin-Lajoie correspond à la "romance" homosociale typique, c'est-à-dire au roman Harlequin pour hommes (de guerre, d'espionnage, de science-fiction, le western et le polar) qui répond aux rêves de puissance de ceux-ci sur d'autres hommes et femmes, et dont les principales relations qu'elles soient amicales ou antagonistes sont habituellement avec d'autres hommes.[24] Un livre d'hommes donc, comme *Robinson Crusoé*, *Don Quichotte*, l'*Histoire de Napoléon* et *L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, où la mise à l'écart du féminin brouille la filiation. Dans ces ouvrages homosociaux, c'est en effet le sol d'un territoire, d'une *patrie* matérielle, spirituelle ou utopique, qui joue le rôle matriciel et législateur. Que ce soit par linéarité patriarcale verticale (relation père/fils biologique ou spirituelle) ou par fraternité civique horizontale, il s'agit toujours de "conter l'origine" sans passer par les femmes.

NOTES

1 La présente approche qui scrute les "relations masculines" est contiguë à la critique féministe qui s'attarde surtout au sort que les auteurs réservent à la femme dans leur univers romanesque.

2 Voir Tremblay, 83-133.

3 À propos du mauvisme, voir Proulx, *Le Roman du territoire*, 39-76. Cet essai démontre que dans les romans publiés par la suite, "l'éventail des conceptions idéo-politiques [suit] une trajectoire qui mène à un conservatisme toujours plus marqué" (111).

4 Gérin-Lajoie fut un grand admirateur des institutions américaines et pendant plusieurs années il fit partie de la direction de l'Institut Canadien de Montréal qui révérait celles-ci. Voir Dionne.

5 La revue *Voix et images*, dans un numéro spécial intitulé "Science et fiction au Québec:

l'émergence d'un savoir" (No 57), situe les enjeux idéologiques ambigus de la notion de progrès tout au cours de cette période.

6 Il est possible, je crois, de considérer ce roman comme l'un des paradigmes de l'imaginaire de l'époque. Selon Major, *Jean Rivard* est une "oeuvre importante, et dans l'histoire de notre littérature et comme phénomène idéologique [...] Elle a exercé un rayonnement considérable, elle est une des plus commentées et des plus connues de notre XIXème siècle" (12-13). Il faut ajouter qu'elle a été maintes fois éditée et que de "tous les romans canadiens du XIXème, *Les Anciens Canadiens* exceptés, c'est celui qui a obtenu le plus de succès auprès des lecteurs" (Dionne, 383).

7 Il faut prendre le mot "mythe" dans son acception la plus large, en tant que récit primordial à l'origine et à la base de toute société. Au contraire des *doubles* qui s'opposent dans la *mimésis d'appropriation* que raconte le mythe (le héros *versus* le monstrueux; le bien *versus* le mal; etc.), les doublets proviennent du dédoublement du héros et correspondent au couple d'amis qui s'entraident dans la quête mythique. Voir Tremblay, 15 et 70.

8 Bien que Gérin-Lajoie soit plutôt silencieux sur ce sujet, l'espace maléfique de la ville est aussi relié au fait que le pouvoir socio-économique est possédé par l'Autre, c'est-à-dire les Anglophones. Comme remède à cette castration, l'auteur propose un espace vierge où les Canadiens français, imitant les moeurs conquérantes capitalistes de l'Anglo-Saxon qu'il admire, pourront exercer leur pouvoir en français.

9 La quête héroïque, dont dérive le romanesque, comporte deux facettes reliées aux impératifs biologiques: le besoin de territoire pour survivre (manger et procréer) et le besoin de sexualité pour se propager. Ces deux exigences/désirs conduisent inévitablement à la violence mimétique. C'est ce que raconte le récit de toute quête.

10 Voir les notes précédentes 7 et 9.

11 À l'espace négatif urbain, qui est associé à Charmenil, se rattache le "jeune avocat de la ville" qui se présente aux élections fédérales contre Rivard, et qui au contraire de ce dernier "brigu[e] les suffrages des électeurs, non dans l'intérêt public, mais dans son propre intérêt", en pratiquant la corruption à tous les niveaux (238).

12 À propos de la symbolique néfaste de la ville propagée par le roman du terroir, voir l'article de Sirois, 272-276, et Tremblay, 226-230.

13 Les ouvrages à ce sujet sont de plus en plus nombreux. Voir entre autres ceux d'Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick et Richard Dellamora. Pour une définition de l'homosocialisation, voir Michel Foucault. Alors que ce dernier écrit ce mot avec deux "m", Luce Irigaray préfère utiliser l'expression "hom(m)osexualité" pour décrire une réalité semblable.

14 La description de ce compagnonnage fertile n'est d'ailleurs pas sans connotations sensuelles: après la "volupté [...] du travail des bras [...et] quelquefois de douces jouissances [...devant] les beautés de la nature" (39), ils peuvent "jouir [ensemble ...] de certains moments de loisirs" (50). Souvent "la bonne humeur de Pierre Gagnon servait à entretenir celle de son jeune maître" (45). Plus tard viendra "l'indicible jouissance de la récolte" (85).

15 L'homosexualité et l'homophobie sont les deux faces inversées d'une même réalité patriarcale: l'entraide homosociale repose sur un mimétisme, une identification et une interaction affectivo-sexuelles entre mâles, et à la fois sur la peur et l'interdit de cette attirance qui, consciente ou réalisée, les ravalerait au niveau d'objet sexuel, les associant ainsi au monde féminin qu'ils déprécient. Voir la note 13 et 14.

16 La lecture collective montre bien que la société n'a pas encore accédé à l'individualisation moderne où la lecture est un acte privé.

17 Ce célèbre livre de piété, achevé en 1441, est attribué à Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471). Issu des Frères de la Vie Commune, cet ouvrage était d'abord destiné à régir la vie spirituelle d'une communauté de moines.

18 À propos de l'autoritarisme politique et social de Jean Rivard, voir Robert, 237-243.

19 La "passion dominante" d'Octave étant de fumer la pipe, ce dont Jean prend grand "plaisir à le tourmenter", il est légitime de se demander si cet "objet aimé", qui "tyrannisa[it] impitoyablement sa victime" et dont la vue le "troublait" lorsqu'il voulait arrêter de fumer, ne serait pas relié par association inconsciente à la fellation homosexuelle (165-166). Bien qu'il soit impossible de déterminer à quand remonte l'expression argotique "faire un pipe" et si elle était alors employée au Québec, il demeure que la référence est psychanalytiquement valable. Voir "fumée" et "pipe" dans *Le Dictionnaire du français non conventionnel* de Cellar et Rey.

20 Voir les mots "carré" et "quatre" dans le *Dictionnaire des symboles* de Chevalier et Gheerbrant.

21 Bien des chercheurs, dont Lacan et Foucault, ont démontré que, depuis sa naissance, l'écriture—quelque projet ou idéologie qu'elle défende —participe d'une *quête de puissance* sur le réel qui jusqu'ici a été patriarcale.

22 Cité par Major, 46.

23 Au Québec, au point de vue littéraire, voir entre autres des études comme celle de Janine Boynard-Frot, de Patricia Smart et mon ouvrage *Au commencement était le mythe.*

24 Depuis deux décennies, de plus en plus d'auteurs féminins ont transformé la *typologie* masculine de ces genres.

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Bogdan Czaykowski

Traditions of Love

O kiss of the left breast I must have my right
as though it were an apple in a preserved garden.
And we returned to the places of our love, the old streets,
where brown rain fell with the leaves, in the moonless city.
Scenes from the pastoral tradition pass before my eyes:
Daphnis and Chloe somersaulting under a tree,
Adam and Amaryllis, but perhaps the names are different,
Werther gored with a pen, Cornish stories.
Echo accompanies us everywhere, in these old walls,
and with the echo of our steps this more distant memory
harmonizes. Why this trace?
How sweet, what's forbidden.
And what's forbidden for a second time—sweeter.

translated from the Polish by Iain Higgins

epilog

the cops announce your death
body found beside truck, .308 propped up against truck
head blown away, body sent to edmonton autopsy
"don't attend the wake or funeral, we'll lock you up"

slowly the other story comes out
somebody murdered you, but no tracks
no prints, no witness
I'm seen at the wake
I'm seen at the funeral, though I'm at work three hours away
the coffin won't go to the bottom
unfinished business the people say
it wasn't suicide the people say

five months I cry
five months I carry the .303 for my head
then I drink red calona with your oldest son
and I stop crying
his speech is yours, his actions and thoughts too
best of all, the church hasn't screwed up his mind

Donna Coates

The Best Soldiers of All
Unsung Heroines in Canadian Women's Great War Fictions

If we keep on speaking the same language together, we're going to reproduce the same history. Begin the same old stories all over again. . . . Listen: all around us, men and women sound just the same. The same discussions, the same arguments, the same scenes. The same distractions and separations. The same difficulties, the same impossibility of making connections. The same . . . Same . . . Always the same.

—LUCE IRIGARAY 205

In the 1950s, Desmond Pacey remarked that war writing was the least examined area in Canadian literature, a comment still relevant today. To date, only one article on Great War fictions has appeared. Sweepingly titled "Canadian Fiction of the Great War," it sounds inclusive, but is not. Although Eric Thompson declares his intention to analyze war novels "which constitute the best fiction by Canadian writers about the experiences of Canadian fighting soldiers in the Great War of 1914-18" (81), he discusses only fictions by Peregrine Acland, Charles Yale Harrison, Philip Child, and contemporary writer Timothy Findley. In exclusively considering male writers, however, Thompson succumbs to traditional patriarchal criticism, which assumes that the weaponless are wordless, and that war is none of women's business; hence he ignores several of the "best" wartime writers such as Gertrude Arnold and L. M. Montgomery, whose novels also include (albeit peripherally) the experiences of Canadian fighting soldiers. Thompson's failure to include women in his study is particularly glaring in light of the fact that Carl F. Klinck's *Literary History of Canada* mentions Evah McKowan, Francis Marion Beynon, and Nellie McClung as Great War fiction writers. (Surprisingly, the *History* overlooks Grace Blackburn and L. M. Montgomery.)[1] Aside from receiving brief mention in Klinck, however, women's wartime fictions have been completely ignored; a study of their response to the Great War is long overdue.[2]

One of the common threads which runs through these fictions—*Aleta Dey* (1919), by Francis Marion Beynon; *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder* (1917), by Nellie McClung; *Rilla of Ingleside* (1920), by L. M. Montgomery; *The Man Child* (1930), by Grace Blackburn; *Sister Anne! Sister Anne!!* (1919), by Gertrude Arnold; *Janet of Kootenay: Love, Life and Laughter in an Arcady of the West* (1919), by Evah McKowan—is women writers' awareness that their voices and values are marginalized in wartime. McClung points directly to this omission in *The Next of Kin* by having one of her characters complain that her husband has enlisted without first consulting her; the man's response is telling: "The country's business concerns men, not women. . . . Men are concerned with the big things of life" (177). Women, in his opinion, are "missing" from the subject of war. To be sure, at the outbreak of war, many women in these fictions feel that they have no role to play in wartime; with few historical or literary predecessors to tell them how to "occupy" themselves in wartime, they are characters without texts. The occasional women written into war literature provide unsatisfactory role models: Penelope weaves and re-weaves; Desdemona is a "captive" audience to her soldier's tale of fortune. Not surprisingly, then, Montgomery's youthful Rilla expresses bitter resentment at her lover's repudiation of her when the Empire calls, especially since she believes she has nothing (except tears) to substitute in his place: "Women . . . just had to sit and cry at home" (35). To her, war signifies absence and rejection.

Rilla's observation about gendered activities in wartime is astute; a man can respond to a "roll call," whereas a woman has to devise her own "role" without benefit of manuals or reference books which prescribe her duties. But once a man decides to enlist, the rest is easy: the military attends to his physical needs and dictates his movements thereafter. Moreover, a recruit knows (or thinks he knows) what going to war entails.[3] Nancy Huston contends that the enlisted man can conjure up centuries of illustrious models from history which "reinforce his conviction to fight and justify his acts" (272). Correspondingly, several recruits in Canadian women's novels envision their participation in war based on the accounts of war they have read. Blackburn's inductee in *The Man Child* enlists because he has assimilated tales of "honour and glory" (234). One of Montgomery's conscripts, a medical man in training, is enticed to war because he has ingested the heroic actions of a doctor on the battlefront during the Balkan War (25). In going to war, draftees may be hoping to satisfy what Nancy K. Miller, drawing

upon Freud's theories on dreams and wish fulfillment, terms "egoistic and ambitious wishes" (346). In master narratives, the hero knows that he will be exposed to danger, undergo perilous adventure, but eventually emerge triumphant. Because history and literature are written by winners, and war narratives are "heroic," not "enemic" tales (Huston 273), he feels invincible: "'Nothing can happen to me'" (Miller 346). Should the young man not survive the conflict, he dies a hero "in action," making a sacrifice in the service of his country, making history. In answering the call to arms, he cannot lose; he faces what might be termed a positive Catch-22. But war absents women, renders them unimportant in the face of mighty concepts and the male anguish of battles. And at the time of the Great War, love and marriage are women's prime destinies, so adolescents like Rilla can have only "erotic wishes" (Miller 364). When her sweetheart vanishes, the message to Rilla is clear: "'Nothing can happen to me'" (Miller 346). Rilla suffers from what Sharon O'Brien terms "combat envy" (192), but not for long.

Anything can, and does, happen to Canadian women in the wartime climate, for the absence of men brings about positive results. While none of the texts expresses the kind of "invigorating sense of revolution, release, reunion, and re-vision" which Sandra Gilbert identifies in her study of British and American Great War women writers (201),[4] it could be argued that Canadians writers are war profiteers, seizing the chaos occasioned by war to vanquish women's subordinate status. In their texts, they insist upon bringing an end to the image of women as care-givers and nurturers, and forcefully reiterate that women deserve a place in society alongside men, not as their subalterns. Writers express their anger that women have been denied access to public and political realms, caution that they can no longer afford to be onlookers in a man's world, and beseech their characters to make their presence felt during the war. With women's voices and values part of a "new world order," they argue, Canada will be a better place for all.[5]

Although it sounds callous, in *The Next of Kin* and other texts, there is a feeling of jubilation in the air, a sensation akin to the cliché, "While the cat's away, the mice will play." One of McClung's characters captures this statement, stating,

> "I was like the mouse who timidly tiptoed out to the saucer of brandy, and, taking a sip, went more boldly back, then came again with considerable swagger; and at last took a good drink and then strutted up and down saying, 'Bring on your old black cat!'" (191)

Prior to the war, this woman was docile and submissive, obedient to her autocratic husband's every command. Thanks to the war, she learns to defy his dictates, and to stick up for what she believes in and what she knows is right. But that McClung, a well-known supporter of the women's temperance movement, should depict a woman drinking brandy, is remarkable. After a tiny sip, her character gains courage; she's back for more. Both drink and power ("swagger") are addictive. McClung thus urges women not to be dutiful myrmidons, but to be insubordinate, to "fight the good fight" against the patriarchal structures that imprison them. *The Next of Kin* issues a warning to men: Look out, it says, for the battle between the sexes is just beginning, and women are determined to win. This paper will outline some of the strategies, in word and deed, women writers like McClung used to turn absence into presence, to write themselves into the discourse of war; it will demonstrate the kinds of tools women marshalled in their defence, and illustrate the types of devices they used to attack their oppressors.

Throughout their texts, Canadian women writers emphasize that women are intelligent beings who have been prevented from developing their talents and mental faculties to the full, and stress that it is a foolish society which denies women's unique ways of knowing. In order to sharpen women's defenses, writers entreat their female characters to develop their intellectual might. One of the oft-repeated words in these texts is "think." The novels admonish women to eschew simplistic thinking, to recognize that most issues are complex, and to reject the notion that only men can lay claim to authority. McClung, for example, refers to the war as a "great teacher" (99), and in part what she means is that, without so many men around telling women what to think, they can learn to reason for themselves. Several novels deconstruct the notion of authority by refusing to tell readers what conclusions to draw, or what opinions about war to hold. Montgomery, for instance, explores the war from a variety of points of view, but leaves readers free to find their own answers.[6] While historians assume that Beynon's fiction (like her journalism) argues in favour of pacifism,[7] I suggest that, like Montgomery, she refuses to orchestrate her readers' opinions. Beynon simply counsels her characters to insure they are in possession of all the facts, for only then can they reach sound conclusions and make the best decisions. While she encourages her characters to read, she also recommends they trust to their basic instincts, for personal experience, she advises, is also a worthy basis from which to govern one's behaviour.

Blackburn has a similar "message": like Beynon, she abhors the suppression of any voices or experiences, especially women's.

It is misleading, though, to imply that all women speak with "uniform" voices, or hold similar ideological positions about the waging of war, for McClung (unlike the others), takes a pro-war stance, and encourages men to fight. Prior to the war, McClung was, like Beynon, a pacifist, but in *The Next of Kin*, her narrator states that the sinking of the Lusitania convinced her to support the war effort:

> Then I saw that we were waging war on the very Prince of Darkness, and . . . I knew that it would be better . . . to be dead than to live under the rule of people whose hearts are so utterly black and whose process of reasoning is so oxlike—they are so stupidly brutal. I knew then that no man could die better than in defending civilization from this ghastly thing which threatened her! (44-45)

McClung's readers must have been shocked at this fictional betrayal of her staunch pacifist philosophy, forthrightly expressed several years earlier in *In Times Like These* (1915). Her friend Francis Marion Beynon certainly was. In *Aleta Dey*, the "big, aggressive woman, prominent in our suffrage movement" (211) is likely modelled after McClung. Challenged to defend her bellicosity, the suffragist makes several ridiculous statements: "'I meant that [women] would be opposed to wars that are past . . . I never dreamed that women would be opposed to war in their own time or I wouldn't have worked for the vote'" (211).[8] But the question is, why did McClung do such an about-face?

R. R. Warne argues that this radical shift came about because when McClung's son enlisted, "maternal devotion triumphed over feminist certitude" (35). And, as Prentice et al. point out, McClung was not the only one to revise her pre-war stance; Flora McDonald Denison, another well-known pacifist, also changed her mind when her son joined up. Referring to McClung and Denison, Prentice et al. add that "the reality, as opposed to the abstraction, of war presented painful problems of personal conscience. Both had been against war; both had dearly loved sons who enlisted; both eventually came to support the Allied cause. Only a few Canadian women sustained their pacifist opposition to violence" (207). Moreover, Thomas P. Socknat asserts that, on the eve of the Great War, many Canadians vaguely thought of themselves as pacifists; at the outbreak of war, however, the liberal peace movement splintered into three groups: those "who supported the war effort while striving at the same time towards pacifist ideals and a progres-

sive post-war era"; a small number who "remained irrevocably opposed to war and militarism as antithetical to a Christian society"; but by far the majority of Canadians came to think of the war "as a crucible in which Christianity and the ideal of Christian peace were in danger of extinction at the hands of the enemy forces and they joined in the crusade against German 'barbarism'" (31). I cite Socknat's findings to demonstrate that McClung's transformation was not especially unusual, as is often suggested.

Warne further observes that McClung was committed to "effective action rather than pious abstraction" (36), and the latter's pragmatic approach led her to support efforts for an early end to war as the lesser as two evils. Moreover, Warne advances,

> the fact remains that McClung was human. Faced with the slaughter of innocent women and children, [sic] in Belgium and in the sinking of the Lusitania, and with the increasing realization that her family, too, would be broken by war, she grasped for a justification. . . . "Conversion to the cause" was an underlying motive in all of McClung's writing, and she said whatever needed to be said to get the job done, even if meant exposing her own human frailty. (40-41)

Accordingly, throughout *The Next of Kin*, McClung's narrator takes a dim view of mothers who either prevent their sons from going to war (142-53), or give in to despair after their sons' deaths on the battlefront.[9]

While McClung's truculence cannot be denied, I believe that her major concern in *The Next of Kin* is to bring about long-lasting social change, which she envisions will occur once women become actively involved in Canadian society. For example, through her narrator, she urges members of her community to work together to counteract childhood poverty and death from disease, and to bring about an end to "extravagance" and "general shiftlessness" (95). The narrator pushes for prohibition, much-needed legislation in times like those, for when alcohol was cheaper than milk, men drank to excess, depriving their families often of ready cash, and battering their wives, as well (40). Identifying a number of social ills, McClung's text throws down the gauntlet to Canadians, challenging them to restructure their society so that it includes women's worth and experience. With so many men overseas holding up the pillars of Empire, McClung's narrator urges that the time is ripe to take advantage of their absence. Once liberated from their homes, women can take up residences at important houses like the House of Commons and the House of the Lord. Both institutions (which hitherto have denied women access to important positions) will

benefit from women's independent thinking. She advises women to seize the day for reform, to ensure that, on the day of reckoning—war's end—there will be more to show for it than bloodshed and waste. In *The Next of Kin*, McClung sends her narrator on the warpath, exhorting women to disrupt and destabilize the patriarchal structures which imprison them.

One of the tactics Canadian women writers employ in order to emphasize that women are not men's inferiors is to show women "in action," functioning in the work place as effectively as any man. In Canadian novels, many women "enlist" in the public sphere, wear the pants in the absence of men on the homefront.[10] Specifically, novels like McKowan's stress that women can succeed at any occupation they choose: anything a man can do a woman can do even better. McKowan's protagonist, who hates being trapped inside a house, has several times challenged the circumscribed nature of women's place in society. She has been a teacher, a reporter, and homesteader in Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan respectively. Moving "farther west," she arrives in British Columbia in 1917, where she intends to "do a man's work" as a mixed farmer (21). Initially, she faces harsh criticism: the men doubt her ability to farm at all (29); the women ridicule her for wearing riding breeches and leggings (20); and the members of the rural community assume that Janet has come to the region because she has "matrimonial designs" (39).

But before long, Janet wins the respect of the community because she survives so well on her own. With the war raging, and the plumbers, plasterers, and stone masons all away fighting Germans, Janet proves that she is far from defenceless. She "plumbs" from a book, lays her own dynamite, and handily erects her house and outer buildings by herself. To her correspondent, Nan (the novel takes an epistolary style), she expresses her jubilant victory: "Every man, I felt sure, expected me to end by calling in his superior masculine aid—and how I would loved to have done so—but I felt it was up to me to demonstrate my theories of feminine independence, then and there" (48). In quick time, Janet establishes herself as a superb market gardener, fruit farmer, and stock raiser, and thus serves as a role model for younger women in the community, who testify that they have gained inspiration from witnessing her struggle. As a result of Janet's influence, these "new women" wear pants and ride motorbikes (155). Janet's agricultural ventures burgeon to the extent that she eventually needs a partner; of course, she joins forces with another capable woman.

In making the claim that women can be effective co-workers in the labour

force, Canadian women writers also address the place of women within the institution of marriage. McKowan's Janet, for instance, is not against marriage per se, but she wants union with a partner on her own terms, as her non-traditional engagement attests. Janet herself proposes marriage to that rarest of creatures—a nurturing man—who has proven that he is attracted to, and not threatened by, an energetic, efficient woman. A British officer (significantly non-Canadian?) wounded at the Marne, he cheerfully goes along with Janet's plans. She furnishes a car, plans to drive it on their honeymoon, and quite rightly rejoices in the fact that her intended never once objects to her arrangements. "That should augur well for our future together," she writes Nan (277). Indeed.

In *The Man Child*, Blackburn also underscores the importance of work, and illustrates that a woman can live happily even after the death of her husband. Emma Winchester is distraught when she learns that she has insufficient funds to support herself and her newborn child. Only temporarily stymied, Emma takes in sewing and gives piano lessons, and thus raises her son without relying on others. Through dint of hard work, frugality, and resourcefulness, she manages to provide her son with a university education. Shortly after being widowed, Emma receives a proposal from a man she admires greatly; she declines the offer, even though marriage would make her life considerably easier. In suggesting that women can be self-sufficient and independent workers in the public sphere, in arguing that women can be fulfilled without husbands, Canadian women writers were re-writing the conventional marriage plot. Signalling their dissatisfaction with the general destiny of women, writers like Blackburn and McKowan were utilizing the homefront in their books as a radical site for social change.

McClung also maintains that women can cope well on their own when their husbands do not return from war. In *The Next of Kin*, her narrator takes a pleasant drive in the country, and observes how well a woman driving a mower fits into the peaceful landscape. The narrator is struck by the grace and skill with which the woman handles the machine (251), stops to chat with her, and learns that she has lost her husband. The farmer forthrightly confesses that at first she thought she could not go on living, but now takes pride in her accomplishments; she takes care of her children, tends the farm, boasts that her crops are in good shape, and declares that she can manage the harvest with an extra man to help her. When the narrator takes her leave, she tells the woman that through her struggles, she has

found "'something far greater than happiness, for she ha[s] achieved power'" (254). It is significant that McClung concludes her text with a story of a woman's achieving might through independence, for throughout the collection, one of the narrator's recurring tenets is that women will never be able to employ their energies and talents to the full if they remain shackled by the demands of domesticity. In the absence of her husband, this woman attains agency.

Another of writers' main objectives was to document women's responses to war, a task McClung takes up with gusto. In *The Next of Kin*, she sends her unnamed narrator to speak at a Red Cross function in a wind-swept northern Alberta town; the meeting quickly turns into a type of homefront military engagement. Before beginning her lecture, the narrator discerns that "[t]here was a distinct air of preparedness about everything" (5), and subsequently comments that the women have gathered to discuss "the affairs of the state" (6). After her talk, as the women air their views, one asks the narrator to accept a "commission" (14), to be the women's historian and to record for posterity what Canadian women feel and say about the First World War. A written record, the woman argues, will remind women of their emotional response to the First World War: "'We will forget this when it is all over and we will go back to our old pursuits and there will be nothing—I mean no record of how we felt'" (13). She wants the chronicle in order to prove to future generations that women opposed the war, fearing not the question, What did you do in the war, Mommy? but the more serious charge, What did you do *about* the war? The narrator agrees to write what might be termed "counter" stories of women at war, tales not destined to make their way into "official" historical accounts or heroic novels. Similarly, in L. M. Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), Rilla keeps a diary of the war years, which her father observes "should be a very interesting thing to hand down to one's children" (177). Like McClung, Montgomery was emphasizing the need for women to preserve their responses to war by writing them down.

Additionally, prior to writing *The Next of Kin* (1917), McClung had declared herself vociferously opposed to women's omission from the subject of war. *In Times Like These* (1915) expresses her frustration with traditional, male-dominated accounts of history and literature which honour purely economic movements, political decisions, dates, and pivotal battles: "Invasions, conquests, battles, sieges make up the subject-matter of our his-

tories" (14). Ever optimistic, McClung expresses her hope that the future will bring an end to one-sided representations of history and literature:

> Some day . . . there will be new histories written, and they will tell the story of the years from the standpoint of the people, and the hero will not be any red-handed assassin who goes through peaceful country places leaving behind him dead men looking sightlessly up to the sky. The hero [sic] will be the man or woman who knows and loves and serves. (16)

Never one to complain without proposing an alternative or positing a solution, McClung herself takes up the task of "talking back," as bell hooks puts it, to the "official," male-dominated histories and stories of war which traditionally exclude women's voices and experiences. In 1917, she publishes *The Next of Kin*, a collection of woman-centered stories which radically reverse the notion of who speaks with authority in war; she displaces the voices of soldiers, of fathers, brothers, sons, renders them almost "missing" by putting their stories on the margins. Further, McClung refuses to write a conventionally plotted novel, her text calling for a re-definition of what constitutes a war story: *The Next of Kin* is a series of short stories, a chorus of women's voices, McClung's testament to her belief that "counter" stories of ordinary citizens and their experiences (especially women) are worthy of the telling.[11] In her text, she gives voice to mothers, wives, urban women, rural women, young women, middle-aged women; those who encourage men to go to war, those who prevent them; those who cope well with adversity, those who do not. And, as if to underscore the multiplicity of women's stories, at one point in her fiction, McClung situates her narrator at a train station, where she watches troops depart for war. What strikes the narrator is that "men in uniform look much the same" (193) (thereby implying that soldiers' stories are "uniform"), whereas the people waving goodbye *at* the station—Ukrainian women; heavily veiled women; sad-faced mothers; tired, untidy women; brave little girls and boys; babies; chattering young people; brides of the day—are "*from* every station in life" (emphasis added 193). *All*, she intimates, have stories to tell, and in *The Next of Kin*, she tells a range of them.[12]

In *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), Montgomery, too, challenges the traditional concept that a war story is monolithically comprised of a hero in the trenches; she re-writes the term "total war" by arguing that war is a catastrophic event which affects every living creature. Like McClung, she does not allow men's voices to drown out women's, or men's deeds and experiences to efface

them. Montgomery permits only those men who would naturally remain on the homefront—the middle-aged or elderly, pacifists, or ministers—to speak, and then only briefly. *Rilla of Ingleside* tenders a kaleidoscopic view of war; the text gives voice to a wide cross-section of the inhabitants of a small Canadian wartime community which commonly includes cats, dogs, babies and children, and imbues them with an extraordinary intelligence and perspicacity not customarily afforded such creatures. Her text, then, assures us that there are no innocent people or creatures in wartime; the assumption that those removed from the field of battle are unaffected by war is groundless.

Rilla of Ingleside also singles out women whose voices are traditionally silenced in wartime. Society sanctions the right of wives, mothers, and daughters to mourn, but deprives women not related to soldiers of that right. A young woman who had not publicly declared her love for her sweetheart before he went overseas cannot ask for sympathy at his death, but must bear her sorrow and pain alone (193). When another woman's fiance is killed, well-meaning folks in the community deny her the right to lament his loss. The text argues that she has a valid reason to grieve, and that her anguish may be doubly intense, for she is deprived not only of a future husband, but of the children who might have been born to her (169). And during conscription, the government sanctions only those women with relatives at the front the right to "voice" their opinions. *Rilla of Ingleside* argues against an unjust system which fails to recognize that many women, not just those with family members in the trenches, have made heavy investments in war, and that all should be able to cast votes (225).

Several of the texts also exhort women to make their views public, never an easy task for women conditioned by patriarchy into silence, but especially difficult in an intensely male-dominated period like war. As bell hooks maintains, "within feminist circles, silence is often seen as the sexist 'right speech of womanhood'—the sign of woman's submission to patriarchal authority" (6). Silent women do not question authority, or raise subjects deemed inappropriate to their sex. Women who dare to ask uncomfortable questions about who makes decisions in their society are considered abrasive, out of line. In speaking out, they are "unwomanly" or "unladylike," and run the risk of being considered fools should they turn loquacious. In *The Next of Kin*, McClung's narrator is rudely reminded of this danger marked "For Women Only" when she arrives at a town to give a

speech. The station agent who greets her declares with certainty that she will not gather a large crowd, although a few will turn out to hear her out of "'idle curiosity'" (2). Making no apologies to Dr. Johnson, he says, "'it *is* great to hear a woman speak in public. . . even if she does not do it very well. It's sorto' like seeing a pony walking on its hind legs; it's clever even if it's not natural'" (2). McClung's narrator, confident in her role as public speaker, is non-plussed, but the agent's remarks echo the kinds of prejudices women are up against should they choose to speak in public. Those who air their views are violating the expectation of female silence: like children, women are meant to be seen, but not heard.

Both *The Next of Kin* and *Rilla of Ingleside* provide role models for their readers, demonstrating by example that several women hold such strong convictions about the war they cannot be silenced: in each text, middle-aged women who have never spoken in public before rise to their feet spontaneously, and, without the advantage of prepared texts, make electrifying speeches which achieve their aims. These characters are neither placating audiences nor seeking male approval, but speaking against popular opinion (McClung 16; Montgomery 223). Montgomery's housekeeper initially feels guilty about her "unbecoming conduct" and "unladylike behaviour" (223), and does not take pride in her success, even though her speech results in a record sale of bonds. Soon after, though, she throws off her apron, dons overalls, and takes to the fields to help in the war effort, a signal of her growing emancipation from confined women's work, her ability to take on a man's job. As bell hooks says,

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (9)

Coming to speech is for the women in these texts a liberating moment from which there will be no back-sliding; as one of McClung's characters says after making her first public speech, "'I know I will never be scared again'" (16). Thus both Montgomery and McClung use their texts as social and political tools to show women that speaking out is not difficult. Both texts urge women to recognize that patriarchy deliberately silences women, conditions them to believe that they are too irrational to speak in public.

The wartime texts by Francis Marion Beynon and Grace Blackburn focus

specifically on the need to include all voices, to suppress none. Beynon uses her central character to urge those who would be silenced to speak against their oppression, stressing in *Aleta Dey* (1919) that any woman who dares speak against the dominant culture's wartime ideologies must be fearless. In documenting the difficulties a woman faces in finding her public voice, Beynon's Aleta reflects a woman's quandary in any era, but the wartime climate is more intimidating and exacerbates her character's dilemma. At the outset, Beynon illustrates the conditions which force women into passive submission to authority, and then establishes the types of barriers a woman encounters should she wish to speak her peace in wartime.

Aleta's induction into cowardice begins in early childhood. In each institution she encounters—the family, the church, the school—she identifies inconsistencies or ambiguities in its teachers, but when she asks for clarification, she finds her questions ridiculed. Like bell hooks, who writes of her own silence and oppression as a woman in *Talking Back*, Aleta is "always saying the wrong thing, asking the wrong questions" (hooks 6), and, like hooks, her childhood is characterized by "intense confusion and deep anxiety" (hooks 7). [H]ooks claims that those who get on well in patriarchal society acquiesce; they speak, but "talk a talk that [i]s in itself a silence" (7). In *Aleta Dey*, Beynon makes a similar charge. Aleta's friend and sister are what Belenky et al. term "silent women," girls who see authority figures as all-powerful, all-knowing, and submit blindly to their instruction (27-28).[13] Unlike Aleta, they keep out of trouble by adhering unquestioningly to the directives of the masters.

The authority figures in Beynon's text (teachers, preachers, fathers) think exclusively in black/white, right/wrong terms; unable to rationalize their positions intellectually, they demand utter obedience from their charges, and either verbally humiliate or physically beat transgressors like Aleta into silence. As a result of the severe punishment she suffers at the hands of patriarchal figures, especially her violent father, Aleta's confidence in her ability to think and speak is shaken; even as a mature journalist who knows how to use words, she stills her own voice, and allows others' to hold sway. Uncomfortable in her silence, often seething inwardly at others' irrationality, especially during the war, she remains deaf and dumb, a "coward" who adopts a "wait and see" attitude towards life.

To date, articles on Beynon have centered primarily on the anti-war views which she expressed while a journalist for the *Grain Growers' Guide*, but

several of these arguments for non-violence also surface in *Aleta Dey*. As the war years grind on, Aleta becomes increasingly disturbed by the reactions of her fellow countrywomen/men to war. She identifies their wartime ideologies as unimaginative, selfish, and bloodthirsty; she is horrified by their open declarations of hatred for the German people, appalled that they prefer to conscript men over wealth, angered that they fail to recognize the prevalence of both propaganda and war profiteering, and discouraged that pre-war suffragists and pacifists have suddenly turned litigious (207-13). It is not Aleta's abhorrence of these vengeful positions, however, which brings her the courage to voice her views, but the government's suppression of her right to speak against them which catapults her into "action." As she says, "I might have muddled along to the end had not the government begun to forbid us to discuss the war at all, except favourably" (216). Her telephone tapped, warned by the government censor not to oppose conscription, Aleta finds her "courage." Defiant, she takes to the streets, distributing pamphlets demanding that freedom of speech and of the press be preserved (217). This act of resistance challenges the dominant culture, and Aleta is thrown into jail. While incarcerated, she continues to wrestle with her cowardice. Although she cannot be certain that her pacifist views are infallible, she comes to the decision that she must "serve" humanity in the only way she knows; she must denounce violence publicly, and speak her pacifist opinions forthrightly (222). Uppermost is her belief that it is wrong to silence *any* voices.

At the end of the novel, Aleta foregoes meeting her beloved McNair, a soldier returning from combat, in order to make a public address against the war. Knowing she runs the risk of being jailed again, she willingly takes it, for "the whole point of the meeting is that it is to be addressed by one who has been in jail and who refuses to be silenced" (227). Her "fearless" deed proves her undoing, however, for her behaviour poses serious threats to the wielders of oppressive power. While exercising her freedom to speak, a soldier who is going overseas to fight for freedom (and to protect women), knocks Aleta off the public podium, and the blow eventually kills her. Hundreds of people with pacifist leanings, too "cowardly" to declare themselves openly, throng to Aleta's funeral. Here, Beynon uses her text didactically to address those who did not go along with the government's wartime injunctions, but who either lacked the courage to speak their peace, or on other grounds were reluctant to voice their objections. Joan Byles sets out one of the reasons many women had for remaining silent:

> [Women] had a deep sense of loyalty to their men and were acutely aware of their sufferings and sacrifices. Not for the world would they say anything which would seem to undervalue their men, or suggest that they were offered for a wrong or mistaken cause. So that, in backing their men in the war in which they were actually fighting, many women seemed to be backing warfare itself, although most probably they abhorred it. They were caught in the classic situation of women when their men are away at war. (476)

Beynon's heroine has a loved one in the trenches, and so she is also caught in the "classic" situation. Nonetheless, she urges her comrades not in arms to speak with her: a lone voice can be suppressed; many cannot. Through Aleta, Beynon encourages Canadians to be fearless, and together, fight censorship and suppression.[14]

Similarly, given the time at which *The Man Child* was published (1930), it is another bold, or "fearless" fiction which questions the omission of women's voices, specifically by unveiling the secrecy surrounding one of women's most common experiences, childbirth. The text queries why we know so little about a woman's battlefield, the birthbed, and why records of suffering describe only men's pain. Blackburn's text focuses on a woman's view of the creation of life: it uncovers the range of a woman's emotional and physical responses to her pregnancy; it demonstrates the strength of the familial bond which develops between mother and child, and it exposes the sacrifices and hardships a mother willingly endures to raise a child. In focusing on life, not death, the text calls for a revision of patriotic ideals in order to emphasize the sacredness of human life, not its destruction. Blackburn's Emma also criticizes a man-made society. She objects that men brandish all the power, whereas women are told that giving birth "suffices." She laments that men perceive women to be children, lacking in "inventive faculty of analytical thought" (150). It is foolish, she insists, to overlook women's wisdom. Throughout *The Man Child*, Blackburn presents Emma as both inventive and analytical. For example, railing against a society which allows men to make "life hideous and death vile," (266), she devises a plan reminiscent of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, but without chastity as a weapon. Her thoughtful proposal emphasizes to what extent the war machine depends on women's efforts, and not just as producers of cannon fodder. Emma advocates that women should not cooperate with the war effort: they should refuse to nurse, knit, or work in munitions factories. If they "struck" (212), the war couldn't last more than a month. In her argument, the military meets the maternal. If women reveal the secrets of moth-

erhood, the rhetoric of maternity will help foster a belief in the sacredness of life; if women refuse to aid the military cause that depeds on it, they will hinder the makers of war.

Blackburn's notice of the power of collective action points to another of the strategies that Canadian women writers utilize: their recognition that battles can only be won through strength in numbers. To that end, one of the most distinguishing and forward-looking features of McClung's text is her belief that "women are women's best friends" (86). In emphasizing that women must be one anothers' allies, not enemies, she anticipates Virginia Woolf, who laments in *A Room of One's Own* that literature rarely depicts women's friendships (86). Ahead of her time, McClung advocates sisterly solidarity; her gathering together of women, particularly in the Foreword to *The Next of Kin*, resembles an early consciousness-raising group where women come together and openly share their feelings with one another about the war. The atmosphere is non-combative, the terrain a supportive "all-woman's land." Women take their conversational turn in these groups and hear one another out in a non-competitive atmosphere; there are no men present to ridicule women's thoughts or demean their ideas. Through such groups, women can empower themselves; they can formulate strategies and develop tactics against male domination, and by engaging in "team-play" (19) make a difference. Australian critic Rita Felski's depictions of female friendships in contemporary novels echo McClung's visions of what women working together can achieve. When women befriend one another, writes Felski, they can "overcome the negative value which women have been conditioned to place upon their sex; recognizing other women serves a symbolic function as an affirmation of self, of gendered identity" (138). Such identification provides

> a means of access into society by linking the protagonist to a broader social group and thus rendering explicit the political basis of private experience . . . . [I]t also functions as a barrier against, and a refuge from, the worst effects of a potentially threatening social order by opening up a space for nonexploitative relationships grounded in common goals and interests. (139)

Group solidarity "inspires activism and resistance rather than private resignation, and makes it possible to project a visionary hope of future change" (139).

These are all arguments McClung's narrator makes in *The Next of Kin*. She emphasizes that because patriarchy encourages competition among

women, they wage civil war among themselves, dissipating their energies and diminishing the powers they can harness if they regard their sex favourably. One of the reasons McClung's narrator travels to rural townships giving speeches is to help break down women's isolation; when they come together to hear what the speaker has to say, they recognize that they share common concerns. Without opportunity to air their views collectively, they acquiesce to submission. But working together, pooling their energies and resources, they can make political change work to their advantage. Optimistically, the narrator says, "Discussions are raging in women's societies and wherever women meet together, and out of it something will come. Men are always quite willing to be guided by women when their schemes are sound and sane" (101). In *The Next of Kin*, McClung's narrator asserts that female solidarity, which helps bring about women's emancipation, will result in the creation of a better society for children and men, too. (McClung writes women's recent victories into her text, thereby instilling confidence in others that they can be winners at social change, but she also recognizes the dangers of complacency. Writing in 1917, one year after prairie women received the vote, McClung recognized that women's "worst troubles" were not over, for a "second Hindenburg line" had been set up to prevent them from entering the field of politics, and seemed harder to "pierce" than the first [*Next* 232]. But the narrator seems undaunted, almost eager to take up the challenge.)

Aside from urging their characters to document their feelings about war and to voice their opinions publicly, Canadian women writers also utilize militaristic language as a strategy for overcoming oppression. Their characters use combat-ese with ease, one referring readily, for instance, to the "Big Push" which will "soon see the finish of the Huns" (*Rilla* 141). There is, perhaps, nothing unusual about women writers employing fighting words; as part of the current vernacular during the First World War, they would be part of every citizen's vocabulary on the homefront. But in these texts, women illustrate they are well informed about the issues and events of war, learning about combat primarily through their careful reading of daily newspapers which "bristle with alien-sounding names like Mlawa, Bzura and Przemysl" (*Rilla* 83), sites of battle like Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, and Festubert (*The Man Child* 200-01), place names foreign to both the tongue and the ear. As their knowledge of geography extends, so does the range of their conversation, for in spite of their remoteness from the roar of the can-

nons, war is the only topic of conversation women engage in. One of Montgomery's characters remarks, "'*everything* comes back to this war. . . . We can't get away from it—even when we talk of the weather'" (*Rilla* 95). Prior to the war, women made small talk over domestic matters and chatted over local issues; now they speak of little but military tactics and diplomatic intrigue. They carry on heated debates about whether the Somme battles constitute defeat or victory, argue over how much the Russians have contributed to the allied effort, laud the competence of their military leaders, ridicule the ineptitude of the opposition's, and dispute what effect the Americans will have on the war if and when they enter the fray. Women also diligently chart the "progress" of war; they study maps, track the movement of armies, their emotions see-sawing between hope and despair as they await the outcome of crucial battles. Thus women do not feel distanced from battle, but "horribly *near*" the war, as a school-teacher attests (*Rilla* 73). Several, like Montgomery's housekeeper in *Rilla of Ingleside*, even display a keen interest in military strategy and tactics:

> Lord Kitchener went to Greece, whereat Susan foretold that Constantine would soon experience a change of heart. Lloyd George began to heckle the Allies regarding equipment and guns and Susan said you would hear more of Lloyd George yet. The gallant Anzacs withdrew from Gallipoli and Susan approved the step, with reservations. The siege of Kut-El-Amara began and Susan pored over maps of Mesopotamia and abused the Turks. Henry Ford started for Europe and Susan flayed him with sarcasm. Sir John French was superseded by Sir Douglas Haig and Susan dubiously opined that it was poor policy to swap horses crossing a stream. Not a move on the great chess-board of king or bishop or pawn escaped Susan, who had once read only Glen St. Mary notes. (146)

So familiar are these women with the reported phenomenon of war that one of Blackburn's soldiers suggests in a letter to his mother that she probably knows more of what is happening at the front than he does (249). And she may, for distance provides an unobstructed point of view. In their novels, Canadian women writers demonstrate women's passionate preoccupation with military campaigns and their astute grasp of world affairs, and thus give the lie to culturally and historically ingrained beliefs that women on the homefront are either indifferent to, or unaffected by, war.

But it is possible to speculate that women writers have more on their agenda than simply demonstrating that they are informed about the events overseas, or that they are mere interlopers in a man's game. They also realize that the words and phrases used to describe warfare—"enlist," "commission," "last

reserves," "mobilizing for home defense," "heroic action," and "sworn enemies"—could be considered gender-neutral or universal, but because we associate them directly with men in combat, they are heavily biased towards the male. (At the same time, it is difficult to think of any words we might align with women in wartime, other than the passive "nursing," "knitting," "waiting" or "weeping.") McClung, Montgomery, Blackburn, Arnold, and Beynon not only illustrate that women can talk intelligent battle-talk (oxymoronic as this is), but these writers also deliberately and self-consciously appropriate masculine discourse, words with clout, and mark them for their own use. Although they may feel as if they are using an impoverished language, they do not allow wartime vernacular to crush them, nor do they silence their own voices by reproducing word for word the discourse of the master or espousing his phallocratic ideals.[15] Rather, I argue, theirs is a wilful commandeering of the language of war, arising out of their desire to problematize androcentric language and to disrupt conventional literary genres. Women are as affected by war as men, writers argue; and even though women's experiences are dramatically different, there is no good reason to disregard them entirely, or denigrate them as inferior. High on these writers' agendas, then, is the need to challenge women's omission from the subject of war, and to claim a space for them in intensely male discourse. As the epigraph from Irigaray suggests, Canadian women writers may seem to be speaking the same language as men, but in using the masculine colloquy of war, they are not reproducing the same history, not replicating stories already written by the dominant ideology.

In *The Sex Which Is Not One*, Luce Irigaray proposes a solution to sexism in language which I submit Canadian women writers adopted. Irigaray advocates that a woman write in a way which expresses her knowledge of the sexist nature of language, and simultaneously signals her dissent from it. She recommends a concept which takes "mimesis" as its basis:

> For how can we introduce ourselves into such a tightly-woven systematicity? There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one "path," the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. . . . To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself . . . to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisi-

> ble: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means "to unveil" the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply resorbed in this function. They also remain elsewhere . . . . (76)

Irigaray's argument gathers its strength from her insistence that a woman writer "remain elsewhere," as several feminist critics have observed.[16] Canadian women writers, whether they are pro- or anti-war, recognize that language is an important site of political struggle; through language, they grapple with the problem of their subjugation and devise strategies to deal with it. In their texts, they prove that they are excellent, playful mimics of masculine discourse, and can remain exterior to oppressive, male-dominated wartime language even as they use it to shift the focus from the militaristic to the domestic. Anticipating Irigaray, women writers *use* men's language, use sameness not to reproduce the same history, not to underscore their own subordination, but to convert marginalization into affirmation, and to speak from a position of power. Playfully appropriating military language in order to disrupt its logic and exploit its repressive nature, they do remain elsewhere. They use combat jargon to decentre strategically the war narrative, to write women into the discourse, and to signal their own philosophic and intellectual distance from the men who wage war.

One of women writers' central objectives is to re-interpret, or re-define war words to eradicate gender exclusivity. McClung specifically singles out for re-evaluation the term "national service" which, as her unnamed narrator in *The Next of Kin* notes, is at present restricted to the soldier who leaves home. Specifically, the narrator says, "if national service is taken to mean the doing of something for our country's good which we would not feel it our duty to do but for the emergencies created by the war, then there are many ways in which the sincere citizen may serve" (154). But at the moment, sincere citizens (read women), neither "called up" nor officially "called upon" to aid the war effort, are excluded from the official definition, and through no fault of their own, made to feel as if they are "slackers" (164). Women are keen to pull their weight, but the government, which the narrator argues can ill afford in wartime to squander any talent, foolishly refuses to conscript women, to put their energies and abilities to use (163). Much of the land in Canada is idle, the narrator argues, and those women who sit knitting socks or crocheting would gladly raise potatoes and chickens if only they knew how to begin (98-99).

The Next of Kin establishes women's abilities both to create jobs for them-

selves and to seize existing opportunities to "enlist" (89): one takes care of war orphans (190); another replaces a teacher-soldier (169-70); yet another signs on as a waitress (89). Moreover, the narrator observes that restricting the term "national service" to soldiers is erroneous, for women already serve the war effort; their labours go unnoticed and unrewarded, however, because the government takes women's work for granted, and refuses to list or count their efforts in any systematic fashion (163).[17] And not only do women already easily step into soldiers' shoes, given a chance, the narrator upholds, they could perform some jobs even better than men: they could, ironically, write more comprehensible and humane death notices than do the men in the war office (204). Canadian writers also use military language to demonstrate women's valour on the homefront in a variety of other contexts. Some use it to suggest that women are aware of the hardships soldiers in the trenches endure, and draw their ability and courage to withstand tribulation from that close identification. Montgomery's protagonists refuse to be shirkers; like men in the trenches forced to perform duties they abhor, women on the homefront resolutely stick to jobs they hate. Rilla, for example, detests knitting socks, but keeps her needles flying nonetheless. In her diary, she confesses, "I have done so many things I hate since 4th of August that one more or less doesn't matter. I just think of Jem joking about the mud on Salisbury Plain and I go at them" (89). While this example may seem trivial, it is worth keeping in mind that knitting was one of the few tasks adolescent girls were encouraged to take up; obviously, not all girls found knitting easy or satisfying. In another instance, a young bride declares that if her husband can "face the Huns," she can stand up to tyrannical father, for "a soldier's wife can't be a coward" (162). Women on the homefront also feel that they can contribute significantly to the war effort. When the news from the front is discouraging, for example, Montgomery's housekeeper intensifies her energies, clearly feeling that, even at a distance, she is a full-fledged member of the allied forces. Her use of masculine imagery underscores her belief that both women and men were fighting together: "we [women] must gird up our loins and pitch in" (76). And, like soldiers who survive combat, women on the homefront often feel a "sense of victory and achievement" in their accomplishments (which previous to the war would have seemed too intimidating), as Rilla does when she successfully engineers a fund-raising concert (114).

Canadian writers argue that the relative absence of the word "heroine" in

wartime discourse functions to obscure women's participation in war. In writing heroines into their texts, they were anticipating Rachel Brownstein, who argues that "To want to become a heroine, to have a sense of the possibility of being one, is to develop the beginnings of what feminists call a 'raised' consciousness: it liberates a woman from feeling (and therefore perhaps from being) a victim or a dependent or a drudge, someone of no account" (Introduction xix). Canadian texts insist that the homefront abounds with women who display exceptional courage, fortitude, and enterprise. "Not all heroes are war-heroes. . . . The slow-grinding, searching tests of peace have found out some truly great ones among our people and have transmuted their common clay into pure gold" (73), states McClung's narrator. McClung places this statement near the beginning of her story "Surprises"; after briefly commenting on a soldier's heroism, her narrator follows with a lengthy account of a woman's conversion from a pleasure-seeker into a resourceful wartime worker. McClung's "heroine" takes on a strenuous job which enables her to save for the future without drawing upon her soldier's allowance (91). In writing heroines into their texts, Canadian women writers were also subverting narrative structures, and redefining heroic action.[18]

In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Teresa de Lauretis argues that the work of narrative is one of mapping differences into text, and hence "into the universe of meaning, fiction and history" (121), sexual differences foremost among them. Sexual difference constructs the subject of the narrative movement as "male," its object "female." Using Soviet semiotician Jurij Lotman's work, de Lauretis suggests that "narrative endlessly reconstructs" the world

> as a two-character drama in which a human person creates and recreates *himself* out of an abstract or purely symbolic other—the womb, the earth, the grave, the woman; all of which, Lotman thinks, can be interpreted as mere spaces and thought of as "mutually identical." The drama has the movement of a passage, a crossing, an actively experienced tranformation of the human being into—man. (121)

If narrative can be consolidated into a drama with only two functions, an active, "male" subject and the "female" space through which he moves, then women who write confront in narrative structure the same ambivalence and ambiguity they face on the semantic level—their status as human beings. On the semantic level, the generic "man" complicates the question by telling women they are and yet are not men; accordingly, they cannot be female

heroes, or heroines. Thus both language and narrative structure silence and alienate women by excluding them, by making their participation appear impossible, oxymoronic. Does this mean that women cannot be subjects? In Canadian women writers' texts, obviously not; by declaring women on the homefront "heroines," by speaking in their own voices about women's experience, they break both the hold of narrative structure and the silence.

Montgomery, like McClung, refuses to limit the designation "heroic" to purely male endeavour. *Rilla of Ingleside* features several women who boldly declare (perhaps in recognition that no one else will) that they are "heroines," their homefront activities "heroic." At the outbreak of the conflict, while organizing a Junior Red Cross committee, Rilla announces to her parents that she intends to be as "'*brave* and *heroic* and *unselfish*'" as she can possibly be (53). They receive her pronouncement as adolescent posturing, but as the war continues, and she assumes ever-more challenging tasks which propel her into the wider community, her parents revise their views, and begin to see her as hardworking and courageous. More important than what Rilla accomplishes, however, or what impression of her duties she conveys to others, is that she perceives of herself as a heroine, and of her wartime efforts as "heroic" (60). Her confidence increases by leaps and bounds. Gloria Steinem might argue that, thanks to the war, Rilla is developing an externalized, or "situational" kind of self-esteem of the sort that

> comes from knowing we are good "at" something, compare well with others, meet other people's expectations, and can complete ever more challenging and interesting tasks for the sheer joy of it. In this phase comes satisfaction with new abilities, a new sense of interaction and community with others, and increased curiosity about the world . . . . (66)

Furthermore, women on the homefront, Montgomery suggests, possess, like soldiers, strong allegiances to duty. Declaring herself a "heroine," the housekeeper Susan boldly declares, "We have just got to grapple with whatever we have to do whether it is weeding the onion patch, or running the Government. *I* shall grapple. Those blessed boys have gone to war; and *we women* . . . must tarry by the stuff and keep a stiff upper lip" (58). The text argues, too, that women's tenacity renders them as indomitable and indefatigable as soldiers. Montgomery's narrator interprets that the housekeeper, who has always sworn that she would give the "last drop of her blood for King and country" (231), manifests the same kind of vigour and intensity that a soldier requires to defeat his enemy: "the spirit that ani-

mated [Susan's] gaunt arms was the self-same one that captured Vimy Ridge and held the German legions back from Verdun" (217). Without women's efforts on the homefront, Montgomery's narrator insists, the allies might have lost the war: "[Susan] was one of the women—courageous, unquailing, patient, heroic—who had made victory possible" (247). In creating characters like Rilla and the family housekeeper, Montgomery stresses that not all war heroes are found in the trenches; heroines are located in kitchens and nurseries.

Many are located overseas, too; nurses, like soldiers, are devoted to their jobs, and like fighting men, are called upon to give up their lives for others. In Gertrude Arnold's *Sister Anne! Sister Anne!!*, when a hospital suffers a bomb attack, a young nurse is hit; yet by insisting that the men be taken out of the ward before her, she performs her duties heroically. One of the senior nurses, who had initially doubted the nurse's abilities, pays her tribute:

> That child is a heroine—if ever there was one. From the first moment of the reports of the gun she ran from one to the other of the patients, cheering them, and "carrying on" as if nothing at all were happening. . . . Had she lost her nerve or become frightened, or hysterial, it is quite possible the Ward would have followed suit. Instead that girl . . . was as calm as if she had been under shell fire all her life. . . . (169-70)

Commonplace assumptions hold that women become overwrought in the face of danger; in creating a woman who coolly puts the needs of others ahead of her own, Arnold underlines the notion that women are incapable of acting fearlessly under duress.

Several texts argue that heroism takes many forms: central to any war effort are mothers. *Rilla of Ingleside* insists that every mother who sends a son to war is a "heroine," as Mrs. Blythe declares herself when her first-born departs (63). And through her central character, Montgomery reminds readers that we need prompting to recognize what tremendous sacrifices mother-heroines are called upon to make. When Rilla speaks unkindly about a neighbour, for example, her mother quickly reminds her that the woman has sent three sons to the front. Instantly, Rilla recognizes her mistake, and records her guilt as follows in her diary: "I was ashamed—for it is true that all her boys have gone and she was very plucky and loyal about it too; and she is a perfect tower of strength in the Red Cross. It's a little hard to remember all the heroines" (148). As well, through her housekeeper, Montgomery further demonstrates that heroines need not be biological

mothers; any woman who sends a loved one into combat is a heroine (207). And although women's renunciations are traditionally perceived to be secondary to soldiers', Rilla argues that *all* women, even sisters of soldiers, make enormous sacrifices, and firmly rejects the notion that her beloved brother Walter's oblation is supreme. To her mother, she says, "*Our* sacrifice is greater than *his*. . . . Our boys give only *themselves. We* give them" (120). While women are not required to surrender their own lives, they are forced to relinquish the lives of those they cherish. One of McClung's mother figures stresses that women, primarily mothers, have "given up everything" for their country (85, 87).

Canadian women writers also employ militaristic language to advance another closely related argument: that women's sorrow and hardship in wartime are equal to men's. This is an observation Nosheen Khan makes in her study of British women's poetry of the First World War. Although Khan does not construct her argument around women's appropriation of military language, she does, nonetheless, insist that women's suffering in war is frequently overlooked:

> The claim that war makes upon women is, in comparison with that made upon men, more hidden and more difficult; for it is easier to be active than passive, easier to place oneself under obedience in a time of crisis than to serve by silent anxiety. Courage is manifest not only in brilliant attack, but also in patient waiting and patient endurance. In war-time, women, too, go to battle; they battle with the slow torture of fear and suspense, the long agonies of anticipation; the sleepless nights and fevered imagination; the pitiless hours usurped by visions of battered bleeding bodies. (138)

Khan's comments echo those which appear in *Rilla of Ingleside.* One of the most excruciating absences for women on the homefront arises when their loved ones are reported missing. Montgomery's Rilla describes the ordeal of waiting for news as "torturing, agonized hope" (241), and the teacher, too, describes the experience of waiting for news from the war office as torturous: war is "this horrible rack of strained emotions, when every day brings a new horror or the dread of it" (144). Answering the telephone or the doorbell is so stressful that Rilla speaks guiltily of "shirking" her responsibilities (99), leaving them to her mother or the housekeeper. Even something as casual as reading newspapers becomes a form of torture: Rilla scans them anxiously, fearing that her loved ones' names will appear in the casualty lists.

Beynon also describes Aleta Dey's suffering on the homefront in military terms. In so doing, she redefines the front, and shifts the nature of battle from physical to mental. Aleta does not make the claim that women pay the biggest price in war, but she acknowledges that their part is "hard enough" (202). Both women on the homefront and men on the battlefront respond in kind to threats of death and dying, though one fears for himself, and the other for her loved one. In the trenches, the warrior lives with the constant apprehension that at any moment he may be severely wounded or killed; on the homefront, Aleta never receives telegrams or answers the door without feeling terror: "A ring at the door early in the morning. I started up in bed in a cold sweat—was it a telegram? A telephone call late at night and my heart was in my mouth; called out from a meeting I went white" (202). In describing her anguish, Aleta mimics the terminology of war: "A strain such as that slowly wears away one's nervous energy, so that the shock, when it does come, finds one with reduced powers of resistance. And it always comes in the end with the suddenness of a bomb explosion" (202). When Aleta hears, via telegram, that her loved one is wounded, she collapses, then takes to her bed; her fevered imagination transports her, as Khan suggests it might, onto the battlefield where, in a nightmarish delirium, she searches for McNair through trenches crawling in vermin, piles of dead bodies saturated in blood. When she finds him, he has an arm and leg blown off, half of his face shot away, and he is stone blind (204).[20] Later, struggling to describe her tortured traverse over the green fields of France, Aleta finds the memory so devastating that she can only put the "lesser horrors" into words (205). That she (a journalist) cannot locate words to depict the wartime atrocities she witnesses is reminiscent of the dilemma literary soldiers faced. Paul Fussell observes: "the . . . inadequacy of language itself to convey the facts about trench warfare is one of the motifs of all who wrote about war" (170). And, since McNair returns from the war relatively unscathed, having endured little, if any, of the suffering Aleta envisions (significantly, Beynon does not delineate McNair's wounds), it could be argued that, in having undergone such intense anguish on the homefront (and vicariously on the battlefront), Aleta has, indeed, experienced "the hardest part" of war.

Beynon uses military language throughout *Aleta Dey* to underscore her belief that wars need not occur if adversaries can learn to reconcile their differences through peaceful measures: negotiation, mercy, kindness, and ultimately love, which she considers "the only conquering force" in the world

(191, 216, 235). In order to prevent war, Aleta insists, people must learn to "love their enemies." The novel turns, in fact, on the tolerance which unfolds between two people who, from their first meeting, are "sworn enemies" (87). Beynon deliberately makes the couple antithetical in every respect—physically, morally, philosophically. The Scotsman McNair is huge, the Canadian Aleta tiny. He smokes cigars and has a drinking problem; she is non-smoker and belongs to the women's temperance league. She is a virgin, a "clean" woman, whereas McNair has, like Niels Lindstedt in Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*, married an "unclean" woman (read prostitute) as penance for one night of sin. Ever since his "fall," McNair has taken a vow of chastity, frustrating to Aleta, a passionate woman longing to be involved in a sexual relationship. McNair is egocentric, beginning most sentences with "I," whereas Aleta puts the needs of others, including McNair, ahead of her own. McNair is a regular church-goer, whereas although Aleta retains her belief in God and Christianity, she rejects what she calls "churchianity." McNair is an arch conservative; Aleta is a social democrat. McNair enlists; Aleta is an ardent pacifist.

It is significant that both are journalists (although for rival newspapers), making their living through words. Through casual conversation, intellectual discussion, and even heated argument, each learns respect for the other, to be supportive of what each perceives to be the other's weakness. McNair dislikes the suffragist movement, but defends Aleta's right to "stick to what she believes in" (123). Aleta deplores McNair's alcoholism, but she stands by him, deeming his fault a "mistake," not a "crime" (160-61). In spite of their obvious differences of opinion about Canada's involvement in the war effort, McNair encourages Aleta to overcome the "spirit of cowardice" (211) that plagues her, and to "come out strong" against the war (140).

Several critics have disregarded the importance of McNair as a figure who tests Aleta's tolerance. In her play *The Fighting Days*, Wendy Lill seems to miss the point of Beynon's novel, upon which her script draws heavily. Lill shows Aleta and McNair often in heated disagreement, but she does not make them opposites who must learn the true meaning of democracy, to leave "each the other one to choose his [sic] path" (*Aleta* 255). In not sending McNair off to war, Lill destroys the complexity of Aleta's arguments. Anne Hicks also misreads Beynon's depiction of McNair, finding it seriously flawed: he is "domineering and discreditable," his "political arrogance presents too obvious a contrast to Aleta's humane uncertainty," and his "senti-

mental portrayal becomes irritating" (Introduction vi). Ramsay Cook as well finds that Aleta is

> torn between devotion to her cause and her love for an older man whose alcohol problem, conservative and nationalist opinions obviously represented the old order. The conflict is never resolved before Aleta dies of injuries sustained while distributing pacifist literature . . . . (201)

(Cook also errs in suggesting that Aleta is killed while distributing pacifist literature. She voices her opinions from a public platform.) Both Hicks and Cook fail to comprehend Beynon's intention completely: the conflict(s) between Aleta and McNair are never meant to be resolved. Their relationship is founded on disagreement, as Aleta's declaration to McNair attests: "'as long as we both live I shall be your friend, and I'll argue and argue with you to your heart's content'" (151). McNair and Aleta are perfect examples of strong-minded individuals who learn to reconcile their differences, not through violence, but through peaceful means—words. The text argues that mental battles, fought through verbal sparring, are the only ones worth waging, and that the only "power" worth possessing is that of the mind (109).

Ultimately, Canadian women's novels are, in subtle ways, pleas for peace, instructions on how to avoid war. Although women writers cannot fight war itself, they can expose war mentality: they point to the dangers of propaganda, and make their characters cognizant of the hype generated by war. They warn them to be wary of slogans that "get" men to enlist, and encourage them to see through patriotic fervour, to recognize that soldiers will find neither glory nor glamour in the trenches. One of the strengths of these novels lies in their promotion of non-violent ways of solving problems. Writers encourage their characters to be tolerant of others' beliefs, and to solve disagreements by exploring differences of opinion through mediation. Montgomery depicts her characters making compromises, occasionally swallowing large slices of humble pie, but always more anxious to foster a harmonious environment than to exact small victories or take revenge over minor matters.

Finally, one of the most effective strategies Canadian women writers employ is humour, pervasive in novels by McClung, Montgomery, and McKowan. Montgomery's description of a decidedly unromantic war wedding, which features a flat-faced and commonplace bride and a groom who sobs uncontrollably throughout the ceremony, is a howler, as are McClung's

not-so-subtle digs at men who postulate that only they are capable of running the world. By utilizing wit, Canadian writers dispel the myth that women have no sense of humour. Further, their use of humour makes the subject of war accessible, and thus an appropriate vehicle for social reform.

To date, critics have done our literary heritage (often considered a vigorous and healthy tradition which gives women a prominent place), a disservice by ignoring writers like McClung, Blackburn, Arnold, McKowan, and Beynon, and Montgomery. As Woolf writes, "we think back through our mothers if we are women" (*Room* 79). But in assessing why Canadian women have such a strong place, critics like Howells have thought back, but they have looked to our grandmothers, or great-grandmothers Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, or Sara Jeanette Duncan, not the women writers who, in this century, in modern memory, were showing women how to write themselves into an intensely male-dominated discourse, and at the same time, teaching women how to secure powerful positions in their society. In the current agenda to dissolve or expand the boundaries which exclude women writers, critics have argued for the admittance of marginalized genres like memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies. To that list, I would add women's Great War writing. Not only will such a re-reading have implications for how we read the fiction women produced in subsequent wars, it will inform us how Canadian women writers managed to gain small victories during a turbulent historical period. Forewarned is always forearmed.

NOTES

1 The editors also overlook J. G. Sime's short-story collection *Canada Chaps* (Toronto: Gundy, 1917). I overlook the collection, too, because I am discussing only women's wartime novels in this article.

2 In this article, I am concerned primarily with English-Canadian women writers' response to the Great War. For French-Canadian women writers' responses, see Christl Verduyn's "La prose feminine québécoise des annees trente." Verduyn finds that few works explicitly consider issues of war or economic crises: "De façon générale . . . ni la guerre ni la Crise économique n'exercent de grande influence sur la vie des personages présentes dans ces romans" (60). Verdun cites Laetitia Filion's *Yolande la fiancée* (1935), the action of which takes place during the First World War; the titular character repeatedly asks: "Qu-est-ce que cela pourrait bien nous faire à nous, ici au Canada, s'il y avait la guerre en Europe?" (59 - 60 n.9).

3 In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell writes that "every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected" (7). The Great War, however, was more ironic than any before or since; eight million people were destroyed because two persons, the

Archduke Ferdinand and his Consort, were shot (8). Based on their knowledge of previous wars, enlisted men could not have forseen what an inhuman(e) slaughter this war would be.

4 In her study of American and British women's war writing, Sandra Gilbert argues that the Great War served to empower women psychologically, economically, and sexually; throughout her essay, Gilbert employs words such as "glee," "exuberance," and "triumph" to describe writers' enthusiastic response to war, which (alas only temporarily) liberated women from cloistered environments, confining clothing, and tedious domestic chores. Gilbert's essay should be read, however, in light of the critics who argue that her thesis is biased and her use of examples cavalier. See Jane Marcus 49 - 83; Claire M. Tylee 199 - 210. My own research reveals that Gilbert disregards Mary Marlowe's *The Women Who Wait* (London: Simpkin, 1918) and Helen Zenna Smith's *Not So Quiet . . . Stepdaughters of War* (London: Marriot, 1930; rpt. London: Virago, 1987), possibly because they do not fit her thesis.

5 Canadian women writers' texts also differ significantly from those by Australian women writers, who are obsessed with hero worship of the Anzac, not with social reform or the liberation of women. See my article, "The Digger on the Lofty Pedestal: Australian Women's Great War Fictions," *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada* 10 (Dec. 1993): 1-22.

6 I disagree in part with Alan R. Young's claim that "ideologically all . . . [Montgomery's] voices concur" (110), including the voices of mothers and fathers with sons at the front. Young does not take into account that their reactions to their sons' enlistment differ sharply. The responses of men are similar to those propounded by Sarah Ruddick, who argues in *Maternal Thinking* that "abstractness . . . characterizes military discourse as a whole. In militarist thinking, human bodies are subordinated to abstract causes" (146). Montgomery makes no effort to depict her male figures as militaristic thinkers, but they are, nevertheless, of the gender which wages war. In *Rilla of Ingleside*, fathers conjure up abstract ideals of patriotism and sacrifice, and describe their sons' engagement in war as a collective enterprise or brotherhood. Several of Montgomery's mothers express pride at their sons' enlistment, but rarely and reluctantly. Significantly, they proclaim their pride only in public, thereby signalling their enforced complicity with the social order, but one they do not necessarily embrace. And while fathers regard their sons' enlistment in abstract terms, the most common reaction for a mother is to revert, almost instantly, to memory, to picture her beloved son either as an infant or child. Mothers' thoughts, then, are not abstract, but concrete, as Ruddick points out. She asserts that mothers have a "concrete cognitive style," and that such concreteness can be seen as "a mix of interwoven responses to a growing, changing child"; in raising her child, the mother will "eschew generalization" ("Preservation" 249). Montgomery's text stresses, too, that mothers recognize more than fathers the emotional costs of war, and thus have a firmer grasp of what war means than do men. Almost from the moment their sons announce that they have signed up, Montgomery's women graphically visualize war for what it really is—the maiming and killing of young men, as Elaine Scarry argues in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World.* But patriotism has a firm hold on fathers, for only after his third son has gone to war does Montgomery's Dr. Blythe verbalize his desolation. Even though he is a doctor and thus aware of the sacredness of life, his response to all three sons' enlistment is an unemotional and unequivocal expression of "pride" (207).

7 See Ramsay Cook, "Francis Marion Beynon and the Crisis of Christian Reformism," *The West and the Nation: Essays in Honour of W. L. Morton*, eds. Carl Berger and Ramsay Cook (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) 187-208; Barbara Roberts, "Women Against War, 1914-18: Francis Beynon and Laura Hughes," *Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace*, eds. Janice Williamson and Deborah Gorham (Toronto: The Woman's Press, 1989) 48-65.

8 According to Barbara Roberts, the friends also had a falling-out over McClung's having urged Prime Minister Borden to exclude foreign or alien women from the vote and give it only to the British; she told him all suffragists agreed (53).

9 In "Men and Money: A Story With a Purpose" (*Maclean's Magazine* Sept. 1919: 15-17, 99-100), McClung leaves little doubt that she felt strongly that it was a family's duty to send their sons off to war. In writing *Three Times and Out: A Canadian Boy's Experiences in Germany* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918) for Private Simmons, a Canadian soldier who had been a prisoner in Germany and made several escapes, McClung was also indicating her support of the war effort.

10 J. G. Sime's "Munitions" exemplifies that women were ecstatic once released from private homes and propelled into jobs in a munitions factory. Sime asserts that, prior to the war, women led dull and quiet lives. The conflict brings them into contact with other women and provides them with a strong sense of pride and self-worth.

11 In "Nellie McClung and Peace," R. R. Warne observes that although McClung "articulates the complexity of the war experience from a variety of perspectives . . . her own understanding is always present" (40). For example, the women in the Foreword (Warne incorrectly refers to it as the Preface) phrase their concerns in ways which echo statements from McClung's *In Times Like These* (40).

12 In giving voice to a variety of women, *The Next of Kin* is typical of McClung's style. See Misao Dean, "Voicing the Voiceless: Language and Genre in Nellie McClung's Fiction and Her Autobiography," *Atlantis* 15.1 (1989): 65-75.

13 Significantly, the only person in Aleta's growing-up years who openly defies authority is male. Belenky et al. argue that during adolescence, males challenge authority, whereas females do not (64). During the war, Aleta's male friend openly declares his pacifist views, and although he is ostracized by his friends, he does not suffer the same fate as Aleta; she is incarcerated for her outspokenness. Beynon thus underscores that girls (more than boys) are socialized into passive obedience, and further, that Canadian society might tolerate a man's contestation of the war effort, but never a woman's.

14 No doubt Beynon was speaking from the heart in this novel, for as Hicks notes in her Introduction to *Aleta Dey*, Beynon was forced to resign as women's editor of *The Guide* in 1917 due to her public opposition to male conscription; Hicks speculates that the tapping of Aleta's telephone is probably biographical fact (xiii). Roberts writes, too, that Beynon may even have feared physical attack, for at anti-war rallies, several activists had been beaten up, and right-wing vigilantes staged brutal riots all over the west from 1917-1920. According to Roberts, Beynon moved to New York in 1917, writing *Aleta Dey* while in exile (52).

15 For a further analysis of how military discourse subordinates women, see Claire A. Culleton, "Gender-Charged Munitions: The Language of World War I Munitions Reports," *Women's Studies International Forum* 2.2 (1988) 109-16; Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 12 (1987) 687-718; and Margaret R. Higonnet, "Not So Quiet in No-Woman's-

Land," *Gendering War Talk*, eds. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton: PUP, 1993): 205-226).

16 See also Mary Jacobus, "The Question of Language: Men of Maxims and *The Mill on the Floss*," *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. Elizabeth Abel (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 37-52; Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," *Feminist Studies/ Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1986) 213-29; Tanya Modleski, "Feminism and the Power of Interpretation: Some Critical Readings," in *Feminist Studies / Critical Studies*, 121-38.

17 Somewhat ironically, McClung's narrator observes that men do recognize women's contributions, but only when it suits their purpose. For example, a recruiter tries to convince a reluctant conscript that he must not let his wife stand in the way of his enlistment. She will be well taken care of on the homefront, the recruiter insists (hypocritically, since he denies his own wife an "active" role), because "women are the best soldiers of all" (186).

19 Coral Ann Howells, in *Private and Fictional Worlds: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s* (London: Methuen, 1987), does not go far enough in her claim that, in their stories about the lives of girls and women between the 1970s and the 1980s, Canadian women writers were redefining heroism (Introduction 5). Obviously, Canadian women were reinterpreting the term as early as the Great War.

20 Descriptions like Beynon's of the atrocities a soldier would witness on the battlefield should counter the commonly held belief that women know nothing about war. I am reminded of a quotation which appears in Sarah Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking*, attributed to suffragist Anna Shaw: "Looking into the face of . . . one dead man we see two dead, the man and the life of the woman who gave him birth; the life she wrought into his life! And looking into his dead face someone asks a woman, what does a woman know about war? What, friends, in the face of a crime like that does a man know about war?" (151).

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Sharon Singer

not a sigh of desire

(for my mother)

did you notice how the view
zoomed in and the world before your eyes
narrowed small and indistinct?
a target it seems
dense and ungiving.
peripheral vision
and the hues that might be long
ribbons of orange violet sunset
are blurry and vague
and maybe you feel dizzy
when you strain to focus.
you want to know you want to know
what it is that stirs
in the dim.
You want to know
and maybe you're afraid
since god was in the sky
last time you looked
and you were told that the finger
he pointed wasn't kind.

december gales push dry leaves
down the road past you
and you tug your collar
high and close.
you think you hear your name
just now in the wind
as the wool touches your ears.

Allan Brown

The Bells

That easterly again; some quieter
now, I guess, till the nether interval
and Jonah's creeper shudders and fails.
Strange,
the things you think about between evenings;
half a world could be or not and no-one
an ut re the wiser; or such other
a dusty business in widderskinfulls
of done or dying; or each the voices
as

I cross and cross the limen;
accidentals of light mumble
my eyelids and I am returned to
a closed red world.

Voices: the snarling
of pebbles roiled by tide play; the darkness
we die into, or that dies into us.

Wanda Campbell

Alchemy in Ontario
Reaney's *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*

> . . . I merely react—not necessarily in a positive, optimistic way, but with images and metaphors; and to hell with it, I don't care whether they're 'grids of meaning' or not; I'm going to grid away.
>
> —JAMES REANEY (*Long-liners* 124)

James Reaney's *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* is a suite of poems first performed on CBC to the music of John Beckwith in July of 1961. Since it won the Governor General's Award for the best volume of poetry published in 1962, the critical response has been mixed. Some critics, including Ross Woodman, Alvin Lee, and Milton Wilson, see *Twelve Letters* as part of a pastoral tradition and others, such as Louis Dudek and Frank Davey, are uncomfortable with the apparent simplicity of Reaney's recreation of his rural roots. George Bowering admits that Reaney has finally begun in *Twelve Letters* "to make myth from local materials rather than spooning it on from the golden bowl of literary materials" (48), a point that Colin Browne elaborates in his perceptive article, "Reaney's *Twelve Letters*: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Boy":

> His intent is twofold: to celebrate the mythic, archetypal, and anagogic potential to be uncovered in the local; and to identify the local as a source of poetry and liberation for the colonized Canadian imagination. (104)

In "The Canadian Poet's Predicament," Reaney argues that Canadian poetry "represents a distinctive vision but it cries out for more development, just as the poet's innermost self probably cries out for some ancestral pattern to go by" (288). The ancestral pattern he chooses for his *Künstlerroman* in poetic form is that of alchemy, which illuminates the theme, the form, *and* the method of *Twelve Letters*. In "The Influence of

Spenser on Yeats," the doctoral dissertation that Reaney completed under Northrop Frye in 1958, Reaney wrote: "Alchemy, as we have seen, is one of the shaping disciplines behind Yeats' evolution as a symbolic linguist" (188). The same can be said of the boy whom Reaney describes in the epistles directed to the town of his childhood.

Two books that were central to Reaney's imagination at the time he was writing *Twelve Letters* were Herbert Silberer's *Problems of Mysticism and its Symbolism* and Carl Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*, and it is their interpretation of alchemy that finds its way into the poems. In *Psychology and Alchemy*, to which Reaney makes repeated reference in his dissertation, Jung compares the imagination, which is central to "the process of individuation" (333), to the methods of alchemy: "the centre—itself virtually unknowable—acts like a magnet on the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and gradually captures them as in a crystal lattice" (Jung 207). Jung's evocative language is echoed in Reaney's description of the poetic process:

> That's how poetry works: it weaves street scenes and twins around swans in legendary pools. Let us make a form out of this: documentary on one side and myth on the other: Life & Art. In this form we can put anything and the magnet we have set up will arrange it for us. (*Alphabet* 1 [Sept 1960]:4)

Guided by Jung and Silberer, Reaney applies alchemy to the "individuation" of the artist, specifically the Canadian artist.

Jung admits that alchemy is not an exact science, if it can be called a science at all: "As to the course of the process as a whole, the authors are vague and contradictory" (228). However, those, like Josephus Quercetanus, who do establish a sequence of operations maintain that there are twelve steps or stages in the alchemical process. This explains Reaney's choice of twelve letters which are not only epistles to the town that shaped him, but also letters of a shared alphabet, the alphabet of alchemy.

I. Aqua Mercurialis

> And by whatever names the philosophers have called their stone they always mean and refer to this one substance, i.e., to the water from which everything originates and in which everything is contained, which rules everything, in which errors are made and in which the error is itself corrected. I call it "philosophical" water, not ordinary water but *aqua mercurialis*. (JUNG 224)

In the *prima materia* of alchemy, often described as quicksilver, the process that enables transformation from leaden matter to golden mystery is

born. Appropriately, Reaney's first letter is an invocation "To the Avon River above Stratford, Canada." This river, like Wordsworth's Derwent, is the *prima materia* from which the poet is formed. The boy comes to know the river intimately as he moves over, under, and within its physical and metaphorical possibilities, a sacred initiation compared with God's presence as the first whirlwind (Job 38:1), the first rainbow (Genesis 9:13), the first snow (Psalm 147:16) and the first falling star (Revelation 9:1). The Canadian Avon, as distinct from its English counterpart, becomes the boy's muse, inspiring him to song while the flow of his own thoughts supplies the river at its source. His earliest wish, "To flow like you" (I.51) is, as Lee points out, an echo of the famous "Thames Couplets" of John Denham's *Cooper's Hill*:

> O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
> Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full. (189-92)

It also inscribes the boy's desire to be initiated into the alchemical magic of transmutation and unification, to give form to the river that gives form to him.

The First Letter culminates with an allusion to the hermaphrodite which, significantly, does not appear in the first version of the poem published prior to Reaney's exposure to Jung. In alchemy, the philosopher's stone that has the power to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary is called the *rebis* (two-thing) or Hermaphrodite because it is complete in itself, a union of opposites in perfect harmony. As both the raw material and the goal of alchemy, the hermaphrodite represents the alchemical union of opposites, male/female, dry/wet, sun/moon, gold/silver, physical/spiritual, etc. (Jung 317-18) and is one of the most pervasive of all alchemical symbols. Two common representations, the *Uroboros*, or tail-eating serpent, and Mercury with his *caduceus*, a familiar medical symbol, shed light on Reaney's reference to "the hermaphroditic leech" ("leech" is archaic for "healer" [*OED*]). The dual nature of Mercurius, here associated with both the stream and the serpent, is the most explicit representation of the alchemical *coniunctio* or union of opposites that appear throughout the suite, including the King and Queen, the two-headed eagle, town and country, sun and moon, summer and winter, twin roses, and the joined figures of the Janitor and Granny Crack.

The quicksilver of the Avon becomes a "crystal lattice" that captures and

organizes the documentary and myth of the poet's world. This image of united dualities is at the heart of the introductory poem and the suite as a whole, providing as it does an emblem of a unified voice for a poet struggling to incorporate both the imported and the indigenous. By reinterpreting the "Avon" in a Canadian context, the poet imposes his own experience upon inherited words and inherited vision. He does not abandon either "stream" of his inheritance but combines them through the alchemical symbol of the hermaphrodite, and the alchemical process which he equates with the creative process. A few years earlier, Reaney had written of the "predicament" of the Canadian poet. "How can I hope to be worthy of the language I write in; I'd better not stay in Canada any longer. I've got to go over and join the more powerful angels on the other side of the Atlantic" (292). In *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* he discovers an alternative angel, the winged hermaphrodite that combines the imported and the indigenous, the cultured and the wild, the local and the universal, the experienced and the imagined. Possessed of this "rebis," he can transform his world into poetry.

II. Squaring of the Circle

The squaring of the circle was a problem that greatly exercised medieval minds. It is a symbol of the *opus alchymicum* since it breaks down the original chaotic unity into the four elements and then combines them again in a higher unity. Unity is represented by a circle and the four elements by a square. The production of one from four is the result of a process of distillation and sublimation which takes the so-called "circular" form . . . . (JUNG 119)

In the Second Letter, the boy initiated into the Adamic task of naming participates in the very act of creation as he explores how indigenous raw materials are transformed into human structures, a process for which Lee suggests some winsome logic (42). The construction of the town as Reaney describes it is a rudimentary "squaring of the circle." The magic circle or mandala of alchemy is "squared" by the four rivers of paradise or four elements flowing from the center (Jung 123, 124). Reaney offers the streets of Stratford flowing into the Great Lakes and named for them. The boy learns how a town is built, or more accurately *grown*, adopting the garden and orchard as prototypes in accordance with the horticultural analogy so often employed by the alchemists. According to Jung, the imagination, what the alchemists called "the star in man" (265) and understood "as the real and literal power to create images . . ." (160), is one method of attaining the elusive stone. What might be dismissed as mere child's play is, in fact, training

in metaphor, a stage in the transformative process. In *Alphabet*, Reaney describes the belief he held as a child "that metaphor is reality" (1[Sept. 1960]: 3), a belief that was threatened as he grew older and ultimately renewed.

III. Coniunctio

The king, clad in purple, with a golden crown, has a golden lion beside him. He has a red lily in his hand, whereas the queen has a white lily. (JUNG 275)

The nursery rhyme cadence that ends the Second Letter continues in the description of King William and Queen Mary that follows. These are, of course, actual historical figures, perhaps represented in the annual Orangeman's parade by people in costume (just as the Irish river Boyne is the site of a famous battle for the Protestant cause in 1690), but the image of the King and Queen are also central symbols in alchemy; the *lapis* is the result of the "chymical marriage" between the two. Many illustrations of the royal pair appear in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* including a 1550 woodcut of a king and queen in coitus as a symbol of the alchemical stage of *coniunctio*, which Jung interprets as "an allegory of the psychic union of opposites" (316). The opposites unified in this seemingly simple poem are many. An Old World celebration of the Protestant William III's victory over the Roman Catholic James II is transplanted to the New World, but the symbolism of orange for Protestantism (through a chance association between the geographical reference in the King's byname, Prince of Orange, and the colour) is imposed upon indigenous tiger lilies. The boy is once again wrestling with inherited stories, stories that, as Browne points out, encourage "factional retrenchment" in a New World setting (108). However, what the boy ultimately celebrates in this playful rhyme named for local flora is not factionalism, but rather spectacle, emblem, and language. As in alchemy, the result of this first union must perish, and be replaced by the true king and queen which are later revealed to be the Janitor and Granny Crack.

IV. Nigredo

...then a union of opposites is performed in the likeness of a union of male and female (called the *coniugium, matrimonium, coniunctio, coitus*) followed by the death of the product of the union (*mortificatio, calcinatio, putrefactio*) and a corresponding *nigredo*. (JUNG 220)

The process of conjunction, or pairing of opposites, sets the pattern for a surprisingly bleak exploration of Stratford as it lives in the poet's memory.

Through a series of thirty-six localizing prepositions, the poet presents many of the contraries that govern the life of the town. In alchemy, conjunction is followed by *putrefactio* or *nigredo*, pictured in etchings as a skeleton standing on a coffin. Of all the portraits of Stratford, the one presented in the Fourth Letter is the darkest, with reminders of death and decay at every turn: the sewage, the graveyard, the Crimean cannon, the "waste outskirts" (IV.17). Significantly, many of the symbols of *nigredo* are representations of Old World enmities and stratifications.

However, in the typographical and symbolic centre of the poem is the image of the "two-headed eagle" (IV.9) which holds special alchemical significance as a symbol of the hermaphroditic stone which, like the phoenix, reproduces itself. The way out of the darkness for the poet is to see, as the grammatical term in the title suggests, the components of his world in relation to one another, to find the moonlight that illuminates the blackness, angels in the wake of the war.

V. Albedo

From this the washing (*ablutio, baptisma*) either leads direct to the whitening (*albedo*), or else the soul (*anima*) released at the "death" is reunited with the dead body and brings about its resurrection, or finally the "many colours" or "peacock's tail" (*cauda pavonis*), leads to the one white colour that contains all colours. At this point the first main goal of the process is reached, namely the *albedo*, highly prized by many alchemists as if it were the ultimate goal. It is the silver or moon condition which still has to be raised to the sun condition. (JUNG 220-21)

The "whitening" stage in the alchemical process is represented by a poem that culminates in the images of winter, moon, and white bird. In the absence of wizards and centaurs, the school children are tediously encouraged to see the shape of their brain in imported systems of quantification. Any element of the natural world that manages to enter their fortress is quickly stuffed, codified and lost under layers of dust. The pattern established in the preceding letters suggests that the natural external world is the world of childhood, whereas the internal world enclosed by human structures belongs to adults. But fortunately, in the cloakroom, elements of the world of nature which have hitherto provided the raw materials for the boy's imagination have been smuggled through the borders. Appropriately, the mythical figure who presides over this magical port of entry is "the old janitor" (V.21), "a curious question" (V.26) in an institution of answers, the only puzzle the boy cannot solve although equipped with all

the codes and formulas. More than a caretaker, he is referred to as "January man" (V.28) which suggests the season in which the boy's epiphanic encounter occurs, and associates him with Janus, "the guardian god of doors and beginnings" (*OED*). The image of Janus, described as having two faces, one young and one old looking in opposite directions, is later amplified in the image of Janitor and Granny Crack revolving "back to back" as a compound angel looking down upon the town. This hermaphroditic image reveals the dual nature of Mercurius as both guide and tempter:

> sometimes he was a ministering and helpful spirit . . . and sometimes an elusive, deceptive, teasing goblin who drove the alchemists to despair and had many of his attributes in common with the devil. . . . (Jung 64)

The Janitor presides over the young boy's initiation into life's mysteries represented by the white bird unlocked "upon the wave" (V.29). Reminiscent of Noah's dove (Browne 112), and the one accompanying Christ's baptism, the winged figure represents the release of the soul in the crucial refining stages of alchemy (Jung 192-93). The boy's soul finds release from rote and routine but the training of the poet as alchemist is not yet complete. "If the main work was interrupted at the white stage," writes Silberer, "instead of waiting for the red, then they got the white stone, the small elixir, with which the base metals can be turned into silver alone" (126).

VI. Citrinatas

> . . . the wanderer comes to those houses where people work alone or by twos. They work in a slovenly fashion. The alchemistic quacks are generally called "bunglers" and "messy cooks" by the masters of the art. These are the ones who do not work according to the "possibilities of nature," which is, nevertheless, the touchstone of all right production. (SILBERER 132)

The "yellowing" was sometimes omitted as a stage in the alchemical process, but Reaney here employs it as an opportunity to describe those who would militate against life's mysteries. The maiden aunts with whom he boards in town never move beyond the simple language and judgments of nursery rhymes and beast fables. Significantly, they live on a street named for King William who represents a colonial sensibility and reminds of Old World divisions. By not recognizing the garden in which they live, the spinsters allow the roses on the wallpaper to become as sere and repetitious as the life they lead. Because they feel compelled to reject the magical (Rider Haggard's novel is about an immortal woman waiting for a reincar-

nated lover), in favour of the mundane, the spinsters' *hortus conclusus* becomes a sad parody of the rose garden of the philosophers, one of alchemy's favourite symbols (Jung 167). Only the boy dares to confront the "green smothered darkness" (VI.28) behind the cupboard, in the cloakroom, and within the secret kingdom of language.

VII. Rubedo

The *albedo* so to speak, is the daybreak, but not till the *rubedo* is it sunrise. The red and white are King and Queen who may also celebrate their "chymical nuptials" at this stage. (JUNG 221)

In the Seventh Letter, the boy who has become the poet searches for a past for himself and his community in the "tea-coloured files of the town's newspapers" (VII.2). What he discovers at the center of it all is the "flower or is it a seed pod of all the words spoken at the / cross-roads of the town" (VII. 34-35). Jung writes:

> The inside of the "golden flower" is a "seeding-place" where the "diamond body" is produced. The synonymous term "the ancestral land" may actually be a hint that this production is the result of integrating the ancestral stages. The ancestral spirits play an important part in primitive rites of renewal. (124)

The streets of the town intersect with the past and blossom into a history at once public and private, at once "heroic and infuriatingly tame" ("Canadian Poet's Predicament" 121). The past survives within the oral tradition, and the poet's world is inhabited by "figures" described by "ancestral voices" (VII.37) and those he himself has seen. Thus the "seedpod," like the philosopher's stone, is an image of potential, regeneration, and promise. The motley cast of characters who live out the drama of the town are described, but none so vividly as "Granny Crack," who, as "a spirit of the rural Ontario countryside" (Lee 47), becomes the alchemical partner of the town's Janitor.

Granny Crack is a central figure in Reaney's imagination who also appears in the poem "Winter's Tales" (1949), and in the plays *The Kildeer* (1959) and *Colours in the Dark* (1967). Harlot and harridan, she is at once the crack of doom and the crack of dawn. In the alchemical context she comes to represent the physical aspect of the hermaphroditic Mercurius:

> It is of the essence of the transforming substance to be on the one hand extremely common, even contemptible...but on the other hand to mean something of great value, not to say divine. (Jung 128-29)

The frightened children see Granny Crack "as an incredible crone / The

spirit of neglected fence corners" (VII.65-66), a garden gone wild. Her own perception of herself is somewhat more lofty:

> I was the mother of your sun
> I was the aunt of your moon
> My veins are your paths and roads
> On my head I bear steeples and turrets
> I am the darling of your god. (VII.69-73)

Granny Crack's name suggests a multitude of meanings, from craziness to casual conversation (Browne 116-17). Like Johnnie Crack in Dylan Thomas's *Under Milkwood*, she is the stuff of song and folk tale. She also resembles Yeats' Crazy Jane who was called Cracked Mary in early versions of the poems that bear her name. (Reaney had just completed a dissertation in which he drew attention to the alchemical as well as occult dimension of Yeats' poetry.) Like Crazy Jane, Granny Crack has an audacious power of speech, and an audacious sense of self, but in the final stanza of the Seventh Letter, the poet reveals that Granny Crack is only half of the equation that is completed by the Janitor. Body and soul, summer and winter, Sol and Luna, country and town are united together in the alchemical marriage, creating a hermaphroditic whole, a winged figure that is at once annunciator and guardian looking down upon the child's garden. This recognition of his dual heritage is the poet's empowerment.

VIII. Multipicatio

The red man and the white woman, called also red lions and white lilies, and many other names, are united and cooked together in a vessel, the philosophical Egg. The combined material becomes thereby gradually black (and is called raven or ravenhead), and later white (swan); now a somewhat greater heat is applied and the substance is sublimated in the vessel (the swan flies up); on further heating a vivid play of colors appears (peacock tail or rainbow); finally the substance becomes red and that is the conclusion of the main work. The red substance is the philosopher's stone, called also our king, red lion, grand elixir, etc. The after work, is a subsequent elaboration by which the stone is given still more power, "multiplied" in its efficiency. (SILBERER 125-26)

Silberer's description of the alchemical process is echoed in letters Three through Seven. The poet must now learn how to multiply his powers through a long apprenticeship.

The town that was recreated earlier in vegetable form is now recreated in musical form (Lee 46). The setting for this "formal" training should not go unnoticed, cluttered as it is with Old World artifacts, reminding us, writes

Browne, "of the desperation of the colonial imagination" (117). The composition emerges from the tensions between the regulatory metronome and the freewheeling rhythms of child's play. A year in the town becomes a "Two Part Invention," a counterpoint of natural rhythms and seasonal cycles juxtaposed against human structures and ingenuity. We see here, in its most rudimentary form—it is these passages that elicit the most disparaging comments from critics—the multiplication of the poet's power, but he soon discovers that language, not music, is his true medium.

IX. Fermentatio

> The practice connected with this idea consists in putting some gold in the mixture that is to be transmuted. The gold dissolves like a seed in it and is to produce the fruit, gold. The gold ingredient was also conceived as a ferment, which permeates the whole mixture like a leaven, and, as it were, made it ferment into gold. Furthermore, the tincturing matter was conceived as male and the matter to be colored as female. Keeping in view the symbol of the corn and seed, we see that the matter into which the seed was put becomes earth and mother, in which it will germinate in order to come to fruition. (SILBERER 115)

In "Town House and Country Mouse" Reaney contrasts a familiar rural world of relatively unified wholes with a strange urban environment characterized by separation. The child submits to the passage from "here" to "there," a process accompanied by the flowering of language. During his journey into town, the wheels of the boy's red buggy whirl "against sheaves of blue chicory" (IX.29). According to the alchemists, unity is achieved in the golden flower, but Jung notes that the "golden flower of alchemy" can sometimes be a blue flower, "the sapphire blue flower of the hermaphrodite" (76-77). As a symbol of the mandala (Jung 99), the blue flower is associated with all the wheels and circles in the poem, most notably the seedpod of voices of the Seventh Letter that is here described as "the million leaning pens of grass with their nibs of seed" (IX.31). The circular journey between the two worlds of his childhood is appropriately accompanied by the indigenous music of nature heard in "the gamut of grass and blue flowers" (IX.65).

Nightmarish and chimerical, the town offers its own hieroglyphs and emblems to entice the boy's imagination and contribute to the *fermentatio*, the germination of his poetic self. The town, initially defined in terms of the imported (streets named for dukes, gothic architecture, exotic birds) presents the danger of the rural being submerged in the urban (corduroy logs buried in gravel), while the countryside shows signs of the imported drowning in the indigenous (orchards gone wild), but the boy finds his model in

the successful wedding of the two, a house defined by human culture united with a barn, an ark of animals and urges.

X. Exaltatio

In this connection belongs also the ancient alchemic symbol of the philosopher's egg. This symbol is compared to the "Egyptian stone," and the dragon, which bites its tail; consequently the procreation symbol is compared to an eternity or cycle symbol. (SILBERER 116)

The philosopher's stone is exalted, or brought to a higher degree of potency, as the boy learns to interpret the voices of his community as poetry, to translate the pairings he observes into metaphor. The title of the Tenth Letter "Voices and Conjunctions" echoes that of the Fourth Letter "Voices and Prepositions." In the former poem, however, the grammatical part of speech to which the title refers appears throughout the poem, while in the latter, "ordinary conjunctions, in the grammatical sense, are not in evidence" (Browne 123). These conjunctions, it appears, are the "paradoxical union of irreconcilables" (Jung 139) at the heart of the alchemical process. Each stanza based upon a remembered fragment of conversation expands to include an image of *coniunctio* as well as a reference to the alchemical process. The town becomes the "philosophical egg" or circular vessel in which the masterwork is to be accomplished. Through this *matrix* of associations, the boy enters a symbolic universe where language assumes a peculiar power. He learns that words can be used to question, chastise, describe, disarm, convert, herald, and even pun in the face of mortality. Though in Reaney's poem, "The Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker," the old man with the two canes is God with Adam and Eve before him, here the mystery of the opening stanza is left unsolved. Equally mysterious is the final and most fearsome of the conjunctions, the dream figure of a man "with a clock in his belly" (which in alchemy represents immortality [Jung 172]) juxtaposed with babies "in their christening shrouds" (X.31) reaching out from the church yard. Here poetry, the art of anagogy, becomes the ultimate stay against extinction.

XI. Augmentatio

After I had arrived at the gate of the garden, some on one side looked sourly at me, so that I was afraid they might hinder me in my project; but others said, "See, he will into the garden, and we have done garden service here so long, and have never gotten in; we

will laugh him down if he fails." But I did not regard all that, as I knew the condition of this garden better than they, even if I had never been in it, but went right to a gate that was tight shut so that one could neither see nor find a keyhole. I noticed, however, that a little round hole that with ordinary eyes could not be seen, was in the door, and thought immediately, that must be the way the door is opened . . . unlocked and went in. (SILBERER 5-6)

The poet has arrived at the penultimate stage in the alchemical process. But before he can successfully transform base matter into golden mystery, he must wrestle with inherited angels and, not surprisingly, the most daunting of these, for a poet born in Stratford upon Avon, is the other poet born in the other Stratford upon Avon. In the opening letter, Reaney has issued a challenge by insisting that the silver flow of his Avon, "does not taste English" to him (I.10). Though he insists upon an indigenous tradition, the inherited one cannot be ignored:

> When you start to write a poem in Canada and think of the British Museum Reading Room you almost go mad because the great tradition of English literature, the glare of its brilliant modern representatives seems so oppressively and crushingly great. ("Canadian Poet's Predicament" 119-20)

A young Canadian poet seeking entrance into the rose garden of the philosophers is bound to be met with naysayers and doubters, but he persists in finding a way in, in staking out his peculiar territory. In all of his writing Reaney works toward the maturation of a Canadian and contemporary poetic which relates to, but transmutes, the original.

In contrast to the citizens of Stratford, Ontario, who merely plant the floral emblems associated with the various plays in their "Shakespearean Gardens," the poet illustrates how the plays themselves are emblems of actual incidents in the town. The town itself becomes a garden in which each individual carries symbolic value, as do the flowers in Ophelia's bouquet. The often poignant, always clever, connections drawn by the poet reveal that Stratford, Ontario contains tragedy and romance as genuine as any which inspired the bard, that our winter's tales are equally worthy of an audience.

Augmentation, the name for the penultimate stage of the alchemical process, is also a word used in heraldry to describe an honourable addition to a family emblem. In the opening poem, the boy adopts a coat of arms that combines the wild and the tame, and now he is ready to make his own contribution to the heraldry of his homeplace, and to do so with honesty and humour, insight and eloquence.

XII. Projectio

The possessor of this penetrating Mercurius can "project" it into other substances and transform them from the imperfect into the perfect state. The imperfect state is like the sleeping state; substances lie in it like the "sleepers chained in Hades" and are awakened as from death to a new and more beautiful life by the divine tincture extracted from the inspired stone. (JUNG 285)

The final stage of the alchemical process is *projectio*. "In 'projection' upon a baser metal the *rebis* is able to tincture immense amounts of it to gold" (Silberer 126). In the last letter, "a poetic recapitulation of main images and themes from the whole suite" (Lee 50), the boy's bicycle enables him to project his imagination upon his world and awaken its golden potential. As a union of two circles, the bi-cycle is yet another symbol of the philosopher's stone. Possessed of the *rebis* or "two thing," the boy can see into the heart of life and transform what he sees. Like the other vehicles in the suite, from red buggy to shark-fish car, the bicycle is a medium of both transportation and transformation. It allows him to unite his worlds, the rural world of his youth where nature speaks and legends come alive, and an urban future of speeding cars "filled with the two-backed beast" (XII.6-7). Sexuality, here expressed in the language of Shakespeare's Iago, is one of many hieroglyphs waiting to be deciphered, one of many experiences yet to be named into existence. The poet who acquires the *rebis*, described by alchemists as both panacea and sanctuary, is protected in "a world of love and of feeling" (XII.31). He has indeed learned to flow like the quicksilver of the river that formed him—from youth to adulthood, innocence to experience, country to town, fairy tale to fact, local to universal, and back again.

As Lee points out, the turning wheels of the bicycle bring to mind the many other images of circles in *Twelve Letters* (51). The final letter itself is full of circular images ranging from the explicit (hoop, wheels, burs, and puddles) to the implicit—the hermaphroditic figure of coitus and the cycle of the seasons which echoes the cycle of human life.

> Time and again the alchemists reiterate that the *opus* proceeds from the one and leads back to the one, that it is a sort of circle like a dragon biting its own tail. For this reason the *opus* was often called *circulare* (circular) or else *rota* (the wheel). Mercurius stands at the beginning and end of the work . . . He is the hermaphrodite that was in the beginning, that splits into the traditional brother-sister duality and is reunited in the *coniunctio*, to appear once again at the end in the radiant form of the *lumen novum*, the stone. He is metallic yet liquid, matter yet spirit, cold yet fiery, poison yet healing draught—a symbol uniting all opposites. (Jung 281-82)

The young poet's climactic assertion that "everything was / The bicycle of which I sing," echoes the alchemist's belief that the stone was the one in all and all in one. Mineral transmutations were the least of its miraculous powers. In fact, Jung contends that "it always remains an obscure point whether the ultimate transformations in the alchemical process are to be sought more in the material or more in the spiritual realm" (266). The unifying power of the imagination, or what Stan Dragland calls "the myth of coherence" (231), may be in doubt in this sceptical age, but, according to a character in Reaney's play *Colours in the Dark*, a world without it seems too dismal to contemplate:

> Then if a flower is not like a star, and nothing is like anything else then—all the spring goes out of me. I used to take such pleasure in little things—images, stones, pebbles, leaves, grasses, sedges—the grass is like a pen, its nib filled with seed—but it all seems—lies. I can't go on. There seems no reason to go on living or thinking. (65)

The final image that rests with the reader is a visual one of a bicycle with seedpods as wheels which not only ties it back to the seeds in the rest of the suite, but captures the whole enterprise in a single icon, a human frame uniting bundles of natural potential, an imported structure made functional by indigenous components. In this final poem Reaney reveals that the imported and indigenous can co-exist—beautifully. In "The Canadian Poet's Predicament," Reaney writes:

> If you just hole up in Canada and refuse to educate yourself you are going to be provincial. But if you flee the country, cut yourself off from your roots, you may end up not even being that. The solution seems to be that the Canadian poet has to stay in the country and at the same time act as if he weren't in it. It looks as if I'm saying that the Canadian poet has to be some sort of poltergeist. He probably has to be. (120)

In *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*, Reaney refines this image of a noisy and mischievous spirit into that of a compound angel, a hermaphroditic Mercurius who combines the best of all worlds, and guides the alchemist/poet to treasures untold. "The *prima materia*," writes Jung, "has the quality of ubiquity: it can be found always and everywhere, which is to say that projection can be made always and everywhere" (311), even in Stratford, Ontario. Reaney's poetry, here as elsewhere, is an expression of his conviction that Ontario, his home place, is "not just a heap of topsoil, parking lots, mineshafts and stumps, but a sacred place" ("An ABC to Ontario Literature and Culture" 2). To accept and celebrate the conjunctions that make us who

we are is the true solution to the predicament of the Canadian poet, and that of all Canadians wondering which stream of their inheritance to turn to for sustenance. If, as Dragland maintains, "Reaney is a teacher of citizenship in Canada and in the country of words" (231), *Twelve Letters* is one of his most important lessons. Through these poems and the alchemical principles that inform them, we learn how to sink our "claws into a locally coloured tree trunk and scratch [our] way through to universality" (*Alphabet* 4 (June 1962): 3).

NOTES

I am indebted to Richard Stingle and D.M.R. Bentley of the University of Western Ontario for setting me on my way and the readers at *Canadian Literature* for helping me to arrive.

1 "To the Avon River Above Stratford Canada" first appeared in *Canadian Forum* 30 (Feb. 1951): 255. The conclusion to that version reads as follows:

> As some day I'll know
> Your name
> Your coat-of arms I do—
> A shield of reeds and crayfishes
> Thin mussel-shells and rushes
> And muskrats and farmer's geese
> And one of my three earliest wishes
> To flow like you.

A reference to the river sounding "like old money, / The tiny silver nickels of my childhood. . . ," excised from the later version, helps to explain the drawing of a coin that appears in the text of *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*, but may also be a gloss on Jung's discussion of the ubiquity of the gold that is the goal of the alchemical process: "It is part of the banality of its outward aspect that the gold is minted, i.e. shaped into coins, stamped, and valued" (78). Browne argues that "the drawings may appear ornamental, but in their own subtle way they comment rather profoundly, revealing a dimension left unspoken in the poems" (101). Significantly, almost every drawing represents a conjunction between an aspect of nature and a man-made object. This visually reinforces Reaney's theme of a hermaphroditic union between the indigenous and the imported, the wild and the tame. The drawing of the gas pump surmounted by the sun that appears at the end of the Ninth Letter and its companion drawing bear a striking resemblance to alchemical illustrations of the sun and moon that appear throughout *Psychology and Alchemy* (331, 387).

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Bogdan Czaykowski

Ad Dadam

It's so dark that only words are bright,
wrote Tristan, the sad swarthy Rumanian,
coddling his eye in the radiant clarity
of a crystal Iliad.

O Tristan, comic and cold,
your ways ran away like mercury;
look: a raised fist falls
by night, that had for you no beauty.

It's so dark that only words are shining,
and dying, O Tristan, and they die too.

translated from the Polish by Iain Higgins

Derk Wynand

Body Bag

Tristan Tazara's still picking himself out
of his paper bag, phrase by phrase or less
than that, reassembling himself. *Et vous?*

It's not all a matter of preference
for hip bone, say, thigh bone, exquisite head.

Whatever comes out, he says, resembles
him, or does he say it resembles you?

No one's seen anything go in. So, who
has been sitting on his hands all this while?

And who is selecting bits of what is
or *will be* himself, or you—depending
on the *traduction* you believe in, or
traducteur, proverbial traitor—out of the bag
with the cat/chat and its whiskers and meow

at the core of his work before *corps exquis.*

Filling In the Blanks

Edeet Ravel

Lovers: A Midrash. NuAge Editions $12.95

Reviewed by Laurie Aikman

"I held the note in my hand and stared at it. The unlikely, decorative script filled me with unbearable desire. It seemed to me that if I could only decipher the sinuous markings on the page, I would be able to unlock the secret of my longing." So muses one of the characters—a Jewish agriculturalist in love with an Arab student in Jerusalem—in Edeet Ravel's sparsely lyrical *Lovers: A Midrash.* This haunting prose poem novel is essentially an exploration of the complex interrelationships between interpretation, knowledge, communication and desire.

Ravel, who teaches Hebrew literature at McGill University, was inspired in her writing by the ancient Hebrew tradition of scriptural interpretation known as "midrash." Richard Cooper explains in the afterword that midrash "is simply the Hebrew word for interpretation or explanation." He describes it as an "interpretative strategy" that involves telling stories to explain other stories, specifically the stories of scripture. Another Hebrew scholar, Lawrence Kushner, has defined midrash as "the writing that sprouts up in the spaces between the consecrated words of Scripture." Perhaps the most evocative and playful metaphor for midrash was provided by Ravel herself in a CBC "Saturday Spotlight" interview with Shelly Pomerance in December, 1994: "It was a kind of group writing. You'd have a group of people in a room, each one building an interpretation on the interpretation of the other. It was a kind of ancient jam session in interpretation."

These definitions provide important clues as to how midrash functions in Ravel's text, and how Ravel's text functions as midrash. The book is divided into six sections. The first, third and fifth sections, entitled respectively "Departure," "Absence," and "Return," describe the timeless world of six Hebrew sages, all men, who gather to discuss Scripture and midrash in the House of Study. The verbal "jam session" in which these men engage is a reminder that interpretation is communal, that it is a process of discussion and dialogue, rather than any fixed truth. The road that leads to the House of Study, however, also leads away from it, and the movement described by the titles of these chapters is that of one of the scholars, Rav Huna's son.

Each of the other three sections is a contemporary midrash on six verses of the "Song of Songs" or "Song of Solomon," one of the most highly erotic and mysterious books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Again, the titles of the chapters are spatial in nature: "New York," "London," and "Jerusalem." "New York" and "Jerusalem" are stories of love, jealousy and desire narrated by women. "London" is a series of responses to the personal advertisement of "[two] impecunious ugly sisters looking for beaux who will wine and dine [them]." In these sections, part of the "Song of Songs"—an

entire verse, a phrase, or a single word, such as "caressing"—is printed on each page, followed by a short narrative excerpt.

Ravel's text is sparse, full of actual, visual gaps and spaces: some pages contain as little as two or three lines; few are more than about half-full of words. This is a piece of writing which calls attention to emptiness, silence, and reflection, and invites the reader to step into the spaces it creates. It is hardly surprising that many of the characters are searching for clues, digging in the earth or among papers, unearthing bones, reading fragments, playing detective.

The importance of space in Ravel's book can perhaps serve as a reminder that interpretation itself is often situated in and controlled by certain physical and intellectual spaces, like the sages' "House of Study." Such spaces may be stimulating and challenging, and may house a genuine community of interpretation, but they may also be stifling: "Rav Huna's son feels that if he stays in the House of Study one minute longer he will be dead." The young man's journey away from and back to the House of Study calls into question the role of the institution in interpretation. The contribution of Edeet Ravel, a contemporary woman writer, to an ancient Hebrew tradition dominated by men, may inspire other readers to do likewise: to enter into the spaces in existing traditions and "fill in the blanks"; to continue the ongoing process of interpretation, rather than feeling excluded or silenced. Ravel's perspective on interpretation is liberating: "[It] cannot be over your head, because the whole idea of midrash is that any interpretation that you have has to come from yourself. It can't come from any other source or any other place." *Lovers: a Midrash* freed me to imagine a House of Study where we could discuss our dreams and our daily lives along with our most profound and sacred thoughts about poetry and the nature of the universe. And you? What did you dream?

Stuck or Mended?

Timothy Findley
The Trials of Ezra Pound. Blizzard $15.95

Louis A. Sass
Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought. Harvard UP US$18.95

Reviewed by John Xiros Cooper

At one point in Timothy Findley's dramatization of the 1946 judicial hearing to determine Ezra Pound's fitness to stand trial for treason, Dr. Muncie, the consulting psychiatrist in the case, mentions that Pound has a number of 'fixed ideas.' Pound, who is listening to Muncie's testimony, seems confused for a moment by the word 'fixed' and cannot decide whether the doctor means fixed in the sense of 'stuck,' or fixed in the sense of 'mended.' We all know what Muncie means, but Pound's hesitation goes right to the heart of Findley's drama.

Pound alerts us to the ambiguity of the doctor's words, and thereafter everything that Muncie says is subject to a double or even triple reading, even if he is not aware of it. Is this sudden awareness of multiple meanings, of the heightening of consciousness, of *too much* consciousness, a sign of insanity? If it is, then most of us, trained to see and to read by modernism (and I count new critical reading practises as modernist), suffer from the same dementia. We all speak with tongues which always say more than we mean, and modernism made us all high on the knowledge of it. The trials of Ezra Pound are the revenge of Cyclops on the 'many-minded,' quick-witted Odysseus. Ezra's wit turned out to be too quick for his own good, or, not quick enough.

From raised states of ironic openness, we can discern the unavoidable wobble of discourse in the mouths of those, down there, with the one-rut minds. With views like that, is it any wonder the early modernists tended to be elitist? For the cyclopic sense regimes

of bourgeois society, on the other hand, Odyssean many-mindedness may seem dangerously demented. Let's put it another way, the negatively incapable are fixed in their single tracks. And Pound thought that they (along with the U.S. Constitution which they wrecked) needed fixing.

In *The Trials of Ezra Pound*, Timothy Findley returns to the particular cultural history of modern times into which his *Famous Last Words* inquired with penetration and power. In that novel, he explored the culture of the modernist imagination in the person of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, aesthete, ironist, rootless intellectual, fascist. Mauberley was adapted, of course, from Ezra Pound's neurasthenic 'character' in the 1920 poem of that name. Hardly surprising then that Findley, fearless historian of injured minds, has now turned to the story of Ezra Pound himself.

The dramatic possibilities of the American government's hearings into Pound's state of mind have been vividly exploited for their own sake, and also for the light they cast on the desolate aftermath of the modernist experiment. The presence of William Carlos Williams and Dorothy Pound conveys effectively the ruined personal relations of Ezra, the inveterate loudmouth, now forced into a lawyerly silence as the system conspires to avoid having to hang him. But of course the silence is not only strategic; there are moments when Pound is stammered into silence by the incorrigible idiocy of a world that cannot get the wisdom he proffers. The play, now and then, also catches some of the moods and eloquence of the late Cantos, as Pound struggles against an encompassing incoherence to make legible his experiences.

Pound's madness is the issue before the court and Findley exploits the ambiguities of Pound's position. We see him in a number of guises: misunderstood sage, holy sap, pee-stained derelict. The play forcefully conveys the view that Pound dodged responsibility for his actions and words in Italy by the collusion of one or two sympathetic psychiatrists who swore to the unsoundness of his mind, thus, sparing the poet the ordeal of a trial. But again the word 'unsound' brings back the whole quandary of the word 'fixed.' When lifted clear of its narrow legal confines, being of 'unsound mind' activates several other senses, all of which resound in the play. Being a modernist means not being able to stop your ears to the Sirens perched on every morpheme in the revolutions of a word.

First presented as a play for voices by C.B.C. radio (with Douglas Rain in the title role), Findley has now made the text available in a version for the stage. Having never seen it in production, I'm not sure how the play might work in the flesh. It certainly works well in the theatre of this reader's head. One other sticking point. I'm not sure what someone who doesn't know the documentary background would make of the play as a play. The more you know of the personalities and events on which the play is based, the richer you will find Findley's superb enactment.

Madness and modernism is also the topic of a new book by the clinical psychologist Louis A. Sass and although Pound only gets passing mention, Sass's very interesting thesis goes some way in illuminating the issue of Pound's so-called unsoundness of mind. Like the work of R.D. Laing and David Cooper in the 1960s, Sass contests some of the givens of clinical psychology. For example, he inquires whether the identification of madness and irrationality is entirely warranted in all cases of dementia. He questions the commonplace notion that insanity necessarily means a lessening or diminishing of consciousness, 'a deprivation of thought that, at the limit, amounts to an emptying out or a dying of the human essence—the mind reduced to its zero degree.'

Following on a rich literary tradition that

suggests otherwise, and especially some remarks about the intensification of consciousness as a kind of disease by Dostoevsky's narrator in *Notes from Underground*, Sass puts forward the thesis that madness, in some of its forms at least, derives from 'a heightening rather than a dimming of conscious awareness, and an alienation not from reason but from the emotions, instincts, and the body.' He is careful to limit and qualify his assertion and to say that it is schizophrenia and related disorders which he has principally in mind rather than 'manic psychosis' and other 'classic organic brain disorders.'

The mad are not necessarily thrust into darkness and torpor. Often schizophrenics occupy a landscape of preternatural brightness, suffused by light and knowledge in an atmosphere of electrical revelation. Sass quotes the French poet Gérard de Nerval, one of the sources of twentieth-century modernism, describing the character of his psychoaffective episodes: 'It struck me I knew everything; everything was revealed to me, all the secrets of the world were mine during those spacious hours.'

Sass contends that many classic features of early or high modernism are analogous to the experiences of madness, aspects such as aesthetic self-referentiality, irony, detachment, alienation, meaning as reticulable structure, derealization ('the unworlding of the world'), epiphanic momentousness, and so on. He explores these analogies in detail over the course of six hundred pages, using the ideal-typical domains of schizophrenic symptomatology as his organizing principle. At the end of the day the sheer volume of material seems convincing, although I'm not sure how convincing it might seem to a clinician bent on mending broken minds.

Perhaps there is too much evidence here, because it is difficult avoiding the thought that the sort of madness Sass has in mind may have more to do with everybody's experience of *modernity* in modernized societies than with modernist art practices. Modernism may be simply the *aesthetic* response to the more generalized schizoaffective space we all now occupy as a matter of course. In short, modernization makes us all mad; as a result, some of us write *The Waste Land* or *Thrones*, while others become serial killers. The rest of us are stuck somewhere in the middle, documenting, maniacally no doubt, the various senses of the word 'unsound.' If this is so, I don't think any clinician can fix us.

Piercing the Real

André Breton
Arcanum 17 with Apertures Grafted to the End. Trans. Zack Rogow. Coach House $14.95

Hal Foster
Compulsive Beauty. MIT US$30.00

Reviewed by John Xiros Cooper

With the adjournment of the European avant-garde in the late 1930s to Manhattan and Southern California, the surrealist André Breton found himself in an America that an old friend from Paris, Henry Miller, was already busy describing as the 'air-conditioned nightmare.' Surprising then, at least on the evidence of *Arcanum 17*, the utter banality of Breton's response; America is simply primordial nature, pure essence somewhere out there past the margins of history. This excursion to the Gaspé and Percé Rock, by way of Bonaventure Island occurred in late 1944 after the D-Day landings in June and the liberation of Paris in August, events that are on his mind as he contemplates the Gaspé. It is this journey 'back to nature' that gives rise to the meditations on civilization, history, and values in the text. The prize he seeks is, simply put, metaphysical foundations, the redemptive *one* or unity, that might allay the spiritual unravelling of a 'somber Europe.'

Like most urbanized Europeans he is

impressed with the Gaspé's natural wildness and its botanical and zoological fecundity. Like most Europeans he thinks of time in Europe as history, but of time in America as geology. The striations of Bonaventure Island's geological substrata become the symbol of the ground of human culture. It is on the indivisible rock of nature that 'man's home' is constructed and for that reason, 'Civilization,' he says, notwithstanding all the evidence to the contrary, 'is *one*.' Those pesky little 'conflicts of interest' in history (like the world war) that undermine this primordial unity are 'not unsolvable.' The lameness of this kind of thinking cannot be camouflaged by the visionary arm-waving.

The title, *Arcanum 17*, is adapted from the seventeenth card of the Tarot pack, the card called 'The Star.' It depicts bright stars above a naked woman who pours water from two urns, one stream falling into a pool or pond, the other on land. This card represents the birth of hope and love from despair. As the Breton text makes clear it also represents for him the eternal strength of the feminine. Drawing on the power of the female as the foundation for redemption and resurrection in time of war and loss, Breton invokes powerful female deities from the mythologies and folklores of Europe.

He is particularly interested in Mesulina, half woman, half serpent, taken from a French fairy tale. In Breton's feminism, she symbolizes the fate of woman, reduced to half her humanity by phallogocentric culture. Mesulina's contact with the animal world drags out the dreary old stereotype, so dear to the male hearts of the early modernists (Joyce, Lawrence, etc.), that woman draws her strength directly from nature itself. Breton sees this enforced contact with the natural world, paradoxically, as the source of a redemptive power that will rescue a world dominated by phallic violence and hysteria. His sojourn in Québec in the autumn of 1944 brings the urbane exile back to the basics of natural existence. Woman, he seems to suggest, is already there.

This is all fine and good, but many readers today will be embarrassed/ angered/ amused (choose one) by the limitations and assumptions of Breton's feminism, if that is what it is. Contemporary readers will also be struck by the unabashed romantic humanism. From an artist (and veteran of World War One) who as a devotee of Dada, Surrealism, and Freud had done much to shake the foundations of bourgeois consciousness and patriarchal morality earlier in the century, the decrepit Lawrentian 'feminism' and his clapped out liberal humanism sounds rather odd indeed. There is about the whole of *Arcanum 17* and its 1947 after-thought *Apertures*, a very old-fashioned tone. America as the simple historyless Eden of plants, earth, and birds, woman as our species' enduring contact with nature, humanism as the discourse of human perfectibility and progress, and, finally, a thoroughly unreflective Eurocentrism which, for one thing, makes Paris the center of the universe, will make many readers wince. This was Breton's last major work and most readers today will be relieved to hear it; one such '*detour through the essential*' (Breton's emphasis) (or should we say, his detour through essentialism?) is enough.

Hal Foster's splendid dissection of the sewing machine of surrealism on the operating table of psychoanalytic criticism is one of the finest books on modern art so far in the 1990s. His aim is to rescue the history of surrealism from the chamber of com(MERZ) (with apologies to Kurt Schwitters) boosterism of none other than André Breton. Breton always wanted surrealism to be seen as a movement of love and liberation grounded implicitly on a rather conventional humanism. Foster wants to uncover the other, darker sources of the movement, the ones papered over, on the one hand, by Breton's hippy talk, and, on

the other, by a later 'cubocentric art history' that emphasizes significant form and abstraction and which identifies the course of modern art with the line that runs from cubism to abstract expressionism. Foster's recovery of surrealism as the visual discourse of trauma, shock, cultural concussion, lethal desire, compulsive repetition, and, above all, as the modern discourse of the uncanny, is precisely the critical programme designed to make us take notice again of a vital movement.

Foster's book is not only revisionist art history, it also contributes to current theoretical debate, bringing to bear the concepts of Freud and Marx, by way of Lacan and Benjamin, on the art and its milieu. In eight closely argued and aptly illustrated chapters, Foster takes us past the categories of Breton's surrealism—the marvellous, convulsive beauty, objective chance—and uncovers surrealism's other psychic sources, namely compulsive repetition, the death drive, and the uncanny, defined, after Freud, as the traumatic return of the repressed.

He debunks the notion that surrealist automatism (as in automatic writing) is necessarily a technique of liberation from the conventional apparatuses of repression. He makes a very convincing case that automatism, and 'the marvellous' which superseded it, drives the subject towards compulsiveness, repetition, and the paranoid, or strobe-like, alternation of the living and the inanimate. With the inanimate (as in the obsessive surrealist interest in mannequins and dolls), we glimpse the continuous presence of the death drive as a constitutive element of the surreal.

This scheme sets up one of Foster's most fascinating chapters, 'Fatal Attraction,' where the doll compulsion is treated in terms of fetish and sadism and related to German fascist constructions of masculine subjectivity and maleness. In later chapters Foster links the surrealist uncanny to the shocks visited on individuals and collectivities by the juggernaut of industrial capitalism ('Exquisite Corpses'). He also discusses the surrealist fascination with ruins and the recovery of obsolete cultural materials as the return of repressed psychic events ('Outmoded Spaces'). In the closing chapters Foster brilliantly connects Benjamin's notion of 'aura' in art and the Freudian uncanny and shows that the resulting psycho-aesthetic structure has driven the development of surrealism in this century.

Borrowed Metaphors

Clive Gamble
Timewalkers: The Prehistory of Global Colonization. Harvard UP $24.95

Kamala Visweswaran
Fictions of Feminist Ethnography U of Minnesota P $44.95/$17.95

Reviewed by Noel Elizabeth Currie

These recent books illustrate the exciting work currently happening under the general rubric of "cultural studies," an ill-defined field but one which nevertheless suggests exhilarating possibilities for the borrowing of knowledge between academic disciplines. Both acknowledge their indebtedness to scholarly work and metaphors developed in other disciplines, which they apply within their own fields, pushing at the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge in so doing.

In *Timewalkers: The Prehistory of Global Colonization*, Clive Gamble picks up the project of interrogating academic explanations of the past begun by Johannes Fabian in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Objects* and Erich Wolf in *Europe and the People Without History.* Gamble's Introduction notes a feature of accounts by European explorers (and, later, scientists) regarding the regional distributions of biological species, with the notable exception of humans; Europeans were surprised by

the *form* human society took in regions far from Europe, but not by the *fact* that they encountered it everywhere. Accordingly, the field of prehistory and archaeology has been shaped by a question based on cultural bias: "why was civilization not universal?" The result: "archeological textbooks are often sermons on the inevitable. All developments are seen as a consequence of elapsed time during which the human species achieved full humanity, like a child becoming an adult." Instead, Gamble offers a different question: "why were humans everywhere?"

Timewalkers uses the metaphor of colonization to explain the prehistoric expansion of hominids from the evolutionary cradle of eastern Africa to virtually every part of the globe. Gamble uses another metaphor, the "timewalkers" of the title, to discuss "the staccato rhythm of global colonization," which began only with the integration of adapted elements (including bipedality, brain and body size) through social behaviour, which provides purpose; behavioural, not physical, evolution integrated the elements necessary for migration and colonization. For example, Gamble suggests that the colonization of Pacific islands depended less on technological developments, such as boats which could cover long distances of open ocean, than on organizational ones.

Although he discusses the migration of both Ancients into the Old World and Moderns into the New in some detail over several chapters, Gamble makes the point that reconstructing broad patterns of migration reveals more than pinning down specific details, given the sparse evidence. Gamble's study is interesting because of the number of questions he answers with recourse to culture. For example, he discusses several difficult habitats as they produce social solutions to problems of predictability of food sources, instead of emphasizing technological solutions, such as tool development. Thus he argues for social networks as a form of storage—a means of sharing resources and knowledge. Aspects of culture, such as tool design and art, function as communication which establishes group membership. As a result, historically problematic and overdetermined oppositions (for example, civilization and savagery) are made largely irrelevant. For this reason, Gamble's study is impressive, as are the frequent connections he makes between the human fossil record and that of other species. The material of this book is exciting; Gamble has fruitfully appropriated the metaphors of other disciplines, literary studies in particular, for his own purposes. It should be noted, however, that while the book is a broad discussion of the archaeological record evidently intended for a general readership, more careful attention to punctuation could present clearer grammatical relationships between ideas, thus helping readers make logical connections between them.

By contrast, Kamala Visweswaran's *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* marries both the form and content of at least two disciplines, literary studies and ethnography. This is an exciting collection of essays which self-consciously intersect and extend each other formally and intellectually, rather than a book which sandwiches specialist technical material between an introductory theoretical framework and concluding overview. Throughout the collection, Visweswaran examines the three elements of her title in a multiple interrogation which plays them off against each other.

Visweswaran first explores, then breaks down, the distinction between fiction and ethnography. She suggests that, as an academic discipline, ethnography has "self-consciously marked its narrative production against the novel" as much as against the explorer's or traveler's journal, and accord-

ingly has dismissed early ethnographic works that incorporate modes of fiction or autobiography. In ironic contrast to this attempt at disciplinary self-definition stands the practice of producing two ethnographic documents of fieldwork: a scholarly monograph, then a popular book which incorporates elements of autobiography or fiction. For example, Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* set the standard for scientific ethnography, while his self-revealing journal account of his Trobriand Islands fieldwork, published posthumously as *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, surprises the reader with Boswellian promises to abandon novels and to read ethnographies. "Experimental" ethnography, in which the (male) ethnographer problematises his experience of fieldwork, seems to offer a challenge to norms of objectivity that could include earlier ethnographic works by women (such as Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, and Ruth Underhill) previously dismissed as popular, fictive, subjective. However, what literary studies would call the canon of experimental as well as a classical ethnography still seems unable, or unwilling, to include experiential, first-person accounts by women; hence the need to add feminism to the generic or disciplinary categories of fiction and ethnography.

Visweswaran simultaneously interrogates academic feminism for the assumptions about women it brings to ethnography, suggesting that in fictive accounts feminist ethnography can break free of the disciplinary restraints of positivism to examine relationships among women. And so she frames her "series of experiments" in ethnographic writing using fiction. She begins with "A Feminist Fable" and concludes with "Sari Stories," a series of modernist vignettes which "completes the move toward fiction by presenting an autobiographical short story as feminist ethnography." Alternately, she characterises them using a pun: "an ethnographic description of the ways a gendered body is (ad)dressed intimately by history and culture, age and class." Documenting relationships between women in the author's family in Madras, the pleasures and perils of self-representation, and the consequences of getting dressed (up), "Sari Stories" offers a satisfying account of the problems of reading and writing across cultures. Stretching this metaphor beyond nation to academic discipline, Visweswaran's own "fiction of feminist ethnography" captures the subtle nuances of all three terms and, in so doing, evokes both the difficulty and excitement of cross-disciplinary cultural studies.

Rétro/Spectifs

Maurice Lebel
D'un livre à l'autre. L'esprit des livres. Editions du Méridien n.p.

Réjean Robidoux
Fonder une littérature nationale. Notes d'histoire littéraire. Editions David n.p.

Reviewed by Estelle Dansereau

Il va de soi que, ayant fait carrière universitaire et ayant fait oeuvre de pionnier au Canada dans le domaine de l'histoire littéraire, les professeurs et les critiques les plus distingués, maintenant à la retraite, jettent leur regard sur leurs premiers écrits qu'ils offrent en rétrospective aux lecteurs. Maurice Lebel (né 1909), critique et essayiste ainsi que professeur de lettres anciennes et modernes à l'Université Laval de 1937 à 1970, et Réjean Robidoux (né 1928), enseignant à l'Université de Toronto, puis à Ottawa d'où il prend sa retraite en 1990, émettent pour l'édification d'une nouvelle génération de lecteurs et de chercheurs des textes qui représentent bien leurs contributions à la critique universitaire de leur jour.

La citation de Sainte-Beuve présentée en épigraphe, "Un intellectuel est un homme qui sait lire et apprend à lire aux autres,"

résume le projet de Maurice Lebel dans la centaine de comptes rendus rassemblés dans *D'un livre à l'autre.* Se disant avant tout humaniste, il nous montre l'ampleur de l'esprit critique capable de se prononcer avec lucidité et érudition, au cours de trois décennies, sur tous les aspects de la culture occidentale, non seulement la québécoise; en véritable humaniste il commente des oeuvres d'érudition en archéologie, géographie, histoire, francophonie, belles-lettres, littérature, philologie, éducation, langue, linguistique, anthropologie, sociologie, philosophie, religion, et spiritualité. Les commentaires souvent descriptifs et sommaires de Lebel sont toutefois parsemés de philosophie personnelle ainsi que de passion. Symboles de civilisation, véritables reposoirs pour la mémoire culturelle, les livres selon le critique sont parfois "bien plus vivants que des êtres humains": "Ils sont indispensables à la vie, comme le boire et le manger le sont pour le corps". Lebel aspire à une vue d'ensemble, diachronique, intégrale, harmonisant les connaissances et les perspectives—idéal difficilement réalisé aujourd'hui car "[l]a culture nouvelle [...] repose beaucoup plus sur l'acquisition de connaissances variées et l'apprentissage de différentes techniques que sur la lente formation de la volonté, des aptitudes et des qualités de l'esprit." Cette vision humaniste de Lebel, cependant, sape les doctrines en vogue telles le féminisme et le postmodernisme qui, en interrogeant le passé, ont remis en question, par exemple, notre vision de la francophonie post-coloniale et des conflits de races. Enfin, les comptes rendus recueillis dans ce volume nous rappellent les privilèges et les leurres d'une critique humaniste; ils peuvent émerveiller ou désemparer les lecteurs par la vaste culture étalée, culture héritière d'un enseignement révolu.

Fonder une littérature nationale de Réjean Robidoux réunit cinq essais de diverses longueurs (le plus long comptant 130 pages) sur l'abbé Casgrain, animateur culturel avant la lettre, et le mouvement littéraire de Québec, auquel ont participé vers 1860 Albert Chauveau, Octave Crémazie, l'abbé Ferland, Louis Fréchette, François-Xavier Garneau, Philippe Aubert de Gaspé, et J.-C. Taché. Dans ses études s'inspirant de l'école lansonienne de l'histoire littéraire, Robidoux peint le tableau de l'ébullition créatrice qui inaugure, dans un climat dynamique et parfois concurrentiel, les débuts de la littérature canadienne. Seul inédit, le premier essai, "*Les Soirées canadiennes* et *Le Foyer canadien* dans le mouvement littéraire québécois de 1860," scrute les conditions favorisant le dynamisme créateur de l'époque et l'influence de l'abbé Casgrain. Robidoux se prononce parfois sévèrement sur certains membres de la côterie littéraire, tel l'abbé Casgrain lui-même, jugé coupable de mesquinerie dans les affaires et d'un esthétisme passéiste. Il semblerait que cet essai, informé par une recherche impressionante, n'a été publié que sous forme de condensé. Ainsi, Robidoux et les éditeurs rendent plus facilement accessible un texte de valeur incontestable rassemblant et documentant les faits historiques d'une naissance littéraire.

Il est parfois trop facile d'oublier les fondations érigées par les historiens et chercheurs antérieurs, ceux qui ont fouillé les archives, déchiffré les manuscrits, fourni les éditions critiques, et qui en ont fait le récit; en somme, les pionniers qui ont créé l'histoire littéraire canadienne dont nous disputons aujourd'hui les versions et les interprétations, pour ne pas dire la validité même de la méthode. Cette méthode est décrite par Robidoux ainsi: "recherche à la fois pratiquée comme une science exacte (appuyée solidement sur le vestige et le document) et traitée (relatée, racontée) comme un roman d'aventure, comportant personnages, intrigue(s), épisodes corsés, péripéties préféremment palpitantes, petites guerres picrocholines, à la façon

d'une véritable oeuvre de fiction." Approche de la vieille école, sans aucun doute, mais il reste que les premiers chercheurs en littérature canadienne partaient, en toute bonne foi, d'une conception acceptée et bien établie des méthodes de recherche et des objectifs de l'enquête.

Tous les deux à la retraite, Lebel et Robidoux ont raison d'être fiers de leurs contributions intellectuelles ainsi que de leur rôle de pionniers dans nos universités. De fait, les *Mélanges* offerts à chacun (1980, 1992) par leurs étudiants et collègues témoignent d'influences incontestables. Pourquoi vouloir par la suite recueillir de vieux textes? Nous devrions d'abord nous demander s'ils sont toujours pertinents aux enquêtes actuelles. Par le fait qu'il était introuvable, le premier essai du recueil de Robidoux présente un document précieux sur la fondation d'une littérature nationale. Bien que la méthode soit devenue désuète, la documentation historique reste fort pertinente. En contraste, les comptes rendus de Lebel (sorte de texte fragmenté), tout en témoignant d'un esprit remarquable, restent de peu d'utilité pratique sauf peut-être pour le biographe ou l'historien, peintres d'une époque. Le regard rétrospectif de nos penseurs ne dépasse parfois pas le personnel.

Disturbing The Peace.

Ormond McKague (ed.)
Racism in Canada. Fifth House $15.95

Marlene Nourbese Philip
Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture. Mercury $15.95

Reviewed by Geoffrey V. Davis

Those of us overseas who watched the events at Oka or the 1992 Toronto riots on our television screens, who have seen a performance of Pollock's *Komagata Maru Incident* or Lill's *The Occupation of Heather Rose*, or have read a novel like Kogawa's *Obasan*, will no longer subscribe—if we ever did—to the view that Canada is a land of harmonious racial relations where racism does not exist. The treatment of East Indian immigrants in pre-World War I Vancouver and the removal of Japanese Canadians from the BC coast after Pearl Harbour point to a history of racism; atttitudes towards native people and recent immigrants provide more recent evidence that the problem has not gone away. Nevertheless, Canada's image hitherto has hardly been that of a racist society, racial outbreaks have seemed isolated incidents, and the policy of multiculturalism has been thought an honest attempt to further equality between the various peoples who make up the Canadian population and to support their cultural expression.

The two books under review—the one compiled in the wake of Oka, the other in the shadow of Toronto—survey the country's racist past, seek to reveal the workings of racism in contemporary Canadian society and argue that it is systemic, that it permeates Canada's institutions. They give little credit to the policy of multiculturalism, doubting that it is an effective instrument against racism. In his preface to *Racism in Canada*, for example, the editor contends that "there are few issues . . . more pertinent and more fundamentally important, more threatening to Canada's development as a humane and progressive society, more hidden and misunderstood, than racism." Racism, he asserts, is to be found everywhere in Canadian society and Canadians have been far too complacent about it. Only recently, as aboriginal people have organised in protest and "the racist assumptions of the past" have been increasingly called into question, has "a process of challenge and confrontation" been initiated, within which he firmly situates the present work.

Racism in Canada is a work of political

and social conscientization. It consists of nineteen articles, originally written between 1979 and 1991, drawn from a variety of sources, among them *Canadian Woman Studies, Fuse Magazine, Canadian Ethnic Studies* and *Canadian Forum*, and now reprinted. Although the collection contains abundant notes and a useful list of further readings, it unfortunately has neither an index nor any bio-bibliographical details about the contributors. The strengths of the volume lie both in the heterogeneous group of authors assembled—recent immigrants, Native, South Asian and Caribbean voices, as well as academics (overall an even balance of male and female)—and in the very diverse selection of texts, bringing together personal reminiscence, academic discourse and journalism. Such a selection some might think uneven, but it does have the advantage of making the reader very aware of the personal dimension of racial discrimination, which would be absent in an exclusively academic volume.

Organised in five major sections—personal reflections, historical and structural aspects, the interaction of racism with gender and culture, and the future of racism in Canada—the volume opens up an exceptionally wide perspective on its theme. A fifth-generation black Canadian recounts her experience of institutional racism; a native woman artist shows how racism has politicised her art. There are accounts of the attempt to prevent the immigration of blacks from Oklahoma to Alberta in the first decade of this century, of the Chinese workers' resistance to racism in Vancouver before World War II, and of the effects of antisemitism on Jewish social cohesion since 1884. "Structural Racism" considers more contemporary matters, such as the enlightened, if short-lived tenure of David Crombie at the Ministry of Indian and Northern Affairs under Mulroney, the teaching of "race-science" at Canadian universities (by such as Philip Rushton) and the relationship of the rhetoric and policies of the radical right to racist views held by the wider society. In the belief that racism must also be viewed in the context of gender and culture (a perspective hitherto neglected, as some contributors contend), the editor includes reports on the difficulties experienced by women of colour in aligning themselves with a Western feminist movement perceived as white and middle-class, on reactions to the controversial ROM "Into the Heart of Africa" exhibition, which put on show artifacts brought back by soldiers and missionaries, on the exclusion of native artists from the dominant culture, on the effects of colonial capitalism on Indian societies, illustrated from the sexual and economic exploitation of Indian women in the fur trade, and on the way in which Western cinema has demeaned women of colour. The final section "Racism's Future in Canada" then explores ways by which racism might be overcome through such measures as human rights codes and governmental intervention.

A record of racial discrimination makes for depressing reading: there is little pleasure to be gained from accounts of the exposure of black children to racist taunts, from a black Canadian's assertion that "racism is, and always has been, one of the bedrock institutions of Canadian society," or from the experience of recent immigrants who "live among racists everyday" or "begin to live a life of fear." The evidence of a long history of racial discrimination against blacks in Canada is unfortunately all too damning, witness the appalling hypocrisy with which a federal cabinet passed an order seeking to prevent black immigration on the grounds that the climate was deemed unsuitable! There is, too, "a long and ignoble tradition of discrimination in the workplace, particularly, but by no means only, against Asian workers."

It is the commonly held view of all the

authors represented here that, in the words of Norman Buichignani, "the persistence of racism diminishes us all." In addressing the question of what to do about it, many of them emphasise the need for Canadians first to recognise that the problem exists and that it must be confronted. "Before we as a society can liberate ourselves from the grip of racism, we have to acknowledge that it exists," writes Adrienne Shadd; " do Canadians have the foresight, the compassion, and the courage to confront these less creditable aspects of Canadian history?" asks Emma Laroque. Some writers deplore the lack of awareness of the history of racism against native peoples and of the distortions of history purveyed in school books and in the media. They speak of the need to take account of native history, to critically reappraise the history of empire, rather than simply claiming it, as the ROM exhibit did, to eradicate ethnic inequality and to develop joint initiatives with whites to combat racism, as in the example of the Chinese workers.

Much emphasis is placed on the need for the racially oppressed to join forces, to seek solidarity, to find out about their own history, to change their lives and acquire autonomy, to define their own self-images. In this context, several writers address "the nearly total lack of coordination or reciprocal support between the feminist movement and those who are fighting racial discrimination" (Buchginani). Vanaja Dhruvarajan, for example, sees little likelihood of such identification between women of colour and feminists until racism is placed on the feminist agenda and the concerns of women of colour are also addressed by feminists. Aware of the benefits such a broader approach would bring, Ron Bourgeault insists on the need "to advance a critical analysis of the historic and current interaction of race, class and gender in such a way as to offer an explanation of the forces underlying the oppression suffered by aboriginal peoples in Canada."

Frontiers, a collection of essays, reviews and letters written during the period 1986-1992 and previously published largely in *Fuse Magazine*, takes up many of the issues addressed in *Racism in Canada*. Philip, too, has much to say about some of the major cultural controversies of the day: the ROM exhibit, the dispute at The Women's Press, the demonstration at the PEN Conference in Toronto, which led to her notorious altercation with June Callwood. Philip is a polemicist, passionate in debate, often strident, always controversial, an inveterate writer of letters of protest, a campaigner prepared to go out onto the streets to demonstrate for what she believes in, and sometimes vehement in her criticism of other writers (her review of Neil Bissoondath's *A Casual Brutality* is a case in point). June Callwood will certainly not have been alone in feeling provoked by her activities. It is necessary, therefore, to be quite clear about Philip's intentions.

In "exile" in Canada, Philip writes interestingly of what she regards as the formative influence on her, namely the experience of decolonisation. Displaying a proud awareness of her African and Caribbean heritage and of the centuries of struggle preceding independence, she is entirely convinced "that, if only one were to struggle long and hard enough, one could and would make meaningful and radical change for the better." Her conviction that "one can change the odds" is certainly at the base of the laudable commitment to struggle for what she believes to be right which informs all her activities and her writing. She has adopted the activist position of James Baldwin, whom she admiringly quotes on the necessity for the writer to "disturb the peace of those invested in maintaining the status quo." This she has certainly achieved.

Nourbese Philip's political and cultural stance is determined not least by her con-

cern at the "erasure" of African culture under colonialism. Much of her work is characterised by the will to reassert that African cultural identity within the Western—here, Canadian—context. This consciousness informs her priorities, which she defines as: "to defy a culture that wishes to forget; to rewrite a history that at best forgot and omitted, at worst lied . . . to honour those who went before, to grieve for that which was irrevocably lost (language, religion, culture)." Philip finds little sympathy for such a project in Canada, however. What she encounters is a lack of acceptance, which prompts her to assert—repeatedly—the dignity and worth of African culture. The main aim of her writing she sees as "the need on the part of what has traditionally been seen as Canadian culture as represented by arts councils and organisations to respect those cultures—African, Asian and Native—that had long established circuits of culture, which Europeans interrrupted." As a black Canadian writer she sees herself contributing to the creation of a distinctive black culture unlike that of Britain or the US. In much of her writing, she complains about the lack of support this literary project is receiving from the literary establishment—a fact she puts down to racism. About racism in Canada she is frequently scathing: the country is "steeped in racism," it is "racist in its well-springs." Indeed, Canadian racism is, we are told with some exaggeration, "as deeply embedded in this country as in the US," it is "as virulent as any found in the US." Since she observes "a general reluctance in Canadian society to tackle this issue," Philip makes it her purpose to put racism firmly on the agenda.

It was, Philip recalls, on the occasion of the ROM exhibition of 1990, "that for the first time the issue of culture as a site of contestation attracted and galvanised wide-based attention"—and it is on culture that her own fight against racism largely focusses. In her essays she thus deals frequently with the policy of multiculturalism, the practices of arts organisations and government funding of the arts.

Multiculturalism, in her view conceived "to diffuse potential racial and ethnic problems," is essentially a "whitewash," mere "window-dressing," serving to perpetuate the inequality between English and French cultures and those of the "others." Citing numerous examples of what she regards as discrimination against artists of colour, she criticises multiculturalism for sidestepping the central issue of racism.

Philip is throughout concerned to demonstrate that racism "permeates" the institutions of Canada, most particularly those in the sphere of the arts. Arts organisations, such as the Ontario Arts Council, the Toronto Arts Council and Metro Cultural Affairs, thus come in for much criticism. She berates them for their "failure to represent the ethnic composition of Toronto and Ontario on their boards, councils, panels and juries"—a factor which, she believes, negatively affects the funding of black artists, with whose aesthetics such organisations are, she maintains, unsympathetic. Alleging that "mainstream culture receives by far the lion's share of funding and government support," she postulates "a causal relationship between the composition of the various boards and committees of these funding agencies and the underfunding of Black artists and groups." Nor is she convinced that the appointment of black artists by several arts organisations indicates any genuine commitment; she regards them as tokenist co-optations, as "hair-line fractures in the at times overwhelming and oppressive structures standing guard over 'Canadian culture'."

When it comes to their readiness to entertain work by black writers, publishers, too, are found wanting. Arguing not only from her own experience, Philip alleges

that publishers, reviewers and critics alike have "failed to take up the challenge the presence of other voices in Canada offers." This she attributes, not to market forces, but to racism. According to Philip, African, Asian and First Nations writers are being silenced —much as, in her view, they were at the PEN Conference.

Marlene Nourbese Philip's commitment to a non-racist Canada is beyond doubt. It ill behooves a reviewer to doubt the sincerity of her case when she writes out of personal experience, much of which, to judge from this volume, must have been bitter. Her campaign against what she regards as racism in Canadian arts institutions has, however, encountered a good deal of opposition and one may suppose that her vituperative attacks have forfeited her some support in the arts community, while her allegations of systemic discrimination may be regarded by some as not wholly credible. Certainly, to the foreign observer surveying Canadian publishing, it does not seem as though minority voices are being silenced; rather the opposite seems the case. Nor does it help her case, when, on occasion, she indulges in polemical exaggeration, as when she argues that Callwood's famous expletive is "tantamount to declaring open season on individuals like myself" or alleges that "this sort of irrational response to legitimate protest comes close to being the verbal equivalent of actions of governments such as the Chinese government toward its dissenters." One wonders, too, what publishers might think of her suggestion that they be required to give account of "the number of manuscripts from African, Asian and Native Canadians they have seriously considered over the last fiscal year."

Philip's thought-provoking, if somewhat argumentative volume is ultimately repetitious and would have benefited from more rigorous editing. The bibliographical references are inadequate.

Reconsiderations

Mary Henley Rubio, ed.
Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L.M. Montgomery: Essays on Her Novels and Journals. Canadian Children's P $15.00

Irene Gammel
Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove. U Calgary P n.p.

Reviewed by Judy Dudar

The writing of Lucy Maud Montgomery has always had an appreciative general readership, but it is late receiving academic respect and only relatively recently has been the subject of critical assessment. Mary Rubio, editor of *Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L. M. Montgomery*, suggests that Montgomery was conscious of the fact that her work was considered "'low' culture" and "children's" literature, but the essays that Rubio has collected bring Montgomery into the stream of current gender, cultural, and autobiographical criticism. Rubio claims three goals for the collection: "to establish Montgomery as a serious, disruptive, political author of adult books;" "to present new interpretations by critics who have had the advantage of reading Montgomery's journals;" and "to signal Montgomery's identification with her Scottish heritage." The first is attained, but only if the terms "serious, disruptive and political" are considered in a qualified and modest sense. The third is of peripheral importance to both essayists and readers, although it does provide access to a neat linking metaphor for the editor and enlarges on the implications of the book's title. The second of the goals, however, is admirably achieved. The majority of the essayists keep their sights on the intended subject of their deliberations—the writings of Lucy Maud Montgomery—but their focus is not limiting and they do not make the mistake of becoming mired in abstruse criticism or language. Although a few of

the contributors give the impression that they have stretched to make a connection between their area of specialty and a Montgomery character or situation, most present stimulating material. This includes consideration of the writers who influenced Montgomery and the writers who were influenced by her; discussion of the precision found in the manuscripts of the novels and found in the stages of the journals; exploration of the relationship of contemporary Presbyterian doctrine to Montgomery's own opinions of church and the spiritual as expressed in her fiction and in her journals; consideration of the possible intended purposes of the author and the role of the reader in liberating the meaning of the text; and the ways in which Montgomery's writing reflects the social, educational, and literary institutions of her day. A comprehensive index provides easy access to related materials in the seventeen essays.

The book is published through Canadian Children's Press, but the collected essays encourage the reader to refocus on Montgomery's work and to see it as more than children's literature. They encourage mature readers to approach Montgomery with new insight, including an awareness of the emotional, artistic, and domestic matters with which she struggled, the thistles which Rubio senses can be selected for examination for their influence on Montgomery's work.

L. M. Montgomery (1874-1942) lived and wrote in the same period as Frederick Philip Grove (1879-1948) and Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), but the men's work received greater academic and critical attention. In 1932, Robert Ayer proclaimed Frederick Philip Grove the "Canadian Dreiser." A discussion of the work of these two authors by Irene Gammel, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove*, is a welcome extension of Ayer's comparison. The extension is in several directions. Gammel depends primarily on Michael Foucault for her theoretical and critical position, and she uses the work of Émile Zola as her touchstone to the extent that his name might have been included in her title. Within self-set limits, she meets her main objective: "to provide a revisionary—gender-critical—reading of twentieth-century American and Canadian naturalism."

One could quibble that Gammel's presentation on Frederick Philip Grove/Felix Paul Greve emphasizes the books published in Germany (*Fanny Essler* and *The Master Mason's House* [*Maurermeister Ihles Haus*]) but this is an area of Greve/Grove criticism that has been in need of amplification. Gammel's ability to consider the differences in the nuances of the German original and the English translations of Grove's work adds depth and insight. Gammel also presents enlightening parallels between events and characters in Dreiser's novels and the events and the individuals who may have inspired them, allowing, for example, *The Trilogy of Desire* to gain resonance and particularization through her discussion. Those who are troubled by the logic in some feminist criticism—Women are victims; therefore, men who are victims are feminized—may not agree that when Phil Brandon (*A Search For America*) is powerless, he is "a (feminized) male." Gammel points out, however, that both Dreiser and Grove "have to be credited with questioning, criticizing, even deconstructing the [naturalist] genre's male convention." She also notes that the male authors "reinscribe" the male conventions; that is, their female characters ultimately are contained by the male order in which male sexuality is "normal" but female sexuality is marginalized into the "abnormal," giving the women a perspective that lacks power.

Publishers routinely caution scholars that successful doctoral dissertations do not necessarily make good books. Much of the material in Gammel's volume is valuable,

but readers first have to wade through the initial few scholarly pages of declaration of intention in which the author promises that she "will examine/adopt/argue/trace/explore/use/provide" material. Later passages of justification and amplification also ring warning bells of academically worded "Information Overload," but the comprehensive index provides easy access to specifics. Gammel includes an excellent bibliography; to it can now be added *Baroness Elsa*, the published edition of Elsa Freytag-Loringhoven's fascinating history (Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue, Oberon 1992),

Through *Harvesting Thistles* and *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism*, both Rubio and Gammel stimulate a rereading and a rethinking of the works of authors whose significance is due for reassessment.

Sounding Soul

J.A. Wainwright, ed.
A Very Large Soul: Selected Letters from Margaret Laurence to Canadian Writers. Cormorant $18.95

John P.L. Roberts and Ghyslaine Guertin,
Glenn Gould: Selected Letters. Oxford UP $19.95

Reviewed by Deborah Dudek

Margaret Laurence and Glenn Gould are two representations of the Canadian heroine/hero archetype where hero/heroine simultaneously resist categorization while carrying cultural obligations and characteristics. Robert Kroetsch, in the introduction to Wainwright's text, says of Margaret Laurence, "she doesn't make a very deliberate attempt to separate texts from life . . . Instead of mirroring Canadian life . . . she became a mirror for us. And so, in a way, she became artwork." Both Gould and Laurence spent most of their lives experimenting, re/defining, and expanding text within and from the page to voice, with Gould proceeding on to concert hall, radio, television, video.

J.A. Wainwright and John P.L. Roberts with Ghyslaine Guertin take the epistolary texts of Laurence and Gould and compile them for the reader who is interested in obtaining a sense of where the writer positions her/himself outward from home.

The system of compilation and format for the two texts was approached very differently, but in a manner which suited each texts' individual objectives. Wainwright collected letters to Canadian writers with whom Laurence corresponded in the years between 1960 and 1980. Embedded between Laurence's letters are comments from select writers which Wainwright obtained through various interviews. These italicized notation often serve to place the letter within the context of the relationship between writer and written text. The letters center on creative and cultural matters and are arranged alphabetically according to the writer addressed. Wainwright has not changed Laurence's punctuation but has cut parts of the letters.

The collection of correspondence by Glenn Gould reperesents one-hundred and eighty-four unabridged letters chosen primarily from the 2030 letters written by Gould now in the National Library of Canada. Guertin in her preface to the text says the "selection of letters for this book was determined by our desire to provide a general overview of Gould as correspondent rather than to highlight any specific theme, let alone his correspondence with any particular individual." The letters expand from 1956 to 1982 (with the exception of the first letter of the collection written c. 1940) and can be divided into three groupings which identify specific periods in Gould's life, tracing his career from the public to the private and into the last six years before his death. While the correspondence, as Guertin points out, does not belong to *belles lettres*, Gould is established as theoretician, writer, humourist, technician, and musician.

Laurence's texts, however, do approach *belles lettres*. Reading *A Very Large Soul* translates into a conversation with Margaret Laurence. She is warm and funny and astonishingly insightful. The way Laurence turns a single phrase into a philosophical meditation and then in the next minute becomes endearingly colloquial invokes the reader as friend and member of her "tribe." Everything she writes is about people and place and the way language can be manipulated to signify anything: "Anything that happens anywhere in the world, in some way happens in one's own town." Laurence addresses the notion of an inner and outer geography strongly grounded in the concept of grace. She insists on the importance of ancestry both familial and within the community of wordsmiths. "We must bear witness to our own people and our own lives," she says.

Most heartbreaking for the reader of Laurence's letters is having to bear witness to her struggle to write after *The Diviners*. While she offers hopeful reassurance to her readers (both original reader as well as those reading now), the level of her despair is impossible to ignore: "I do not feel that at present I can call myself a writer . . . I did try to help other and younger writers. Now I need help. A shocking thought? Mum isn't strong? You bet she isn't." She continually provides support to the numerous people who address her regarding their own writing. The insight and regard she instills in each reading is a loving caress grounded in astounding intelligence. There is always affirmation and praise in her responses and any critical comments are prefaced by "but this is only my opinion." She announces various political positions regarding the French language issue, censorship, women's rights or religion. The letters flow between various, I hesitate to use the word, "themes," with each writer offering a new aspect in which Margaret Laurence is well versed. She constructs herself as matriarch of the inheritors "my own real kids among them, and in a profound sense, *all* those young people are my children, and yours, and all of ours, in this strange but surviving tribe of ours, the story-tellers."

If Margaret Laurence is matriarch and story-teller, then Glenn Gould must surely be the trickster. He manipulates both text and music in an attempt to locate and dislocate the reader/listener while constantly resisting notions of stability. He is able to use many different registers of language which range from the muscial to the theoretical. He often uses pseudonyms to construct alternate identities. I recall listening to program on CBC about Gould where they were still uncertain as to the correct spelling of Glenn because he varied the spelling so often. He would play incorrect notes on purpose in order to enhance sound quality and he deliberately staged interviews so they sounded natural and spontaneous. He did not believe in the necessity for an audience, rather he preferred solitude and the capacity to change the already played.

Guertin notes that "the letter and the recording studio represent two places where communication can occur in the absence of others." Gould was addicted to both forms of communication. Perhaps some fo the most revealing pieces are those which are replies to various fan letters. Gould often responds with humour and always with the utmost consideration. Every letter is given a serious and thoughtful answer even when slightly or not so slightly delayed. Much of the collection outlines Gould's precise planning, with the extended footnotes operating as both a history and discography. One letter stands out from all the others. It is worth transcribing here in its entirety.

> You know
> I am deeply in love with a certain beaut.
> girl. I asked her to marry me but she
> turned me down but I still love her more

than anything in the world and every min. I can spend with her is pure heaven; but I don't want to be a bore and if I could only get her to tell me when I could see her, it would help. She has a standing invit. to let me take her anywhere she'd like to go any time but it seems to me she never has time for me. Please if you see her, ask her to let me know when I can see her and when I can . . .

While this book is not a quick, quirky insight into Gould's private life, it is well worth reading both for those researching Glenn Gould or those interested in the historical, theoretical musicology of Gould as genius of sound.

Border Crossings

Kathleen Ashley, Leigh Gilmore, and Gerald Peters
Autobiography & Postmodernism. U Massachusetts P US$50.00/$16.95

Mary Elene Wood
The Writing on the Wall: Women's Autobiography and the Asylum. U Illinois P US$36.95/$13.95

Diane P. Freedman, Olivia Frey, and Frances Murphy Zauhar
The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism . Duke UP US$ 45.00/$16.95

Reviewed by Susanna Egan

Templeton the Rat (*Charlotte's Web*) expresses the ultimate in satisfaction (after feasting on leftovers at the Fair), when he says: "'That was rich, my friends, rich.'" My sentiments entirely on the reading of these three books, a veritable feast on the genres of autobiography. Would that reviewers could always get such replete pleasure in preparation for an omnibus review.

These three texts respond to the challenges posed to work in and on autobiography by deconstruction in particular and by varieties of postmodernism in general . Blurring genres, implicating critic and reader, reconstructing subject positions, engaging with the many issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, historicity—these works initiate dialogues, open questions, explore possibilities, suggesting repeatedly that tradition is a matter of cultural history rather than a straitjacket and that the very critiques (for instance of the subject) that tend to make traditional autobiography theorists defensive can serve instead as opportunities for significant new thinking. As Gilmore puts it in the Introduction to *Autobiography & Postmodernism,* "The rumblings of postmodernist debate have . . . shaken the constructed foundations of autobiography studies. . . . Clearly, the time has come to consider the implications of genre for autobiography. Postmodernism's skepticism about generic typology . . . offers useful conceptual leverage for the task." For all three works, furthermore, Gilmore's comment about "the insights of some postmodernisms into the functioning of ideology and representation" offer fruitful opportunities to reread and reconfigure this field of study.

The Ashley, Gilmore, Peters collection of essays grows out of a 1989 autobiography conference in Maine. Only four of these essays have appeared elsewhere and are well included here as making important contributions to this particular discussion. And it is a discussion. The strategic combination of Christopher Ortiz on "The Politics of Genre," Leigh Gilmore on "Policing Truth," and Michael Fischer on "Experimental Sondages" opens discussion on gender and genre, contradictory and marginalised self-representations, and interdisciplinarity. Working within this particular set of concerns, Betty Bergland and Kirsten Wasson inscribe their own Bakhtinian take on subject construction. Where Bergland, working on chronotopic analysis of ethnic women's writing, concludes that "autobiography studies might . . . provide a site for cultural critique and social change," Wasson begins her "Geography of Conversion" with

Mary Antin's question "How long would you say, wise reader, it takes to make an American?" As if in an excellent seminar in progress, Paul Jay, working with Sherman, Duras, and Momaday, exploring image and the construction of identity, seems to invite Hertha Wong's examination of the autobiography inherent in naming practices for Plains Indians. David Haney's discussion of Wordsworth's "A Farewell" may seem to belong to the conversation at the next table, in part because its theoretical foregrounding is more strenuous than most, in part because Haney lacks the flexibility with which Gilmore connects Julian of Norwich to Mary McCarthy. Even so, his treatment of some limits and boundaries for the autobiographical makes an important contribution to what feels, as one works through this text from start to finish, like heated exchange. Finally, Sidonie Smith, asking "What does skin have to do with autobiography?" is "answered" by Shirley Neuman's opening line: "Bodies rarely figure in autobiography." Neuman shows that bodies can and do figure, however, and not only as products but also as producers of ideology. So the text comes full circle and the discussion continues: of the relations of literature and life, of plurality both social and interpretive, of boundaries and transgressions, of self-ing and other-ing. Andrei Codrescu's witty opening observations on the complications of self-representation before various audiences/readers establishes the endlessly reflexive nature of the autobiographical and, indeed, the critical enterprise.

More concerned with ideological marginalisation than with reflexivity, *The Writing on the Wall* engages with the social and political constructions of gender and insanity that effectively discredit "incredible" voices (in this case, of American women, for the most part, incarcerated in mental asylums through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Wood focusses on some of the historical issues of mental science, including evolving definitions of sanity and insanity and the effective reform activity of women like Elizabeth Packard, who supported campaigns for legislative protection of married women and the mentally ill by writing of her own experiences in an asylum. Working very closely with historical constructions of the "self," the "alienated" and the "Other," Wood also explores the literary tropes on which these autobiographers depended in order to connect with their reading public and to convey some sense of their distress: in particular, the slave narrative, sentimental and domestic fiction, and sensation literature. Within these literary genres, each expressive of particular historical conditions, asylum writers demonstrate to varying degrees some control over the ideological and narrative paradigms that threaten to control them. Wood's analysis, furthermore, of the asylum as originally modelled on the family, and the family itself as threatened by the diseased insider, makes a case for fictions that offer wholes where the insane autobiographer cannot provide closure.

With the development of the talking cure, of course, autobiography moves from being secret or protest literature into an important new role complicit with the healing process. Increasingly, too, it makes the mental patient familiar; her self-expression diminishes the apparent distance between writer and reader. Wood's reading of Zelda Fitzgerald's *Save Me the Waltz* extends concern for the asylum inmate and analysis of her tropes for narrative expression well into the twentieth century. The reflexivity of the theorist, furthermore, expressed in Wood's opening, as she "recognize[s] [her] discomfort with the topic of sanity/insanity" makes effective rhetorical distinctions between the objectifying "case study" and the unavoidable implication of writer/reader/subject in normative con-

structions. Wood concludes with the further recognition of "the indelible mark" on her own life of these and other experiences of mental illness and its cures, and valorises the "stories that can help us gain control . . . without losing our voices or denying the voices of others."

Whereas *Postmodernism* is almost overdue in the ongoing discussions on autobiography, and *The Writing on the Wall* contextualises and attends to seriously undervalued voices, *The Intimate Critique.* is the book that I shall foist upon students, graduate and undergraduate, and colleagues both spotted and striped, for more general discussion of what we think we are up to when we study and teach literature. Occasionally angry or bitter, varying in effectiveness, but invariably demonstrating energy, wit, and creative flair, these essays exemplify their "intimate critique"; they deconstruct the closet imposed by academic objectivity so that autobiographical literary criticism becomes a "border-crossing genre." (Early analogies align the rational tradition represented by the MLA with the normative controls of heterosexuality and indicate anxiety—about publication, tenure, promotion—for the autobiographical critic who "comes out" as a holistic reader.) Weaving complex textures among the activities of reading, teaching, talking, studying, writing, living, these essays deal with process, with risks, with vulnerability and self-discovery, with authority and instability, with pluralism, with exploding boundaries and unlimited canon, certainly with the vital connections between literature and life, and also between aesthetics, politics and ethics. Not surprisingly, these essays focus largely on feminist revisioning and on issues of race, gender, and sexuality. What remains most vivid to me, however, is not any one concern but the cumulative force of many deeply committed men and women exploring the meaning in their own lives of the research they do and its implications for their teaching and their writing. This collection contains too many essays for individual comment; my copy is marked from cover to cover with suggestions received, with responses, with my own engagement in the enterprise. Its division into three parts, formative strategies, critical confessions, and models of autobiographical literary criticism, creates a rational coherence within which the original, the personal, and the inspired make persuasive sense. Among many contributions that will be important for me to reread, essays by Henry Louis Gates, Melody Graulich, and Suzanne Bunkers are models of elegant scholarship combined with profoundly personal appeal.

How a People Die.

Alan Fry

How A People Die. Harbour $14.95

Reviewed by Renate Eigenbrod

This new edition of *How a People Die* contains the unrevised first version of the novel published in 1970 together with an "Introduction" of 28 pages and an "Afterword" of 14 pages.

The plot of "the novel," as Alan Fry subtitles his book, can be summarized in a few sentences. In a Native community the author calls Kwatsi in British Columbia, an eleven-month old girl dies in her crib as a result of parental neglect. This incident and its investigation—a police officer lays charges against the parents—provide the factual basis for a story in which the main conflict does not focus on "the disease" of alcoholism and how the people of this "unhappy community" cope with it, but on the Indian Agent's relationship with the people and *his* way of coping. Given the responsibility to improve life for these people, he is frustrated at his failure, appalled by continuous alcohol-related incidents of

violence directed especially at women and children. It is mostly through his observations, feelings, reflections and discussions with professionals, reporters and, occasionally, Native characters that the reader learns about the happenings in the community.

The introduction to the 1994 paperback edition, makes it clear that the main character Arne Saunders is related to the author Alan Fry: both men come from hardworking ranchers' families in British Columbia and both become employed by the Department of Indian Affairs later in their lives. This similarity between character and author, together with the insertion of (not fully dated) newspaper articles, gives this so-called novel a documentary quality. As a result not only the plot but also all its characters become more believable—including the Native characters and their stereotypical descriptions as drunken, dirty, lazy, impassive and irresponsible.

Alan Fry justifies his Indian Agent's point of view (as opposed to a Native perspective) in the introduction where he comments on the publication of the novel in 1970: "They [the Indian leaders] did not want to talk about the drinking, the beating, the incest and the child neglect . . . . So I decided that I would talk . . . ." However, if indeed few Aboriginal people spoke out in the late 1960's, there is certainly no lack today and therefore no need to re-publish Alan Fry's story. What is needed is a publishing industry which supports Aboriginal voices, for example, writers like Beatrice Culleton (Mosionier) whose hopeful ending to her novel, *In Search of April Raintree* (1983), also a novel about alcohol-related tragedies, is in striking contrast to the hopelessness of the last lines of Alan Fry's novel: "Jacob [who had just asked for relief money] left the car and Arne watched him slouch along toward his in-laws. . . You're nineteen and you are dead already." Alan Fry perceives himself as witness, and what he sees makes him come to the conclusion that life in this Native community is "damnably hopeless." But if stories about addiction, death, violence and abuse are told by an Aboriginal writer, the intent is not to show how hopeless the situation is but, as Beth Brant points out, "to *renew* life, to renew *life*" (*Writing as Witness*, 1994). In Native cultures stories have power (Lenore Keeshig-Tobias) and are a means of empowerment (Jeannette Armstrong). But Alan Fry disempowers the people he writes about. He takes away their voice, their strength, their identity: this is also "how a people die."

Trans-Cultural

Wolfgang Binder,ed.
Ethnic Cultures in the 1920s in North America.
Peter Lang n.p.

Luciano Díaz,ed.
Symbiosis: An Intercultural Anthology of Poetry.
Girol Books $14.00

Winifred Woodhull
Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures. U Minnesota P
$44.95/$16.95

Reviewed by Petra Fachinger

Ethnic Cultures in the 1920s in North America is a collection of fourteen essays dealing with the impact of ethnic and racial diversity—the authors fail to distinguish between ethnicity and race—on American "culture." The essays are written by French and German scholars working in North American Studies. That North America(n) Studies in Europe still essentially means American Studies is reflected in the fact that only Dieter Meindl's "The Last West: Scandinavian Contributions to North American Prairie Fiction" deals with Canadian issues and then only to discuss the similarities rather than the differences between the literatures of the two countries.

The contributors to the collection see the

1920s as a transition period in America marked by vast demographic changes that were responsible for the decade's preoccupation with ethnicity and spawned fictional and non-fictional responses of both an ideological and generic diversity never before seen anywhere. For example, the 1920s witnessed a boom in prairie fiction mostly written by Scandinavian immigrants who, Meindl claims, "transcend realism" owing to both their "uprootedness" and the literary influences of Ibsen and D.H. Lawrence. The decade also gave rise to so-called mulatto fiction and to a literature expressing the "fascination of white authors for the figure of the African-American" (Binder).

The six articles not dealing with literary discourse discuss Jewish entertainer Al Jolson's success on Broadway, the *Menorah Journal* crisis, the Jewish Labour Movement, the ethnic ramifications of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, the loss of group coherence among Germans on account of Germanophobia after World War I, prohibition as still another "avatar of American nativism," and the rising interest of American anthropologists in local "cultures" ("ethnic"/immigrant groups) and their flirtation with hereditarianism.

The strength of this collection lies primarily in the compilation of information. The contributors are obviously more interested in the history of "ethnic cultures" than in questioning the methodology and terminology they employ to talk about them. What one misses in this book on "ethnic cultures" in the 1920s are articles about the contribution of the Irish and Italian communities, which were both culturally and politically influential at the time.

Symbiosis: An Intercultural Anthology of Poetry includes poems written in French and English by more than thirty poets from the Ottawa region. Editor/contributor Luciano Díaz maintains in the foreword that "writers from the minorities are put, and subsequently kept, in a sort of ethnic literary ghetto." To counteract this tendency in Canadian literary criticism, Díaz includes works by Canadian-born writers "whose writing is worthy of recognition by a wider public," with those of immigrant and First Nations writers.

The title of the anthology is probably not the most effective. Symbiosis signifies the living together of two *dissimilar* organisms, whereas the editor's intention is to de-emphasize difference. He critically observes that "ethnic" writers (whom he identifies with non-Anglo-Celtic or French immigrant writers) are "of interest to the mainstream public primarily for their 'ethnicity' rather than their intrinsic value as writers" and claims that all writers need "to converge in the common ground they all share: the artistic expression of the written word." Furthermore, "transcultural" may have been a more appropriate term for Díaz' project than "intercultural" since, in Diana Brydon's words, "transcultural" signifies a process whereby "differences are brought together and make contact." While "intercultural" implies a binary opposition between a writer's heritage culture and mainstream culture, "transcultural" emphasizes the writer's interaction with existing cultural frameworks within and between which he or she is writing.

Although the majority of the contributors were not born in Canada, only a few of the poems deal with immigrant or exile experience. The anthology demonstrates once more that although feelings of displacement may at times be driving forces behind an immigrant poet's creativity, the immigrant predicament is not the only subject for these writers.

Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures is an informative, passionate, and provocative book. "Writing ... in the wake of the Rushdie affair and the Gulf War," Woodhull sees her book "as part of a collective effort to resist an impulse ... to demonize and do

violence to Muslim peoples." The first two chapters of the book offer a feminist reading of a number of texts from Algerian literature written in French. The third chapter investigates the failures of French post-structuralism to theorize and politicize adequately the relationship between decolonization, neocolonialism, and minority literatures. It demonstrates how "left-wing" French intellectuals avoid dealing with the "contradictions" and "disjunctures that mark the history of colonialism" for women of the Maghreb, for Maghreb women who emigrated to France, and for the "culturally ambiguous" Beurs (French born of Arab parents). In her final chapter, Woodhull provides close readings of French novels of the 1980s "that attempt to confront colonial and postcolonial violence and establish solidarity between France and the Maghreb."

While Woodhull criticizes Kristeva's *Etrangers à nous-mêmes* for leveling difference, she joins Spivak and Radhakrishnan in their rejection of Foucault's critique of representational politics for its dismissal of agency and asks why Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* exclusively analyse "writings by European men." Woodhull bases her own readings on theories of nomadism and métissage, which challenge essentialist notions of racial, sexual, and national identities and take into account shifting and at times conflicting personal and political configurations such as those of the Beurs. She successfully demonstrates that in the study of a literature or culture, theory cannot be separated from politics.

Eyes & Letters

Mary Dalton
Allowing the Light. Breakwater n.p.

nick avis
bending with the wind. Breakwater n.p.

Reviewed by Alexander M. Forbes

Although thoroughly contemporary in its forms, interests, and language, Mary Dalton's *Allowing the Light* is a collection much indebted to eighteenth-century literary example. In its progress from pastoral to satire, the volume follows a favourite eighteenth-century movement, but the endpoints of this movement are also indebted to eighteenth-century precedent.

The opening two sections, for example, are together reminiscent of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, with poems in the first section often finding darker counterparts in the second, as perspective shifts. The first grouping, "Veined Ways," offers a series of descriptions of plant and animal life, as seen under the different degrees of natural lighting afforded by the different seasons. Not surprisingly, given Dalton's interest in the perception of natural life in specific seasonal moments, many poems here are haiku or senryu (or are derived from these). But if the first thing one must do, in "reading" nature, is "to find / the eye" ("The Book of Kells"), it quickly becomes apparent that the shift into darkness, in the second grouping, is an allegorical lesson in reading: a warning about what our "reading" has become, because of what *we* have become.

The title of the second section, "The Body Cooling," explains what we have become by providing us glimpses. Where the poem "harvest codes," in "Veined Ways," made farm imagery a code of innocence, the imagery is now transformed into lurking "terror" in the companion poem "bachelor brothers," a demonic rereading of rural existence. A lively cat ("taking away

the snow") becomes a cat "hung high upstairs" ("the anxious"). The active eye of an animal ("The Book of Kells") becomes the passive eye of a television viewer ("eye"). The eye is made passive not only because it watches television, however, but because it *is watched* by television: the eye is placed within a series of frames ("and this is the video / of the photos developing / of me watching TV") that finally deconstruct the speaker's perception, erasing and postponing it until all that is left is "TV / watching" the speaker. If the speaker's perception is deconstructed, however, the process is not endorsed by the poem, but regretted, for it is seen as one more instance of the larger process of energy loss typical of contemporary life: another instance of "The Body Cooling." For Dalton, no less than for Blake (or Milton) "the lethal, the curve of the worm" ("vancouver reverie") is everywhere a sign that the world is not as it should be.

The next section, "Angling a Fuchsia," extends Dalton's satire as bodies continue to cool. The targets are various, and handled with vigorous eighteenth-century wit. In "on not writing the mother" the speaker repudiates much contemporary "writing" of women's bodies, preferring Vermeer's portraits of women to contemporary written versions. The old portraits, which took "courage" to paint, really *show* women, and in doing so effect what only powerful art can do: they "unmask us in looking." They show up "our false faces / peering from cages / caught in the century's camera"—the camera that cannot truly *see*, because it is nothing more than "the ideologue's eye." This satire is continued in "woman of letters," in which writing the body, if it neglects all that is *not* the body, is seen as nothing more than an exercise in literalism carried to a cool conclusion. The "woman of letters" ceases to be a woman of "letters" in the metaphoric sense of the term, for metaphor requires words and there can be no words when all is "flesh." Writing the body then becomes, to the speaker, an imprisoning exercise as well as a reductive. What emerges is woman as "the *I* upright and pinioned": the personal pronoun is turned into a mere letter, the body of a word, when its reference is wrongfully confined.

In "*il dolce stil novo*," Dalton draws her satire to a point by personifying both modernism and postmodernism, and contrasting them not only with each other but also with an earlier culture that provides a way of measuring what contemporary culture has become. "Modern" makes two appearances (once as sorrowful Niobe and once as frustrated Sisyphus), only to be succeeded by "Postmodern," adorned with "TV tubes in bits" and "parentheses at her wrists," wearing the latest perfume (marketed as "*Joy of Flux*"). Her mincing presence is then contrasted with that of "Mediaeval," who trails words that "somersault": "transfigurations into hazel, / salmon leaping silver beneath." It is little wonder, suggests the speaker, that bodies are now left "cooling": without "word" and its "muscle" and "music," little else can be expected.

The poems that comprise *bending with the wind*, by nick avis, share a number of similarities with the poems of Dalton. Like Dalton, avis is a Newfoundland poet much concerned with specific moments of perception, and with shifts of perception. Like Dalton, avis turns to haiku and senryu (and modifications of these) as forms suitable to his poetic interests.

The poems are organised, for the most part, into narrative sequences that are as strongly connected as poems which focus upon momentary perceptions can be connected. Although avis makes traditional use of seasonal references to unify particular sequences, the references often mark advances from one season into another, rather than simple delineations of a single season, and haiku are freely mixed with senryu. In one sequence, for example

("descending the mountain"), "young leaves" give way to a "short summer night" as the speaker moves from innocence (in which haiku figure prominently), to experience (appropriately captured in the satirical social poetry of senryu).

A number of experiments are made with haiku and senryu of different syllable and line lengths, and experiments are also made with concrete and sound poetry. The most extensive example of this experimentation occurs in the sequence entitled "C," in which the letter announces the theme to be developed by variations in the untitled poems that follow. The letter is playfully transformed into words, and these are in turn transformed into a picture (constructed entirely of parentheses) which offers a concrete representation of the speaker seeing seagulls flying over the sea. The punctuation marks, and the letter suggested by their shape, then become subjects of additional variation, at both verbal and pictorial levels, as reference is made to an echo, and to the shape of a "hull" returning to the sea.

Waterfronts

Al Pittman
Dancing in Limbo. Breakwater n.p.

Philip Gardner
Talking to Ghosts. Breakwater n.p.

Reviewed by Alexander M. Forbes

Al Pittman's *Dancing in Limbo* is a collection loosely structured by its images, as the speaker's struggles to find direction in life prompt poems located (literally and metaphorically) on land, at sea, and along the dividing line between land and sea. Recollections of domestic life open the collection, affording accounts of dandelion-detesting neighbours dedicated to killing "the colour yellow" ("The Dandelion Killers"), and also of a daughter whose trust in parental love is unqualified ("Goodnight Kiss"). Water quickly begins to threaten the dissolution of domestic happiness, however: gently at first, as a river floods the playground of the speaker's children ("Atlantis"), but soon more seriously, as a death in the Atlantic is recollected ("Boxing the Compass").

If water poses one threat, fire poses another as the speaker begins the descent into the limbo that is the organising metaphor of the volume. The speaker's portrait is burned in a house fire from which his family barely escapes. The portrait goes up "in flames / in the living room" ("Ashes, Ashes! All Fall Down!"), prompting the speaker to evaluate his own "living" and to recognise that he "has been dangerous" to ones he has "loved without malice" and "embraced without courage." But the recognition comes too late to avert family dissolution: the speaker is left alone, in the ambiguous position of wanting to reform but not desiring to become "any sort of saint" ("Living Alone")—an ultimately unsatisfying position to one for whom "it's either the cathedral / or the alley" ("Invitation Declined"). The speaker's "wishes," while not abandoned, are "shipwrecked," and water imagery, together with fire, is appropriately displaced into the imagery of a lustful man on the waterfront ("The Woman in the Waterfront Bar").

In poetry, however, the speaker finds a means to return some sense of order to his life, a means to take small steps out of limbo ("Poem for Michelle," "Kelly at Graveside"). Although the speaker's "resistance to virtue" remains "stubborn" ("Prayer"), and his sense of himself fragmented and ambiguous to the end ("The Music in your Mind," "Limbo Dancer," "Final Farewell"), a prayer for deliverance nevertheless becomes possible ("Passing through St. Jude's").

The poems of Philip Gardner also record life along a waterfront that is at once literal and metaphoric. The similarities end here,

however, as Gardner's speakers look into themselves to find something more happy than limbo (although there are troubles enough), and look back to find an earlier life located far beyond the boundaries of Newfoundland: a life, in fact, across the ocean.

England is the setting for many of the highly descriptive poems in *Talking to Ghosts*, and English elegiac and pastoral poets must be numbered amongst the ghosts most frequently (if often anonymously) engaged in the dialogues that comprise the collection. As might be expected of descriptive poetry in the elegiac and pastoral traditions, the descriptions offered are dominantly realistic, but unexpected neometaphysical conjunctions of otherwise realistic images emerge upon occasion. In "Funerals," for example, Antarctic whales are juxtaposed with a garbage dump, which in turn receives unexpected treatment when it is defined as a place for "pet after pet" to be "tossed out." Similarly, the desk of a dead man, in "Reposing," is unexpectedly transformed into a casket—one resting on "wheels."

Sometimes the dialogues are immediately personal in significance ("Spelsbury House"); sometimes, however, the speaker is joined by others in acts of communal commemoration ("Reading 'Spain' to the Students"). On other occasions, the dialogues involve extrapolations into the past in an attempt to understand what *another* once experienced ("Piano Quintet," "Walberswick Pier Head, 1888").

Most often, as might be expected from the title of the collection, the dialogues are melancholy in tone, but some are playful ("White Point, Trinity Bay") while others are violent ("Fen Ditton"). At all times, however, the dialogues *are* dialogues, and ghosts from the past are invoked only to be connected to the speaker's present world ("Wood-side Ferry," "Revisiting"), or to the future as well ("Archbishop," "Winter View of Liverpool Cathedral," "Blundellsands, 1985").

Unifying the collection are frequent references to ecclesiastical subjects. Gardner describes or makes reference to particular churches ("Winter View of Liverpool Cathedral," "Revisiting"), but also to church services ("Four Mile Point"), holy days ("Waiting on Christmas Sunday," "Palm Sunday, Thornton"), and ecclesiastical figures ("Archbishop"). Echoes of hymn are heard ("Wirral"), and also of Scripture ("Ghosts"). If Gardner is an elegiac pastoralist, he is also, and often at the same time, an ecclesiastical poet, and this conjunction, when it occurs, makes many of his elegiac pastorals distinctive.

Not all of the poems are specifically or primarily ecclesiastical, however, for the topical range of the collection is extensive. If poems such as "Woodside Ferry" and "Revisiting" are elegies for speakers' earlier selves, others commemorate particular individuals ("Memorial Service," "Elegy for William Mathias", "Intensive Care," "Old Haymarket, 1955"). There are also elegies for animals ("For Percy," "For Oscar in Easter Week," and "1895"), together with elegies for inanimate objects. Bridges, in particular, receive attention ("11 november, 1983," "Levelling"), and their archetypal significance ensures that Gardner's descriptions of them, like his other descriptions throughout the volume, serve ends beyond description itself.

Interrupted Voices

Gary Geddes
Girl by the Water. Turnstone $12.95

Raymond Souster
Old Bank Notes. Oberon $23.95/$11.95

Reviewed by Alexander M. Forbes

In *Girl by the Water,* Gary Geddes continues the formal and thematic explorations that have long been identified with his name. Dramatic monologues of different speakers are collected either into inter-

rupted narrative sequences or loosely associated groupings, and these enable Geddes to examine ethical and political questions at both individual and social levels.

The first sequence provides the volume with its title. Stories of desire merge with stories of death against a background of war in an unnamed country, with the poems sometimes shifting between *eros* and *thanatos* ("Artist"), and sometimes associating *eros* with *thanatos* ("Private"). Representatives of death—soldiers, in the sequence—sometimes prove unexpectedly capable, however, of a love that is something more than *eros* ("Midshipman").

In the second grouping, "Junkfood Pastoral," rural violence replaces overt warfare, but can prove as deadly: in Canada there are "farm accidents" ("Subsidies"); in Central America, government attacks upon farmers ("*Fusiles y frijoles*"). Despite their own hardships, however, farmers themselves sometimes have much for which to answer ("Baltics Corners").

The structure of the third grouping, "Two Moose on the Hunker Creek Road," falls between that of "Girl by the Water" and that of "Junkfood Pastoral," with the poems more loosely arranged than in the former but more strongly interconnected than in the latter (a fact made possible by the single setting of the Yukon). Violence is again Geddes' concern, as scenes of domestic violence ("The Sporting Life") are juxtaposed with scenes of environmental violence, which are the result of mining ("Bonanza," "Two Moose on the Hunker Creek Road"). With "Prospecting," however, Geddes turns to questions which, if still related to ethics and politics, nonetheless mark a change in focus. Poetics becomes his subject as prospecting becomes a metaphor for poetic composition. The speaker rejects literary theories which would turn words into mere "playing at knowledge," insisting, instead, that "bed rock" is a more reliable fact of nature, and of poetic prospecting, than "nuggets / washed down by freak storms," and that this "bed rock" is, furthermore, found in the "image": particularly when, as the speaker's examples illustrate, the "image" conveys the inescapable and painful conditions of human experience.

"Relative Humidity," the penultimate collection of poems, marks a return to interrupted narrative sequence, in a series of long poems about family relations in general, and "mother-stories" in particular ("Afterbirth"). Sea imagery dominates the sequence, with the surface of the ocean becoming a metaphorical boundary to distinguish failure ("Cod Royal") from survival ("Headlong Flaming"). Often, however, there is blurring of the distinction, although a pervasive concern with ethical questions ensures that words amount to something more than "playing at knowledge": if there is "border-blur" in "Coming Up For Air," for example, the reader finds that the blur has much to do with breaking "the shell / of vanity."

The concluding section, "Mao, Dreaming," offers yet another interrupted sequence. In it, Geddes returns to overtly political poetry, as the myth of Mao is undercut in a series of monologues articulated by the ghost of Mao himself. Mao identifies himself as "an actor" who "practised deception / on a grand scale" ("How I Solved the Contradictions"). Despite good intentions ("Self-Criticism"), Mao concludes that he was never "prepared for peace" ("Be Careful Whom You Invite to the Party"), and that his own ignorance of agriculture ensured, furthermore, "crop failure" as a consequence of his policies ("The Great Leap Forward"). Bethune, in contrast, proved more worthy of recognition than Mao himself, for he "saved thousands" ("Monkey Business").

Although Raymond Souster's name is most strongly associated with short imagist poems, *Old Bank Notes* reminds readers

that Souster is one of Canada's most prolific narrative poets—and that, like Geddes, he is a master of the interrupted sequence, constructed from a series of monologues. "Old Bank Notes: King and Bay," the title section of the volume, draws upon Souster's own experience to recount the story of a banker's life in Toronto. The sequence is novelistic in its impulses, if not in its final form, as it records a changing society through the eyes of a constantly developing character (the speaker of each of the monologues) in free verse that stays, in keeping with the subject matter, close to prose.

The prosaic character of the free verse is established from the beginning, as Souster reworks, in verse, the prose of the Imperial Bank's House Rules for its officers ("Found Poem: 'Rules & Regulations, 1939'"). This poem establishes the tone of many of the poems that follow: narratives that reflect the life of a junior banker, whose routines culminate in the daily ritual of "balancing the books." This ritual, as it is the central ritual of banking, is the subject of a number of poems: "The Major," "Clearing-Department Blues," "Coming Up Short." As the titles of the last two poems make clear, the life of banking, if largely prosaic, is nevertheless not without dramatic potential. Nor is the life of banking, seen from the standpoint of its central ritual, without traditionally poetic potential: "balancing the books" *is* a ritual, after all, and as such is rich in metaphorical possibilities. For the speaker, the ritual acquires just such metaphorical significance when the term comes to represent, in "Toronto Clearing-House Days," a self-assessment that extends far beyond the world of banking.

"Personal Touches," the second section of the volume, is a collection of separate imagist poems. The collection shows Souster continuing to experiment with the type of poetry that long ago established his reputation, and the range of poems here is considerable. Many poems are variations upon the quintessential imagist poem, the haiku ("Sunny, Milder," "The Last of Winter Ice"), but symbolism makes an unexpected appearance in "A Birthday for Rosalia" when Souster shifts from an imagist opening into an experiment with synaesthesia. The reader encounters epigram ("Good Neighbours"), chant ("Chant"), and elegy ("For Ron, On His Going," "And Now Morley Callaghan"), as well as autobiographical and biographical poetry influenced by elegy ("Sad Fact," "Those Good Old *First Statement* Days"). Self-reflexive poetry is represented by "Cat on Ironing-Board," while historical realism is represented by poems about the Second World War ("Warrant Officer First Class Jones, RCAF," "RCAF War Cemetery, Yorkshire, England").

The concluding section consists of a single long serial poem. Unlike "Old Bank Notes: King and Bay," in which narrative is interrupted by extensive temporal gaps, the poems that comprise "A Donna's Dying" form a strongly connected sequence. In selecting the slow death of the speaker's mother-in-law for the subject of this poem, Souster turns from simple prosaic realism to grim realism, as the titles of individual poems within the sequence testify: "Helplessness," "Her Cane," "Screams." With "A Donna's Dying" Souster brings to a climax his extended record, in *Old Bank Notes*, of the everyday sufferings of individuals in a mutable world. The record is not, however, without hope, for in the long prose poem with which "A Donna's Dying" concludes, "Finis," Souster finds hope in the very interruption of painful human experience.

Writing in the Dark

George Bowering
Shoot! Key Porter Books $19.95
Reviewed by W.F. Garrett-Petts

The final scene of George Bowering's *Caprice* (1987) shows the heroine riding off into the sunrise, "eastward through the west that was becoming nearly as narrow as her trail." Where *Caprice* seems more concerned with sending up the narrative conventions of the "Western," Bowering's new novel *Shoot!*, also set in the Thompson-Nicola valley of the late 1800s, focuses upon the social forces (the law, politics, racism, and economics) that delimit the lives of the "McLean Gang," brothers Allan, Archie, Charlie, and their friend Alex Hare. At first, the boys, like the landscape they inhabit, are "always moving": "Before the white people came the land was unsettled. It was always moving around, nervous. It could not sit still." Ironically, the McLeans have become an unsettling influence, their racial mixture and criminal exploits provoking fears of an Indian uprising. White society wants the race problem "settled," and opportunities for the likes of the McLeans become narrow indeed. Their movement becomes further and further restricted: like the Natives, who "were assigned a little bit of land and encouraged to change their lives to fit into these enclosures," the McLeans find themselves holed up in a besieged cabin, thrown into a New Westminster jail, and eventually "secured with heavy iron" rings that would define the rest of their short lives.

The sons of Donald McLean (a Chief Trader for the Hudson's Bay Company in and around Kamloops) and their mother Sophie Grant (a Native woman of uncertain origin), the brothers are known as "breeds." Neither white nor Native, and accepted by neither community, the "Wild McLeans" seem inexorably driven into their roles as outlaws; as Archie puts it, "The onliest thing we were ever left with was gettin' famous"—and they decide early in life that lasting fame can be achieved by following the example of outlaws to the south. What they fail to recognize is that the rhetoric of American-style violence does not play well in Canadian history books:

> Canadian history is mainly written by schoolteachers who know a lot about the Government. If an individual with a gun shows up, he had better be an American or else.
>
> In the Kamloops museum there's a display including pistols about Bill Miner the train robber. He was an American who snuck into Canadian history with a gun in his hand.
>
> People dont want to know about the McLeans. They werent Americans. They werent white people and they werent Indians.

That the McLeans became famous in their day is not in dispute; but it is a fame carried by the hyperbole of newspaper men and frightened ranchers. Back then the "McLeans were history and news. . . . They showed signs of becoming a legend"; today they have been all but erased from recent historical accounts of the period. As the narrator laments, "One hundred and twelve years . . . [after the McLeans were sentenced to death] two new histories of British Columbia were published to considerable acclaim. Neither mentioned the McLeans. The McLeans are not in history." When people begin to stop telling stories about the boys, the McLeans disappear from history. Fame proves as difficult to hold onto as the boots and horses they steal, for history books are written and read by those in power, and, significantly, none of the brothers can either read or write. "Learn reading and arithmetic," Archie's mother tells him, but, like his brothers, he too seems unable to decipher, much less control, the dominant language of white

literacy and commerce. On his way to prison, Allan is pulled feet first across ice and gravel and leaves "a pink line in the snow frozen to the surface of the ice." We are pointedly reminded that this is "the only writing Allan could read."

Shoot! gets its title from a scene late in the novel: the McLeans find themselves in prison awaiting trial and an eventual sentence of death by hanging for the murder of two men. The oldest bother, Allan, challenges Warden Moresby and the guards, disdainful of both his immediate physical circumstances and the authority of several shotguns and a revolver pointed at his head:

> "I go where I want to go," said Allan, moving nothing, not even his lips. There was nothing now for anyone to say. It was dead silent inside the cell block. The rotting door was wide open, and late winter light showed dust particles in the cold air. A piece of pitchy wood snapped in the stove and the barrel of Moresby's revolver did not move.
>
> "Shoot!" said Allan, without moving his lips.
>
> Everyone was perfectly still, as if posing for a photographer.

This scene offers one of many frozen moments, where Bowering complicates the metaphors and representational style of modernist photography (one thinks especially of Cartier-Bresson's notion of the "decisive moment" here). Action proceeds in a series of arrested moments, in stops and starts; figure and ground compete for the reader's attention; and key scenes are embedded among competing narratives so that past cause and future effect are always implied. When Allan McLean commands the warden to shoot, a narrative voice reminds us that he has unwittingly conflated the rhetoric of gunplay and photography, and at the same time rehearsed the faulty premise of his violent existence: a belief that history is a text shaped by force of will and individual action. The narrator's reference to photography sets Allan's fatalistic bravado in sharp relief against a repertoire of self-conscious, sometimes earnestly didactic, observations. Here and throughout the novel Bowering effects a curious reading experience: the drama of the moment gives way to a sudden shift in perspective, for clearly the sensibility that would equate this futile stand-off with characters posing for a photographer does not belong to either Allan or the warden. The observation dissipates the dramatic immediacy of the scene and encourages us to reflect upon the absurd and ultimately impotent spectacle of a man with nowhere to go—an historical tableau framed by elements of oppression, racism, political expediency, and the economic imperatives of the white ruling class.

Bowering's principal subjects, four young men in search of their collective place in history, are threshold characters, occupying that liminal space between shadow and light, between relative obscurity and fame. Darkness is their element. But theirs, says the narrator, "was a darkness that would not stay down in the basement of history." Like Archie Minjus, the character who first appears as the ship surgeon Menzies in *Burning Water* (1980) and then as the photographer in both *Caprice* and *Shoot!*, Bowering develops his figures in the dark, waiting for a public moment of recognition or insight:

> These four halfbreeds were dark shadows and white ones. They were the zone of translation. They were bad news of the future for the Indians, and bad news of the past for whites. They were trapped in a ghost life, like a high waterfall caught by a slow lens. They could never have participated in either community.

Appropriately, then, the novel ends with a startling image of Archie, the narrator, *and the reader* straining to see one another in the dark: standing with the hangman's hood over his head,

> Archie's eyes looked at nothing, at the chopped hair in front of him, at the hoofprints of the horses in the snow, looked out of the photograph in the tray. I see them in the dark. You see them. The squinting eyes of little Archie McLean.

The transition from the historical moment of Archie's execution to the squinting eyes staring out from the developing fluid of a photographer's tray captures the novel's theme—and its narrative method. The effect is not unlike that achieved by the ironic narrative asides, which, by interjecting a sudden shift in perspective, violate chronology and encourage the reader to see each scene as the product of multiple contexts. Here we are asked to bear witness not only to the execution, but to the photographic token which, like all narratives, is always in the process of developing. We are also reminded of Minjus' observation that "When they hanged these boys they were going to weigh shadows. They were going to hang images."

This is a novel about the intercession of storytellers and language, about the need to translate the story across space, time, and the boundaries of genre and medium. Like the nineteenth-century photographer who "ducked under his black hood and transferred [the McLeans] to silver," the narrator looks into the blackness of the McLeans' lives to reveal the forces that conspire to write the brief history of four Canadian outlaws. The success of the novel—and it is a wonderfully successful complement to Bowering's *Caprice*—depends upon the author's ability to tell multiple stories at the same time, like a juggler creating and sustaining a meaningful pattern by keeping the narratives moving—keeping them in the air.

The story of the McLean Gang develops at the intersection of multiple plot lines and narrative perspectives. What we learn to read is not the "history" of the McLeans, but a story about the limitations and consequences of following one narrative too closely. The McLeans, for example, do not see a future for themselves except in terms of imported frontier myths; white society, in turn, cannot see the McLeans as anything but "breeds." Failure to see the whole picture leads to a kind of blindness involving prejudice and despair.

As readers, too, we are challenged to see things differently. Those looking to get to know the McLeans as fully realized characters may find themselves initially disappointed, for, according to traditional realist notions of character development, the brothers hardly exist. Such readers will almost certainly find themselves frustrated by the many narrative interruptions and interludes that disrupt the linear progress of the McLeans' story. If we look beyond the particulars of the characters and the drama of the moment, however, we discover a complex, collage-like narrative about the political, legal, racial, economic, and linguistic constraints that backed four young men into a small, obscure corner of Canadian history.

Trains and Tradition

Donald MacKay and Lorne Perry
Train Country: An Illustrated History of Canadian National Railways. Douglas & McIntyre $45.00

Vi Plotnikoff
Head Cook At Weddings and Funerals and Other Stories of Doukhobor Life, Polestar $14.95

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

In an age of jet travel and high tech it is easy enough to forget—or to take somewhat for granted—the earlier reliance on railways and on the strength and courage of people who surveyed the lines, often through difficult terrain, and those who built, maintained, and ran the systems that bound this land across its wide span. Donald MacKay and Lorne Perry in *Train Country* offer a readable and accurate

account of the development of various companies (e.g., Canadian Northern, Grand Trunk Pacific, and Intercolonial) which went into the mix to form the CNR (the final act of incorporation came in 1923), the conglomerate company's subsequent progress through the days of steam, and the move (still lamented by some) to dieselisation. While the text offers a nice blend of technical and corporate history—the main facts and figures are there, and some mechanical matters are explained, for the lay reader, in a tactfully unpatronising way—it also provides more than a glimpse of the human price paid, from the board member to the track gang, in order to make the system work. Further, they have succeeded in doing this with some economy of text. While there have been other significant books on the history of the CNR (e.g., G.R. Stevens' splendid two-volume *Canadian National Railways* [1960, 1962], Stevens' *History of the Canadian National Railways* [1973], and Donald MacKay's *The Asian Dream* [1986]), what enhances and develops the text and makes this work by MacKay and Perry particulary attractive is the astonishingly generous provision of black and white photographs, most of which will be unfamiliar even to avid train buffs. Text and picture link well, and the illustrations (many of them superb examples of photographic art in their own right) offer that blend of fact and romance which is, in fact, often the aim of the dedicated photo-essay about railways. This is not, though, a coffee-table or railway-fan production but a serious attempt to make intellectually/visually accessible to a potentially wide audience an introduction to a vital segment of Canada's past and present, and the book succeeds happily. And given the number of occasions when railways figure in our poetry and prose, even those with a more decidedly literary interest would do well to give this volume some time.

The railways were, after all, at one time the major and sometimes the only means of getting supplies and people into and out of remote communities. One area which depended on such service is south-eastern British Columbia, which became the home for many of the Doukhobors who found their way to Canada after fleeing Russia because their pacifist views were, at best, uncongenial to the Czarist regime. Settling first in Saskatchewan, large numbers came to B.C.'s Kootenay region seeking a peaceful agricultural existence. Just as MacKay and Perry offer a clear-eyed view of a transportation system labouring to survive in a world of mercurial economics and rapid technological advance, Vi Plotnikoff provides remarkable 1950's vintage portraits of a group of people with deeply rooted traditions and values, endeavouring to preserve a spiritual and communal existence while having to come increasingly into contact with the secular and material forces of western Canada, the margins often producing a difficult social rip-tide which, at its most extreme, prompted the reactions of the Sons of Freedom and the forced seizure and education of a number of Doukhobor children at New Denver. Confrontation always makes the news, unfortunately; peaceful socialisation and productive coexistence, characteristic of the majority of the Doukhobor group, has been traditionally—and regrettably—regarded as unremarkable.

Plotnikoff's *Head Cook . . .* reminds one sharply of this error. There is nothing, indeed, unremarkable about the lives of her people nor her book as a whole: she offers fourteen sensitive and touching fictional accounts of their way of life—perhaps one of the best sets of short stories to come out of western Canada in the last decade. This is fine short fiction—rooted in reality, in what the writer really knows. Economical, insightful, well-paced, full of characters with wonderful individual voices (the flavour of the Russian language is here,

with translations subtly tipped in), resonant with sounds of hymns, prayers, and everyday talk, touched by aromas (of baking and borscht), and graced also by a splendid visual sense (costumes, countenance, and countryside all come vividly before the reader's eye)—this is smashingly good stuff. What one gains, quite apart from the sense of events, the intrigue of the narratives, and one's emotional response, is a wide vision of Doukhobor society, from the few apparently well-to-do to the poor, from the socially prominent (and the head cook at celebrations of marriages and at wakes was among those) to the obscure and even the shunned (the story of the lekarka, a female healer, suspected of possessing, in late life, an "evil eye" is a case in point). Certainly, there are the moral lessons—there nearly always are, if one chooses to look for them, and the gap between appearance and reality is often wide, as many writers (Shakespeare among them) have warned. The lekarka can still heal and Mr. Slivka, a greased-haired, Meteor-driving salesman, is really a swindler and a cheat with a technique which even Sam Slick would have admired (see "Gabriel and the Salesman"). Plotnikoff's grip—her sense of human nature—is superb and her narrative style is disarmingly straightforward; there is an apparent artlessness here which is the mark of both real talent and real craft.

Both *Train Country* and *Head Cook . . .* have important stories to tell and both offer memorable pictures, the former with the aid of photographs and the latter without. Quite different in form and focus, they nevertheless serve to remind the reader about the past in an engaging way which may well help to sensitize judgments about the present. Both are approachable, and *Head Cook . . .*, especially, displays real distinction and deserves warm-hearted applause.

The Canonical Critic

Harold Bloom

The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages. Harcourt Brace $39.95

Reviewed by Graham Good

Northrop Frye believed that, whereas literature moved through cyclical phases, literary criticism should move in a linear, progressive way towards greater and greater understanding. But perhaps criticism also moves through cycles. Harold Bloom's book seems to take us back to the period when T.S.Eliot and F.R.Leavis were propounding a Great Tradition, and pronouncing judgment on which writers were worthy or unworthy of inclusion. Frye's *Anatomy* poured scorn on this activity, but now Harold Bloom is back at it with a vengeance—a vengeance against what he calls "the School of Resentment," which has dominated criticism for the last twenty-five years. But there are differences this time around. Instead of Leavis' English and Eliot's European Tradition, Bloom gives us a "Western" one, including the Americas. The increased prominence of non-Western literature has had the side-effect of making Western Literature look much more unified than it used to. Even in the 1950s its constituent national literatures looked much more distinct and autonomous than they do now. Now Bloom takes for granted the unity of "Western Culture," though omitting full consideration of the main unifying factor: the persistent influence of, and tensions between, the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritages.

A second difference is that Tradition has become Canon. The term "Canon" was first brought into the literary sphere by critics who argued that writers other than Dead White European Males were largely excluded from literary study by reason of prejudice. They chose "canon" rather than "tradition" or "the classics" because it

sounds more authoritative, more decisive, more oppressive. "Canon" is a religious term, which, as it applies to the Bible, represents an official, binding and *permanent* separation of approved from rejected ("apocryphal") scriptures. As such it has no equivalent in the literary field. At most there is a vague analogy. There is not and has never been (outside totalitarian regimes) a body which licences approved texts in this rigid way. What actually happens is a constant process of acceptance of new texts, as their quality is demonstrated in a variety of institutional and informal situations, into the tradition. Nor is there, with regard to older books, any hard and fast line between those which are "in" or "out." Instead there is a central core of acknowledged classics, graduating outwards to lesser works, without any fixed rankings and with much leeway for variations of esteem. The notion of the "classics" comes from the Greco-Roman side of the Western heritage, and since it originated in a literary context, it is more useful *for literature* than the biblical concept of the "canon." Thus Harold Bloom's defence of the "Western Canon" takes the term from its enemies, and many of the weaknesses of his book are due to allowing the foe to choose the field of battle. The most obvious case is the lists of canonized texts at the end of the book, which become more and more arbitrary and absurd as they near the present. The Canadian canon, for example, includes all of eight names: Malcolm Lowry, Robertson Davies, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, Northrop Frye, Anne Hébert, Jay Macpherson, and Daryl Hine!

Yet perhaps the religious connotations are relevant to Bloom's persona in this book as an Old Testament Prophet, denouncing the "academic rabble" for falling away from the true faith. His aim is not really to describe accurately the *secular* process by which texts get acceptance as classics, but to rise to the defence of his own sacred texts, which have been profaned by the School of Resentment. The "enemy," as he calls it, haunts the book, like a many-headed monster out of classical myth or biblical prophecy, consisting of "Feminists, Marxists, Lacanians, New Historicists, Deconstructionists, Semioticians." Bloom nowhere stops to spell out and systematically refute the arguments of this variegated group, but rather denounces and abuses its members in asides, sometimes witty, sometimes angry, sometimes both. Nor does he look very far into the capitalized Resentment he ascribes to them all equally. At times it seems to be a generalized Resentment of literature itself; at others, of the Canon's unsurpassable aesthetic quality. Since the Resenters and the works they prefer cannot gain admission on aesthetic grounds, they switch to sociopolitical criteria, attacking the very notion of the aesthetic as an aspect of patriarchal, bourgeois, imperialist ideology.

For Bloom, the aesthetic pre-eminence of Shakespeare is "the rock upon which the School of Resentment must at last founder," though elsewhere he represents its triumph as irreversible. Shakespeare is not only the centre of the English Canon, but of the Western Canon *and* the World Canon. Bloom claims that Shakespeare's work is permanent, universal, and unsurpassable. It is understood and appreciated by all people, regardless of culture, education, or language. Shakespeare occupies first place in the book, breaking the otherwise chronological order by taking precedence over Dante, Chaucer and Montaigne. Shakespeare is not confined to his own chapter, but perpetually reappears to daunt later writers with his supremacy. They, though Bloom does not make this connection, are among the first Resenters, especially Tolstoy. Bloom discusses Tolstoy's antipathy to *King Lear* at some length, making many of the same points (notably the resemblance between Lear and Tolstoy

himself) as George Orwell's essay "*Lear*, Tolstoi and the Fool," but without acknowledging it. Shakespeare was also a problem for Freud, whose entire work is according to Bloom merely "prosified Shakespeare." Bloom has fun with Freud's fervent belief in Thomas Looney's theory that the Bard's works were actually composed by the Earl of Oxford: "misreading Shakespeare's works was not enough for Freud; the threatening precursor had to be exposed, dismissed, disgraced." Bloom also traces Joyce's engagement with Shakespeare through the *Hamlet* theme in *Ulysses*.

Bloom's Western Canon, centred on Shakespeare, extends from Dante to Beckett: *Endgame* is described as "literature's last stand," implying that the Canon may have been closing even before the School of Resentment got to work. The lists at the end, however, extend these limits back to the classics (in Sanskrit as well as Greek and Latin), and forward to the contemporary scene, the latter suggesting that the Canon can still be opened. The twenty-six authors who get a chapter (or part) are selected for their centrality to their national canons (Dante for Italy, Goethe for Germany, Cervantes for Spain, and so on), but also to represent canonical forms like the novel. But despite Bloom's disparaging remarks about historical "context," the main structure for the book is chronological (with the sole exception of Shakespeare). Bloom adapts Vico's cycle of Ages into a sequence of the Aristocratic Age (Dante to Goethe), the Democratic Age (essentially the Nineteenth Century), and the Chaotic Age (the Twentieth), but never really specifies what effect this has on the Canon. The Theocratic Age (pre-Dante) is not covered in the text, but there are prophetic hints of an imminent return to a new Theocratic Age, only a few years away, in which "ignorance of the Koran is foolish and increasingly dangerous," and Bloom is careful to include it in the Western Canon.

Where the School of Resentment stresses group identity (race, class, gender, and so on) Bloom emphasizes individuality *and* universality. The canon contains *only* works of universal scope, transcending time, place and culture. Individual writers seek admission through struggle with their predecessors. For Bloom, literature is "an ongoing contest," not between classes or other categories, but between individual writers. The goal is creative originality; only those who do not imitate the Canon can be admitted to it. The writer does not represent class or anything else, and "will frequently betray or neglect his class in order to advance his own interests, which center entirely upon *individuation*." This "desire to be different" (a phrase of Nietzsche's which Bloom alludes to twice) is common to readers and writers. Readers, like writers, are essentially "free and solitary" (where the Resenters see them as socially constructed and categorized). The aim of reading the Canon is "to confront greatness directly," and thus realize individuality through universality. The canonical reader is not seeking the "pleasure of the text," but the "high unpleasure or more difficult pleasure" which leads up to the aesthetic heights.

The critic must emulate the solitary struggles of the writer and reader. Dr. Johnson is chosen as the "canonical critic" and gets a chapter to himself. He is praised because he "directly confronts greatness with a total response, to which he brings his complete self." This demand for full existential encounter with the text is reminiscent of Leavis, though he is unmentioned in the book. Bloom's own encounters actually cite other criticism more often than the stress on "directness" would lead one to expect. Often the choice of critics is refreshingly independent of current fashion (W.G. Moore is preferred as a critic of Molière, for example, or Charles Williams of Dante), but at other times Bloom quotes contemporaries who

sound dangerously like the six-headed monster. Nevertheless, Bloom's own voice is clear and individual most of the time, unlike the impersonal, ideologically blended "discourse" of much contemporary criticism. We never doubt his passion for reading, of which we get occasional revealing glimpses, such as his becoming so engrossed in *Paradise Lost* that he read on until he fell asleep at his desk in the middle of the night.

In his "Elegiac Conclusion" (elegiac because the new Theocratic Age will presumably finish off the destruction of the Canon begun by the Resenters) Bloom recalls beginning his teaching career fighting against the then dominant ideas of T.S. Eliot as furiously as he now fights the "professors of hip-hop," "the clones of Gallic-Germanic theory," and the "ideologues of gender." Yet Bloom has ended up sounding some of Eliot's themes. Eliot was equally a champion of the aesthetic supremacy of Dante and Shakespeare ("there is no third"). Bloom's Chaotic Age echoes Eliot's view of contemporary history as "a vast panorama of anarchy and futility." In some ways, *The Western Canon* is a vast belated gloss on "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The difference is partly one of tone: the polite adjustments made to admit Eliot's deferential candidates contrast with the strenuous anxieties of Bloom's newcomers. But the main difference lies in the Freudian dynamics Bloom brings into literary history. It is noteworthy that only Lacanians, not Freudians, are listed among the "enemy," while Freud himself is honoured by inclusion in the Canon itself, albeit as an epigone of Shakespeare.

If the struggle for admission to Bloom's Canon is a Freudian one, the struggle *against* the Canon is seen in Nietzschean terms. Like Eliot, Nietzsche haunts the book without ever being focussed on directly. The "School of Resentment" idea clearly owes something to Nietzsche's concept of the *ressentiment* which the Weak feel towards the Strong. While the Strong are busy struggling with each other, the Weak are plotting to overthrow them (Christianity and Socialism were Nietzsche's examples of these conspiracies, and Bloom would presumably add contemporary "theory"). Yet Bloom, unlike Nietzsche, confines his endorsement of the Strong to the aesthetic realm. He does not oppose "social justice," merely asserts that it cannot be accomplished through literature, which must remain aestheticist and élitist.

The autonomy of the aesthetic is Bloom's cardinal principle, though as the son of a garment worker, he concedes the dependence of his career in reading on wealthy institutions like Yale University. He writes of Virginia Woolf: "Her religion was Paterian aestheticism: the worship of art," and describes himself as "a belated acolyte of that waning faith." Criticism in the twentieth century has rarely succeeded in holding a balance between the political and aesthetic dimensions of art, and Bloom's heroic protest against the current politicization of literature, despite its contradictions and absurdities, is an admirable one. He remarks that Molière, like Shakespeare, understood the "aesthetics of representing someone in the state of being outraged, made furious by intolerable provocations." Bloom understands too, and there are echoes of Lear and Alceste in the persona he creates for this book, as well as of the biblical prophets. A huge, passionate, absorbing book, it reminds us that aesthetic "greatness" is the living centre of literary experience, reached by the individual struggles of readers and writers, not "constructed" by society, politics, class, ideology, institutions, criticism, culture or anything else.

Reimag(in)ing the Arctic

C. Stuart Houston and I.S. MacLaren
Arctic Artist: The Journal and Paintings of George Back, Midshipman with Franklin, 1819-1822.
McGill-Queen's P $45.00

M.J. Ross
Polar Pioneers: John Ross and James Clark Ross.
McGill-Queen's P $34.95

Photographs by Charles Gimpel with commentary by Maria Tippett
Between Two Cultures: A Photographer Among the Inuit. Viking $50.00

Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, Canadians are demonstrating renewed fascination with the far north and with those who explored, painted, and photographed it. Whatever the reasons for this interest (and they range from political and economic to social and romantic), the striking number of recent publications on the north, of which the three books reviewed here are a representative sample, all share a desire to re-write history, to take received notions and narratives of what happened and to expand or modify the story, to adjust our perceptions of what the arctic was/is really like. *Arctic Artist* gives us, for the first time, George Back's perspective on the first Franklin expedition; *Polar Pioneers* claims a new place in history for the two Rosses; and *Between Two Cultures* introduces us to the little-known photography of British art collector and dealer Charles Gimpel. To my delight, the images that emerge from these three fine books serve to complicate the picture nicely; myths are problematized, stereotypes dismantled, and our received, simplified notions of the complex human realities of arctic life and exploration are greatly enriched.

Arctic Artist is a stunning volume. If you have formed your opinion of George Back (1786-1878) from other exploration accounts or from Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers* (1993), you may imagine the man, whatever his considerable accomplishments as an explorer, as vain, arrogant, and overweeningly ambitious. *Arctic Artist* will not eradicate this image, but it will present you with a more complex human being. Stuart Houston has edited three versions of Back's journal from the 1819-21 expedition into one text, providing an essential contextual introduction, useful annotations, and brief interstitial comments to guide the contemporary reader. By placing the material excised from Back's journal by Franklin (who, as expedition Commander, published the official account *Narrative of a Journey to the Shore of the Polar Sea* in 1823) in bold face, Houston executes an editorial coup. This editorial decision, more than any other to my mind, makes the journal riveting. Not only do we get new information about the expedition and the human being who wrote and sketched under the most arduous circumstances, but we are also allowed to trace the discursive manipulations and narrative constructions of people, places, and events that inevitably occur when a text is tailored to the demands of an official record. Predictably, Franklin cut almost all of Back's extensive aesthetic and descriptive commentary on the landscape, most of his detailed observations of the native peoples, and much of his lively (at times critical) story of events. Quite simply, there are two textual Backs here; the one Franklin constructed and the one Back presents in what amounts to another voice.

This *other* voice is witty, ironic, dramatic. Back has a flair for metaphor and an ear for dialogue; he doesn't merely describe what the Natives and Canadians said but presents it (in French for the latter group). Here, for example, in a passage Franklin discarded, Back narrates, in the form of a vignette, the trials of sleeping on the land in winter so as to avoid frost bite. The trick is to settle

under blanket and buffalo robe and "not move one jot":

> Now our servant had placed these things [special meatballs] near me for security . . . . The dogs have the privilege of sleeping on you—because it is well known you would prefer that to the trouble of kicking them away—This was not only my case, but throughout the night there was nothing but a fighting and growling of dogs about my head and it was evident they were munching something . . . . assuredly said I rather loud, the rascals are devouring our best of luxuries . . . . I started up—away went the thieves—When oh! unfortunate sight—the faint glimmer of the fire shewed me the empty sack—never in my life did I hold the canine species in such abhorrence.

The over-riding preoccupation of the expedition, as Back narrates it, was the search for food. In November of the final year, when he had gone ahead to seek help from Akaicho's people, he describes the reactions of the Yellowknife women to the chief's decision to share *half* their provisions with the expedition in terms that, in my eyes at least, reveal Back's ignorance, ingratitude, and insensitivity: "to see them throw it down—and hear them bauling—not to mention the singular gestures that were made—a stranger would have supposed we were robbing them" (196-97). Which Back might as well have done because to save himself, Franklin, Richardson, Hepburn, and the Canadians, he promised distant rewards for the present necessities of life. If the Natives' provisions ran out, the women and their children would starve. Moreover, nowhere does Back acknowledge the sacrifices made by the Natives; nowhere does he recognize the labour incurred by these women to provision an expedition of little value or relevance to them.

This book is called *Artic Artist* because George Back was the official artist on the expedition, and an equally interesting component of the volume is the presence of forty-six reproductions (most in colour) of Back's watercolour sketches. In "The Aesthetics of Back's Writing and Painting from the first Overland Expedition," Ian MacLaren provides an intelligent and helpful commentary on Back's writing (including a narrative poem edited by MacLaren and reprinted in Appendix 2) and painting. He makes some essential distinctions between the conventions of picturesque and sublime landscape painting in order to situate Back's art and, in an especially interesting discussion, he compares the highly stylized 1771 engraving of Samuel Hearne's view of Great Slave Lake with Back's almost anti-picturesque version. MacLaren concludes that Back's "pen and brush go well beyond the normal response to wilderness Canada from travellers and explorers representing various British institutional interests" (309), and his essay, together with the beautifully reproduced watercolours, provides convincing evidence of Back's complex personality.

The popular story of British polar exploration in search of the Northwest Passage is one of high adventure, drama, heroism, endurance, and patriotism. It is also, as the first Franklin expedition demonstrates, a story of misadventure, incredible suffering, death, and failure. Since the disappearance of the 1845 Franklin expedition, this story has acquired mythic status complete with mystery, unanswered questions, cannibalism, desperate searches for evidence, rounds of recrimination, and theories about *the* cause of the disaster. However, in our obsession with Franklin, much of value and interest has been lost sight of and the reputations of other explorers (besides George Back) have suffered. The chief purpose of *Polar Pioneers* is to redress the balance, and given the facts—that both the Rosses accomplished a lot, lived to write about it, and died in their beds—the biographer's task is considerable. In my view, M.J. Ross has met the challenge admirably; he gives

us a compelling portrait of his grandfather James Clark Ross, of James's uncle John, and of the complex behind-the-scenes machinations of the Admiralty, the political in-fighting, and the often vicious struggle for national and individual glory and wealth that characterized and determined the course of nineteenth-century exploration.

M.J. Ross tells his story in meticulous and judicious detail, taking pains to present the facts objectively. As a result, John Ross (1777-1856) comes alive as a stern disciplinarian, irascible and egotistical but skillful and with what, in hindsight, we can see as very advanced and sound ideas about how to survive in the arctic (which he did for four years from 1829 to 1832) and the potential value of steam powered ships. That he also antagonized almost everyone he met and disparaged in print the claims and discoveries of others (including his nephew) should not blind us to the unfairness of the vindictive attacks he suffered from John Barrow, second secretary of the Admiralty from 1804 to 1845, who wielded his considerable power in the press and with the Admiralty to discredit and exclude John Ross. James Clark Ross (1800-62) emerges as an altogether more noble and likeable human being, a skilled navigator and gifted scientist. He was also a moderate and modest man who shrank from self-promotion, public disputes, and self-aggrandizement. Indeed, if any one man appears in three dimensions here it is James and it is, finally, James's rightful place in history that this book establishes.

James accompanied his uncle on two arctic expeditions, the most remarkable being the second, which kept the ships "four years in Boothia." It was on this voyage that James located the magnetic north pole, detecting that it moved even as he took his measurements. The subsequent falling-out between uncle and nephew resulted in John's taking credit for the expedition and its discoveries. In 1839-43 James Clark Ross commanded an expedition to the antarctic, one of the main goals of which was to determine the precise location of the south magnetic pole. This expedition, described in *A Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Region* (1847) and in many ways his crowning achievement, was a great success, but at the time the arctic had a much higher profile in the public imagination and in the ambitions of many would-be discovers of the Northwest Passage or the lost Franklin, and James Clark Ross's achievements went uncelebrated.

James did return to the arctic, one last time, in command of the first official search for Franklin in 1848-49. As M.J. Ross makes clear, the decision to take this command was complex; on the one hand, he had chosen not to return to sea and was very happily married; on the other, John Franklin and Francis Crozier were dear personal friends and Lady Franklin had appealed to him personally as the best man for this urgent search. As fate would have it, James found no trace of the men or the ships *Terror* and *Erebus* and he was forced to return to England rather than risk the loss of more lives from disease, poor provisioning, and perilous ice conditions. Once home he faced criticism for abandoning the search, not least from his vociferous uncle John.

Polar Pioneers is certainly not about the Franklin disaster, but the scramble to find the Northwest Passage, the battle of competing egos, the unedifying squabbling and ad hominem attacks that characterize British naval history of the period form the unavoidable context for the lives of the two Rosses. By deftly establishing that context and narrating his story of two men inextricably caught up in what all too often reads like a plot of Jacobean proportions, M.J. Ross has created a biography of the era, as well as of the men. There is a large cast of characters in this drama, all of them famous for their exploits (Parry, Back, Franklin, Beechey, Bellot, Rae and

Richardson, and in many ways the villain of the piece—Barrow), but where John Ross seems very much a man of his time, thoroughly embroiled in the scheming and vanities, John Clark Ross rises above the fray. M.J. Ross's final words are quotations from men who knew James and described him as the "greatest" and "noblest" of them all, but long before the end of this compelling book I had already reached that conclusion.

Between Two Cultures, although a different type of book from the others—it is a coffee table volume presenting the photographs of a twentieth-century Englishman—nonetheless provides a valuable additional perspective on the arctic represented by *Arctic Artist* and *Polar Pioneers*. Charles Gimpel's photographs were taken over ten years (1958-68) during six trips to the eastern arctic and they document the Inuit and their changing way of life. What was largely ignored by the explorers, often with fatal consequences, was the people themselves, and this human aspect of the arctic is captured well in Gimpel's photographs. Cultural historian Maria Tippett provides a brief but useful overview of Gimpel's life, his attitudes towards the people, and the various traditions of visual documentary (notably Robert Flaherty and Peter Pitseolak) that influenced Gimpel's camera work or provide a critical context for his images.

Perhaps the most telling comment, however, is made by Kovianaktuliaq Parr, Gimpel's Cape Dorset friend and guide, who is quoted as saying that the Englishman "was not just trying to tell a story in his photographs but showing something that was just there." Tippett does not analyse what this remark might mean, either theoretically or practically, for Gimpel's images, but what Parr has put his finger on is the relative absence of narrativity, of narrative motivation and construction, in the photographs. Instead of constructing a story like Back's journal or an identity like Flaherty's "Nanook," these photographs strive to capture aspects of Inuit life and work in the moment without, for the most part, obvious artistic framing, posing, or visual allusion. Only two strike me as deliberate quotations of Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922).

Of course, in her selection and discussion Tippett constructs a narrative of sorts to show how Gimpel moved from more formal to more candid shots. But the story I found most interesting was the one I was left to construct myself, a story that will differ with each reader/viewer of the volume. For me, Gimpel's best photographs are of Inuit children, and by comparing his 1958 image of an Inuk child outdoors holding a harpoon with his 1968 image of another child indoors wearing a cowboy hat and makeshift mask, carrying a toy rifle and sitting astride a plastic dumbo-the-elephant doll, one understands what has happened to a generation of Inuit caught between two cultures. The pictures speak for themselves.

All three of these volumes are exceptionally well produced; *Arctic Artist*, in fact, is a triumph. My only criticism of their presentation concerns the maps: in *Polar Pioneers* they are too small and there is no contemporary map of the Canadian arctic to guide the reader unfamiliar with the area; for the same reason, *Between Two Cultures* would have benefitted from a general map of the eastern arctic and a more detailed one showing Gimpel's travels. Nevertheless, together these books represent an impressive amount of research—editorial, biographical, archival—and remind us forcibly of just how easy it is for real accomplishment to be lost in the highly politicized historiographic battle to establish a master narrative. Perhaps most important, these volumes remind us that, after two hundred years of writing about, painting, or photographing the arctic, we have amassed a wealth of information for a story that keeps changing and growing.

High and Low

Timothy Murray
Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera and Canvas. Routledge, US$ 49.95/$17.95

John Gray
Lost in North America: The Imaginary Canadian in the American Dream. Talonbooks, $17.95.

Reviewed by Mark Harris

If nothing else, the increasing marginalization of serious intellectual debate in North America has given rise to an interesting critical sub-genre diagnostically devoted to the reasons behind this worrisome decline. For Andrew Ross, Camille Paglia and the other interns of this postmodern cultural dis-ease, the widening gulf between journalistic and academic writing is perhaps the worst and least necessary of "No-Brain" culture's aggravating factors. Things were better, they assert, when arguments were lucid and cogent rather than abstruse and citation-choked. Freelance urban intellectuals of the Irving Howe variety are favourably compared, in such polemics, to the inward-looking eggheads and mindless popularizers who have arisen in their wake, while the New York magazine culture of the 1940s and '50s is fondly remembered as a vanished Golden Age of almost Athenian splendour.

While it is easy to make fun of some aspects of these critiques—particularly their anti-theoretical slant, which often contain a thinly-veiled "No Nothing" suspicion of those wily foreigners, the French—the greater part of their complaints are not only valid but—pace, post-structuralists!—true. Nowadays, few general interest magazines soar above the level of *People*, while academic journals are typically as narrowly-focussed and hermetic as a plumber's newsletter.

Big Capital couldn't have organized things better if it had tried—which, to a certain extent, it did. Even so, the greater share of the blame clearly belongs to those of us on either side of the populist fence who allowed culture to be polarized out of any viable relationship with quotidian reality. What's lacking on both sides is *passion*, the natural desire to impart something significant to a second party and thereby make a difference, a feeling as alien to most literary academics as it is to the paid corps of publishers' flacks. Consequently, most of the cultural criticism being written in English today reflects this woeful lack.

If not for this Manichean split, it would be impossible to discuss the latest books by Timothy Murray and John Gray in the same review. Although both authors are concerned with contemporary culture, they are basically writing for entirely different audiences. Murray's *Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera and Canvas* is aimed at an exclusively academic readership, while Gray's *Lost in North America: The Imaginary Canadian in the American Dream* reads like a 200 page Op Ed piece published in a middle-of-the-road Canadian newspaper. The first shudders at the very thought of slipping into easy readability, while the second cheerfully absolves the peruser of any need to acquire prior knowledge of the world.

Although its eight chapters are all composed by the same person, *Like a Film* unfolds like a series of essays by different scholars on related topics. In his introduction, Murray informs us that he wishes to reflect "on the broad impact of the cinematic apparatus on interdisciplinary experimentations in the arts. . . on social and political narratives. . . on representational and visual theory. . . on perceptions and articulations of history. . . and, ultimately, on the subsequent return of the procedures and results of interdisciplinary experimentation itself to the cinema and its language."

Describing himself as a critic who is "sensitive to [his] own subject position as a heterosexual, white male," Murray then

proceeds to consider such "appropriated" subject matter as castration theory in feminist film criticism, the role of homosexuality in Derek Jarman's *Caravaggio*, and the social significance of Laurence Olivier's "blackface" makeup in John Dexter's screen version of *Othello*. To avoid giving even unintentional offence to social groups whose vested interest in these concerns is greater than his own, Murray goes to extraordinary lengths to make his "irreproachable" theorists agree with each other—at one point employing a term invented by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to purge an otherwise admirable argument by Luce Irigaray of any possible homophobic content. Although the jacket blurb describes Murray as a Professor of English at Cornell University, he often writes as if the whole world had the power to deny him tenure.

Quotation, though, is his real weakness. Virtually all of his arguments are shot through with repeated references to Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Christian Metz, Kaja Silverman, and a dozen other pet authorities. To make matters worse, these citations are virtually always better written than Murray's own texts. If nothing else, reading this book will show you how television viewers can sometimes come to prefer commercials to programs. They, at least, are concise; they know what they want to say.

As does, one might add, John Gray. *Lost in North America* is the musical playwright's typically "Canadian" defence of the elusive qualities that make his culture different from Uncle Sam's. Homeboy Marshall McLuhan is the only critical theorist mentioned in this unapologetically unacademic polemic. Reflections on the nature of the Free Trade Agreement are followed by personal recollections of growing up in small town Nova Scotia or working for the CBC. Common sense and homely values are favoured throughout, and fact checking is a little slapdash (at one point the author tells us that France lost Québec "during the Hundred Years War"). Despite pronounced regional differences, Gray clearly expects to encounter mainstreet consensus from coast to coast. Politically, *Lost in North America* is left-liberal and sheepishly humane.

Ironically, its clearly-enunciated nationalist sentiments are as incapable of inspiring direct political action as are *Like a Film*'s meandering, French-filtered musings on the nature of postmodern art. If the earlier text is too dense, unwieldy and subservient to intellectual authority to stimulate a reader's will-to-action, the latter is too breakfast-table sleepy to arouse our righteous indignation.

No *wonder* we keep reading the French.

Historiographic Metafiction

Bernd Engler and Kurt Müller, eds.
Historiographic Metafiction in Modern American and Canadian Literature. Ferdinand Schöningh DM98.00

Thomas Irmer
Metafiction, Moving Pictures, Moving Histories: Der historische Roman in der Literatur der amerikanischen Postmoderne. Günter Narr DM 68.00

Reviewed by Gabriele Helms

Since Linda Hutcheon introduced the term "historiographic metafiction" in the mid-eighties, it has been widely adopted by literary critics to describe the kind of fiction in which the "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past." The thirty-one essays in *Historiographic Metafiction in Modern American and Canadian Literature* demonstrate the usefulness of the critical term but also remind us of its complexity and the need for fur-

ther critical exploration. Interestingly, the concept of historiographic metafiction is discussed not only in the context of the historical novel but also with regard to other genres such as science fiction, autobiographical writings, nonfiction novels, and the comic strip.

The opening three articles skilfully lay out the framework for the rest of the volume. Engler explores the contemporary philosophies of historical representation and its intellectual contexts; Müller outlines the history of historiographic metafiction in the American context; and Wolfgang Klooß sketches the colonial and post-colonial structures of historical experience as reflected in English-Canadian historiographic metafiction, arguing that the "(imperial) master narrative of an all-encompassing Canadian identity is replaced by a post-colonial notion of an identity beyond nation."

Eight essays in *Historiographic Metafiction* deal with Canadian literature. The contributors either present surveys of one author, such as Rudy Wiebe (Jutta Zimmermann), Robert Kroetsch (Martin Kuester), and Jack Hodgins (Waldemar Zacharasiewicz), or they discuss one or two individual texts, for example Mavis Gallant's *The Pegnitz Junction* (Danielle Schaub), Michael Ondaatje's *Coming Through Slaughter* and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (Wolfgang Hochbruck), and Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words* (Paul Goetsch). While these selections cover familiar ground, readers may enjoy the conscientious and well-organized discussions.

The studies of one relatively early and one very recent example of historiographic metafiction deserve special attention. In his thoughtful reading of Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, Winfried Siemerling explores how the "transgeneric collage" of the novel responds to narratives of the historical figure Catherine Tekakwitha. *Beautiful Losers* both attacks and relies on history, while also reflecting extensively on "language and the limits of its possibilities." Similarly engaging is Barbara Korte's discussion of what she considers Mordecai Richler's first historiographic metafiction, *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. According to Korte, Richler parodically rewrites Canadian history from a Jewish perspective, especially by inscribing Jews into one of the most prominent and mysterious historical events in Canada, the Franklin expedition. As Korte investigates Richler's "ingenious montage of the documentary and the imaginary," she shows not only how the novel presents all accounts of history as subject to invention and manipulation but also how it participates specifically in the subversion of "the great Canadian myth of the North."

Historiographic Metafiction also includes essays on a wide range of American writers from John Barth, Ishmael Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, and Ursula LeGuin to Art Spiegelman and many others. Two contributions should be noted for their sophisticated theoretical and philosophical reflections on historiographic metafiction. In "History and Metafiction: Experientiality, Causality, and Myth," Monika Fludernik astutely argues for a limited application of the term historiographic metafiction in order to retain its usefulness. And Ansgar Nünning proves through his discussion of Susan Daitch's *L.C.* that "constructivist models of cognition and historiography can provide a consistent theoretical framework for an analysis of the epistemological implications of ... 'historiographic metafiction'."

Historiographic Metafiction does not include any comparative analyses of American and Canadian texts. It is for the reader to engage with Engler's and Müller's suggestions in the preface that American historiographic metafiction seems to be "more pronouncedly skeptical about the

'knowability' of historical reality" whereas Canadian authors emphasize "the constructive and re-constructive quality of historiographic fiction." Although the volume lacks essays on Canadian women authors, Native American and Canadian writers, and the French-Canadian novel, this is a carefully edited, stimulating collection.

E.L. Doctorow, Robert Coover, and Thomas Pynchon are, of course, among the American writers represented in this volume. Their oeuvres are also featured in *Metafiction, Moving Pictures, Moving Histories: Der historische Roman in der Literatur der amerikanischen Postmoderne*, which is based on Irmer's recent doctoral dissertation. He defines historiographic metafiction as a new type of historical novel. Through the study of this much debated genre and in particular of the issue of representation, he also hopes to contribute to the interdisciplinary study of postmodernism.

Irmer's ambitious project discusses the connections between the emergence of historiographic metafiction and the increasing relevance of mass media (especially film and television but also print media and computers) in America in the sixties and seventies. He views Doctorow's literary adaptations of the narrative structures of television, especially his use of discontinuity in *The Book of Daniel*, the cinematic quality of *Ragtime* as well as Pynchon's use of mixed media in *Gravity's Rainbow* as part of the larger aesthetic context of a developing new consciousness. For Irmer, the meta-semiotics of reading history in the novel is a form of epistemological cultural criticism, as it is ultimately directed at the construction of historical meaning outside of the literary text.

Reflections on Poetry

François Dumont
Usages de la poésie: Le discours des poètes québécois sur la fonction de la poésie (1945-1970). Presses de l'Université Laval $27.00

Paul Chanel Malenfant
La partie et le tout: lectures de Fernand Ouellette et Roland Giguère. Presses de l'Université Laval $18.00

Reviewed by Sandra Hobbs

In his essay on the function of poetry in Québec, Dumont clearly establishes the parameters of his study from the outset. The choice of time period (1945-1970) is well justified: 1945 by the emergence of post-war French discussion led by Sartre on the role of literature in general and poetry in particular, and 1970 by the staging of the "Nuit de la poésie" and the publication of Gaston Miron's *L'homme rapaillé*. In general, Dumont is careful to limit his material to the reflections of poets themselves on the function of poetry. The approach taken is essentially diachronic, demonstrating an evolution in the view poets held of the function of their work in society. Throughout the study, Dumont emphasizes the effects of the rapid evolution of Québécois literature: rather than one point of view giving way to another, Dumont observes that approaches tend to become superimposed. New "generations" of poets succeed one another very rapidly. Indeed, it was quite common for the same poet to identify with different generations in succession, often modifying or even contradicting previously held views in the process. Nonetheless, an overall progression is distinguished, which is described in terms of *topoï*: the first is one of unity, the second one of discordance and the third one of rupture. In establishing these *topoï*, the role of the literary institution is emphasized over the contributions of individual poets. Poets are grouped around journals:

the first group around *La Relève* and *La Nouvelle Relève*, the second around *Liberté* and Les Éditions de l'Hexagone, and the third around *Parti Pris, La Barre du jour,* and *La Nouvelle barre du jour.* This grouping of poets into "schools," while useful for Dumont's framework, tends to reduce the diversity of individual poets' positions by focusing on the shared elements of their discourse. As a result, writers' comments are chosen as much for their ability to demonstrate adherence to a larger current of thought as to represent the position of their author. In addition, in the interest of clarifying his argument, Dumont ends up being redundant: the three *topoï* that he identifies are underlined again and again in the introductory and concluding sections of each chapter. Although the body of his essay is limited to the discourse of poets in Quebec, Dumont opens and closes his study with references to European-based debates; he opens with Sartre's view of the role of poetry during the Resistance and closes by discussing the concepts of modernity and postmodernity. He concludes that the advent of modernity in Québec signified a change from the idea of unity to a valorisation of conflict and rupture, but this statement may well be too sweeping given the initial definition of his topic.

The notion of unity also underlies Paul Chanel Malenfant's study of Fernand Ouellette and Roland Giguère. This unity can be found in each poem: "le poème recrée le monde en un monde unifié. . . ." The title of his book, *La partie et le tout,* sums up the approach he takes to the work of both poets: by analysing two representative poems in great detail, he proposes to establish thematic links to the entirety of their work. For Malenfant, "Le poème se présente alors comme une oeuvre unique, l'oeuvre comme un poème multiple." Unlike some of the poets surveyed by Dumont, Malenfant rejects the possibility of poetry representing life, favouring instead the idea that each poem and the larger work to which it contributes possesses an internal cohesion and unity with only a weak relation to the referential society. Ironically, this view is far removed from the notion of "engagement" that Dumont emphasizes as having variously influenced the poetry of Quebec.

Malenfant, a prolific poet himself, takes a thematic approach to the study of the two poems in question, "Et nous aimions" by Fernand Ouellette and "Roses et ronces" by Roland Giguère. At the end of each analysis, he establishes a repertory of themes identified over the course of his reading. The recurring themes of "profondeur" and "abîme" which link the work of both poets are borrowed directly from Jean-Pierre Richard's *Poésie et Profondeur,* an analysis of Baudelaire, Nerval, Rimbaud and Verlaine. Indeed, Malenfant openly embraces Richard's approach to reading poetry, an approach which is subjective and personal, a sensitive reaction to a poet with whom the critic necessarily feels a certain affinity. No "grille de lecture" is applied, no critical stance is taken; the critic does not pretend to come to any conclusions about the work in question. The reader attempts instead to enter into the text, to get "underneath" the words. For Malenfant, "tout l'effort de cette lecture consiste à rapprocher la conscience critique du sujet écrit, du sens lu." More questions are raised by reading the poetry than are answered, and thematic fields are identified as global aspects of the work in question. Although he occasionally lapses into subjective readings influenced by his own work as a poet, Malenfant does use structuralist theory and relies on the work of Bachelard to support his interpretations.

Teaching Culture

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
Outside in the Teaching Machine. Routledge US$16.95

Isaiah Smithson and Nancy Ruff, eds.
English Studies/Culture Studies: Institutionalizing Dissent. U Illinois P US$39.95/$15.95

Reviewed by Philip Holden

Gayatri Spivak's second collection of essays, *Outside in the Teaching Machine,* is as eclectic as her first. None of the essays here is new—most were published in the late eighties and early nineties and one, "Limits and Openings of Marx in Derrida," is now some fifteen years old. In many, Spivak carries out a reinterrogation of earlier theoretical positions, re-examining intersections between Marxism, Feminism, and Deconstruction, and—somewhat surprisingly—returning to Foucault, and making Foucault "resonate with Derrida." Theoretical formulations are supplemented by a series of readings of social texts and contexts: stories by Mahasweta Devi, Hanif Kureishi's *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid,* Jamelie Hassan's exhibition *Inscription* at the Regina Public Library. A third, intertwining, concern is to discuss and deconstruct the aporias in cultural and postcolonial studies within the U.S. academy.

As ever, Spivak's writing is dense, and many of the essays bear the scars of hasty cosmetic surgery. One of the most thought-provoking, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Culture Studies," lives up to its name. After a discussion of the possibility of manufacturing "counternarratives" which stress "contingency of origins" to undermine the narrative of "the American nation-state . . . illegally wrenching the origin of freedom from a merely moribund Europe," Spivak moves on to analyze the emergence of the Turkish nation state from the Ottoman Empire, and then supplements it with a series of hard-hitting recommendations for the training of teachers and the structuring of graduate postcolonial studies programmes in the U.S. university. The relationship between the three elements of the essay only emerges in its final pages. Turkey's national narrative provides a heuristic which acts against any "inclination to obliterate the difference between United States internal colonization and the dynamics of decolonized space," in contemporary postcolonial studies, an inclination encouraged by the construction of America, through the Declaration of Independence, as "We the People." Pulling together such scattered speculations requires considerable mental transmigration.

Spivak pulls no punches in questioning the orthodoxies of postcolonial studies, orthodoxies that she, to an extent, has been responsible for creating. Subalternity makes a predictable appearance, as does the concept of strategic essentialism: the former is defined in some detail, the latter rephrased in an interview with Ellen Rooney. "Hybridity" and "marginality" as descriptive tags are critiqued and problematized. Spivak's argument often dwells upon a need to place a critique locally, for the graduate student to learn a "colonized vernacular" and the ability to "surrender" in the process of translation, a process which Spivak amplifies in a discussion of her own translation of Mahasweta Devi's "Breast-Giver." This is a series of essays which, because of their complexity, merit careful reading and critical response: one hopes that such response will be forthcoming. Much use of Spivak in postcolonial criticism in recent years has been as a *deus ex machina,* her critical vocabulary produced at the climax of analysis, but exempt from sustained critique.

Spivak's name is, unsurprisingly, invoked in a number of the essays in Smithson's and Ruff's *English Studies/Culture Studies.* Smithson unconvincingly deploys Spivak's

notion of transnational culture studies from *Outside in the Teaching Machine* in setting the parameters for a scrupulously United States-centred collection, while Cary Nelson is more enterprising in naming Spivak as a key, if disingenuous, player in cultural studies' "fetishizing of 'fandom.'" While there is good material in the collection, it is unfocused and ultimately disappointing. Smithson's introductory essay, one suspects, would be a suitable item for deconstruction by the author of *Outside in the Teaching Machine*: Smithson fails to situate "culture" historically within the British tradition (Tylor's *Primitive Culture* is not a central text, and not the only important one before Williams), and, in his discussion of essence of culture does not seem to have considered the possibility of "strategic essentialism," a concept beyond which Spivak has now moved. Potentially productive tensions are elided, Smithson stressing early in his essay a now-common proposition that culture studies is concerned to create new knowledge, not to explain knowledge to a wider public, but failing to address the contradictions of this position with his later comment that teachers in culture studies will "have to write jargon-free prose for magazines and newspapers." Similarly, a tame "dialogue" between Gerald Graff, Janice Radway, Gita Rajan and Robert Con Davis ends in agreement to disagree, gentlemanly disputes glossed as "signs of vitality in an ongoing and productive debate."

The explicit subject of the collection, the institutionalization of "culture studies" in the University, and the problems and possibilities this opens up for cultural workers, is an important one. Many of the articles debate the need to make a declaration of independence from the Birmingham School, to adapt British "cultural studies" to "culture studies" in the United States; again, this is a fertile topic. Too many essays, however, after promising beginnings, end in a melange of celebratory epiphany and warnings of a forthcoming apocalypse. Several of the writers in the "Dissenting Voices" section successfully use the tactic of either anecdote, or detailed analysis of a specific cultural situation to open up institutional contradictions for analysis. Pamela Caughie narrates her own reaction to "strategies of manipulation" of the Chicago Art Institution's "Degenerate Art" exhibition to lead into a discussion of how "a cultural studies pedagogy may work against the very politics it endorses." Sheng-mei Ma's chilling account of his interpellation and packaging as native informant within North American academia suggests institutional aporias in Asian and Asian American Studies. Yet both writers turn away from detailed analysis of institutional practices to unproductive generalization. Few culture studies teachers would disagree with Caughie's call for "a performative pedagogy . . . continually reenacted and reinscribed" in which "each pedagogic situation creates its own dynamics"; many might question the precise nature of this pedagogy beyond the application of currently fashionable gender studies vocabulary. Again, Ma's suggestion that culture studies "integrate and use varying perspectives rather than exclude any one of them" is unarguably desirable; however, his essay clearly shows that there are institutional constraints upon such integration which mere volition cannot overcome.

English Studies/Culture Studies contains two excellent essays: the first, and the last in the collection. Patrick Brantlinger produces detailed analysis of "Cultural Studies versus the New Historicism," while Cary Nelson's refreshingly polemical "Always Already Cultural Studies," explores the commodification of cultural studies and produces a manifesto for future work in the area. They cannot compensate, however, for the overall thinness of the collection.

We Need To See This

Betsy Struthers
Running Out of Time. Wolsak and Wynn $10.00

Roberta Rees
Eyes Like Pigeons. Brick $10.95

Judith Fitzgerald
Habit of Blues. Mercury $11.95

Su Croll
Worlda Mirth. Kalamalka New Writers Series n.p.

Reviewed by Nancy Holmes

Betsy Struther is one of many Canadian women writers writing of the formerly unspeakable in women's lives. Although Struthers describes terrible incidents—men exposing themselves, the abuse of little girls—her preoccupation seems to be the consensual act of sex, the feelings of desire and the inadequacy of the act to comfort us (the central theme of infertility hints at dead-end). At times, she can write well about women's sexuality. With the lines "Our fingers fit, bones/ in the space between bones," she gives us a feeling of that space of suspended skin between the bones. However, Struthers only irregularly accomplishes this tactile immediacy, for later in this same poem, "Sounding Line," one of her weaknesses as a writer is revealed: her tendency to rely on language that verges on cliché. The fine lines about fingers are followed by an image of a "pulse surging with the tide." Like many other examples in the book—"The urgent pulse of flesh," for instance, in another poem—this is just bad writing. Her diction is often harlequin romance. In "Rendezvous," she writes "your breath with my pulse/accelerates, soars." In a poem called "Hors d'Oeuvres," Struthers celebrates women's bodies with weary "feminist poet" Great Mother Sea imagery: brine and pearls and "overwhelming tide." Her persona's memory of the "the first time . . ./ I felt the knob of my cervix" is more laughable than empowering or daring. With a few exuberant exceptions ("Under my Skin" is a funny poem about fucking in poison ivy), Struthers often doesn't have enough irony or panache, perhaps because she feels some self-consciousness about describing sexual experience. Discomfort is hinted at in a few memorable lines describing a streetlight:

> How we hated to see it planted
> on the edge of our garden,
> a dead tree, its one eye bold
> on our bedroom window.

When Struthers moves away from the "female" experience and writes a prose poem like "the Sentence" or part 1 of "Giving Up," she seems less conscious of being observed. In the last poems in the book, elegies to her father, details move us and each moment is acutely observed.

Roberta Rees, a Calgary writer, won both the Alberta Poetry Award and Gerald Lampert first Poetry Book award. Rees's book has many of the failings of its post-structural obsessions. The poetry is syntactically fragmented and splintered, with many deconstructive twitches. The sentence fragment, repetition, the self-conscious use of brackets are becoming dull conventions in Canadian poetry. Why, for instance, does a writer want to begin a line with a comma? Or draw attention to the language in the following uninteresting way:

> no m before mother
> mmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm
> other so br and r
> brother with an s

Or make silly statements like "carillon sounds like carrion," or make lists of rhymes like "thigh sigh thai / nipple ripple cripple." (I'm reminded of the song from *Sesame Street:* One of these things is not like the other—ripple?) All of this seems more like a sophomoric game than real attention to language. This is too bad because Rees is grappling with "herstories" of abuse, childbirth, rape, disease, alcoholism, and immigration, and she is capa-

ble of shocking when the power is not undermined by the tic of language-centred poetics. The most memorable poems in the book are the peripheral dramas: "the Shirley Temple Man" is truly scary, partly because it is plainly told. The intertwined stories of most of the women in the book are obscured by lack of narrative or drama, even though this seems to be the point, that action is unspeakable or that language is incapable. Yet when Rees attempts to capture experience, she is able to make us gasp:

> the time you wanted to kiss the boy
>
> called you More Ass and Tits ran his bike
> into the Elbow river down by the
> horse barns,
> put him in a head-
> lock,
>
> dunked his whole head and body,
> kissed him on the mouth when he
> came up for

This is a lovely use of white space and breathlessness. Fortunately there are several moments like this in Rees's book.

In *Habit of Blues,* Fitzgerald, the author and editor of more than fourteen books of poetry, is concerned with the state of contemporary language, at least partly because this book is an elegy to a novelist, Juan Butler, who committed suicide. Fitzgerald writes in a condition of paradox—"Do the unforgettable and forget." She says in "indigo" that "Derrida crushes the right hand," indicating that Fitzgerald fears the damage that theory can do to literature. She seems resentful of post-modern writing that is often an exercise in frustration and failure. She claims that "I find my self/fracture, splintered," and that stories are "not story enough to fix facts in sequential / relief." Yet her poetry, while it complains about theory, uses every banal deconstructionist technique she can find:

> . . . He . . .
> reaches through sill and sash
> (ill and ash) to untie logical progressions

Surely a good reader can catch the buried sound of "ill" and "ash" in this poem about death. Fitzgerald's worst habit, though, is poor writing. She uses pastiche and allusion, from pop songs to proverbs to Dickinson, Rich, and Yeats, but the result is hackneyed: "A rebel without applause" "learned to read between the lines / of the writing on the wall." She relies too heavily on strings of modifiers. Her language is often tediously abstract:

> Tried to remain in American arms.
> Resisted
> the clandestine movement, the precious
> denial
> of the irrational, the incapable heart
> supine,
> relinquished only in self-extirpation.

The ear is dead here. Yet Fitzgerald CAN do the old-fashioned show-don't-tell stuff: "Wish I could kick you out of my brain" or "I want you, a celebration in my hands, / somersaulting sense." She seems to have drowned her concrete and lyrical abilities in poorly edited ramblings. One poem does work well as fragment and fear—"arillion," a complexly structured poem that works with layering and anger and horror. The poem acts out a real analysis of post-modern language and its origins in violence and loss.

Su Croll won the third Kalamalka New Writers competition with *Worlda Mirth,* her first collection. Originally and ironically, Croll examines our impulse to voyeurism and she questions whether our seeing is motivated by titillation or by a search for understanding. This collection is about a woman who has a strange affair with two dwarves, Jocko and Napoleon and about carnivals which become elaborate metaphors for women's sexuality and sexual desire:

> wishing for more flesh more openings
> more free tickets to the inside

wishing for more gates to the midway
wishing for better longer carnivals
wishing for more arms around us

Croll doesn't draw any deconstructionist arrows to "carnal," but this word is deliciously embedded throughout the book. The carnival, peopled by deformed fetuses, rotten mermaid carcasses, fat ladies and so on, becomes all that has been held freakish about women's sexuality. In one vivid sequence, Napoleon dresses the narrator up in Victorian corsets and warps her body into "perfection." Along with women's bodies, the idea of voyeurism seems to be the dominant theme in this book. At the end of the collection, the narrator says she has to "stop" and after a thorough roller coaster ride of language and freakishness, we feel relief and agreement. Why do we need these stories of the freaks and why do we read about them? Do we want to be thankful for our blessings or do we want to be titillated? There is a fine line between telling a story because we need to know, to protest, to expose cruelty, and telling a story to thrill. Croll's narrator says one point, "it's hard to write about this it's hard to know/ how much to tell how much to tell / and how much to keep to myself." Her central metaphor of the tar baby—some kinky sex tool for the woman and her two lovers—suggests that tar sticks, that we are tarred by our obession for the shocking, no matter how "truthful" or necessary it is. Near the end of Su Croll's collection, the woman forces a man to go to a freak show and he says, "WE DON'T NEED TO SEE THIS." The women responds, "but that's what floor showing is that's what the worlda mirth is / . . . . get used to looking." Perhaps we need to "get used to looking" at these stories, for these are women's stories and they haven't been told often enough. If the novelty wears out, they may become private tragedies, rather than public displays. Croll's book is stylish, energetic and odd.

Findley's Eighth

Timothy Findley
The Piano Man's Daughter. HarperCollins. $28.00.

Reviewed by John Hulcoop

Some symphonies acquire titles: Bruckner's fourth is called the "Romantic"; Beethoven's sixth, the "Pastoral." Findley's eighth novel, *The Piano Man's Daughter*, might well be called his "Romantic-Pastoral." Speaking of his marriage to Alexandra, the narrator, Charles, says, "it had seemed we could survive on love and music—music and love," two of the most common ingredients in recipes for romance. Charlie is, typically, a guilty romantic who disowns his mad mother as a teenager, then sets out, at twenty-nine, to "give her back her life" by telling her story. Like most Romantics, he moves between extremes of idealization and denigration. The heads of female ancestors, servants and friends he crowns with aureoles; the men he casts as vengeful brothers, petty tyrants, dysfunctional drinkers, unworldly androgynes, nonentities, narrators and horny sex-hounds who disappear whenever they feel fatherhood approaching. "There are so many fathers in this story. . . .Aside from parenthood, they have only one thing in common: their habit of disappearing." Paradoxically, the mystery of the protagonist's origin is the birth-place of many romances; and *The Piano Man's Daughter* confirms Barthes' notion of narrative as "the unfolding of a name": "Isn't story-telling always a way of searching for one's origin, speaking one's conflict with the Law, entering into a dialectic of tenderness and hatred?"

Like his first novel, *The Last of the Crazy People*, Findley's eighth is retrospective, structurally and generically. Nostalgic in its summoning up remembrance of things past, elegiac in its celebration of the dead,

this novel harkens back to a pastoral, pre-war (WW1 and 2) world, to a field full of fair folk—"*the field was the world*"—in which love and music can still be worn as amulets against the disasters of that other place beyond the field where the fight for wealth translates into social status and war. Blissed out by inter-uterine existence, Lily, the piano man's daughter, "had taken up dreaming in her [mother's] belly—dreaming. . .and singing. Not singing songs a person knew. . . .But songs for certain. Music—with a tune to it. Evocative. A song about self" (shades of pastor Whitman). "A song about place. As if a bird had sung it, sitting in a tree at the edge of the world."

Rumour has it that Findley conceived this novel long ago and intended it to complete a trilogy begun with *Crazy People* and *The Wars*. Its emotional and psychological landscape will be familiar to those who've read the earlier novels, stories and the play about crazy Cassandra, *Can You See Me Yet?* The primary concerns of *The Piano Man's Daughter* are anticipated in the 1981 conversation between Findley and Whitehead, "Alice Drops her Cigarette on the Floor..." (*Can. Lit.* 91). Here, Whitehead talks about "a particular view of insanity" as a theme threaded through Findley's work "more than any other." And Findley talks about "someone close to me who had to be placed in a mental institution" who was "brilliant" and "had incredible insights into what was really going on in the world around us."

Like the fugue, defined by Tovey as "the mutual 'pursuit' of voices," Findley's new novel is much concerned with voices, also with songs, singing, "*all kinds of music*" (literal and metaphorical) and musical instruments: flute, violin and, of course, piano. Indeed, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem, "A Musical Instrument," proves a crucial clue in Charlie's quest for his father's identity. Himself a piano tuner, Charlie, the piano man's grandson, explains that "Every piano has its own voice—unique in its sound as the voice of a human being. And when that voice begins to waver—when it strays, the way human voices do under stress—my job is to restore its resonance—tighten its enunciation—clarify its tone. I have an unerring ear for these voices. That is my gift. In the music business, we call it perfect pitch." These words strike a homologous chord in my reading ear, perhaps because I noticed that Charlie, the narrator, and Findley, the creator, share the same birthday: October 30th. A fictional character is a musical instrument (for which the piano is both synecdoche and symbol); Findley is a tuner of instruments. His job is to restore resonance to a wavering voice by tightening its enunciation and clarifying its tone. The crucial question, therefore, is this: Does Findley have perfect pitch? Or, to put it differently, Are all the instruments in tune?

Not as I hear them. I don't have perfect pitch but know a false note when I hear one, and wince when a voice sharpens or flattens the note-as-written. I wince when Ede, a strong woman and dedicated mother, allows herself to be separated from her daughter, Lily. Frederick Wyatt, the man who takes over Ede's life and banishes Lily, has a tinny voice (*Monty Python* fans know that "tinny" is a derogatory word, whereas "woody" is approbative). Tom, Lizzie (short for Lisgard), Neddy and Karl are all slightly off pitch. In fact, the male section of Findley's fictional orchestra lacks the resonance and clarity of the women's voices. Most wavering of all is the narrator's voice. Nothing in the narrative structure prepares the reader for the fact that Charlie has supposedly added the "Epilogue" after completing his story of the piano man's daughter. In the main text, he mourns his wife's "passing from [his] life," but takes consolation in the fact that no child of his will inherit his mother's madness: "No more Kilworth babies." In the "Epilogue" we discover him reunited with Alex and

father to Emma. Since he starts writing in 1939, *after* discovering his father's identity, why does Charlie pretend not to know it? And can we listen without wincing to the sophisticated conversations Charlie, aged six, has with his mother? Doesn't the sound of a six year-old Charlie playing Irene to his mother's Vernon as they perform the Castle Walk at *thé dansants* in 1917 stray way off key? The piano tuner's voice needs retuning.

Shaping Ethnicity

Neil Bissoondath
Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada. Penguin $16.99

Denise Chong
The Concubine's Children: Portrait of a Family Divided. Viking $27.99

Reviewed by Marilyn Iwama

Neil Bissoondath describes *Selling Illusions* as his "personal attempt to grapple with" the policy of multiculturalism in Canada. The personal nature of this text is palpable. Complementing Bissoondath's views on multiculturalism are the story of his immigration to Canada from Trinidad, a chat about his family and friends, and a detailed rendering of the "creative process" of his writing. The reader learns Bissoondath's opinions on a constellation of topics surrounding politics and art, including his lengthy rebuttal of certain criticisms of his own art. For the reader concerned with the decontextualized interplay of writer, text, and critic, *Selling Illusions* is, then, a helpful volume.

But the policy of multiculturalism affects all Canadians, and by also promising "to look at where we are and how we got there," Bissoondath engages in a more public discourse, if not analysis, of Canadian political and social history as they relate to ethnicity. Regrettably, Bissoondath's discussion is constrained by a simplification of ethnicity heavily dependent on media sources and isolated quotations, sometimes uncited or selected from John Colombo's *Dictionary of Canadian Quotations* (1991). It is at this level that *Selling Illusions* flounders.

A strong component in critical discussions of ethnicity over the past two decades has been the substantial interdisciplinary effort invested in observing and articulating the process of racialization. Bissoondath acknowledges the entrance of the term "racialization" into the discourse on racism, claiming not to know the word, either, he says, through naivete, or his "distance from racial concepts and politics." Earlier in the text, he muses that racialization "seems to imply. . . to see life and all its ramifications through the colour of one's own skin." Resting on his definition, Bissoondath's commentary skirts the complexities of racialization, and diminishes historical injustices it has caused. Simultaneously, his conviction that a racialized subjectivity is simply a matter of individual choice allows Bissoondath to subsume—as he does—individuals with a racialized sense of self under categories like the Nazi regime, and "the architects and defenders of apartheid."

Throughout *Selling Illusions*, Bissoondath links ethnicity with geography, the undeveloped imagination, the past, and an "ethnic" nationalism which entails patriotism, empire and exclusion. Bissoondath describes the dominant center of the "old Canada" as having been made "void" by the country's present "multicoloured" social reality. His desire is that Canadians fill this national void with a controlled "multiplicity of voices and visions," a center that would be, nonetheless, "distinct and firm and recognizably Canadian." This Canada would enjoy the inclusive "civic" nationalism that Bissoondath finds in Quebec.

The polemic of *Selling Illusions* rests on Bissoondath's equation of ethnicity with

the subjection of mature selfhood to the "confines" of one's cultural past and skin colour. Just as he asserts that the individual can choose to be racialized, Bissoondath stresses that each Canadian is free to choose between "continuing to be what one's parents have been" and the "psychological revolution" he has enjoyed, in coming to a lighter dependence on one's heritage "to guide or succour." Because Bissoondath constructs ethnicity and "race" as an individual matter of choice, multiculturalism as public policy is, *a priori*, flawed.

More ominous is Bissoondath's corollary that voices identifying systemic racism in Canada are "crying wolf," and that the most effective way to eliminate racism is for individuals to counter it with "an immediate challenge." Bissoondath decries the "culture of victimhood . . . the threads of which stitch themselves through the ideas of multiculturalism." Having constructed parameters of ethnicity that do not exceed individual responsibility Bissoondath must then denounce the social reality of victimization. Such a construction also facilitates his comparison of the call for "punitive" redress of past injustices with "arguing that the victims of torture must be allowed to torture their torturers."

Restoring a different canvas of the past, *The Concubine's Children* tells the family stories of three generations of Canadians, living in China and Canada, largely in the voice of May-ying, the concubine of the title. Sold by her "Auntie" in 1924, May-ying joins her husband Chan Sam in Canada at the age of seventeen, to spend the rest of her life supporting his "at-home" family and the children May-ying and Chan Sam eventually have together. One of these children is Winnie, Chong's mother. Fading family photos (included in this volume), a trip to China, and her mother's reluctant story-telling spark Chong's curiosity about her family. These events also return as elements in Chong's retelling of May-ying's life as a waitress in the tea rooms of Chinatown in Victoria and Vancouver.

In recounting the "daunting" side of weaving together family history, Denise Chong explains: "The truth becomes a landscape of many layers in an ever-changing light; the details depend on whose memories illuminate it." Chong explains that choosing an omniscient narrator was her way "to be true to the individual lives of the family." As I read this text, the powerful voice of the narrator seems, rather, to detract from the layering of the stories' truths, smoothing the seams almost out of sight. As well, Chong's modulation to the first person in recounting her own part in the saga may heighten the tendency of readers to depend on *The Concubine's Children* as historical evidence, and compromise the very constructedness of history that Chong is determined to emphasize. Happily, the stories carry enough urgency and vigour to maintain the dissonant quality of individual memory.

The multicultural reality of Canadian society, and the gentle rousing of academia to greet non-mainstream writing is widening the audience for texts like *The Concubine's Children*. But readers concerned that the policy of multiculturalism is spawning a body of literature which glorifies an ethnic past need not bring such worries to this volume. Chong acknowledges her attempt to "find the good among the bad, and pride among the shame of [her grandparents'] past." Yet she refuses to edit out the unlovely in her heritage, letting shame and pride co-exist in these pages. In a measured, almost detached tone, Chong relates the social and personal complexities among early immigrant women who created communities of survival in an environment insistent on arbitrary standards of ethnic and moral purity. As in other accounts of witnessing and con-

fession, this tactic heightens the rhetorical impact of the telling.

Some readers may cringe at minor historical "inaccuracies" in the text, and at Chong's selective treatment of injustices. For instance, Chong mentions, almost incidentally, her grandmother's purchase of a store "confiscated from Japanese [sic] interned during the Second World War." As well, she asserts that the Canadian public's negative opinion of Chinese Canadians improved "because of the patriotism shown by Chinese [sic] men who volunteered for active wartime service," a response that Japanese Canadian men, for example, did not enjoy when they volunteered. If these excerpts diminish or simplify the wartime injustices of other minorities, they also highlight the complexities of ethnicity and the further "shading of truth" that Chong confesses she brings to her telling. As well, such passages contribute to the textured detail of Chong's portrait of community life.

One technique that Chong uses awkwardly is her incorporation of un-glossed Chinese nouns into the sustained English syntax of her text. The inclusion of non-English narrative in English texts is a provocative and powerful strategy. Used skillfully, it can yield an inclusive, but not dismayingly accessible discourse. As well, it discourages notions of representation that perceive the experience of the other as always translatable and, therefore, understandable. By submitting "foreign" nouns (the linguistic component usually easiest to learn) to domestic forms with enough context to make the nouns comprehensible, Chong creates an assimilationist linguistic model that suggests such an experiential parallel.

Regardless, the portrait of *The Concubine's Children*, drawn as it is with a mature, ironic eye, will heighten readers' awareness of where the greater illusions of ethnicity lie.

Pushing the Boundaries

Barbara Godard
Collaboration in the Feminine: Writings on Women and Culture from Tessera. Second Story $19.95

Lynn Keller and Christanne Miller
Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory. Michigan UP US$49.95/$19.95

Reviewed by Wanda A. Kelley

"Difference, purpose, community, future—these are key terms that situate *Tessera* as a feminist project," claims Barbara Godard, editor of *Collaboration in the Feminine. Tessera*, a "bilingual, pan-Canadian periodical offering a space for women's thinking and writing" which grew out of the 1983 Women and Words conference in Vancouver, may very well celebrate "difference"; Godard's collection, however, despite its emphasis on pushing at the boundaries of patriarchal literary convention, seems at times an exercise in navel-gazing. The consummate skill of individual pieces—Lorraine Weir's "'Wholeness, Harmony, Radiance' and Women's Writing," Daphne Marlatt's "Writing Our Way Through the Labyrinth," and Marlene Nourbese Philip's "Whose Idea Was It Anyway?" in particular—is not to be denied; nonetheless the anthology as a whole has an alienating "insider" air which is off-putting indeed to readers who are not members of the feminist theory elect.

Readers hitherto unfamiliar with the *Tessera* project can hardly help but feel excluded by the "old girls'" mentality which pervades the text. Godard shares her "Introduction," if not her overly lengthy concluding "Reprise," with the other four editors of the *Tessera* periodical; the potential for dialogue, however, is curtailed by the insularity of many of the references: the reader cannot feel herself a participant. Collaborative essays by these editors pepper the text, inviting comparison with such

career-boosting publications as *Tish*; the editorial voice so dominates the text that it effectively silences other voices. Godard's brief analysis of each piece in her "Reprise" is particularly offensive, as it leaves the reader little room to think for herself. Her too frequent mention of articles from *Tessera* which do not appear in *Collaboration* is even more suspect, as is the fact that much pertinent information respecting the periodical occurs not in the introduction, but rather at the end of the text. Equally disturbing is Gail Scott's mention of the "suspicion" and "hostility" to the *Tessera* project evinced in "certain essays" in *Language in Her Eye* (18); *Collaboration*, it seems, has a personal axe to grind.

Intrusive editorial practices aside, the text is in many ways a fascinating one. Many of the essays deviate from the academic model, blurring the lines between fiction and theory, between the supposedly (traditionally male) objective and the (traditionally female) subjective. Marlene Nourbese Philip's "Whose Idea Was It Anyway?," for instance, juxtaposes speculation and "fact" in a recreation of the mentality of a slave owner, creating a powerful immediacy lacking in much academic writing. Phillip appeals to both intellect and emotion; the piece is as much a story as an essay, and yet it stands as an effective argument about the way in which patriarchy operates. Philip's article is one of many which disprove the assumption that academic discourse is necessarily dry: Ismail, Marlatt, Scott, and Smyth all experiment radically with the academic paradigm, creating a space in which woman's voice is freed (or would be were Godard et al less insistently vocal) from the constraints of prescriptive, male-determined forms.

Feminist Measures, while it adheres for the most part much more strictly to the academic model, has similar if not identical aims; according to editors Lynn Keller and Christanne Miller, the collection attempts to rescue poetry from its relative critical obscurity while allowing women to "experiment with the soundings of their own clear, personalized voices." Poetry, claim several of the authors represented in the collection, as the genre perhaps most resistant to change, presents women writers with a substantial dilemma: the novel, as Virginia Woolf notes, may have been young enough to have been shaped by female hands; poetry, however (or "good" poetry, at least), has long been almost exclusively male territory. Thus, not only poetry itself, but also the way in which poems are read and evaluated, has remained in some ways decidedly androcentric; "poetry," state Keller and Miller, "is a gendered practise."

The strategies employed to generate new readings of poetic texts are almost as varied as the subject matter itself; the anthology includes everything from dense text-based analysis to feminist takes on Lacanian theory to experimental work in which the criticism is indistinguishable from the text. Disparate as the focus of the articles may seem, each piece, from Janel Mueller's reading of the medieval "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum" to Christanne Miller's examination of the "space age" poetry of Alice Fulton, attempts to engage with the issue of "gender's role in poetic production." Some essays, like Mueller's, offer a feminist reading of the text using traditional scholarly techniques; others subvert academic techniques themselves by privileging so-called subjective methods of discourse.

Akasha (Gloria) Hull's "Channeling the Ancestral Muse: Lucille Clifton and Dolores Kendrick," for example, opens with a series of "Narratives": the essay begins as story. As the piece progresses, Hull's startling thesis emerges: she is exploring the "spiritual connection of the two poets...to black female ancestors," and her evidence includes everything from Ouija boards to visions. The high Romantic concept of

"inspiration" associated with canonized European male authors like Wordsworth is doubly subverted: Hull not only claims the tradition for black women, but posits a communal voice for Clifton and Kendrick, thus replacing the Romantic model of the lonely but spritually superior solitary male poet with a matriarchy in which one woman's voice resonates not only with her immediate personal past, but with the untold stories of generations of women who for various reasons were unable to record in writing the details of their lives.

Other essays such as Margaret Homans' "The Powers of Powerlessness: The Courtships of Elizabeth Barrett and Queen Victoria" concentrate not so much on evolving a feminist reading of a given text, but rather on what it means to be a woman poet. Homans refers to the "pose of abject humility" evident on both sides of the Barrett/Browning correspondence, pointing out that "this apparently gender-neutral strategy has differing resonances for a man's and for a woman writer's authority in Victorian England"; for Browning, self-deprecation may be a pose, but for Barrett it is all too congruous with her role as "lady" (that is, lesser) poet. Homans goes on to link Barrett's downplaying of her powers as poet to Queen Victoria's undermining of certain aspects of her authority as monarch; according to Homans, both women are allowed to keep their power only by adopting a stance of powerlessness. A woman in a position of power is thus never allowed to forget her gender; she is always woman first, and poet or monarch second.

What emerges from *Feminist Measures* is a woman's literary history: from Aemilia Lanyer down through Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Dickinson to Adrienne Rich, Marilyn Hacker and Alice Fulton, women have been writing poetry which explores what it means to be a woman, and to be a woman writing. The various authors represented in the collection help us to lay claim to this heritage by providing us with reading strategies which, while they are by no means tentative, manage to escape being prescriptive: to break the critical silence around women's poetry is only the beginning.

One in the Many

Zailig Pollock

A.M. Klein: The Story of the Poet. U Toronto P $60.00/$25.95

Reviewed by Jon Kertzer

Within the narrow (though generous) confines of A.M. Klein studies, Zailig Pollock's *A.M. Klein: The Story of the Poet* is something of an event. Over the last decade Pollock has established himself as the foremost scholar of Klein's work, and after a well-annotated parade of notebooks, stories, essays, editorials, and an authoritative edition of the poetry, here is a critical study from the person who should know Klein best. In his reviews, he has been politely ruthless in exposing the errors of misinformed critics, notably Miriam Waddington and Solomon Spiro, whom he virtually pickled. He is utterly at home within Klein's intricate literary world, indeed more at home than Klein was himself, since the latter wrote painfully about his anxiety as a poet exiled from his home. Such familiarity gives an air of firm authority to *The Story of the Poet*, especially when it deals with biographical facts, chronology, details of composition, literary models and mentors, and aspects of Jewish thought or *Yiddishkayt*. Even when Pollock admits to being uncertain, his uncertainty seem extremely well-founded. To cite one small example: he observes that the metre of the last line of "These Northern Stars" requires that "mazel tov" be pronounced with an Ashkenazi (eastern European) rather than a

Sephardi (Spanish, North African) accent; but this pronunciation implicitly contradicts the poem's declared desire to renounce exile and return to Zion: "The very language, then, in which Klein envisions his freedom from the bonds of the Diaspora testifies to the continued power of those bonds." Wide knowledge and a good ear alert Pollock to stylistic and thematic tensions that others might miss. Since tensions of this sort are "at the heart of his best writing," Pollock seeks ways of displaying them, not in order to resolve their antagonism but to give them full play. From that play emerges a portrait of the artist as "Jewish modernist."

A Jewish modernist is an ambiguous beast worthy of Dr. Seuss, and the problem is to reconcile its conflicting appetites. Pollock's solution is extremely neat, so neat in fact, that he occasionally mistrusts his own scheme. A single story runs through Klein's writing, in which the creative, alienated artist seeks meaning, value and community amid the chaos of personal experience and the barbarity of modern life. Every poem, tale and essay is an episode in a visionary quest conducted through language and tradition for "the One in the Many," a quest through which the poet would become the very breath of his—the artist is always male—people. Despite hopeful moments, the quest fails because the "curse of history" nullifies all human effort by making meaning, value and community torment rather than sustain each other. History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as parody, and finally as nightmare. This is the story of Klein's writing viewed as a single work. It also happens to be the story of Spinoza's life, of modern man, of Jewish history as Klein tells it, and of his own literary career, which ended in silence. It is even the story of Pollock's *The Story of the Poet.* The fact that the story recurs everywhere indicates that he has devised his own critical version of "the One in the Many." He trusts in a dominant, unifying theme even though, ironically, that theme is the poet's failure to achieve a unified vision. In effect, Pollock succeeds where Klein fails by incorporating his failure into the story.

Pollock is aware of this irony and periodically confesses that his scheme is really an illusion, a handy fiction that "at least has the virtue of corresponding to the vision of the One in the Many which Klein's story of the poet unfolds." I am not sure that the correspondence is always a virtue, although I admit that it keeps Pollock intimately attuned to Klein's poetic reflexes. Consequently, while I admire his analysis of the poems (The studies of "Pulver," "Portrait" and "Rocking Chair" are terrific), and I would not dare to carp at his Jewish scholarship for fear of being pickled myself, I suspect that his critical framework forces him to make the same discoveries again and again, whereas some of his best observations occur when he manages to step outside of his favourite story. For example, Klein presents history as pain and chaos. It is an enemy, a curse, a litany of suffering to be transcended by a "unifying Jewish tradition" which is "continuous" and "timeless." But a litany is not really history. In other words, Klein sees history in ahistorical terms, and this may be one reason why his vision of community fails, because communities, and the traditions sustaining them, are inescapably historical in nature. Klein's portrait of Israel is pastoral, biblical, mystical, but never of a modern state in which Jews can find a home. His nostalgic portrait of Quebec does acknowledge historical reality, but only as a threat, never as an opportunity. He longs to transform "the stutter of history into the music of tradition," but he lacks a secure religious faith that could orchestrate temporal chaos. If the "One" is not God, then what moral, rational or aesthetic principle is exalted enough to subdue the vicious "Many"? When the modern substitutes for religion—

art, politics, love—fail to satisfy him, Klein turns for inspiration to *Yiddishkayt* and Zionism; but paradoxically, as Pollock shows nicely, both are historical movements that enmesh him in the very history he wants to surmount. Similarly, the traditions of Jewish ethics, piety and mysticism on which he draws are inescapably social in character; they too drive him "back into the social world from which his long journey into the interior has taken him."

This vicious circle suggests a pattern that does not correspond to the progressive story of the poet, although it might be a chapter in the story of modernism, Jewish and otherwise. It also leads me to wonder what lordly "One," what hermeneutic or psychological principle, is secure enough to enfold Pollock's own critical retelling of Klein's untidy story.

Maps and Meanings

Graham Huggan

Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction. U Toronto P $40.00.

Reviewed by Axel Knoenagel

Maps are among the oldest human devices to represent a reality and thus to define it. Cartography is, however, like any other attempt at mimesis, not a neutral enterprise but one influenced by individual perspectives and intentions. As a consequence of their modes of production and distribution, maps have traditionally partaken of the discourses of domination and Eurocentrism.

In his study, Graham Huggan examines the roles that maps—real or imagined—perform in contemporary fiction from English Canada, Quebec, and Australia, literatures that he perceives as separate bodies moving toward a post-colonial stance and consequently in need of emancipated maps. Maps are expressions of given power structures and, Huggan argues, "the metaphoric function of maps in literature is addressed first and foremost to the issue of how the land is *controlled*" (emphasis in original). From this and other "principles for a literary cartography" Huggan derives his methodology: "The map's function as a metaphor of structure suggests that the constitutive analyses of semiotics may be usefully combined with the deconstructive practices of post-structural criticism to provide a methodology for the identification and critical assessment of maps and mapping strategies in literary texts." Huggan mostly contrasts texts from different geographic origins, but only in the first interpretative chapter does he relate texts from all three regions: Patrick White's *Voss*, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, and Hubert Aquin's *Neige noir*, all of which "can arguably be seen as a watershed between the 'modern' and 'contemporary' periods of literary cartography."

Maps are by nature conservative since they "construct precisely detailed but narrowly conceived models of the world which are incapable of accommodating temporal flux." The decolonizing literatures and cultures of English Canada, Quebec, and Australia therefore need new maps, Huggan argues, maps that operate "as a vehicle for the reorganization of space which permit the writer to invent and explore 'new territories', or to reassess more familiar places and his/her own relation to them." Huggan creates several pairs of novels that use the map topos subversively from a non-empowered perspective and with an emancipatory intention. The common basis for the different perspectives is provided by gender (Nicole Brossard, Margaret Atwood, Janette Turner Hospital, Marion Campbell), mixed heritage (David Malouf and Clark Blaise), cultural diversity (Joy Kogawa and C.J. Koch), myth (Jack Hodgins and Antonine Maillet) and the native experience (Rudy Wiebe and Krim

Benterrak). Huggan sees these and several other authors working toward a "cartography of difference [which] celebrates the heterogeneous nature of post-colonial societies whose acknowledgement of a multiplicity of cultural codes, influences and relations provides a means of out-manoeuvring the predominantly dualistic patterns of influence and response that characterize a European colonial heritage." Huggan's analysis is generally interesting and thought-provoking, but at times it appears far-fetched and superficial. The question remains, for example, why of all possible texts to represent the map topos in Canadian literature about the Native experience Huggan chose Rudy Wiebe's *Playing Dead.*

Focusing exclusively on texts of the 1970s and 1980s written by authors with an awareness of theoretical issues, it is no surprise that Huggan finds contemporary literature in English Canada, Quebec, and Australia corroborating his own deconstructive approach: "The multiplication of spatial references in contemporary Canadian and Australian writing has resulted not only in an increased range of regional and international locations, but also in a series of 'territorial disputes' which pose a challenge to the self-acknowledging 'mainstreams' of metropolitan culture, to the hegemonic tendencies of patriarchal and ethnocentric discourses, and to the homogeneity assumed and/or imposed by colonialist rhetoric. . . . The map operates instead as a locus of 'productive dissimilarity': productive in the sense that the provisional connections of cartography enact a process of perpetual transformation which in turn stresses the transitional nature of post-colonial discourse." Huggan makes his points quite well, but like any thematic study, *Territorial Disputes* is in frequent danger of selecting its material in such a way that it does not always do justice to the entire text at hand. The cursory nature of several analyses as well as the relative brevity of the study (155 pages of text for a massive body of novels) indicates that Huggan discusses a topic that is still evolving as the Canadian and Australian literatures are developing their post-colonial identities.

Voices of South Asian Women

Nurjehan Aziz, Editor
Her Mother's Ashes and Other Stories by South Asian Women in Canada and the United States.
TSAR $15.95

Reviewed by Pamela McCallum

The stories collected in *Her Mother's Ashes* bring together a varied group of writings by South Asian women living in North America. In her introduction Arun Prabha Mukherjee cautions that "we must guard against the homogenizing tendencies of much Western scholarship which speaks of 'the third world woman' or 'the South Asian woman' as though these terms denoted actual, existing entities whose characteristics could be quantified and differentiated." While it would be misleading to generalize about this very diverse collection of stories, it is possible to say that each writer grapples with relationships which cut across national and cultural boundaries. What is readily apparent is that the stories represent women whose lives dramatize an uneasy interaction among ethnic, generational, national and religious affiliations. In various and challenging ways the writers in *Her Mother's Ashes* articulate overlapping cultural, historical and personal allegiances which are negotiated in the narratives, and which shape the experiences of women whose migrations take them across the boundaries of several cultures.

Perhaps these cultural tensions are nowhere so clearly represented than in the stories which explore the problematic sta-

tus of gay sexuality. In Farida Karodia's story, "Crossmatch," a young actress, Sushila, the rebellious, wilful daughter of the family, returns from England to visit her parents in South Africa. Initially at least, the 'crossmatch' of the title appears to be her parents' efforts to interest her in a young man who turns out to be, as she puts it, "very sweet and . . . also very gay," another migrant who finds teaching in California more fulfilling than respecting his parents' hopes for a traditional marriage. But as the story unfolds it becomes increasingly apparent that more than one crossmatch exists: a sister, who is the compliant daughter, has dutifully accepted a marriage with a man who neglects her. The traditional society has provided no haven for her sister, yet Sushila's acceptance of an inter-racial affair threatens to drive a final wedge between her and her mother. More stark in its bleak episodes of violence is Feroza Jussawalla's "AIDSwallah," which recounts the death of Rohinton (Ronnie) a gay Parsi man who contracted AIDS while living abroad, and the ensuing protests over his family's attempt to give him traditional Parsi funeral rites. Throughout the story Jussawalla stresses the complicated and often tense relationship between those within the Parsi community and those who have left: the narrator "has kept the faith for all these years in an even more foreign and distant land," but is driven from the holy agiary because she has married an American, despite a priest's assurance that she will be welcome. The verbal abuse she encounters, however, pales beside the reaction to Ronnie's death when the community insists that the body be burned to stop the spread of AIDS and attacks the Parsi temple. It is a fine piece of writing, powerful in both its representation of the general misunderstandings of AIDS infection and in its parody of the western world's construction of the disease in racist cultural fantasies which locate its origins in the third world.

Other stories engage the experiences of women whose immigration to a strange society penetrates every detail of their daily lives. Himani Bannerji's 'On a Cold Day' opens with the startling and surrealistic suicide: on a bitter winter morning a woman leaps from the balcony of a highrise apartment to the streets below. Among those who first arrive at the scene of her death are Mr. Abdul Jalal, the owner of a nearby store, and Debbie Barton, a young Bengali immigrant (Devika Bardhan is the name she has anglicized) on her way to her job as a cashier. Their ensuing conversation over coffee at a small table in Mr. Jalal's shop—his questions about her home and family, her answers, tentative at first, later less self-conscious, his own anxieties for his son—opens up a space for human contact and community which brings a moment of warmth to the city streets. It is from this brief encounter that Debbie's striking and unexpected gesture as she leaves for her workplace constructs affiliations that link her with both the dead woman and with Mr. Jalal. 'On a Cold Day' is a politically subtle story, but it offers the crucial possibility of alliances which traverse nationalities, gender and generations.

Many of the stories in *Her Mother's Ashes* will challenge western readers with their attention to details and minutae of daily life in unfamiliar cultures; I often found myself puzzling over references (what is a gharara? who was Fatima Jinnah? and so on). Mukherjee's introductory essay comments that the stories' capacities to make readers aware of the gaps and silences in their knowledge of South Asian societies and cultures offers special classroom opportunities for students to engage in colloborative learning as they assist each other in deciphering the texts. Such openness and attentiveness to the details of another culture certainly holds out possibities for increased understanding. In the context of this vigilance to a culture's uniqueness I am struck

by Mukherjee's emphasis that the collection deliberately seeks to range across national boundaries, to avoid the tired arguments about "how 'Americans' are different from 'Canadians.'" There is no doubt that North America, with its common history as settler colonies, its systemic racisms, its integrated economies and culture industries, can take on the appearance of a monolithic unity. I cannot help wondering, however, if the modalities of specific situations, not grasped as essentialized national identities, but as markers of particular and different histories, are not at work in the experiences of immigrant South Asian women. Does, for instance, the presence in the history of the United States of a strong and ongoing black civil rights movement construct different oppositional stategies to racism and afford different possibilities of alliances? To ask such a question is not to deny the overlapping histories of the North American continent; rather, it is to seek to locate the particularities of the situations in which the cultural politics of writing intervene. This is only one example of the important questions raised by the stories collected in *Her Mother's Ashes*, a book which readers will find challenging and rewarding.

Dream Roads

Marcel Bélanger
D'où surgi. L'Hexagone $14.95

Gilles Cyr
Songe que je bouge. L'Hexagone $14.95

Reviewed by Constantina Mitchell

Readers of the latest offerings of Marcel Bélanger and Gilles Cyr will undoubtedly be struck by a common element that pervades both works: haunting, ever probing, often hermetic meanders tracing obscure paths briefly glimpsed by the poetic eye. More than views of the poet's quest for self-realization, these are renderings of the poem's journey, its unending search for embodiment, its impossible dream of definitiveness.

The nine segments that make up Bélanger's *D'où surgi* are like so many inroads, each leading not to a fixed destination but rather to the recognition of the precariousness of all destinations. It is immediately apparent that the mention of a distinct time and place in the opening lines of the first segment, entitled *L'esprit du lieu*, paradoxically serves to undermine the authoritativeness of such markings since it is coupled with a sense of puzzlement and uncertainty that will persist throughout the entire collection: "toi / mais d'où viens-tu et où / tes pas / de Berthier à Karnak / quelle voie s'invente / est-elle même / depuis ce 5 juin 1943." This equivocality is echoed in the final segment, aptly entitled *opus incertum*, where it is transferred from the external *tu* to the internal *je*, the wound of evanescence to be borne secretly, indelibly: "il y a—mais comme n'y étant—l'espace d'un manque pas un vide cependant mais l'envers d'une présence comme un appel d'air et s'y formulant longuement la question: de quoi demain serai-je composé de quelles cellules en laquelle séjournerai-je pour combien de temps." As the title of the fifth segment suggests, all is at once "même et autre."

Oneiric moods overlay the markedly architectural, geographic and anatomical imagery dominating Bélanger's circumnavigation of the written and spoken word. In *Ici même*, the sensual beauty of a reclining adolescent embodies the poem itself, the bed (*lit* is here an artful play on the verb *lire*) providing "amoureusement les marges." One of the most powerful constellations of this affective-thematic blending appears in the penultimate segment, the stylistically varied *ainsi*: "le pas à pas ne se superpose plus au mot à mot d'un texte que les chevilles rédigent / un journal de voyage où l'on parle de ravins franchis d'un

bond et de bouts de phrases en guise de passerelles / surtout que le pied gauche efface au fur et à mesure ce qu'écrit le pied droit." While this association of language with wandering, dispossession and, ultimately, effacement may not be entirely innovative, Bélanger's particular focus on the act of writing sets up its own fresh *mise en abyme*. One is left with the lasting impression, expressed in this work's final pages, that "les lieux importaient moins que les routes qui y conduisaient par d'innomrables détours."

Gilles Cyr's *Songe que je bouge* brings together revised and, in some cases, augmented versions of previously published works. As the poet explains in an end note to the volume, *La connaissance*, *Myrthios* and *Corrélats* appeared earlier in art editions while other excerpts first saw the light in various journals and anthologies. Each of the five poems displays Cyr's preference for sparseness, both stylistic and thematic. The short, at times monosyllabic, lines set within the wide margins of the page are a fitting reflection of the whiteness that penetrates these poetic territories. A nocturnal snowfall and the attendant sensation of mutability envelop the *je* of *La connaissance*, the collection's first poem: "Il neige quand je sors / ... / je change aux flocons / change encore / pendant l'interruption." By contrast, *Myrthios* evokes the rocky terrain of a white-washed Cretan village while *Dans cette zone*, *Corrélats* and *Habitat dispersé* continue the achromatic leitmotif through images of birchtree forests, retreating galaxies and clouded skies. Cyr's writing exhibits an almost romantic vision of nature as an analogue to human emotions. There is of course little in the way of romantic elaboration or hyperbole, ellipsis and fragmentation being, in fact, the overriding stylistic traits. This is not to imply that the works lack fullness where imagery and form are concerned. On the contrary, while each poem is unique, a sense of visual lushness as well as of dramatic, albeit esoteric, progression are common denominators. Vague reminiscences of Verlaine emerge from this geography of hesitation, this poetization of the invisible.

As is the case with the universe Marcel Bélanger presents in *D'où surgi*, Cyr's is in eternal flux, ebbing and flowing, proliferating and diminishing before a hesitant, often bewildered observer. The incorporation of the motif of inquiry, cardinal to Bélanger's world view, takes on even greater significance with regard to Cyr's. "Que est-ce que la neige?"; "comment-es-tu là?"; "pourquoi des feuilles / et sous des pierres?"; "Où trouver?"; "il pleut ou pas?"; "Qui se traîne: quoi d'autre?" are but foretastes of the profoundly telling line that surfaces in *Corrélats*: "Je demande quoi penser." With *Songe que je bouge* Gilles Cyr has created an alluring work of fragile beauty.

Simple Facts

James Mackay

Vagabond of Verse. Mainstream Publishing, £20.00/$39.95

Reviewed by Peter J. Mitham

Robert W. Service once observed, "The best autobiographers handle themselves with discretion." Accordingly, he maintained a secrecy about himself throughout his career, preferring to let biographers chronicle his personal life in intimate detail following his death. *Vagabond of Verse*, by Glasgow writer and Burns scholar James Mackay, penetrates the shroud that Service drew about himself, but it ultimately leaves the reader wanting more.

Mackay triumphs in skilfully reworking Service's two autobiographical volumes, *Ploughman of the Moon* (1945) and *Harper of Heaven* (1948), into a coherent whole that allows Service to speak for himself. Furthermore, Mackay provides a detailed

account of Service's life as a youth in late-nineteenth-century Scotland, and illuminates his portrait with letters, diaries, and manuscripts still in the possession of the Service family. Many of these were not consulted by previous biographers, and offer a novel glimpse of Service. *Vagabond of Verse* also includes sixteen leaves of black and white photos.

At 416 pages, however, the book may seem padded, especially considering the copious extracts Mackay makes from Service's autobiography. Although Mackay discusses Service in the context of inter-war Europe, with its rising facist and communist movements and vibrant literary scene, his narrative is too close to Service's own. He details Service's literary liaisons in Paris and Monte Carlo, but he does not engage with the intellectual currents of the era. Although Service expressed his most profound political thoughts in the verse he wrote following the Second World War, Mackay barely explores this portion of Service's career.

Equally disconcerting for the scholar is the lack of explicit references for the sources Mackay uses to clear up long-standing myths and biographical inaccuracies perpetuated (and perpetrated) by the late Carl Klinck in *Robert Service: A Biography* (1976) and G. Wallace Lockhart in *On the Trail of Robert Service* (1991). One is unable to double-check Mackay's own work.

Mackay refrains, for example, from challenging Service's account of his early publications in Scottish periodicals. He presents one of these fugitive poems, "Her Part and Mine" (1890), but otherwise leaves the reader unsure of whether any others actually appeared. He repeatedly notes that Service is an unreliable source at the best of times, and his facile acceptance of Service's claims here and elsewhere undermines the reader's faith in his thoroughness.

The Edinburgh *Scotsman* remarked, *Vagabond of Verse* is "not inspired nor inspirational." Mackay gives readers "the simple facts of the case," making his work a welcome addition to Canadian literary biography, but this same predilection for points of fact also succeeds in dispelling a great deal of the fancy in which Service revelled as he wrote his life's story.

Geography of Nowhere

Trevor Ferguson
The Fire Line. HarperCollins $25.00

Reviewed by Nancy Pagh

With his fifth novel, Montreal writer Trevor Ferguson returns to the landscape of British Columbia's North Coast, the setting for his *High Water Chants* (1977). Most of *The Fire Line* takes place in what Reed Kitchen, the central character, calls "God's country otherwise known as nowhere"—the (so-called) perpetually wet and interminably cool territory near Prince Rupert. Flanking the bulk of the novel with a drama played out among the flames and char of a forest fire near Prince George, Ferguson creates a story of mythic and darkly humorous contrasts. "For we live," Reed Kitchen explains near the end of the novel, "upon a world atrocious in its pain and fabulous in its spectacle." That is the geography of *The Fire Line.*

Reed Kitchen, a career railroad worker with "sub par circulation," claims he is seduced into accepting a transfer to the rain country by the promise of subtropical climes. Riding the artery of the continent to "the end of the earth," he soon finds he was duped about the climate and that his reputation as a jabbermouth has preceded him. Train crews have tormented the men of B & B Gang 4 (a stationary crew rebuilding the Green River Bridge) with warnings about Reed Kitchen:

> He was a chronic yakker who did not know when to shut up and he could not

> voluntarily shut up. Bind him. Gag him. Drop him aboard a freight train. Ship him Parcel Express across the continent and he'd be back talking a blue streak. The word was out that the new man would drive them mad and mad they would become in the confines of their camp in the depth of forest and winter's dark prevail.

Joining B & B Gang 4, Kitchen enters the rather stereotypical world of the ordinary Western novel, where women, Indians, and Asian immigrants are marginal, if occasionally provocative characters. The workers, transients, and members of the local crime ring are all essentially good- or evil-hearted, with the possible exception of Yellowhead Don McBain, an ambiguous railroad detective who forces Kitchen to spy for him.

The success of Ferguson's novel lies in his vision of an erudite, wiry, potentially insane and extremely unlikely hero who manages to walk felicitously through that frontier, and in Ferguson's precise, original, and highly entertaining use of language. Reed Kitchen's perverse addiction to storytelling, pontificating, and just plain mouthing off is a consistent source of pleasure to the reader and energy to the novel, and even the simplest passages of description are lively and clever in Ferguson's hands; a forest fire, he writes, "sashayed down to the river in its arrogant wigglyassed conceit."

The Fire Line concerns the crossings between many lines—honor and depravity, sanity and insanity, and perhaps most important, myth and reality. Reed Kitchen, presented with a ticket to nowhere at the beginning of this tale, comes to confess to his friend Van Loon: "I wish to cross a line also. Into the human realm." Ferguson has skillfully created a hero who stands with one foot in reality and the other in myth. With a style that moves quickly and easily from mimicked Biblical discourse ("He spoke after that in a comical voice that made all men laugh and even he did smile with the sound of himself although smiling was hurtful to him. There was peace the second night") to hyper-realistic scenes of violence à la Sam Peckinpah, Ferguson offers an engrossing, witty, somewhat disturbing, and well-crafted book about the landscapes of the dispossessed.

Stage Voices

Cynthia Zimmerman, ed.
Taking the Stage: Selections from Plays by Canadian Women. Playwrights Canada n.p.

Joan MacLeod
The Hope Slide/Little Sister. Coach House $14.95

Reviewed by Ruth Panofsky

Taking the Stage is the result of an ambitious project undertaken in 1993 by the Women's Caucus of the Playwright's Union: an anthology that reveals "the diversity of women's playwriting in Canada," its variety of forms, subjects, and theatrical styles. The intention was to present the breadth of contemporary writing, and women from across the country were invited to submit their work. The Caucus solicited material from new as well as established writers, from members and non-members of the Playwright's Union of Canada, from women of all backgrounds, cultures, and colours. A project coordinator, a collective of five regional editors, and Senior Editor Cynthia Zimmerman selected from among the 125 submissions they received. *Taking the Stage*, the work of 45 playwrights, reflects the spirit of initiative in which the project was conceived and confirms its editors' "commitment to theatrical, emotional, and geographical range."

With few exceptions, the pieces included here were written and produced in the nineties and vary in theme and theatrical style. Women's issues, both personal and political, are foregrounded in these selections that include characters from all stages of life, including childhood, adolescence, adult-

hood, and old age. The many roles and relationships of women are examined in excerpts that "range from the performance piece to the traditional script, from the realistic to the symbolic and experimental."

The collection includes six sections: "Maximizing Attitude"; "Revisioning Time"; "Revisioning Place"; "Connecting/ Disconnecting"; "Looking In/Looking Out"; and "Personal/ Political." These categories hope to draw connections among the disparate pieces. In the first section, for example, Margaret Clarke posits a relationship between Hamlet's mother and his sweetheart. In *Gertrude and Ophelia*, a pregnant Ophelia seeks the counsel of Gertrude, who ignores her situation and shows concern only for her son. In section two, Joan Givner imagines an exchange between Mazo de la Roche and her cousin, Caroline Clement. In the excerpt from *Mazo and Caroline*, the latter is the stronger character who assumes control of their lives when de la Roche's *Jalna* wins the *Atlantic Monthly* prize of $10,000 US.

In section three, Betty Quan parodies the Nancy Drew mystery novels for girls in her serio-comic *Nancy Chew Enters the Dragon*. In Quan's treatment, Nancy Chew is accused by "good cop" Bruce Lee of participating in a robbery. Section four includes an excerpt from Rachel Wyatt's *Getting Out*, which records, with painful clarity, the marital strife between a working wife and her unemployed husband. Eleanor Albanese's *The Body Image Problem* in section five presents Mari's struggle and determination to be thin and attractive to the boys at her school. And in the final section, ten-year-old Lucy in Judith Thompson's *Pink* mourns her former nurse, Nellie. Having racially insulted Nellie in the heat of an argument, Lucy feels guilty and responsible for her beloved nurse's death.

In its attempt to provide a broad picture and its inclusion of new material—as the editors envisioned, the work of experienced playwrights appears alongside that of new dramatists—*Taking the Stage* is valuable primarily as an introduction to contemporary theatre by women in Canada. As an introduction, however, it has limitations. Despite an attempt to organize the material in sections, for example, the categories offer little information to readers who are faced with a vast, eclectic collection. Of the headings, "Connecting/Disconnecting" and "Personal/Political" are the most appropriate and connote the similarities among several pieces. Regrettably, each excerpt is too brief to provide more than a glimpse of the larger play. As a reader, I would have preferred fewer but longer pieces. Moreover, there are typographical errors throughout the text, unfortunate evidence of poor proofreading.

Taking the Stage includes an excerpt from *Little Sister*, Joan MacLeod's first play for young people. The complete work, along with *The Hope Slide*, have been issued in one convenient volume by Coach House Press. *Little Sister* explores the private lives of five adolescents—three girls and two boys. Katie, an anorexic, is the catalyst for much of the play's action. Katie is coming to terms with her parents' divorce, having moved from Toronto to Vancouver, attending a new school, living apart from her father who now has a girlfriend, and her altered relationships with her mother and brothers. Bella, Tracey, Jay, and Jordan are variously affected by Katie's hospitalization after she collapses in school. As Katie withdraws into her private world and Bella obsesses over her weight, as Tracey and Jay engage in a gender-imbalanced sexual battle and as Jordan faces unpopularity, *Little Sister* strikes some poignant chords. In this sensitive and engaging drama, written in adolescent vernacular, MacLeod raises compelling issues for all readers and viewers, regardless of their age.

While *The Hope Slide* also explores topical issues, it adopts a more experimental

style than *Little Sister*. The play is as much concerned with our unrecorded history and the AIDS crisis, as it is an exploration of morality and idealism. As Glynis Leyshon states in her preface, the work "explores three profoundly different realities: a past, a present and an entirely poetic world of dramatic 'testaments.'" These levels continually overlap, coming together only at the close of the play. In the "present," middle-aged actress Irene Dickenson is touring central British Columbia with her one-woman show about the Doukhobors. As Irene recalls her youth and is transported into the "past," she relives her idealistic fascination with the province's Doukhobors. A third dramatic level consists of three monologues by three Doukhobor martyrs. By the end of the play—when theatrical images merge to evoke the tragedy of AIDS and a middle-aged woman's moment of self-discovery—it is evident that these monologues are actually Irene's one-woman show. Through the use of theatrical effect, MacLeod moves the reader toward compassion for Irene and an understanding of the complex issues that form the substance of her drama. *The Hope Slide*—which won the 1993 Chalmers Awards—is eloquent, passionate, and finally hopeful, a welcome combination in this age of cynicism.

Inside Diasporas

Makeda Silvera, ed.
The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature. Sister Vision $24.95

Joseph Pivato
Echo: Essays on Other Literatures. Guernica $18.00

Reviewed by Donna Palmateer Pennee

Silvera's is a rich collection of indigenous and diasporic voices and positions, useful bibliographies, and wonderful photographs, all in a pleasing format and structure that alternates interviews with essays. The collection comprises comparative knowledges and critical strategies, derived from comparative (because diasporic) experience of language and place, and the imbrications of these with the discourses of race, class, gender, erotic preference, nation, colonialism, multiculturalism, family, state, religion, and education. Personal experience—of coming to writing, of racism, sexism, classism, immigration, of residential schools, university training and teaching, of publishing and reviewing in Canada, and so on—is focal point and category for the more than twenty women writers represented here (the one male critic is more concerned with *ars poetica*). Seldom, however, does experience remain uninterrogated or is it essentialized: in this volume, experience produces theory rather than is opposed to it. Many of the contributors implicitly erase the distinction between theory and practice and between creative and analytical work, but some contributors also insist on their differences (in, for example, the talk between Silvera, Bannerji, and Brand). Others explicitly integrate the personal, political, critical, and theoretical: the most successful pieces in this light are Rita Wong's "Jumping on hyphens" and Saloni Mathur's "bell hooks Called me a 'Woman of Colour'."

At moments, the interviews seem less successful than most of the essays, perhaps because so many of them are conducted by Silvera who uses a series of more or less set questions inflected toward the autobiographical and intimate. However, the near-repetitive structure actually produces useful and important counterpoints in the text as different voices enter into it (or even resist it, as in Brand's case), as the autobiographical is alternately rejected, disguised, revisioned, or embraced, and as the public and representative role of the writer/critic/teacher/intellectual is encouraged, risked, debated, enlarged. Silvera

clearly wants these voices and careers to be "role models" for a new generation of "women of colour" (however debated both those phrases are), to be visible in more empowering sites than the sightings of "visible minorities," to be legitimated and disseminated through the authority of print, performance, and communal and academic reception. Here, Arun Mukherjee's essay, "Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Literature and Racial Minority Women," functions as an excellent summary piece for the volume: it is a concentrated, rigorously argued examination of the discursive effects of nationalism and other well-worn topics (two solitudes, topos-determinism, birth right-essentialism, and so on) in Canadian history and Canadian literary history, not to dismiss nationalism but to re-think it positively in light of challenges brought to it by people with other national experiences, other modes of political and historical constituencies and imaginings—possibilities for *rapprochement* of heterogeneities, promoted and understood as such through education.

I wish that I could be as celebratory about Pivato's collection of (for the most part) previously published essays (with little revision or editing), although I did derive a great deal of pleasure from the tone and spirit of affirmation that resonates through the volume. Pivato's first priority is to record the formation of an Italian-Canadian writing community through its common heritage, its networking, and its establishment of a corpus for creative and scholarly work. Indeed, his project has many parallels with the early stages of second-wave feminism in North America and with the second-wave establishment of a canon of Canadian Literature: thus, the strategy of most of the essays is to record names and titles, chart principal themes, make readable an ethnic dimension of a national literature, and offer close readings of texts written in more than one language and of translation as both a linguistic and experiential matter. As such, the volume is a useful primer on Italian-Canadian writing, but, despite occasional references to more recent feminist and post-colonial studies, the essays lack the discursive and theorized methods and insights that would make them more readily useful to other writers of/on ethnicity.

In fact, the subtitle is rather misleading since Pivato's focus is primarily to chart the existence and thematics of Italian-Canadian writing. Only one essay offers any sustained analysis of ethnic literature other than Italian-Canadian; a few stock titles (by, for example, Wiseman, Marlyn, Richler, Wiebe, Kriesel, Kogawa, Grove) appear elsewhere in the volume, but there is no consistent or theorized attempt to articulate what constitutes "ethnicity" or "other" literatures, what problematics emerge when ethnicity as subjugated knowledge and experience is underread in a Canadian-national discourse, what opportunities emerge for the re-thinking of nation and ethnicity as categories of literary definition, evaluation, and reception when, for example, on one page an Italian-Canadian writer is not received as Canadian (in Canada) and on another he is not received as Italian (in Italy). Given the essays' origins in the experience and recognition of cultural difference, the volume surprisingly homogenizes and essentializes both ethnic and "Canadian" writing, referring to "the emotional Italian" and "the rational Canadian," "the Australian reader," and Canadian readers as always anglophone or francophone. The near-absence of historical detail about immigration (as both event and policy)—confined to a few pages in one of the middle essays and repeated in fewer pages in a later essay—seems to indicate a reluctance to move beyond thematics and recuperation to materialist and discourse-based scholarship. When Pivato quotes Trinh, Spivak, and

Bhabha in the conclusion, their comments are merely inserted into the essay; they make no difference to the volume except to point up what it has left unexamined.

A very different volume might have emerged had the conclusion been the introduction and all of the essays re-worked from that point. Without the deployment of the theorized insights quoted at the end, the essays are not specifically an analysis of "[c]ultural difference as a process that establishes meaning" as Bhabha recommends; they are instead an implicit plea for recognition of "cultural diversity" where "culture [i]s [only] an object of empirical knowledge," where Italian-Canadian literature can simply be added to CanLit. The limits of the supplement as add-on and the insights of supplement as *pharmakon* are articulated very clearly in Sneja Gunew's excellent comparative Foreword to the volume. Between the Foreword and the Conclusion, important archival work is begun, but without revision and editing of dated essays to eliminate repetition, and without rethinking of commonplaces about forms of dominance in CanLit, the volume's contribution to scholarship remains limited.

Over the Years

Christopher Wiseman
Remembering Mr. Fox. Sono Nis $12.95

Ralph Gustafson, ed.
Collected Poems, Volume III. Sono Nis $24.95

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser

Remembering Mr. Fox is Christopher Wiseman's seventh collection of poetry. As the first word of its title indicates, this is a work that looks to the past, its author seeking there materials with which he might replenish and also comprehend the present, both his own and that of his readers. In this he succeeds admirably. The forty-one elegies, meditations, and occasional poems that make up this book are meticulously crafted and inspired. They reflect a yearning for what was and what might have been, always avoiding the extremes of maudlin nostalgia on the one hand and stolid historicity on the other. It is memory itself in these poems that grows preeminent, acquiring its own reality from the things remembered. We recognize the compelling significance of words as constituents of memory, the worlds therein created as vital as the supposedly irrevocable past from which they are engendered.

To look to the past as a poet is not necessarily to recreate history, but rather to explore the impact of the idea of the past upon our memories and emotions. The poems in this collection turn upon a variety of emotions: outrage, joy, bewilderment, mirth, longing, sorrow, affection, and many others whose shades are subtly and effectively evoked. Words on old postcards blossom into a delightfully intricate anthology of Edwardian portraits that skilfully and sympathetically mingle past and present, text and image. The compelling landscape of England's Yorkshire coast, particularly the town of Scarborough and its environs, figures strongly in many of the poems, as do other settings more distant (or closer to home, depending on the reader's perspective). Born and educated in England and a resident of western Canada for over a quarter century, the poet serves as an essential bridge between the old world and the new, both temporally and spatially, providing some interesting connections between such poems as "Anne Brontë's Grave—the Flowers" and "Cemetery near Beiseker, Alberta" which evoke distinctive images yet strangely complementary emotions.

The dead are here in this book, oddly alive in many ways, as are the old and the once-forgotten. The poet's respect for the dignity—let us say the sanctity—of the old

and the ignored, is a theme that is introduced in the title poem when he discovers to his wrath that the 92-year-old Mr. Fox has been seated towards the wall lest his palsy embarrass the other diners. This theme recurs in various forms, most notably in "Retreat" wherein an old soldier finds himself half a century after the war engaged in a bewildering retreat of a different sort on the Scarborough strand. But it is not only the old, and not only men, who are so treated. A variety of individual characters are portrayed throughout the collection with sensitivity and compassion.

Our ties to the past can constrain and confine us. They can also, subject to the reshaping and reforming forces of poetic memory, liberate us into freshly perceived realities. As the poet notes:

> Perhaps I know better now what poetry's for—
> Small words pulling, tugging, trying to join us,
> Words circling round our gatherings and passings.

Wiseman's "small words" do indeed accomplish these things. And at their best, they do more than circle: they clothe the human experience with the dignity and the joy it was meant to have, but of which, all too frequently, it is tragically stripped.

To appreciate the significance of Ralph Gustafson's *Collected Poems Volume III*, we need to place it in the broader context of his poetic career. In 1987 his *Collected Poems*, Volumes I and II were published, a substantial compilation of his earlier works. In many cases, such a publication could have signalled the end of a long and distinguished poetic career. Yet in that same year Mr. Gustafson also published *Winter Prophecies* about which I noted in a contemporary review, that whatever else was indicated by the title, it did not necessarily prophesy an end to the poetic creativity of a poet approaching his ninth decade. Indeed, some half dozen years later, the present volume brings together poems from four books published between 1987 and 1992: the aforementioned *Winter Prophecies*; *The Celestial Corkscrew and other Strategies*; *Shadows in the Grass*; and *Configurations at Midnight*. (His most recent book of poetry, *Tracks in the Snow* is not included.)

The broad scope of Gustafson's learning, his due sense of history, his artistic consciousness, are displayed to great advantage throughout this collection. Gustafson's powers of synthesis are remarkable, his poetry reflecting an acute and perceptive awareness of the significant shaping influences of western civilization. Art, religion, literature, and especially music figure strongly as poetic subjects throughout the collection, and their intricate interrelatedness forms the basis for many successful poems. The relationship between music and poetry has always been a favorite theme of Gustafson's; the potency of that relationship is quite evident in the synesthetic tones of these lines from *Configurations at Midnight*:

> Music itself,
> A burst of broken light centred
> And splayed in a thousand shatterings of coloured
> Vision, impressions on impressions—

Many of his earlier poems, already reprinted in previous editions, are also here as well. "Figurations," his witty and inspired series of portraits of fellow poets, adapted to their distinctive styles, is happily included in this edition. Many quotable gems are here, particularly the concluding lines on the subject of W. C. Williams' famous red wheel barrow poem:

> I was struck dumb
> anything modern
> could last
> so long

What ultimately holds the entire collection together is the tremendously powerful yet

graceful voice of the poet. A sense of transcendent optimism emerges above the inevitable ironies and paradoxes which such an overview of western civilization must necessarily invite. The sense of personal and universal apocalypse which fills the following lines is subtly balanced against the sum of the poetry that precedes it:

> I am next to midnight,
> Almost I hear the bell toll—
> Assurance I could do without.
> I have no answer, faith the warrant
> Of intransigence I would not leave.
> Sensation claims me, I leave my love.

The negation implied in the fourth line, for example, is belied by the the strongest answer of the collection: the poetic fact itself.

On the technical side, *Collected Poems Volume III* is notable for the revisions Gustafson has made to many poems. Not all of the four books are reprinted in their entirety. Words, lines, and often whole sections of poems have been reworked in the present edition. As the most recent text over which the poet has exercised his editorial control, this one will no doubt figure strongly in any future editions of his work, but readers would be well repaid by making their own comparisons with the original editions.

Memories Uncovered

Todd Bruce
Jiggers. Turnstone $9.95

Clive Doucet
The Debris of Planets. Black Moss $10.95

Steve Luxton
Iridium. DC Books $24.95/$9.95

Stephen Morrissey
The Compass. Empyreal $10.00

Michael Redhill
Lake Nora Arms. Coach House $12.95

J. A. Wainwright
Landscape and Desire: Poems Selected and New. Mosaic n.p.

Reviewed by Anthony Raspa

It is strange how poetry continues to be vital. Strange because on the surface of everything that absorbs us without, there is no place for it. Strange, too, because in the poetry written by the poets who are with us, we find ourselves. If practising poets in Canada have a common virtue, it is that they call us to order by bringing us face to face with our moral contradictions and our conflicts of sensitivity. The six poets under consideration here are witness to this. If there was no place for poets and their little books of poetry, there would be no place for a part of what we are.

The gamut of emotions, feelings and thoughts that the practising poet in Canada seems to cover represents a kind of reference system for our collective private world. So often this world is a formative past moment that has been catalogued, as it were, in the present. The system of our memories in poetry is like an old style library card-catalogue where you can look up what you want while passing over the entries that for the moment you don't need. You put short pencils and scraps of paper in front of some cards to remember where to go back to them later. In Clive Doucet's *The Debris of Planets* and Stephen Morrissey's *The Compass*, the entry is auto-

biographical, a sometimes fairly close definition of Canadian and québécois people in clearly defined Canadian and québécois places. In Steve Luxton's *Iridium* and Todd Bruce's *Jiggers*, the entry is symbolic, symbolist in the case of *Iridium* and allegorical in the case of *Jiggers*. In J.A. Wainwright's *Landscape and Desire* and Michael Redhill's *Lake Nora Arms*, the entry is post-modernist impressionism, an aspiring successor to abstract art but in words.

With these six books of poetry, we don't laugh very often. But among them, it is autobiography that allows laughter or something close to it most often. Doucet's world in *The Debris of Planets* with its recurrent image of the lion symbolic of the creative poet romping continually through his lines, is full of vignettes of his native Newfoundland. The two planets of his title are his Acadian father and his British war-bride mother; their debris is their son Clive the poet, the fruit of his parents' stellar crash into marriage; and, in the experience of the young poet who came into being in this happily blasted union, "A good drunk/ is a lot like a good mass./ It exalts and comforts,/ but without the hangover of virtue." Rare surely must be the Canadian poet who can make a Newfie paradox memorable and amusing in serious verse. The laughter is less evident in Morrissey's *The Compass*. Perhaps the reading of this autobiographical poem might inspire one to describe it as an account of the fall of the house of middle-Westmount in Montreal where the almost very rich of Quebec's Anglos once lived. Morrissey writes : "We could have been a dynasty/ . . . had Father's brothers/ pulled together, not lost the tug-of-war/ against death and failure." But if release and relief are part of laughter's background, this long compass narrative, which points the way magnetically to the success of human love, ends happily with three real old-fashioned prayers that Morrissey addresses to a Supreme Maker. If we, who occupy the geographical space that we call Canada, find ourselves in the contradictions of Doucet's Newfie paradoxes, we also discover at least a fraction of our image in the redeemable darkness of Morrissey's *Compass* world.

By contrast to Doucet's and Morrissey's autobiographical flights, Luxton's *Iridium* and Bruce's *Jiggers* explore the aesthetic possibilities of the human condition in the images of verse. If the reader is looking for an entry on traditional beauty in our imaginary library card-catalogue of Canadian poetic experiences, it is with Luxton and Bruce among the six authors under consideration here that he will find it most easily. There is lots more there as well. The iridium of Luxton's title, which sounds like a flower, is actually a chemical element allied to the most precious metal, platinum. Like time that haunts Luxton's lines, iridium resists fusion with other elements that constitute the stuff of human existence: "Time is irretrievable/ like the persuasions of self-love." There are echoes of Luxton's British origins in Vaughan and Traherne in *Iridium* side by side with a superb tribute to the true poetic spirit of an old muse on her porch on de Bullion street in east-end Montreal. The old lady emerges for her first spring-time exit on her balcony as in a rite of re-birth. Unlike the chemical element of Luxton's title, here, for those who know Montreal's east-end porches and staircases, England and Quebec fuse: "Our fresh spring outfits donned/ we earnestly seek her sanction/ for our latest claims to original vision." By contrast, in Bruce's *Jiggers*, our symbolic muse is an articulate sensitive rubby-dub. No Canadian contradiction there. In our card-catalogue of Canadian poetic experiences, you will find him classed under the derelict whom you see in the summer, who disappears in the winter and who sometimes reappears in the spring. Bruce has a strong lyrical sense amid the irreparable damage of a fractured universe. Here is the poet seeking his self:

"When I/ search for you/ breathlessly under/ the river when I/ fear to prepare/ to surface." But the painfully disparate sense-impressions of the poet coalesce in what might be called the anti-syntax of his language. Language is spread helter-skelter all over Bruce's pages, but its form is nevertheless there and it pieces the broken Humpty-Dumpty universe together again: "footfalls on a/ cool October sun/ . . . jiggers on a swing/ in a sand box."

In J.A. Wainwright's *Landscape and Desire* and Michael Redhill's *Lake Nora Arms*, it is not the beholden universe of Luxton's *Iridium* and Bruce's *Jiggers* that is rent asunder and that must be patched up by verse. Rather, the act of poetic vision is itself dismembering of the universe. There is no story here, no allegory, not even a character in nature, in spite of Redhill's Nora. In our card-catalogue of Canadian poetic experience, we would have to look up Wainwright and Redhill under post-modern impressionism, perhaps with a cross-reference to a couple of cards on early Eliot. It cannot be an accident that the covers of both *Lake Nora Arms* and *Landscape and Desire* prefigure modern art, that *Landscape and Desire* identifies its cover painting as by Robert Markle and that Redhill's preface refers us to van Gogh for his impressions of what lies around him. Among the colors of our painter Wainwright, white is the shade of creation: "let me tell you all/ that stuff about the poet/ and the white page/ is just a minor hope/ I figure of speech," and some pages later, "but it was always an empty page/ we knew we'd paint with words." Poetry is the art of painting life white with words, and this principal color on Wainwright's palette is the descriptive probing stick of memory, either with or without references to language, over and over again in his book of verse. In Redhill's *Lake Nora Arms*, time is a recurrent consideration too: "Time elides this world like Old-Word names." Time even serves as an instrument for the consideration of space and for creating equations between nature and the pages of poetry. Perhaps the pivotal poem in this collection is "The Physical World" in which the dissolution of the poet's self in nature is his prelude to his re-creation of it into verse. Matter is conquered by a process of absorption during which something like Lake Nora can be created. And such creations, as in "Nightfall," are the imagined centres for a birth of personal impressions that might be called verse.

What is common to the forms of the verse in all of these six little books is their sense of the lyric. Here, the lyric has no rule of genre whether the poem is autobiographical, symbolist or impressionist. Or rather the one role of lyric as genre is its servitude to meaning. But meaning is taken as idea, belief, moral discovery and aesthetics, and is haunted by a sense of memory. It is memory that so often seems to vitalize the poet as writer. As the words *memory*, *remember* and *photograph* reappear throughout the lines of these volumes, we may ask whether a collective memory is not making itself felt beneath the surface of the poetic experience of the geographical space we call Canada.

What I'm Doing Here

Bronwyn Drainie
My Jerusalem: Secular Adventures in the Holy City
Doubleday $27.95

Mordecai Richler
This Year in Jerusalem. Knopf $27.50

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

Amos Oz has written of the "Jerusalem stillness which can be heard, if you listen for it, even in the noisiest street." Like the famous Jerusalem light, it may take very sensitive instruments to pick up such sublime sensations. To most of us, Jerusalem is a fascinating enigma—constantly in the

news, beloved of Jews, Arabs, evangelists and tourists—a daunting topic for any writer who struggles to record the city's daily life. In recent years, the pace of political change has rendered local wisdom obsolete with startling suddenness. "Wars and victories, inflation and censorship," writes Oz, "Likud and Labor, Eurovision and the Maccabee Tel Aviv basketball team. El Al and the Histadrut are all like shifting sands. Here today and gone tomorrow . . . ."

Mordecai Richler and Bronwyn Drainie both made visits to Jerusalem in the early 1990s, and produced very different accounts of what they saw. Like typical Canadians abroad they managed to cross paths halfway around the world. In *This Year in Jerusalem*, Richler describes a visit he and his wife paid to Drainie. Drainie gives Richler a cameo appearance in *My Jerusalem*, during which he feeds Drainie the most unabashedly honest and funny line she has to report of her two-year long Jerusalem sojourn. As Drainie and her husband, *Globe & Mail* correspondent Patrick Martin, lead Richler to view a Franciscan procession of the cross on the Via Dolorosa, he remarks, "I've spent my entire life trying to avoid people like this. What am I doing here?"

These two authors bring vastly different resources and concerns to their accounts of the long-contested Israeli capital. Drainie describes herself as a "journalist, specializing in cultural matters," and accounts for her preference "not to advertise" her "half-Jewishness" by the fact that she

> had heard stories of North American Jews, especially those with young children, being subjected to extraordinary pressure from religious Jews in Israel to make *aliya*. Since this was out of the question for our family, it was simply easier not to let the subject arise at all.

Richler makes no effort to disguise himself, and his credentials as a respected Jewish author—though no voice of the status quo—precede him wherever he goes.

Jewish culture and learning played a minimal role in Drainie's daily life before Martin was chosen as the *Globe's* Middle East correspondent and Drainie decided to join him there. Her mother, she says, grew up "Jewish in Swift Current Saskatchewan, which is to say she had hardly grown up Jewish at all." Richler, on the other hand, takes the opportunity in *This Year in Jerusalem*, to reveal how deeply his childhood was influenced by a wide variety of Jewish experience: both his grandfathers were learned and daunting figures—most notably his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg, who was the author of more than 20 books of religious scholarship, as well as a "puckish" collection of stories based on the legendary Golem of Prague (one of the chapters in *This Year in Jerusalem* includes a story from this collection—an evocative fable with a plot twist influenced by the same small town yarns that I.B. Singer drew on throughout his career). Most revealingly, Richler investigates his youthful attachment to the leftist youth organization, *Habonim*, whose twin causes were to increase immigration to Palestine and the "establishment of socialism" in North America. It was this early affiliation that bound Richler, though from a distance, to the new Jewish State, and which provides him with old friends—now inhabitants of kibbutzim and Israeli cities—to track down and compare notes with.

Richler employs his story-teller's skills as he interweaves his youthful memories with accounts of a 1962 trip he made to Israel as a reporter for *Maclean's*, along with his account of the 1992 visit that prompted him to reassess his earlier enthusiasms and ambivalences regarding Zionism. *This Year in Jerusalem* is pleasurable and provocative for a number of reasons. Richler's interviews with Israeli journalists, arts administrators, kibbutzniks and professors convey the character of the country's inhabitants

with a minimum of authorial editorializing. In his description of encounters from his 1962 visit, characters and incidents that made their way into his fiction—primarily the 1971 novel *St. Urbain's Horseman*—are given an arresting non-fictional presentation. And in his candid description of the contrasting influences of his family and the non-Jewish friends who guided him to "*goyish* culture," Richler explores how he linked his own cultural and religious background with the tradition at large. Richler also captures the way his youthful Jewish commitments were coloured by Hollywood, leading him and his St. Urbain crowd to admire, along with actual pioneers, "elite desert fighters like Gary Cooper, Ray Milland and Robert Preston in *Beau Geste*."

Drainie's book is lacking in all such complexities, ambiguities, and self-revelations. We learn very little about how the writing of *My Jerusalem* affected the author's sense of herself as a writer, as a non-practicing Jew, as a Canadian. She is quick to speak for and sum up those she meets—Israelis and Arabs alike—but rarely distances herself from these judgments to consider how her own assumptions colour her outlook. Jewish orthodoxy is a favourite target of Drainie's, but the reader learns nothing from her report of "black-suited" and "baby-making" figures who observe "obscure family-centred rituals." Israel as a whole is dealt with in *My Jerusalem* in stereotypic terms: Claustrophobia. . . . It is a feeling all Israelis share as they sit hunkered down on their slim dagger of a Mediterranean coastline . . . ." Drainie also seems to have decided to exclude from her account any anecdotes or information learned by way of her partner's involvement with the international press. A more personal look at the way the media views and influences the Middle East might have led Drainie to material she felt more enthusiastic about. Instead, we find out what it's like to buy a Volvo in Jerusalem and how Israeli supermarkets compare with Canadian stores.

The best chapter in Drainie's book describes the friendships she developed with Arab women who work in a West Bank sewing co-operative. Here she restrains her brooding authorial voice and lets her acquaintances speak for themselves. Through much of the remaining chapters of *My Jerusalem* one gets the feeling that Drainie was asking, throughout the two years she spent in Israel, "What am I doing here?"

Richler's *This Year in Jerusalem* is far more successful than Drainie's book at conveying the most heart-breaking outcome of the Zionist dream—its creation, in the words of Amos Elon, of a "mirror-image of itself: Palestinian nationalism—the longing of a dispossessed people for their own state." By examining his ambivalent allegiance to a distant land and to his grandfathers' world, Richler provides us with a compelling portrait of himself as "a Canadian, born and bred, brought up not only on Hillel, Rabbi Akiba, and Rashi, but also on blizzards, Andrew Allan's CBC Radio 'Stage' series, a crazed Maurice Richard . . . ."

Recurrent Themes

Sollors, Werner, ed.
The Return of Thematic Criticism. Harvard UP $32.50

Reviewed by Roger Seamon

The Return of Thematic Criticism is a useful reference work for anyone interested in the concept of theme. It is composed of historical overviews, theoretical essays and "Case Studies" in which one learns, respectively, about the history of theme as a literary concept (helpful), current efforts to establish thematology as a discipline (confusing), and the critical consequences of thematic approaches (mixed, as one would expect). The essays are flanked by eighteen pages of quotations that use the term "theme" and a twenty page "selected" bibliography, the

former suggestive, the latter as much as anyone will probably need.

While thematic statements are inseparable from the serious discussion of literary works, the study of recurrent themes as a formal academic enterprise is primarily a comparativist and European phenomenon. Menachem Brinker nicely captures the function of the former: "[A theme] unifies a large or conspicuous or important portion of these components [of a literary work] relative to a specific descriptive interpretation of the work's 'world' and language"; in other words this use of themes is clearly heuristic, a quick way to refer to "topics a text is built to make us care about." If I say that one of the main themes of naturalist fiction is the impotence of the individual will, I have used "theme" in this well-understood and widely used sense. However, *The Return of Thematic Criticism* is not concerned with this garden-variety meaning, but more recondite issues.

Thematics is based on the fact that literature exhibits, or perhaps is even constituted by, repetition and variation. Writers tell their tales as variations of common stories and they build their works from various sorts of elements smaller than plots. One thus finds essays here on stories that are retold (Parzifal), character types (the bachelor), and *topoi* ("autumn poems" and "the metamorphosis of colors"). One can do many things with this intertextual repetition (*intra*textual repetition is the basis of, *inter alia*, New Criticism, thus its primary focus on poetry), but a dominant pattern emerges. One isolates the recurring element, and then asks for the implications of the similarity or the differences. The emphasis on similarity leads to efforts such as Northrop Frye's to create a universal thematic typology, and a number of essays here pursue that line, not very helpfully in my view. The emphasis on difference leads one to ask: what are the implications of telling it this way rather than that? There are many sorts of answers depending on whether one's interests are psychological, sociological, cultural, artistic, etc., and these inquiries are usually more illuminating than the more theoretical studies. Lynn Wardley's account of the social implications of the bachelor figure in late nineteenth-century fiction and Theodore Ziolkowski's discussion of Wagner's libretto for *Parsifal* are good examples of the genre.

The title of the collection, which suggests an unjust exile, indicates its agenda. It is meant to signal a turn away from a concern with form and structure in favour of, to put it crudely, content. Thus, in a brief section called "Short Takes," the editor extracts a passage from Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* that begins: "I have never had any doubt that all literature is *about* something." Despite this passage and similar testimonials in other essays, thematics or thematology or *Stoffgeschichte* (the German term of art for the historical version of the enterprise), there are only sporadic explications of what works *say* about what they are *about*. The works are taken as objects of study not sources of insight, in just the way that all efforts at systematic literary study do.

The most illuminating theoretical essay is David Perkins' critique of thematics as a basis for literary history or a literary science, which it is the aim of many of these essays to adumbrate. In thematic literary history, Perkins notes, the "hero is a theme rather than a genre, period, national 'mind,' and so on," but

> There is no possibility of explaining all thematic recurrence by one theory unless there can be agreement as to what can count as a "theme" and what cannot. This fertile conceptual chaos, in which anyone can call anything a "theme," also makes quixotic the various attempts that have been made . . . to define a canon of themes,

as Frye and others have tried to do. A few of these essays are devoted to determining the difference between, and the relative sizes of, themes and motifs, but unsurprisingly no agreement emerges. The futility of this quest is evident when Theodor Wolpers says that "a motif [a word which is sometimes synonymous with theme and sometimes not] appears to be an operating unit (usually of 'medium size') mediating between the larger dimensions of plot and theme and the mass of smaller details." This inability to determine a fundamental unit for analysis, a function performed by the cell in biology and the sentence in structural linguistics, is the same failure that ultimately undermined structuralism and formalism. The result of the failure is what Holger Klein calls a "combination of rigidity and fudging" in the effort to make "thematology" systematic.

Perkins (again) points us in the right direction when he says that thematic comparisons "enrich our experience in reading" as they help us "see further implications in the work at hand." In other words, they add to our literary sophistication. Thus, while thematics is a poor candidate for making literary study a discipline and is even less impressive theoretically than earlier efforts, the sharpening of perception that results from comparison and the fact that one must read a lot in order to compare are healthy consequences of the approach. In his brief study of the (new-to-me) *topos* of description of fading colors, Francesco Orlando cites passages from fifteen novels in four languages (English, French, German and Russian). It is little wonder that multilingual Europeans have tended to understand themes as repeated elements across national literatures, while New Criticism (a largely American phenomenon) emphasized the thematic patterns within literary works in English.

But I let George Steiner, whose brief lament for the decline of literary culture, "Ronceveaux," is the final piece in the volume, have the (almost) last and saddest words here too:

> Thematic presences are, as in music, the instrument of economy. They 'shorthand' the wealth and depth of adduced meaning. A number of highly touted American novels in 1991 exceed one thousand pages. They are in essence empty. In an almost macabre vein, we are now given variations without a theme.

One may either join Steiner in his lamentation or welcome the decline of an elitist literary culture, but it doesn't suggest great confidence when a book announcing the return of thematic criticism concludes with a eulogy for the literary culture that sustained it.

For Marx and Derrida Purists

Murray G. Smith
Invisible Leviathan: The Marxist Critique of Market Despotism Beyond Postmodernism. U Toronto P $55.00/$24.95

Rodolphe Gasché
Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida. Harvard UP US$22.95

Reviewed by David Thomson

Attracted by the subtitle, those interested in the debate between Marxism and postmodernism—however one chooses to define those unwieldy words—might be tempted to pick up *Invisible Leviathan* hoping to find a new perspective. Unfortunately, this collection of essays in no way takes one "beyond postmodernism": it is solidly grounded in a philosophical and political outlook entirely informed by an orthodox and inflexible Marxism. Its real focus is the controversy within economic circles over the concept of "value," a concept Smith, following Marx, argues is inseparable from its concrete representation as human

labour. There is no doubt that the book provides a thoughtful elaboration of Marx's labour theory of value, along with a consideration of competing value theories. What remains baffling is the offhand rejection of "postmodernism" (which for Smith encompasses a wide range of theorists from Derrida to Foucault to Laclau and Mouffe) in a text that makes no effort to engage with the consequences for Marxism, both direct and indirect, posed by Derrida, Foucault, and others.

Indeed, far from confronting the challenge to fundamental Marxist assumptions made by "celebrants of 'postmodernism' and/or 'post-structuralism,'" Smith deliberately identifies four basic "premisses" (sic) grounding the Marxist project: i) that experiential reality "is an ontologically unified ensemble or totality," ii) that the subject of history is "real living individuals," iii) that human actions are "purposive and rational," and iv) that "Marx's pivotal notion of a 'universal human history' [is] marked by a determinate (if not 'inexorable') developmental logic." These premises are, according to Smith, too fundamental to be questioned, effectively eliminating any troubling reservations about the status of history, reality, or subjectivity those he dubs 'postmodernists' might have brought up.

The bulk of *Invisible Leviathan* is given over to a debate waged entirely on the grounds of conventional economics, and here Smith's careful elaboration of key Marxist concepts is very valuable. But the rigidity of the four initial premises leads to the repetition of clichéd Marxist positions such as "capitalism is, at bottom, an 'irrational' and historically limited system, one that digs its own grave. . . ." Smith's caricature of "disoriented" postmodernist intellectuals "[w]allowing in impressionism" precludes any serious engagement with the possibility that current crises in capitalism—such as the increasing fragmentation and disorganization of the working class, rising rates of 'structural unemployment,' a shift in emphasis from the mode of production to what Mark Poster has called "the mode of information"—are also crises for orthodox Marxism, crises that cannot be resolved within an unmodified Marxist paradigm founded on unquestioned assumptions. The irony is that it is precisely those 'postmodernists' Smith rejects who have endeavoured to uncover the historical formation and ideological function of categories such as a universal history or the idea of progress or Enlightenment, and in so doing have made possible a critique of Marxism that does not repudiate it entirely.

While Murray Smith is intent on protecting Marx from his critics, Rodolphe Gasché, in *Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida*, seems intent on saving Derrida from his own admirers. Gasché's book collects essays from 1979 to 1993, each revealing the depth of Derrida's involvement with the philosophical tradition, especially his relationship to Hegel. Gasché contends that Derrida has been misappropriated by two identifiable groups. On the one hand, literary critics such as J. Hillis Miller have popularized an impoverished and simplistic variant of deconstruction, while on the other hand, philosophers such as Richard Rorty claim that Derrida has rejected philosophy as a universal discourse and turned his attention to creating a localized, private discourse. In response, Gasché's essays show that Derrida's thought cannot be detached from the philosophical tradition, and indeed elaborates upon that tradition.

If there is a single thread of continuity linking Gasché's essays, it is his concern with the play of intelligibility and unintelligibility in Derrida's work. In the preface he frames this point in terms of the tension between *invention* (the completely new) and *comprehension* (the code within which the new must be interpreted): "For a differ-

ence to make a difference, and hence to be one in the first place, its uniqueness must be wrenched from and negotiated within a system of conventions." The title, *Inventions of Difference*, comes to signify the importance of reasserting what Derrida shares with philosophy as a discipline. Gasché seems very concerned that if the play of difference is not reinscribed within a framework of conventions, it risks lapsing into incoherent 'free play.' This argument is made most persuasively in Gasché's essay "The Law of Tradition," particularly when he counters over-emphasis on Derrida's radicalism with the observation, "[t]o characterize a thinker's work as breaking with the entire tradition is quite a traditional mode of thought. Moreover, such a break with tradition and traditionalism is in the best tradition of *philosophical* thought."

Gasche's quite conservative agenda has two unfortunate consequences, however. First, while demonstrating that deconstruction is indeed richly informed by the philosophical tradition, the essays employ a discourse of such density that it frequently borders on the opaque—I would maintain that the book is actually of little practical value to non-philosophers. Second, his emphasis on the work of deconstruction compels Gasché to recuperate—or ignore—all vestiges of play in Derrida's texts. Thus in an extended discussion of *Glas* his focus is on the left-hand column exclusively, (re)marginalizing the Genet column and effacing the potential dialogue between the two. Similarly, he concludes an analysis of Derrida's text "Ulysses Gramophone" by voicing the hope that he has "dispelled its appearance of frivolity. . . . Every 'joke' or 'pun' also works toward a solution of the question of the *yes*." Gashé's unvoiced concern in *Inventions of Difference* is that Derrida's position as a serious and original philosopher must be rescued from the 'popular' version of deconstruction circulating outside of philosophy.

Société & Poétique

Jacques Pelletier, ed.
Littérature et société, vlb éditeur $21,95
Anthologie préparée avec la collaboration de Jean-François Chassay et Lucie Robert

Claude Filteau
Poétiques de la modernité, l'Hexagone $29,95

Compte rendu par Leif Tufte

Le temps n'est plus où la *poétique* et le *social* ne faisaient pas bon ménage. Une fois abattues les cloisons séparant le fait littéraire de tout ce que pourraient lui apporter d'enrichissant les points de vue sociologiques, c'est une véritable ruée vers de nouveaux pâturages. Or, même un public passablement averti se trouve souvent pris au dépourvu quand il essaie de trouver son chemin à travers ce nouveau paysage qui, depuis les dernières décennies, est en train de se dessiner. Ce n'est pas parce que les documents qui témoignent de cette invasion du champ littéraire par le social nous font défaut. C'est plutôt la surabondance qui menace, accentuée par le fait que nous ne sommes plus à l'heure d'une seule doctrine ou d'une piste théorique unique, que ce soit celle de Sartre, de Goldmann ou de Bourdieu.

C'est donc une initiative particulièrement heureuse que celle de Jacques Pelletier et de ses deux collaborateurs Jean-François Chassey et Lucie Robert de réunir en un seul volume, intitulé *Littérature et société*, à la fois des textes déjà canoniques et d'autres susceptibles de le devenir. Jacques Pelletier en présente les principes sous-jacents avec une clarté exemplaire en rappelant que "l'approche sociohistorique de la littérature ne désigne pas une *méthode*, une *démarche* précise et rigoureuse, un *corpus de doctrines* constitué et stable possédant *un modèle opératoire universel* (un 'mode d'emploi') mais bien *un questionnement* possible parmi d'autres sur la littérature dont la spécificité est de considérer les textes en lien

avec le contexte historique dans lequel ils apparaissent et dont ils forment une composante."

Il est difficile d'imaginer meilleure application d'une telle mise au point que le choix judicieux qu'ont opéré les auteurs de l'anthologie dans la grande masse des textes disponibles. Les principales pistes de recherche, d'hier ou d'aujourdhui, sont représentées. Sont d'abord réunis quelques-uns des textes canoniques, où les pionniers en la matière—Lukács, Auerbach, Sartre et Goldmann—adoptent des points de vue que l'on caractériserait aujourd'hui "d'inspiration sociocritique". Ensuite, la composition de l'ensemble de l'ouvrage reflète la distinction désormais classique entre la sociologie du fait littéraire, consacrée à tout l'appareil institutionnel qui entoure les textes, et une sociocritique proprement dite, où il est principalement question de "la teneur sociale des textes". La partie qui nous réserve le moins de surprise reste celle de la première de ces catégories, où il est question de l'approche institutionnelle, qui restera forcément plus sociologique que proprement littéraire. Dans la deuxième et la quatrième section par contre, celles consacrées à la "Sociologie de la littérature" et aux "Nouvelles perspectives", on se retrouve dans un champ d'études plus spécifiquement littéraire en pleine effervescence, axé sur la signification sociale du discours, qu'il soit littéraire au sens le plus traditionnel ou non. C'est un plaisir de constater que les introductions à chacune des quatre sections sont non seulement précises, éclairantes et pleines de nouvelles perspectives mais également exemptes de toute orthodoxie. S'il fallait chercher un point de convergence de l'ensemble de ce champ de recherche, il faudrait sans doute choisir Bakhtine. Il est pour ainsi dire omniprésent, tant par les fréquentes références explicites à ses concepts clefs, comme la dimension carnavalesque et la polyphonie dans le discours romanesque, que par l'inspiration sous-jacente.

S'il est vrai que "les pères fondateurs" de cette branche des études littéraires viennent du vieux continent, il est également vrai que *Littérature et société* porte à l'évidence le sceau de la littérature québécoise. Les éditeurs montrent de façon convaincante à la fois que leur littérature à eux constituent un terrain de recherche particulièrement prometteur à cet égard, et que les spécialistes québécois ont fortement contribué aux percées récentes dans le domaine. Cette publication, qui comble une lacune sur les rayons des anthologies pour les étudiants aussi bien que pour les chercheurs, se place donc résolument sous le signe des recherches transocéaniques et laisse bien augurer de la suite.

Le fait qu'une seule des contributions, parmi une vingtaine en tout, soit consacrée à un sujet qui touche à la poésie, en dit long sur le manque de rapport que celle-ci entretient avec le social. En effet, le lyrisme et le social se sont toujours tenus à bonne distance l'un de l'autre, à cause notamment de l'état de quasi-autonomisation de la poésie, tacitement acceptée, car elle est ancrée—comme le dit Bakhtine—dans la "grande temporalité" et les "tendances séculaires". Il n'empêche que les pistes prometteuses que dégage dans son article Michel Biron montrent comment l'on est en train de repenser le rapport de la poésie à la société, notamment du côté de la néo-rhétorique (Groupe de Liège), de l'analyse de l'énonciation(théorie de la réception, appliquée par Jauss et Iser) et des théories du discours social (Marc Angenot). Il n'en reste pas moins que même dans le cadre de la sociocritique actuelle la poésie se trouve le plus souvent tenue respectueusement à distance.

Pour Claude Filteau par contre, celle-ci est un genre qui n'a toujours rien de marginal. Dans un livre intitulé *Poétiques de la modernité*, il nous invite à un long voyage au pays de la poésie. Ce spécialiste québécois en la matière nous propose une réflex-

ion sur l'émergence de "la modernité et son ancrage dans la poésie québécoise" pendant la première moitié du siècle, c'est-à-dire depuis la fondation de "l'école de Montréal" en 1895 jusqu'à la publication de *Refus global* en 1948. S'appuyant sur un vaste corpus et une riche documentaion, il suit attentivement quelques-unes des manifestations les plus significatives de cette modernité. Sa quête commence à l'époque où l'on prend pour programme de libérer le rythme par rapport à la métrique du vers classique français et où se confrontent poètes et critiques au sujet de notions clefs comme "la voix du poème" et "le rythme du discours". En compagnie de Filteau, nous nous trouvons loin des simplifications réductrices de la métrique traditionnelle. Il se joint à ceux qui donnent la priorité à la rythmique du discours sur la fiction linguistique qui a engendré la scansion des métriciens. Pour lui, il s'agit d'étudier "comment le poème relève d'un rythme singulier inséparable de l'organisation sémantique du discours, dès lors que celui-ci n'existe pas hors d'une situation d'énonciation." Dans cette activité de co-énonciation et co-interprétation, où collaborent poète et lecteur et d'où nait le sens du poème, la *voix* qui en organise le sens en discours prend le pas sur le rythme.

Puisque le destin du poème est déterminé principalement par l'échange dialogique qui s'instaure dans une situation de discours, les détails de l'analyse rythmique sont essentiels dans des études de ce genre. Filteau s'y lance à coeur joie dans les exemples choisis, qui vont de Nelligan à Grandbois et Paul-Marie Lapointe. Rares sont sans doute ceux qui sont capables de suivre dans tous les méandres l'exposé de cette prosodie renouvelée, où se poursuit un dialogue avec des spécialistes français chevronnés comme Henri Meschonnic et Benoît de Cornulier. Malgré la ferveur communicative de l'auteur, qui facilitera considérablement la lecture, les parties les plus techniques seront surtout appréciées par ceux qui se trouvent dans la catégorie du public intéressé par le domaine.

Mais Claude Filteau a d'autres ambitions que de se limiter à écrire un traité de versification, et entreprend en outre un périple aux nombreux détours. C'est ainsi que le spécialiste de prosodie et de poétique se transforme tour à tour en historien de la littérature et historien des idées. Il est, certes, raisonnable de ne pas faire du "change des formes" le seul critère de la modernité et d'y inclure des thèmes comme la place du poète dans la société et les luttes entre l'humanisme issu de l'esprit des lumières et le cléricalisme. Les références aux efforts des Québécois pour construire à l'époque "la fiction d'une tradition littéraire" sont également intéressantes en soi. Mais l'auteur ne semble pas avoir complètement résolu le problème épineux que constitue la composition équilibrée d'un ensemble de cette envergure. Il n'empêche que le lecteur sortira émerveillé de la lecture d'un livre qui fait une telle démonstration des richesses que recèle la poésie québécoise de "la modernité."

Framing Multiculturalism

Sneja Gunew
Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Guides. Melbourne UP $19.95

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam
Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media. Routledge n.p.

Reviewed by Herb Wyile

In these times of conservative retrenchment in the West, as one witnesses the growing backlash against a distorted, even demonized multiculturalism, one is reminded of Martin Luther King's observation that "privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily." Fortunately, paralleling this backlash has been the appear-

ance of more constructive and less totalized approaches which set multiculturalism and reactions to it in a larger critical context.

Despite its broad title, *Framing Marginality* is a fairly focused project. Sneja Gunew has been a central force in drawing attention to the work of non-Anglo-Celtic writers in Australia and in addressing the problematic place of multiculturalism in Australian writing. In *Framing Marginality*, Gunew draws on a fairly broad range of theory to address issues of multiculturalism and literature and to break down some troubling borders within the study of Australian literature.

Gunew gives her book a specific purchase by reflecting on the rise of multicultural literary studies in Australia, a rise in which she has played a large role as an academic, critic, editor and anthologist. Her introduction thus serves as useful preamble by conveying some of the critical debates about "NESB" (non-English-speaking-background) writers and their tenuous position in the development of an Australian literary canon.

Gunew then broadens the scope of the discussion by drawing on post-structuralist, post-colonial, and feminist respsonses to the essentialism and universalism of European modernity in order to theorize multiculturalism in Australian writing. Because of the tendency to describe the work of ethnic writers in Austrialia as "migrant" writing—with all its associations of the transitory and the foreign—Gunew opts for "ethnic minority writing" as the most workable term, a usage which furthermore ensures "that cultural majority groups no longer remain invisible." An important gesture Gunew makes, therefore, is to denaturalize the majority culture, foregrounding its own ethnicity.

Gunew delves into contemporary critical theory in her examination of the dynamics of multiculturalism in Australian literature, and she is careful to delineate the differences between this specific context and multiculturalism as it has taken shape in other largely Anglophone countries like Canada, Britain and the United States. At the same time, Gunew's exploration of literary multiculturalism has clear implications for those countries as well, as she addresses question of ethnicity and community, the relationship between ethnicity and subjectivity, ethnicity and race, and the role of ethnicity in the national imaginary.

The second half of the book is in large part a response to critics' tendencies to read ethnic minority literature as uncomplicated, almost sociological studies—the equivalent of oral testimony rather than written artifact. Gunew demonstrates the centralizing impulses behind such reading strategies and argues for more sophisticated readings of these texts. She supports her position and fleshes out her theorizing of marginality and multiculturalism by approaching Rosa Cappiello largely through Bakhtin and Kristeva, and by reading Anna Couani's work in the context of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, with another chapter devoted to poets Antigone Kefala and Ania Walwicz.

Given the book's relative slimness, Gunew's treatment of ethnicity is fairly nuanced, though the lack of a conclusion leaves the two halves of the book sitting somewhat uneasily together (it may well, however, have been Gunew's intention not to "frame" the discussion of the texts in such a fashion).

Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media is much more substantial than *Framing Marginality*, providing a wide-angle lens take on multiculturalism. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam make a case for the need to understand multiculturalism in relation to the history of Eurocentrism which is as compelling (though for some reason not as frequently articulated) as viewing feminism in relation to the history of patriarchy. At a time when

multiculturalism is being critiqued within majoritarian and minoritarian discourses as a problematic ossifying of ethnic boundaries, Shohat and Stam provide a complex and acute discussion of the dynamics of culture and ethnicity that serves to dispel various myths associated with multiculturalism and to illuminate its role in both local and global politics.

> . . . what we have been calling polycentric multiculturalism is not a favor, something intended to make other people feel good about themselves; it also makes a cognitive, epistemological contribution. More than a response to a demographic challenge, it is a long-overdue gesture towards historical lucidity, a matter not of charity but of justice. An answer to the stale, flat and unprofitable complacencies of ethnocentrism, it is part of an indispensable revisioning of the global politics of culture.

Their conclusion makes some large claims, but it is a fair reflection of the achievement of *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. In keeping with their position that multiculturalism must be viewed in the context of a dominant Eurocentrism, Shohat and Stam proceed to reveal the prevailing Eurocentrism of 19th century colonialist, early 20th century imperialist, and postmodern discourse in the First World. The authors focus predominantly on film, but their discussion has an engaging interdiscipinarity as they highlight the subtle and not-so-subtle writing-out of the non-European, from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* to media representations of the Gulf War.

The corollary to the unthinking of Eurocentrism, which is the prevailing concern of the first half of the book, is rethinking of multiculturalism, in which Shohat and Stam develop a carefully modulated view of "ethnicities-in-relation," a model which negotiates between (and intelligently theorizes) an essentialist view of ethnicity on the one hand and a paralyzing deconstruction of it on the other. This rethinking of multiculturalism involves an exploration of film in the Third World (such terms are not, of course, used uncriticially) and of anti- or counter-Eurocentric work in the First World. The appeal of *Unthinking Eurocentrism* is that it compels readers to view the dominant media (and of course Hollywood gets a lot of attention) in a more resistant way but also addresses a lot of interesting, less-publicized and less-discussed work (as well as the resaons for its marginality).

Which is not to say that *Unthinking Eurocentrism* is simply a revisionist, alternative film studies primer. The larger purpose of the book is to provide an enabling perspective (for the marginalized and not-so-marginalized) on the politics of cultural interaction which keeps in focus the damaging history and damaging present of Eurocentric thinking and also the need to develop a more relational and polycentric approach to cultural difference. In the process of theorizing multiculturalism, Shohat and Stam perceptively synthesize a series of larger cultural debates; their criticially nuanced but also politically astute approaches to race, political correctness, syncretism, representation and stereotyping, and post-colonialism help to give the book broad appeal.

An Early Review of *Roughing It in the Bush*

Elizabeth Thompson

In a letter to her publisher, Richard Bentley, published in *Letters of a Lifetime* (1985), Susanna Moodie makes reference to some negative Canadian reviews of her *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852): one in the *United Empire*, the other in the Toronto *Examiner* (*Letters* 136-7). As Carl Ballstadt points out in his Introduction to the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts' edition of *Roughing It* (1988), these reviews were important to Moodie, for they "apparently gave her the impression that Canadians generally were opposed to her work" (LVII). By extension, the reviews are important to subsequent Moodie criticism; unfortunately, they are difficult to find—Ballstadt, for example, fears that there may be no extant copies (LVII).

The *Examiner* review, however, can be found in an article called "Misrepresentation" which appeared on June 16, 1852. In it, the editor of the paper takes exception to Mrs. Moodie, "an ape of aristocracy," to *Roughing It*, "a most mischievous work," and to the review of *Roughing It* published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in March 1852. "Misrepresentation" is not merely a review of Moodie's work; it presents a warm defense of Canada and mounts a strong attack on popular misconceptions of the country which appear in the British periodical press of the time. Because neither Moodie nor her book is mentioned by name, it is easy enough to overlook both the article itself and the origins of the editor's distress—the misrepresentation of Canada by Moodie and the ready acceptance of such "fanciful and fabulous stories" as truth by *Blackwood's*.

Although Moodie tells Richard Bentley that the editor has repented (*Letters* 136), his earlier condemnation of *Roughing It in the Bush* stands as an important document in the critical history of what is now seen as a central Canadian text.

MISREPRESENTATION

In Canada, we complain, and not without reason, of being misrepresented in other countries. Say what we may, we are only a great people at home. Abroad we are positively insignificant. As regards our trade, commerce, industry, or public policy, this might be bearable; were it only generally known that we own one of the finest countries in the world—that we possess resources almost inexhaustable [sic], and that we have ample room for millions of industrious people. Whence comes this misrepresentation of which we complain? Is it from those that know us—that have sought any means of knowing us, or that are in any way fitted to pronounce an opinion? These are questions which merit consideration. It is, first of all, no small consolation to reflect, that whoever the detractor may be he is an ignoramus! But

then again, it is pitiful to consider, that no amount of ignorance will mitigate the mischief wrought by detraction and misrepresentation, and no *history* can be too absurd to gain credence among the vulgar. And, astonishing is it, that not merely the illiterate peasant, whose ideas have never travelled beyond his native parish, but the man of learning, the statesman, and most pitiable of all—the Minister of the Crown—the dictator of nearly fifty colonies—too frequently takes as standard authority the fictitious trash that is found in the literature of tourists.

The author of the fabulous stories that form the staple commodity retailed as Canadian history, is the homogeneous creature known by the apt cognomen of a *Traveller*. He travels on and on, without either acquiring wisdom himself or communicating it to others. He is one of the positive nuisances that we have to complain of, and in order that foreigners may know him and know us, it were well that he were pointed out. He comes here in his "travels," and he serves us—we will not say worse than he serves others, but in such a way, as affords us large room for complaint. Did he confine his researches and adventures to himself, his travels, if not profitable, would at least be harmless; but in this lies the mischief: the merest youth that ever escaped from the parental domicile, has no sooner caught a glimpse of foreign scenes than he must forthwith inflict a Book on the community. And a heavy infliction it is, verily—one solid jumble, in ninety-nine of every hundred cases, of exaggeration and lies. How can it be otherwise? Our modern traveller or tourist's knowledge—such select portions of it as he prints—is not even derived from personal observation. It is never gleaned from things which he has seen or on which he has studied or reflected. In most cases the pith of his wonderful narrative is to be found in some antiquated volume descriptive of men and things half a century gone by. And to give the grandfather tale a modern air, this valuable *guide* to the history of the country is interspersed at certain intervals with some wayside gossip—the extravaganzas of a loafing acquaintance.

Place beside the fabulous adventures of our Traveller, the plain, indisputable facts and figures in which Lillie or Smith have ably and triumphantly shown the progress, the capabilities and the prospects of our infant country—shew these productions to the wise men of the East, and with ready discernment they will pronounce the statements of the latter prejudiced, improbable, and unworthy of credence; while the former—the production of some literary sprig of their Modern Athens—is veritable, naked truth. And in plain fact, it is evident, that as far as public opinion is or will be regulated by the high literature of British Magazines, we bid fair to be holden as a starvation-stricken race—the denizens of an outlawed region parallel in climate and material enjoyments to the penal colonies of the Russian Czar.

This is no exaggeration. Hear *Blackwood* in March, 1852, discoursing of the "Canadian Wilderness." But let us premise (lest we heap unmerited opprobrium on the "Traveller") that *Blackwood's* Novel—for it is simply a novel—a most mischievous one, moreover—is founded on the published experience of a disappointed settler—an ape of aristocracy, too poor to lie on a sofa and too proud to labour for a living. The unutterable hardships of the Canadian Settler are thus introduced to the commiseration of the fair ones of England: —

"Ladies of Britain, deftly embroidering in carpeted saloon, gracefully bending over easel or harp, pressing with nimble finger your piano's ivory, or joyously tripping in Cellerian circles, suspend for a moment your silken pursuits, and look forth into the *desert* (mark that) at a sister's sufferings. . . . The comforts of an English home,

the endearments of sisterly affection, the refinement of literary tastes, but ill prepared the emigrant's wife to work in *the rugged and inclement wilderness.*"

Think of that ye braggarts accustomed to dub your country the "Home of independence." Talk of cultivated farms, of pleasant Homesteads and luxuriant crops in a "desert." The thing is positively preposterous. We are dragging out a miserable existence in a "rugged and inclement wilderness," and worse than all, we seem to be ignorant that it is so. We imagine ourselves happy, poor, ignorant folks! and *Blackwood* tells the Ladies of Britain in their carpeted saloons, we are miserable beyond conception. Was ignorance ever known to be bliss before?

But we begin to be serious, and certainly not inclined to laugh, when we see writers ranked at the head of the Literature of the Empire speaking of Canada as a remote wilderness. Is it possible that the writer in *Blackwood* is ignorant that this remote "residence" is within 12 days travel of Liverpool, and the "carpeted saloons"—a journey no greater than that between the extremities of the diminutive Island of Britain some half a century ago? Or what are this wiseacre's ideas of distance? Fifty years ago, Niebuhr, the great historical critic, travelled from London to the Northern metropolis, in 4′ days, and records the unprecedented feat for the information of his wonder stricken countrymen. Give us a Railway from the port of Halifax—and we believe a few years will see the completion of this great undertaking—and this *remote* region may be reached in 60 hours' longer time than Niebuhr's expeditious journey through half the island of Britain.

The diffusion of sound information respecting the condition and resources of the country is a matter which could not fail to tell very powerfully on its material progress as well as on the social prosperity of the people. That such information is at the present time accessible every one must be prepared to admit. And for this reason it becomes more lamentable that British journalists and Reviewers, for the sake, it may be, of gratifying a taste for romance and novelty, are found at this moment pawning such counterfeit pictures of Canadian life as that which we have noticed, on the gullible natives of the three kingdoms. That fanciful and fabulous stories should form a standard guide book for the emigrant is a more serious matter than at first sight appears. The people of Britain will read, and what more palatable reading do they expect to find than in the pages of the great magazines of the metropolis, in which is concentrated the best talent of the country? So long, therefore, as the periodical literature of Britain is prejudiced against Colonial interests, whether willfully or through ignorance, so long these interests suffer in the eyes of those on whom they are mainly dependent for favour and furtherance. In view of this, while deploring the continued circulation of mythical treatises on Canadian affairs, we hail, as an omen for good, the manifestations given of an increased taste within the Province for scientific and literary pursuits; believing [*sic*] that in the cultivation of these a standard literature will be formed within the country, which will ultimately give character and tone to such foreign publications as aim at an honest and impartial transcript of Canadian history.

From the Toronto *Examiner*, Wednesday, June 16, 1852

Last Page

Appropriately, some of the best recent criticism of travel writing comes from geographers. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographics*, eds. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (Guilford, n.p.) includes sections on travel in West Africa and Australia, and on the "imagined geographies" of WW II women, as well as theoretical papers exploring aspects of ecology, postcolonial positionality, and the interface between geography and art. William W. Stowe's *Going Abroad: European Travel in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton U, n.p.) is an essentially conventional if often enjoyable reading of canonical American writers like Emerson, Fuller, and Twain spruced up with references to matters of gender, class, race, and empowerment, terms which are here rarely developed beyond somewhat gratuitous clichés. The book has an annoying tendency to claim goals quite different from its predecessors only to confirm their well-known findings. Karen R. Lawrence's *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Tradition* (Cornell U, n.p.) takes a broad-minded view of its subject both historically and generically speaking. Beginning with readings of Margaret Cavendish and Fanny Burney, Lawrence also considers Wollstonecraft, Kingsley, Sarah Lee, Virginia Woolf, Brooke-Rose and Brophy. Her focus is a variation on Mary Jacobus's question "Can women adapt traditionally male dominated modes of writing and analysis to the articulation of female oppression and desire?" While this premise is nothing new, the book at its best presents careful readings of female travel narrative, both actual and fictional, against the grain of conventional male genres. In so doing, it offers nuanced alternatives to some feminists' tendency to homogenize women's travel narratives into masculinized adventure stories. Despite a somewhat intrusive handling of existent criticism, Lawrence tells an eloquent, informative story, and even her footnotes are worth studying. Quoting Gilles Deleuze, Ali Behdad's *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Duke U, n.p.) reads a variety of orientalist texts (travel-writing, tourist guides, cover illustrations) from a variety of angles, using anthropology, literary theory, history, philosophy, and psychoanalysis as a "'box of tools' to be used only when they prove useful." Particularly thought-provoking is Behdad's reading of Anne and Wilfrid Blunt's collaborative work. Female note-taker and male conceptualizer produce a collusive "shadow-text," in which one discursive practice lends authority to the other.

One gets rather tired of the perennially coy titles gracing studies and anthologies of women's travel writing. Its title notwithstanding, many of the excerpts in Anne Robinson's *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford U, n.p.) (following Robinson's earlier annotated bibliography *Wayward Women*) present extraordinarily courageous, resourceful women with not a shred of dilettantism about them. Like most anthologies, *Writing Away: The PEN Canada Travel Anthology*, ed. Constance Rooke (McClelland and Stewart, $19.99) has some very good pieces and some weak ones. Atwood is as comical as ever; Munro presents a haunting parable of death deferred, and Rohinton Mistry describes a hilarious search for a "wee bust" of Robert Louis Stevenson in Edinburgh's museums and souvenir shops. Greatly disappointing is Nicole Brossard's fuzzy piece on Buenos Aires; it doesn't help much that she seems dissatisfied with it herself. A book on tuberculosis may be a surprising source on travel writing, but Sheila M. Rothman's excellent *Living in the Shadow of Death:*

Tuberculosis and the Social Experience of Illness in American History (Harper Collins, n.p.) provides information on and background to a rich array of topics. Sections of the book are devoted to linkages between invalidism and Ocean travel, the "journey west", mountaineering, and the spa movement. Besides presenting a broad but differentiated analysis across all social levels, Rothman also concentrates on the lives and writings of two tuberculosis patients, one male, one female, in order to record their day-by-day concerns which were sometimes interrupted by a recuperative journey. The account of Deborah Vinal Finske's journal is especially harrowing and an important contribution to nineteenth-century American women's history: daughter of a consumptive mother, Finske grew up with relatives, learning early on to conduct herself with excessive prudence so as not to outstay her welcome. Her own death impending, she sought to instill the same virtues in her daughters, worrying much about the independent-minded Helen. *The Politics of the Picturesque*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge U, n.p.) is a welcome addition to a discussion which is often dominated by purely aesthetic concerns. Essays in this book read landscape art as an ideological parable with very specific contemporary references, but they are also careful to point out diachronic developments of that relationship. In "The Ruined Abbey: Picturesque and Gothic Values," for instance, Michael Charlesworth reads depictions of Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire against changing Whig perceptions of Roman Catholicism. Ann Bermingham's "The Picturesque and Ready-to-Wear Femininity" traces links between landscape art and fashion and sends one back to old favourites such as Jane Austen's novels. E-M.K.

Contributors

Ken **Babstock**, John **Hulcoop**, and Wanda **Kelley** live in Vancouver; Elizabeth **Brewster** in Saskatchewan; Lea **Littlewolfe** in Canwood; Derk **Wynand** in Victoria,; Allan **Brown** in Powell River; Sandra **Hobbs** in Coquitlam; Peter **Mitham** in Hampton; Ruth **Panofsky** in Thornhill; Sharon **Singer**, Norman **Ravvin**, and Elizabeth **Thompson** in Toronto; Nancy **Pagh** in Anacortes; Eric **Miller** in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Klaus **Martens** teaches at the Universität des Saarlandes, Germany; Victor-Laurent **Tremblay** at Wilfrid Laurier University; Donna **Coates**, Jon **Kertzer**, Estelle **Dansereau**, and Pamela **McCallum** at the University of Calgary; Wanda **Campbell** at the University of Windsor; Bryan **Gooch** at the University of Victoria; Nicholas **von Maltzahn** at the University of Ottawa; Nancy **Holmes** at the Okanagan University College; Alexander **Forbes** and Will **Garrett-Petts** at the University College of the Cariboo; Renate **Eigenbrod** at Lakehead University; Deborah **Dudek** at the University of Manitoba; Judy **Dudar** at Dalhousie University; Neil **Querengesser** at Concordia; Anthony **Raspa** at Laval; Herb **Wylie** at the University of Alberta; Constantina **Mitchell** at Gallaudet University; Leif **Tufte** at the University of Bergen, Norway; Axel **Knoenagel** at the University of Hamburg, Germany; and Philip **Holden** at the National Institute of Education, Singapore.

Laurie **Aikman**, John Xiros **Cooper**, Noel **Currie**, Susanna **Egan**, Petra **Fachinger**, Graham **Good**, Sherrill **Grace**, Bogdan **Czaykowski**, Roger **Seamon**, and David **Thomson** all teach/study at U.B.C.

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