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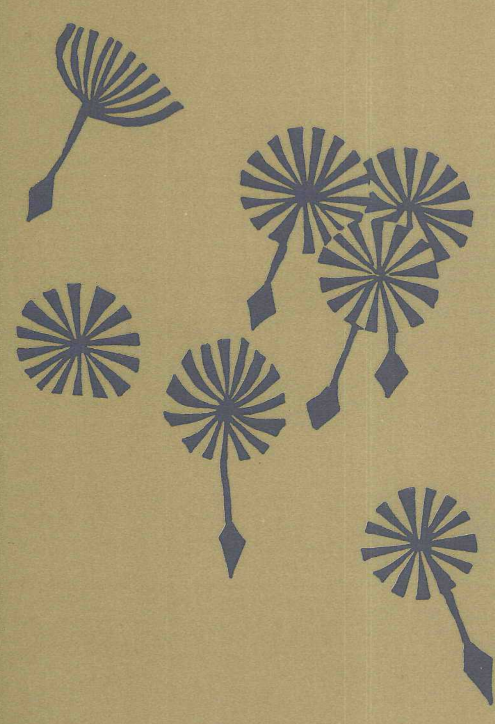

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

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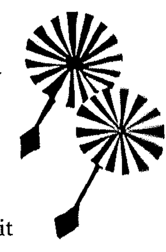

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Global/Local

As the return of Hong Kong from Britain to China approached this summer, local and international media chronicled the countdown and its effects on the Pacific Rim with something resembling obsession. In Europe over Christmas, I shook my head at an article in *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (a leading German daily) which appeared to lament "the conquest" of Vancouver by "the Chinese" seeking "refuge" in this "satellite of Hong Kong" (Brigitte Scherer, "Der grosse Sprung über den Pazifik," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 7 Dec. 1996; my translation). Although she rehearses the stereotypical observations about rising property prices and the desecration of an Edenic natural environment by "monster houses," however, the author also writes approvingly of the conversion of what she considers a former hicktown into a global city whose population, hitherto unsophisticated and devoted to sports, has learnt from the newcomers to shop in expensive designer stores and relax in outdoor cafes while "so far, the consumption of food outdoors has been prohibited [sic]."

The errors in this piece range from the amusing to the infuriating (visa students at UBC and SFU are rumoured to pay an annual $14,000 in tuition fees each, and homeowners on the North Shore are said to suspend their garbage cans from chains to protect them from "racoons," "evidence of the ever-present drama" provided by a "grandiose and cruel natural environment"), but these errors are to a measure typical of the discursive confusions attending "rimspeak" (Bruce Cumings, "Rimspeak; or The Discourse of the 'Pacific Rim'," *What Is In a Rim?*) generally and the rhetoric surrounding the Hong Kong turnover in the Western media in particular. Returned to North America, I was instantly confronted with a series of articles on the subject in the *New York Times* which, while not as scurillous as the item in *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, still trotted out a predictable mix of economic hype

and cultural cliché. Both the *Vancouver Sun* and the *Globe and Mail* have pursued the topic assiduously. Here, the misconceptions are perhaps not as glaring, but there is still ethnic innuendo galore. On a recent weekend, for instance, the *Sun* featured a four-page report on "Hong Kong and Us," while the *Globe* translated art appreciation into stockbroker's jargon by declaring "the Asian cultural community on Canada's West Coast [to be] hot, hot, hot" (Chris Dafoe, "East Heats West," *Globe and Mail*, May 3, 1997).

Analysts of "rimspeak" have pointed out how its practitioners tend to posit the Pacific Rim as the quintessential postmodern space, all mobility and global access, but in describing the region's characteristics still adhere to entrenched binary constructs derived from orientalism or frontierism. Nevertheless, three remarkable recent collections of critical essays—*What Is In a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik (1993), *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, eds. Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik (1995), and *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (1996), the first published by Westview Press, the remainder by Duke University Press—go some considerable way toward disentangling not only the corporate rhetoric of "rimspeak" but also the cultural studies lingo posturing as its analytic superior: "Too much of cultural studies, in this era of uneven globalization and the two-tier information highway, can sound like a way of making the world safe and user-friendly for global capital and the culture of the commodity form" (Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake, "Introduction," *Global/Local*). Working from a variety of perspectives ranging from anthropology and geography to politics and history, and drawing on literature, film, journalism, polemic and other forms of discourse, the essays collected in these three volumes remain alert to social injustice and uneven modernization, to orientalisms revived or re-invented, and to energetic localisms which insist on formulating their own imaginary, "transnationalization, that master-narrative of globalized production" (Wilson, Dissanayake 4) notwithstanding.

Thus, Karen Kelsky discusses alternatives to the *Madama Butterfly* myth which, with its vision of the East as feminine, mysterious, and passively ready to give up its riches, continues to influence Western economic thinking, as headlines such as "Wooing the Orient: With Cash Reserves and Growth Rates on the Rise" (*Ottawa Business Life*, April 1988) or "Westerners [Are] Told Far East [Is] Glittering with Opportunity" (*Calgary Herald*, 13 Feb 1988) will readily attest. Kelsky, an anthropologist, describes the phenomenon of

the "yellow cabs," that is, Japanese women who aggressively pursue *gajin* men in Hawaiian and other resorts, in deliberate provocation of Japanese patriarchy and the deference expected of women within it. Kelsky, however, does not idealize this phenomenon into an act of feminist defiance, but refers to "the forces of commodification [that] can dominate even as they liberate desire" (Karen Kelsky, "Flirting with the Foreign: Interracial Sex in Japan's 'International' Age," in *Global/Local*). Donald Nonini, in "On the Outs on the Rim: An Ethnographic Grounding of the 'Asia-Pacific'" (*What Is In a Rim*, 161-82), agrees with bell hooks and, more recently, Inderpal Grewal's contention that the study of travel has privileged Western concepts of leisure and culture traffic and has failed to investigate involuntary mobilities such as those enforced by labour inequalities or political unrest. Travel and tourism are also one of the bones of contention in the fiery and very important ongoing debate between anthropologist Joyce Linnekin and the Hawaiian sovreigntist Haunani-Kay Trask over questions of cultural appropriation, as chronicled in Jeffrey Tobin's "Cultural Construction and Native Nationalism: Report from the Hawaiian Front" (*Asia/Pacific*).

Perhaps the most illuminating observations in the context of the Hong Kong turnover and its impact on the Pacific Rim occur in the geographer Katharyne Mitchell's essays in *Asia/Pacific* and *Global/Local* on changes in the city of Vancouver. She speaks about the results of a massive influx of immigration and of the emergence of a new global citizen (although her observations here seem to generalize the experience of a proportionately small number of extremely privileged individuals). She also investigates the systematic challenge to unexamined racial prejudice initiated by research initiatives like the Laurier Institute. Drawing on a wide variety of phenomena, Mitchell's work eschews the facile conclusions about the turnover that the press all too often reiterates and instead develops the case of Vancouver into a paradigm of multiculturalism as a policy "not naturally emancipatory, but [one which] must be constantly monitored and interrogated" ("In Whose Interest? Transnational Capital and the Production of Multiculturalism in Canada," *Global/Local*).

I read these books with relief, finding in essay after essay a patient attentiveness to the complexities of cultural identity and exchange, and an equally impressive determination to expose racism and exploitation, however well disguised they might be. E.-M.K.

Zhàozhou Congshen

Can't step twice
into the same river, Visiting
Professor Herakleitos said.

Zhàozhou rose. Sir, he said, far
over your head there,
treading flowing water,

or standing in the middle
of your one-inch square
of dry rock,

five thousand miles from the closest
shore, where
else do you expect to step?

Quite, said Herakleitos,
and how often
can you step there?

Left right left, sang Zhàozhou,
marching out the door.

Russell Thornton

The Curtain

Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?
William Blake, THE BOOK OF THEL

. . . *the blurred touch through the curtain.*
W.B. Yeats, THE LETTERS

In the soundless travelling dazzle
of the afternoon sunlight

after the rain and mist have disappeared,
at a turn in the creek where it has come to run level,

the quickly swaying water
is the movement of your waist.

In its cold longing, the water is uncovering you,
drawing a curtain aside,

and drawing another over you
in a deepening clarity—

the way my hands, as you let the blurred touch
interpret the light, and veil you

in the dreaming of the flesh,
find a caress.

So you may become bright, you become dark again,
darker than before.

The creek turns, and flows through itself,
and frees the loss beyond loss

of the water's pure searching,
hides, and binds it.

Miguel Mota

The Tyranny of Words
Malcolm Lowry's *Tender Is the Night*

When in 1949, in Dollarton, British Columbia, Malcolm Lowry turned from the novels and short stories he had in progress to work with his wife Margerie on a filmscript, the massive project that suddenly inspired him became central to his career as a writer and essential in his struggle for personal spiritual redemption.[1] What began as a brief treatment grew by the spring of 1950 into a 455-page typescript adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*.[2] "We have become possessed by *Tender Is the Night*," Lowry wrote in a September 1949 letter to his contact in Hollywood, Frank Taylor, ". . . I myself have never felt so creatively exhilarated since writing the better parts of the *Volcano*" (*Cinema* 19). Though the Lowry filmscript retains many of the characters and some of the situations of Fitzgerald's story, it nonetheless differs markedly from it. Among numerous re-writings, there are lengthy, completely original sections dealing with Dick Diver in New York and on a mercantile ship to Europe, a dramatically revised ending, and an overall Expressionist filmic aesthetic that aligns the script much more with Lowry's other writings than with Fitzgerald's novel. Lowry's manuscript was the only major piece of writing that he completed after *Under the Volcano* (1947); yet until its recent publication it remained a relatively obscure, eccentric document.[3] Even a recent reviewer of the published script, though generally praising the screenplay, nevertheless suggests that Lowry undertook the task of adapting Fitzgerald's novel as a way of avoiding his own writing (Binns 37). And for more explicit corroboration of this kind of indictment, we have biographer Douglas Day's comment that it

was the later opinion of Frank Taylor—an opinion which Day does not contest—that Lowry "had taken on the scriptwriting chore as an excuse not to do his own work" (Day 422).[4]

The scarcity of critical writing and support surrounding the filmscript is indicative of the way in which response to a text, what Gerard Genette has called the *horizon d'attente* of the reader, is to a significant extent determined by an assessment of its generic classification. To suggest that Lowry was unable to do both *Tender Is the Night* and his "own work" is to distance the filmscript from Lowry's other fiction and imply a hierarchy within Lowry's body of writing in which the script is accorded secondary status. In fact, Lowry's *Tender Is the Night* is a serious and significant literary work, and any insistence on first labelling it "simply" a filmscript and then categorizing that genre as implicitly inferior denies the text both its multi-generic status and its important connections to Lowry's concerns as a writer. By limiting the script within generic boundaries, it becomes possible to emphasize its conventional shortcomings.[5] Such criticism, however, posits an actual film produced out of, but separate from, the physical writing contained within the text. A different and more productive study of the script must first examine the writing that such a film would displace, a writing that in this case is highly self-reflexive and passionately involved with the conditions of words themselves. The fact that Lowry had Fitzgerald's ready-made material in front of him undoubtedly functioned as practical impetus for Lowry's sudden obsession with the project at this time. The realization, however, that he was faced with having to transform someone else's words into his own vehicle for self-representation also exacerbated Lowry's anxieties about language and self-authorization. For in the script Lowry most clearly gives expression to his ambivalent and troubled relationship with the written word and looks to the different medium of film as the means by which he might successfully overcome the predicaments and exigencies of linguistic representation. The filmscript is thus essential to an understanding of the fiction of Malcolm Lowry, accentuating concerns with which Lowry continually struggled, in particular foregrounding and illuminating his central obsession as a writer: the individual's arduous encounter with language in his desire to represent himself.

Brian O'Kill has called attention to what he terms a "strangulated hyper-articulacy" in the writings of Malcolm Lowry: "We witness an intense struggle with language: a man not knowing which language to use, not even

confident that he speaks any language, feeling himself to be in a small curious linguistic recess, having great difficulty in writing at all, sometimes wishing that he were free from 'the tyranny of prose'" (180). One way in which Lowry attempts to overcome this tyranny is to embrace language fully in all its excesses. Lowry loved words, and he took pleasure in pushing them to their limits. But while Lowry embraced language, he also feared it. He was made anxious by its contradictions, its ambivalences and vicissitudes, its inescapable, uncontrollable interpretations. For all his obvious enchantment with words, Lowry also saw them as a threat.

This struggle is often explicitly dramatized within Lowry's stories. In *Under the Volcano*, for example, the sign in the garden—LE GUSTA ESTE JARDIN QUE ES SUYO? EVITE QUE SUS HIJOS LO DESTRUYAN!—both in its literal meaning and in the Consul's "misreading" of it,[6] functions as a graphic linguistic reminder of the threat under which the Consul lives, a threat here manifest at least in part by the very strangeness (to English eyes) of the words on the sign. (Significantly, these are the final words of the novel.) In a related context, it is the Babel of voices in the bar Farolito during the novel's final scenes, with seemingly disembodied words appearing to literally fly at the Consul from all sides, that prefigures the Consul's demise. Similarly, in both *October Ferry to Gabriola* and "The Forest Path to the Spring," signs threaten to control, or at least significantly affect, the protagonists' lives.

Such dramatic manifestations of the threat of words are evident throughout Lowry's work, but this anxiety more significantly haunts Lowry at a broader level of writing. In a June 1950 letter to his Vancouver friend Downie Kirk, Lowry expressed his fascination with Ortega y Gasset's notion of man as "novelist of himself" (*Selected Letters* 210).[7] And in a 1953 letter to his editor, Albert Erskine, he spoke in detail of "Ortega's fellow, making up his life as he goes along, and trying to find his vocation" (*Letters* 331). Lowry hoped that his belief in this notion of "man as novelist of himself," in "Ortega's

fellow," would allow him to escape becoming a character in someone else's novel. But he also understood all too well the inescapable, inexorable fact that these fictions or constructions of the self, however protean, however much they might purport finally to be the product of an autonomous, authoritative subjectivity, existed nowhere but in language and were thus vulnerable to appropriation by other voices, subject to other discourses of authority. In a suggestive reading of Lowry's association of writing with

self-entrapment and death, Patrick McCarthy has recently shown how the Consul in *Under the Volcano* fears the completion of writing because it will signify his loss of control over the self-identity that is constructed within it (45).[8] This certainly accounts for the Consul's refusal to rest on any one of the series of provisionally held rhetorical postures within which he lives. Undoubtedly, Lowry himself dreaded the same loss of control. But if on the one hand he celebrated language's open-endedness, even its indeterminacy, as a way of avoiding closure and thus subjection, on the other hand Lowry, who sought to write himself in and through his writings, simultaneously feared the destabilizing, the loss of grounding, of self that such indeterminacy would inevitably effect.[9] Though words were Lowry's necessary tools in the process of his self-making, those same words would nonetheless threaten the self's control and authority as the author became subjected by and to language. Thus, while Lowry at times celebrated the open-endedness of language, he also feared for the self caught in language and defined along with everything else as a component in the discursive field. In 1949, in his and Margerie's shack at Dollarton, mired in the composition of *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid,* a kind of gloss on the writing of *Under the Volcano* and a text which would come to illustrate the inherent difficulties in the notion of "man as novelist of himself," Lowry turned to the filmscript of *Tender Is the Night.*

Among his examples of methods available to writers in their search for voice, O'Kill cites what he calls a "style of transcription." This he defines as "using language which is, or professes to be, objective. . . . [The writer] can do this by putting into his work apparent transcriptions of external reality—the language of public notices, signposts, menus, advertisement hoardings" (181).[10] By the time Lowry began working on *Tender Is the Night,* he had already made use of signs, posters and advertisements in his writing, most notably in *Under the Volcano,* and would do so again in *October Ferry to Gabriola.*[11] In the filmscript, he contextualizes and justifies the use of such graphics and insists on their effectiveness on numerous levels. "Cinematically speaking we might indeed here be right back in the phantasmagoric world of Murnau," Lowry writes of his use of signs. In the filmscript, as in Lowry's other work, these graphics include words themselves. But because the envisioned final product in this case is a film, these words take on a peculiarly significant status.

According to Lowry's view of his own work, no part of the project was inessential to its intricately planned structure. It is possible to make a distinction, though, between writing which appears intended as background (though still significant) material, perhaps to remain unnoticed by the majority of viewers, and writing which is clearly foregrounded. Many of the references in the script to film titles, to names of plays on theatre marquees, to road signs, etc., fall into the former category. At times, however, Lowry positions words on the screen so that it is impossible to miss their physical presence. There are numerous instances throughout the script of such use of the written word. When, for example, we first see, through Dick's memory, Dr. Dohmler's sanatorium in Zurich where Nicole has been brought by her sister Baby, the script dramatizes Nicole's condition through the use of words on a written report:

> The camera starts forward to focus on the report, and we see what is written, small, but coming closer and larger as we move in. First we see it as over Dohmler's shoulder, written in Gothic German handwriting. Before we have grasped this it has turned to French as we move up towards it:
>
> Diagnostic: Schizophrénie. Phase aiguë en décroissance.
>
> Before we have read even this much it has changed into English so that by the time we have come up to it we can read it clearly:
>
> Diagnosis: Divided Personality. Acute and downhill phase of the illness. The fear . . .
>
> The other words are blurred and while we are reading, the words Divided Personality have changed into the one word Schizophrenia, their anglo-Greek and more terrifying counterpart. The other words all drop away, and on the screen, surcharged with horror and menace, accentuated by music, and coming straight out of the screen at us, the one word:
>
> SCHIZOPHRENIA (*Cinema* 93; UBC 144)

Clearly here the words themselves are meant to overwhelm the viewer's consciousness.

Similarly, in the script's long New York sequence, the electric headlines that rotate round the top of the Times Building provide Lowry with countless opportunities to emphasize the materiality of words. The screen becomes engulfed by contemporary headlines which, as Dick watches, inevitably begin to act strangely:

> IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES MAY . . . (the news can't make up its mind, adds incongruously) OSWEGO NEW BRUNSWICK . . . OUTBREAKS OF . . . It is standing like this when Dick looks up from his newspaper; everything suddenly blacks out save the ID of ideological at the very beginning and the EGO of Oswego; then, for a few seconds, either the Times Building goes mad or Dick has a delusion:

while the EGO stays where it is, the ID swoops up to it in a trice to try and get past: another ID comes swooping round the other side of the Times Building in the reverse direction—and at this moment it ceases to behave like the news at all, and behaves in the flashing dancing manner of a frenetic frenzied illuminated advertisement in perpetual metamorphosis, and for a moment the EGO is caught between the two IDS but still holding its ground: not merely that, but coming up on the left the sentence about the senator from Idaho has repeated itself in a flash, then blacked out leaving only the ID of Idaho and SUPERCARGO, which instantly changes to SUPEREGO; simultaneously yet another ego has been coming round from the right so that the EGO is caught between the SUPEREGO as well, so that the hammering lightning dispersal of the words is something like:

ID - SUPEREGO - EGO - SUPEREGO- ID

Yet the EGO still holds. (*Cinema* 168; UBC 297-98)

Though, in the best Lowry tradition, this may be overdone, there is no denying the impact that the sheer size and physicality of the words themselves would have in a movie theatre.

My final example is drawn from an earlier scene in Paris after one of Nicole's breakdowns but before the impending crisis that forces her back into the sanatorium. In their Paris hotel room, Dick receives telegrams from both Baby Warren and his old colleague, Franz Gregorovious, urging him to invest in a Switzerland clinic. Here, in a typically Lowryan nod to silent film, the words take the form of subtitles, commenting on the action on the screen. Soon, however, the words once more begin to acquire a life of their own:

Meantime, on the screen, almost before we have finished with the word "Warren," all the words save the word "agrees" vanish, against which word other single words continually changing and approaching in the same manner, keep sliding up as if trying to get past, while "agrees" refuses to move, so that the effect, though it is horizontal and not vertical, is as below, the word "reason" having been taken from Baby's uncondensed telegram:

BANKER AGREES
GREGOROVIOUS AGREES
REASON AGREES
LIFE AGREES (to which is added now)
FOR NICOLE'S POSSIBLE BENEFIT

On the screen now a DIS suddenly inserts itself between the AGREES and LIFE and the POSSIBLE disappears so that it reads:

LIFE DISAGREES FOR NICOLE'S BENEFIT then, the first two words disappearing:
FOR NICOLE'S BENEFIT then, the last word disappearing:
FOR NICOLE which is replaced by, suddenly:
CHANCE YOU HAVE AWAITED ALL YOUR LIFE to which is added:
FOLLOWS condensed to:
LIFE FOLLOWS
Dick: (on the phone as this last is appearing below, though he has not

> stopped talking more than a necessary moment or two here) Absolutely final . . . We'll be glad to see you. No, I said glad. G for Grand Guignol, L for Lanier, A for abracadabra, D for damnation. Glad. (Dick hangs up, throwing away the last words in the act.) (*Cinema* 127-28; UBC 230-31)

On one level, of course, the words in these scenes are intended as graphic expressions of Dick's consciousness, what Lowry sees as the consciousness of humanity. The words atop the Times Building enact a herculean, universal psychological struggle while simultaneously dramatizing Dick's particular predicament. Similarly, the words from the telegrams convey Dick's crisis in which (as yet unaware that the two are inseparable) he must choose between personal freedom and responsibility, with key words—LIFE, TIGHT, FREE, STOP—apparently shifting their allegiance at will. Insofar as these words operate in this manner, their function is largely thematic, determined to serve the purpose of the narrative.

Yet these words on screen acquire additional significance which has little to do with the actual narrative, though much to say about Lowry's relationship with words themselves. In his introduction to his recent study of writing in film, Tom Conley argues that writing can induce "a linear reading of an image, but its own nondiscursive traits can jostle or complicate its meaning enough to make of its signs a tabular, pictural, even tactile ensemble of letters" (xi). Its own form, in other words, can alienate the viewer/reader to the extent that the word itself can be analyzed graphically. This view of the written word is in fact suggested by Dick's own breaking down of the word "Glad" into each of its components: "G for Grand Guignol, L for Lanier, A for abracadabra, D for damnation. Glad" (*Cinema* 128; UBC 231). By laying bare its composition, Lowry encourages us to confront the word as a constructed object, an entity unto itself, which can be broken apart and played with: "G for Grand Guignol, L for Lanier," etc. Apart from any of their other possible meanings, then, words become concrete objects on the screen and enter into relationships with human individuals, relationships in which they not only function as expressions of those individuals but also at times as their masters. The word on screen in the Lowrys' script, then, often represents what we may call the tyranny of the object.

Though the idea of the malevolence of objects and their power over the individual can be traced back to nineteenth-century reaction to the mechanization of everyday life, this obsession with objects also has its antecedents in silent film.[12] As John Barlow has pointed out, where early American films

(Chaplin's, for example) found comedy in the struggle of individuals with objects, the German films of the 1920s, particularly the Expressionist films which Lowry so loved and which so clearly influenced his script, used objects to "express the tragic hopelessness of the human predicament."[13] "Individuals," Barlow argues, "fight with the objects that challenge them in the American movies, and we laugh; they are overcome by them in the German movies, and we shudder" (135).

This ambivalence surrounding the relationship between object and individual is central in the *Tender Is the Night* filmscript. Though it may not make us laugh, for example, there is certainly comedy of a different sort in the portrayal of one of the most significant objects in the script, the Divers' Isotta. Intended to replace the incest motif of Fitzgerald's novel, Nicole's car accident (in which her father is killed) is meant to convey, superficially at least, the origins of Nicole's illness. Later, the car takes on further ominous overtones when Nicole, during one of her breakdowns, is responsible for a serious accident during the family's return to Switzerland. Yet the car also allows Lowry to explore the possibility of freedom and hope. While the Isotta represents illness, doom, and menace at the story's beginning, it finally stands as the sign of Nicole's freedom when she drives, alone, from the beach to the Villa Diana near the end. The car becomes that which marks the transformation from damnation to redemption.

In the case of the word, though, the relationship between object and individual is more ambiguous and uncertain. Certainly, Lowry's camera often appears obsessed with words, specifically with words as objects. Barlow has pointed out that in Expressionist film, "[t]he camera tends to dwell on certain objects . . . and the actors hover about them, handle them, even seem to submit to them, as if the force that moved the action and determined the characters' destinies were contained in these things" (137). At the level of plot, it is Baby Warren's letter to Dick in Glion (*Cinema* 113; UBC 20-01), asking him to escort Nicole back to Zurich (after Dick has apparently completed a successful emotional break from Nicole), that initiates Dick's fate and precipitates much of what follows. But it is the pervasive presence of words on screen and their seemingly overbearing effect on both characters and viewers that in the Lowrys' script best exemplifies the attempt to represent the tyranny of objects. For although these words are often intended as graphic articulations of internal consciousness or struggle, just as frequently they appear to exert control over the individual, in effect subjecting him or her.

Seen as a pictural surface, as Conley has argued, "the letters of a title can be broken apart, splayed and recombined," and he detects in such activity the freedom of the viewer "to see writing as a compositional design that has everything—as well as nothing—to do with what is meant" (xi-xii). But though he might at times encourage such playfulness, Lowry never allows us to forget the tyranny of the object itself. He finally forces us to confront the words on the screen as objects ("visual weapons" he calls them in his notes (30)), objects over which no one seems to exert any control, as is suggested by Lowry's practice of pairing them in the script directions with active rather than passive verbs: "words . . . keep sliding up"; "'agrees' refuses to move"; "DIS suddenly inserts itself"; "POSSIBLE disappears"; "the ID swoops"; "the EGO still holds"; "the news can't make up its mind." The self's subjection to language is here represented to the extent that words reveal their own independence and superimpose themselves upon the individual. Once given expression, language appears to take on an autonomy that at times threatens to dictate the individual's fate and authority.

Dramatized here is a struggle between self and language in which the latter threatens to subject the former, a struggle that in Lowry's case translates into an anxious fear of losing control over his own life-writing. He had come to literally dread *Under the Volcano*'s power over him, its threat to in effect rewrite him as the Consul.[14] With the filmscript of *Tender Is the Night* he hoped to refashion himself as the heroic and redemptive figure of Dick Diver.[15] Yet he seemed now to doubt that he could accomplish this within the medium of words. The difficulty lay for Lowry in the heterogeneity and elusiveness of the written word, with its formidable challenge to the authority of the coherent, individual author. Never hesitant to take advantage of the possibilities offered by his modern technological world, Lowry quickly seized upon the film camera as the most appropriate vehicle through which he believed he could successfully put the object back in its place, thereby guaranteeing the self's coherence. The written word would not stand between him and his self-making.

In his portrayal in the filmscript of the relationship between the word/object and the individual, Lowry finally embraced a paradox. As we have already seen, he attempted to present a kind of allegory of the struggle between the writer and his words, dramatizing the latter's ability to subject the author, thus breaking down the traditional stable relationship between self and language. At the same time, by turning to the medium of film, as I

will now try to show, Lowry articulated a desire to affirm and celebrate the authenticity of the object (including the word as object) on the screen. In so doing, he hoped to correspondingly posit the authenticity of the self and attempt to re-establish its stability.

In the filmscript Lowry reveals his desire to embrace film as the medium which would allow him to transcend the play of language by apparently solidifying the boundaries of the written word and reaffirming the primacy of his own authority. Not surprisingly, Lowry stands precariously balanced between two opposing views of cinematic articulation, and he expresses a wilfully self-contradictory attitude toward filmic representation. Though, as one would expect given his predilection for Expressionist representational strategies, he argues that film manipulates, amplifies, transforms whatever stands before the camera, Lowry nonetheless repeatedly insists on film's capacity to mechanically record the fullness and plenitude of the profilmic event, to provide an objective rendering of the material world. In this he resembles those who like Siegfried Kracauer claimed that through cinema viewers could recover the "crude and unnegotiated presence of natural objects" (164), or who like André Bazin insisted on the "essentially objective character" of the photographic image (13).[16] As Kaja Silverman has argued, such faith in the "indexical relation of the camera to the profilmic event"(9) signals a desire to compensate for the loss inherent in the cinematic process—that is, the loss of the physical presence of the object itself. It was precisely this apparently lost stable object, with its necessarily corresponding lost coherent subject, that Lowry wished to recuperate.

Muriel Bradbrook has suggested that Lowry "learnt from the cinema the art of suggestion, of collocation without comment, and transposed it into his own medium" (67). The assumption that film can "collocate without comment" seems questionable, for it denies the role of selection, apparatus and so on, in the filmic process. Yet Lowry often perceived film as functioning in precisely this innocent, disinterested way, revealing a desire for immediacy and lack of mediation perfectly in keeping with his insistence that film images could be uniquely profound because "fully realised—ten pages of condensed naturalistic technique at a blow each time they appear" (*Notes* 15). As Paul Tiessen has noted, Lowry's "faith in the film image's ability to move man seemed to surpass his faith in the ability of the literary image to do the same" ("Statements" 123). And this ability to move seemed for Lowry

to exist first and foremost in what he perceived as film's capacity to fully present to the audience the object already there, whole and complete. Lowry insisted on an existential bond linking the cinematic image to the phenomenal world. Like Kracauer, he believed that the power of the camera lay in its ability to seem as if it had "just now extricated [natural objects] from the womb of physical existence and as if the umbilical cord between image and actuality had not yet been severed" (Kracauer 164).

This is made explicit in Lowry's other attempt at an adaptation for film, the 27-page screenplay for his short story, "The Bravest Boat."[17] The script begins:

> In long shot we see the rip-teeth of the winter-white mountains across the bay; closer in, the combers riding in toward shore; and close-up, what was there all along: the single flare of a rain-drenched blossom on a flowering tree (1)

The script directions here emphasize the role of the camera in recording what was already there, "what was there all along." The blossom, in other words, is presented as possessing an autonomous (and poetically romantic) existence outside of the camera's perspective. The camera has no need to "create" the flower; it simply records its presence. Immediately following, during a description of a squirrel, the script directions insist that "He is neither afraid nor curious; above all, he is not cute; he is merely a squirrel" (1). Again here the camera functions as objective observer and recorder; it remains non-judgmental, non-creative. Elsewhere, "the camera" is depicted as noting "without comment" (6) and as capturing suddenly also "another sound which we haven't been aware of although it has been going on" (2).

Such statements of belief in the camera's intrinsic objectivity have their precedent in the filmscript of *Tender Is the Night* and its accompanying notes. In the latter, Lowry expresses his trust in the ability of the camera to capture the "superior power of the outer world," the "objectively real" (*Notes* 43). The very first scene in the script, calling for a panoramic shot reminiscent of the opening passage of *Under the Volcano*, begins with "a tremendous shot of the night sky, the stars blazing" (47), and moves gradually down to the words on a sign in a field, establishing the camera's capacity to capture the "objectively real" in all its fullness. Soon after, in one of the script's early scenes, Lowry writes that "the feeling should be . . . of such intensive realism that we feel ourselves actually to be on the beach" (52).

Lowry was searching for a grounding of meaning and thus of self that he believed the camera's function as a mechanical recorder of the material world could provide. Though he saw the concreteness of the cinematic

image as the basis upon which he could build a more subjective vision, the focus on the materiality of the film image remains throughout. Though he believed that "the camera's evocative power is much greater than that of words, for it can say several things at once" (60), he also believed that such evocation could somehow be controlled in a film in a way that would be impossible to emulate on the written page.

The medium of film afforded Lowry the opportunity to ground his process of self-making in the "objectively real." And it allowed him, in a way that he felt the written word never would, to enact a process of shared human experience in the apprehension of the filmic depiction of the material world. Whatever room for the individual imagination the camera allowed, Lowry believed that film had the unique capacity to involve a community of viewers in a shared reality. Furthermore, he insisted that there was an "inevitability" in the movement of film (Tiessen "Statements" 132). In his notes, he spoke of the audience as being "at the mercy of the momentum of the film itself" (*Notes* 9), and in *October Ferry to Gabriola*, his protagonist, Ethan, responds thus to the inexorable progression of the film: "And against such a predetermined doom, as against one's fate in the nightmare, finally you rebel! How? when the film will always end in the same way anyhow?" (133). Implicit here is a desire to equate the inevitability of the film's movement and images with the inevitability of the viewer's interpretation of those images, an interpretation which in effect would be formed for the viewer by Lowry himself. Lowry believed in film's inherent capacity to capture and convey a specific reality that can—indeed must—be shared by all viewers, in a way that the written word cannot hope to emulate. Thus his insistence that film concern itself (as the script of *Tender Is the Night* did) with the "ennoblement of man." If film had a unique ability to move an audience and to unite them in the process of their apprehension of the film image, then the film of *Tender Is the Night* would take full advantage of that ability and move that audience upwards, taking Dick Diver and Lowry with them.[18]

Much has been written about the "cinematic" qualities of Lowry's writing, but most of this commentary too easily elides the significant distinction in Lowry's mind between the written word and the film image. Lowry's movement from page to screen reveals a desire for autonomy and authority, for a more strict interpretation of "reality," based on an insistence (however naive or emotional) that the film image denotes the "real" more immediately and effectively than the written word. If Lowry was to be successful in his literary

self-making, he needed to arrest the meaning of the literary work. Yet by the simple though complicating fact that he undertook this task in language, such a project was impossible. This led him into a paradoxical engagement with the idea of the object. While he sought in the filmscript to represent the word as object and dramatize its threat to the self, by turning to the medium of film he simultaneously placed his faith in what he saw as the film camera's unique capacity to ground meaning in the object through its depiction of the profilmic event.

Thus, though the object on the page (as word) represented that against which Lowry struggled in his self-making, the object on the screen became the means by which he sought to stabilize and ground meaning and, by extension, the self. Whereas words—his own words—would always remain elusive and thus threatening, film would offer a chance for personal redemption arising out of the shared experience of author, character, and audience. In place of a solipsistic, weary Consul literally battered by words, Lowry foresaw the figure of Dick Diver sacrificing himself heroically amidst a community of viewers who would be transported by the simple force of the medium itself. The fact remains, of course, that the film of *Tender Is the Night* exists nowhere but in words, thus obviously complicating Lowry's hopes for such redemption. Yet though Lowry's camera thus never achieves more than the status of metaphor, Lowry's filmscript nonetheless remains as his most ardent, even desperate, expression of an inevitably unfulfilled desire to overcome "the tyranny of prose."

NOTES

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1 Though the figure of Margerie Bonner Lowry (as editor and collaborator) problematizes all that has been published under Malcolm Lowry's name, in this case the issue of authorship is particularly relevant. The title page of the filmscript includes both their names, and in an April 1952 letter to Albert Erskine at Random House in which he expressed hopes of using the script to meet the publisher's demands for a book, Lowry voiced concern about the "joint authorship" (*Selected Letters* 308). Although in this paper my interest lies in what I take to be Malcolm Lowry's personal stake in the project, I want to acknowledge here that Margerie Lowry's involvement in the writing of the filmscript challenges the attribution of the work to Malcolm Lowry alone. Consequently, when I refer to Malcolm Lowry, I do so keeping in mind that this construct is here constituted by the relationship between two people.

2 Lowry's filmscript was never filmed. It has recently been published in edited form in *The Cinema of Malcolm Lowry*. The original typescript is housed in the Malcolm Lowry Collection at the University of British Columbia Library, Box 23, Folders 15-17.

References in the text are to page numbers in both the edited script (as *Cinema* pg.) and the original manuscript (as UBC pg.). The script was circulated in Hollywood by Lowry's contact in the industry, his former editor Frank Taylor. Among others Taylor tried to interest MGM and David Selznick, whose own interest in Fitzgerald's novel led to the eventual production of *Tender Is the Night* by Twentieth Century-Fox in 1962. Taylor has recently indicated that he sent Lowry's script to Selznick and scriptwriter Ivan Moffat after Selznick, who had earlier sold the screen rights to the novel to MGM, repurchased the rights. However, they did not, according to Taylor, read the script.

3 For good, though rare, early critical assessments, see Perlmutter and Tiessen, "Statements." Lowry's own extensive notes to the script (hereafter cited in the text as *Notes*) were published separately as *Notes on a Screenplay for F. Scott Fitzgerald's Tender Is the Night.* The volume features not Lowry, but a prominent photograph of Fitzgerald on its cover.

4 Though Gordon Bowker, Lowry's most recent biographer, briefly discusses the script, he nevertheless refers to it as a "disruption" (Bowker 461). In the book's index, *Tender Is the Night* appears under Fitzgerald's name but not Lowry's.

5 Binns is justified in criticizing Lowry's *Tender Is the Night* as filmscript. As a screenplay, it in no way measures up to the "professional" Hollywood work of writers such as Faulkner or Fitzgerald (nor, for that matter, of countless "lesser" Hollywood hacks). Yet to judge it only or principally on those terms (as Binns himself pointedly does not) would be to do Lowry's work a disservice. When Faulkner wrote *The Road to Glory* (1936) or Fitzgerald *Three Comrades* (1938), they were composing, first and foremost, professional Hollywood screenplays and they were doing so from within a specific community that structured the conventions within which they could work. Lowry's *Tender Is the Night*, though ostensibly a filmscript, recklessly breaks generic boundaries (though it must be granted that such adventurousness is often the result of ignorance of both the craft and the practical demands of the Hollywood production machinery). In his afterword to *The Road to Glory*, George Garrett cautions us not to overlook "the essence of the creative process in movie making—that it is corporate, that it is political, also, in the sense that the final product is a choice arrived at through constant negotiation and compromise," and he adds that "all this was obviously understood by William Faulkner" (164). Whether it would have been understood also by Malcolm Lowry had the filmscript raised more interest in Hollywood is impossible to say. He referred to the work as a "blueprint" and repeatedly assured Frank Taylor that he understood that the script might need further work. But unlike Faulkner or Fitzgerald, Lowry was far from the world of Hollywood exigencies (he had unsuccessfully tried to get work in the industry in 1936), and his writing reveals little awareness of studio politics. Rather than a "professional" screenplay, then, Lowry's *Tender Is the Night* may best be described as a celebration of a cinematic imagination enacted within a literary context that never hesitates to break generic conventions.

6 Literally, the sign translates as "Do you like this garden that is yours? Prevent your children from destroying it!" The Consul portentously misreads it as "You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy!" (*Under the Volcano*, 128).

7 Lowry is alluding to the "History as a System" section of Ortega y Gasset's *History as a System and Other Essays Toward a Philosophy of History*. On Lowry and Ortega, see Grace "Consciousness" and Virgili.

8 On the relationship between writing and death from which McCarthy partly draws his argument, see Foucault, "Language to Infinity" and "What Is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice.*

9 In "Language to Infinity," Foucault speaks of the inescapable excessiveness of language:

"Excessive because language can no longer avoid multiplying itself—as if struck from within by a disease of proliferation" (65). But he also questions whether such excess does not lead to a loss of "ontological weight." Language's excess makes it "fated to extend itself to infinity without ever acquiring the weight that might immobilize it" (65).

10 In the context of Lowry's writing as autobiography, Sue Vice reminds us of the "realist paradox that more words bring greater verbal opacity," "minutely detailed description moves steadily *away* from its object" (124). One way in which Lowry attempted to solve this problem, Vice argues, was to allow the story to be told at times by "an assemblage of autonomous words" (125), such as those on signs, posters, etc.

11 For discussions of the typographical qualities of *Under the Volcano*, see Costa, Tiessen "Malcolm Lowry and the Cinema" and Grace *Regression*. Both Tiessen and Grace note the influence of film in this context.

12 "Things, inanimate objects," John Barlow has argued, "played an important role in the silent cinema" (135). This is particularly true in German films of the period. "The Germans," Lotte Eisner writes, "used as they are to savage legends, have an eerie gift for animating objects. . . . Animate objects always seem to haunt German narcissism" (23).

13 For lucid, insightful discussions of Lowry and Expressionism, see Grace "Malcolm Lowry" and *Regression*.

14 See Jewison: "*Under the Volcano* both validates the concept of world as text and shows how, if the will is destroyed, the library destroys life. The author/narrator is writing, but the protagonist, because of a lack of will, has succumbed to the fate that Sigbjørn Wilderness will later experience in 'Through the Panama'; he has allowed himself to be written. He has become product instead of process" (144). Lowry feared becoming product himself; he feared being written, in effect, by and through the Consul. But he also was made deeply anxious, I argue, by the possibility of losing self-coherence and stability through process.

15 Lowry's Diver differs significantly from Fitzgerald's. While in the novel, Dick is left to a vague, somewhat dingy end, moving from one small American town to another, in the Lowrys' script he exits in a blaze of glory, going down valiantly and heroically in a sinking ship after having enacted the ultimate sacrifice for Nicole. Fitzgerald critics familiar with the Lowrys' filmscript have not been generous toward the choice of ending. Phillips writes: "One must say in favor of the Lowry script that at least it did not reduce the plot line of the novel to superficial melodrama, as Fitzgerald's own scenario tended to do. On the other hand, the ending which Lowry supplied for his film version of the book is not any more acceptable than the one that Fitzgerald himself had devised for his own adaptation of the novel" (139). (Fitzgerald had himself collaborated with Charles Warren in 1934 on a film treatment of *Tender Is the Night*.) Dunlap adds that Dick's "obscurely drawn-out purgatory in the American hinterlands is a far more terrible and appropriate" kind of ending than that constructed by Lowry (285). Dunlap fails to notice that a "terrible" end is not what Lowry has in mind for his Dick Diver, and neither critic considers Lowry's own significant emotional and psychological investment in the revised ending.

16 "For the first time," Bazin adds, "between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man. . . . In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced" (13).

17 Composition date for the screenplay is unknown. Day writes that Lowry completed the short story by November 1, 1951 (426). It was accepted for publication by the *Partisan Review* in 1954, and it is likely that the script was written after this. As late as 1956, in a

letter to David Markson in which he alludes to the story, of which he is "very fond" (*Letters* 385), Lowry makes no mention of the script. The screenplay is at UBC 7-18. References are to page numbers within the script.

18 See Falk: "Lowry's plans for a 'drunken Divine Comedy' rested on a schematically simple pattern of self-transcendence, a ceaseless striving upward" (54). In a "preface" to the filmscript, Lowry asks: "Is there any valid reason for literature and the movies to portray man as ignoble and mean? How have we got that way? . . . Surely one place for this to be corrected is the film" (8). "Man *wants* to be drawn upwards. (Even should the protagonist go downwards)," Lowry argues (10), projecting onto the audience his own desire for redemption. The manuscript of the Lowrys' preface (UBC 23-14) consists of about twenty-eight pages, mostly typed but also hand-written in parts. There is no conclusive evidence as to whether a final typed draft was ever composed and sent to Taylor. The preface, introduced and edited by Paul Tiessen, has been published as "A few items culled from what started out to be a sort of preface to a film-script."

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Acetone

I am a pig
because before
they made lampshades
        out of you
they made buttons
        out of me
dear Leonard

        and buttons
        and knife handles
        and wallets

before Auschwitz
there was Cypress Hills
before you
there was me
and my broken teeth

cold

I dream
rasp breathing of pneumonia
in, rattle, in, rattle, in, rattle
outside my bedroom window
minus forty-six Celsius
straw bales bury doghouse
I count nine mutts
vicious throat strangle, yelp, heavy growl
like penguins getting to centre of pack
white black body roils up and out
survival of fittest in action

biggest dog's the breather, guardian of my sleep
ever the *alpha* porcupine expert of the quilled nose
very lucky as *betas* of canine brotherhood
bite off the hollow needles
always he runs just in front of my left tire
so I must drive   not too fast   a half mile
someday black's luck will run out

Kevin McNeilly

His Own Best Narrator
Franz Boas and the *Kwakiutl Tales*

In the last ten years or so, ethnography has become an increasingly self-conscious discipline. Anthropologists express a keen awareness of the problematic dynamics of cultural appropriation within their work, and have begun to pay much closer attention to the part played in this dynamic by the act of writing itself. They have come to recognize themselves as authors, and thus as agents within their own texts. The problem of subjectivity in ethnographic material has been acknowledged since the emergence of anthropology as an academic discipline, but it is only recently that the anthropological observer has been understood as a rhetorical construction, and not simply a misleading "outside" presence to be filtered away. The question of authorship, as Clifford Geertz points out in 1987, is "not usually acknowledged as a narratological issue, a matter of how best to get an honest story honestly told, but as an epistemological one, a matter of how to prevent subjective views from colouring objective facts" (9). The ethnographer's task, for Geertz, has become not simply a matter of pretending to an impossible objectivity or transparency, but instead a matter of discovering how such self-representations and cultural blurrings necessarily occur:

> Getting themselves into their text (that is, representatively into their text) may be as difficult for ethnographers as getting themselves into the culture (that is, imaginatively into the culture). . . . But in one way or another, however unreflectively and with whatever misgivings about the propriety of it all, ethnographers all manage to do it. There are some very dull books in anthropology, but few if any anonymous murmurs. (17)

Writing, even writing which aims to withdraw from any sense of "signature" or subjectivity, by its nature constructs an authorial presence, and it is particularly crucial to attend critically to this presence in ethnographic discourse which is concerned with the analysis and interpretation of other cultural discourses. "No longer a marginal, or occulted, dimension," James Clifford writes in 1986, "writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter" (2).

Alongside Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss, Geertz cites Franz Boas as one of the "founders of discursivity" in anthropology, a man whose name comes to "set the terms of discourse in which others thereafter move" (19). James Clifford calls Boas the "last virtuoso" of a coherent anthropology, apparently untroubled by such discursive concerns (4). Little attention has been paid in assessments of Boas's work to the role played by his discourse in shaping his conception of anthropology, a conception which lies at the root of much contemporary ethnographic practice. But his own discourse occupies a crucial and fundamental position in his examinations of other cultures. To engage Boas's rhetoric of self-representation is to challenge, in part, claims of objectivity and strategies of cultural appropriation not simply as epistemological quandaries, but as issues of anthropological discourse itself. Boas's work on the Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly Kwakiutl) culture of Northwestern British Columbia occupies a particularly prominent position in his *oeuvre*, and the discursive strategies which Boas employs in that work evidence his own authorship or "signature" as much as they explain anything of Kwakwaka'wakw life. His *Kwakiutl Tales*, published in two bilingual series as one of his crowning achievements in cultural recuperation and analysis, are not merely narratives translated from their Native originals so that they may be more clearly understood and assimilated by curious anthropologists; they are narratives of this anthropological process of discovery and disclosure, and their "scientific" discourse, rather than offering some sort of an objective stance for Boas, provides a means by which he constructs himself figuratively as the protagonist, the hero, of his own anthropological texts.

Much of the critical rhetoric surrounding Franz Boas and his work stresses indebtedness. He is regarded as "the most important single force in shaping American anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century" (Stocking 1). Claude Lévi-Strauss, in a 1980 interview for a

television documentary on Boas, credits him with being one of the last intellectual giants of the nineteenth century, who set in motion all the diverse currents of contemporary anthropology and whose like will not be seen again; he repeats this same praise in his "conversations" with Didier Eribon, and affirms that "all of American anthropology issued from him" (36). Marshall Hyatt, in his recent biography, argues that Boas's life and thought had "a profound impact on many diverse elements of American society," and is keen to stress his pioneering work on race, particularly with regard to black studies, and his political and social activism:

> As an intellectual, Boas attacked the misusers of science who promulgated theories of racial inferiority based on alleged mental differences between ethnic groups. As a scientist, he directed the professionalization of the field of anthropology, overseeing its evolution from an amateur hobby to its maturity as a rigorous academic discipline. As a social activist, he strove to eradicate prejudice and bigotry from American society, in an effort to ensure the promise of American democracy was articulated in reality and practice. (x)

Boas is widely credited with a sense of egalitarianism and of ethno-cultural relativity, a sensitivity to the nature of difference and otherness which informs most anthropological practice. In actively campaigning against ethnocentrism, Boas gives rise to a certain cult of himself as an anthropological hero, a seeker of justice and liberty, a man of truth.

In a 1990 special issue of *Canadian Literature* on Native writing, Robert Bringhurst describes Boas as "a kind of midwife" at the creation of a written literature for West Coast Native peoples, and credits his publications of Tsimshian and Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw texts with the salvation of West Coast native cultures:

> To Boas and to other scholars whom he provoked, promoted and funded, we owe most of our knowledge of Northwest Coast mythology: the most coherent and intricate body of mythical thought that has been salvaged from the pre-colonial world of northern North America. (New 36-37)

This admiration and this feeling of indebtedness are carried over in the work of a number of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw writers as well. David Grubb, himself a Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, composes a Kwakw'ala dictionary in which he revises Boas's complex orthography to suit the needs of Native writers; he sees Boas and his collaborator, George Hunt, as setting in motion a grand scheme of cultural recovery which the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw people themselves must continue:

> Much was done by Dr. Franz Boas and Mr. George Hunt in the early part of this century, but even their tremendous efforts have only made a dent in the culture and language of the *Kwagulh.* It is now up to the Indian people themselves to continue where Boas and Hunt left off. (1-2)

Boas appears to be responsible for the rescue and continuation of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw language and culture, and has provided the means for cultural security which the Native people could not, at the time, provide for themselves. Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw story-teller Chief James Wallas (at least, in the English-language versions of his tales by Pamela Whitaker) includes among his own work texts and prayers salvaged by Boas as examples of the "beauty" of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw culture; Boas seems to be credited with the same degree of "authenticity" as a Native narrator (Wallas 13). Boas's *Kwakiutl Tales* thus occupy a particularly important place in Native Canadian literature, in that they are the most complete and sustained record of Native writing that has been preserved in text. As transcriptions of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw story-telling from almost one hundred years ago, they provide, in part, a basis for a Native literary tradition in this country, a tradition which is currently in the process of recuperating and rejuvenating itself.

Boas is praised repeatedly both as an advocate for and as a saviour of many significant North American ethnicities and cultural groups which might otherwise have suffered extinction under the pressures of a white, Eurocentric cultural dominant. He has apparently been justly cast by his readers and admirers in the role of the scholar-hero. However, this role remains a suspiciously rhetorical effect, a construction of the reception of Boas's work by the North American and European scholarly and academic establishment. It is not that he has been overpraised for his accomplishments, which are clearly significant, but that such praise cannot be allowed simply to overwrite or obliterate the intercultural and interracial dynamics of power and politics that such operations of "salvage" and advocacy entail. Boas's work, whether with Native peoples, with Blacks or with any of the numerous American ethnicities, describes an ongoing encounter with the cultural Other. And the very fact of this alterity, of the "otherness" of those for whom he writes and speaks, depends on a well-defined sense of white American normalcy, and on well-drawn boundaries between "us" (the "we" with whom Bringhurst implicitly sides, for instance) and "them."

Without exception, Boas positions himself in his writing self-consciously (despite his own origins as an immigrant) as a member of the white

American cultural dominant, but as one who, while acknowledging his part in an oppressive socio-cultural hegemony, sympathizes with those who are "different." As he makes clear in his "Preface" to *Race, Culture and Language* (1940), this difference must no longer be regarded simply as an obstacle to national or cultural or personal autonomy for "Americans," but forms a crucial part of "our" freedom:

> Growing up in our civilization we know little how we ourselves are conditioned by it, how our bodies, our language, our modes of thinking and acting are determined by limits imposed upon us by our environment. Knowledge of the life processes and behaviour of man under conditions of life fundamentally different from our own can help us to obtain a freer view of our own lives and of our life problems. (v)

Anthropology provides the means for the liberation of the human mind. This liberation depends on a direct encounter with the Other, and upon a recognition of the contingency and relativity of "our own" value-systems and ways of life. Throughout his *oeuvre,* Boas is highly conscious of the relativity of cultures and of cultural values, and the purpose of anthropology, as "liberation," is to cultivate an awareness of this relativity. In an essay on nationalism (first published in *The Dial* on March 8, 1919), he defines two sorts of cultural reification in the concept of national "feeling": an intolerant "imperialistic nationalism of political and economic power" which "sets its own kind over and above every foreign form of feeling," and what he calls "the nationalism of ideas," which, by contrast, "endeavours to understand and appreciate foreign patterns of thought" (*Race and Democratic Society* 122). It is this second sort of nationalism which anthropology—as an organ of "understanding" which returns the foreign, respectfully, to the domain of "our civilization" for the sake of "our own" edification and identification—seeks to instill.

In a 1930 essay on the "Religion of the Kwakiutl," Boas describes his suspicions about systematic anthropology, arguing in favour of analyses of particular phenomena over abstract "scientific" generalizations regarding cultural "laws" and systems, generalizations which, because of the amorphous and shifting nature of human cultures, will always be inadequate descriptors:

> Generalizations will be the more significant the closer we adhere to definite forms. The attempts to reduce all social phenomena to a closed system of laws

applicable to every society and explaining its structure and history do not seem a promising undertaking. (Cited in Codera 66)

Stressing the intractability of cultural difference for anthropologists, Boas also points out that any attempts to generalize about the attributes of "culture" result only in an ascription of the observer's own values to the culture being observed, and in a reification of these particular values, an overwriting of this valuable difference by likeness and sameness: "Absolute systems of phenomena as complex as those of culture are impossible. They will always be reflections of our own culture" (*Race, Language and Culture* 311). Nevertheless, Boas is determined to argue the significance of anthropology in terms of just such an overwriting, a systematic and ultimately coherent discovery of "ourselves" in these apparently unassimilable differences.

Boas remains committed to the notion of personal and national progress, and of self-recognition, through the scientific, responsible encounter with the Other:

> The character of a person is moulded by the social medium in which he lives and his ideals and wishes reflect the national temper. Progress results from the peaceful struggle of national ideals and endeavours, and from the knowledge that what is dear to us is for that reason not the best for the rest of mankind, that we may cultivate our most valued ideals without ever harbouring the wish to impose them on others—unless they adopt them by their own free will. . . . In other words, the background of nationality is social individuality that neither brooks interference from other groups nor possesses the wish to deprive other nationalities of their individuality.
>
> Conceived in this way nationality is one of the most fruitful sources of cultural progress. (*Race and Democratic Society* 121-22)

All of Boas's work on the socio-cultural construction of race—his anti-determinist stance and his critique of the abuses of power in the name of racial conquest—is predicated on a recognition of the productive, positive aspects of cultural difference for nationality, particularly American nationality.

Education in anthropology offers, for Boas, a potentially just and balanced re-configuration of the American dream itself, as he makes clear in a 1937 interview in *Forum*:

> We are not free from [racist] tendencies in the United States. . . . The obvious remedy is education—teaching the indisputable fact that colour of skin, class, religious belief, geographical or national origin are no tests of social adaptability. . . . It is time to restate the beliefs of the founders of this nation and drive home

> again the democratic principle that a citizen is to be judged solely by the readiness with which he fits himself into the structure and by the value of his contributions to the country's development. (*Race and Democratic Society* 14)

The ideology of personal "liberty" encoded in the American Declaration of Independence, which has laid the foundation for the American dream of social progress and freedom, lies closely behind Boas's own program of "liberation" through anthropological work. The call for liberty and equality here, however, are subtly belied by Boas's demand that good citizens "fit into" the hegemony of American culture. Boas's sense of freedom and openness actually involves a promulgation of conformity, a demand that American ideologies of "liberty" be recognized as universal truths. But the "structure" and "value" which Boas lauds are in fact by-products of a White cultural dominant, and are largely controlled and determined by White interests. The racism which he deplores in the United States likely depends as much on this same demand for conformity as it does on any ethnic struggle for power, and the call for liberty tends to mask the fact that those who promote "freedom" are the same persons who have propagated the politics of racial inequality in the first place.

There is a latent contradiction in Boas's work, which is as concerned with a citizen accommodating American social structures as it is with a citizen's critical enlightenment as to the contingency of these very structures. Boas is fairly careful to assert the national bounds of this imposition, such that, while Americans may choose to live out their civilizing dream of freedom and progress, this dream need not be applied imperialistically outside of the nation. Problematically, however, the "foreign" cultures with which Boas deals, especially the West Coast Native and Black cultures, lie within the domain of North American governments and nationalities, and the very otherness which Boasian anthropology demands we productively encounter is, in national terms, an internal otherness, one which is not so easily exempted from the homogenizing pressures of White American nationalism. Boas himself is well aware of this problem, and his own negotiations with the "American" Other, the counterbalancing of "us" and "them" within his anthropological texts, forms the dialectical underpinning of his proper work. And it is this negotiation, this troubling dialectic, which informs the anthropological writing, and manifests itself vestigially in Boas's writing as narrative.

Paul Ricoeur, writing in 1955, points to the potential anxiety in given human responses to cultural difference:

> When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and . . . when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with destruction by our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just *others*, that we ourselves are an "other" among others. (*History and Truth* 278)

Ricoeur ascribes to this alterity a fundamental importance. In *Oneself as Another*, almost forty years later, Ricoeur suggests that the Other is implied intimately in selfhood *per se*, and, in a rather astute pun, that "one cannot be thought without the other" (3). Otherness, in other words, is a constitutive element of self-determination, whether personal, cultural or national. While Boas is much less willing to describe this "freer view," this cultural alterity, as rigorously as Ricoeur, he nevertheless points to a certain socio-cultural interdependence based on economies of difference, a hesitant dismantling of the (White, American) cultural monopoly which had levelled ethnicities and dissimilarities, and a valuation of difference itself as a force of cultural liberation. But Ricoeur is willing to ascribe to human existence a *fundamental* alterity, while Boas, finally, cannot; the collective "we," for Boas, remains intact and vigorously assimilative, in the sense that it takes cultural difference productively into its own sphere, as valuable knowledge to be possessed, as a form of self-knowledge. For Ricoeur, identification, the comfort of self-sameness, is upset by such an encounter, while for Boas this encounter, mediated by a scientific anthropology, can only intensify socio-cultural and/or national bonding, as we recognize the limits and capacities of our bodies, our languages, our thoughts both through and against these others.

"The Kwakiutl have no better friend than I," wrote Boas in a letter to Chief Hemasaka of the Fort Rupert Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw in February of 1899. "Whenever I can, I speak for you" (Stocking 127). But what exactly do such texts of friendship, as the book of speeches Boas sends to the chief to prove his loyalty, offer these cultures whose substance they incorporate and whose cause they take up? Advocacy, speaking for others, is conditioned by a sense of palimpsest, of one voice overwriting another, even as it articulates the ghostly presence of those for whom it speaks. Attending the texts and voices of a given culture, the reader is pointed back, by the anthropologist's gesture, to some of the essential stylistic or constitutive elements of that culture. A given Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw text, for instance, appears to position itself as a bounded, fixed artifact, as utterances from a distinct elsewhere, as an emblematic otherness which can be regarded, categorized, interpreted and

known. But there remains, in the advocal text, a troubling multiplicity. Knowing and interpreting have already been inscribed into the advocal text, by the time it reaches its audience, in the gesture of advocacy. Who is it who speaks in or through such a text? In what sense are the tacit "outsiders" given any legitimate voice, a voice which, in Boas's American context, must be rendered culturally acceptable or understandable in order to achieve its mission of education and liberation? And if, in following his task, the advocate Boas renders these texts readable, how can he not violate the *positive* estrangement, the liberating foreignness, which he aims so dearly to safeguard in the first place? The familiar and the strange, the Other, are by Boas's definition incommensurable. How can Boas's advocacy possibly refrain from transgressing his own first principle, namely to maintain the sanctity of the other, not to lapse into an "imperialistic" American nationalism? Advocacy, by its very nature, runs dangerously close to appropriation.

Anthologies of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw texts and films of the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw compiled by Boas make no excuses as to their authorship; they are owned by Boas himself. The title frames of his documentary footage *The Kwakiutl of British Columbia,* taken in the autumn of 1930, ascribe the contents of film directly and immediately to him, in bold capital letters: "BY FRANZ BOAS." His two series of *Kwakiutl Tales,* published as part of the *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology* which he himself edited, are similarly ascribed on their title pages: "By Franz Boas." Despite the internal crediting of the tales to various native authors, it is Boas himself who assumes the position, not of collector or translator or even editor alone, but of author. These are his tales, his films, his cultures. Boas adopts the proprietary stance of the field anthropologist obsessed either with safeguarding or with shepherding "his" people, those whom he has discovered and to whom he alone has the rights of access. One might recall here Boas's outrage over Edward S. Curtis's 1914 film on the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, *In the Land of the War Canoes,* which he saw as distortional and subjective, or his repeated requests to George Hunt not to offer information about Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw culture to rival anthropologists. To get to the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, one must read through Boas, look through Boas's lens.

Boas's presence in his work, as photographer, editor, transcriber, collector, translator and writer, is articulated as a shadow. In his films of the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, for instance, his subjects, positioned in obviously contrived situations, demonstrate certain aspects of their daily lives. They stare

into the camera, and speak to someone apparently behind the lens; they draw our attention, in effect, to the presence of the filmmaker, of a shaping intelligence, someone in charge of our point-of-view, who is Boas himself. At times, the viewer catches a glimpse of his shadow in the lower portions of the frame; the sun behind him, the outline of his human form and camera appears in the peripheral foreground, and one is suddenly made aware that this film is not simply a documentary record, but a carefully guided and contrived perspective on the cultural material it presents. The presences of photographer and camera intrude upon what seems at first to be pristine, unmediated footage. A sense of the anthropologist inhabiting and shaping what he offers as objective evidence builds throughout the film. Each action, game and dance is categorized and separated off from any naturalistic context by Boas's titles; single events in what appears to be the "daily life" of the Kwakwaka'wakw are isolated, and the viewer watches, as the titles indicate, first a woman at a "Cradle," then a man "Woodworking," then "Drilling," then a woman "Weaving Mats" and so on. People are made to perform tasks without reference to the purpose or function of these tasks. In effect, the film imposes anthropological schema on the life of the Kwakwaka'wakw to the extent that it erases this life in favour of its own formal, organizational principles.

A clear example of this erasure occurs in a section of the second part of the film, dedicated to "Chiefs Boasting." Boas intends, evidently, to recreate some of the hyperbolic gesturing associated with potlatch and with copper exchange, and he places two chiefs on a road behind a row of houses in order to have them perform some of these gestures, however out of context, for his film. While the two are performing, two figures who seem to be women begin walking up the road toward the camera in the distance. As they approach, Boas suddenly cuts away, and they vanish before the chiefs go on, apparently allowed to pass, or simply asked to step out of the camera's way, while the camera is turned off. Boas wants no accidents of present, hybridized or Westernized Kwakwaka'wakw life to intrude upon his (almost) pristine, highly staged recreations. He wants to abstract certain instances, traces, of pre-colonial Kwakwaka'wakw culture for the sake of anthropological clarity.

A famous photograph taken by O.C. Hastings for Boas also encodes this sense of erasure. Boas and George Hunt, at the edge of the frame, hold up a blanket to cover the Western-style colonial buildings of Fort Rupert, and to isolate an image of a Kwakwaka'wakw woman spinning, to locate this

image, in effect, in an ahistorical, decontextualized setting (Halpin 4). In a commentary on his own representational aesthetic, Kwakwaka'wakw photographer David Neel argues that such hypostatizing photographs of Native people tend to perpetuate narrow stereotypes of Native peoples, either as "noble savages" or a "vanishing race," images which he deplores as dehumanizing and threatening (Neel 14). Citing the work, in particular, of Edward R. Curtis, Boas's contemporary and "competitor" for West Coast anthropological knowledge, Neel suggests that what these posed photographs of Native life actually offered the White cultural dominant of the time was a confirmation of their own superiority, held in sharp contrast to images "of a primitive human, existing like a hunting trophy or a fish in an aquarium" (16). These photographs may be "good art," Neel argues, art which adheres to the demands of a Western Romantic aesthetic of primitive nobility, but they also involve a sustained "campaign of misinformation" which has ultimately degraded Native culture, and locked it safely into a history of conquest and assimilation (18).

Both Neel and Marjorie Halpin, who provides an afterword to his text, distinguish between the work of Curtis, who encouraged the expression of "some individuality" and artistic personality in photographs, thereby deliberately skewing the representation of the Native life to suit the photographer's preconceptions, and the work of Boas, which situates itself in the "scientific" tradition and resists pictorialist impulses (186). Nevertheless, both Boas and Curtis resort to "bribery and deception" to appropriate sacred Native "artifacts" and to alter the Native realities they encountered to suit their anthropological needs (17). The "desired image," Neel writes,

> is moulded by adding props, deleting signs of contemporary life, and selecting background to correspond to White ideas of the "authentic" Native person. . . . A good deal of omission, selection, and propping was required to mould a publically acceptable image. There was a market for photographs of the noble savage, not the degraded heathen. (15)

While Boas may not have been so crassly commercial as Curtis, his representations of Native life were nonetheless determined by the demands of his own consumer culture. Halpin goes so far as to argue that "the attempted removal of non-native elements from their photographs" is in fact an assertion of directorial power, of control over their subjects, who, Halpin notes, show "few smiles and little evidence of presentational energy" (187). Boas's erasures, despite his pretence of objectivity and withdrawal, are in fact a

form of distortion that involves a calculated self-insertion into the seemingly untainted photographic frame. Boas is made present in his representations by his supposed absence; the colonizing mind enters the picture by gesturing to remove itself.

Boas also later used frames from his films in an exhibit on the Hamatsa Dance, but hired an artist to remove the western clothing of the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw worn in the film in order to give the images more of a primeval, pre-colonial appearance. The pre-colonial, in other words, is not simply to be collected in the vestiges of present Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw life, but must in fact be constructed imaginatively, conjecturally. And Boasian anthropology, despite Boas's objections to Edward Curtis, aims to perform just such an imaginative leap, as it attempts to discover or to invent (whether scientifically or not) what Boas calls, in an essay on Canadian ethnography, "the fundamental tendencies common to humanity" (*Race, Language and Culture* 341).

Authorial presence is manifested in Boas's texts paradoxically as a gesture of withdrawal. There is no actual withdrawal; after all, no such complete absenting of oneself from one's "own" signed texts could be possible. Boas's shadow casts itself across his texts as the appearance of a personal absence, of an objectivity. Boas's *Kwakiutl Tales* appear to be renderings of a number of voices; each is credited to a particular author or to a given tradition, and there is little obvious evidence of authorial mediation. They are presented as if in the form in which they were first told, translations accompanying transliterations of the original language on facing pages, so that the knowledgeable scholar may confirm the accuracy of the English renderings. Problematically, however, this objectivity is an illusion of the *Kwakiutl Tales.* The transliterations themselves are Boas's, as he makes clear in his preface to the 1910 series. Boas alone mediates all levels of textuality; the translations would naturally be accurate, then, given that both texts are by Boas. In fact, Boas claims all aspects of the texts as his own:

> The following series of Kwakiutl tales was collected by me on various journeys to British Columbia. . . . I have published a considerable number of myths written down by Mr. George Hunt of Fort Rupert, B.C., who speaks Kwakiutl as his native language. These tales were written under my direction, and the language was revised by me phonetically, the text being dictated to me in part by Mr. Hunt, in part by other natives. (v)

Despite his pretence of scientific objectivity, Boas remains the central shaping intelligence behind the recasting of these tales. They become his own stories.

But how is it that this ascription takes on a specifically narrative form? Boas has argued that the "fundamental problem" of the anthropologist is the description of the progress of cultures, and that the West Coast Natives provide remarkably favourable "conditions" for the fulfilment of this task (*Race, Language and Culture* 341). The Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw provide a nearly ideal context for the writing out of an anthropological master-narrative, the story of the discovery of these human fundamentals. But these "conditions," in so far as they require the manifest traces of pre-White civilizations, are themselves constructions of the anthropological mind. The collation of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw tales occasions the potential solving of a narrative problem: the heroic, scholarly task of solving this "fundamental problem," of doing anthropology, through the creation of anthropological *fictions* of the "basic tendencies" of humankind. Furthermore, Boas imposes on his collection of tales another narratological sequencing, a meta-narrative which overwrites the individual narratives he translates and recounts, a masterplot of anthropological discovery of which he himself is the protagonist. In his zeal for human (that is, chiefly American) "progress" and liberation, Boas uses the tales to tell his own story of how these tales lead him toward personal enlightenment, through a productive conflict with and assimilation of cultural difference, with otherness. The gaps of difference, of differentiation, whether merely cultural or essentially human, are closed by anthropology itself, as it seeks a positive productivity in its Western context by turning a relative cultural liberation into a holistic human enterprise. The anthropological becomes what Boas sees as the fully human, as the anthropologist assimilates and understands the differences of the peoples he studies. Boasian anthropology, despite its provisos, aims then to determine what this humanity is, and to impose its standards, as if they were universal, on those for whom it purports beneficently to speak. Boas's scientific commentaries on the tales are not static or atemporal, not strictly "objective," but narrate a progress toward the liberating resolution promised by Boas's own westernized anthropological ideals.

Boas's collation of two instances of the same Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw tale provides a clear example of this narrative in motion. In his second series of *Kwakiutl Tales*, Boas offers a 1932 re-telling by the same narrator, Charlie Wilson, of the story of "Scab," which he had already collected in 1900 for his first series of tales. In a note on the versions, Boas compares the two to each other and to an unrecounted version of the same story (a version to which

he alone has access) which he heard and transcribed in Alert Bay in 1890 (229). The purpose of this comparison, for Boas, is to offer, at a geographical and historical separation, evidence of cultural continuity. Continuity of occurrence, he argues in his 1910 essay on ethnological problems in Canada, is a key to the determination both of cultural traits and of deeper human psychological laws (the "fundamental tendencies common to humanity"), both essential goals of anthropology itself (*Race, Language and Culture* 342-3). The collation is an attempt to fill in the gaps, to overwrite difference with continuity, and to write his own efforts at achieving his goals across the texts of the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw stories.

"The two versions," Boas tells us, "are essentially the same in content except on two points," which he goes on to list (*Kwakiutl Tales New Series* 229). Boas attempts to construct a narratology of the folk-tale and to establish, in a localized abbreviated form, an essential structure for this tale; one might compare similar efforts, conducted on a much larger scale, of Vladimir Propp in Eastern Europe or of Claude Lévi-Strauss in his *tristes tropiques*. Boas offers a page-long schematic for the two stories, suggesting non-essential divergences and deeper continuities. At certain points, he even alludes to a more general morphology of the "Kwakiutl tale," as when, for instance, he notes that a particular figure in the later version is a man, while by "analogy with all other tales she should be a woman" (230). Boas's emerging narratology becomes a narrative itself, a meta-narrative, as he intrudes into his material, commenting on and modifying its essential elements to suit his own synthesizing purpose. "I presume in a more complete version [of the story]," he interjects, "that [Scab] would have hidden in a tree and been discovered by the reflection in the water. Here the remark that the water was like a looking glass seems uncalled for" (230). This commentary is not, as it might initially seem, a passing critique by an erudite anthropologist, but involves a wilful, deliberate intrusion into the body of the texts, a presumptuous re-narration of these same texts in terms more amenable to the anthropological mission of understanding and progress. Boas announces his own presence, asserts himself in the first person—no longer as mere shadow—in order to assume direct control of the process of discovery.

Boas intrudes into the stories themselves as well, as translator and as a kind of stylistic mediator. In most of his prefaces to the various collections of tales and verbal artifacts collected from the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, Boas clearly positions himself as transcriber, translator, editor, and even author; it was

he, after all, who gave this language its first system of orthography, who in effect gave birth to its written form. And as the source of this system, its control remains ultimately in his hands, as he makes clear in a 1913 introduction to George Hunt's manuscripts:

> [George Hunt] was taught to write the language by Franz Boas in 1891, and by constant correction of his method of writing, the system of spelling applied in the present manuscript was gradually developed. Nevertheless the phonetics required revision, and everything written by Mr. Hunt up to 1901 inclusive has been revised by Franz Boas from dictation. The materials contained in the following volumes [of manuscripts] have been published with such changes in the spelling, and a few times also in grammar, as seemed necessary.

The appeal to scientific necessity and the tone of objectivity that Boas strikes here by, among other things, referring to himself in the third person, suggest that the orthography fabricated and overseen by Boas, as well as the interlinear glosses and translations in the text, are in effect as transparent as possible to the Kwakw'ala "mother tongue" and consequently offer direct ethnographic access to that language through the supposedly corrective filter of Boas himself. Boas, as writer, positions himself as the singular advocate for Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw culture in North America.

This illusion of transparency, however, is precisely that: an illusion. While Boas wants to appear as scientifically objective, his texts, by their very nature, involve considerable intrusive meddling. Key evidence of such an intrusion into his material, of the presence of Boas's shadow self in the *Kwakiutl Texts*, appears as a narratological feature of his translations themselves. In his prefatory note to *Kwakiutl Texts*, a 1902 parallel text in Kwakw'ala and English, published by the American Museum of Natural History and accredited to both Boas and Hunt, Boas offers some explanation of his own methods of translation:

> In all these texts the ever-recurring quotative, "it is said," has been omitted in the translation. In the English translation, words enclosed in parentheses have been added for the sake of clearness; words enclosed in brackets are literal translations of the corresponding Indian text, but should be omitted on the English text. Indian proper names have been translated with considerable freedom to avoid encumbering the English translation with the strange phonetics of the Kwakiutl language. (4)

Boas intends to make his translations as "clear" as possible, by which he means not, as one might expect, to offer access to some sense of the stylistic or narrative texture of the original, but instead to remove any traces of

awkwardness, strangeness and "encumbrance" of the phonetics or syntax of Kwakw'ala that may intrude onto the English translations. He wants to present a smooth, readable, English text. In his famous essay on "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin cites Rudolph Pannwitz to suggest that translation ought to allow the essential "foreignness" of the original to emerge in the target language:

> "The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge." (Benjamin 81)

For Benjamin, this deliberate commingling of languages is necessary for the work of re-creation, liberation and discursive "flux" which he understands as the prerogatives of linguistic artifacts. Boas refuses this commingling in his translations, preferring instead to reinforce the contingent boundaries of his own English, to make the Kwakw'ala into good English, and thus to eliminate any destabilizing "foreign" elements in his language.

This normalizing carries a certain force in any translation, but where the text aims for scientific objectivity, its presence is particularly troubling: why, after all, ought the anthropologist attempt to remove all the awkward traces of "foreignness" when, according to Boas himself, the goal of comparative ethnography of the sort he undertakes with the Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw is precisely to enlarge mainstream American knowledge and to "liberate" the American mind from its ethnocentric confines? These stylistic encumbrances, the trace elements of Kwakw'ala, ought to be the focus of any anthropological interrogation of these translations, of the importation of Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw culture into the American mainstream.

Benjamin recommends both literal (and thus agrammatical) word-by-word renderings of original texts into target languages, and suggests that the form of translation which best comes to terms with the "primal elements" of language itself is the interlinear gloss (79, 82). Boas, in his 1910 primer on Kwakw'ala (called *Kwakiutl: An Illustrative Sketch*), provides such a double text (using his own system of orthography) to give some sense to the English reader of the textures and word-orders of Kwakw'ala speech, which he then follows up with what he calls a "translation" of the work into a normalized English (553-557). In *Kwakiutl Texts*, which had appeared sev-

eral years earlier, he follows a similar procedure, offering the first text with interlinear glosses and then all subsequent works as parallel texts, with the transcribed Kwakw'ala originals on the left of the page and a normalized English version on the right. Once students have mastered the first literal rendering and are somewhat familiar with Kwakw'ala syntax and Boasian orthography, Boas asserts that they will be more readily able to identify parallels between Kwakw'ala and English texts (4).

But these "parallels" are deceptive; instead of allowing scholarly access to the original, they obscure the Kwakw'ala in a form of anglicization. By erasing the literal stylistic markings of the Kwakw'ala, Boas forces his readers, in learning the language, to anglicize it. Instead of sensing the Kwakw'ala impinging on their anglocentric world-views, in other words, comparative readers end up imposing the forms and shapes of English onto the Kwakw'ala, effectively reversing the "task" of translation that Benjamin and Pannwitz describe. The cultural "liberation" that Boas wants to bring about is thus merely a cloaked form of linguistic imperialism, an overwriting of the "foreign" text by an English cultural dominant.

To demonstrate how this anthropological overwriting is realized in Boas's translations, I want to look briefly at the sample text he supplies in his Kwakw'ala grammar, and then turn to the *Kwakiutl Tales* themselves to suggest some of its narratological consequences. Here is an extract from the middle of the text as Boas provides it, with his own glosses:

Hë´x·ʻidaEmʻlā´wis	G·ē´dEn	lā	qā´sʻīd	lā´xa	Wāk·!ēgēsLa.
That began referred to it is said	G·ē´dEn	went	walk-began	to the	Bent-Bay its name.

Lā´ʻlaē	dō´xʻwaLElaxa	ʻnEqā´ts!aqē	xwā´k!una	mExē´s lāq.
Then it is said	he discovered the	ten long	canoes	hollow things on beach at it.

Lā´ʻlaē	ʻw´unʻwīg·aq,	laE´mʻlāwis	lā´x	ā´Laʻyasa	xwā´xwak!una.
Then it is said	he hid back of them,	then referred to it is said and so he went	at	landward of the	canoes

Boas's subsequent "translation" normalizes the glosses, making them grammatical and recognizably English: "At once G·ē´dEn went to bent Bay. There he discovered ten canoes on the beach. He hid behind them landward from the canoes" (557). The most obvious emendation to the text is the expurgation of what Boas wearily refers to as the "ever-recurring quotative," which he transcribes as Lā´ʻlaē, "then it is said." To him, this term is apparently little more than a narratological tic which impedes the unfolding of the story

itself; his own narratology here, in other words, centres on event-content, and he regards such quotatives as incidental, of no consequence to the actual matter of the tale at hand. But such an assumption depends on a certain narrow notion of what it is to tell a story, or of what a story is. Given that the quotative is "ever recurring," it should be self-evident that it plays an important, even a key, role in Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw narration; where Boas, because of his own notions of what is essential here, chooses in translating to emphasize the mimetic and the representative in the tale, the "original" transcribed text, by employing some form of quotative in every sentence, points to a more diegetically-oriented sense of story-telling. The Kwakw'ala text emphasizes the process of telling itself, which suggests a very different role for story in that culture than Boas's content-centred renderings indicate. It is possible even to speculate, based on the stylistic evidence from the "original" texts Boas provides, that stories in Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw culture focus as much on the importance of the act of narrating as on what is narrated, a role which is obscured by Boas's ethnocentric re-tellings.

Such overwritings pervade the *Kwakiutl Tales*. For instance, in the first version of "Scab," Boas offers (in parallel with the Kwakw'ala "original") what appears to be a very straightforward rendering of a myth into English:

> Then he sat down with his child. He felt lonely. He felt really lonely. Then Scab spoke, and said to his father, "Don't long for me. I shall go to the other side of the beach." Then the child Scab started and went to the other side of the beach. He went to a river. He waded across, and went straight to the place where the dead sisters of his father were (buried in) boxes on the point of land. Then he took needles (of an evergreen tree) and put them in the fold of his shirt. Then he started and went into the water at the mouth of the river. He went straight down to the mouth of the river. (43)

His sentences here employ a predominantly simple syntactic form, which, along with the folkloric repetitions, makes them seem rhetorically to gesture back to a primitive origin. Boas clearly wants to offer some sense of the narrative style of the original, as Charlie Wilson told it. The aspect of the translation that one might take at first glance as intrusive, the parentheses which he has said he includes to clarify the meanings of the original, in fact make obvious the self-conscious presence of the anthropologist, and his apparent unwillingness to tamper with his source material. They indicate typographically for the reader that he is an editorializing presence here. Such intrusions deliberately disrupt the smooth surface of the text itself and confirm its hybrid state for us.

What is actually troubling here, however, are the numerous tacit emendations and smoothings that Boas does not indicate. His two parenthetical gestures cannot rhetorically redress, as they seem intended to do, the subtle narratological distortions that he has managed in this brief passage. Every sentence in the Kwakw'ala version, with the exception of Scab's speech, begins with the quotative "Lā´ʿlaē" (42). Boas makes a limited effort to gesture toward the narrative form of the original by occasionally beginning his sentences with "Then," but this practice is evidently capricious and hardly approximate to the texture and substance of the Kwakw'ala. (Boas may have taken his cue from George Hunt here. In the original manuscript transcriptions of this and other tales by Hunt, "Lā´ʿlaē" is rendered alternatively as "it is said" and "then," though it encompasses both meanings.) This hyper-use of the quotative may be peculiar to Charlie Wilson, but if one peruses the other tales, it becomes obvious that, while the quotative may not begin every sentence, its appearance is frequent, and Boas has almost without exception purged it from his text. The diegetic nature of the *Kwakiutl Tales* themselves has thus been altered, and in normalizing the text by erasing the "foreign" qualities of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw narrative practices, Boas has imposed his own notion of what a "primitive" story ought to sound like, and what it should contain. The anthropologist, as a seemingly objective "scientist," tends largely to discover in the Other his own preconceptions of what he ought to find, preconceptions which are informed not by the experience of so-called "primitive" cultures, but by the ideas of the Native that were current in American society at the time.

This erasure is closely akin to the elimination of colonial or "Western" detail in the photographs that Boas had taken at Fort Rupert. But here Boas has eliminated not simply the apparent Western European "contaminations" of Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw culture, but elements of that culture itself, those which do not conform to his own preconception of what a Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw story ought to sound like in English. He tends to substitute, on the level of style in particular, a narratology of his own making for one which might have been more "objectively" determined from the Kwakw'ala originals. This erasure still operates under the guise of objectivity, but now it is proactive, in the sense that it calls for the scientist not to be recordist but co-creator, maker. Boas himself, through his apparent withdrawals and clarifications, becomes a narrative filter, a mediating presence in his tales. By reshaping the narratology of the *Kwakiutl Tales*, he manages to mould the "Native"

stories to suit his own tonal and conceptual demands. The stories he rewrites are hybrids, as much his own as those of his appropriated subjects.

What the reader finds manifest in such texts as the *Kwakiutl Tales* are episodes, events, in this narrative process. Boas positions himself, finally, as if he were Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw—or at least, as he says, their finest friend—speaking through the stories he collects, correcting them to suit his own vision of who the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw essentially are. But instead of articulating cultural difference and diversity, Boas imposes his own anthropological framework on this work, so that speaking for others, in this case, becomes a mode of speaking for himself, and of narrating events in his own autobiography of progress and liberation through anthropology. The *Kwakiutl Tales,* despite their value as cultural artifacts, artifacts without which the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw would certainly be poorer, are indelibly overwritten by Boas's own personal narration, as he endeavours to construct his own ethnographic tale.

For Boas, the interplay between the normal and the strange which conditions his salvage and rescue of "other" cultures manifests itself as a narrative: not so much a cultural history—whether of others' or of his own culture—as an autobiography, a writing of himself into the position of the protagonist of the very texts and artifacts he aims to salvage, as the hero of his own life's work. The advocate and saviour described by his readers and interpreters is not simply the creation of a cult of admirers, but is based in Boas's own methods of collection, of transcription, and of rewriting. These methods, finally, subtend a decidedly narrative presence, a tale-telling which writes itself episodically into the interstices and the margins of the myths and stories Boas sought so ardently to preserve. The Native offers the White dominant of North America, with Boas as its key scientific and cultural representative, a functional counter-discursive space, in which the dominant discourse can discover itself as otherwise than it is, as fully self-conscious and fully known and articulated to itself, a space in which it can construct a "freer view" of its limitations, and thus assert its universal validity. In Boasian ethnography, the Native is "recovered" for the White cultural dominant, and installed in the position of the valuable Other, but an Other, this time, which cannot escape the determinations of the White dominant, which has been rewritten and overwritten by a narrative of White self-discovery.

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David McGimpsey

Too Much Slouching, Not Enough Slumping

I loved her but she made me forgo my plans
to become an airport minister:
those little bibles and those little vodka bottles
always in my linty, gabardine pockets.

The good lord helped me metabolize
but she made me check into a Minnesota clinic,
forcing me to go under an assumed name,
so I picked the unlikely sobriquet "McGimpsey."

What kind of name is that?
I told everybody it was all things European
and that I came from a long line of paprika millers
and disreputable computer salesmen.

And sooner rather than later I felt better anyway—
ain't it funny how butter melts away—
she made sure when she said she was off to T.O.
I could *feel* every single syllable.

Catherine Owen

Eros, 1911
(from a painting by Schiele)

As Freud coined the term,
Eigenbeziehung to encompass
the attachment to self, you

were slouched naked on a chair,
thighs ajar, in the first stages
of ecstatic discovery. Though

your face was not defiant, but soft,
simian, awash in hidden, Victorian
guilt. Though your body was limp,

unformed, excluded from feminine
reverence. Though your mind had not yet
crystallized the death-instinct. Still your sex

listened to the times, reared against them
its red and lambent weapon. Its honest organ.
In the throes of Sophocles' *frantic and savage*

master, you learned to counter blindness:
stoking a slow-burning fire, immense
and fixed in the apex.

David Heinimann

Ironized Man
A Jest of God and *Life Before Man*

I: Essay

I have always had more sympathy for Nick Kazlik, in Margaret Laurence's *A Jest of God*, and Nate Schoenhof, in Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*, than is usually reserved for them. I view them as *eirons* that Laurence and Atwood use to show how the problem of women's misapprehension of men contributes to the dysfunctional relationships their novels portray. Though Laurence and Atwood may not have intended the irony I ascribe to the creation of Nick and Nate, Linda Hutcheon's assertion of intentionality in irony can help us view them in a way not usually seen but useful for deeper understanding of the novels: "The major players in the ironic game are indeed the interpreter and the ironist. The interpreter may—or may not—be the intended addressee of the ironist's utterance, but s/he (by definition) is the one who attributes irony and then interprets it: in other words, the one who decides whether the utterance is ironic (or not), and then what *particular* ironic meaning it might have" (11). As difficult as ascribing intent is for post-structuralists, I can assert that Laurence and Atwood intended Nick and Nate to be as deserving of our sympathy as are the women they are involved with, and that without that sympathy the novels are only partially understood.

Hutcheon's intentionalist irony takes me a certain way in reading male presence in *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man*. To further structure my reading, I rely on the humanist and contingent irony defined by Richard Rorty. Both Laurence and Atwood write as Rorty's ironist as they portray the uncertainties that drive the characters of *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man*.

Rorty defines an "ironist" as "someone who fulfills three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself" (73). Laurence and Atwood test vocabularies of power through interactions of Nick and Nate and the women with whom they are involved. The proximity to reality at the end of each novel remains as ambiguous as at the beginning, but Rorty says we are left with a better understanding of the proximity when we see, through such novels, "the ways in which particular sorts of people are cruel to other particular sorts of people" as a result of "the blindness of a certain kind of person to the pain of another kind of person. . . . how our attempts at autonomy, our private obsessions with the achievement of a certain sort of perfection, may make us oblivious to the pain and humiliation we are causing" (141).

What I am looking at here, then, is how *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man* present blind cruelty in the attempt to achieve autonomy and how men need to rid themselves of their pain before they can be expected to respond to women's demands that men stop being such a pain. As curative demonstrations, *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man* are useful to compare for how Rorty's "private obsessions" create the (mis)understanding of men. Laurence's view of Nick is exterior only, through the obsessions of another, Rachel; Atwood's view of Nate is interior, through his own obsessions. With opposed agency yet similar outcome, the novels create a dialectic within which misapprehension can occur—and can be resolved.

Laurence in limiting the view of Nick Kazlik to perception through Rachel creates the impression that he has used Rachel, but with closer examination of Rachel's behaviour the impression is not entirely justified and is balanced by her personal difficulties, which Nick helps her overcome. Laurence ironizes their relationship to represent Rachel's need to escape the tradition she clutches, and Nick becomes the *eiron* in her realization of the need to let go. In *Life Before Man*, Nate becomes Atwood's means to show the consequences of the ethical misprisions of Elizabeth and Lesje, requiring that he, like Nick, also be read ironically. The term "ethical" itself could be wondered at here: I understand it as the description not of the *desirable* but

rather *what is*, as does Wayne C. Booth (8). Ethics does, however, prescribe the desirable when irony enters; Hutcheon locates ethics as the "something else that characterizes irony", beyond the unsaid: "irony involves the attribution of an evaluative, even judgmental attitude" (37). Innocence and guilt can be debated and attributed after the terms of debate are defined; the irony in *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man* shows those qualities in the relationships to emphasize the importance of definition before judgment. In both novels, it is not that the men abuse the women but that their presentation in the development of problem behaviour in the women makes them appear abusive. At the same time, Laurence and Atwood do not grant them complete innocence either. It is the distinction between that guilt and innocence that interests me here, the ambiguity of presence and agency in Nick and Nate.

The ambiguity of Nick's position is established when Rachel recalls that his eyes are "seemingly only friendly now, but I remember the mockery in them from years ago" (62). Nick's seeming friendliness is Laurence's signal that his mockery continues, and Rachel's failure to see that grounds her misapprehension of him, especially on the problem of acquiescence to control. Ironically, if much of Rachel's problem with control is situated in patriarchy, patriarchy's example of control permits her self-control, as when the prophetic Murray Lees says that her father "'had the kind of life he wanted most'": Rachel realizes that if her father "had wanted otherwise, it would have been otherwise" (124). The realization encourages her to begin living the life *she* wants, and despite feeling that "Women shouldn't phone men" (131), she phones Nick and begins to break the rules that have controlled her life. The realization also situates Nick as enforcing Rachel's continuing need to break those rules, set primarily by her mother, an ironic agent for patriarchy. Laurence, however, requires that Nick be seen as passive in Rachel's struggle—otherwise, a novel of female independence becomes, ironically, contingent on male consent.

Nick's reticence encourages Rachel to fantasize about him, and her fantasy establishes the basis for his unwitting control of her. Desperate to escape tradition, she denies the truth of her observation that he "doesn't reveal much. He only appears to talk openly. Underneath, everything is guarded" (85). The denial in the fantasy makes Nick the unwitting deliverer of the hard truth to Rachel about her self-deception. When Rachel succumbs to "dramatizing" him in order to make their affair "seem mysterious

or significant, instead of what it is, which is embarrassing" (86), he becomes "one of the hawkish and long-ago riders of the Steppes" (86). The image of rapacity reveals the innocence and passivity of Rachel's romantic naivety as it also puts Nick in a difficult predicament: if he really did behave as one of those riders, Rachel would be terrified. If Nick eventually appears to suit the image, he also leaves Rachel with more than he takes. Her benefit raises the historically recognized irony that difficult men are characterized as sometimes beneficial for women.[1] Laurence asks, as did Emily Brontë with Heathcliff, and as does Rorty in describing his ironist, what can be done to prevent that ironic agency.

In *Life Before Man*, the impression of Nate is established by his confusion over the trait that is considered primary and unique to Man: love. He realizes that, with Elizabeth, "He doesn't know what 'love' means between them any more, though they always say it" (14). His realization defines the novel's metaphor about love: absence of meaning leads to obsolescence, and the obsolete becomes extinct. If Nate loses the definition of what defines his species, he—and the species—is destined for extinction. The metaphor represents the ethical vacuum of the inability to take a position on an issue, as shown in Nate's finding it hard "to blame anyone for anything" (31). The metaphor makes us re-examine the anti-teleological relativism that defines popular culture's ambiguous ethical purpose and direction, an ambiguity found in the evolution of Nate's impression of Martha: "What he liked about her at first was her vagueness, her lack of focus, an absence of edges that gave her a nebulous quality," but when she becomes demanding, her pain makes it seem that "she's been dropped on the sidewalk from a great height and frozen there, all splayed angles and splinters" (34). Martha exists only as matter for Nate—she has no soul. Liking her for being vague, unfocussed, and nebulous, he also lacks position and a soul.

Yet Atwood presents positionality itself as a problem. Believing that his work as a lawyer compromised his intergrity, Nate decided to take "an ethical stance. Grow. Change. Realize your potential" (41). He stood on shaky ground, though: the pop human-potential movement, with its emphasis on the self, is as misapprehending of ethics as was the law distant from the social justice Nate thought possible in it. His pursuit of the answer only leads him to blame Elizabeth for his dilemma: "It's partly her fault. Half of her wants a sensitive, impoverished artist, the other half demands a forceful, aggressive lawyer. It was the lawyer she married, then found too conven-

tional. What is he supposed to do?" (41). Atwood here identifies the difficulty men have in meeting perceived demands that they be one or the other. A partial answer, as another question—what prevents being both?—only leads to the further question of what societal pressure made both impossible and caused Elizabeth's dilemma of insisting that he be just one or the other so that *she* could better define *herself* by either.

Definition through a man is Rachel's problem as well. Her passivity is evident in her response to Nick's voice, a sense-related concern similar to the sensualist ethic Atwood critiques. Rachel likes the simple *sound* of Nick's voice and wants "just to sit here beside him, in this security and hear his voice, whatever it happens to be saying" (105). Paradoxically, Rachel's state of security is her greater danger: listening only to the sound and ignoring the sense, she is most open to deception. If Laurence here cautions women to be wary of the seductive deception of a man's voice, it also appears that a man is responsible for a woman's seduction when the real problem is her inattentiveness. Desiring security, she seeks protection with a man. In making him protector, though, she assigns him responsibility to determine the bounds of protection. The determination can be a sacrifice of liberty and even amount to repression. Rachel is unaware of that and will suffer for it, but Nick is also victimized in being made the mistaken repressive agent.

Nate lives with a dilemma similar to that which Rachel imposes on Nick. His mother looks down on him from her pedestal, having engendered insecurity because of the contradiction between her forbidding him to fight in self-defence when a boy and her willingness to "kill" over bigotry (83). Respecting her yet confused by her hypocrisy, he can only respond in fantasy with the hostility toward women that the dilemma generates in him: bathing while Elizabeth glares at him, he imagines diving for a raw sponge and "combat with a giant squid" whose tentacles enwrap him, and he has "Nothing to think about but getting free," which he does by "Plunging the knife right in between its eyes" (105). Yet, though hostile, he follows his mother's injunction and does not plunge the knife where he really wants to, and he still desires her presence in his lovers, as when Martha perceives Elizabeth's continued influence on Nate and berates him for it: "'When are you going to get your own bellybutton back, Nate'" she scolds, sneering with a metaphor that recalls Elizabeth's marrying him as easily as putting on a shoe: "'I bet she even ties your goddamned shoelaces for you'" (233).

With Nate in this dilemma, Atwood can use him as a foil to qualify the

status of the women around him. Neutral—maybe "neutred" is better—as he is and as his mother believes he should be, Lesje finds him attractive yet ambiguous in his "making a gift of himself, handing himself over to her, mutely" (116). Yet her attraction to being able to "do something" (116) with him, just as he implicitly let Elizabeth form him, is frustrated by his continued value for his marriage. The frustration challenges Lesje's own ambiguous ethics, which are pop-oriented like Nate's and founded on the view of her women's group that spouses are not "property" but "living, growing organisms" (127). "Organism" is particularly apt in describing the absence of any consideration of the soul. Without that consideration, ethics are impossible. Atwood problematizes the solipsistic sensualism that Lesje begins to perceive, the hypocrisy of the pseudo-ethic that justifies what it also condemns: "What it boiled down to was that man-stealing was out but personal growth was commendable" (127).

The beginning of Nate's affair with Lesje also begins what appears to be the development of his new ethic. Its basis is his change from passive to active involvement, which Elizabeth identifies, and it parallels Rachel's assumption then rejection of Nick as her protector. Nate once "wanted to be protected. He wanted a woman to be a door he could go through and shut behind him," but now, "he wants to protect" (162). While Elizabeth's understanding of Nate's involvement with Lesje may not indicate how Nate is, and regardless of the identification as protector, Elizabeth finds herself, like Rachel toward Nick, in a compromised and threatened condition. The trick of the irony here is to recognize that Elizabeth and Rachel have put, or allowed themselves to be put, in that condition and that Nate and Nick appear blameworthy if not responsible when they were unwitting participants in the development of Elizabeth's and Rachel's reaction of fear. But as does Laurence in exposing Nick's injury over his father's absent love, Atwood questions this ambiguous role of protector by undercutting its supposed strength with an image of Nate's weakness. Having realized that he can and will leave Elizabeth, he nonetheless feels acute helplessness over the impending separation from his children. His bewilderment leads to the fundamental questions he has to answer, just as his physical position suggests his need to return to grace, to recover his soul: "Yet he kneels; tears come to his eyes. He should have held on, he should have held on more tightly. He picks up one of Nancy's blue rabbit slippers, stroking the fur. It's his own eventual death he cradles. His lost, his kidnapped children, gone

from him, kept hostage. Who has done this? How has he allowed it to happen?" (166). The introduction of death to the image of desire for redemption is foreboding, despite Nate's realization of the questions he needs to ask about his state. Yet Nate's eventual realizations about himself, his developing ability to assert himself, especially against his mother, together with the provocative ending which may either destroy or redeem him, show the possibility for redemption, *if* the right questions are asked.

Traumatic separation from others, as the means of final discovery for Nick and Nate, is the means also for Laurence and Atwood to represent the severest consequence of misapprehension. Not having anticipated his own trauma over separation from Elizabeth, Nate is shocked to discover that "He can't connect any act he can think of with any consequence he can imagine," and that as a result he feels "Segmented" and "Dismembered" (244), a worse state than he was in while with Elizabeth. He suspects that the truth about himself is that he is a "patchwork, a tin man, his heart stuffed with sawdust" (246). The character he becomes by the allusion to the tinman and the lion in *The Wizard of Oz* is one in need of courage and a heart. With those needs, his desire to view Elizabeth as "morally neutral" (245) becomes the stand of the cowardly and the witless. Just as Laurence problematizes Rachel's traditionalism, Atwood through Elizabeth indicts moral neutrality with the evaluative irony that Hutcheon describes. Nate's reaction to Elizabeth asserts the need for the position that will raise the novel's characters from their moral stupor.

The same need for elevation in Nick is suggested when the possibility of pregnancy makes Rachel fantasize about how he would ask her to marry him. She constructs and rejects scenarios, then realizes the futility of her fantasies and is finally able to act on her knowledge of her self-deception. When she asks Nick to stay in Manawaka despite his desire to leave, she has "no pride" left, yet, paradoxically, she is also "calm . . . almost free"; she asks herself, "Have I finished with facades? Whatever happens, let it happen. I won't deny it" (142). The epiphany of her visit with Hector makes her see herself and her affair with Nick in a new way. But Nick, also the unwitting agent of revelation yet in a relationship of lover rather than father, is not seen as an emissary but as a deceiver who has been discovered. Nick has done nothing more than Rachel permits, yet Rachel in discovering her facades implicitly accuses him of responsibility for it. Just as Elizabeth's self-righteous contempt of Nate permits her a moral relativism, Rachel's self-deception continues but now with a hostility toward a scapegoat who permits her a false virtue. Laurence's focus

on Rachel's delusion makes it less evident that Nick has become a victim than that Rachel has been wronged, but Rachel has wronged herself as much, if not more.

Rejecting facades, Rachel is capable of a new assertiveness with Nick and is strengthened as she recognizes her weakness. The ambiguity of her new status is evident when she inwardly quotes John Donne to silence Nick: "*For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love.* But it's the man who is supposed to say that" (145). The assumption of male responsibility seems to repeat Rachel's passivity earlier in the phone call to Nick, but here Laurence ironically shows Rachel's change. In quoting Donne, Rachel feels that convention hampers the expression of her love. Her usurpation of the male role is a means to mock the convention to discredit it and then act without reference to it. Yet, at the same time, the statement is a plea for the ability, which Rachel is painfully aware she lacks, to talk enough that Nick would quote Donne to her. The tension between the two possibilities shows Rachel's uncertainty with her new vision of the world without her formerly reassuring facades. The impression it leaves of men, though, is that they are domineering and must be mocked into realizing their imperiousness—Nick gets his mockery turned back on him. Rachel looks the better for it, but only because Nick looks worse.

Mockery of his state finally makes Nate act as he needs to, as when he returns to the morally suspect world of his law practice, a world in which even his hero René Lévesque has succumbed to "compromise and hedging, like the rest of the country" (274). Yet Nate's disappointment turns into a tautological defence of compromise: "It's a world of unfreedom after all. Only a fool could have believed in anything else, and Lévesque is no fool. (Like Nate: not any more)" (274). Such a defence, if adhered to, justifies the mockery that Rachel feels necessary to jolt a Nick into awareness of his behaviour, and Atwood forwards the same idea when Nate confronts the moral fervor of his mother and her imposition on him of her vision of an ideal son. He scoffs at her enthusiasm for what she believes is his idealistic return to law: "'Mother,... anyone who thinks they can really help people, especially doing what I'm doing, is a horse's ass'" (286). But his triumphant assertion is erased by his mother's revelation that not only has he always been afraid of being a horse's ass, but also that she contemplated suicide after his father's death. Appalled that she shares with him a despair of life, he realizes that his mother is not the idol he had in turn set her up as, that

he can no longer depend on her. This is the point of total alienation for him. Like so many others in literature whose illusions have been shattered—Updike's Rabbit, Hesse's Harry Haller, Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov—he attempts to flee to the absence of the knowledge of mortality: running and leaping and soaring, "he aims again for it, that non-existent spot where he longs to be. Mid-air" (288).

Such flight is also evident in the last time that Rachel and Nick are together, a moment of inversion in his involvement with her growth to autonomy. As Nate does from Elizabeth and Martha, Nick withdraws in what appears to be an escape from Rachel, and the reason for his flight makes him seem even more an ironic emissary for her. In the scene, they have made love for what will be the last time. Rachel affectionately says that if she were ever to have a child, she would like it to be his. She feels immediately his withdrawal from her, and he replies "'I'm not God. I can't solve anything'" (148). Apparently he believes she thinks he can put her life in order. Rachel has meant a compliment, and whether he desires to evade it or fails to perceive it, he is implicitly discredited as not only egocentric but also spiritually dead when he directs Rachel's attention to the cemetery. Puzzled, Rachel asks, "'Nick, why don't you ever say what you mean?'" (149). This anxiety-laden gap in signification is, at the same time, Rachel's first challenge of another, the first example of her new independence of mind, whose strength makes Nick try to defend what he knows he cannot: "'Don't make a major production of it, eh? . . . I've said more than enough, about everything'" (149). It is uncertain whether it is Nick or Rachel who understands the other better. Rachel has had difficulty speaking and interpreting herself and the words of others, but Nick evades her because he knows that his position is indefensible, just as Nate evades Elizabeth and Martha.

Existence for Nate after his annihilation and flight, however, is not quite that of the automaton he wants to become. He still works for political justice and "longs for a message" even while suspecting that the message is a "joke" (306). He will, at the end of the day, "lose himself among the apathetic, the fatalistic, the uncommitted, the cynical; among whom he would like to feel at home" (306). But his suspicion is unconfirmed; he does not feel at home. The sense that Atwood gives that the human spirit endures after the last illusion has been shattered—the illusion that makes Nate "sway at the lip of the abyss" (287)—makes Lesje's pregnancy at the end, despite Nate's desire not to have a child, not a push into the abyss but a step back from it.

That is one choice for the ending. The other is that his suspicion will be fulfilled and that he will feel at home with the alienated. Though we last see him running, which is the metaphor of control for him in the novel even while it suggests his desire to escape, a small but significant detail shows the fragility of his new state: when he stops, he will smoke a cigarette, "Perhaps he'll throw half of it away" (313-14). Immediately after, he will meet Lesje, who will tell him she is pregnant. Will he continue running, or will he rejoice? Atwood leaves the choice to us, as something of an ethical test for ourselves. Given his love for children, yet his despair of the world, either is possible. If we choose flight, *we* succumb to despair. If it is joy, we revel in the new life.

Ambiguity determines the final view of Nick also. After Rachel learns that Nick is not married, she first concludes that his own "demons and webs" made him "draw away, knowing that what I wanted from him was too much," but then she objects, "Was that it? Or was he merely becoming bored?" (189). Nick had been fighting the demon of his dead brother and his father's attachment to that brother to the detriment of himself. Rachel's conclusion implies isolation on two counts: over personal problems that arise, and the boredom that ensues. In both cases, the reference is to Nick: the problems that she perceives in him take precedence, and he is derided for not realizing that departure does not end boredom. Rachel can now dismiss him: "I don't know whether he meant to lie to me or not. As for what was happening with him and to him this summer, I couldn't say what it really was, nor whether it had anything to do with me or not" (190). The accumulation of negatives in the statement nullifies the modicum of sympathy in it. Laurence shows Rachel as hardened, with the resolve to finally leave Manawaka, even over the protests of her mother, less a happy choice than an enforced decision.

The ambiguity of its conclusion complicates A *Jest of God.* Rachel was headed for disaster in her life, which was suggested by her bizarre speaking in tongues and her undesired friendship with Calla. She seems to have come to her new strength as a consequence of her summer with Nick, to whom she was drawn from Calla, the absurd spiritualism, the clutch of her mother, and the static memory of her father. Nick, though, in Rachel's view, developed into something other than what he led her to believe he was—or, more accurately, what she wanted him to be. Just as Atwood problematizes the last view of Nate, Laurence symbolizes Nick's final effect on Rachel with her suspected pregnancy being a tumour. The autonomy Rachel achieves is

made ironic through the cancer metaphor for her hardened emotional state, but without a consideration of Nick's difficulty with Rachel, it is unclear whether or not her conviction of his deceit is justified.

The ironized view of Nick in *A Jest of God* and Nate in *Life Before Man* reveals the sensitivity of Laurence and Atwood to a representation of male presence founded on uncertainty and binarism, not just in relation to women but within men themselves. Both writers reject the simplistic ascription of blame for the complex irony that better represents the nuances of their characters' relationships. The representation is more than a valorization of the shaky relativism that Atwood critiques in her novel; it is the extension of her victim status to acknowledge the possibility that the perceived victimizer—as Laurence shows through the effect of Nick's father and brother on him—is himself a victim. Adherents to contemporary men's movements that are concerned, even obsessed, with their claimed victimization under feminization would do well to understand their perceived plight through the irony that Laurence and Atwood employ. The solace of the recognition of their victimhood would at the same time encourage them to see the legitimacy of women's anger against them.

II: Differences

Irony and identity criticism on *A Jest of God* and *Life Before Man* can be addressed partly through the issue of language. Diana Brydon says that Rachel's speaking in tongues is a "release of speech" and freedom from the restriction on speaking within patriarchy (189), though Brydon does not praise Nick for his role in freeing Rachel where she should: Calla is Laurence's representation of the isolation that awaits Rachel if she denies the need to speak not *within* patriarchy, but *to* it. Rachel speaks only to herself if her language is premised on speaking in tongues, and Laurence refuses that solipsism as she shows the need Rachel and Nick have for each other if they are to move beyond restriction. Diana M.A. Relke defines Calla as does Brydon, calling Calla's "gift of tongues . . . a metaphor for communication—not merely verbal communication, but emotional, sexual and spiritual communication as well" (35); again, though, as Calla can be understood by no one when speaking in tongues, she communicates with no one but herself, which is not the end Laurence wants for Rachel.

Frank Davey, discussing *Life Before Man*, claims that the characters' "insights into themselves are . . . restricted to conventional language" (85);

that restriction indicates the need for an ironized reading to determine the value of the binarism that Davey identifies in the novel: "*Life Before Man* thus makes exceedingly clear the fact that Atwood's male versus female dichotomy of order versus disorder, solid versus liquid, stasis versus process, segmentation versus wholeness, is a metaphor, rather than a literal distinction between men and women. It is a feminist vision of nature rather than of politics" (90). Yet to restrict the metaphor to nature is to deny the identity politics of feminism. The ironist position permits the necessary metaphors of both politics and nature: each becomes a metaphor of the other as the characters grope toward understanding through the limitations of their language. Like Davey, Cathy N. Davidson and Arnold E. Davidson argue by trope as they describe a limitation like the one Davey sees: "dead dinosaurs . . . are Atwood's ambivalent icon of the life before man and her multivalent symbol for the life of man" (221). Davey's metaphor and the Davidsons' symbol go further with the addition of the embracing trope of irony, which extends their arguments to the ethical vacuum that equates both the male and female characters of the novel.

Nick of *A Jest of God* has received extensive consideration, both positive and negative. The negative treatment centres on the perception of him as a worthless seducer. Elizabeth Waterston asserts that "Like the other male figure who dominated Rachel's life, Niall ('nihil') Cameron, Nick offers nothing" (88), but she unfortunately lets slide the potential for the ironic reading that shows what Nick offers after she earlier states that "Nick is Rachel's double" (83). Kenneth James Hughes is even more severe: "Nick coldly uses Rachel . . . for his own selfish gratification, and in the process he misleads her about his marital status" (110); Nick is a "failure as an individual," having Buberian "I-it relationships of power" rather than "I-thou relationships" of intimacy (119), which repeats Davey's observation on the novel's nature-politics division. The negative impression has led to Harriet Blodgett's disputable claim that Nick "pretends to be married" (11); Blodgett, as does Hughes, reads too much into the ambiguity-laden photograph that Nick shows Rachel, showing more their own desire that the photograph be Nick's son—it could also be Nick as boy, playing on his lost boyhood (see Stovel 38), even his rival brother; the point is, the photograph has no certainty: it is Laurence's signatory gap in the novel to play on the gap between Rachel and Nick—what *is*, she asks, the true identity of these people?

The discussions about Nick reveal Laurence's success in conveying the

irony of his role, even if the perception of that irony is seldom announced. Yet both Waterston and Hughes see some value in Nick. Waterston sees him as something of an example to women who, "emphasizing their equality with men in everything but opportunity, came to say, like Nick, 'People used to group us [Nick and his brother] together . . . I wanted to be completely on my own'" (89); Hughes admits to the presence, if limited, of a didactic role: Nick, "not without some distress, gives [Rachel] a sexual education" (118). Clara Thomas is closer to the ironic reading that objects to Nick as solely a "casual seducer," arguing that is it Rachel's mediated vision of him that prompts the description (90), and Patricia Morley disputes Hughes' impression that Nick uses Rachel as a "commodity" and that Rachel's tumour represents a colonial past that *A Jest of God* argues against (97), though Morley does not consider the irony the tumor symbolizes. C.M. McLay also discusses how Rachel's view of Nick, "uncorrected by an omniscient narrator," though "closer to reality," does distort him (188), a distortion corrected with the ironic reading. Nora Stovel has directly noted the irony, if briefly, with the facts about Nick emerging to "form an ironic counterpoint to Rachel's misinterpretations" (37).

Nick's role as Rachel's teacher is regularly alluded to. Margaret Ossachoff believes "Nick sets her straight" about the colonialist mentality (232), though here again the irony of Rachel as willing participant in this colonialization, through her self-doubt, is missed. Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos concludes that Rachel and her sister Stacey make "internal changes through connections with dynamic animus figures that the women internalize although the men themselves are ephemeral" (50); Waterston also notes the dynamism, claiming that "Nick is Rachel's double" (83). Clara Thomas believes that Nick "understands Rachel better than she understands him" and that Rachel is unaware of "the depth of his meaning" when he says "'I'm not God, I can't solve anything'" (85). Totally opposed to the casual seducer role for Nick is C.M. McLay's assertion that Rachel's demand for a child "ultimately destroys her relationship with Nick"; the child, Nick realizes, is for "her own fulfillment" (180), which is the ironic response to the view of Nick as colonizer—he now becomes the colonized and exploited.

As with Nick, criticism of Nate varies. Barbara Hill Rigney sympathizes with but implicitly dismisses him: if he is victimized as a "Segmented man," he creates his victimhood, as when his "sexual fantasies about Lesje, as about all women, are firmly grounded in arrested adolescence" (87, 86). Just

the same, Elizabeth's viciousness and Lesje's pop-psych romance are as retrograde and in need of ironic reading to reveal Atwood's concern for the problem of being kept adolescent rather than choosing to be. Cathy N. and Arnold E. Davidson also see Nate as living "mostly in his fantasies" (213), with the result that "Nate remains the same Nate" at the end (220); their view is limited, not taking into account Nate's overall ethical change, which the use of René Lévesque suggests and which Atwood posits with the ethical test at the novel's close as Nate runs toward Lesje and the knowledge of new life that could either condemn or redeem both him and us. The Davidsons in comparing the men in *Life Before Man* employ a binarism that hints at the irony they nonetheless do not discover: "Nate is Chris' emotional and physical opposite" (211); to the extent that Chris' brutality is developed, Elizabeth's attraction to it affirms her adolescent arrest, and Nate's difference from it reveals him to be, ironically, far beyond that plead-shout-and-punish romance.

The ending of *Life Before Man* has been difficult for critics, ranging from Kolodny's belief that Lesje "makes a commitment to the future by throwing away her contraceptive pills" (96) to Barbara Hill Rigney's disagreement with the tendency to view Lesje's pregnancy as life-affirming (99); Gayle Greene disagrees with the usual "hopeless" view: "I see the characters as changing and countering the processes of repetition" (81), which is the closest any previous reading has come to recognizing the irony at work in the novel.

Frank Davey's argument that, because the characters' "insights into themselves are . . . restricted to conventional language," *Life Before Man* "has no climactic moment" (85), could have defined an alternative language through irony. The definition would have permitted identification of any number of passages as the climactic moment—Nate's realization of the loss of his children, or his mother's revelation about suicide, for example.

While not opposed to these criticisms, others do not consider Nate exclusively as a man of limited worth or appeal. Sherrill E. Grace believes that Atwood created "a sympathetic picture of Nate" (136), and Atwood herself, suggesting the irony fundamental to the novel, said that "Peter [in *The Edible Woman*] is not terribly likable; Nate, in *Life Before Man*, is very likable" ("Interview" 179). The ambiguous readings of both Nate and Nick beg for some further understanding of their value to the novels. The ironic reading both accounts for the ambiguity and establishes their value.

NOTE

1 Work on the historical presentation of this irony in women's fiction includes Lydia Burton and David Morley, "A Sense of Grievance: Attitudes Toward Men in Contemporary Fiction," *The Canadian Forum* LV.654 (Sept 1975): 57-60; Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977); Carolyn Zonailo, "Male Stereotypes in *The Diviners* and *The Edible Woman*," *Room of One's Own: A Feminist Journal of Literature and Criticism* 3.1 (1977): 70-72; Janet Todd, ed., *Men by Women* (*Women & Literature* Vol.2, new series, New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981); Jane Miller, *Women Writing About Men* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); Helen M. Buss, "Margaret Laurence's Dark Lovers," *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* 11.2 (1986): 97-107.

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Beverley Brahic

Objets d'Art

1

Sliding into Brussels on the southbound
train—on elevated tracks—we flashed
through a red light district where a row
of second story picture windows framed
woman after woman, each one pressed up
against a sheet of glass suggestively
for the stopping-over inter-city
traffic. *Rooms Chambres Zimmer* the signs taped
in bottom corners said, behind them
deepening chiaroscuro labyrinths
of imaginary spaces: tiled rooms
with curtained double beds, vestibules
opening on a damp square of pavement
with an arched doorway where an aging procuress
flashes a coin . . . a Flemish genre painting
with dollhouse perspectives and trompe-l'oeil.

2

Sometimes when I'm feeling sexy
I imagine a whorehouse
for women—a sort of
Roman bath with Doric columns
and mosaics, where male models
lounge about like flesh and blood
classical statues, reclining
with draperies loosened
and wakening erections
to make me feel desirable.
I'd be done in sheer black stockings
as for a visit to the Louvre
where guards in uniform would wink
at visitors who fondle sculpture.

3

At the Picasso Museum
once I joined a group of people
gazing at some blown-up black and white
photos of Picasso at Antibes.

In one of them he stared straight back
his torso bared, seated on a stool or chair
in skintight trunks with legs agape
(*his nails are painted,* someone whispered,
awestruck), the image of a fertile god:
Priapus offering his gibbous crotch
like a ripe mango on a plate, a slice
of shade along one nether edge
you knew you could see up
if only you could get the right angle.

The Big O

A poet is allowed to use the interjection O just once in a lifetime.
—rule for writing

Each time I face the fleshly o-
val, the folded and enfolded entrance
with its hairy cap
I wonder
is this it?
is this the O I am permitted?
The tongue, teeth
my whole mouth
working diligently
delicately
draft after draft after draft
is this sweet flow I suck
the Muses' fount that
rises in the cleft
struck by Pegasus?
When a version works
each breath
I take, release
each tongued syllable
vibrates all Mount Helicon
quake after quake

In another version
the seismic probings
that trigger shock
below ground
cause ripple upon ripple to curl
across the field of her belly
—the tempestuous earth-surf
threatening to swamp
the coracle of the navel

Such moments
bring us closer
every time
to the bel-
   low ringing
the pro-
longed ye-
   ES
and counter to
all laws, the
O the   O the
O

John Pass

Aristotle's Lantern

When perspective is new who knows where we tend.
Piero's St. Mary Magdalen is realization
of purposeful form, a specimen.

The good work done, the halo in place
the act of grace subsumed in the state
"the curves in the regular bodies"

her hair remains bedraggled with oil
its emptied decanter transparently glass
her luminous weight, human

as any woman's who hurries, warm from her bath
in candlelight across the room, to bed, a lover.
"Beauteous night, O night of love, smile at our excesses,"

sings the whore in the dwarf's arms, departing . . .
Hoffman's captive soul in tow
a rival's blood on his hands
the gondola's lone lamp fumbling
with the architecture, the stupified water.

Cry him a river. I pinned my hope early
on Ping the duck, who, late and afraid
of the swishing stick, just punishment,
hid in the reeds as his family waddled
onto the junk on the yellow Yangze, at sunset.

Alone, disconsolate, he saw them go
but found them again by luck, downstream!
Though a man might have his balls chewed off
by another, at a guard's whim, in Bosnia.

At length, at last, past the fish-count shack
where the forest opens west to release us
past unnatural history, past the little wheeze
at the bottom of your breathing: salt-water.
And perhaps a crevice concealing
the urchin aria

named for the great teacher: orchestration
of forty skeletal pieces meshed
in muscle or ligament

for the synchronous movement
of five teeth, ever-growing, ever-ground
down on the rock, reaping algae. Appetite

insistent, blind to even the aqueous light,
couldn't be that virtuous striving, aspirant
form within the form: active soulful happiness.

Fresco, melody, story, faith.
A theory of evolution.

O the taste, the pleasure
as we lick and kiss each other there
grooming the metaphysics.

Twenty-three hundred years and counting.
The same observable mouth-parts, apparatus.

Kathleen Wall

Representing the Other Body

Frame Narratives in Margaret Atwood's "Giving Birth" and Alice Munro's "Meneseteung"

When I think of the framed depiction of women's bodies, I cannot help thinking of the nineteenth-century nude, those women depicted by Ingres, Bonnard, Courbet, and Manet in their baths, their beds, their dressing rooms. Those paintings might be said to represent an iconography of what Simone de Beauvoir identified as early as 1952 in *The Second Sex* as the woman as "other" in a culture where the masculine was the same, the norm. Additionally, paintings like Manet's *Le dejeuner sur l'herbe* emphasize the extent to which the body that is the object of the male gaze is, in this iconography, reified and abstract. Zola, trying to justify Manet's inclusion of the nude woman among the clothed men, the unlikeliness of the whole scene, wrote "Thus, surely the nude woman of *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* is there only to furnish the artist an occasion to paint a bit of flesh" (Brooks 133).

Further, the poses of these representations suggest an oxymoronic knowing unself-consciousness: for how can a woman be both self-absorbed in her own toilet and yet be posing for the man who paints her? Thus we might see her as self-divided or doubled, depending on whether we attend to the painting's frame: she is alone and subject to her own self-absorption in the context of her representation within the frame that contains her. Yet before the frame separates her from the context of the artist's studio, she is certainly not alone, but rather object of the male artist's gaze. Thus the framed female body typically might be said to represent female otherness, to embody woman as both object and subject. Such a status renders her both self-divided and doubled, in contrast to the unified, singular male of

whose gaze she is the object. Subject of her representation, she is the object of the desire to know and understand, but is finally unknowable and incomprehensible. In *Body Work*, Peter Brooks writes about the traditional connection between the desire to know the body and narrative, as well as about "the inherently unsatisfiable desire resulting from the drive to know":

> The body in the field of vision—more precisely, in that field of vision which is so central to realist narrative—inevitably relates to scopophilia, the erotic investment of the gaze which is traditionally defined as masculine, its object the female body. . . . As the fictions most consciously concerned with the epistemology of observation demonstrate, scopophilia is inextricably linked with epistemophilia, the erotic investment in the desire to know . . . [Yet] another body never is wholly knowable; it is an imaginary object that returns us to questions about the meaning of difference. (122)

Both Margaret Atwood's story "Giving Birth," from her 1977 collection *Dancing Girls*, and Alice Munro's story "Meneseteung," first published in the *New Yorker* in January 1988 and subsequently collected in *Friend of my Youth* in 1990, contain framed representations of women. Yet unlike the nineteenth-century nudes and the objects of scopophilia that Brooks describes, the bodies depicted in the stories of Atwood and Munro are not those that are traditionally the object of the male gaze, almost suggesting an effort on the authors' part to de-romanticize and de-reify the female body. In "Giving Birth," the protagonist is a woman in labor; in "Meneseteung," she is a nineteenth-century "poetess" awaiting the onset of menses. In yet another way they are unlike those nudes: their enclosure is not effected by a picture frame, which we might see as a supplement to or reification of their representation, but by a frame narrative, the kind of frame that Derrida describes as " not incidental; it is connected to and cooperates in its operation from the outside. . . . [I]ts transcendent exteriority touches, plays with, brushes, rubs, or presses against the limit" (Derrida 20-21). In these two stories, the frame and the framed bodies interact in a way that subversively calls attention to the margin and the marginal. Such a strategy, as Molly Hite notes, questions our tendency to ignore frames and to view them as means of cutting off, and hence making an object of, that which is framed: "To call attention to the margin is to render it no longer marginal and consequently to collapse the centre in a general unsettling of oppositional hierarchies" (*Other Side* 121-22). As a consequence, both the nature of the body represented and the authors' ways of framing that representation challenge the iconography of those nineteenth-century nudes as well as articulating

the nature of self-division and otherness that their framing entails.

The narrators of both stories (who are, not coincidentally, both writers) evince ambiguous relationships to their respective protagonists that, in evoking both similarities and differences, correspondences and discordances between themselves and the women they represent, recall another aspect of painting, the *mise en abyme* (Dällenbach 33).[1] A further similarity in the structure of these two stories is the author's use of a second *mise en abyme* that depicts what Atwood's narrator terms "the other woman" whose experience of her body, related to yet different from that of the protagonist, highly colors the protagonist's own interpretation of and reaction to her body and its distinctively female experiences. First explored by André Gide in 1893, the "mirror in the text" reflects both what is and what is not represented in the narrative or in the representation between the frames. One thinks here of *The Arnolfini Marriage*, with its convex mirror that depicts the backs of the husband and wife as well as the painter and the wedding guests, all of whom are outside the space that van Eyck is ostensibly representing, but all of whom are represented nevertheless. The mirror thus presents a different version of what is represented within the frame (the backs of the couple) as well as what is beyond (the wedding guests and painter) the field of representation.[2] Velásquez's *Ladies in Waiting* provides another familiar example; the King and Queen appear in a mirror on the wall of the salon. In both paintings, the mirrors—the convex mirror in *The Arnolfini Marriage* and the badly silvered one in *Ladies in Waiting*—distort as well as reflect. Hence, Dällenbach concludes that the *mise en abyme* reflects and distorts, articulates differences and similarities, concordances and discordances between the field of representation and the mirror in the text.

Inevitably, we see played out in the doubled, mirroring structure used by Munro and Atwood three major and interrelated concerns identified as central to women's writing. The first is woman's often multiple and contradictory reactions to the experiences of her body perhaps first theoretically articulated by de Beauvoir, and then differently focused by Luce Irigaray in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (for an illustration of the interrelatedness of these issues, note how Irigaray floats from the issue of a woman's pleasure to that of language):

> the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than is commonly imagined—in an imaginary rather too narrowly focused on sameness. . . . "She" is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated,

capricious . . . not to mention her language, in which "she" sets off in all directions leaving "him" unable to discern the coherence of any meaning. (28-29; ellipses in original)

The second concern central to our explorations of women's writing is the project of "writing the body" easily summed up by Cixous's injunction, in "Laugh of the Medusa," that because so much of our experience is mediated by a variety of social discourses, including literary texts, woman must "write the body," re-create it as—or in—discourse for other women, change and challenge the representations that shape our perceptions and experiences of ourselves. There is some concensus about the characteristics of literature that writes the body: Cixous describes discourse that overflows, exceeds, that "jams sociality" (344), that "does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible" and that expresses "the wonder of being several" (345). Certainly, "writing the body celebrates women as sexual subjects not objects of male desire" (Dallery 58). Writing the body involves, in addition, the recognition that the body, as it is now represented, is the equivalent of a text; that, like a text, it is constructed of and by the discourses in circulation around it. That equivalence is humorously acknowledged by Cixous when she threatens to show men women's "sexts" (342).

The third concern addressed by feminist criticism is the belief that women must or should write differently from men (whether they are "writing bodies" or not). Yet this belief is fraught with problems and contradictions. On one hand, Irigaray believes that a civilization that was capable of expressing women's desire "would undoubtedly have a different alphabet, a different language . . . Woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's (*This Sex* 25; ellipses in original). On the other hand, the practice of an "un-masculinized" language produces

. . . the "other" language of witches advocated by some women—a language of the body, singsong, visceral cries, etc.—(silence even, which supposedly can be heard, what was the point of asking for your turn to speak then?), this language of the body, this cry-language, is that enough to fight oppression? If one should not hesitate to cry out one's guts against the words that leave you out in the cold, there is no good reason to reject as "masculine and oppressive" a certain form of conceptual discourse and thus give men the exclusive control over discourse. (Marks and Courtivron 221).

Finally, belief in a female style or language is not born out, Nancy K. Miller argues, by examinations of style on the sentence level, except in the case of

individual authors whose individual styles do not provide an adequate basis for generalization about a female one (37). Thorne, Kramerae and Henley similarly found that "few expected sex differences have been firmly substantiated by empirical studies of actual speech" (640).

Hite, discussing Irigaray's metaphor of the speculum (another mirror; the reverse of van Eyck's), writes: "If there can be no clearly delineated Other language, no direct route to the articulation of difference, it followed that difference must use the language of the Same—if rather differently. That is, representation must be skewed or oblique, a perverse mimesis employing the sort of concave mirror that is the primary image of the speculum for Irigaray, the mirror that inverts the image as a condition of reflecting it. Mimesis as mimicry; representation with a difference" (*Other Side* 144). Might not that "mirror in the text," Lucien Dällenbach's phrase for the *mise en abyme*, be these narrative structures that frame, multiply, and problematize the bodies they represent? What I propose here is that narrative structure—the use of the doubled *mise en abyme* along with the various interrelationships that this device creates—constitutes another language.[3]

It is no coincidence, then, that Atwood's story opens with just such a reference to the problems of using the available language to represent women's experience, as the narrator questions the appropriateness of the phrase "giving birth" for the experience that she is about to describe. The story's very first sentence 'overflows' boundaries by interrogating the title in a gesture that already problematizes the relationship between the inside and the outside of the text, given that we assume that it is authors who give texts their titles, but narrators who tell stories: "But who gives it? And to whom is it given? Certainly it doesn't feel like giving, which implies a flow, a gentle handling over, no coercion. But there is scant gentleness here, it's too strenuous, the belly like a knotted fist, squeezing, the heavy trudge of the heart, every muscle in the body tight and moving" (228).[4] The narrator, nevertheless, resolves to "go ahead as if there were no problem about language" (229), even though language will often fail her or her protagonist, Jeannie, in this depiction of childbirth, late seventies style with the pre-natal classes and breathing exercises, the emphasis on breastfeeding, the eschewing of painkillers that arose out of the belief that "pain" in childbirth is caused by the wrong attitude. While Atwood's depiction of childbirth has a curious kind of historical and cultural accuracy, what is most significant about its representation is the disconnection of Jeannie from the experiencing body.

When Jeannie's labor pains begin to intensify, the narrator reports: "At the moment she can't remember why she wanted to have a baby in the first place. That decision was made by someone else, whose motives are now unclear" (239). When yet another strong contraction begins, Jeannie's options seem to be escape or dissociation from her body: "she slips back into the dark place, which is not hell, which is more like being inside, trying to get out. *Out,* she says or thinks. . . . When there is no pain, she feels nothing, when there is pain, she feels nothing because there is no *she*" (241). Frequently, this disconnection is related to the inadequacy of a language that has no words for "the events of the body" (239), for the kind of pain or "whatever it is" (240) that she is experiencing. The fact that there is no *she* is accounted for by the "disappearance of language" (241).[5]

But Jeannie's disconnection from her body is mainly projected onto "the other woman," a pregnant figure that Jeannie may actually have seen a couple of times, but who is "not real in the usual sense" (235). Jeannie may feel that the decision to have a baby "was made by someone else whose motives are now unclear," and that the language for her experience is inadequate. But "the other woman's" pregnancy has even less to do with her own volition; and the language for what is about to happen to her is even more non-existent:

> She, like Jeannie, is going to the hospital. She too is pregnant. She is not going to the hospital to give birth, however, because the word, the words, are too alien to her experience, the experience she is about to have, to be used about it at all. . . . She is a woman who did not wish to become pregnant, *who did not choose to divide herself like this,* who did not choose any of these ordeals, these initiations. It would be no use telling her that everything is going to be fine. The word in English for unwanted intercourse is rape, but there is no word in the language for what is about to happen to this woman. (234; italics mine)

Placing the "other woman" in a *mise en abyme* allows Atwood to depict what is paradoxically contained in yet absent from Jeannie's own experience. Consider again *The Arnolfini Marriage* (with its pregnant woman), and the convex mirror (the obverse of Irigaray's concave mirror) that depicts what is just outside the represented plane: the wedding guests, the painter, the couple's backs. Yet of course, the picture does represent these others in their distorted, mirrored forms; they are there and not there; they are simultaneously outside the space the artist represents, yet are inserted into that representation. Similarly, the other woman, who is real and "not real in the usual sense," shadows Jeannie throughout her experience of giving birth, representing the "other" side of childbirth. It is the "other woman" who screams

from pain. It is the "other woman" who doesn't want to have a baby—perhaps, Jeannie hypothesizes, because she's been raped, because she has ten other children, because she's poor and starving. It is the "other woman" whose childbirth is fraught with complications (238). In other words, Jeannie can project the anxieties that she doesn't want fully to claim onto the other woman. Such a projection expresses Jeannie's disconnection from her body's potential experience and her fears. Thus, "the other woman," who occupies a miniature, distorted place in Jeannie's narrative of giving birth, allows Jeannie to construct the saving fiction that it is "other women" who are [more] disconnected from the experiences of their bodies, and that these disconnections are caused by external circumstances (like rape or poverty), not by some inherent disconnection between [the female] body and mind.

As the recipient of these projections, the other woman also functions as a talisman. The morning after her daughter's birth, Jeannie hears footsteps in the hallway: "She thinks it must be the other woman, in her brown and maroon checked coat, carrying her paper bag, leaving the hospital now that her job is done. She has seen Jeannie safely through, she must go now to hunt through the streets of the city for her next case" (245). In some uncomfortable way, then, she seems both to protect and represent all those women whose experience of childbirth does not involve choice, supportive husbands, natural childbirth, healthy and desired babies, and she thus symbolizes all of the possible ways in which women can be alienated from the experience of giving birth.

But just as this figure plays the "other woman" to Jeannie, so does Jeannie play the other woman for the narrator, who wants both to claim and disclaim identity with Jeannie, though, in the telling of the story of Jeannie's childbirth, the gap between the two is slowly closed. The first sentences after the preamble about the inadequacy of language deny any equivalence between the narrator and Jeannie: "This story about giving birth is not about me. In order to convince you of that I should tell you what I did this morning, before I sat down at this desk" (229). Yet her proof is not particularly convincing; in fact, one is all but directed to wonder how this description of a morning with a child proves that she is *not* some one who gave birth.

Once Jeannie's story properly begins, the narrator makes use of several techniques that keep to the fore her ambiguous relationship to Jeannie. On one hand, Jeannie's story is told in the present tense, a kind of Atwoodian anti-convention that theoretically makes the narrative immediate, but that

also has the paradoxical effect of suggesting that the story is a construction, is "made up," since, according to narrative conventions, "real" stories can only be told after the events have occurred. Because the frame narrative uses past tense, and the *mise en abyme* makes use of the present, the naturalness of the frame and the artificiality of Jeannie's story are emphasized. Second, the psycho-narration is not entirely consonant: the narrator frequently makes judgments about Jeannie's behavior that distance her from Jeannie yet indicate the narrator's privileged knowledge.[6] As Jeannie waits for her labor to become more strenuous, for example, the narrator comments: "But—and this is the part of Jeannie that goes with the talisman hidden in her bag, not with the part that longs to build kitchen cabinets and smoke hams—she is, secretly, hoping for a mystery. Something more than this, something else, a vision" (239). What kind of person takes a Turkish glass talisman into a modern hospital? What kind of woman expects that childbirth will bring mysteries with it? the narrator seems to ask.

At the same time, this narrator attempts to reassure the reader that she really wants to shrink any distinction between herself and Jeannie. In a parenthetical note that interrupts the story of Jeannie's childbirth, the narrator remarks: "(By this time you may be thinking that I've invented Jeannie in order to distance myself from these experiences. Nothing could be further from the truth. I am, in fact, trying to bring myself closer to something that time has already made distant. As for Jeannie, my intention is simple: I am bringing her back to life)" (232). But why the reader should suspect the narrator of creating distance is unclear. Does the narrator sense that the culture text tends to separate women from the experience of their bodies? Or that the culture text teaches women to separate themselves from their bodies, particularly with respect to childbirth? (Shirley Neuman's survey of mothers in autobiographical literature certainly reveals the rarity with which mothers are presented as subjects in their own right, as mothers, experiencing motherhood.) Or is she suggesting that our lack of language about childbirth makes memory difficult? Or are women encouraged to pretend these intimate, immediate events happened to someone other than our "proper" public selves, to bracket off in a kind of emotional *mise en abyme* the experience that is there and not there, because it is not nameable—and therefore not to be spoken of?

In the narrator's second parenthetical remark on her relationship to Jeannie, she is more forthcoming about their precise relationship: "(It was

to me, after all, that the birth was given, Jeannie gave it, I am the result. What would she make of me? Would she be pleased?)" (244). Jeannie, a number of readers agree, is a previous incarnation of the narrator who is using the narrative to recapture an experience not easily remembered, partly because she has been so transformed by childbirth and motherhood that her earlier self is not readily recalled (Davey 142; Rosenberg 125), partly because there is no language to facilitate memory. Thus, she narrates, literally, "to know." There are no real words for this identity, this similar difference, this different similarity. There is only the *mise en abyme* with its inherent distortions and paradoxes regarding what is within the frame and what is not, what is outside the sphere of representation, yet represented. Hence, the narrative structure articulates a relationship for which we have no ready language; it is the narrative structure with the complex inter-relationships between the narrator, Jeannie, and the other women that gives this new meaning to the phrase "giving birth" that was questioned at the story's outset.

The relationship between the narrator of "Meneseteung" and Almeda Joynt Roth bears some resemblance to the parallel relationship in "Giving Birth" in that the narrator establishes a distance from and a sympathy with the sensibilities of her protagonist. But her representation of Almeda is mediated by a number of framing devices, almost amounting to frames within frames, areas of differing degrees of narratorial authority or omniscience. In section I of the story, Munro's narrator might be seen as self-consciously engaged in "writing the body," since Meda is presented as a text to be read and interpreted. In this frame, which extends nearly to the end of section III, the narrator ostensibly constructs her protagonist out of textual evidence: Meda's book of poems with its autobiographical preface; the poems themselves; gossipy commentary in the local paper, the *Vidette*. Such a construction of Meda reminds us "that woman's body is always mediated by language; the human body is a text, a sign, not just a piece of fleshy matter" (Dallery 54), particularly given that the narrator's goal is eventually an intense exploration of that body's experience of a menstrual period.

The narrator establishes her identity as a kind of researcher, and as such her narrative pretends to a kind of historical authority.[7] This authority is at its strongest when she cites documents like the *Vidette*, or when, based on the *Vidette*'s accounts of life in this western Ontario town, she can make generalizations about the mores and values of the town's citizens.[8] Her authority is increased even further by her knowing, twentieth-century com-

mentary upon the values of the time, upon the town's fear that, should a "man and woman of almost any age [be] alone together within four walls, it is assumed that anything may happen. Spontaneous combustion, instant fornication, an attack of passion" (59). Her authority similarly appears in her critique of the doctor who "believes that [Almeda's] troubles [with her health] would clear up if she got married. He believes this in spite of the fact that most of his nerve medicine is prescribed for married women" (62). But this authority only serves to highlight those moments when she admits to uncertainty, as when she attempts her initial description of Almeda—though note here the fluctuation from twentieth-century analysis of the roles and habits of women to the questions about Meda's life:

> Almeda Roth has a bit of money, which her father left her, and she has her house. She is not too old to have a couple of children. She is a good enough housekeeper, with the tendency toward fancy iced cakes and decorated tarts that is seen fairly often in old maids. (Honourable mention at the Fall Fair.) There is nothing wrong with her looks, and naturally she is in better shape than most married women of her age, not having been loaded down with work and children. But why was she passed over in her earlier, more marriageable years, in a place that needs women to be partnered and fruitful? She was a rather gloomy girl—that may have been the trouble. The deaths of her brother and sister, and then of her mother, who lost her reason, in fact, a year before she died, and lay in her bed talking nonsense—those weighed on her, so she was not likely company. And all that reading and poetry—it seemed more of a drawback, a barrier, an obsession, in the young girl than in the middle-aged women, who needed something, after all, to fill her time. Anyway, it's five years since her book was published, so perhaps she has got over that. Perhaps it was the proud, bookish father encouraging her? (58-59)[9]

The narrator uses, then, a whole host of narrative devices to suggest her inability to have any intimate knowledge of Almeda's consciousness. She does so by establishing herself as a researcher who is constructing Almeda from texts, or by reminding us that she is a twentieth-century person who can comment on the social mores of Almeda's time, or by framing questions about aspects of Almeda's and Jarvis Poulter's lives and personalities that she cannot construct from the "evidence" that remains. Like Atwood, she further reminds us of this distance through her jarring use of the present-tense of the verb "to be" in such statements as "The population [of this town west of Kingston] *is* younger than it *is* now, than it will ever be again" (54; italics mine). Or: "the grand barns that *are* to dominate the countryside for the next hundred years *are* just beginning to be built" (61; italics mine).

But these frames, these claims to authority and admitted lapses of

authority all serve the same purpose: they foreground the impossibility of the narrator's entry into Almeda's consciousness, given that we conventionally expect some consistency in a narrator's knowledge and presentation of a character's inner states. Or, to put it another way, the limits that the narrator places on her knowledge highlight those anomalous moments when she exceeds those limits. Thus, if the narrator does present Almeda's thoughts, she's clearly "making it up." So it is interesting that the narrator most simply and confidently enters Meda's consciousness when she describes Meda's experience of her body: her physical reaction to Jarvis's heavy clothing and masculine smell, her thoughts and feelings on the hot afternoon when, under the influence of laudanum and the flow of menses, she sits in the dining room and plans the poem from which the story takes its title.

Unlike "Giving Birth," which places the question of language in the outer frame, "Meneseteung" places that question at its centre. Here, "Almeda in her observations cannot escape words" in her attempt to articulate the complex relationship between body and mind, body and society. Her thoughts about the heat, her menstrual period, the woman found beaten and unconscious at the bottom of her garden, the effect of the laudanum on her frame of mind are expressed in language that recalls in style and content Cixous' descriptions of writing the body:

> Soon this glowing and swelling begins to suggest words—not specific words but a flow of words somewhere, just about ready to make themselves known to her. Poems, even. Yes, again, poems. Or one poem. Isn't that the idea—one very great poem that will contain everything. . . . Stars and flowers and birds and trees and angels in the snow and dead children at twilight—that is not the half of it. You have to get in the obscene racket on Pearl Street and the polished toe of Jarvie Poulter's boot and the plucked-chicken haunch with its blue-black flower. Almeda is a long way now from human sympathies or fears or cozy household considerations. She doesn't think about what could be done for that woman or about keeping Jarvis Poulter's dinner warm and hanging his long underwear on the line. The basin of grape juice has overflowed and is running over her kitchen floor, staining the boards of the floor, and the stain will never come out. . . . She doesn't leave the room until dusk, when she goes out to the privy again and discovers that she is bleeding, her flow has started. (69-71)[10]

Munro has violated a near taboo against the representation of menstruation in literature,[11] and perhaps is engaging with Cixous's poetically expressed connection between women's bodies and their language by connecting Meda's period with her creativity. In some ways, Munro challenges Cixous, whose good mother "writes in white ink"—which of course privileges the

bodily experience of motherhood (Cixous 339). Cixous' metaphor would certainly be questionable in the case of Almeda Roth, given that the majority of nineteenth-century women who were able to create writing careers for themselves had no children. In addition, that metaphor, besides excluding women who choose not to be mothers, potentially renders a woman's creativity invisible: white ink is not visible on white paper. Meda's creativity instead is linked to her menstruation, to the impossibility—this month anyway—of motherhood, to her rejection of convention and conventional roles for women, to her aesthetic critique of her mother's "bunchy and foolish ... crocheted roses ... [that] don't look much like real flowers," to her refusal of Jarvis Poulter's significant invitation, to her rejection of the cozy domesticity of grape jelly which, we are told in the framed narrative, she never makes. In Munro's story, poems come out of embracing the experience of body and rejecting society's constraints, and in this sense, is very much like the writing of the body that Cixous envisioned. Furthermore, through the metonymic connection between the experience of menses and the conception of Almeda's poem, "Meneseteung," body has literally become—flowed into—text.

But this scene does not depict the experience or thought of the diegetically historical Almeda Roth; rather, it represents the narrator's invention or imaginative leap—a fact emphasized by the narrator's admission in the last sentences of the story: "I may have got it wrong" (73). This assertion reminds the reader that the story's central, intense scene, along with the metonymy that connects Almeda's menstrual period with her creativity is a "fiction." That the narrator does not know precisely why Almeda never married, but feels comfortable "inventing" this intimate experience of the body speaks to the nature of the relationship between the narrator and Meda, and the extent to which this narrator can "imagine" the experience of another body. Yet the narrator, by constructing the *mise en abyme*, as well as by purposefully emphasizing the aporia, suggests that half the point of her representation is an exploration of the relationship between the two of them.

Yet the narrator fails to explore Meda's relationship to "the other woman" who is beaten and raped[12] at the bottom of Meda's garden on the hot summer night before the onset of her period, in a scene which comprises this story's inner *mise en abyme*. What little we do know suggests that Meda's relationship to the other woman remains distant. We are told, for instance, that her dreams have transformed "something foul and sorrowful" into an

inert and unoffending "wheelbarrow" (64); or that "[i]f she had touched the woman, if she had forced herself to touch her, she would not have made such a mistake" as calling on the help of Jarvis Poulter (66). Beyond that, there is much that we do not know about Meda's reaction to the other woman except for the helpless panic that sends her to Jarvis Poulter's house for help and advice. Why does she taste "bile at the back of her throat" (66)? Is it a reaction to the prostrate, half clothed female body at her feet, or a reaction to Jarvis Poulter's gesture, to the fact that he "nudges at the leg with the toe of his boot, just as you'd nudge a dog or a sow" (66)? Why does she feel she will retch? Is it because of the body that "weaves and stumbles down the street"? Or is it caused by Jarvis Poulter's tone of "harsh joviality" (67)? If the narrator can present us with Almeda's reaction to her period, she can also fill in these gaps. But Almeda's reaction to the ambiguous, disturbing, destructive and violent sexuality of the other woman she finds at the foot of her garden is never articulated—beyond the important fact that it must be included now in the view of her world she presents in her poetry.

The final frame returns us to the narrator's original relationship to her protagonist, presenting Almeda Roth as a historical figure whose tombstone the narrator eventually found, as well as someone whose experience and consciousness she has partly invented: "I may have got it wrong. I don't know if she ever took laudanum. Many ladies did. I don't know if she ever made grape jelly" (73). In the context of this re-established frame that reminds us of the limits of the narrator's authority—and inevitably of her willingness to burst those limits when she chooses—we can only conclude that the narrator has chosen to facilitate our view of Almeda's experience of her own body, and has blocked (or cannot help blocking) Meda's experience of "the other woman."

The similar narrative construction of these two quite different stories, then, reveals something about women writers' representation of bodies. The respective narrators' representation of the bodies of their protagonists is variously problematized by the construction of a "frame" around the represented body, and by psychological or temporal disconnections between the narrator and the protagonist made manifest in that frame. The narrator of "Giving Birth" does this simply by affirming that she is not Jeannie; while the narrator of "Meneseteung" accomplishes this distancing by appearing in the guise of a twentieth-century writer doing research on a figure who lived in the past. Yet each narrator can, nevertheless, relate to her protagonist,

and can claim some identity with her, either by attempting to define that identity or by intense, imaginative engagement in an experience that is, given the limits of the frame narrator's knowledge, theoretically unknowable. Despite the ambiguous, qualified, and problematic relationship between the frame narrator and the protagonist in the primary *mise en abyme*, then, the potential for identification is foregrounded. Munro and Atwood, rather than defining woman "by an act of marginalization, by a thrusting of 'women' to a position outside the order of the Same" (Hite *Other Side* 159), have used their frame narrators to redefine the margins and then to proceed to place women's bodies firmly at the centre. Those women, moreover, are not defined by their relationships to men (*pace* A, the good childbirth coach) or to the male gaze but rather by their own inward gaze, their intense engagement with their experience of childbirth or menstruation.

The inner *mise en abyme*, in contrast, highlights the distance between the story's protagonist (and her experience of her body) and "the other woman" (and her experience of her body), even while the possibility of identification is admitted and rejected. The relationship between the protagonist and the other woman is rather like that between the young women in Manet's *Bar at the Folies Bérgere* and her reflection: regardless of where one stands to observe that painting, a viewer cannot get the woman and reflection to cohere spatially, in spite of the fact that they belong to the same figure. Similarly, each protagonist senses the possibility of becoming [like] the other woman, but it is a possibility which each of them finally seeks to avoid. The other woman—who is largely silent, in contrast to the frame narrator whose profession is words—is frightening because she is (seen as) the helpless object of various typical abuses—rape, poverty, violence, and it is perhaps precisely the protagonists' fear of her and her experience that makes her 'Other.' Or, to put it another way, while the other woman may be socially marginal, her position within the centre of these frames renders her—and her experience—central. In spite of the admitted difficulties the narrators have representing her experience, she is "Other" only by virtue of being, in some ways, the "Same." In the context of the doubled frame, and in spite of her silence, the other woman is not marginal but central.

NOTES

1 I am here entering the fiction of these stories that conventionally equates the authoritative narrator with the author. Thus when I refer to the "narrators' protagonists," I am not mistaking the implied author for the narrator (something which several readings of Atwood's story tend to do) but am addressing the conventionalized situation the stories establish.

2 It is possible that Atwood was thinking of this painting when she wrote the story, given that the narrator's life in "Giving Birth" is compared to Dutch genre painting and Atwood uses the image of this mirror in *The Handmaid's Tale.*

3 I intend to argue elsewhere that Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is the prototype of this narrative structure; like these two stories, *Frankenstein* makes use of a double frame that asserts numerous (and well-documented) similarities between Victor Frankenstein and his interlocutor, Robert Walton, thus recalling the painterly *mise en abyme.* Also similar is the "other body" of Frankenstein's monster, whose experience comprises the innermost narrative.

4 Conventionally, the implied author is "heard" only in devices like titles and epigraphs; otherwise we "hear" only the narrator. For the narrator to respond to the title blurs this distinction. See Chatman, *Coming to Terms,* Chapter 5.

5 Once Jeannie's baby is born, this inadequacy is once again posed as the mother contemplates her daughter: "Birth isn't something that has been given to her, nor has she taken it. It was just something that has happened so they could greet each other like this" (243).

6 See Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds.* Psychonarration (for which Cohn provides no succinct definition) is the presentation of a character's consciousness that utilizes (largely) the narrator's style, diction, and viewpoint. One of its trademarks is a predominance of verbs of consciousness—"she thought" or "she felt." Psychonarration always implies some degree of superiority on the part of the narrator, who generally remains more "knowing" than the character. Nevertheless, psychonarration can be consonant or dissonant, depending upon whether the narrator shares or critiques the thoughts or perspective of the character.

7 The influence of Susan Lanser's exploration of the issues of authority in *Fictions of Authority* permeates my discussion of this issue in Munro's story.

8 She frequently engages in a kind of social psychonarration, in which her voice merges with the values of the townsfolk, as in this description of a hot summer day:

> One day a man goes through the streets ringing a cowbell and calling, "Repent! Repent!" It's not a stranger this time, it's a young man who works at the butcher shop. Take him home, wrap him in cold wet cloths, giving him some nerve medicine, keep him in bed, pray for his wits. If he doesn't recover, he must go to the asylum. (55)

9 There is a passage that similarly asks questions about Jarvis Poulter: "This is the *Vidette,* full of shy jokes, innuendo, plain accusation that no newspaper would get away with today. It's Jarvis Poulter they're talking about—though in other passages he is spoken of with great respect, as a civil magistrate, an employer, a churchman. He is close, that's all. An eccentric, to a degree. All of which may be a result of his single condition, his widower's life. . . . This is a decent citizen, prosperous: tall—slightly paunchy?—man in a dark suite with polished boots. A beard? Black hair streaked with gray. A severe and self-possessed air, and a large pale wart among the bushy hairs of one eyebrow?" (57).

10 See Pam Houston's essay, "A Hopeful Sign: The Making of Metonymic Meaning in Munro's 'Meneseteung'," page 85, for a discussion of the metonymic connections between the story's title, Almeda's menstrual flow, and the grape juice.

11 Doris Lessing was quite aware of breaking this taboo in *The Golden Notebook*, in which Anna, who has resolved to write an uncensored day in her journal suddenly finds herself faced with the unrepresentable: her period. She resolves to write anyway, to break the taboo, but is aware of the extent to which her experience of her period may distort her representation.

12 The word "rape" may be only partially appropriate, since the other woman's reaction to what happens to her remains unclear, filtered as it is through Meda's sleepy consciousness. The narrator describes the sounds Meda hears almost oxymoronically, and certainly equivocally, as "a long, vibrating, choking sound of pain and self-abasement, self-abandonment, which could come from either or both of them" (64).

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John Donlan

Crow Child

Sparrows squat for a dust-bath
outside Alpha Video, near the cool shade
of a hacked shrub and three kinds of weed.

The Crow Child drags its beak (*sideways,*
head tilted, nostrils foremost) through the bird-bath,
trolling for softened bread-crusts left by its loud
and unremittingly instructive parents.

From below, near the base of the trunk,
the silver maple in Trinity Park
could be a green brain.
                                        Delicious—the air
above the great branches, under the leaves!

Landscape with Cowherd Piping

It's later than usual. Around the corner,
a streetcleaner swallowed a penny
and troubled the spirits of nameless trees
with the roaring of its engine.

A man on the street accused the trees
of worshipping old gods and drifting
to the lands of their ancestors.

Time needs funding. I kept at it for years, fighting
strangers clothed in flaming purple, dodging arrows hissing
through the clammy, blood-drenched air of battle.
It was horrible, if nothing I wasn't used to.
The war continues elsewhere,

but I've retired to my cave
in the country where I spend my days avoiding schedules.
Pan visits me quite a bit, and we go fishing together,
walk along the river, play our pipes, drink wine,
watch videos—just hang around. "Now that the lust
of gain is dead, the pure may rest," he often says, his hand
on the remote control.
But haven't you noticed that the gods

have forgotten how to throw a good party?
Look at some of Poussin's paintings. Women squeeze
grapes into the gaping mouths of naked sylvan boys,
people ride goats, satyrs goof off with drunken pipers,
and masks lay strewn all over the ground—now that
looks like fun!
Today, however, we have only three ways
to go about our business:
we can make money, help other people
to make money, or claim to know the truth.

Basho and Theocritus meet in Hawaii
to discuss fragmentation and downsizing.
Cows eat weeds in the country,
and along the broad avenues of our suburbs
trees overflow with the chatter of starlings.
But starlings are from Europe, too.

Jamie Dopp

Affirming Mystery in Eric McCormack's *The Mysterium*

"Just out of curiosity, though," I said, "what do those words on the title page mean—*certum quia impossible*?" "They're a short form of another Latin phrase—a paradox. . . . Loosely translated, they mean that something you always thought to be quite impossible may actually be the only solution to your problem. Worth remembering, in our profession."

—JAMES MAXWELL AND REEVE BLAIR in *The Mysterium*

The last decade or so has seen the consolidation of a sub-genre variously called the "anti-detective," "metaphysical detective," or "postmodern detective" novel.[1] Probably the most famous example is Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, but novels as diverse as Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, and Timothy Findley's *The Telling of Lies* may also be said to fit the type. What these novels have in common is a rewriting of traditional detective motifs for "serious" literary purposes. They all foreground the detective novel's built-in meditation on reading (from Dupin on, detectives are portrayed as exemplary "close readers") in order to raise questions about the construction—or even possibility—of meaning. They also subvert the traditional "closed" ending of the detective novel, in which the criminal is identified and the mystery "solved"; in so doing, they seek not to dispel but to affirm mystery. As Stefano Tani puts it:

> Anti-detective fiction restores and assimilates [detective conventions] to twentieth-century man's acceptance of the nonlogical in everyday life. Once decapitated by the nonsolution, detective rules no longer epitomize a genre but a contemporary attitude towards life as a mystery to be accepted. (151)

Like its cousins in the postmodern detective genre, Eric McCormack's *The Mysterium* (1992) both asserts and celebrates mystery. *The Mysterium* offers the same distinctive mix of metafictional playfulness and macabre events found in McCormack's previous books, the story collection *Inspecting the Vaults* (1989) and the novella *The Paradise Motel* (1990).[2] It also builds on

the parodies of detective conventions evident in stories like "Eckhardt at a Window" and "The Fugue." Like McCormack's earlier work, *The Mysterium* uses metafiction to foreground the complex relationship between language and reality, and thereby, as Stanley Fogel puts it (with reference to *Inspecting the Vaults*), to "[jeopardize] our confidence in the relationship between words and things" (Fogel 137). By affirming the inevitable mystery in reality, *The Mysterium*—in good postmodernist fashion—dramatizes the need for humility about claims to knowledge. At the same time, the novel seeks to expand our understanding of what affirming mystery might mean. Indeed, as McCormack himself explains, *The Mysterium* grew out of a meditation on the word "mystery," which can refer not only to a detective "mystery," but to religious "mystery," and to "mystery" as the "mastery" of a trade or art ("Less Than Meets the Eye" 10). *The Mysterium* exploits the potential in all these meanings to create a multi-layered meditation on what it might mean to take life "as a mystery to be accepted."

The Mysterium tells the story of James Maxwell's investigation into the strange events at Carrick, a small Scottish-like town in the "North" of the "Island." As told in the document authored by Robert Aiken, Carrick has suffered three acts of vandalism, a brutal murder, and a mysterious plague—or poisoning—in which the victims "chatter about this and that till they abruptly [die]" (61-62). Maxwell's investigation uncovers an earlier mystery that seems connected to these later events: the mining deaths of a number of prisoners of war, in what was ruled at the time an "accident," but in what seems to have been an act of revenge for the death of a platoon of Carrick men during the War on the Continent. This earlier mystery seems to explain the malaise of the town at the beginning of the story.

The opening lines of the novel, which exhort the reader to "smell" the book, establish the importance of affirming mystery. According to the opening lines, anyone who can smell "scents a north-east wind carries on a March day in the northern part of this Island" and also "a hint of something strange" is "probably still safe." But anyone who smells only "the paper and the binding," anyone without imagination and a sense of mystery, is probably lost (1). A strange smell permeates the town of Carrick within the story as well, and it is clear that those who are "lost" or "safe" may be identified by who is or is not aware of it. James Maxwell, the narrator, is aware of it throughout; certain figures of authority—the warden in the insane asylum (100), a soldier (222)—are not. Near the end of the story Maxwell discovers

that the smell emanates from the body of Robert Aiken, the character, more than any other, who is the "author" of the mystery at Carrick.

The smell is closely related to another key image in the novel, the fog. Carrick, we are told, is often shrouded in a fog that "wipes out the borders between countries and the lines between earth, sky, sea and shore" (5). Allusions to the fog stress the way it dissolves the solid world. So Miss Balfour "disintegrated for a while in the dark" (32) and the fog on the Green "was so thick the far side was quite obliterated" (43). Reeve Blair makes the obvious interpretation:

> Nothing's straightforward here. People keep things hidden, even trivial things, and it's hard to know why—maybe it's just a natural liking for secrecy. In the North real mysteries become even more mysterious. (75)

In various places, the novel suggests a necessity—even a certain comfort—to the fog. For the residents of Carrick, sunshine is the weather that is disorienting (36); they only pretend to prefer sunny days, only pretend "that they could see just as clearly in sunshine as in more discreet light" (48). The idea that you can see things more clearly in "discreet" light is picked up by Reeve Blair in one of his pedantic lectures:

> And remember, James: it's not always the clues that are right before your eyes that are significant. Some of the most important things in life can only be seen with peripheral vision. (112)

The connection between the fog and the smell is made explicit by Maxwell when he observes that "the fog seemed to be that bitter smell made visible" (151).

The images of fog and smell are only two of many devices that signal *The Mysterium*'s intention of offering a self-reflexive meditation on the construction of meaning. Indeed, in typical "postmodern detective" fashion, *The Mysterium* regularly foregrounds the parallels between James Maxwell's exploration of the mystery at Carrick and the act of reading. Maxwell himself is presented at first as a kind of ideal reader. He admits near the beginning that he has left much of his life "sleeping in books" (68). As the investigation unfolds, and he becomes more active in making up his own interpretations of events, Maxwell takes on the role of writer as well as reader. At the end he tries to write a book about the events at Carrick, but does not finish it because he is haunted by the possibility that he and Robert Aiken (and Kirk, another "author" of the mystery) might be relatives. The thought of such a co-incidence lying at the heart of his investiga-

tion appalls Maxwell, for it implies "a world so patterned, so contrived" that it is "a world *without mystery*" (253).

If Maxwell performs the role of reader/writer, the witnesses are explicitly likened to characters in a novel. "These people are as good as dead," explains Reeve Blair, with his usual mix of pedantry and double-entendre. "They aren't much more than cadavers who can still talk... They may be interesting characters but they're no more substantial than those people you meet in your dreams" (109). The fictional quality of the witnesses is suggested by the fact that their testimonies are in the third person, as if they are themselves products of an observing narrator. Literally, of course, within the terms of the novel, this narrator is James Maxwell, and the shift to third person only highlights Maxwell's tendency to organize the clues he encounters into a coherent story (Reeve Blair criticizes him in the end for the "very selective" quality of his "transcriptions and condensations" [251]); still, because the testimonies are so completely in the historical voice, with a level of detail which far exceeds what is likely in an actual interview, there remains the impression of some other, anonymous voice. Another hint of fictional quality is that each witness has a highly marked peculiarity of speech, apparently as a result of the poisoning or plague (which adds new meaning to the idea of "speech pathologies"). So Kennedy speaks his sentences backwards (79), Miss Balfour has a "unique dialect" (139), Dr. Rankin's conversation is "peppered with childish insults" (160), and so on. The blatant nature of the speech differences foregrounds and parodies a key novelistic convention for constructing characters. Maxwell's interviews with the witnesses are filled with parodic elements. Before each interview an authority figure imposes an arbitrary time limit, half-an-hour, an hour, and so on—a common device for generating suspense in mystery stories (124, 138). The witnesses each also have a specific piece of the story to tell and no more (in detective fiction, as in Carrick, a witness's "life" runs out "with her string of words" [151]). Interestingly, the witnesses seem to be aware of their own role as characters: they come right out to tell Maxwell when they've told all they're permitted to tell (137, 150). They are also uniformly unconcerned about their impending deaths; instead, they worry whether the portraits of themselves in Robert Aiken's account are sufficiently "interesting" (136, 150, 220-21).

Intertextual references intensify the metafictional quality of the tale. Like many of McCormack's stories ("The Fragment," "Sad Stories in Patagonia," and "One Picture of Trotsky," to name only three), *The Mysterium* uses the

device of texts within texts to foreground that *mise en abyme* so beloved of postmodernism: is it real? is it fiction? . . . lost again in the funhouse of language. The novel contains references to at least two earlier works by McCormack, *The Paradise Motel* ("Do you remember when the Motel Paradiso affair hit the headlines, James?" [179]) and "The One-Legged Men" ("The most popular" artists at the later day festival are the elderly miners from Muirton who have "each lost a leg in an accident that killed and maimed half the town's miners" [189, see also 201]). It also contains a long and hilarious discourse on criminology by Reeve Blair that is a thinly veiled parody of contemporary literary theory:

> The originator of the revolt [against the old methods of investigation] was a man named Frederic de Nossure. In his treatise, *A Course in General Criminology*, he set the world of criminal theory on its ear by the simple statement: 'the nature of the crime is totally arbitrary and requires new systems of analysis' . . . He proposed that an altogether new set of terminology be introduced, built around the triad: CRIMINIFIER—CRIMINIFIED—CRIME. (174)

These references, in conjunction with the other devices, make clear that the events in Carrick are "staged," in more ways than one, that the inhabitants have "set us a test" (171) and that the town itself is "a theatre of some kind . . . some intricate performance" (108).

What does this performance teach about the construction of meaning? Not surprisingly, the "message" is not at all straightforward. Take, for example, the thematic pronouncement repeated at various points in the novel: "Telling the truth is only possible when you don't know very much." This pronouncement—like everything else metafictional about *The Mysterium*—is tellingly ambiguous. On the one hand, it seems to refer to how the "truth" of the situation in Carrick becomes more difficult to pin down as more information is revealed. Truth, then, is superceded by how "one possibility melts into another," as Reeve Blair says (245), or it is like the sand that slips through the festival artist's fingers (190). This side of the pronouncement warns against those who would claim too confidently to tell the truth. Indeed, as Fogel has pointed out, much of McCormack's writing works to unmask the "ease with which we classify, sort, and organize" as a "dubious virtue" (Fogel 137). In this context, truth becomes the province of the narrow-minded or ignorant—rather like the moralistic monks in *The Name of the Rose*, who try to protect their ownership of truth by limiting what can be disseminated from the library.

On the other hand, an alternative reading of the pronouncement is also possible. According to this reading, limiting what you know is a necessary enabling act. James Maxwell's situation at the end of the novel hints at the old saw about creative writers, that they should only learn as much as they need to know to tell the story. John Barth puts it nicely when he says that a novelist's homework is "the opposite of ice-bergs: Eight-ninths of [it] . . . is in plain view on the surface of [the text]" (Barth 180). To learn too much is to forgo an important kind of "affirming mystery"—the writer's ignorance which leaves a space for imagination—and thus to be threatened by a silence in which no truth can be told.

The first interpretation of the pronouncement aligns *The Mysterium* with other postmodern texts, which commonly argue for (and dramatize) the need for humility about claims to knowledge. Such humility is one of the most valuable lessons Maxwell learns in the novel: "Now, I wonder if any decision can ever be that simple. I ask myself, does any of us know, really, why we do what we do? That was one of the lessons I was to learn in Carrick" (68). At various places in *The Mysterium*, the lesson is reinforced, as, for instance, when Maxwell admits "I'd made up a cause and effect that was understandable and convenient. And quite wrong" (169; see also 220 and 239). A similar plea for humility about claims to knowledge is at the root of the idea of affirming mystery in postmodern detective novels. In *Hawksmoor*, for instance, the two time periods in the novel, with their maze of almost-but-not-quite parallel events, foreground how causal explanations obscure as much of history as they illuminate. Ackroyd's novel can be read as elaborate demonstration of the childrens' joke that a History lesson is a "Mystery lesson" (Ackroyd 29). In *The Name of the Rose*, William of Baskerville backs into a solution through a totally incorrect chain of reasoning. The lesson William draws from his experience could stand as a moral for *Hawksmoor* or *The Mysterium* as well:

> Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truth laugh, because the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth. (Eco 491)

A number of McCormack's most gruesome earlier stories have contained explicit warnings against fanatical quests after "absolute truth." The sect in "The Fragment," for instance, horribly mutilate their bodies in an attempt "to make themselves the perfect embodiments of spiritual self-sufficiency" (*Inspecting* 26), while Da Costa in "Lusawort's Meditation" is literally "too

good to live," so the world begins to invade his body (194). In *The Mysterium*, the most obvious absolutists are the three men who apparently engineer the deaths of the prisoners of war: Alexander Aiken, Jakob Grubach, and Doctor Rankin. Alexander is, quite simply, an ego-maniac. He is capable of intellectual brilliance (many of the most resonant metafictional pronouncements come from him) but also great evil: when he discovers that one of the prisoners of war is having an affair with his wife, he sets out to kill all of them (166). Jakob, on the other hand, is obsessed with history. He believes "that to possess a country's past was almost the same as possessing the solid earth of it" (162). As a result, his bitterness at his own persecution and exile, which involved a proclamation that his version of his country's history was "officially unacceptable," seems to know no limits, and he agrees to go along with Alexander's plan in order to "strike a blow against those who had ruined his family and his homeland" (161, 166). Doctor Rankin absolutely believes in his own authority. He is the town patriarch, the one who usually has "the last word" in the decisions of the town council (34). He feels no compunction about sexually assaulting his patients (166). He goes along with Alexander's plan, presumably, as a way of revelling in his own power.

Similarly, though more benignly, the limit of Reeve Blair's authority in the text is signalled by his own traditionally detective-like adherence to reason. So when Maxwell recognizes the Reeve's love of mystery for its own sake as an attitude like "one of those old religious cabalists," Blair denies it, saying that those in his profession "are concerned with mysteries—not mumbo jumbo" (73). Tellingly, the Reeve puts dreams in the same category as religious "mumbo jumbo," a tendency that seems to be connected to the fact that he is a Southerner (where there is less fog and more sunshine), and, as a result, he is fundamentally at a loss for how to deal with the events in Carrick. He projects confidence at every turn, but the fact is, he has had to bring in James Maxwell, a more "creative" reader/writer, in order for the story to unfold. Maxwell, unlike Blair, believes that dreams "could be deeply revealing, no matter how puzzling they might appear" (73), a necessary attitude in a place in which, as Robert Aiken points out, "the crazy logic of dreams [has been] introduced into the rational world" (212).[3]

Humility about claims to knowledge is not, of course, the same thing as saying "nothing can be known" (just as the "crazy logic" of dreams is not entirely beyond understanding). Although *The Mysterium* warns against the absolutisms of Alexander, Grubach and Dr. Rankin, and gently satirizes the

rationalism of Blair, it doesn't suggest, as an alternative, that everything is simply relative or undecidable (a common misrepresentation of texts that foreground epistemological uncertainty). One of the most interesting things about McCormack's work—as in the best postmodern texts—is the way that metafictional elements have a way of doubling back to comment polemically on "reality." The very ambiguity of the metafictional elements invites this doubling back. Remember the enabling side to the idea of "not knowing very much." Or consider again the image of the smell. As I mentioned at the outset, the smell signals the importance of affirming mystery, but the smell itself is "bitter," which implies that awareness of the smell—for all its value—is not necessarily a pleasant experience (just as neither the unconscious nor "reality" is necessarily pleasant). Awareness of the smell may "save" us from the plague, from that involuntary—if joyful—release of the repressed, but it also implies that we are not fooled by the bland surface of the town: something truly "smells" in Carrick, and those who are aware of it are half-way to perceiving the underlying reality.

The red circle perhaps most powerfully illustrates this "doubling-back" quality of images in the novel. Red circles (or just circles) show up at various places in *The Mysterium*: at each act of vandalism (14, 30, 45), as Swainston's mutilated mouth (51), in the fish affected early on by the plague (they swim "in tighter and tighter circles before rising to the surface" [56]), as Kirk's "stigmata" (the imprint of the gun barrel left after the guerrilla leader murders Kirk's lover [102-03]), and so on. As signs (and as clues), these circles are both empty and full: they point to the vagaries of history, to the possible worth of our explanatory systems (a big zero); and yet they are pregnant with meaning at the same time. The red circle is the mark for Camp Zero, the prisoner of war camp around which the mystery behind the mystery seems to revolve. The recurrence of circles in the novel, the way they strike terror in the townspeople, underlines the fact that the present of Carrick is deeply conditioned by the earlier incident. The red circles foreground all that was at stake when the townspeople closed ranks to "let history re-write itself just a little bit" (169). The closing of ranks is both origin and effect of the town's decay, emblematic of the stultifying insularity of the place. And yet, as the sign itself suggests, the connection to Camp Zero is, from one point of view, an elaborate nothing: the miners were not in fact killed to avenge the Carrick men; the townspeople (most of them, anyway) have nothing really to hide.

The doubleness in images like the red circles throws light on McCormack's

claim, in his introduction to *Inspecting the Vaults* and in a recent article, that his fiction testifies to "the power of the written word" (*Inspecting* xii; "Less" 6). McCormack's texts dramatize that the power of words is rooted in what makes words hard to control: the multiple meanings they invoke, their profound connection to imagination and the unconscious. Like the elixirs Robert Aiken learns to concoct from his father, words are inherently ambiguous—they are always both poison and cure—and this ambiguity is the very source of their power (37). For this reason, what words offer is always a kind of "peripheral vision," to return to Reeve Blair's term, a vision that foregrounds epistemological uncertainty (affirming mystery) while at the same time hinting at some of "the most important things in life" (112). Like the red circles, words—and the stories they form—are an elaborate nothing, "lies" that nevertheless, indirectly and obliquely, can expose the "truth."[4] One of the best images for the duplicitous power of words in *The Mysterium* is the Carrick bend. It turns out that the knot was *not* named after the town, that the connection is spurious, a lie, and yet as a metaphor the knot still represents the town remarkably well (190, 221).

A favourite McCormack motif for portraying the power of words might be called "the return of the repressed text."[5] A number of his stories portray situations in which the destabilizing power of words asserts itself in spite of efforts to the contrary. In "The Fugue," for instance, a man who masquerades as "a scholar and a man of culture" is caught up in a moebius strip of fiction and reality in which the pattern of the "cheap novels" he so loves, but which he claims to be able to contain within "their place in his own particular jungle," come back, in a most direct way, to haunt him (*Inspecting* 231-4).[6] In "Inspecting the Vaults," an Orwellian regime imprisons people for crimes of imagination (one prisoner belongs to a family that constructed an entire forest of papier maché [*Inspecting* 6], another is accused of being a "mouth-sorceress, a manipulator of spells" [10]) and then rationalizes its activities with administrative jargon (the prisoners live in "'vaults'... not 'basements,' and especially not 'dungeons'—a most unsuitable word" [3]). For all the regime's efforts at control, however, what they try to repress comes back to haunt them. For one thing, the vault-dwellers are prone to a "wailing" that "penetrates all barriers." This howling has an inexplicable power: "It should be impossible for the other vault-dwellers, underground, to hear the cry, yet invariably they all take it up" (3). And the narrator of the story, the "Inspector" in charge of these vaults,

turns out himself to be a suspect. His crime? He may or may not be implicated in the disappearance of his entire village, on the site of which the authorities have found "something unthinkable:" a disemboweled body "completely tattooed from head to toe with columns of words" (18).

By foregrounding the return of the repressed text (which, after Derrida, you might also call "the return of textuality") McCormack implies that words can create a space of freedom, even, potentially, of resistance: there is something hopeful in the way that the wailing—even if it is, in itself, a horrible wailing—exceeds all attempts at control by the regime. The fact that what words tap into is often mysterious and chaotic is all the better for those who share the condition described by JP in *The Paradise Motel*:

> Some men do not need to search for order, they are overwhelmed by it, everywhere they turn. They feel as though they're in a prison where each moment of the day is planned, every action overseen. They hunger for the smallest particle of chaos, for things that do not fit. (105).[7]

Certainly, from a writer's point of view, the power of words can be a tangible pleasure: it means that there is no "last word" to a story, no final version, only an infinite sequence of possibilities each with its unsolved and potentially absorbing mysteries. One message of *The Mysterium*, like the story "Eckhardt at a Window," is that the value of the performance is simply in the contemplation of all the various possibilities. Inspector Eckhardt, at the end of his unsolved case, realizes that he "is not discontented with the way things have worked out. He knows now that he has no wish ever to solve his mystery . . . only to contemplate it, to delight in its complexities" (*Inspecting* 54). Similarly, the open ending of *The Mysterium* seems to invite the response of James Maxwell: let whiskey "oil the machinery" and then sit back for hours "discussing the mysteries at Carrick from this angle and that, considering such matters as guilt, innocence, doubt and certainty" (249-50).

At the same time, as *The Mysterium* implies, what "returns" with a repressed text is an oblique indication of the "truth." Recall that in the novel the plague induces normally reticent people to talk volubly until they die. The subject of their talk, and sometimes the nature of their speech impediment, is directly connected to what they had repressed in their lives before the infection. Kennedy sets the pattern by monologuing endlessly about his wife's twin sister, the "first time" he's told anybody about her (79).[8] Anna, to use just one other example, talks about Robert Aiken, her first lover. Her speech impediment involves violent displays of emotion triggered by certain

key words, which is appropriate, since a cause of her alienation from Robert is that she could not say "I love you" (she "had no wish to express such emotions in words" [95]). It's also interesting to note that the plague first strikes animals (rabbits, fish, dogs, and sheep) and children (young Cameron who "talked and talked, day and night" [59] and then five others [61]) and only finally adults. In other words, the plague takes effect first on those least "repressed" and gradually progresses to those most repressed. Understanding the plague as a return (and release) of the repressed also explains why it is such a "benign killer"; the threat of death pales before the euphoria of the unburdening (82).

The unburdening of the townspeople emphasizes that Carrick's present state comes from a failure to affirm mystery adequately, either by actually dispelling mystery (love does not flourish in the town because lovers "know each other too well" [195]) or by absolutist perversions of the need to affirm mystery (the closing of ranks after the mine disaster). In either case, the townspeople have drawn a (red, bloodied) circle around the town, imprisoning themselves in an insular certainty and defining everything outside as threatening and other. They have internalized the lesson of "the taming" described by Miss Balfour, in which the town collies are terrorized by a ram so that they repress their deepest desires and never go near the sheep that are "the fulfillment of [their] essence" (147).

The "essence" from which the townspeople are alienated is hinted at in *The Mysterium* by the various intertwined meanings of "mystery." For instance, one signal of the town's stultified condition is the fact that the church is shut down. According to Robert Aiken, "no sound" has emanated from the church since the end of the War (17). When Kirk asks him about this silence, Robert explains that his father said "we don't need churches anymore," because "we've learnt everything the Great Executioner in the Sky had to teach" (47). At its best, the religious sense of "mystery" implies a certain humility in metaphysical matters. The OED puts it succinctly when it describes a religious mystery as "a doctrine of the faith involving difficulties which human reason is incapable of solving." Alexander thinks he has solved everything, but, creature of reason and ego that he is, his "solution" only feeds his fearful obsession with death: "The body is nothing but a food supply for a million maggots" (202).

Most crucially, however, the novel implies that the townspeople are alienated from the idea of "mystery" as "mastery of a trade or art." This mystery is intimately connected to the festival at the literal and metaphoric heart of

the novel. McCormack has shown a fondness for rituals and festivals throughout his work.[9] Fogel argues that such rituals "act subversively to contextualize ironically our own value-making practices" (143). In *The Mysterium*, there are some good examples of the way ritualized activity can be used to rationalize atrocity: the taming (147), the almost ceremonial murder of Kirk's lover (102), the "rites" attendant on the persecution of the Grubachs (161). At the same time, however, these abuses of ritual are shown to be perverted expressions of a fundamental—and fundamentally empowering—human activity. The nature of this activity is suggested by Carrick's medieval Festival of the Mysterium, the disappearance of which is the key signal of the town's present malaise.

According to the account by "Johannes Peregrinus," a text within the text of *The Mysterium*, the medieval Carrick festival began with "a great procession" in which "eech crafte and mystery" was represented (84). The various mysteries assembled at the church to make their oath: "*Wee swear that we will well and truly oversee our mysteries. And all good rules and ordinances we shall keep*" (85). After the day of processions and solemn oaths, there followed "much drinking and eating and wenching," in the middle of which, on the third day, there was a stage play of the "*Mysterium Mysteriorum*—the Mystery of Mysteries" (86). Peregrinus remarks negatively on all the "wicked sorte" who descended on the town, but his criticism is tempered by the tangible benefit he himself received from one of the mysteries celebrated in the festival: the Carrick town apothecary gave him a "sovereign remedy" against "a sleeplessness conducive to a melancholy" (86).

Clearly, in these various details, the festival embodies an ideal of community in which responsibility and freedom, internal cohesion and openness to the outside, are balanced. From one point of view, the festival is a carnivalesque celebration that invites outsiders into the town and gives license to "wickedness." As Reeve Blair points out, with his usual double-entendre, Peregrinus uses erratic spellings in his account because "[in] those days there weren't any rules" (110). Blair, however, misses the fact that the disorder of the festival is contained within a larger—but not oppressive—commitment to the common good. The procession and other organized activities are a strong expression of solidarity, and the guild members swear on the steps of the church to keep "all good laws and ordinances" of their mystery, laws and ordinances which, judging from the original English guilds, always began with respect for the "common law" (see Smith xxxix).

The Carrick festival also celebrates a condition of relatively unalienated labour: during the festival week, as Reeve Blair points out, Carrick becomes for the tradespeople not just a workplace but "the stage of their performance" (111). For this element, McCormack taps into views sometimes expressed in scholarship on the medieval guilds:

> The early English Gild was an institution of local self-help which, before the Poor-laws were invented, took the place, in old times, of the modern friendly or benefit society . . . [Their] main characteristic was, to set up something higher than personal gain and mere materialism, as the main object of men living in towns. (Smith xiv-xv)

Or, in the same vein:

> The rules laid down by the Gilds, and to which all men of the trade had to submit, had reference (1) partly to securing the good quality of the work, and (2) partly, like all Gild-Statutes, to the temporal and eternal welfare of their members. Both kinds of rules were consequences of the fundamental principle of all Gilds, namely, care for the common interest by means of association. (Brentano cxxviii- cxxix)

These quotes highlight how the guilds put the general welfare of the community over the free pursuit of profit. Brentano describes a very telling incident from the fourteenth century in which certain "rich" merchants called "Grocers" began to deal in "all manner of merchandize vendible," much to their own profit. After a complaint, the king, Edward III, responded with a decree "that all artificers and people of mysteries shall each choose his own mystery before the next Candlemass; and that having so chosen it, he shall henceforth use no other" (cxxiii-cxxiv). Though the social inequities of the medieval period warn against taking these accounts naively, the loss of communal values represented by the disappearance of the guilds and their festivals is, as McCormack seems to argue, something to mourn.

The Mysterium suggests that, at its best, to take "life as a mystery to be accepted" means to adopt an attitude to life analogous to that embodied in the guild festivals. It means to forgo certain efficiencies deliberately—certain advances of technology and reason—in order to affirm other values. That the festival is now "out of fashion" is particularly poignant when you consider that Carrick, at the beginning of the novel, is not only psychologically but *economically* depressed (191). Smaller communities almost always suffer from capitalism's mania for rationalization and efficiency. As Robert Aiken points out at the beginning of the novel, the town still "contains practitioners of the various trades as it did in its heyday," but these practitioners are now no longer "townspeople" but "strangers" (7). In economic terms, there

may be something impossible about declining to be efficient (are we not all prisoners of international financiers and the competitive global economy?) and yet "*certum quia impossible*" (as the epigraph to Peregrinus's account of the festival says): "something you always thought to be quite impossible may actually be the only solution to your problem" (84, 112).[10]

The Festival of the Mysterium, then, intertwines the aesthetic or epistemological implications of "affirming mystery" with more directly practical concerns. In fact, the festival embodies within itself all the various "mysteries" in the novel. There is an explicit connection between the "mystery" practiced by other craftspeople and the "mystery" of the writer (all those freedoms and responsibilities): Maxwell's own task in Carrick is likened to a guild member "learning his trade" (68, 187). The rituals acted out have a reverential quality to them, and in the *Mysterium Mysteriorum*—the Mystery of Mysteries—Peregrinus discovers something that highlights the limits of his own knowledge: he cannot tell what this stage play involves—it remains a permanent gap in his account—because he is not one of the initiates. The festival also feeds back into the novel's metafictional account of "the power of words." The "exotic" experiences offered by the festival ("staged" or not) nicely parallel the experiences offered by literature. Not surprisingly, the first part of the testimony of Robert Aiken deals with his love of the festival, and the elements he most loves offer clear parallels to the best functions of art: the artist whose impressionistic portraits revealed "characteristics his sitters never knew they possessed or had managed to keep hidden," and the sailor who tells the story of the Carrick bend, that thing of deceitful beauty, only to be trusted if you "had tied it personally" (190).

To affirm mystery, then, the novel seems to argue, is a festive business. It is to tap into and affirm all the intertwined "mysteries" implicit in the Festival of the Mysterium. There is something licentious and not entirely serious about the process—the power of words implies a carnivalesque indulgence in "wickedness," in things marginal and transgressive, and also warns against taking absolutist positions (especially, perhaps, with regard to the "ideals" represented by the festival). At the same time, to affirm mystery is to speak to a range of more prosaic human needs: the needs for community, reverence, and for a dignity in labour. As Robert Aiken points out, the people of Carrick, like all human beings, "wanted to be part of something coherent like those tradesmen at the festival hundreds of years ago" (221).

NOTES

1 My own preference is to use "postmodern detective." "Anti-detective," Stefano Tani's term, implies too much of a binary, as if the later novels are acting only in opposition to the "traditional" mystery. In fact, the later novels simultaneously exploit and undercut the received conventions—a typically postmodern tendency (see Hutcheon, *Canadian* 1-8 or *Poetics* 3-8). "Metaphysical detective," on the other hand, a term used by Patricia Merivale and Michael Holquist, implies that earlier mystery novels somehow do not have a metaphysics. They do (which is one reason so many critics have been fascinated by them): just that it is not the metaphysics of Nabokov or Pynchon or Borges. So, as much by default as anything else, "postmodern detective" is a term I will employ in this paper.
2 Though he has published only three books so far, McCormack has established himself as a distinctive voice in contemporary Canadian fiction. There is not another writer in Canada who does quite the kind of work he does—all those Borgesian echoes in *Inspecting the Vaults*, the dizzying mix of playfulness and horror throughout. *The Mysterium* is McCormack's most sustained effort to date. It doesn't have the *tour de force* quality of some of the stories, but is, it seems to me, a highly successful novel that raises some complex issues in a winningly playful and dramatic way.
3 I was at first tempted to link Kirk, because of his mane, to the level of religious mystery. Kirk does, after all, explore the region with a fishing pole that seems a "divining rod" (10), and he contributes to the return of the repressed mystery in Carrick. Alas, however, that was as far as I could make the connections go. It is possible that Kirk's name is one of those teasing clues, empty and full at the same time: it turns out it is not even his original family name, but rather an easily spelt patronymic given to his mother when she emigrated to the Colony (237).
4 In this context, it is well to remember the paradoxical effect of Kirk's acts of vandalism. At first glance, the acts seem designed to defile or obliterate the town's past, but ultimately they have the opposite effect. The acts, by their very appearance as attempts to efface history, end up posing the question "Why would anyone want to obliterate the town's past?" and thus make history a subject of urgent concern.
5 As my examples below indicate, this motif is similar to one of the devices Borges claims is fundamental to all fantastic literature: the contamination of reality by dream (Irby in Introduction to *Labyrinths* xviii). In both cases, the power of words and of what words tap into (imagination, the unconscious) has a way of destabilizing everyday assurances about reality.
6 This story reads like a one-upping of Julio Cortázar's "Continuity of Parks," a possibility signalled by the spurious quotation from Cortázar that makes up its epigraph. It also has parallels with a story like Borges's "Tlon, Orbis Tertius," in which the fantastic world of Tlon makes intrusions "into the world of reality" (Borges 16).
7 In the context of this article, it is also well to remember the epigraph from R.P. Blackmur that begins *The Paradise Motel*: "What, should we get rid of our ignorance, the very substance of our lives, merely in order to understand one another?"
8 Her story presents another image for the necessity of mystery. Turns out that the sister that was born blind had an operation at twelve to restore her sight. But she didn't like being able to see. Everything was disappointing to her, nothing was as beautiful as she had imagined it, except her dog and shadows. As a result she blinded herself again and lived "happy as a queen" (79).
9 See the saturnalia festival described in "Inspecting the Vaults" (*Inspecting* 15) or the rites of the spider-god in "Sad Stories in Patagonia" (30-32) or the Kafkaesque festival in "Festival" (115-28).

10 The values represented by the guilds remind me of a story from my hometown of Waterloo, Ontario, where there are many Mennonite farmers. Some years ago, it seems, the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to do a cost-benefit study comparing modern farming methods with the traditional methods of the Mennonites. How was it, the Ministry wondered, that the Mennonites could survive—even thrive—while forgoing such efficiency-producing devices as fertilizers and tractors? When it came time to do the study, however, the Mennonites had trouble cooperating, for the simple reason that they could not understand the surveys they were asked to fill out. It seems the survey listed "labour" as one of the "costs" of production, but, from the point of view of the Mennonites, "labour" is one of the "benefits."

By a quirk of circumstance, Eric McCormack lives in Waterloo, Ontario (though I have never met him).

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The Living Must Never Outnumber the Dead

It is that simple. The living
must never outnumber the dead.
With us, at the moment, they do.
We have broken the rule.

They are hard words
to say to a woman,
preposterous words
to say to a child.

And I do not know what to do
except leave them behind
here in the air
where no one will find them.

Northern Mysteries

Margaret Atwood
Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature. Clarendon $29.95

David C. Woodman
Strangers Among Us. McGill-Queen's $29.95

Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

As Margaret Atwood's title reminds us, after Robert Service—"There are strange things done 'neath the midnight sun"—and these strange things, such as going mad, cannibalism, murder, mysterious disappearances (and reappearances), continue to haunt the Canadian imagination. The books under review here are just two more proofs that the Canadian North, however we define it, holds an endless fascination for us. Whether we go there or not, we seem to have an insatiable capacity to read, write, paint, film, or just imagine it.

Atwood's *Strange Things* is a collection of four lectures which she gave at Oxford in 1991 as part of the Clarendon Lecture Series. In them she explores four of the possible topoi of our northern mythology: the lost Franklin Expedition, what she calls "the Grey Owl Syndrome," cannibalism, and "women-in-the-North stories." Now this is all familiar territory for Atwood who has given us examples of all four topoi herself. But here she sets out to trace what other writers do with the Franklin story, the Grey Owl desire to "go native," the Windigo legend (and psychosis), and the fate of the woman who dares to enter a northern space already designated as deadly and female.

My favorite chapter is the one on Franklin. Atwood follows our obsession with "the hand of Franklin reaching for the Beaufort Sea," which Stan Rogers celebrated, through a wide range of texts as different as MacEwen's verse play *Terror and Erebus* and Richler's parodic narrative of nation *Solomon Gursky Was Here.* Not surprisingly, she misses some key texts from her catalogue of Franklin-mania, but that's the subject of Woodman's book. Stories about the North always seem to return to Franklin! The Grey Owl chapter is less satisfying, perhaps because it is less spectacular—Franklin is a hard act to follow. Here Atwood considers Kroetsch's *Gone Indian,* M.T Kelly's *Breath Dances Between Them,* and once more MacEwen, for whom Grey Owl (aka Archie Belaney) was a "doomed hero."

The Wendigo chapter, "Eyes of Blood, Heart of Ice," is altogether another matter. If Franklin is a rather tragic ghost and Grey Owl a rather confused one, there can be no mistaking the terrible power of the Wendigo—or of going Wendigo. If we wanted one myth to sum up what North means, this would be it. Stories of the Wendigo are indigenous to eastern and northern parts of Canada, and the Wendigo is all too real a presence to the Ojibway and Northern Cree. Euro-Canadians, who brought with them to the frozen wastes their own prohibitions on cannibalism and were just as susceptible as the natives (if not more so) to starvation or the "last resort"

of cannibalism, were quick to recognize a good story when they heard one. Atwood tracks the Wendigo from legend to ghost story and from metaphor to gothic thriller, where this quintessentially northern monster is one's dreaded double; a choice example of this latter type is Wayland Drew's novel *The Wabeno Feast* (1973), but one could do worse than look to Atwood's story "Death by Landscape."

I find the fourth chapter the most problematic. Although it is true that most of those who go North have been and continue to be men, the fate, narrative or otherwise, of the women who do so is far more complex than Atwood allows. Here I wish she had considered Aritha van Herk's *Places Far From Ellesmere* or Elizabeth Hay's *The Only Snow in Havana*, and if she had considered plays she might have reflected upon Wendy Lill's powerful monodrama *The Occupation of Heather Rose*. Instead, she focusses attention on another Wendigo incarnation, Ann Tracy's novel *Winter Hunger* (1990) in which the monster is a wife and mother. And we are left to conclude that women who go North become North—a fate worse than death!

Strangers Among Us is a sequel to Woodman's stunning achievement in *Unravelling the Franklin Mystery: Inuit Testimony* (1991). As he explains in his introduction, he had material centring on the discoveries and speculations of the American explorer and would-be Franklin expert Charles Francis Hall that would not fit in the first book. However, *Strangers* is something of a let-down. Although it is structured in the same way, interspersing Inuit stories with Hall's and other white men's accounts, it does not carry the same inherent drama, and the attempt to sort out who saw whom where becomes confusing.

But let me backtrack briefly. The eccentric Hall, captivated by the news coming out of the Arctic in the mid-1850s, quickly became obsessed with the Franklin disaster. What most intrigued him was the possibility that some of Franklin's men had survived. By 1860 he was in the Arctic and, having failed to reach King William Island, where the search for Franklin had been focussed, he spent two years living with the Inuit and establishing friendships with an Inuit couple who became his assistants, allies, and companions: Joe Ebierbing and Tookoolito (Hannah Ebierbing).

By 1864 Hall had returned with his Inuit friends to spend the next four years living with the Inuit on Melville Peninsula near Repulse Bay, interviewing anyone who could remember the Franklin disaster, or had other stories to tell about strange white men, and visiting sites to search for evidence. He quickly became convinced that some of Franklin's men had indeed survived; he postulated that, instead of trekking south for the Back River and perishing at Starvation Cove, a small group of them led by Captain Francis Crozier, whom the Inuit called "Aglooka," walked north and east to Melville Peninsula in the hope of meeting whaling ships or of travelling south down the west coast of Hudson Bay.

What convinced Hall of this possiblility was the set of stories told by Inuit of sightings of three or four strangers and a dog walking and hunting at several points on the peninsula. Other Arctic veterans like Dr. John Rae dismissed Hall's theory of survivors, claiming that Inuit tales were untrustworthy and the sightings could be explained more simply. What Woodman has done is to weave the various stories, relayed to us through Hall, with Hall's own speculations and to compare the composite picture with the evidence from other sources, such as Rae's accounts. His own conclusion, however, remains tantalizingly inconclusive. If there were two or three survivors, and if they were led by Crozier, they do not appear to have made it south to white outposts—their trail dies out somewhere near Chesterfield Inlet, and we will

never know precisely what happened or who exactly they were.

Although I find *Strangers Among Us* less gripping than Woodman's first Franklin book, it is nonetheless fascinating. It is another example of the northern tale that Atwood extolls—a mystery story with ghostly presences that cannot be confirmed or explained away. Certainly, whatever the Inuit saw and heard over one hundred years ago provided them with the stuff of legend and myth, and these tales continue to haunt our imaginations, our literature, and our arts. As Woodman reminds us in his final remarks: "the Inuit knew [that] the best stories are those that survive on their own merit, and bear endless repetition."

Bibliotherapy

Beckylane

Where the Rivers Join: A Personal Account of Healing from Ritual Abuse. Press Gang $16.95

Nancy Owen Nelson, ed.

Private Voices, Public Lives: Women Speak on the Literary Life. U North Texas P US$16.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

Both of these books explore the realm of literature as therapy. The first, a personal journal of horrific revelations, finds solace through writing. The second, an academic anthology of intellectual intertextualities, records the life-impact of reading. Both belong in the categories of autobiography/women's studies rather than in the traditional genres of literature/literary criticism, but their feminist voices proclaim that they are no less valuable and that they will no longer be silenced by patriarchal structures.

Beckylane is a pseudonym for a writer from Turtle Island who, as the afterword indicates, cannot use her real name because she is vulnerable to lawsuits for the revelations of ritual, sexual abuse she makes in this book. It is a personal journal from March 1991 to June 1992 that records her recovery of the memories of her childhood: her prostitution, until age seven, to a cult that practised physical and sexual abuse of children, bestiality, murder, and cannibalism; and, between the ages of seven and eleven, her sexual abuse by her father after he no longer offered her to the cult. The journal entries reveal the essence of her story within twenty pages, then detail, repeat, and psychoanalyse the events as her counsellor-therapist enables her to relive her repressed memories. As Lee Maracle says in the Foreword to the book, the nightmarish fragments are horrific and challenging; they are not sensationalized or self-indulgent.

What weakens the autobiographical impact of this courageous book are the self-conscious literary interpolations of the self-confessed writer and grad student: ironic fortune-cookie sayings; numerous quotations from authorities on child abuse; dialogue from "Readers" who instruct her to make the text more "feminist"; even "A Scholar" who praises her courage and writes the book review—"the interweaving of quotations from other accounts of abuse survival, diary entries, images welling up from repressed memories, fortune cookie proclamations etc. is very effective." This reader feels manipulated. The cover blurb claims that this "record of a woman's healing from ritual abuse does not pander to skeptics and does not apologize." The problem is that it does both. The author is so obsessed with the accusation of False Memory Syndrome that she constantly foregrounds a critique of her own material that compels the sympathetic reader to become a skeptical judge. Ultimately, as she insists, this brave book is primarily a therapy for herself and other abuse survivors.

Private Voices, Public Lives is an anthology of twenty-four essays by American women scholars who attempt to liberate literary criticism from an adversarial "masculinist" mode by foregrounding an

autobiographical, gendered reader response to literature. They hope their "I-witness" will "reconcile the conflict between [their] private worlds and [their] public lives," promote "collegiality in academic life," and encourage teachers and students to acknowledge "the reality of emotional life." Ranging from the trivial to the traumatic, these essays practise what they preach: an integration between, and an illumination of, both literary texts (in the broadest definition) and individual lives.

The book is divided (somewhat arbitrarily and redundantly) into three sections. Part One, "The Work/Love Paradigm" includes essays on Katherine Anne Porter, Willa Cather, and Laura Ingalls Wilder. In the first essay, Ann Putnam documents the trivial distractions of daily life that keep her from analysing "Pale Horse, Pale Rider" (her child forgets a note; her dog swallows a sock). This banal beginning shocks the reader with its subversion of objective, impersonal, intellectual literary criticism. Other essays present more traumatic life experiences or more profound literary analyses but the point has been made: women, at least, cannot separate life and scholarship.

The second and longest section, "The Text as Mirror," explores the therapeutic "mirror" effect of literature on the lives of thirteen women. Their studies of detective fiction, Western American literature, women's sea logs, and the works of Adrienne Rich, Emily Dickinson, Amy Tan, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Toni Morrison, Kathleen Norris and others have enabled these female critics to come to terms with child abuse, sexism, divorce, lesbianism, infertility, menopause, relations between genders and generations, and geographical/spiritual displacement. One of the best in this section is Melody Graulich's article, which integrates literary references to the loss of a child from women writers of disparate races and eras (Gwendolyn Brooks, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Leslie Silko, Beth Brant, Mary Austen and Charlotte Perkins Gilman) with her own poignant memoir of infertility to demonstrate "the consolation of knowing that other women can understand, despite often living far apart."

The essays in Part Three, "Teaching and Writing The Self" discuss the theme of individuation through the acts of teaching and writing. Lynn Z. Bloom narrates a fascinating story of achieving independence from family racism and academic snobbery through writing a biography of Dr. Benjamin Spock. Other essays document the educative effects of our "literary grandmothers," multicultural literature, women's literature, and gender studies. Beverly Conner's brave account of the disappearance of her daughter, the discovery (nine months later) of her murdered remains, and the comforting parallels she found while teaching Anne Tyler's *The Accidental Tourist* is the most moving essay in this collection. The final article provides an appropriate commentary on, conclusion for, and, to some extent, subversion of this text. Elsie Mayer "attempts a reconciliation between masculinist criticism and feminist epistemology" illustrated in Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader*. The essays in Nelson's anthology are generally honest, interesting, and personally insightful—but not always critically illuminating. As Mayer points out: "While I want others to respect my right to express my personal relation to a text, I in turn must weigh my experience, sifting the important from the unimportant. I must judge the value of my experience for the reader if I hope to move criticism beyond expressionism." Nevertheless, she valorizes "the fruits of connecting the self and the text." This feminist discourse is necessary in order to liberate literary criticism from masculinist argumentation and analysis and "move it closer to a position that acknowledges equality and difference."

Novels for the Masses...

Carol Beran
Living Over the Abyss: Margaret Atwood's Life Before Man. Canadian Fiction Studies #23. ECW P $14.95

Donna Pennee
Praying for Rain: Timothy Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage. Canadian Fiction Studies #21. ECW P $14.95

Lorna Irvine
Collecting Clues: Margaret Atwood's Bodily Harm. Canadian Fiction Studies #28. ECW P $14.95

Arnold E. Davidson
Writing Against the Silence: Joy Kogawa's Obasan. Canadian Fiction Studies #30. ECW P $14.95

Reviewed by Patricia Merivale

To review these four titles is to review samples of a genre, i.e. to review, in a sense, the genre itself—the concise, strictly formatted introduction to a single major work of fiction, one almost certainly "canonical" and certainly a title taught in schools and universities.

All four authors have followed the format successfully: Chronology, the Importance of the Work, and Critical Reception take up about twenty-five pages; a segmented "Reading of the Text" fills out each monograph to a total of about a hundred pages; Works Cited and Index conclude each slim volume. Twayne, the Next Generation...

On the whole, nothing in these volumes and, in all likelihood, nothing in their thirty or so fellow-volumes, will either shock, surprise, or inspire the critical reader reasonably acquainted with these novels (and with some of the already received opinions on them), or grievously mislead the innocently inquiring mind. The latter readership is clearly the primary one for this series, and they have been well served, with accurate information and clear, useful interpretations and emphases. The Critical Reception sections are, however, inevitably 'bitty' and joyously self-contradictory: they might, in fact, be more useful to, or at least safer in the hands of, the warily critical reader.

Having said that, I must confess that my own opinion of the novels inevitably affects my judgment of the critiques. Irvine and Beran will have some difficulty persuading me that *Bodily Harm* is not one of Margaret Atwood's more problematic novels and *Life Before Man* not perhaps her most tedious, while Pennee and Davidson can, just by humming softly, persuade me to hear the massed choirs of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and (above all) of *Obasan.*

Carol Beran's introduction asserts, implausibly, some special novelty in *Life Before Man*'s expansion of "Canadian" elements. She makes heavy weather throughout of the fictional genres and types deployed in the novel: "At this point we are aware [actually, somewhat earlier: page one, perhaps...] that depressed Elizabeth and macaroni-and-cheese making Nate are not the standard heroine and hero of a romantic novel." The study, short though it is, is still very repetitive, especially in regard to this non-problem of how different the characters and events are from those of her textual straw person, "a typical popular novel."

Beran notes the frequency of "hands" images in Atwood, but misses many other chances to explicate Atwood's intra-textualities, e.g. "dancing", Ezekiel's bones (cf. not only Atwood's "Good Bones," but also, interestingly, Kogawa's), and such Atwoodian apocalyptic themes as "Lifeboat" (the game). Like other Atwood critics, she overuses (or under-understands) the word "ironically" as applied to Atwood. She gives a good reading of apocalyptic images in the novel, and of the Cheshire Cat image, yet seems to misunderstand "a piece of cake" as connected with the very different slang phrase, "having one's cake," and, somewhat unprofitably, links Chris (the person) with kris (the curly knife).

Beran's conclusion exemplifies her argument as a whole. Her exordium, "reading this novel demands that we learn to read for something other than marriages and births and passionate sex scenes among likable characters" constitutes a wanton patronising of her readership, even if she has been told to write 'down' for high school students.

Donna Pennee's study of *Not Wanted on the Voyage* indulges in some heavy politically correct breathing over the fictional exemplars of Findley's admirably humane principles: "let us hear from the defeated, from the silenced,"—in short, from the oppressed, both human and animal, and (perhaps) angelic as well. She catches nicely Findley's amalgamation of humour, fantasy, and several different prose genres, including his "revisionist" (like More, Bunyan, Swift), defamiliarizing of received texts.

Not Wanted on the Voyage is a definitively "postmodern" novel on "the revolt of the lower orders." Pennee gives a very fair account of how power-relations are narrativised via Noah's apocalyptic, world-destroying activities, and how Noah's own aesthetic production, his grand magic show, "The Masque of Creation," leaves no room for the past, or for imagination, or for human liberty. She plays patriarchal texts—the Bible, of course, Dante, and Milton—against alternative texts throughout her "reading". For Noah's binaries can be resisted by, for instance, the struggling Mrs. Noah in the mystery play, or by the subversive genre of the beast fable: "some fictions are preferable to others."

Further, she makes clear that the conclusion to the book must be seen as unhappy, or at best a compromised solution, for the sheep no longer sing, and Mrs. Noyes' elegy is for all of us: "in blind Mottyl's mind was the last whole vision of the world before it was drowned." Findley is (self)-defined as feminist and as a defender of the marginalized, in Pennee's postcolonial reading of his overtly postcolonial text. As a fringe benefit, she provides a useful tutorial in postcolonial attitudes and vocabulary.

Lorna Irvine, in her account of Margaret Atwood's *Bodily Harm*, comes out firmly, in the "Critical Reception" section, for the "readings that stress complexity," and her own is creditably consistent with that principle. She is concerned throughout with Atwood's use of perspective, reified as Rennie's ways of seeing, to convey political themes: Rennie's naïvete decreases as, despite herself, her political involvement increases. Other characters, Dr. Minnow speaking as her conscience, or the (not coincidentally Canadian) Lora, whom Rennie constructs as her dark double, play roles in what is essentially Rennie's private psychomachia.

Rennie comes to see that sexual games and cruel playfulness are on the same gendered political spectrum as sadism, pornography, and even the torture and the chopping up of women which is an integral part of revolutionary activity (cf. Naipaul's *Guerillas*, on which much of *Bodily Harm* could be read as a commentary). As in so many political novels, revolution should appear "real, not faked;" it involves the closing of the airport, and the imprisonment of subversive elements (like Lora and Rennie), but the police can stop it, when they choose to, "without much shooting." A narrative notable for its "holes, undergrounds, and textual gaps," *Bodily Harm* forces the reader to follow the prisoner's consciousness as it struggles to make meaningful deductions from fragmentary clues (hence Irvine's title).

The uncertainties of the narrative structure in the prison scene introduces the problematics of the novel's ending, or indeed of its various endings, as Rennie, sequentially, becomes capable of imagining them. Irvine's strategy for "Interpreting *Bodily Harm*" includes a good account of Atwood intra-texts, such as Bluebeard's

Wife, as well as typescript clues from the Atwood archives, which show, for instance, Rennie being explicitly in-and-out of her body in other versions of the manuscript. With this material in hand, Irvine proposes a combined solution to the double problem of the time scheme of the novel and its ambiguously "open" ending.

Starting from an authorial clue—Atwood describing the time scheme of the novel as "a few hours"—Irvine presents a couple of other solutions, and then suggests, intriguingly, "that Rennie never leaves the hospital room where she is undergoing an operation for cancer." There is surgical imagery throughout the Caribbean action of the book; items from Rennie's 'real' life recur in dream circumstances, building up suspense while providing clues for Irvine's final, and novel, reading of the story by way of its narrative structure: "[T]he whole of the multi-layered narrative [is] contained within Rennie's consciousness." So she considers *Bodily Harm* to be what I would call a "time-bubble" story, like Ambrose Bierce's classic, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," and a dozen others, notably Jorge Luis Borges' stories "The Secret Miracle," and "The South" and Conrad Aiken's "Mr. Arcularis." In such stories, the protagonist lives out instantaneously a whole alternative sequence of events, in what is usually an at-death experience: both "The South" and "Mr. Arcularis" take place in the non-time-just-before death on an operating table. But as Irvine claims that Rennie "will survive this operation," we presuppose an equally feasible near-death experience.

This hypothesis helps to explain the "bookishness" of the Caribbean scenes, playing as they do with Naipaulian and Didionesque versions of Greene-land; Irvine suggests *The Quiet American* as the "Somerset Maugham novel" Rennie is imagining herself into, but Atwood may have, or perhaps should have, imagined Rennie in the Graham Greene novel of that name, or even in Joan Didion's remarkably similar gendered inversion of Greene in *A Book of Common Prayer*. It is as if Rennie, having read such books, acquired material for her own fictional construction, whether with or against the grain of those conventions. Had Irvine had the space or inclination to use the other 'time-bubble' stories as supportive analogues for this one, her invigorating hypothesis could have been made even stronger. This is such a bright critique that it is bursting the corseted bonds of the ECW series format.

Arnold E. Davidson's understated eloquence does not compete with, but tactfully reinforces, Kogawa's own. His format-enforced selective summary is a clear account of a complex work notoriously difficult to explicate (including, again, a tricky time scheme).

He writes particularly well on the internal echoes that build Kogawa's "poetics of dispossession"; he is subtle on interlocking "takings in" and closures of the family tree, of loss in contextual relationships. Among the many "parables of displaced parenthood" which form one of *Obasan*'s key image-"webs," we see that the story of Momotaro prefigures all of them; that Canadian bureaucracy deprives Naomi of mother and father separately, but, unknown to her, at *about the same time*; that the story of the chicks reciprocates inversely the story of Old Man Gower's sexual abuse of her, and that Naomi's complicity ("silence") with her own sexual abuse implies parallels to Japanese-Canadian "silence" in the face of racism.

Davidson makes good use of of what he learned during his own stay in Japan. For instance, he met a woman in her mid-seventies, who says that the Nakanes would, as Japanese-Canadians, have been far worse treated in wartime Japan than they were in wartime Canada. He speaks of Kogawa's style as "almost Japanese"—imagistic, indirect, allusive—and praises those critics who

have, despite all the "difficulty of reading across cultural differences," given the non-Japanese reader some clues as to how to do it.

He understands how the book is built: "*Obasan* is therefore a circular Künstlerroman, the story of how the protagonist/narrator finally became an artist by reaching the point where she could produce the novel which we have just read" (Stephen Kellman calls such a narrative "a self-begetting novel"). Exactly: a beautiful summation of the story-structure.

To conclude, Davidson makes a case for the book he's discussing as one extending the range, scope, and generic possibilities of Canadian fiction. *Obasan* is both lyrical and political at the same time; *Obasan* brings into being, almost single-handedly, and masters at once, the genre of the Canadian ethnic novel; *Obasan* mirrors to us one of our less lovely collective selves; *Obasan* has played its own ameliorating role in the public, historical world. *Obasan* is a novel to re-read, he reminds us, and Davidson's is a critique to re-read alongside it.

Sacred Game

Leonard Bloomfield
Sacred Stories of the Sweetgrass Cree. (facsimile reproduction of the 1930 edition, originally published by F.A. Acland, King's Printer, Ottawa.) Fifth House Publishers $16.95

Michael J. Caduto and Joseph Bruchac.
The Native Stories from Keepers of the Animals. Fifth House Publishers $14.95

Basil Johnston
The Bear-Walker and Other Stories. Royal Ontario Museum $19.95

Reviewed by Jillian Ridington

These three books all address a similar theme, the relationships between humans and other animals as portrayed in the legends and myths of Canada's Aboriginal peoples. However, they address their topics from very different perspectives and will appeal to very different audiences. Basil Johnston's *The Bear Walker and Other Stories* is by far the most attractive book of the three; its brilliant illustrations in traditional Woodlands style by Anishinaubae artist David Johnston will appeal to children, and Basil Johnston's simple renderings of the stories of his Anishinaubaek people will also find an audience among younger readers. Yet, to an adult critic, the stories lack the depth and complexity that is a feature of the most authentic renderings of native stories. They are too simple, too diluted, rendered too much into everyday English, they have lost their magic in the translation process.

Unlike the other two books, which focus on one particular culture, Joseph Bruchac's *The Native from Keepers of the Animals* attempts to bring together stories from all over Native North America. Unfortunately, in doing so, it fails to respect the very great differences that exist between and among the diverse Native cultures of our large continent. This problem is most evident in Vine Deloria's foreword to the book. Deloria fails to point out, for example, that relationships between northern hunting peoples and the moose, caribou and deer on which their lives depend are bound to be very different from the relationships between the animals of the southern U.S. and the pueblo peoples, who have long been much more dependent on agriculture. Another problem is that Bruchac's book seems to be two books in one. It is hard to ascertain which readers the editor is hoping to attract. Deloria's foreword and Bruchac's own introduction seem to be aimed at adults. Their vocabulary is mature, the concepts they discuss are complex, and the type is tiny. Yet the stories themselves, all of which Bruchac has adapted—he calls them "my own retellings"—are obviously watered down for young children. In the retelling, they have lost their individuality,

original resonance and vivacity. They are told in a uniform voice that denies the intricacies of individual Aboriginal cultures and serves up a solid meal with all the consistency of pablum, though perhaps without its nourishment.

Yet this group of texts is not without a worthy member. Leonard Bloomfield's *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree* is a gem, a true treasure trove of wonderful, well-told stories. This book is a facsimile reproduction of a 1930 publication of the National Museum of Canada. The stories in it were collected by Bloomfield, a linguist at Yale University, in 1925, when he spent five weeks at the Sweetgrass Reserve near Battleford, Saskatchewan. The stories were told to him by three middle-aged and elderly men, two of whom were blind, and by one middle-aged woman, whom he considered to be "something of a sorceress." Each story is written as it was told, in Cree, and then an English translation is provided. These are tales of creation and transformation, tales of wonder. They are complex and convoluted, sometimes violent, but never dull. They give the reader food for thought, and material for discussion and dreaming, long after the reading is complete. "The Birth of Wisahketchahk and the Origin of Mankind" is a "creation" story that has elements of themes common in Cree narratives—the trickster-transformer Wisahketchahk, the rolling head—together with such biblical themes as the seductive snake, the flood, and the creation of women from the ribs of the first man. "Wisahketchahk Preaches to the Wolves" also has religious overtones, including a pseudo-mass—but it is a tale of resistance and subversion, not a tale of compliance with the colonizers.

The book is not without flaws. It would have benefitted greatly by the addition of a new preface giving the historical and cultural contexts under which the stories were collected. We will have to look to other sources to understand what the Cree's relationship with missionaries was at the time, and what economic and cultural pressures they were under. There are no illustrations, although there is something far more useful to students of linguistics—a six-page guide to the pronunciation of Plains Cree. Because of this guide, and the stories' complexity, and the Cree-English format, *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree* will be of particular interest to students of linguistics and anthropology. They are also a good read for anyone who is interested in Cree culture, and likes a good tale well told. But don't put your babies to bed with these stories; they are made of very strong stuff, the stuff of nightmares.

Subliterary Victorians?

Laurel Brake

Subjugated Knowledges: Journalism, Gender & Literature in the Nineteenth Century. New York UP US$15.00

Ellery Sedgwick

A History of the "Atlantic Monthly" 1857-1909: Yankee Humanism at High Tide and Ebb. U of Massachusetts P US$40.00

Reviewed by Deborah Blenkhorn

What can we learn from the newspapers and magazines of over a century ago? Recent work by Laurel Brake and Ellery Sedgwick shows that the socio-literary histories of Britain and America respectively emerge from the nineteenth-century periodical press. Both Brake's *Subjugated Knowledges* and Sedgwick's *History of the Atlantic Monthly* herald the Victorian popular press as chronicling the age through a broad representation of fiction, poetry, essays, and other literary genres.

Brake's analysis comprises a discussion of the "gendering" of this "literary space," beginning with the question of how the "startling growth" of periodicals influenced

literary and social criticism. The periodical, as a genre, increasingly featured so-called "lighter"—indeed, "sub-literary"—literary fare. That relatively unknown women writers could and did contribute to this genre, while women readers made up an increasing sector of its audience, reinforces Brake's thesis of gendered space: this discourse was, in significant part, second-class literature for second-class citizens. At the same time, literary journalism developed as a vehicle for serious literary and social commentary, so that the blending of "news" and "culture" reflected a broad social spectrum of men's and women's lives and interests.

Tracing the development of the genre from *The Academy* (1869), through *The Nineteenth Century* (1877), *Harper's* (the 1890's), and *The Savoy* (1896), *Subjugated Knowledges* considers en route the role of several forces which shaped nineteenth-century journalism: publishers; major authors including Pater (a consuming interest for Brake, here and in her other works), Arnold Shelley, Tennyson, and Swinburne; and even the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

Notwithstanding the immense value of Brake's more general comments on Victorian literature and criticism, her great strength and appeal is in her ability to describe case studies which illustrate the concepts she explores. A highlight of the book, for instance, is its chapter on "Oscar Wilde and *The Woman's World*," which examines the dynamic between a homosexual discourse and a female readership. Brake adeptly describes the way in which, covering trends in fashion, literary criticism, sport, and drama, this periodical reflects Wilde's significant editorial choice of work from women writers.

Placing her own work in the context of the "interrogation of authorship by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, and latterly by postmodernist theory," Brake puts forward the intriguing hypothesis that all are as "indebted" to the publishing history of the nineteenth century as to the "technology and nature of the twentieth-century media" in understanding cultural production and formation.

A strong sense of the indebtedness of literary criticism to the journalism of the previous century also underlies Ellery Sedgwick's *History of the "Atlantic Monthly"*. Focusing on the "most respected literary magazine" in U.S. history, Sedgwick begins with an overview of the magazine's evolution 1857-1909, and organizes his discussion in subsequent chapters chronologically, by editor.

Sedgwick identifies the magazine itself as an "expression of the humanist tradition of the New England cultural elite," and explores its "idealism and pragmatism" through a series of seven editorial chiefs, including James Russell Lowell, James T. Fields, and William Dean Howells. Throughout its history, Sedgwick contends, the magazine functioned within the Western humanistic tradition to represent the "educated minority" which was striving to educate a cultural majority while resisting its "tyranny."

As such, the *Atlantic Monthly*'s ideal (albeit one it fell short of, says Sedgwick) was to encourage individuality and even dissent, to oppose a static hierarchy of culture. Women's contribution to the periodical initially comprised works of fiction, such as work by Louisa May Alcott, Kate Chopin, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. As Sedgwick tells it, Stowe proposed in the 1860s that editor-publisher James T. Fields establish a women's department; he refused, but did agree to feature several articles on "domestic" subjects, while Stowe proceeded to write a series of political articles under a male pseudonym.

In each of his chapters, Sedgwick provides behind-the-scenes detail of the *Atlantic Monthly*'s publishing history; particularly engaging are his assessments of each editor's tenure. Fields, for instance,

comes alive for Sedgwick's readers as the "intelligent, handsome, and good-humoured" son of a sea captain who rose through the ranks in journalism from a clerk apprenticeship to an editorship which was characterized by a willingness to accommodate public tastes.

James Russell Lowell, Fields's predecessor from 1857 to 1861, Sedgwick identifies as a "Yankee Humanist" with a "propensity to take editorial liberties." Balancing praise and criticism, Sedgwick describes Lowell as "sometimes disorganized, arbitrary, or insensitive to the rights of contributors," but nonetheless a chief who "brought in good material through personal contacts" and often showed generosity in his support of unknown writers. In all, Sedgwick argues, Lowell's "high-culture aspirations" and his desire to appeal to a wide audience made him a fitting figurehead for the *Atlantic Monthly.*

A less glowing description is of Thomas Bailey Aldrick, whose editorial voice governed the *Atlantic* from 1881 to 1890: here was "an indolent and inefficient editor, and an amusing but somewhat languorous, shallow, and supercilious human being," according to Sedgwick's assessment.

While emphasizing the individual approach of each editor, Sedgwick observes that "the changing of the editorial guard at the *Atlantic* has always, at least publicly, emphasized continuity rather than change." The magazine's evolution, he maintains, is best understood as its becoming "more fully national and democratic in its authorship"—indeed, more "progressive."

The *Atlantic,* then, "one cultural voice among a great many," underwent a process which significantly mirrored the evolving political and social reality of the times in Sedgwick's New England, as did the popular press in Brake's nineteenth-century Britain. Both *Subjugated Knowledges* and *A History of the Atlantic Monthly* illustrate that nineteenth-century periodicals played a significant role in recording—and in making—literary and social history.

Do we still view journalism as a subliterary genre? To take a step forward, these texts suggest, we may well have to take two steps back.

Boys, Booze & Twang

Bonnie Burnard, ed.
Stag Line: Stories by Men. Coteau, $14.95

Mark Anthony Jarman, ed.
Ounce of Cure: Alcohol in the Canadian Short Story. Beach Holme n.p.

Lorna Jackson
Dressing for Hope. Goose Lane $15.95

Reviewed by Tamas Dobozy

Short story anthologies that pursue a particular line run up against mediocrity, bulking-up on lesser stories to provide filler between the ones that count; first-time short story writers encounter a similar dilemma in picking extra material over and above their half-dozen or so stories that merited publication in various literary magazines. Unlike the compilers of your standard "best of" collections, those restricted by theme or experience find themselves in uncharted country, without a tradition of previous anthologies behind them or enough experience with their authorial strengths and weaknesses. I think all three books stack up well in overcoming these rookie drawbacks either against each other or against other collections "out there."

I have to admire Bonnie Burnard and Coteau Books for publishing collection of male writing at a time when blatant maleness is far from fashionable. In her introduction, Burnard claims: "I am not receptive to writing which observes male violence in a way which is suspiciously enthusiastic or, conversely, to writing which attempts to apologize for the masculinity of

men. Some would say this limits me." As contradictory or impossible as it seems, the stories in this book—the majority written by whites—do manage to discuss violence and emotion without slipping into spaghetti-western mode or running off to the park to bang on drums and weep. By far the best story in the collection, "Thin Branches of Rainbow," by Patrick Lane, captures the contradictory essence of masculinity—dangerous but playful, serious yet comic, and its sometimes infuriating combination of emotional disinterest and attachment—in a story that focuses as clearly on Rayanne as it does on her husband, Charlie. I also marveled at how a prose so ordinary and unassuming could conjure up such emotional intensity. Other notable pieces include the late Craig Piprell's "Machinery of Night," with its tongue-in-cheek chronicle of sexual maturation, and MichaelVSmith's bleak tale of teenage homosexuality in backwater Ontario. Most of the writers Burnard chose render stories of hard-boiled realism, the kind of stories, apparently, that a woman like Burnard would "choose." And Burnard advances individual taste as her only defense for content: "Justification for this anthology is personal. I wanted to read a book such as this, and I wanted a woman to choose what would be in it."

Mark Anthony Jarman also grapples with justifications for his choice of stories dealing with "most people's drug of choice"—alcohol—and its addicts. He writes: "It's impossible to justify such stupidity and cruelty and damage to themselves and those within range, but many still find these figures charming sirens, hard-living, brutal, selfish sirens, adding something to our lives while subtracting it from theirs." Like Burnard, Jarman favours the realistic mode, with a few notable departures supplied by Michel Tremblay and Levi Dronyk. Interestingly enough, many of the stories by women—such as Linda Svendson's excellent "Who He Slept By"—arouse the atmosphere created by many of Burnard's men (which suggests that Burnard's picks may indeed have less to do with gender and more with a preference for a particular type of story). Like Burnard's book, this also performs its own balancing act—making the alcoholic an entertaining clown (Vanderhaege's "Man Descending"), and wretch (Findley's "Real Life Writes Real Bad"). The collection investigates this irresolvable dichotomy. Otherwise highly readable, the book is unfortunately marred by numerous typos.

Lorna Jackson, on the other hand, needs no justifications. Her impressionistic stories hang not on rationale, but on the lazy, lyrical drive of country and western music and the deductions of the heart. In "Elite Hotel," her narrator states: "Once I'm upstairs I will no longer have what I have at this moment down here, behind the wheel: a feel for locomotion." And a sense of locomotion and the moment proves integral to Jackson's stories, many of which involve sitting behind the wheel and allowing visuals to crowd the windshield and vanish, without ever letting one particular configuration of images settle into a clear picture. Jackson feels "content" to provide information for those, like the brother in "Science Diet," who want a "precision memory bank, photographic"; but instead of informing us with answers, Jackson serves up a sensual interplay of syntactical rhythm and snapshot. We do not agree with Jackson, we empathize, missing the message but always recalling the song.

Critical Acts

L. W. Conolly and D.A. Hadfield, eds.
Canadian Drama and The Critics. Talonbooks $22.95

Keith Garebian
A Well-Bred Muse: Selected Theatre Writings 1978-1988. Mosaic $14.95

Neil Carson
Harlequin in Hogtown: George Luscombe and Toronto Workshop Productions. U Toronto P $50.00/$19.95

Reviewed by Louise Ladouceur

The revised and expanded edition of *Canadian Drama and the Critics*, edited by L.W. Conolly and D.A. Hadfield, includes reviews, interviews and articles from newspapers, books and scholarly journals on forty-three Canadian plays which have been collected in separate anthologies by Richard Plant, Richard Perkyns and Jerry Wasserman. The eight new plays covered in this edition correspond to those added to Wasserman's revised anthology, for which it serves as a critical complement, "providing a body of criticism against which readers and audiences can test their own judgements." For students and scholars, this is an opportunity to trace the development of modern Canadian theatre criticism, to experience its inner contradictions and prejudices, and to evaluate the criteria by which the plays have been considered successful or not.

For the most part, this book provides accessible, sometimes puzzling, often entertaining reading for the critically inquisitive mind curious about Canadian drama. The critical commentary offered for the plays that caught my attention was chronologically presented by date of publication, beginning with the initial production, but I was at times confused when trying to identify which subsequent production certain material referred to, a problem that more detailed references would have certainly alleviated. I also wonder how something referred to as Canadian drama could deal so frugally with plays from Quebec, particularly when theatre is such a vital and vibrant cultural item in Quebec and since much of it has been produced in translation.

The aforementioned Canadian drama critics are not spared the wrath of Keith Garebian in a collection of his own critical writing *A Well-Bred Muse: Selected Theatre Writing 1978-1988.* With an incisive, when not furious, tone and decidedly elitist modulations, Garebian condemns the nationalism, provincialism, populism, banality, and sheer tastelessness that accounts for Canadian theatre's current status as "fabulous invalid," a state of affairs he attributes mostly to the lack of aesthetic standards to be found amongst playwrights, directors and, above all, critics. It is this critical laxity, which Garebian deemed acute in the pioneer alternative movement of the seventies, that has hindered the emergence of the immortal and universal art form that could have, according to Garebian, propelled Canadian theatre to the forefront of the world stage. Although I don't necessarily subscribe to this view of theatrical ambition and art's *raison d'être*, I found the controversial component of the book stimulating in the sense that it invites examination and debate on what is meant by "Canadian" and by "theatre" in the ongoing discourse on this subject.

Covering a wide range of venues, with an insistent fondness for those well-bred, and a wide range of theatre artisans, from director to actor, playwright and scenographer, Garebian's excerpts offer an eclectic critical panorama divided into three parts, each introduced with a rationale and presentation of the material selected. It is a convincing attempt at illustrating the book's epigraph, borrowed from Alexander Pope: "Tis hard to say if greater Want of Skill / Appear in Writing or in Judging Ill; / In

Poets as true Genius is but rare, / True Taste as seldom is the Critick's Share."

If there is a theatre that resisted the tendencies decried by Garebian, it is George Luscombe's Toronto Workshop Productions. As Neil Carson suggests with his title, *Harlequin in Hogtown: George Luscombe and Toronto Workshop Productions*, the history of this theatre company reads primarily as a biography of Luscombe and his unfailing commitment to international socialism and political debate through an art rooted in experimentation. With the memorable success of *Hey Rube!* in 1961, the company attacked the cornerstones of then-current theatrical practice by replacing text-based performance with actors' improvisations and by breaking away from the traditional proscenium staging. Using the subversive techniques of Marxist ideologies and dedicated to revolutionary social change, Toronto Workshop Productions survived the initial indifference it encountered in the sixties and confronted the preoccupation with the individual and nationalistic obsession of the seventies only to succumb in the eighties to its own inflexibility. Refusing to adapt to new circumstances and cede control, Luscombe couldn't save the theatre he had founded almost thirty years earlier from financial disaster.

Well documented and written with an evident admiration for the ground-breaking work accomplished by Luscombe and the Toronto Workshop Productions, this historical account underlines what Carson considers a previously neglected "sense of the novelty of the enterprise," while shedding light on the social and artistic context in which this work took place and on the increasing complexity of the Toronto theatre scene.

Fiction and Nature Writing

Margaret Creal
Singing Sky. Coteau Books Regina $14.95

Peri Phillips McQuay
The View from Foley Mountain. Natural Heritage/Butternest P $16.95

Reviewed by Peter A. Taylor

Both of these books are collections of pieces of writing that first appeared in different forms: Margaret Creal has brought together seven stories that first appeared in a variety of U. S. and Canadian magazines over several years, together with three new stories for this collection. Peri Phillips McQuay has reissued eighty-three pieces most of which she originally wrote for a column in the *Kingston Whig-Standard.* Both groups work well in their new environments: Creal's as a narrative of imagination and power of a Canadian girl's coming of age set in Saskatchewan in the twenties and thirties, and McQuay's as a nature almanac which focuses on a wildlife sanctuary in Ontario through the seasons, arranged as about twenty pieces in each of the seasons. What brings both these books together is a powerful sense of place and varied reactions in response to that place. One is fiction, the other is not.

The border between fiction and non-fiction, though, is a porous one, as recent critical theory makes clear. This is especially true for what we have come to call, for lack of a better name, "nature writing." As Western fiction developed, it co-opted wider and wider domains of non-fictional rhetoric. At the same time, so-called "creative non-fiction" is not an oxymoron, but a counter-aggrandizement. Farley Mowat has said that he never lets facts get in the way of a good story.

So too, Margaret Creal has put together a transparently autobiographical novel in the form of ten short stories: the main character is named Margaret Creal, who lives first

in Grenfell, Saskatchewan as the daughter of the Anglican rector there and then moves with her family to Regina during the depression, just as the author did. Despite the formulaic disclaimer that "Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or *are used fictitiously*," this last word points to a central theme of this *Kunstlerroman*: the interesting relation between fiction and lying, as the narrator realizes as she recounts her parents' reaction to one of her schoolgirl stories: "Of course we know it's only a story, don't we? We know it didn't happen." She also comes to realize that there is power in lying, as she candidly reveals in several different episodes of her growing up.

In McQuay's almanac the pieces cover a dozen years or more when McQuay and her teacher-husband were living at and looking after a wildlife sanctuary near Perth, Ontario, named the Foley Mountain Provincial Sanctuary. These newspaper renderings of the natural world seem to assure a sense of recurrence in a medium that thrives on change and innovation: the falling leaves, the drifting snow, the blossoming trees. These disparate pieces cohere because of their evocative sense of place and a consciousness that responds in various ways to the seasons: wonder, narrative incident, the urge to share and teach, nostalgia and anger in the face of change.

A regular column in a newspaper demands a wide variety of discourses. For example, McQuay draws on the anecdote of pathos, a story told by a friend of chance acquaintance, the story of an old widower who could no longer keep up his farm. She draws on reminiscence of childhood, a central strategy for both fiction and autobiography, as for instance in McQuay's Christmas article in "Winter" that tells of her artist-father, Ken Phillips, who would begin each Christmas season by designing a card, lino block or ink-drawing, which makes for her an enduring family record. Creal's "Prairie Winter," which first appeared in *Ladies' Home Journal*, reads like a non-fictional, or semi-fictional evocation of several winters and several Christmas seasons, a child's Christmas in Saskatchewan.

And central to one kind of nature writing is the journey out and back, with its venerable echoes of Romance. McQuay includes a number of these, like her canoe trip on the Snake River in summer or her tour of winter ponds on skis. Near the end of the final section of the book, the Winter section, the narrator of this episode, on a circuit of the Reserve on skis, has detected abundant life even in the middle of winter: "I sat very still, staring at the hard, cloudless blue sky and the writing a broken reed made scraping back and forth across the snow in the wind, and I listened deeply." She hears the sound of a beaver below her under the ice, and she catches the rustling of "some dead everlasting flowers from last summer rustling in the breeze." But it is not nature, writing this episode with a reed pen, but the author on a typewriter. It is also a long tradition of nature writers before her, many of them making similar good use of the almanac format, including the Canadians Harold Harwood in Nova Scotia, F. P. Grove in *The Turn of the Year* in Manitoba, Marilyn Halvorson in *To Everything a Season* in Alberta, Roderick Haig-Brown in *The Measure of the Year* in British Columbia, and Margaret Creal in Saskatchewan.

Creal is most novelistic in her long final story which recounts her narrator's visit, years later when she is herself a grandmother, to the Scottish island where her mother was born. She finds that she cannot really find her dead mother there and that there will always be parts of her mother that she can never know. At the same time she finds that the experiences recounted in the earlier episodes of the book are the warp on which her present self has been woven.

In a similar way, McQuay appends an Afterword to this second edition of her book. There she affirms many of the consolations of raising a family at Foley Mountain. At the same time she frequently echoes something implicit in much of nature writing: the landscape today is not what it was years earlier. The tone is the melancholy of pastoral elegy that so much of what we love has passed away. As Creal puts it at the end of "Prairie Winter": "Remembering, my heart is seared with longing, not for parents and childhood home and surroundings . . . but for childhood itself, for youth, for those bright days of hope and possibility."

Figures and Facts

David Fishelov
Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory. Pennsylvania State UP US$32.50

David E. Shi
Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920. Oxford UP $51.95

Reviewed by Diane Stiles

In the opening chapter of *Metaphors of Genre: The Role of Analogies in Genre Theory*, David Fishelov reminds us that metaphors are not simply ornamental, nor even descriptive; they can actually influence our perceptions of reality. His book explores the roles of four "deep metaphors" that both illustrate and shape our understanding of literary genres, analogies based on biology, the family, institutions, and speech acts. Each section investigates the nature and history of one of these analogies, then demonstrates its usefulness and limitations by applying it to a particular genre. Although his study is sophisticated metatheory, Fishelov writes clearly enough to engage a reader unversed in the intricacies of genre theory.

Frequent carelessness in comparing literary groupings to biological species has prompted many critics to discredit biological analogies altogether. In so doing, says Fishelov, they are rejecting such promising concepts as the comparison of generic with species survival; cultural environment can be seen to influence the productivity of a genre, as the natural environment selects certain genetic make-ups over others. He describes the generic "struggle for survival" as the epic poem was supplanted first by the mock-epic and then by the novel. Fishelov maintains a close connection between biological and literary concepts, and we see here as in no other section of the book how an analogy can function as a lens, bringing into focus a new perspective on a complex cultural phenomenon.

A literary genre is frequently compared to a family, in that no single characteristic is shared by all members, but Fishelov argues that even proponents of this view actually do assign necessary conditions for membership in a genre. He proposes an alternate version of the family analogy: the genre as a structured category with a core of prototypical members which highly resemble each other, and through which can be traced a textual ancestry, with newer texts both imitating and rebelling against "parental" texts. He analyzes this generic "anxiety of influence" through the conflicts between romance and realism in *Don Quixote* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*.

Fishelov acknowledges that his last two analogies differ from his first two, in that institutions and speech acts are cultural phenomena which are related to literature in many direct and non-analogical ways. The metaphorical relationship he proposes between institutions and literary genres focusses on two concepts common to both: conventions and roles. The problem here is that while conventions and roles are characteristics of institutions, they are also characteristics of other social groupings, so that his analyses, for example of the "blocking" role in romantic comedies, are inter-

esting in themselves, but do not seem to illustrate specifically the analogy he has set out to establish.

Isolating a specifically metaphorical aspect of the relationship between speech acts and literary genres is even more challenging. Literature is often seen as a highly complex speech act, the difference between the two being of degree rather than kind; certain literary genres, however, such as *amemus* poetry using the *carpe diem* motif, have also been described as artistic imitations of "natural" speech acts. Here Fishelov's logic becomes confusing; he seems to claim that insofar as literature is mimetic of speech acts, speech acts can be seen as analogous to literature. He does not clarify the relationship he sees between mimesis and metaphor: in what sense is a tree a metaphor for a painting of a tree?

Fishelov concludes by advocating a pluralistic approach to the use of analogies in genre theory, stressing that no one analogy is superior to the rest, and that each illuminates different aspects of literary groupings. His study is interesting not only for its insights into genre theory, but also for the questions it raises about the nature of metaphor itself.

Facing Facts: Realism in American Thought and Culture, 1850-1920 is a meticulously researched interdisciplinary study, intended for general readers as well as for scholars. It focusses primarily on literature, painting and architecture, also tracing developments in science, philosophy, and social thought. Shi acknowledges that he has no new thesis about the nature of realism, but is working toward a more "textured" understanding of the term by exploring a range of realisms, their cultural causes and effects, and the affinities and conflicts between them.

There is a potential thesis in Shi's documentation of the connections between nineteenth-century gender politics and the rise of realism. Women were vilified by male and female artists and intellectuals alike, for both demanding and producing the sentimental in literature and art. After the Civil War, women flooded into the work force and higher education, causing many men to fear being "swept away by the rising tide of femininity." Realists claimed to have the "virile" and "masculine" vision that would counteract the dangerous trend toward "weakness" and "effeminacy" in American culture. Paradoxically, Shi argues, female sentimentalists broke the ground for the realists who so despised them, by challenging prevalent attitudes about what constituted acceptable material for fiction, and daring to depict common people and common social experiences.

Shi opens his study with a synopsis of various strains of idealism dominating American culture from 1830 to 1860, and then isolates three main causes of the rise of realism: the impact of the Civil War, the growing influence of scientific materialism, and the rapid development of urban culture. This section of the book is both informative and animated, including brief biographies of such figures as Walt Whitman and William James, cultural commentary from a wide range of sources, statistics, and descriptions of early realistic work and contemporary responses to it.

Most of Shi's analysis is devoted to literature, from the aesthetically and philosophically motivated realism of William Dean Howells and Henry James, to the bleaker, more socially conscious "naturalism" of Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser. Here a clearer organizing principle would render more assimilable the sheer mass of information. Shi's discussion of parallel developments in visual art is more focussed, and includes proportionally more analysis of specific works, from those of earlier realists such as Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins to those of the later, more socially conscious "Ash Can School." The only disappointment here is that paintings are

reproduced in black and white instead of in colour. Shi opens his comparatively brief discussion of architecture by wondering what a "realistic" building might be. As he never establishes a clear connection between mimesis in fiction and painting and "function" in architecture, this section seems unintegrated with the rest of the book.

He concludes with a fascinating account of the modernist revolution against realism and an epilogue defending his interest in a cultural phenomenon currently regarded as not only irrelevant, but even irresponsible. Describing it as "thoroughly unfashionable and fundamentally important," Shi maintains that however compelling the individual vision of a modernist may be, realism is still crucial in exploring and reaffirming people's connections with each other.

First Nations' Writing

Dawendine (Bernice Loft Winslow)
Iroquois Fires: The Six Nations Lyrics and Lore of Dawendine. Penumbra $19.95

Drew Hayden Taylor
Toronto at Dreamer's Rock; Education is Our Right: Two One-Act Plays. Fifth House $10.95

Connie Fife, ed.
The Colour of Resistance: A Contemporary Collection of Writing by Aboriginal Women. Sister Vision $19.95

Reviewed by Helen Hoy

Three books. One of drama, the other two of mixed genres. Three instances of the current burgeoning of First Nations writing in Canada. Or, rather, two contemporary instances—and one reminder that the flourishing of literary production, within print culture, is subject to the *fiat* of editors and publishing companies. The latter text, Dawendine (Bernice Loft Winslow)'s *Iroquois Fires*, is the welcome retrieval of material which apparently came close to publication in the late 1940s (and acts, one hopes, as the harbinger of more such revivals). The unwillingness fifty years ago of Ryerson Press to provide remuneration—and the death of illustrator C.W. Jefferys whose sponsorship had advanced the project—meant that copies of Dawendine's poems, prose, and stories lay among Jefferys' papers until Jefferys' grandson Robert Stacey came upon them. Bernice Winslow, in her nineties as *Iroquois Fires* went to press and living in Massachusetts where her marriage took her in the 1940s, is quoted in the Afterward on the unexpectedness of her ultimate publication: "Thump! That's me!—deposited by a cloud on Terra Firma again."

Drew Taylor's play *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock*, one of two one-act plays comprising the volume reviewed here, confronts a contemporary Native teenager with young Native men from the past and future. The illuminating dislocations of Taylor's play, the frictions of culture, history, and idiom, are echoed in the encounter within the confines of this review between Dawendine (b. 1902), on the one hand, and Taylor (b. 1962) and the forty-five contemporary female contributors to *The Colour of Resistance*, on the other.

Dawendine, of the Six Nations Reserve near Brantford, Ontario, daughter of Cayuga mother Elizabeth Ann Johnson Loft and Mohawk chief William D. Loft, conversant in five of the Iroquoian languages, performed as poet and orator of Native traditions and stories in the 1920s and 30s. In its belatedness her collection *Iroquois Fires* inevitably suffers, at least as a publication, from what Joseph Brodsky called "the falsification of time," the lost opportunity to intervene historically at its own time. In its appearance now it risks a falsification of response, as the discourse of one time ("wee," "tryst," "lore," "braves,") makes its inaugural appearance to a readership schooled in another. (Even without that gap, Dawendine struggles with other divides, speaking back deliberately to the

dismissal of Native spirituality, for instance.) Among *Iroquois Fires*'s more original contributions (to non-Iroquois readers, at least) is Dawendine's introduction into late Anglo-Victorian poetic traditions—through the elegiac and rhythmically cumulative commemoration of her mother, "Wild-Flower Petals Fall"—of what she describes as "the slowly developing ritual style of the Longhouse Condolence [which] . . . begins in a conversational tone, increasing in length, until it again dies away in brief closing chant." The collection is diverse, including conventional poetry (making discreet and subtle use of rhyme and using the poetic line flexibly, but not noticeably influenced by modernism), accounts of Iroquois rituals and seasons, explanatory narratives ("The Dancing Stars, or the Pleiades," for example), personal accounts (reflections on a medicine man mask or memories of a maternally heroic mouse), and historical chronicle, all framed by the issue of racial difference. Dawendine negotiates and deploys a range of ideologies in some tension with each other. The traces of her shifting location ("Indians were the lone inhabitants of the American *wilderness*," "this *so-called* stoical race"; emphasis mine) reveal the challenge and complication of that negotiation.

Drew Hayden Taylor's *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* recently played with comic and poignant power under the aegis of Native Earth Performing Arts (Toronto). His *Toronto at Dreamer's Rock* and *Education is Our Right* are earlier ventures, produced in 1989 and 1990 respectively by the De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig Theatre Group (Manitoulin Island). Both display Taylor's trademark amalgam of political urgency and self-deflating humour, ("My home, my people, my beer store"). Rusty in the first play, a somewhat aimless Odawa 16-year-old, is galvanized by his encounter with a pre-contact young man from his tribe and a future counterpart, each throwing Rusty's present into negative (and occasionally positive) relief. "We achieved self-government in the 2020s," boasts Michael. "Self-government?" asks Keesic, "When did we lose it?" *Education is Our Right* draws on the structure and at times the melodrama of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (the wretched children Want and Hunger huddle at the feet of one of the spirits), as Ebenezer Cadieux, Minister of Indian Affairs in charge of capping Native post-secondary education, meets Education Past, Present and Future. In both plays, Taylor utilizes theatre's capacity for confrontation, along with clever self-reflexive ironies, to ensure that over-statement (or over-seriousness) does not sap the impact of his dramas' conviction.

The Colour of Resistance anthologizes Native women's poetry, fiction, and some non-fiction prose, approximately half of the material being original to this volume. The writers are Canadian and US American, with the latter predominating slightly, and with a welcome representation of lesbian voices. How to convey the pleasures of scores of divergent and eloquent voices? The rhythms of Vickie Sears: "cush cush le toong/ripples the windtaken katydid song." The powerful succinctness of Marilyn Dumont, writing in "Helen Betty Osborne" of "a town with fewer Indians/ than ideas about Indians." The poignant ironies of Kimberly Blaeser's "Certificate of Live Birth," where the speaker wonders whether to correct her mother's checkmarks at "Father, caucasian" and "Mother, caucasian"— "It is my heritage more truly than any account of bloodlines/ It tells the story of a people's capture"—concluding, "And, Mother, this poem is the certificate of our live birth." The visual effect of Nicole Tanguay's "Half Breed":

I fight I struggle to keep
    2 feet planted
    in one
    self.

The engaging indirectness of the unfolding relationship between tough-talking street woman and well-meaning researcher in Chrystos' monologue "Interview."

Like the heterogeneity of the three books reviewed here, the diversity in this anthology's contents (the non-fiction section includes analysis of Native American poetry, reflections on two-spiritedness and on substance abuse, and a Cherokee alternative/supplement to the Genesis Eden story—and contributors address quite different audiences) is reassuring. A Native lesbian editor and small presses are factors here; editing and publishing present a less monolithic front than when Dawendine first faced the industry.

Fathering Poems

Gary Geddes
The Perfect Cold Warrior. Quarry $14.95

Paul Wilson
Dreaming: My Father's Body. Coteau $9.95

Joseph McLeod
The Rim Poems. Penumbra $9.95

Tom Marshall
Ghost Safari. Oberon n.p.

Tom Henighan
Home Planet. Golden Dog $6.95

Allan Safarik
On the Way to Ethiopia. Polestar Book $11.95

Reviewed by Stefan Haag

The three sections of Gary Geddes's *The Perfect Cold Warrior* display a fine sense for the relations between form and content, a dimension in his poetry that adds immensely to its effectiveness. The section that most directly lives up to Geddes's reputation as a "political poet" is "Palestine." However, in dealing with political realities, Geddes focusses on the personal, thus providing a context for the political. Truly an outstanding achievement in its simplicity and hurt outcry against injustice is "What Does a House Want?" which deals with Palestinians being evicted from their homes, which are then demolished by the Israelis. As I write this review, I hear on the news of the most serious clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in decades and Geddes's poems seem to document a desperation that reaches beyond the political or personal.

At first, the fourteen poems of "The Drive" seem forced into regular stanzas of three to five lines. But the more one reads these poems, the more one realizes that this procrustean bed leads to interesting effects. Especially where a new stanza begins in the middle of a sentence, the aural tension builds up and emphasizes the tension of living on the Drive, as in this example:

> Meanwhile, the bike grows more
>   flamboyant,
> sprouting bright plastic streamers
>
> from the handlebars, metal rattlers
> mounted to the frame with clothes-pins
> to strike rotating spokes and shatter
>
> the early morning silence of The Drive.
>   (27-28)

In this way, we appear to be constantly on the edge of a new turn in the poem, reliving Geddes's experiences of growing up in this neighbourhood. The atmosphere of "The Drive" is one of insistent and ubiquitous apprehension of the unexpected. Just as the speaker of the poems knows that there may be "days when the pay cheque / doesn't make it home" because of a drinking binge of his father, we know that there may be stanzas that do not end on a full stop and leave us on the edge.

Geddes's father appears often in these poems. "It's the other I seek . . . the time-bomb of the father I carry like a ticking clock inside" is a memorable sentence that echoes through several poems in this section. Geddes seems to use these echoes to explore his father's influence on his own

sensibilities, such as in this instance: "With luck and a measure of forgiveness I scribble poems instead of wreaking havoc." The unspoken presence here is the father and his weaknesses, a ubiquitous danger and temptation to be aware of.

In *Dreaming My Father's Body*, Paul Wilson carefully probes the reasons for moments of closeness as well as distance between his father and himself. While Wilson seems to achieve a sense of understanding for his father and his actions, I cannot help wondering about the nature of this understanding. The title of his volume is revealing because through dreaming about his father's presence, Wilson gains only insights into his own character. Thus the blurb on the back cover asking "why was it so difficult for his father to show affection, why couldn't they talk about sex or express their feelings?" may give the impression that Wilson achieves an understanding of his father. When the understanding he achieves is one of his own character and his own limitations and strengths, only through these insights does he learn something about his father. Perhaps it is not as ironical as it first seemed to me that in pursuing dreams about his father, Wilson finds out quite a lot about his mother, who emerges as a strong presence throughout this volume.

Rim Poems by Joseph McLeod consists of sixteen mythopeic "Rim Poems" and his uncollected poems from 1950 to 1990. The former are based on a quasi-Aboriginal myth of the world's creation and the by-product of the trickster who is forced to do good through humour and wit. What we get in the poems are not a re-telling of this myth, but rather variations on life under these mythological conditions. Even in these sixteen poems a flaw in McLeod's poetry is apparent that is even more in the foreground in the uncollected poems which cover a period of forty years. Neither his voice, nor his approach towards the subject matters, nor the forms of his poems change very much in *Rim Poems*. One could of course say that such a consistency in poetry is admirable, but I found it too monotonous. While these poems work very well on their own, having them side by side may work against their effectiveness and detract from what they do best, namely convey McLeod's responses to a world that has by and large rejected mythical explanations of life.

The term "safari" is a Swahili word meaning anything related to a journey and travelling. In *Ghost Safari*, Tom Marshall seems to think back to the root of this word and traces various of his journeys as well as some of the people that accompanied him both in the flesh and in the spirit. He reflects, however, not only on people and journeys, but also on cultures and their histories. In a note to a poem on a journey to China, Marshall remarks on the students' outspokenness on sex and politics in the "dusk of Tiananmen Square." It is chilling to learn that his journey took place two years before the Tiananmen massacre. Especially admirable is the ease with which Marshall glides from the aesthetic mode of the poem to the documentary mode of prose or from the rhythm of the poetic line to that of a prose passage. Perhaps it is this ease of drifting between modes, of merging them even, that makes Marshall's poems particularly forceful to our current sensibilities.

Before I began reading Tom Henighan's *Home Planet*, I expected a volume of genre poetry, namely science fiction poetry, for that is what Henighan is known for and what the blurb on the back cover announces. All in all, I got that but also a good deal more. Most significant is his fine ability to detect ironies in our attitudes towards technology and science fiction themes. More than once, Henighan surprised me with a tongue-in-cheek turn in the last stanza of a poem or an uncanny self-awareness that threw new light on a

poem or an entire genre as in "Visitation" where an alien visit serves to satisfy primarily the human desire to escape their surroundings. Henighan, not surprisingly, shows a liking of ritual and myth in his poetry. While at times the expression of this liking becomes formulaic, in some instances it adds to the richness of this poet's vision.

The poems in Allan Safarik's *On the Way to Ethiopia* have a restless quality to them. On the whole, Safarik's poems work best when he uses a short line to present a pointillistic portrait of things or situations.

From Post-age to New Age

Barbara Gowdy
Mister Sandman. Somerville House $24.95/$13.95

Ann-Marie MacDonald
Fall on Your Knees. Knopf Canada $28.95

Reviewed by Julie Beddoes

It is wonderful to see so many Canadian writers on fiction bestseller lists in this country and earning big advances for publication abroad, especially at a time when the publishing industry is having a harder time than ever keeping solvent. Most of the fiction that appeals to reviewers and prize juries now is, however, a long way from the innovative work of fifteen or twenty years ago (to which, surely, a lot of the credit for this notice must go). Perhaps this is unavoidable: socio-economic regression is the condition of literary regression; conservative fiscal policy accompanies conservative fiction. As well, it is easy to sympathize with publishers tempted to promote the sort of books that attract the sort of media attention that brings sales that balance ledgers. And probably the over-worked juries for the various prizes have no more time to look beyond surface appeal than overnight reviewers and interviewers for radio and TV shows.

The reviewer who cares passionately for the well-being of Canadian publishing but is a bit bored by the stuff that is paying the bills might find herself in a dilemma if she didn't remind herself that there is enough adventurous and intellectually rewarding writing going on that once in a while a book that is more than middle-brow and second-rate receives some recognition. When times are so hard for the small publishers who have in the past nourished this kind of writing it is surely up to the guys with the big promotion budgets to work a bit harder to find it. It is up to the hype industry to be a bit more discriminating in the praise it gives and not to fall for the sort of literary tricks that seduce quick-read reviewers.

Fifty years after the *nouveau roman* and a good century after the Modernists began the work of demolishing Victorian assumptions, one has a right to expect that novels that operate according to those assumptions will give readers their money's worth by using the proven techniques. The best realist fiction has always offered its readers many rewards: well-structured plots, crises and denouements, engaging characters with believable dilemmas and a satisfying feeling at the end that, no matter how implausible the events described, things had to be that way.

These novels by Gowdy and MacDonald have given joy to reviewers and sold a lot of copies. *Mister Sandman* has been nominated for four awards (Giller, Governor-General, Trillium and International Impac Dublin Literary Award) and won one (Marion Engel). *Fall on Your Knees* has been nominated for a Giller. Gowdy is famous for writing a story (in her collection *We So Seldom Look on Love*) that asked us to share the point of view of a necrophiliac while MacDonald is a successful actress and the author of the wonderful play, *Good Night Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. However, Macdonald's book contains more

hints of the Gothic than Gowdy's. Both books, however, are pretty conventional realist family sagas similar in many ways. Both have collections of daughters with various eccentricities; in both a baby is passed off as the child of its grandparents; both have a lot of references to songs; both plots build up to revelations of the truth and end with everyone set to live happily ever after. In MacDonald's often tragic story, however, not many of the characters are left alive for this. One of the ways in which MacDonald's book is more engaging is that the reader is left to discover some of the secrets herself; Gowdy's narrator tells the reader everything and one finds the characters tiresome for being so blind to what is going on.

In addition, what is revealed is pretty unremarkable. If Gowdy's *Mister Sandman* is about anything at all, it is asking us to be sympathetic to oddballs because they might be very nice people and have jobs and families just like us. The problem is, her people are so ordinary that they don't qualify as oddballs at all, unless an audience in 1996 is supposed to gasp in shock when a father turns out to be gay or a woman with a successful career likes sex. The book is set mostly in the sixties, perhaps to make such characteristics seem more of a burden. Many people are having real problems of acceptance in our common sense society. The powerful rhetoric of realism could be better used to resist the myth that the lives of the new underclass are not worth paying attention to.

The main plot events in *Mister Sandman* are the birth of the child and the evening of revelations she engineers. The child is an idiot savant, though perhaps not idiotic at all, as hints are given that she is much more capable of fending for herself than she lets on. Anyway, she keeps all those good-hearted people with interesting sex lives waiting on her hand and foot and rewards them by causing much anxiety. The book contains enough suggestions of the supernatural to please New Agers but not enough denials to appease the rest of us.

Gowdy's style is much praised in its jacket blurbs. I would say, however, that she has picked up too many of the mannerisms of Timothy Findley's last few books (presumably edited out of the early great ones): incomplete or one-word sentences, cute but redundant little comments. Sometimes the grammar is peculiar; I had to read this sentence several times: "Her parents and Sonja mutate compared." The narrator sometimes slips into present tense, sometimes addresses a "you" but is most of the time invisible and omniscient so one never knows whether lapses into the demotic are signs of a switch in focalization or the lack of a clearly constructed narrative voice. This might all be part of the message in a different kind of book, but this is realism and so such glitches are irritating.

MacDonald's much more satisfying book is surely the first about Cape Breton in which all the characters are not Scottish. It, too, starts like a Findley, with someone explaining some photographs to someone else. The last words are, "sit down and have a cuppa tea till I tell you about your mother," suggesting that this telling is to be the novel we have just read. The teller, however, becomes miraculously omniscient; the story, covering more than seventy years, has many events and characters and, like much of the most satisfying Victorian realism, it takes its time to introduce and develop its situations; the reader encounters its surprises at satisfying intervals. Its touches of spookiness seem more at home in Cape Breton than do Gowdy's in Toronto. The family qualifies more genuinely as eccentric according to the standards of present-day readers; only their taking place ninety years ago makes it feasible that some of its activities did not put anyone behind bars. The book, despite its Gothic elements, is more satisfying as realism *than Mister Sandman*, both because

of its scale and density and because its characters are richer, the situation of the four daughters often truly horrifying.

MacDonald's prose, despite its improbability as the words of the supposed storyteller, is less irritating than Gowdy's, her heartwarming touches less sentimental. This is MacDonald's first novel and it shows she is capable of being more adventurous with form in the next. I look forward to it.

The Work of Theory

Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn, eds.
Changing Subjects: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism. Routledge $15.95

E. Ann Kaplan
Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama. Routledge $16.95

Reviewed by Penny van Toorn

Changing Subjects is an anthology of autobiographical essays focusing on the lives of twenty women academics, as they negotiate the connections and disjunctions between the personal, the professional, the political, and the theoretical. The list of contributors' names reads like a who's who of American second wave feminism, and the collection commemorates their struggles and achievements from the time they entered the profession in the 1960s and 70s, up to the present when they currently occupy senior positions in major American universities. What makes *Changing Subjects* different, engaging, and enjoyable to read is that it works simultaneously as a forum for theoretical debate and as something resembling a transcript of a women's consciousness raising group. In this way, the design of the collection honours a networking process that proved historically crucial to the women's liberation movement in the US.

The cutting edge of feminist theory has moved some considerable distance beyond the positions initially adopted by the women who write in *Changing Subjects.* Some have welcomed the changes, moving happily with the times, and joining the ranks of third wave feminist scholars and theorists. Others, however, are sceptical, but *not* out of a blind refusal to acknowledge the limitations of their old, hard-won intellectual resources; indeed, there is much self-questioning, humility, and even some confessions and apologies for former blunders. A number of the writers look back to a time when they moved enthusiastically into third wave feminist theory. Now, however, they find themselves "coming out" on some yet to be defined other side, and they invite us to look back with them as they sort through precisely what has been gained and lost along the way. In this "coming out" they consciously run a risk of being labelled theoretically deviant or regressive, yet they take that risk because they see their responsibility as being to a larger constituency of women—a popular constituency that may have considerable use for ideas that are well past their academic use-by date.

Part of the problem here is that talk about numbers, waves, and cutting edges works to obscure the fact of the synchronicity of disparate feminist positions. Calling different strands of feminism "waves" can imply that each new major theoretical development sweeps earlier modes of thought and action away, as though the time for thinking and speaking in a certain way were now irretrievably past. Similarly, while the assignment of numerical labels to different modes of feminist thought is a useful shorthand way of referring to the chronological order in which they first emerged, it can also activate a politics of progressivism by implying that newer is automatically better, and that feminist theory can only change by "advancing" (or "cutting") along a single

straight line. Debate and diversity are stifled when theoretical difference is reduced to spatial distance on a single time-line that supposedly gauges progress from more primitive to more advanced states of thought.

The question posed by *Changing Subjects* is not "which theories correspond to actuality?" but rather: "how have various theories worked historically and politically for or against (which) women's interests?" Gayle Greene and others argue that third-wave feminist theory, for all its potentially liberating powers, has ultimately played into the hands of political reactionaries by being unconcerned with the pragmatics of change. In the present age of "post-feminism" and the anti-feminist backlash, "it's no accident that this [unpragmatic approach] is the going thing" (Greene). Quoting Nicole Ward Jouve and Nancy K. Miller, Greene worries that women "have been asked to go along with Deconstruction whilst we have not even got to the Construction stage. You must have a self before you can afford to deconstruct it. . . . Only those who have it can play with not having it."

A number of contributors to the collection identify biases in the criteria determining what counts as "theory," and analyze the way theory presently functions in the academy to distribute authority unevenly between women and men (and honorary men). When "theory" is narrowly associated with names such as Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida, once again "a group of white male-authored canonical texts is at the centre." The worry is that when feminist scholars and theorists invoke these "big names" to establish their credentials, they are consolidating the very structures of authority they are concerned to dismantle.

E. Ann Kaplan's *Motherhood and Representation* offers itself as a case in point. Kaplan spends considerable energy and many pages discussing Freud, Lacan, and various feminist revisions of their work; she also endeavours to link psychoanalytic insights with certain Marxist fundamentals, and prefigures how they will all be put to work in her analysis of fictional, dramatic, and filmic narratives. She even includes two theoretical appendices in the main body of the text. All of which is to say that Kaplan's theoretical framework seems to be designed to do *much more* than simply generate questions, categories of analysis, and new readings of the popular cultural texts on which she focusses. It's tempting to say that the theoretical sections of Kaplan's book function largely to signify her authority. But if this is the case, why is her painstakingly forged badge of intellectual authority not worn up front in the book's title? Has someone decided that this is not "*real* theory" after all, but only "*feminist* theory"? Freudian and Lacanian theories play an extremely ambivalent role in Kaplan's discourse: at times, they boost her authority; elsewhere, they are examined critically as discursive instruments for keeping women in their place; on other occasions, Kaplan invokes them with a fundamentalist faith in their literal truth-value, and proceeds to use them as skeleton keys to unlock all puzzles of character and narrative.

Kaplan analyses the mother in three separate but (confusingly) related representational spheres—the historical, the psychoanalytic, and the fictional. (Following Lacan, she assumes the "real life" mother is unrepresentable.) Analyzing the historical life of narratives, she establishes interesting links between nineteenth-century melodrama and twentieth-century film, and between new reproductive technologies and sex, work and mother/fatherhood. Yet she does not pursue the materialist level of analysis in as much detail as she could have; she lapses on occasion into essentialism, gender stereotyping, and circular argument; and there are some weak links of vague speculation in certain of her chains of logic. It is difficult to predict whether

Kaplan's elaborate but rickety theoretical framework will form a foundation for future feminist scholarship and theory.

Caribbean Word Power

Christian Habekost
Verbal Riddim: the Politics and Aesthetics of African-Caribbean Dub Poetry. Rodopi US$44.00

Pamela Mordecai
de Man: a Performance Poem. Sister Vision $10.95

M. Nourbese Philip
She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks. Ragweed $11.95

Reviewed by Brenda Carr

Christian Habekost blends a formalist and cultural studies approach to engage the "word, sound, power" aesthetic of African-Caribbean dub poetry and provide a corrective for a critical problem he diagnoses at the outset of *Verbal Riddim.* That the musical press has given the dub medium attention, while the academic press has typically dismissed it is symptomatic of the challenge posed by a hybrid cultural form in which spoken word lyrics are often accompanied by reggae rhythms in a live performance context. Habekost's answer is a "methodological pluralism" comprised of complex engagement with relevant culture-specific political, social, and aesthetic contexts, as well as "old-fashioned" close reading. This is an important intervention for those sceptics who see formalism and theory as incompatible approaches. It is also appropriate for a volume that appears as #10 of the *Cross/Cultures* series. The Western reader is not naturally an ideal or competent reader of dub poetry. We need new forms of cultural literacy for cross-cultural encounters.

In his close readings, Habekost models a sound working method for reading dub poems in light of a sound/performance aesthetic. He is meticulously attentive to multiple "versions" of dub poems—printed, recorded, and live performance. This is contextualized within a useful cultural history of dub, including protagonists, major events, times, and places, along with introduction to relevant cultural frameworks such as the Jamaican popular music scene, dance-hall DJ talkover, Rastafarianism, and the evolution of Jamaican patois as a legitimate form of English. Kingston, Jamaica, London, England and Toronto are three metropolitan centres where dub poetry has flourished since the early 1980's. Key players in the international dub scene include Jamaicans Oku Onuora and Mutabaruka; Linton Kwesi Johnson, Jean Binta Breeze, and Benjamin Zephaniah from England; and Lillian Allen, Clifton Joseph, and Ahdri Zhina Mandiela, each of Toronto.

My quibbles with Habekost are small. There is a hint of unexamined cultural tourism in Habekost's references to the "exotic beats" of Reggae, to the "black enigma," and to Oku Onuora's prison biography as a "spectacular adventure story." Despite Habekost's careful attention to context, some of his social assumptions provide a cautionary tale for how difficult it is to undo centuries of self/other conditioning in Western colonial history.

Habekost's book could have used some of the dynamic "verbal riddims" of the medium under study. It is somewhat plodding, repetitive, and cumbersome in its weighty citations. However, it exemplifies an ethical undertaking to engage dub as a serious art form. Habekost upholds the need for the ongoing expansion of dub poetry's repertoire and range in order for it to continue as a living, changing medium. This is true of all poetry; it must keep an ear to the ground, an eye to the street, reflecting the pulsing and changing life concerns of the communities to which it gives witness.

While Jamaican Pamela Mordecai's *de Man: A Performance Poem* and Tobagoian

M. Nourbese Philip's *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* are not dub poetry, they are in a continuum of Caribbean poetry practices that draw upon the "word, sound, power" equation. Mordecai's retelling of the passion of Christ or "de man" from the perspective of Naomi, a house servant to Pilate's wife, and Samuel, a disabled carpenter friend of Jesus' family, is consistent with an African diasporic liberation theology which has its roots in the slave spiritual tradition of rendering Biblical narratives as allegory for suffering and deliverance. Not only does Mordecai cast the entire retelling in the "Caribbean demotic" as Philip terms it, but her protagonist eye-witnesses are working-class heroes. Further, Rome is representative of the colonising powers and "Backra," or the white master, is typified by Pontius Pilate. Mordecai puts a fresh spin on a familiar story to remind us of a neglected truth. The historical Jesus intentionally walked alongside his society's most marginal—prostitutes, tax collectors, fishermen, carpenters, domestic workers, and the disabled.

M. Nourbese Philip's suite of poems is contextualized by her superb introductory essay on the centrality of language to any movement for self-determination in the Afro-Caribbean. She argues persuasively that English has historically been expressive of the "non-being" of the displaced African, while the various forms of the Caribbean demotic or vernacular "language of the people" seek to "heal the word wounded by the dislocation of the word/image equation." Poems such as "Universal Grammar" and "The Question of Language is the Answer to Power" enact an alternative grammar and phonetics lesson, using what Philip calls "unmanageable form" to signify the diasporic African subject's refusal to be managed. Through juxtaposition and fragment, she raises important questions around the interrelation of language, history, and social power.

Most moving for me is her elegiac tone, the "ordeal of testimony" that gives witness to the "anguish that is English" in the history of Empire and its aftermath. The speaker's last prayer is that "body might become tongue." Philip's emphasis on body, voice, "polyphony and rhythm" returns poetry to its physical roots, as it returns the speaker to her cultural roots where the pulse of African drums is never far from the page. This book, rich in craft and questions, will reward readers interested in questions of postcoloniality and poetic form alike.

Fictive Order

Melissa Hardy
Constant Fire. Oberon $27.95/$13.95

M.A.C. Farrant
Altered Statements. Arsenal Pulp $12.95

Reviewed by Sharon R. Wilson

Although *Constant Fire* and *Altered Statements* are both promising new works of fabulist fiction, they offer two rather different reading experiences. Hardy, an Ontario writer born in Durham, North Carolina, draws from Cherokee oral narrative traditions in writing about the Eastern Band of Cherokees she came to know as a child spending summers on the Qualla Boundary reservation. Resembling the U.S. writer Barbara Kingsolver in her dedication of her book to the Cherokee nation (in her case, the Eastern Band) and in her ability to represent rather than colonize voices of First Nation or Native peoples, Hardy's interwoven mythic, historical, and folkloric intertexts present authentic and often humorous anecdotes of human endurance. In connected stories about split identities, constructed realities, and displaced cultural traditions following Andrew Jackson's forced evacuation of the Cherokee to Oklahoma (the Trail of Tears), Hardy explores the role of ritual and magic in healing

and in regaining cultural connections.

Hardy's fictions use traditional oral stories to comment on contemporary frame stories, thus bringing Cherokee folklore and history into current events and helping readers feel the hidden or subversive, "constant fire" still burning in Cherokee culture. In "Blood," for example, Juanita Tuskateeskee, maybe a hundred years old, sings folk songs, such as "Who Killed Cock Robin," that an amateur folklorist records while Juanita sees in her mind's eye what the Black Raven sees: her grandson, Coming Back, locking Bob Pricey in the sweathouse to die. Coming Back, a descendant of a man with the same name who walked the Trail of Tears and back again is, like other Tuskateeskees, blood proud. A conjurer with uncertain powers, he has been spending summers under a plasticized teepee wearing a big feather headdress unlike what any Cherokee had worn. Tourists have been giving him five dollars "for the loan of his red face." Pricey, an Indian "Wannabee" who tried to buy noble "blood with seed" by impregnating Coming Back's granddaughter, was "a running sore on two legs." As Juanita "rides" old songs "like they was horses taking her to a far place," she sings of Coming Back telling Bob "how it feels to be an Indian, alone," and sees him giving Bob's soul to Black Raven. The story ends with her thinking how "We Tuskateeskees was ever a mystery to the white man" as Coming Back successfully makes an offering to the monster turtle and discovers that "the earth is not angry."

Farrant, who lives in Sidney, B.C., uses magical realism and surrealism in connected stories revealing "altered" realities: in "Vacation Time," "monkeys, lions, and snakes trade places with accountants, lawyers, and priests"; in "The Miss Haversham Club," Grandma gangs terrorize men in a "geriatric plague"; and in the title story, the Department of Hope warns people to take "imagination suppressants" to avoid the dangers of independent dreaming and other seditious practices. Endowing abstract concepts, such as Karma, with grotesque physicality—in this case a scapegoat character's scabs—and creating similes and metaphors that "alter" readers' conceptions of family, gender roles, traditional values, societal expectations, and reality, Farrant possesses a fresh and sometimes bizarre imagination. Here the infant Jesus becomes "a cocktail wiener wrapped in a Kraft cheese single" ("Kristmas Kraft"); a parent takes a "fornication kit," the family dog, and Grandma along on her daughter's date ("The Date"); the pensioners' Thanksgiving dinner features a dump truck of broccoli ("Broccoli"); and the airport located underneath the bedcovers sends the Rescue Flight for those stranded when a bridge over a churning sea of red jello gives way ("Covers"). In contrast to the reverence Hardy inspires by using traditional North American indigenous narratives, Farrant's deconstructive postmodernism amuses and amazes.

Farrant, like Hardy, writes beautifully intertextual metafiction critical of mainstream culture. Both *Constant Fire* and *Altered Statements* are fictions preeminently about fiction; and both delight not only in the textures, language, and shapes of fiction but also in self-reflexive statements about fiction and its relationship to various realities. According to Hardy and Peggy Whistle, a character in "Little People Still Live in the Woods," "a story is not only what you choose to tell, but what you choose not to tell." As June Lily in "Star Feathers" adds and all the stories illustrate, unlike white stories, which "end with great and clear finality, . . .Indian stories merely break up like fights or modulate like music into a different key or drift away like smoke." As in Farrant's fiction, the reader is invited into the work.

In five parts and differing print styles,

Farrant's metafictions often focus on unappreciated artists who, like Farrant, create "jewels from the trash of the age" ("Thunder Showers in Bangkok"). The title story, in the section called "THERE IS COMPETITION FOR THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF THE PEOPLE," presents a government with Departments of Hope, Depth, Experiments, Diversity, Silence, and Secrets which attempts to control and subvert unsanctioned images, messages, and "exotic reading" from such groups as SPEIV (Society to Prevent the Eradication of Inner Voices), "the perpetuators and guardians of the novel." While the official position is "to integrate minority groups into mainstream culture," it keeps an approved list excluding Boring White Women and Dead White Males and suggests that old people "abandon the pursuit of joy." Advising that artists try "working with empty spaces" or make "novel houses, each room a chapter," it wishes to save the last existing sheet of paper for "something of importance." This government uses audiences for market research "target practice." Expected to rate televised natural disasters and to behold rather than to interact, they are allowed only fifteen shades of pleasure and must "colour-coordinate [their] ideas to match the prevailing winds." Neverthless, in "THE WORK" section, Farrant's self-conscious artists continue to bake poems ("Oven") and collect "stray stories" forbidden by rules ("Rules").

As Hardy says in a *Contemporary Authors* entry, she "writes to understand or impose order, however fictive, on [her] life." Farrant seems to do the opposite: to explode the ordinary complacencies with which most of us try to impose order. Like Farrant, however, Hardy parodies her drug-addicted "Reality Therapist" and recognizes that "reality is just a construct." Both authors create what Hardy calls "openings between worlds" to offer us glimpses into alternative realities.

Back in That Skin Again

Jack Hodgins
The Macken Charm. M & S $18.99

Reviewed by Joel Martineau

The events that make up the action in *The Macken Charm* are simple: the one Macken sister and eight surviving Macken brothers and their spouses congregate at an old hotel site; they travel into the nearby small town to attend the funeral of Glory, deceased wife of the youngest brother, Toby; the bereaved husband lives up to his reputation as hellion with various outrageous stunts, and, late in the afternoon, disappears; the seventeen-year-old narrator, Glory's and Toby's nephew Rusty, recounts his infatuation with Glory and probably understands why she drowned; after the funeral the clan and various friends regroup at the hotel site and, during their night-long wake, refurbish Glory's dilapidated shack; Rusty locates Toby and reintegrates him into the family while realizing that he, Rusty, must leave the family arena. All this occurs in twenty-four or twenty-five hours, from one morning through to the next.

Jack Hodgins spins these events into a rollicking novel—albeit restrained by *his* standards—by the tried-and-true narrative device of beginning the story as close as possible to the end and then going back and filling in. We learn just enough about Rusty's parents and their generation, and about Glory—an enigma who bridges the gap between the generations—to make sense of the funeral and wake. An observation in *A Passion for Narrative*, the guide to writing fiction that preceded *The Macken Charm* in Hodgins's *oeuvre*, points toward a fuller understanding: "You can find stories recorded while the events are occurring, stories recorded immediately afterwards, and stories recorded long afterwards." An early passage in *The Macken Charm* signals the temporal span between the narrated

events and the storytelling event:

The Island Highway was still a strip of pleasant tarmac in the year of Glory's funeral—1956. A whole half hour might pass between cars. More than three hours of driving and two hours of steamship away, Vancouver could have been in a foreign country. You expected to see it two or maybe three times in your life: optometrist appointments, the Exhibition. Ferries hadn't yet been built to haul tourists by the thousands every hour across the Strait and set them racing up our roads, trucks and Winnebagos nose to tail from dawn till night."

Rusty's "our roads" reveals Hodgins's narrative intent. Historically, islanders have tended to feel a sense of community. They have seen themselves, like their islands, as self-contained and independent from the outside world. By seeing themselves as separate from the rest of humanity they have become closer to their fellow islanders. Population influx brings a contradiction: as much as islanders want to stick together, they tend to distinguish between natives and those who are newly arrived, between those who belong and those who wish to belong, between those whose island this is and those whose it is not. This sense of community available to islanders is severely challenged in an era of satellite dishes, the Chunnel, and high-speed catamaran ferries—the universe is made up of very different stories in 1996 than was the case in 1956. Jack Hodgins wants his readers to reflect upon the difference, and to extend the analysis beyond Vancouver Island to our culture at large. As an edge-walker of the continent he shows us how preposterously our culture has become tangled in the century's and the centre's glitter.

The imbrication of Rusty as narrator and Hodgins as author shimmers throughout the novel. Rusty's maturation necessitates learning to valorize the local, an approach he predictably rebels against as a youth. In July 1956, about to turn eighteen and anxious to leave Vancouver Island for "the far side," he wondered whether "the world out there had much in common with us." The old hotel, which once provided his childhood imagination space to try out various lives, becomes naked and skeletal: "Somewhere along the way I'd stopped believing." Hodgins has stated that his parents, like Rusty's, started their marriage in an old, abandoned hotel and that as a small child he would wander through that hotel and imagine all the stories that had taken place there: "I knew I had to do something with that image and as I wrote the book, it came to be a symbol of opportunity." The storyteller in the novel, by implication an older and much wiser Rusty, understands the hotel as a symbol for the culture of the extended family which the Mackens represented. He keeps "busy at narrative" in order to poetically reconstruct that hotel, and by extension, all the stories and lives that *can* take place there.

Key to appreciating *The Macken Charm*—and this is equally true for Hodgins's ten other books—is a certain degree of comfort with the sense of "opportunity" that pervades his writing. Which isn't to say that his thinking is grounded in some sort of positivism which excludes speculation upon ultimate causes or origins. His criticisms, however, often seem if not muted then perhaps overly subtle. One example: a welcome critique of British Columbia's lackluster forestry policies is woven into the story. The passage quoted above continues, "Developers hadn't yet begun to replace stands of timber with cement-walled shopping centres"; later the storyteller expresses unease with his youthful dream of "riding on horseback over logged-off slopes"; at another point he ironically observes that during a ceremony a dignitary (representing that centre of exploitation, Buckingham Palace, no less) "planted two small trees in land where every effort was being made to get the trees out"; and, while driving

through a valley of hobby farms he reflects that "all this area had been dense with timber once." Now, as delighted as I am by this condemnation of the heedless pillaging of BC's forests—reproach which metonymically questions the entire narrative of progress and development—I do think that some readers will impatiently seek a more vigorous assertion of outrage.

Hodgins reconstructs the island, the coast, and the region as a community—of flesh and blood, and of narrative—in order to challenge its portrayal as a frontier ordained to supply the centre with raw materials, consumers, and rustic movie sets. In "The Lepers' Squint," a short story that first appeared in 1978, Hodgins had an aspiring Irish writer point out to a visiting North American novelist the inevitable commodification of the region. "Some day," she said, "they will have converted all our history into restaurants and bars like this one, just as I will have converted it all into fiction." She went on to explain that "this place exists" for her because a great regional writer "made it real. He and others, in their stories." Hodgins's narrative project has, of course, long been to make his region real. His superior achievement in *The Macken Charm* is to manifest that region in place and time as direct comment upon the contemporary western world.

The Macken Charm is to be the first of a trilogy. Hodgins has said that the thrill of once again working in the idiom of his earliest years was "like finding Spit Delaney, like finding all those characters in the Spit Delaney stories, it was, Oh my gosh, I'm back in that skin again." This is Rusty's story; the second in the trilogy will be Sonny in middle age, set "vaguely in the early nineties"; the third will be set in 1922: "One character will be important to all three." Rusty's mother Frieda or father Eddie? Thousands of Hodgins's aficionados, in Canada, in Europe, and down under, will be eagerly guessing.

Proper Amazement

Greg Hollingshead
The Roaring Girl. Sommerville House $22.95

Reviewed by Constance Rooke

The Roaring Girl, Greg Hollingshead's 1995 Governor General's Award winning story collection, has two epigraphs:

> Jesus said, "Become passers-by"
> — *The Gospel of St. Thomas*

> There are no innocent bystanders. What were they doing there in the first place?
> — *William S. Burroughs*

Together, they signal the motifs of watching and complicity that pervade the collection, the artist's stance in the world, his sense of self and relationship to the other, and also something of the bemused but laser-sharp sensibility that for me links Hollingshead with three giants of the contemporary short story: Richard Ford, Raymond Carver, and Alice Munro. Like them, he is both wizard and muddler—a superbly talented writer who knows that his material (the life he taps, alongside which he travels) is still more potent than he can show. In awe of life, staggered by the reality of other people, hard on himself, he chisels away in story after story, trying to get it right.

These are masterful stories, marvelously nuanced, accurate, and well-made—but what they speak to is the sense of *being* mastered, whether by plenitude or by poverty. It's a wonderfully attractive thing in a writer this good. He knows the strangeness of this dialogue, the weirdness of these lives; he cannot ever get over it. He's in perpetual love, perpetual pain—because it's all so astonishing and so recalcitrant, and because we keep on missing the point. There is something harsh in Hollingshead's sensibility, too—the odd, ugly twist that marks a wrenching away from the goodness to which he is profoundly drawn.

In "The Side of the Elements," the narrator and his wife are leaving the city for a year and so must rent their house; his story begins, as ours would, with an attempt to find tenants who will take proper care of that house. But from the very beginning we see that the narrator has other, philosophic interests—and the use of all his everyday encounters is really to explore these, to see and talk his way into deeper and deeper puzzles. The house—as Hollingshead and thousands of writers before him have played it—is an archetype for the life we have constructed, under threat from the elements without; its job is to represent us, to stand for us, and to keep death away. When tenants invade, and behave unpredictably, our personal construction (as well as our property) is at risk. Meanwhile, the story's everyday nightmare comes true: loud parties abound, tenants change, cheques bounce.

The remarkable thing that Hollingshead does with this material is to have his narrator weigh in on the side of the elements and of the tenants. When he returns, he goes to the funeral of Frank, his tenant—suffering that stranger's death as if it were his own, and for a time thereafter "fighting on the side of the rains and the wind and the howling night. . . . [Making] big pushes for disaster. For Frank. For disappointment, so useful to sustain proper amazement that order should ever prevail." This split consciousness, the inability to shut out the other, is a signature element in Hollingshead's fiction. And the image of the house, in this first story of the collection, sets the stage for much that is to come.

The second story, for example, "The People of the Sudan," is also quite explicitly an invasion-of-the-house story. This time the invader is huge parcel—containing "relief" for the people of the Sudan—to which the narrator and her husband have given house room, pending its collection by unknown friends of friends. And the box sits: a presence, a memento of the world's pain and our insensitivity. Again, the narrator is imposed upon by others, quite absurdly; and again, Hollingshead swings away from that enclosed, suburban reading of the situation to another that is generous and open-hearted.

The house figures again in "The Death of Brule," when "suddenly one entire wall of the doghouse lifted off," exposing a young boy's sexual "depravity," as "there with the immediacy of God's was my mother's face." Again and again, against the illusion of suburban solidity, the notes of vulnerability and exposure and also of the yearning for some expansion are sounded. "Rose Cottage," "The Roaring Girl, "A Night at the Palace," "The Appraisal," and "The Naked Man" are other stories that develop the house motif in interesting ways. In the closing story, "Walking on the Moon"—whose very title suggests the strangeness of where we REALLY walk—the protagonist takes "a tour of the roof," looking down at his neighbourhood from a new perspective. I read this as Hollingshead's final look at the terrain he has been exploring in this collection. Again, we find the split consciousness—"Same world, different world"—and an astronaut's "hunger . . . for the love and respect of my fellow creatures." There is also a gesture at the foolishness of "insulation," and a recognition that for the very old woman next door, "a new roof had not been worth it to her for a long time." The story ends with the protagonist patching his roof, as the quotidian requires, but also with his hearing a distant "backbeat," "the sound of flowers bursting from the surface of your body." In that closing image we see both the antidote and the sequel to the house, ecstasy and death—the romantic merger.

This is in some ways a dark book, with a roar of pain at its heart. It is also very rich. I've pursued the house image because I was particularly struck by it, and because it is

used to develop a number of Hollingshead's most pressing themes—but there is much, much more here. *A Roaring Girl* is a book I'm sure I will read again.

Images of "Japaneseness"

Marilyn Ivy
Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan. University of Chicago P US$45.95/$17.95.

Jodi Cobb
Geisha: The Life, the Voices, the Art. Knopf $63.00.

Reviewed by Millie Creighton

Here are two books with very different approaches to traditionalistic icons of Japanese culture. One is highly visually oriented, a photographic promenade through the lives, loves, and arts of Geisha, the other a highly intellectual, deeply textual analysis. One appeals to the popular consumption of Japan in the modern West, the other, although profoundly academic, is largely about popular consumerism in modern Japan. Where one is a visual montage of Geisha, embraced by Westerners as an exotic symbol of Japan, the other explores for the mind's eye how within Japan such traditionalistic images, amidst a Westernized lifestyle and fears of a vanishing cultural heritage, become newly embraced symbols of self-exoticism.

Geisha: the Life, the Voices, the Art, a photographic testimony to the lives of Geisha by award-winning photographer Jodi Cobb, is, like the Geisha it presents, an alluring, vivid, and colourful book. Its primary appeal is the photographs capturing the moods and spirits of Geisha both as "lifestyle artists" and "real people". An introduction by Ian Buruma provides a thought-provoking background to the visuals. Textual portraits of Geisha, interspersed among the visual portraits, mingle Japanese poems, snatches from songs Geisha perform, and the voices of Geisha telling their own stories, to capture a deeper understanding of Geisha experiences. These vignettes reveal an ideal of Geisha life as combining sexuality, pleasure, and catering to the male ego, with an attitude of professionalism in the development of a Geisha's art and hostessing skills.

Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan, is a provocative and innovative work that makes a major contribution to academic discourse on Japan. In this gift of scholarship to the field, Marilyn Ivy shifts paradigms from previous canons of scholarly inquiry on Japan in the social sciences.

Ivy provides several separate but connected essays exploring traditionalistic imagery and its place in the fabric of modern Japanese life. She enables the reader to embark on a paradoxical journey of encounter with contemporary constructions of Japanese selfhood through her analysis of the 1970s and 1980s domestic travel advertising campaigns created by Dentsu (Japan and the world's largest advertising agency), "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan". Ivy suggests the real goal underlying the recent popularity of rural hamlets and villages as Japanese tourist haunts, is the desire to journey to a place most Japanese can never reach—or return to—home; home to the Japanese *kokoro* or heart/mind, and to a Japanese cultural identity unadulterated by internationalization and an increasingly Westernized daily lifestyle. Although the sought-after destination remains always out of reach, travel becomes the operator allowing at least a temporary recuperation of a fading self.

In an essay about the origins of nativist ethnology, this North American anthropologist takes Japan's most famous anthropologist, Yanagita Kunio, author of the classic *Tales of Tono* (*Tono Monogatari.* 1910; Tokyo: Yamato Shobo, 1972) and proclaimed founder of Japanese folk studies, to

task. Utilizing contemporary critiques of Western anthropology and anthropologists, she evaluates this early icon of Japanese ethnology, by probing the often ignored relationship between Yanagita and his primary Tono informant—the teller of the Tono tales to the folklorist. Emerging questions include, 'Who has claim to authorship?', and 'Where are the boundaries of creativity and collaboration in this early work of Japanese anthropology, as in all anthropology?'

Ivy provides an intriguing ethnographic account of memorializing the dead on Mount Osore, suggesting that ritual practices of recalling the dead serve eventually, not as a means of remembering, but as a means of forgetting those who have departed from this life. A subtle suggestion, which links such practices to other ways Japanese are attempting to recall their cultural past, which Ivy claims is proof of its vanishing. A final essay on *taishu engeki* provides another rich ethnographic account of localized folk theatre, while suggesting that the revitalization of this traditional theatre art involves a shift in context to accommodate modern capitalist underpinnings of contemporary Japanese culture. Such marginalized events and the efforts made to preserve them are again seen by Ivy as elements of a vanishing national identity, as Japanese culture is replaced by the culture of capitalism.

Although I believe Ivy has made an immensely important contribution with this work, I cannot fully agree with her stance that Japan's extensive cultural loss is so potentially painful that full realization must be resisted. I would instead suggest that images of yesterdays traditionalist lifeways, help Japanese cope with the fear of cultural loss in the present, enabling them to move further into an ever changing future.

Postmodern Families

Wayne Johnston
Human Amusements. M & S $18.99

Russell Smith
How Insensitive. Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Reviewed by George Wolf

Wayne Johnston writes family histories, but not the sort—*The Time of Their Lives* (1987) excepted—that span generations. Like social historians who sacrifice scope for depth, Johnston represents a vivid sense of dailiness, the feel and texture of being in a particular family in a particular time and place. In his three earlier novels, the place was his native Newfoundland. In *Human Amusements* (1994) it's Toronto. But wherever his fictions unfold, his deepest setting is the family, his distinctive skill the creation of those small, significant events that accumulate toward eruptions and landslides few families manage to escape.

Human Amusement's Prendergasts—Audrey, Peter, and son Henry—are a nuclear family, cut off from the sprawling collections of quirky relatives and friendly accomplices peopling the worlds of *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* (1985), *The Time of Their Lives*, and *The Divine Ryans* (1990). With neither clan nor regional bonds to anchor them, the Prendergasts fix their lives to television. The TV Prendergasts the tabloids call them, Audrey having scripted a hit syndicated kids' show in which she as Miss Mary and Henry as the Bees (Bee Good and alter ego Bee Bad) star. "Rumpus Room" (older readers may flash back to "Romper Room"), a classic of its kind, becomes the site in television land where Henry, mutely encased in his Bee costumes, miming the didactic roles his mother has scripted for him, lives much of his boyhood. For him, as he recalls at the opening of his richly comic narrative, "the early days of television are the early days of everything." Only his skeptical father, a

substitute high school teacher and would-be novelist who'll have nothing to do with his wife's TV enterprises though living constantly in their shadows, offers his son repeated doses of sanity and perspective, coated in bracing wit. Peter's bible is *Gulliver's Travels*, "a book to be consulted . . .when one is set upon by optimism . . . plagued with hope and cheerfulness," father advises son. But satire is ultimately no match for Audrey's scheme of "keeping the family intact" by living the future in TV. From the Prendergasts's sixteenth floor Toronto condo she launches her second venture, "The Philo Farnsworth Show," a foolish and fabulously successful series about the invention of television in which Henry spends his adolescence playing leading man. Eventually incapable of bearing such a weight of unreality, the family nucleus splits, blasting Henry out of an overextended infancy (TV would make infants of us all) into the swirling realm of mysterious motives and puzzling betrayals in which mature folk most often dwell.

For all its engaging zaniness and comic distortion, *Human Amusements* is fundamentally about the hard experience of growing up—hard in any age, but complicated in Henry's by the mass popular fictions that promise the protections of infancy in the form of simplistic moral certitudes. It is Henry's powerful sense of his unintended complicity in his family's breakup that thrusts him into the world of guilt and sorrow where he can finally begin to see his parents—reunited but unreconciled—as Audrey and Peter, the complicated, groping, victimized and victimizing mixed affairs not even fantasy or his childish need can keep them from being.

Russell Smith's take on coming-of-age in *How Insensitive*, short-listed for the SmithBooks/ Books in Canada First Novel Award and the Governor-General's for 1994, also reels out in Toronto, but not the Toronto the Good of distant memory or the Toronto the Not-As-Good of Johnston's 1960s and 70s setting. Ted Owen of New Brunswick, by way of a master's program in cultural studies at Concordia, arrives by train in "glittering" Toronto the Postmodern—a city whose recognizable street names and neighborhoods and contemporaneity make it no more substantial than those earlier urban incarnations—to "try to get into film," he thinks, or "some kind of writing." An ingenu despite his M.A., Ted is quickly immersed in the here-today-gone-tomorrow worlds of lifestyle magazines (bearing trendy names like *Referent, Haze, Cities, Next, Apache Surgery*), voguish dance clubs (Spleen, Dionysus, Penumbra, Aquarium, Holocaust), and a cultural life made up of film promotion, grant writing, low end experimental theater, and talk TV. His Maritimer's innocence, though no perfect charm, permits him to move through these worlds remarkably unscathed. Not that he's immune to this Canadian vanity fair's temptations: he falls for two women at once and becomes sexually entangled with a third, he falls easily into habits of self-promotion based on bogus credits, he falls into fashion. And in one of many resemblances to Hawthorne's Robin Molineux, he falls into imagining that someone else, a sophisticate named Max whom he met on the Toronto train, will fix him up, get his career and future moving, help him make his way. When the humiliation of having to live on handouts from his mother and father grows intolerable, Ted weakens, accepting a job with a software company writing manuals ("I have a cubicle with a computer and my very own noticeboard," he writes a friend)—the "veal-fattening pen" fate that caused Douglas Coupland's Canadian *Generation X*er, Dag, to flee this very city. Ted is also tempted to flee, back to the womb of graduate school, but a series of freeing epiphanies triggered by desperation and a glorious winter thaw, as well as

an exhilarating sense of the possibility of his making his own future, leave him at the novel's close in Toronto "with a sudden and intense feeling of relief, of relaxation, of arriving home."

Whether Ted Owen's coming-of-age is as authentic or durable as Henry Prendergast's is impossible to say. Russell Smith, after all, is more interested in deploying his protagonist as a recorder of the vacuous, sensation-driven realm of Toronto chic in the early 90s than in developing character. And in this he succeeds not with a novice's luck but genuine talent. His club scenes erupt in satiric flame, his renderings of Rosedale's twenty-somethings leave no prisoners, his images of Toronto's cultural hip and hipsters are sharp and devastating. Yet behind all this one senses Smith's fascination with the impulse to make things new that to some degree generates the very curiosities he caricatures. Whether he can or wishes to move from the role of satirist to Wayne Johnston's position of introspective, humane storyteller only further novels will tell. On the basis of *How Insensitive* they're well worth waiting for.

Interanimations

Hilda Kirkwood
Between the Lines. Oberon $12.95
Reviewed by Catherine Addison

Between the Lines is a collection of interviews conducted by Hilda Kirkwood with various Canadian writers and artists. It is compelling reading, mainly because of Kirkwood's rapport with her subjects. Even though the discussions include lively debate on such issues as gender, censorship, the American influence and the crafts of writing and sculpture, much of the interest of the book lies in the sense of relationships unfolding.

Kirkwood has selected her subjects carefully. They are all people whom she clearly holds in esteem and all except one—so she tells us in her headnote—are acquaintances of hers already. She is a virtuoso in the older sense, a collector. Her collection consists of Margaret Laurence, Joe Rosenblatt, Robertson Davies, Aritha van Herk, Leon Rooke, Almuth Lutkenhaus, William McElcheran, Barker Fairley, Northrop Frye, Joan Murray and Tom Marshall (who died just before he was to be interviewed and so is represented only by a tribute). She shows off her collection in the special light of her intelligent appreciation, which may be the best kind of illumination for most people. Freed from the necessity of defending themselves, they are able to unmask and disarm; they do not feel compelled to consistency but may go off on revealing tangents, fascinating digressions.

One of Kirkwood's best ploys is to use, in her questions, metaphors that seem appropriate to the artist or work. Of Joe Rosenblatt, poet of fish and insect life, she inquires: "Are the poet's antennae more developed, or has he got better equipment for finding the depths?" And Rosenblatt taking and passing the thread, willingly weaves his own motifs into the conversation: "Only a masochist would write about his or her job experience. Better to observe those super-prols [bees] buzzing away at their blessed productions." Leon Rooke, questioned about his ability to "tap into" both male and female in his fiction, commutes Kirkwood's metaphor into "network[ing] both continents of the psyche" and "enter[ing] other skins." Only Robertson Davies refuses to take up this kind of cue. Asked whether a "Merlin or Prospero myth" underlies the action of *A Mixture of Frailties,* he replies grumpily that "To talk of a Magician Theme is to miss the truth of the story." Kirkwood perhaps gets her revenge in her interview with the sculptor Almuth Lutkenhaus, who is quite happy

to accept Kirkwood's suggestion that her portrait of Davies captures the "Merlin quality" of the novelist himself.

Kirkwood is not a self-effacing interviewer; she works by offering suggestions of this kind to her mostly very receptive subjects. Sometimes her suggestions actually surprise someone into self-knowledge, for example when Aritha van Herk at first rejects but later embraces Kirkwood's query about a Joycean influence on her novels. Usually the suggestions act as bait in a very satisfactory way. A particularly good example is the way she angles for an explanation of the porkpie-hatted businessman figure who recurs in so many of William McElcheran's sculptures. McElcheran rewards her with twenty-three lines for her bold assertion that in the maquettes for *The Gates of Limbo* he has "given [this figure] a soul." And, characteristically, these twenty-three lines express confirmation, not refutation, of her theory.

So warmly do some of her subjects agree with Kirkwood's suggestions that there is occasionally no discussion at all. When she rounds off her questions about Lutkenhaus's "Crucified Woman" with a conjecture that the controversy about the statue did not so much concern its artistic merit as "[touch] off a charge of emotion regarding women's role in Christian society," Lutkenhaus answers: "*Exactly*, you have put it as it should be said." But this is not a failure on the part of the interviewer to elicit a response; it is a point of perfect coincidence between two protagonists in a dialogue. Moreover, since Kirkwood is the protagonist with whom we, as readers, are most inclined to identify, it is a triumph of understanding. The fact that a constant repetition of such triumphs could obliterate the dialogue does not matter. Lutkenhaus, like all the people interviewed, does express herself at length elsewhere. But this assurance of rapport between her and her interlocutor assures the authenticity of her longer responses too.

Of course, the same degree of warmth between interviewer and interviewee does not kindle every encounter. Kirkwood generally seems most comfortable with her female subjects, actually trading autobiographical information with them. In the interviews with Laurence and van Herk, for example, she confesses to having been brought up with brothers by strong women and she also describes her first glimpse of the Rockies from Calgary. Both Laurence and Lutkenhaus, unlike any of the male subjects, reciprocate by discussing aspects of their personal lives—specifically, the dilemma of the married woman as artist. Laurence ruefully confesses that it "took [her] years . . . to get over the socially conditioned feeling that [she] had to make the beds and do the dishes before [she] started writing."

But the discussions with men may be just as revealing of Kirkwood's own life and opinions. Both Rosenblatt and McElcheran feel strongly about the difficulties of their art as a craft to be learned with patience and effort; both decry the "easy" poems and paintings of the postmodern era. In response, Kirkwood declares herself of the same camp:

> I resent the use of the word art to describe a thing like a fence going across the country or a piece of junk being called sculpture, because I think it's debasing the language and as a writer, I really resent the debasement of words such as art and artist. Let it be done, but by another name.

Thus, the whole book is revealed as a tribute to an old-fashioned ideal of artistic excellence—Yeats's "old nonchalance of the hand," acquired by years of dedication. Kirkwood has clearly elected to converse in it with people whom she considers to live up to this ideal. Let us hope that her dialogues have some power to change the fashion.

A Daughter's Dilemma

Joy Kogawa
The Rain Ascends. Knopf $28.95

Reviewed by Arnold E. Davidson

The silence that sounds so persistently in Joy Kogawa's first two novels, *Obasan* and *Itsuka*, figures prominently in her third as well. But whereas *Obasan* richly exploited the silence of dispersal and death, of devastating collective and individual traumas in order to tell the story of Canada's mistreatment of Japanese-Canadians during and after World War Two, *Itsuka* explored the less resonant silence of the country's long refusal to acknowledge explicitly or in any way redress what it had long recognized to be a blatant miscarriage of justice. With the *The Rain Ascends*, however, Kogawa examines quite a different silence, one that is situated in contexts other than the experience of successive generations of Canadians of Japanese ancestry. Now the focus is on how a middle-aged, proper English-Canadian daughter of a much admired clergyman comes not quite to terms with but at least to the acknowledgment of the fact that her loved and respected father has long sexually abused young boys.

As even that brief summary of the plot suggests, the silence of *The Rain Ascends* is hardly univocal. There is, first, a deep divide over the question of whether to speak or not to speak the disgraceful truth. Millicent, the daughter, wants to protect her father from the consequences of his past actions, whereas Eleanor, his daughter-in-law (with the emphasis falling on *law*) insists that he must be forced to confront those consequences. The novel thus partly restages the division in *Obasan* between Obasan determined to silently endure injustice and Aunt Emily insistant on denouncing it and loudly demanding justice, but with the significant difference that the protagonist of *The Rain Ascends*, unlike Naomi in *Obasan*, is not poised between those two poles but attempts to occupy one of them.

Yet the daughter clearly does not fully believe in either the silence she advocates or the mercy she would thereby bestow. Partly her problem is the dual nature of her father. In some ways, as various vignettes signify, he was a good man and even an exemplary clergyman. In other ways he was a moral monster who preyed on those who trusted him and preyed all the more effectively—and appallingly—by masquerading as a virtuous man of God. This division in the father is, moreover, reflected in the daughter as well, for she does not care for him quite as much as she regularly claims she does. From the very beginning of the novel, the lady protests too much, vociferously maintaining that her love for her father consigns her to silence with respect to the crimes she knows he has committed, and in the process she is of course partly recounting the very story that she insists she would not voice for the world. The novel itself is thus testimony to the instability of the speaking/silence polarity whereby the daughter figures her own self division and which she tries to resolve externally by casting herself as the figure of silence (with respect to her father) in opposition to her sister-in-law who readily serves as the figure of speech.

Furthermore, the daughter's early attempt to speak but yet also to remain silent, to tell only her story but not his, is, as she well knows, doomed from the start. Thus the prologue to the novel begins by recounting the "proudest moment" of her childhood when "[t]he town of Juniper, in the foothills of Alberta, celebrated the opening of the Juniper Centre of Music by declaring it C.B. Shelby Day after the founder of the Centre, [her] father, the Reverend Dr. Charles Barnabas Shelby. School children were given a holiday. Banners and balloons decorated the stores. The Shelby Family Quartet [the narrator, her brother, her

mother and father] sang with the combined church choirs in a free concert in the shining new auditorium." But this opening note of harmony and grace does not hold even though the father goes on to found three other "centres of music and healing" in other parts of Canada, and the prologue concludes with a complex reversal of the Biblical account of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. It is the child, the daughter, who is sacrificing the parent. Her implement is the pen, not the knife. And most of all, she rightly suspects that there will be no last-minute rescue:

> I bind him and lay him on the altar on top of the wood. I stretch out my hand. I take the knife and raise it high. And higher.
>
> Where is the ram? Where in the bushes is the alternate sacrifice? Where is the voice that says, "Don't kill"?

She hopes that "if I hold the pen tight enough" and "let it fall just to the point—right up to the throat—that's when the ram will appear" and "I won't have to say the lethal words, will I?" And of course she is doubly wrong. First, how better can you speak the unspeakable than by so pointedly not saying it? And second, the ram has been there all along. She herself as well as many others have been the sacrifice that the father made in his own perverted reenacting of Abraham and Isaac, and this point is emphasized by the daughter's editorial interjection into her quoting of the Biblical account: "It is innocent blood that is to be shed. You shield the child from the awful, the unspeakable truth. It's Isaac, your love, your laughter, your joy, your everything, that is the sacrificial lamb to be slain and offered to your ravenous God." A pointed contrast to her father's case: he didn't shield children from the awful truth and sacrificed them to his ravenous God who was the father himself.

The father's sins, blatant as they are, are not, however, the main subject of *The Rain Ascends*, just as its implication of the perverse and the unnatural is not the main point of the title. Centering the novel on the daughter's anguished response to her father and in the ambiguous ways that she has been and continues to be his victim both in her own life (for example, her sad affair with an older clergyman also given to music—a clear stand-in for her father) and in the price she pays for trying to protect him (especially when she discovers how close to home his sexual predations can come), Kogawa clearly intends something more than a post-Mount Cashel fable of abuse in black and white. The father's good deeds are played out against his bad. We see how he can finally plead that he too had been sexually victimized as a child. We see how his predations were a search for his own lost innocence and we also see how untenable those extenuating considerations also are. We see the divisions in the family that is itself partly the product of homophobia, of the father's attempt to pass as someone that he is not, and we also see the daughter's painful attempt to resolve conflicting claims—to love her father and to judge him. We see, in short, a complex interplay of good and evil. The rain falls, after all, to make life possible, only because the rain also ascends.

The Rain Ascends is an ambitious novel; in many ways it is an impressive novel; but, for me, it was finally in some ways also a disappointing novel. To start with, *Obasan* remains a hard act to follow, and Kogawa's third novel, like her second one, falls short of the artistic success she achieved with the first one. For example, the deployment in the prologue of the Biblical account of Abraham and Isaac is rather mechanical in its implications, and the regular reference to and rewriting of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is even more obvious in its suggestion of men turned into beasts. Similarly, although one strength of the novel is Kogawa's poetic prose, so, unfortunately, is one of the weaknesses. Thus the fog of the

opening—"In the beginning is the fog, the thick impenetrable fog. The lie is the source of the fog, and the lie is the fog"—lies as heavily symbolic as the fog at the beginning of Dickens' *Bleak House* or T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and at this late date rather more mechanically so. Or condemning her father, his daughter, late in the novel, declaims: "You took the pastel shadings of their dreams and splashed crimson and dung across the canvas of their innocent days. You swooped upon the sheltered nests of infant birds, their beaks open, their heads awkwardly angled upwards in a trust as large as the sky. With your unseeing hunger, you plucked the trust from their upturned faces and fed yourself until you could eat no more." Rhetoric, here, too much outweighs recrimination.

But even if the silence of a daughter trying not to admit her father's sins is rather less ringing than the silence of a country trying not to admit its own and even if the art of the third novel falls a little short of the art of the first, *The Rain Ascends* is still a novel well worth reading. First, it tells, for the most part effectively, a powerful story without slighting the larger moral complexities of that story, as victim's narratives are prone to do. And second, it is an intriguing study of how one of Canada's better fiction writers is still striving to surmount the handicap of having written a great first novel.

Women & Eroticism

Evelyn Lau
In the House of Slaves, Coach House $12.95

Lynn Crosbie
VillainElle, Coach House n.p.

Reviewed by Luise von Flotow

Women and eroticism seem to go together, with images of "women" traditionally triggering erotic fantasies and erotic writing. For some time, however, erotic writing has been appearing in a different guise. Women are the ones writing, describing situations in which female narrators or protagonists test and act out erotic fantasies, perceptions and adventures. In Quebec writing, this has been called "tenter l'érotique", a phrase that evokes the erotic as both a temptation (*une tentation*) and, more prosaically, an attempt (*une tentative*). Women writers, such as Anne Dandurand (1987, 1994), Claire Dé (1989), and Danielle Roger (1990), have been tempted by the heterosexual erotic, long a taboo for women writers, and have attempted to make inroads into this area conventionally defined and occupied by male writers. Others, such as Nicole Brossard (1980) have approached the lesbian erotic, also fraught with taboos. In both cases—the heterosexual and the lesbian—women writers have had to write against a long history of male fantasies that occupy much of the space and much of the imagery of eroticism. They have had to dismantle clichés, invent words to express what has so far been largely inexpressible, and imagine or describe situations beyond the scope of those assigned to women in the more traditional forms of erotic writing. Further, they have had to contend with the overlap between eroticism and pornography, whose relatively fluid boundaries demand negotiation.

The collections of poetry under review here are two women writers' approaches to the erotic in English. At least, that is what they appear to be at first glance. Evelyn Lau's collection *In the House of Slaves* is divided into two sections; the first introduced by a quotation ostensibly taken from Wanda von Sacher-Masoch's "Confessions", which, by alluding to the male "founder" of masochism evokes what is to come. The second section, introduced by a telling quotation from Czeslaw Milosz,

> Somewhere there are happy cities.
> Somewhere there are, but not for certain.

prepares readers for Lau's melancholic contextualization of contemporary attempts at

erotic behaviour in cities of Canada and the United States. *VillainElle* by Lynn Crosbie announces its eroto/sexual content with its title: a villainous "she" must surely be doing something "sexual", and the title of the first poem "All About Eve" would seem to confirm this expectation. However the quotations that introduce most of the works in the collection are drawn from a variety of literary texts as well as pop songs, somewhat dispersing first impressions and pointing toward a precious amalgamation of literary sources and popular culture.

Upon leafing through Lau's collection the reader is struck by recurring words—buttocks and lips, nipples and cherubs, Armani suits and withered bodies. They indicate the thematic direction of her work: sexual contact between "fresh" young women with white bodies, bright red fingernails and pitch-black hair and aging, yet well-heeled, gentlemen, in not very happy cities. In Crosbie's work, there are fewer and less direct references to bought sex; instead, women's aggressive sexual fantasies, curiously mixed with images of murder and haunted by figures and moments from the pop culture of comics and film, as well as snippets of French and Italian (to mark the well-travelled?), seem to determine the content of these poems. While the subject matter of work by Lau and Crosbie may seem deliberately designed for, and may actually lead to, a certain voyeuristic reading, a search for the kinky erotic bits, this does not appear to be the main focus of these works. They are interesting for their imagistic language and brilliantly coloured juxtapositions of erotic fantasy "gear" and the drab and seedy realities such "gear" seeks to transcend.

Evelyn Lau opens her collection with a series of prose poems that depict s/m situations where the woman prostitute alternately plays the role of sadistic dominatrix and masochistic victim. The calculated violence and pain of these situations, the dearth of any emotional attachments, the histrionics and superficial theatricality are apparent, and emphasized. So is the sensual: bright splats of colour "the stripes of the crop cardinal across your buttocks," overpowering smells "the ebony room smelling of orange brandy and freesias", "the smell of fear [. . .] hung over the bed like a nuclear mushroom," sounds of agony "the groans round and red as apples in your mouth," and sensations "falling wax like hot seed spilled across your loins," "tips of the whip fling gold stars." Yet beyond the technicolour flashes of the poems, the scarlets and golds, the ebonies and aquas, the red and white fishnet, or the eyes like blue torches, lie the years of loneliness, lived either among successfully stunted trees in the Japanese gardens of affluent suburbia or in some anonymous highrise, and now spent as "dismal reflections" amid a "sad dab of underwear," silk or otherwise. For all the voyeurism they encourage, and for all the striking and garish metaphors, these are moralistic poems.

The moralism becomes clearer in the second part of the collection in which the female "I", the young mistress/prostitute observes and describes her role in her middle-aged lover's life. The relationship is a painfully surreptitious one for her, lived after midnight, or when the family has gone on holiday, or during a business trip. The wife and the "four absent daughters" are omnipresent, however: their make-up, their clothes, their "first efforts in kindergarten", or simply the wedding band are noted by the envious, angry, lonely young woman who is hardly compensated by trips to New York and Hollywood. The moralism of these texts is alleviated, not lifted, by the detailed and tight descriptions, the precise, coloured language and the startling metaphors evoking the tackiness of the "heat-haze nights, purple sky, palm fronds crackling on the boulevards like lightning" and late-night liquor stores of L.A., the texture of unreal blueberries "dull and sullen"

and "lidded with apprehension" that are bought en route, or the defiant despair of the prostitute's "tragic opera" that drives her to "test all your daughters' beds for comfort, steal their lunch money, destroy their teenage trinkets."

Lynn Crosbie's work provides few narratives. Her poetry circulates around surreal situations that leave fantasy/reality breaks unclear. Crosbie's writing moves through the city, starting from relationships of sexual desire, revenge, power struggle and despair. In the poem *VillainElle*, the abused child, turned murderess, calls up Medea "*No secret murder earns renown*" and announces "I have killed seven men [. . .] *I put them out of their misery.*" In *I Eat Your Flesh*, the obsessive "love" for her therapist, brings on a woman's delirious murder fantasies; in *Strange Fits of Passion* the would-be lover is ignored for surreal reminiscences about what "happened to me when I was a madam"; in *Skirt, My Pretty Name* a woman, prepped with valium and coffee, whispers to the waitress *my husband's brains are in my hands* and "remembers" fragments of her past loves to disperse the relentless loneliness she now seems to live. Ambiguous sex/death scenes prevail in these poems, often written from the perspective of a clearly female narrator, whose power is, however, not always as tangible as in the poem *I Am Curious (Yellow)* in which a former "lover" is humiliated: "he is mortified, as he reveals himself/ beneath the gale winds, the cruel force/ of my predatory gaze." Often, the narrator is anguished, or mad, or growing "more and more perverse" in her exploration of her personal histories, of popular myth-ologies, and in her recourse to fantasies of violence.

Crosbie's writing is most effective for its moments of colour and its precise detail; indeed, when her eye for descriptive detail flags, when, for example, a dull account of the activities of a dominatrix provides a lame ending for the poem *Strange Fits of Passion*, it can only be deliberate:

> he was quiet also, and I whipped him, I
> ground my heels in his chest until
> he begged for mercy

The tediousness of having to apply physical punishment when there is no emotional reason for it becomes clear, precisely because the contrast to the descriptive moments in the poetry is so stark. Some examples: the woman in "love" with her therapist sees him "luminous, a sheet of perforated/ wafers. and your blood flows carelessly, wine-purple on my lips." The juxtaposition of pale white skin and lush wine red occurs frequently, as in *All About Eve*: "His wounds are the wine velvet/ seams and lining. she pencils in my eyebrows,/ a radiant arch, the *M* dark blue against/ my pallor." Much of the colouring connotes certain conventions of eroticism: "pink, tender, barely blooming," "purple satin sheets that cling to his thighs," "cassis—the blood of black currants, heavy and sweet," "my tiger-skin bustier", "my red-ruffled garter"; it becomes more interesting in situations where "love" is deciphered as "a bitter taste—small green apples—his mouth is insistent" and the lover is really seen for the first time: "there are amber scales on his crooked teeth;/ once I thought of golden scarabs, pressed/ gold leaf."

In *VillainElle*, the blurb on the back cover assures us, we have "poems of the mouth: tasting and speaking, kissing to wound and kissing to heal". These poems are also a search; they are a search for some way to express a woman's declaration of lust and desire as well as her need for intimacy and trust. Isolation and loneliness are the prevailing sentiments in both Lau's and Crosbie's work: the brightly coloured erotic encounters they describe or "remember" scarcely seem to compensate for the endemic isolation of their female protagonists.

Canadian Reprints

Rosanna Leprohon
Armand Durand. Tecumseh/Borealis $14.95

Margaret M. Robertson
Shenac's Work At Home. Tecumseh/Borealis $13.95

Joanna E. Wood
The Untempered Wind. Tecumseh/Borealis $16.95

Grant Allen
The Woman Who Did. Oxford UP $13.50

J. G. Sime
Our Little Life. Tecumseh/Borealis $20.95

Reviewed by Janice Fiamengo

Over the past few years, a number of long-out-of-print nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Canadian novels have been reissued in paperback by Tecumseh and other presses. These reprintings contribute to Canadian literary studies by broadening and clarifying our understanding of the forms and styles of early Canadian fiction. To the genres conventionally associated with the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods—the settler narrative, the frontier adventure, the historical romance—are added the sentimental romance and the social problem novel. The range of concerns and narrative strategies in the five novels reviewed below testify to the diversity of Canadian cultural life during these formative years.

Rosanna Leprohon is a fascinating and somewhat paradigmatic figure in nineteenth-century Canadian letters. As an Irish Catholic who married a French Canadian, settled in Montreal, and went on to publish successfully in both French and English, Leprohon seemed to typify the cultural harmony and diversity for which Canada was celebrated. As an orthodox Catholic woman who bore thirteen children while producing also a substantial body of fiction about the social constraints facing young women, Leprohon was both orthodox and moderately feminist. *Armand Durand* (1868) is perhaps less representative of Leprohon's feminist concerns than her earlier *Antoinette de Mirecourt* (1864), focusing as it does on young men rather than young women, but it is an excellent example of Leprohon's general fictional interests. Narrating the estrangement between two brothers and the tragic consequences for one of an ill-matched marriage, the novel is a classic sentimental romance, from its quaintness of diction to its insistence on the importance of sound domestic economy. Although I prefer the contradictory feminism of *Antoinette* to the conventional morality of *Armand Durand*, Leprohon's skill in shaping the materials of Quebec culture into readable moral allegory is undeniable.

More evangelical in purpose and narrative symbolism is the contemporary Margaret Murray Robertson's *Shenac's Work At Home* (1866). Robertson was a popular Protestant novelist and teacher whose nephew, Charles Gordon, achieved fame under the pseudonym Ralph Connor as the chronicler of muscular Christianity on the Canadian frontier. In Robertson, we can see the source of Connor's interest in the moral dynamics of Scottish communities in Canada—minus Connor's celebration of machismo. Robertson's focus is on feminine heroism. *Shenac* tells of the Christian education, through suffering, of its Scottish-Canadian heroine, who holds her family together after her father's untimely death. Through poverty, hardship, and the loss of loved ones, Shenac learns that only faith can bring comfort or change in a world of strife. Although its sentimental didacticism may strike some readers as excessive, the novel is compelling in its representation of Canada as a potentially pure nation built by strong, self-sacrificing women such as Shenac. The novel's connection of domestic and national concerns exemplifies the complex social and political dimensions of sentimental fiction.

Joanna Wood's *The Untempered Wind* (1894) is notable for its unconventional treatment of a controversial subject and for

its sombre social realism. The novel tells of Myron Holder, "a mother, but not a wife," and her persecution by the villagers of Jamestown. It seeks to expose the hypocrisy of the women who scapegoat Myron and to express the legitimacy of Myron's sexual transgression. The novel is remarkable for its struggle to articulate a language of female desire outside the boundaries of patriarchal tradition. Significant narrative and stylistic parallels with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess* establish the international context for this ambitious social problem novel, whose now forgotten author was once declared by the *Canadian Magazine* to rank among Canada's very best writers, alongside Charles G. D. Roberts and Gilbert Parker.

Grant Allen was a Canadian by birth who spent the years of his writing career in England. *The Woman Who Did* (1895) is a literary curiosity which generated controversy upon its publication and its belligerently conservative vision of social change. Herminia Barton is a beautiful, highly-educated New Woman who deliberately sacrifices social respectability to protest the tyranny of marriage. She enters into a "free union" with her lover and raises their child alone after his death. Ostensibly concerned with the overthrow of "the evil growth of man's supremacy," the novel that so upset critics and readers is in fact a baffling mixture of outrage at English morality and rigid prudishness about women's social and sexual destiny. For example, on the same page that the narrator rails against "the leprous taint of that national moral blight that calls itself respectability," he also pronounces with censorious smugness that the novel's heroine "was far removed indeed from that blatant and decadent sect of 'advanced women' who talk as though motherhood were a disgrace and a burden, instead of being, as it is, the full realization of woman's faculties." Such misogyny announcing itself as feminism indicates the complex ideologies mobilized by the nineteenth-century Woman Question.

The novel that is perhaps closest to contemporary taste in style and subject is J. G. Sime's *Our Little Life* (1921). A remarkably serious and sustained exploration of urban poverty, the novel presents a Dickensian portrait of life in the slums, emphasizing both the harshness and the poignancy of poor peoples' lives. The novel centres on the unlikely friendship that develops between the aspiring writer, Robert Fulton, and the aging seamstress, Katie McGee. Through scenes in which Robert reads sections of his "Canada Book"—a treatise on what Canada is and could be—to the uncomprehending Katie, Sime develops the contrast between the intellectual pretensions that fuel Robert's disdainful withdrawal from the world and Katie's uneducated but passionate participation in life. The relationship between these two down-trodden people is handled with considerable psychological depth and subtlety. The novel presents a grim urban vision of Canada that is at odds with the wheat fields and wide open spaces most familiar in representations from the period.

Intervening in History

Michael Mason
The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes. Oxford UP $49.50

Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde
Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History. U Toronto P $40.00/$16.95

Reviewed by Janice Fiamengo

Two studies of the nineteenth century seek to reappraise and revise conventional ideas about the period. *The Making of Victorian Sexual Attitudes* re-examines the assumption that the repressive sexual morality associated with Victorianism was rooted in conservative Christian theology; on the

contrary, Mason argues, "explicit anti-sensual attitudes tended above all to emanate from secularist and progressive quarters." Mason surveys the attitudes towards sexuality articulated by a variety of Victorian thinkers. In *Gender Conflicts*, Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde broaden the scope of scholarship on nineteenth-century Canadian women, gathering together essays by distinguished historians, sociologists, and political scientists. The two volumes could not be more different in their perspectives, but both texts complicate and enrich the standard portraits of the period.

Mason demonstrates that theologians were in many cases more permissive in their pronouncements on sexuality than were their more radical, secular counterparts. This rather counter-intuitive argument makes for fascinating reading as Mason explores some "unexpected lines of thought on sexuality" in his first chapter. Some of the most unexpected include the Swedenborgian emphasis on "erotic matrimonialism," Reverend G. D. Haughton's claim that souls in heaven would experience impassioned sexual fervour, and the Apocalyptic Princeite belief that a new era had dawned in which not only man's spirit but also his flesh would be redeemed by the Holy Ghost. In the course of his survey, Mason reveals that thinking about sexual morality was far less homogeneous than has often been thought.

In his second chapter, Mason examines the pervasive and complex heritage of Evangelicalism, focussing on the range of responses to the prostitute rescue work of Evangelical societies. In the third chapter, Mason outlines the relationships between working-class radicalism of the 1830s and 40s, dissenting religion, and ideas about human sensuality, examining Owenite socialism as a microcosm for the period's radicalism and contradictoriness on sexual matters. Chapter Four looks at theories of sexual liberation in progressive movements of the later century, with a focus on controversies over birth control. Throughout, Mason convincingly demonstrates that anti-sensualism was most often connected with left-wing ideologies.

In any study of such ambitious scope, there are bound to be omissions and oversights for which Mason cannot be severely criticized. Because Mason aims for maximum coverage of his diverse subject, his book contains more reporting than analysis of primary sources. Given the complexity of the subject, this limitation is disappointing, if understandable. In his treatment of prostitute rescue missions, for example, neither the founders and operators nor the rescued women themselves are given much opportunity to speak for themselves. In his attempt to separate the punitive from the benevolent aspects of Magdalenism, Mason relies on brief summaries of, or quotations from, mission statements, rescue tracts, and theoretical treatises, which provide only the barest sampling of the complex views held by individuals and societies. A more serious inadequacy is the lack of attention to feminist thinkers. In a study concerned with the relationship between progressive secularism and anti-sensual ideology, feminist anti-sensualism would seem crucial to the overall picture. But Mason finds the views of such feminist radicals as Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Wollstonecraft Elmy baffling and distasteful, commenting at one point with uncharacteristic hostility that "[t]he Social Purity Alliance was a grotesque affair, a great bubble of extreme anti-sensualism whose only lasting achievement was to discredit sexual moralism." Such historical judgementalism is misplaced; indeed, if "lasting achievement" were the only justification for historical investigation, then very few of the writers and thinkers in Mason's study would have any claim on our interest. Despite these limitations, though, Mason's

study is lucid and informative.

In their collective introductory essay, the contributors to *Gender Conflicts* explain that they are united in recognizing the complexities in the historical experiences of women. Interest in gender should not obscure the structuring force of race, class, and ethnicity in women's lives. This recognition that historians cannot posit a single, heroic female subject is fairly standard in contemporary feminist scholarship, almost always but not always successfully practiced. The essays in *Gender Conflicts*, however, follow through on their ideological commitment. The result is an eclectic, wide-ranging and subtle collection of essays that examine gender conflict in terms of resistance to patriarchal oppression and the tensions and struggles among women themselves. For example, Ruth A. Frager explores how the complex interrelations of gender, class, and ethnicity produced both powerful alliances and damaging dissension among striking workers at the T. Eaton Company. Lynn Marks' discussion of women's work in the Salvation Army grounds her analysis of the relationship between non-conformist religion and working-class women. Iacovetta explores how hegemonic ideas about the North American, bourgeois family influenced social service work with immigrant families in the first decades of the welfare state. These essays demonstrate detailed knowledge of their subjects and sensitivity to complex theoretical issues.

The collection is notable for the variety of its disciplines and research materials. Karen Dubinsky examines the history of seduction legislation and court records of seduction cases to demonstrate how ideologies of male sexual desire and female sexual purity are produced and maintained through the institution of law. Valverde explores the racist assumptions and strategies that shaped the sexual politics of maternal feminism. Cynthia Wright looks at floor plans for Eaton's department store to analyze the inculcation of the consumer ethic at the turn of the century.

The collection makes no claim to account for the experiences of all women; still, I regret that there are no essays about Native women, rural women, and women of colour. This caveat aside, I recommend the collection. The essays provide fascinating accounts of the ideologies, experiences, and institutions that have shaped Canadian women's history.

Mainstreaming Margins

Masao Miyoshi

Off Center: Power and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States. Harvard UP US$15.95

M.N.S. Sellers, ed.

An Ethical Education: Community and Morality in the Multicultural University. Berg US$54.95/$19.95

Reviewed by Marilyn Iwama

In *Off Center; Power and Culture Relations Between Japan and the United States*, Masao Miyoshi promises to offset the symmetry endemic to the familiar traditionalist and postmodern extremes of scholarly and popular discourse on Japan. *Off Center* succeeds in displacing this discourse by detailing the extent to which Japanese and American literatures and culture are mutually implicated. Through his translations Miyoshi also gives English-speaking readers greater access to Japanese prose and criticism.

Miyoshi divides his book into three parts. In the first, "Perspectives," he tracks the West's imperialistic relation to Japan by deconstructing "Eurocentric" readings of Japanese literature, then situating both Japanese and Western novels within wider literary and economic histories.

In Part Two Miyoshi examines postwar Japanese literary history, first generally, then by focusing on the writing of Tanizaki Junichiro and Mishima Yukio as respectively "ambiguous" and "homogenizing."

Miyoshi proposes an alternate discourse in Part Three ("Problems") as he explores what he calls "Japan's own centralism" and suggests that Japanese look to women's writing as the most likely way "out of the hierarchic order of control."

Such a proposal demands that Miyoshi challenge the mythology of homogeneity permeating the idea of Japan. Miyoshi attempts this, stressing that Japanese writing "is unique only as any other literature is," and acknowledging his complicity in this mythology by predicating his analysis on the virtue of striving to find a way out of homogeneity. Yet searching in *Off Center* for the same depth of reflection on marginality that Miyoshi demands of Japan "apologists" and "bashers," I read an argument deeply flawed by the selectivity of its engagement with the deconstruction of essentialist and patriarchal discourse.

A major problem with Miyoshi's argument is structural. Because he is concerned to displace the symmetry inherent in his earlier texts, *As We saw Them: Japan's First Embassy to the United States (1860)* and *Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*, he must still assert the heterogeneity of Japan *vis à vis* the United States. Thus, in his first chapter Miyoshi decides that the signifier, "Japanese" should satisfy all but the "Ainu, Okinawa, and other minority productions." More than five million people inhabit these categories; hundreds of thousands of them are excluded from "Japanese" citizenship regardless of the number of their generations in Japan. By relying too heavily on the coarse opposition of Orient and Occident that he seeks to displace, Miyoshi's text gags the very agents of intracultural heterogeneity that would be his allies.

Equally serious are other ideological compromises Miyoshi makes in this text. Encouraged as I am by Miyoshi to view women's writing as Japan's "way out," I expected him to integrate women's texts into his analysis. What *Off Center* proffers is an uneven treatment of texts by women and men. Miyoshi introduces Japanese women writers often overlooked by western critics (Yosano Akiko, Hiratsuka Raicho, Hayashi Fumiko, and Sata Ineko, among others) but generally confines them to a separate chapter on women and women writers. Aside from the section on Miyamoto Yuriko in this "women's" chapter, women writers are absent from the discussion of literary resistance to World War II, despite significant contributions such as Hayashi's *The Floating Cloud*. Consistently, Miyoshi characterizes the "less serious" or even absent writing of men during this time as "bold attempts at resistance," whereas he dismisses the absence or "lightness" of women's writing as "compromised."

Another opposition on which Miyoshi insists is the alignment of Japanese narratives with "third word" orality versus "first world" literacy, despite the early and high degree of literacy in Japan and the often written mode of the "collective" forms he stresses. This third world construction neatly supports Miyoshi's depiction of Japanese imperialism as a "decolonization" response to nineteenth century "Western conquest," an argument that depends on his neglect of, for instance, Japanese invasions of Korea dating from the sixteenth century.

Simply put, Miyoshi's challenge to received ideas of "Japan" and "the West" remains compromised by his refusal to dare enough in confronting his complicity in the traditionalist discourse.

Another examination of cultural diversity is the collection of essays in *An Ethical Education: Community and Morality in the Multicultural University*. Coming as it does from the Hoffberger Center for Professional Ethics in Maryland, the majority of the contributors are from the disciplines of law and philosophy. Nonetheless, the essays range widely from the densely philosophical to the concretely pragmatic as they theorize a pedagogy sufficient to the changing

demographics in the (American) academy.

From a Canadian perspective, Nicholas Steneck makes a timely observation that universities' lack of ethical self-evaluation seems directly related to an increased emphasis on "outside" faculty interests, that is research and professional advancement, and the channeling of decision-making away from faculty to administrative boards, leaving ethical matters up to corporate "outsiders." J.L.A. Garcia criticizes reductive notions of ethics, as Steneck's concern with influence appears to be, exhorting the university to provide "sentimental education," that nurtures "sensibilities and desires." In turn, Robert Lipkin disagrees with the notion of "truth" underlying Garcia's discussion. He envisions the university as "a bastion of . . . radical critique of the dominant culture," therefore ultimately supportive of multiculturalism but not, for example, prepared to ban *a priori* all hate speech, a position K. Anthony Appiah shares in his essay, "Free Speech and the Aims of the University."

The conversational nature of the first three essays reflects the collaborative process of this collection. Overall, the conversations are lively and elucidative of each other, until they reach a low point in Robert K. Fullinwider's essay, "Indefensible Defenses." This piece is an inadequate and misdirected response to Sharon Rush's exhaustive exploration of the tensions in affirmative action policies, "Understanding Affirmative Action: One Feminist's Perspective." Carelessly argued and mean-spirited, Fullinwider's essay tarnishes the whole.

Rush defends affirmative action on pragmatic grounds. Not only does it meet ethical demands by redressing past injustice while recognizing and facilitating diversity, affirmative action is an investment in a future likely populated by a majority of women and people of colour. Rush argues her case tightly, grounding her discussion in a substantial body of jurisprudence and cultural critical theory.

Undergirding several of the remaining essays is discussion over the role of the university in the search for truth. Although periodically zealous over this quest, Kathryn Mohrman's contribution, "Ethical Implications of Curricular Reform," posits diversity as a stimulant to academic excellence. Andrew Altman would curb hate speech whose illocutionary intent is to subordinate others because it does not aid the search for truth.

Robert L. Simon's essay is helpful in that it deals at length with "politicization" of curriculum. My main concern is not with our disagreement: Simon believes a curriculum can be sanitized of ideology while I do not. More problematically, Simon draws on fragments of critical positions as evidence, and then argues his case on the "least sophisticated" or most narrowly interpreted form of those fragments.

Such practice is symptomatic of a larger problem with this text. In a volume that recognizes the urgency of the university's need to examine its ethical positions regarding cultural diversity, the overwhelming sameness of this collection of gatekeepers reflects the liberal view of a multiculturalism which absorbs the margins into the center. Such a text, for all its good intentions, further marginalizes those voices that could have been present at the seminar table.

Questions fondamentales

Louise Milot et François Dumont (dir.)
Pour un bilan prospectif de la recherche en littérature québécoise. Nuit Blanche $23.00

Louise Milot et Fernand Roy (dir.)
Les figures de l'écrit. Nuit Blanche $22.95

Compte rendu par Jo-Anne Elder

La conception graphique de la couverture de *Pour un bilan prospectif de la recherche en littérature québécoise* est provocatrice.

L'extrait choisi commence ainsi: "moins négligeable qu'on ne le pense. . ." Parle-t-on de la recherche littéraire, domaine injustement négligé? En fait, l'auteur de l'extrait, Pierre Popovic, discute de l'hétérogène (sujet repris par Pierre L'Hérault et Sherry Simon, entre autres) et du rôle joué par les textes littéraires dans la transformation de la pensée. Il poursuit en parlant des livres qui "font relire autrement" d'autres textes, qui éclairent "d'un nouveau regard" et qui incitent un "requestionnement du donné." L'extrait reflète la perspective offerte par l'ouvrage. Cependant, il ne s'agit pas tout à fait d'un bilan, dans le sens d'un inventaire complet des recherches "à faire." Dans sa réponse à la question soumise par Louise Milot et François Dumont (qui est trop longue à reproduire ici, mais qui commence par "à votre avis, et selon votre perception de l'état actuel de la recherche en littérature québécoise, au nom de quels critères doit-on penser, à moyen terme, l'avenir de cette recherche?"), Manon Brunet offre un tel bilan dans le domaine des études du 19e siècle, en se basant sur un rapport de 1978 (réédité dans la *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 49.1-2, [1979]), qui sert également de point de départ implicite à certaines autres réponses. Elle répond donc directement à la question de ce qui reste à faire: question fondamentale, du genre de celles que nous posent nos étudiantes particulièrement éclairées ou nos enfants particulièrement innocent.e.s, mais que l'on n'ose pas se poser entre chercheures. Quel est le but de la critique? Qu'est-ce que la littérature québécoise? Qu'est-ce qu'il faut faire? Où allons-nous?

Impossible de donner des réponses complètes, cela va de soi. Première question difficile: puisque la subjectivité va aussi de soi, comment choisir ceux et celles qui répondront? Ce sont des chercheurs "particulièrement actifs dans la recherche actuelle", ayant "déjà réalisé des travaux substantiels" et qui vont "sans doute entreprendre d'autres recherches." Le choix a des airs de famille. Ils et elles s'entre-citent et certaines empruntent les mêmes pistes: les approches sociocritiques et historiques, par exemple. Cela reflète l'état actuel des recherches. Jacques Pelletier, qui analyse les subventions du F.C.A.R., note que "ces projets . . . portent essentiellement sur l'histoire littéraire du Québec et sur des phénomènes institutionnels: l'édition, l'appareil scolaire"; dans le choix de sujets de thèse, il note la "domination d'une approche historique" et que "les études sociohistoriques sont également très importantes dans la critique littéraire des trente dernières années." En lisant cet ouvrage, on a parfois l'impression d'entrer en plein milieu de l'institution littéraire. En choisissant certaines chercheures et en privilégiant ainsi certaines approches, est-ce qu'on contribue à la consécration de certaines idées sur ce que c'est, la recherche en littérature québécoise? Ce n'est pas pour critiquer le choix; j'ai été ravie de retrouver des noms et des références que je connais bien (et, dans presque tous les cas, que j'admire), ainsi que des recherches et des idées qui me semblent importantes. Mais il me semble que, pour faire un vrai "bilan", il faudrait chercher la plus grande diversité possible. Offrir des bibliographies plus extensives, historiques aussi bien que prospectives, aurait permis, en outre, d'utiliser cet ouvrage comme un genre de manuel scolaire pour les chercheur.e.s en herbe, ainsi qu'une révision utile pour les plus experimenté.e.s. Cela répondrait à une autre question qui me semble aussi naïve et pertinente que les autres: qu'est-ce qu'il faut lire/ qu'est-ce qu'il faut produire dans le domaine de la recherche en littérature québécoise?

Les figures de l'écrit, c'est tout le contraire d'un bilan. L'approche est spécifique, la méthodologie exemplaire. Les collaborateurs.trices interrogent le fonctionnement de divers types d'écrits, que ce soit

"référence littéraire, . . . découpure de journal. . . , message griffoné sur un bout de papier" ou même une légende ou autre forme de discours oral. Les points de référence sont également bien situés, et servent à orienter la recherche, parfois en permettant de leur tourner le dos; l'ouvrage d'André Belleau, "en partie responsable de notre intérêt pour les figures de l'écrit" est "constamment questionné, ne serait-ce que pour démarquer notre problématique de la sienne." La rigueur des *Figures de l'écrit* impressionne autant que le caractère personnel et éclectique du *Bilan*.

Les deux ouvrages font partie des Cahiers du centre de recherche en littérature québécoise. Ce fait témoigne du dynamisme du travail d'équipe mais soulève d'autres questions. Aurait-on eu des réponses différentes si l'on avait posé la question uniquement à des chercheur.e.s non subventionné.e.s, non affilié.e.s à des équipes ou des centres, ou autrement plus isolé.e.s (cinq centres québécois sont représentés; peu d'universités non-francophones / non-québécois ne le sont)? En diversifiant le choix, est-ce que "les risques augmentent de voir les réponses proposées gagner en esprit d'aventure et en prétention égoïste ce qu'elles perdent en pertinence et en esprit d'ouverture," ce que craint Pierre Popovic, ou est-ce qu'on contribue à une "histoire du désir littéraire," selon l'expression si séduisante proposée par Manon Brunet?

Le moment est propice aux questionnements. Les sources de financement nous exigent des réponses. Au Forum sur les Arts au Nouveau-Brunswick, on a récemment débattu la lacune discursive entre les arts et la bureaucratie. Comment se parler? Première réaction: résister. L'artisan Peter Powning raconte la réponse de la direction d'une galérie lors d'une exposition particulièrement difficile, provocatrice: la réaction de la communauté? On s'en fiche! Mais après, comment aller chercher des fonds chez un public aliéné, non par l'exposition elle-même, mais par de tels commentaires? Dans une situation qui me semble parallèle, on m'a fait remarquer que de moins en moins d'universitaires féministes ont travaillé dans les centres de femmes, chez les victimes d'agression sexuelle ou les femmes peu scolarisées, par exemple, comme c'était le cas il y a quelques années. Le rôle que jouent dans la communauté les chercheur.e.s et les artistes demeure occulté par un certain discours académique qui passe au-dessus des questions essentielles: pour qui, pourquoi faire de la recherche? Ce *Bilan prospectif* ouvre la voie aux réponses possibles.

Politics and Peace

Armin Wiebe
The Second Coming of Yeeat Shpanst. Turnstone $17.95

Farley Mowat
Aftermath: Travels in a Post-War World. Key Porter $28.95

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

Of the many responses to Canada's post-Meech deterioration—a kind of venom-induced constitutional sickness which, unchecked, rapidly affects the national nervous system, turning the country into an irrational, bilious mess—Armin Wiebe's *The Second Coming of Yeeat Shpanst* is one of the most amusing. The book's primary setting is the fictional prairie town of Gutenthal, a Mennonite hamlet of essentially familiar proportion, complete with grain elevator and other amenities. An unsuccessful local politician, Yeeat Shpanst, suddenly returns to his town—shortly after a Prime Minister delivers a pathetically hopeless plea to the nation—to appear as a kind of messiah, only to vanish while leaving behind a curious black book full of visionary speeches. The national cause is taken up by Oata Siemens and other locals

who seek to restore the country's sense of place and direction, the whole narrative sustained both by Oata's prolix creativity made tangible by her incessant fictional scribblings with carpenters' pencils in a virtual truckload of Farmers' Union notebooks and by periodic sightings of Shpanst in a wildly honking Lazy Leisure Camper, a source of inspiration and instruction to his group of farm-based and curiously driven disciples. What emerges is a dream-like view of the national fabric, with elements ranging from the rural field, to the local railway branch-line, to Parliament Hill; such features are the national touch-points, yet here, as in a real dream (and dreams have their own reality for the dreamer), the factual and fictional, the past and the present are stirred and blended into a mythic mix of heady proportion which, since the reader can remember and re-explore the dream in whole or in part, will serve to remind one of what has been lost in the introspective and selfish provincial dithering about the collective pattern of the national quilt. (The search for unity in this country ironically goes on just when Canadian institutions and symbols are being deliberately compromised, dismantled, and expunged.) Even Sir John A. comes thundering by, riding the pilot of the "Countess of Dufferin." Haggling, ineffective politicians and bizarre policies do not fare well. The citizens can be roused—even by the wide-spread systematic air-dropping of plastic pop bottles containing visionary political messages. And the omnipresent power and economic pressure of the United States gets its share of coverage through an interior mythology. Like James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* with its marvelous "play-box," Wiebe's fantasy will stir many memories and emotions in the course of its often hilarious, hazy romp: perhaps the antidote concocted from our combined memories will indeed remove the effects of the political snake-bite. The humour ranges from the subtle to the bald. The local language—"flat German"—is not a problem when it appears: Wiebe's glossaries take care of that. However, the occasional candid reporting of the physical relationships of certain principal characters may cause some readers dismay; such passages can seem both unnecessary and unamusing.

Though Farley Mowat's *Aftermath* takes the reader away from Canada's shores to the now peaceful sites of the battlefields of France and Italy over which Canadians fought and often died in World War Two, and to locations in England where they waited and trained for the raging conflicts, this book also brings a clear sense of the past, of Canada's place on the international stage, of the way in which, despite internal disagreements, it was possible for this country to work in a focused way to defeat utterly sinister forces both military and intellectual. Here is classic Mowat—with clear, lucid, delightful prose—offering a post-war tour (with his wife) of splendid scenes with charming, kindly people to talk to set against the shadow of carnage and loss. The emphasis, though, is on beauty, on re-growth and re-building, on humanity and the necessity of humane response. Mowat does not preach—he does not need to. The sense of revulsion at the destruction which he witnessed—some of which he recounts—during military service is clear enough. And so is the gratitude of the people whose lands Canada helped to free from Nazi dominion. Mowat's account of his travels is not pure nostalgia and is, in the end, far from sombre; the vision and tone are positive, and the vignettes are instructive and often delightful, despite some nervous moments as the reader rides with the Mowats in their little English Hillman (named "Liz") as they challenge narrow roads and mountain passes while threatened by careering Citroëns and Renaults driven by maniacal locals. The characters met along the way come alive—the imme-

diacy of the dialogue plays an obvious role here, as do the descriptive details which so clearly delineate person and place, whether master brewer in England or the environs of Positano. And Mowat's diction and control of pace are superb—there is simply not a weak moment or a loose passage in the book. There is none of the sense of a pedestrian "battlefields I have known" approach or of the basic travelogue—"places you ought to visit." This is a remarkable series of reflections, some funny and some poignant, by a distinguished writer, clear in his vision of himself and his national identity, reflections which take the reader to new/old worlds through Mowat's gaze and which reveal much about the writer himself—a kind of double experience which, ultimately, is the gift of the best of artists.

If Wiebe offers a riotous brew—a longish therapeutic draught in *The Second Coming* . . . —which may go some way to help us remember and reorder our national priorities, Mowat's *Aftermath* provides a clear, restorative cordial, a first-rate vintage of superlative and unforgettable quality.

Myths of History

David Mura
Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei. Anchor n.p.

Gish Jen
Typical American. Plume n.p.

Wayson Choy
The Jade Peony. Douglas & McIntyre $18.95

Larissa Lai
When Fox is a Thousand. Press Gang $16.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

Near the end of his memoir, David Mura asks a series of remarkable questions about identity and culture: "Does culture ordinarily form a net of remembrance, a safety guard against forgetting? Does it provide the individual with at least some clues, some vague outlines, from which to discern his family history? All I have are these doubts and feelings of loss, these questions which pull me on, step after step, a dance of folly. Over and over, knowing it is futile, I try to create my own myth of history." An engagement with these myths of history—a commitment to remembering and imagining lives, desires, and identities in diaspora—links the narratives of David Mura, Gish Jen, Wayson Choy, and Larissa Lai, narratives that sketch out important details in the increasingly heterogeneous field of Asian North American writing.

David Mura's *Turning Japanese* is a self-reflexive, theoretically-informed memoir that narrates the story of a Japanese American poet's year-long stay in Japan. Make no mistake about it: Mura's narrative is not a naive search for lost "roots" or an essential "Japanese-ness." Instead, Mura works through the more difficult task of rethinking what precisely "home," "nation," and "culture" can mean to a Japanese American who would rather have gone to Paris than Tokyo to spend a year writing. Mura realizes the need to imagine himself in a tradition that has left him unimagined. By seeing himself as a *bricoleur*, one who has to make do with the tools at hand, Mura draws upon and extends an important characteristic of Asian North American writing from *The Woman Warrior* onward: the need to negotiate a cultural identity out of half-understood phrases and half-remembered stories. Mura's search for "a perspective that was not white American" is urgent and inspired—the cultural continuity implied by the figure of his unborn daughter provides *Turning Japanese* with an emotional wallop that defies easy paraphrase.

There is nothing as moving in Gish Jen's *Typical American*, an ironic novel that charts the woeful consequences of Chinese immigrants buying into the American Dream. Yifeng, a young, Shanghainese-

speaking man, comes to the United States to study engineering; he changes his name to Ralph Chang and dedicates his life to academics before shifting his desire to the accumulation of capital. *Typical American* unflinchingly presents the price of capitalist imperatives: Ralph's entrepreneurial obsessions (he spends long evenings making phony cash register tapes to avoid paying taxes); his violence toward Helen (at one point he throws her through a window); the cracks that appear in the walls of "Ralph's Chicken Palace" due to its location on unstable land—all ask the novel's readers to rethink what it means to buy into the American Dream. In the mid-1990s, however, *Typical American*'s ironies verge on triteness—is it necessary to read a novel telling us that the American Dream is inherently racist and sexist? Is it enough to wonder, as Ralph does, how a nation involved in sending satellites into space could also have homeless people collapsing in doorways?

Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* is a much more sympathetic novel, one that offers the pleasures of making small connections across gendered, sexual, ethnic, and racialized positions. The action of Choy's narrative takes place between 1933 and 1942 in the increasingly familiar literary geography of Vancouver's Chinatown. As such, Choy builds upon the work of Sky Lee and Denise Chong, and adds his own subtle voice to the process of historical and cultural re-creation. The character of Grandmama metaphorically enacts this historical search when she makes windchimes from discarded pieces of glass and costume jewellery, searching the garbage cans of progressively more distant neighborhoods for "splendid junk." In turn, the younger generations of characters make their own forays outside of Chinatown's racialized boundaries. A notable example is the illicit affair between Meiying and Kazuo, an affair that defies the tensions between Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians during Japan's military conquest of China. In Choy's narrative, the characters "met at the Carnegie Library on Hastings and Main, between the boundaries of Chinatown and Little Tokyo." Here, as always, Choy's understanding of Vancouver geography allows him to find its seams and to create previously unimagined meeting spaces. And although the meeting spaces can be distressingly pluralistic—Choy's cast of characters includes a kindly white woman who brings a freshly-baked apple pie, and a white teacher who wants her students "to belong to a country that she envisioned including all of us"—Choy ends *The Jade Peony* with the aftermath of Meiying's gruesome self-performed abortion, reminding us of the risks and difficulties involved in crossing the borders that mark locations and identities.

Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* also searches for connections, but it completely rejects pluralism and its easy elision of hierarchies and exclusions. Lai is uncompromising in her depiction of the violence—whether racist, homophobic, or misogynist—that characterizes life in contemporary Vancouver. Racist dialogue and media images (of Asian gangs and Asian drug trafficking, to give only two examples) drift through the narrative, slamming into the novel's characters with a deadening thud; and, in what is perhaps the novel's most powerful section, the voices of five Asian Canadian women narrate their own murders in Stanley Park—such is the grim social landscape exposed and challenged in Lai's novel. What rescues *When Fox is a Thousand* from total despair is Lai's desire to recreate history and redeploy myths from feminist and queer perspectives. Particularly effective is the wonderful wry commentary of the Fox, a figure from Chinese mythology, who at one point realizes:

> how history gathers like a reservoir deep below the ground, clear water distilled from events of ages past, collecting sharp

and biting in sunless pools. How stars dream like sleeping fish at the bottom, waiting to be washed into the bowl of the sky some time in the distant future when enough myths have collected to warrant new constellations.

I plan to see this come to pass.

Of the four works discussed in this review, *When Fox is a Thousand* comes closest to imagining the new constellations of myths needed to understand the past and transform the present.

A Passion For Design

Colin Naylor, ed.
Contemporary Designers. St. James US$145.00

Nancy Ruhling & John Crosby Freeman
The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Victoriana. Doubleday Canada $32.95

Christopher Breward
The Culture of Fashion: a New History of Fashionable Dress. Manchester UP £40.00/14.99

Reviewed by Maria Noëlle Ng

Contemporary Designers is a hefty book which runs to 641 pages. According to the brief "Editor's Note," the "more than 600 entrants [are] intended to reflect the best and most prominent of contemporary designers" in the fields of architecture, fashion, graphics and so on. The research for the book was done mainly in London-based institutions (Victoria and Albert Museum, British Library, amongst others), which might explain the paucity of Canadian entries. Of the 600 plus designers included in this book, only 4 are Canadians: graphic designers Allan Fleming and Rolf Harder, environmental designer Ernst Roch, and photographer Nelson Vigneault. An obvious omission which comes to mind would be the architect Arthur Erickson.

I have tried to decipher the selection process of the contributors and advisory panels, and have failed to find any discernible patterns. The entrants seem heavily weighted in favour of Scandinavian and Germanic nationalities. In the field of fashion, the contributors at least include the French, Italians and Americans, although again, the selections are highly idiosyncratic, to say the least. Why would Gil Aimbez, a non-factor in the world of fashion design, be included, while Rei Kawakubo, one of the most influential and original designers today, is excluded? Some of the text is more puzzling than illuminating, as for instance, the entry on Karl Lagerfeld. Of Lagerfeld's designs the contributor writes, "Lagerfeld is so good at cut that really he does not need to strive for a sensational revival every season. He could produce the same classics every year . . . ." Not only are critical remarks like this totally irrelevant to the field of fashion design which is excessively market-oriented, but they tend to reflect the personal taste of the contributor rather than the art of the designer.

The Culture of Fashion is both a social survey and a theoretical study of the history of fashion in England from 1300 to today. It provides fascinating information, such as the effect sumptuary laws exerted on the consumption of textiles in the 16th century. It also challenges the normative acceptance of clothing as merely a utilitarian part of daily life, as well as expanding the discussion of fashion beyond the confines of aesthetic and ceremonial functions. To Breward, fashion touches and changes all parts of social life, and it is in turn changed by history. Thus, speaking of "the militarisation of male dress and the rise of a more sober patrician appearance from the 1750s onwards," he sees a direct link between these sartorial trends and the rise of social phenomena such as the public school and fox-hunting, and the reform of the armed forces.

Breward's book is a work of careful research. Each chapter is separated into two parts. The first part outlines the historical

development of the fashion of one particular period. The second part provides the theoretical analysis. If there is a problem with *The Culture of Fashion*, it is an embarrassment of riches. It attempts to cover 700 years of fashion history in a mere 7 chapters; sometimes, this abundance of materials creates clutter rather than clarity. Breward also reproduces extensive quotations, at times running to over twenty lines. In one instance, Breward cites a social historian who in turn quotes Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff. This methodology has its intertextual interests, but one would prefer to hear the author's voice more often. The problem of the over-crowding of materials becomes most noticeable in the last two chapters, which are devoted to the 20th century. Although Breward allows this century extra space, his study of the intricacies and tremendous innovations of 20th-century fashion design still lacks coherence. As Breward himself admits, when speaking of late twentieth-century fashion, "The explosion of the fashion system into a fragmented and highly diversified market . . . makes the task of constructing a linear history of style change impossible and perhaps irrelevant." There is simply too much of everything to be treated in the allotted space.

Such is not the case with *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Victoriana*. Lavishly illustrated with colour-plates, it is the type of coffee-table book which gives pea-size definitions of everything. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia* includes all kinds of abbreviated information on the nineteenth century, from knick-knacks to architectural movements. Sometimes, this format is more than sufficient as, for example, the 12-line entry for "summer dress." But for terms such as "prisons and jails," the cursory explanation of the social implication of these institutions seems ludicrous. It would make more sense to exclude terms which deserve some detailed attention and concentrate on the architectural and design items.

Where *The Illustrated Encyclopedia* is a delight is in its handling of such obscure items as "newel post light": "If the newel post of the central stairway did not have a finial, chances are it had a light." The language in this instance is crisply professional and precise. Entries like this save the book from over-indulgence. After all, how much lace lambrequin can one take in a book?

International Cancrit

Mickey Pearlman, ed.
Canadian Women Writing Fiction. UP of Mississippi US$32.50

Coral Ann Howells
Margaret Atwood. Macmillan £10.99

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

These two books represent the two poles of international criticism of our national literature: naive, superficial generalization and sophisticated, knowledgeable literary analysis. In this case, as in some others, the former comes from American sources and the latter from a British critic.

Mickey Pearlman is the editor of several similar collections of essays and interviews and of the companion volume to this, *American Women Writing Fiction: Memory, Identity, Family, Space*. She has assembled ten critics who, according to the notes on Contributors, are all Americans with no pedagogical or scholarly background in Canadian literature except for one Ph.D. student at Stanford who "is a displaced Canadian." They attempted to apply the four "pervasive themes" from her American text to a "similarly representative group of Canadians" and discovered, instead, that "the issue of identity was the linchpin of Canadian writing by women—at least as we were seeing it." She tops this mind-boggling cliché by defining the difference between Canadians and Americans from the *New York Times*, the meaning of

Métis from *Webster's*, and the ethnicity of our aboriginal people as "native Americans." This collection of introductory essays on fourteen living Canadian women novelists (Margaret Lawrence [sic!] is only mentioned twice) is obviously intended for a novice American audience. Each essay is followed by an extensive primary bibliography; secondary source references are cursory and buried in the Endnotes (for example, two journal articles and a *New Yorker* review on Margaret Atwood).

The chapter on Alice Munro follows the thesis that "because her work is so closely related to her life, and so thematically consistent . . . generalizations about setting and subject are possible" with homogenized lists of biographical fallacies and examples of "fathers," "writers," "death," "sex" etc. Mavis Gallant is represented by plot summaries of five of her stories. The fifteen pages on Atwood's seven novels (up to *Cat's Eye*) are inevitably superficial, predicated on the themes "that they are women's confessional narratives on a theme as old as 'Know thyself'" while "retaining that key theme of the national literatures, the struggle to survive." The Québécois writers fare better. Anne Hébert gets a solid, though brief, introduction, and Martha M. Vertreace gives a twelve-page analysis of Marie-Claire Blais's *Deaf to the City*, though never indicating why that novel should be especially favoured.

Some of the chapters on less well-known novelists would be useful as introductions for American readers. While it is not true that "scant attention has been paid to the issues of identity that pervade [Janette Turner Hospital's] novels," Margaret K. Schramm gives them competent, if conventional, readings. Eight pages on Audrey Thomas' six novels highlight a few key themes. A chapter on Isabel Huggan and Jane Urquhart has some good insights on both but never justifies juxaposing these "very different writers." Similarly, the section on Sandra Birdsell and Carol Shields contains some competent readings but founders on the appalling intentionality and oversimplification that these writers "responding to the call to explore Canadian identity using postmodern techniques . . . depict women who may be profitably viewed as metaphorical of the Canadian condition," and therefore the "Canadian-born" Birdsell depicts Canada with "anger and prejudice" while the "American-born" Shields writes of "the nature of happiness and of love." The final chapter on Canadian women of colour and the theme of immigration/assimilation begins some interesting commentary on Marlene Nourbese Philip, Joy Kogawa, and Beatrice Culleton and is therefore, for me, the most frustrating (and typical) section in the book because, promising so much, it can deliver so little in eight pages of analysis.

Coral Ann Howells, Reader in Canadian literature at the University of Reading, has already written the kind of book that Mickey Pearlman's should have been. *Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists of the 1970s and 1980s* was a respectable addition in 1987 to the Cancrit canon. The present volume is part of the Macmillan Modern Novelists series, the first of forty-six studies to be devoted to a Canadian (if one excepts Malcolm Lowry). This honour, of course, confirms Margaret Atwood's international stature. Although these volumes are intended as "introductions" to the novelists and their "major texts," Howells has produced a comprehensive and sophisticated critical study of all of Atwood's novels with detailed close readings carefully supplemented by archival evidence and informed by a jargon-free use of contemporary theory.

The first four chapters trace the "refigurations" of three significant Atwood themes across her career with examples from early and late texts. The second four chapters give analyses of the remaining novels in chronological order, applying the same the-

matic and textual insights. Chapter 1 introduces Atwood's life, the multiple representations of "Canadian" and "feminist" in her work, and her concerns with textuality and genre—reflexivity, re-visionism, and intertextuality.

These themes are expanded in the next three chapters. In Chapter 2, with "wilderness" as the key signature, Howells demonstrates Atwood's shift from the nationalist writings of *Surfacing* and *Survival* to the postcolonial interrogation of traditional narratives in "Wilderness Tips." Chapter 3 reverses Toril Moi's terms to indicate the progress of Atwood's "Feminine, Female, Feminist" themes. Howells reads *The Edible Woman* through the lens of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in contrast to "The Female Body" (from *Good Bones*) whose gendered representations suggest parallels with Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous. Chapter 4 examines Atwood's "reworking of traditional Gothic motifs within the frames of realistic fiction" in *Lady Oracle* and *The Robber Bride* as exempla of her revisioning of cultural mythologies.

The second half of the book devotes a chapter each to detailed readings of four later novels. *Life Before Man* represents (in Homi Bhabha's vocabulary) a site of heterogeneous discourses within the "slippages" between genres. Similarly, *Bodily Harm* rewrites the female body "from that borderline territory between fantasy and reality." *The Handmaid's Tale*, a feminist dystopia, also interrogates gender and genre and calls the reader to moral responsibility. Finally, *Cat's Eye*, Atwood's "life-writing in the feminine," expands on Paul de Man, exposing the limits of female subjectivity. The conclusion summarizes without bringing artificial closure to a study which is both an intelligent introduction to Atwood and a worthy addition to the many critical texts on her which Howell lists in her bibliography.

Masquerades

Bob Perelman
The Trouble With Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein and Zukofsky. U of California P US$40.00/$16.00

Gerald Nicosia
Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac. U California P US$18.00

Reviewed by Christopher Brayshaw

"In a critical context, genius is an embarassment," admits Bob Perelman on the first page of *The Trouble With Genius*, his study of four very different modernist writers: two with well-established critical industries founded on the explication and dissemination of their work (Pound, Joyce), and two who have only recently met with sustained critical attention (Stein, Zukofsky). According to Perelman, what distinguishes the writings of these four from those of other modernists like Williams, HD, and Marianne Moore, is an encyclopedic inclusiveness which tends "to resolve into a record of the writer's mind at work (or play), and hence into a kind of ongoing autobiography."

Pound, Joyce, Stein and Zukofsky all conceived of their sprawling works as "masterpieces—bibles, permanent maps or X rays of society, blueprints for a new civilization or demonstrations of the essence of the human mind." But paradoxically, these works, which were meant by their creators to be practically useful to non-specialists, are stylistically challenging and deliberately obscure. Their social value has been consequently mediated through a body of critical writings which legitimate the authority of the masterworks themselves. But as Perelman argues, the accessibility offered by critical mediation often comes at the expense of its value to anything but critical or scholarly interests: "[I]n many cases the value that is asserted to inhere in [critical] reading is only at the service of narratives

of critical authority. . . .which can force us into situations of permanent debt—a freedom to read that entails submission to endless free play where the playground is an already-written page re-constituted by professional interpretation." Perelman consequently privileges the non-specialist reader's response to these masterworks as an integral part of their appeal "Although it could easily be argued that this naive reading would be worthless, it would be more accurate to consider it a constitutive feature of these works. The blankness that they proffer the neophyte needs to be considered as an integral part of their meaning, and not simply blamed on inadequate readers, schools, or societies." Here, as in subsequent chapters, Perelman is at pains to demonstrate how "the referential, formal and syntactic singularities of this [genius] writing can also be read as the conflicted vehicles of polemics, appeals and pronouncements aimed at, if not exactly addressed to, the writers' contemporaries." For instance, Perelman elides the distinction many critics have drawn between Ezra Pound's lyric poems and "the rhetorical violence and moral blindness of [Pound's] later politics," in order to show how "the supreme social importance of a highly specialized conception of literature is the spur that drives [Pound] out into public space." Pound's poetry and politics proceed from the same impulse. Lyric images, like the well-known light images near the *Cantos*' end, are continuous with the "Fascist light" of the radio speeches. While lyricism may temporarily mark out a "transcendent dimension" in the poetry, this lyricism is "never free from literary and political engagements."

Perelman's chapters on Joyce and Stein are similarly engaging. Discussing *Ulysses*, with particular reference to "Wandering Rocks" and "Nausica," he convincingly shows how Joyce's stylistic experiments eventually overwhelm and subvert the narrative impulse of *Ulysses*' early chapters. And Perelman's chapter on Stein enabled this non-specialist to see the effects of her notoriously difficult phrasing on contemporary Canadian poets like Betsy Warland and b.p. nichol.

Perelman draws upon a number of surprising analogies to support his arguments. Early on, he compares the "transcendent impetuosity" of the Romantic conception of genius to the old ads for Tabu, the "Forbidden Fragrance." Later on, he invokes a Bugs Bunny / Wile E. Coyote cartoon ("The plot revolves around the title of genius. Coyote keeps naming himself one, pronouncing the title with obsequious self congratulation, Wile E. Coyote, *Genius*, and informing Bugs that it's no use running because he is doomed to be eaten by his superior.") Perelman's ideas crackle like Coyote's famous flying dynamite; we emerge from *The Trouble With Genius* with a sharpened sensitivity to the social relevance of Pound, Joyce, Stein and Zukofsky's writings, and the uncomfortable awareness that unscrupulous (Wile-y?) academics can employ dead writers in the animation of their own pet theories.

A different kind of masquerade is exposed by Gerald Nicosia's *Memory Babe*, the most exhaustively researched Jack Kerouac biography published to date. One of the most valuable aspects of this encyclopedic study is the care Nicosia has taken to preserve the complex, often totally contradictory elements of Kerouac's personality. In an early chapter, Nicosia describes young Jack dividing himself into myriad fantasy selves. "Wearing a gunny sack for a cape, and his father's old slouch hat, Jack would burst out of the dark or from behind trees with a sinister *Mwee! hee! hee! ha! ha!* Starting with the Shadow character, he improvised a range of personalities—though it is hard to say just when he gave them definite names: 'Count Cordu' for the vampire, 'Dr. Sax' for the rather clownish,

vaudevillian detective, etc." Kerouac's childhood masquerades, which Jack usually performed in front of an audience of neighborhood children, are described as an important precursor to the breathless outpourings of words which characterize the first drafts of all of Kerouac's major works. Kerouac's masquerades closely resemble the multiple selves of his acquaintance William Burroughs. According to Nicosia, while undergoing "depth analysis," Burroughs once "seemed to contain 7 or 8 separate characters." A favorite book of both men was Melville's *The Confidence-Man*, whose cynical slapstick masquerades mirrored their own.

If there's a failure in Nicosia's exhaustively researched biography, it's that Nicosia is not a very insightful literary critic. *Memory Babe* constantly makes comparisons between Kerouac's fictions and his life, but reads the fiction through outmoded critical lenses like color symbolism. "Brown, grey and yellow all commonly signify the mortal world, time, and decay; but [Kerouac] uses these colors in a more positive way, emphasizing the warmth and tenderness of life." A little of this goes a long way; applied to every Kerouac novel, it gets downright embarrassing. The end result of Nicosia's amateur criticism is that those aspects of Kerouac's fiction which are at odds with the Beat persona (like the mountain top meditations transcribed in *The Dharma Bums* and the "Desolation in Solitude" section of *Desolation Angels*) are never fully explored or used to illuminate baffling or contradictory aspects of the fiction. By the end of Nicosia's book we know Kerouac the man in intricate detail, but have no better understanding of how his life was transformed in the masquerades of his fiction.

Life Claims

Penny Petrone
Breaking the Mould: A Memoir. Guernica $18.00

Elizabeth Brewster
Away From Home. Oberon $25.95/$12.95

Ann Charney
Dobryd. Douglas and McIntyre $16.95

Reviewed by Melanie Kolbeins

A proverb from *Breaking the Mould: A Memoir*, which states "whoever leaves the old road for the new knows what he [sic] is losing but not what he will find," aptly situates Penny Petrone's memoir as well as two others: Elizabeth Brewster's *Away From Home* and Ann Charney's *Dobryd*. Memorializing the authors' experiences of the 1940s and early post-war period, each text examines personal loss, uncertain subjectivity, and the author's sense of belonging or not belonging to a place.

In *Breaking the Mould*, Penny Petrone explores her family's place of exile during World War Two when Italian Canadians were deemed to be "on the wrong side". Growing up *Italo-Canadese* in the northern Ontario town of Port Arthur, Petrone finds her parents' customs clash with local expectations.

Petrone explores the implications of her "foreign" name, language, and "exotic" looks. For example, she frames her name-change from Serafina to Penny as an attempt to "erase the *Italianness* that the dominant culture despised" when she "should have been honoured by" her name. Photos that display Petrone as a North American ideal of feminine beauty contrast her memoir's attempts "break" with stereotypes.

Breaking the Mould successfully revises, however, Petrone's adolescent rejection of her working-class Italian-Canadian identity as represented by her mother. Regretting her younger dismissals, Petrone asserts that

her mother "defied all stereotypes," and "was by no means the *Mamma mia* of the television ads—jolly, naive and round." She reflects:

> Although I accused Mamma of being 'old-fashioned,' she was, as I think back today, ahead of her time. Canada was changing her. There has always been the tendency in Calabrese culture to dote on sons, but I never felt that Mamma did this. Nor did she put pressure on her girls to get married. . . . She made me my first pair of slacks.

The concrete detail of sewing slacks represents Petrone and her mother's shared break from gendered conventions and cultural norms.

Away from Home continues the self-exploration of New Brunswick writer Elizabeth Brewster's first memoir *The Invention of Truth* (1991). *Away From Home* constructs most of Brewster's life through 1946-51, retaining the "gaps" she deems necessary to "obtain some of the mystery of fiction."

Brewster's travels to Indiana and Britain become the means to considering questions of national and fictional construction of subjectivity as the memoir considers the condition of being "away." Although Brewster admits that "the places journeyed to are not especially strange or exotic," she asserts that "they were far enough and different enough to cause some homesickness as well as some sense of adventure, that inevitable tension between the desire for change and the yearning to be rooted to one sheltered spot."

Brewster's inclusion of her own poetry and short stories, which elaborate and contradict her narrative, initially appears more compelling than the life she narrates. She juxtaposes autobiographical and fictional versions of her life story, emphasizing her literary identity. In a poem, "In Favour of Being Alive," she introduces a despair that is startling, given the mostly benign journeying that dominates the memoir. These contrasts signal Brewster's construction of subjectivity as a mobile, ongoing literary project, which leads me to anticipate a third memoir that explores recent reflections of a mature writer.

Ann Charney's memoir is named after the now-vanished Polish city Dobryd, which "left behind it a mythical legacy." Charney's text begins with her emergence from the loft that concealed her Jewish family. She recalls the young girl's need to hide, lie, avoid speculating about the future, and hate journeying because it signalled instability and possible death. She also reveals that it is her early life in Dobryd and her aunt's recollections of the lost town that teaches her the "secret vice" of storytelling. Her childhood fantasy life, which acts as a survival tactic, becomes her adult memorializing.

Dobryd recovers lost lives and memories the author has previously concealed. Connecting others to her own writing act, Charney writes: "Their emotions and my own flow through me, while I control their gestures by transposing my own longings and desires into their existence." The stories of her aunt, mother, and the romanticized soldier Yuri who joins their family, create and obscure the past. *Dobryd* builds itself, like the resurrected town, from these shared stories.

Breaking the Mould, Away from Home, and *Dobryd* will be a valuable resource to autobiography theorists interested in the connections between identity claiming and location. By recalling her and her family's contradictory positions, Petrone, for example, challenges the notion of a coherent gendered, "white," "Canadian," or "European" identity. Each of the memoirs points to how the authors write themselves into particular locations—to accept and reject elements of their lives—and moves them out of them again.

Angel of Tokyo

Margaret Prang
A Heart at Leisure From Itself. UBC $39.95

Reviewed By Marilyn Iwama

In an age when many scholars privilege notions of ambiguity over truth and view missionary evangelizing as aggressive colonizing, attempting "to portray the day-to-day life of one woman missionary" is (at least) a provocative undertaking. Margaret Prang chose not to write the biography of Caroline Macdonald some years ago, she says, because the project also seemed "illegitimate" in an academic climate which favoured the lives of "great" men. Now retired, Prang declares herself unconcerned with such hierarchies and blesses readers with her telling of a life that influenced prison reform, feminism, and the spread of Christianity in early twentieth-century Japan.

Caroline Macdonald refused University of Toronto's offer of a graduate fellowship in physics in 1901 to become general secretary of the Ottawa YWCA. From 1904 to 1916 she served as the first secretary for the "Y" in Japan, consistently working to reform the social conditions of women's lives and to ensure their salvation. Macdonald's spiritual support of one prisoner led her to exhaustive involvement in prison work, earning her the title "white angel of Tokyo," as well as the Emperor's Order of Merit. In later years she actively supported the Japanese labour movement and established a settlement house in Tokyo where a variety of classes were offered to all, but especially designed to provide women a means to achieving more than a life as "good wife, wise mother."

Prang's effort is substantial. Intermixed with her telling of the dailiness of Macdonald's life are sociological and political interpretations of events in the Meiji years of "reformation," the optimism of the Taisho era, the years of increasing militarism, and the shattered illusions of post-war occupation. There are necessary tensions between descriptions of Macdonald's personal life and this environment which she made "home"—indicative of the change Japan was working in Macdonald, even as she was "reforming" Japan. These tensions may have distracted less from Prang's work had she included more excerpts from correspondence *to* Macdonald as well as longer passages from Macdonald's own letters. Such inclusions may also have compensated somewhat for the lack of information on Macdonald's early life. Nonetheless, Margaret Prang's sympathetic introduction to one who shunned feminist causes while practising a feminist Christian life is a stimulating reflection on the ambiguities of a particular life and time.

Collaborative Fire

Marie Elyse St. George and Anne Szumigalski
Voice. Coteau $9.95

Anne Szumigalski
Z: A Meditation on Oppression, Desire and Freedom. Coteau $9.95

Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane, eds.
Breathing Fire: Canada's New Poets. Harbour $16.95

Reviewed by Susan Gingell

The marvellous collection of Marie Elyse St. George's paintings and Anne Szumigalski's poetry that constitute the volume *Voice* began as a response to the tarot, but as the artists caught fire from the spark of a detail, a mood, an image from the other's work, the project acquired other reference points. The self/other portrait on the cover of a closed-eyed woman serenely playing a harp of human bones, veins, and organs is a signature piece for the collaboration's unsettling blend of medieval and contemporary, of contemplative mood and physical grotesqueries evoking life, love, and death.

Szumigalski playfully leads off her 1995 Governor General's Award-winning collec-

tion with "Goodbye," and then addresses a paradox of life-writing in "Voice" to bring out the philosophic dimension of beginnings and endings: "How to begin a story at the end, when the battle is fought and lost, and crows are picking the bones of all flesh?" But if at times the volume's dwelling on death gives it the feel of a farewell volume from a poet who, having lived a rich life, is content to take leave to embrace the challenges of realms beyond, its clarity of image attests to lovingly attentive observation of what animates this life, and the transformative energies of the text argue equally powerfully for the poet's insistent dwelling on the details of earthly existence.

Szumigalski's strength as a poet often springs from the way she realizes one thing by representing it as another. Thus parachutists descend "like delicate mushrooms / with double stipes" and "The sun burns the lips of the waves / until they crisp and fold over, / pancakes ready for jam and cream" in "Goodbye." Poetry that pushes towards allegory is a characteristic mode, "Malus" being a typical instance. The persona's surge of joy in the "small but uppity thing," a seedling crab that has "volunteered in the middle of [her] windflower patch," gives way to a more dubious response that itself invites readers to think beyond the literal tree. In this way the crab seedling comes to suggest all that life unexpectedly gives us to nourish and that will then grow beyond us: "My darling seedling will you flourish? When you're a sapling will you remember who watered you on dry days? And will I still love you when you're four times my height. . . ?"

Szumigalski has so often worked with other artists that her entry into the necessarily collaborative medium of theatre in *Z: A Meditation on Oppression, Desire and Freedom* seems a logical extension of past practice. Her play, like her poetry, makes considerable demands on its audience, working as much through metaphor, paradox, and ambiguity as it does through concrete images, like those of cages. Sparse in action, the play opens not with stark realism but with the joyless chanting of "*Arbeit. Arbeit. Arbeit*," and an elliptical lyric spoken by a female voice. This disembodied character prefaces the revelation her child was snatched from her and smashed against a wall with the enigmatic assertion "I was my own mother and I nursed myself. / I was my own child and I suckled myself."

Z is an attempt to put down the heavy stone that Szumigalski has carried since she went as a Red Cross worker into the just-liberated Nazi concentration camps. Widespread knowledge of holocaust history means audiences have preconceptions about the weight of that stone, and the play quickly acknowledges the humiliations and genocide of the Jewish prisoners in the chant of the male voices "We are captive, / We are powerless. / Nothing nothing remains / But ashes, ashes, ashes." Even the fact that gypsies, who are represented in the play by the character Z, were considered lowest of the low among the captives, will come as no surprise to many. However, the particular oppression that the play brings newly to light for most audiences is the presence of sex huts in the camps, evidence that even in the most humiliating circumstances males continued to assume and exercise the right of sexual access to females. My dissatisfaction with the playscript comes from its wasting the opportunity to explore more deeply the fact that in the midst of their own degradation, male prisoners could yet participate so willingly in the degradation of women from their own oppressed ethnic group. Instead Szumigalski uses the second act of her play to present the rather clichéd observation that contemporary women and men dishonour the memories of holocaust victims by commodifying their suffering, here in the context of visitors and guides to memorial gardens.

Lorna Crozier and Patrick Lane have extended their on-going collaboration in the

editing of a volume of new Canadian poets, in the tradition of Al Purdy's *Storm Warning* volumes. The enthusiasm of both Purdy's brief foreword and the editors' introduction for the quality of the work in general seems excessive in light of much that follows, but the volume is worth its price for the range of promising new poets it introduces to a wider Canadian public and for the new territories they open up: Evelyn Lau's gripping representations of the emotional life and material conditions of a sex worker, Mark Cochrane's challenging evocations of latent homosexuality, and Heather McLeod's figuration of the mapless condition of some contemporary Inuit life are noteworthy exemplars.

So is there one poet in particular to watch? For me the clear answer is Michael Crummey. Like the other poets in this volume, he still has much to learn about the possibilities of form, but the maturity of vision and acuity of image in "Rivers/Roads" stand out:

> Consider the earnestness of pavement
> its dark elegant sheen after rain,
> its insistence on leading you somewhere
> . . .
> A river is less opinionated
> less predictable
> it never argues with gravity
> its history is a series of delicate
>   negotiations with
> time and geography

Good, Bad and Real Women

Mona Scheuermann
Her Bread to Earn: Women, Money, and Society from Defoe to Austen. UP Kentucky US$29.00

George Holbert Tucker
Jane Austen The Woman, Some Biographical Insights St. Martin's Griffin $19.99

Reviewed by Barbara Darby

Both Scheuermann and Tucker position themselves as antithetical to recent critical approaches. Scheuermann's target is critics who emphasize the weakness and confinement of eighteenth-century fiction's female characters rather than reading what the author wrote about them. John McAleer, in a Foreword to Tucker's book, praises the fact that "faddist criticism" can no longer obscure "Jane Austen's true image," which Tucker now provides. Scheuermann's "images of women" approach is valuable for its concentration on female characters who demonstrate financial acumen, self-direction, and creative responses to problems. The painstaking archival research that underlies Tucker's observations about Jane Austen is admirable, but its contribution to our picture of Austen is ultimately unclear.

By Scheuermann's account we should not "arbitrarily limit our images of women to women authors." However, she also asserts that "images of women in novels by women are not obviously different from the images in novels by men," so the need for a corrective is not always obvious. Defoe is praised for his financially capable women, while Richardson and Fielding's images are condemned as conservative or stereotypical. The radical novelists—Holcroft, Godwin, Bage, and Inchbald—present women who are the intellectual equals of their male counterparts. Wollstonecraft, by contrast, "condemn[s] characters to . . . helpless dysfunction." According to Scheuermann, Austen's characters demonstrate her acceptance of the social status quo. Scheuermann's subordination of gender to class produces revealing comparisons between male and female characters. At times, however, she seems dismissive of gender-specific experiences of social, legal, or familial inequality. Indeed, for example, Scheuermann notes that it was "not unusual for very large sums of money either to be controlled by a woman or to come with her as her marriage portion," but lamentably makes no distinction between these financial situations.

Scheuermann examines female characters in books published over the course of a century, providing excellent examples of female characters who manage money well and prove themselves industrious. Some speculation about why characterizations of women have changed would have been useful. Another shortcoming here is the equation of characters' statements with authors' sentiments or the appeal made to irony only when it seems convenient. Defoe is said to speak through Moll and is to be taken "at his word," "naked of any sort of irony" when Moll describes her desire to be a Gentlewoman. Speeches by Roxana, however, are read as ironic. Fielding is not distinguished from the narrator, and anti-feminist remarks by trustworthy characters or bad ones are, "so to speak, on the record." Austen's failure to comment on her characters' speeches is taken as an indication that she is unquestioningly supportive of them. Scheuermann seldom allows that readers (then as now) may read between the lines or may not require explicit commentary on the inequities of gender or class in these fictional worlds. While I disagree with Scheuermann's sense that gender is so irrelevant to social or private life, her main point is a good one: the capability of female characters is often obscured by critics who emphasize the drawbacks to being a woman in the eighteenth century.

Tucker attempts to avoid "the groves of academe" and provide a picture of "Jane Austen as she actually was." His bibliography reinforces the sense of antipathy towards the academy; it includes nothing published on Austen more recently than 1991 and excludes most of the studies considered "major" in Austen scholarship. The book includes chapters on Austen's homes, travels, beaux, and reading, and her relationship to scandals, political events, religion, and so forth. The "true" image presented by the anecdotes and statements about Austen is framed by Tucker so that we are always encouraged to admire the novelist. For example, the "vulgarity and contemporary slang" in Austen's juvenilia does not indicate any moral failing, but a "tolerance of human fallibility." This information is often interesting, but is seldom interpreted convincingly and its relevance to Austen critics is unclear. Evidence is used selectively: Henry Austen's "Biographical Notice" is both relied upon as accurate and reproached as misleading. And one must be careful about the time frame of Tucker's evidence: one observation about Austen comes from a woman fully 57 years after her last contact with the novelist.

One may often disagree with the relative inattention to gender issues in Scheuermann's book, but she is thought-provoking and reminds us that different and contradictory viewpoints produce useful discussion. To my mind, Tucker's work offers tidbits of information that are interesting but unsynthesized. The reader is left seeking an overview of the archival information on Austen that would alleviate the sense of being bogged down by too many unrelated details.

Guy Talk

Bill Schermbrucker
Motortherapy. Talonbooks $15.95

Gerald Lynch
Troutstream. Random House n.p.

Keith Maillard
Hazard Zones. HarperCollins $18.00

Reviewed by Brett Josef Grubisic

While the themes and preoccupations of *Motortherapy*, *Troutstream* and *Hazard Zones* are diverse, one informative way to look at them is as presentations of (white, heterosexual) male concerns. Certainly, beneath *Motortherapy*'s melancholy, *Troutstream*'s manic comedy and the muted pain of *Hazard Zones* questions are being asked about male friendship, father and son

communication, as well as the perennial favourite, the state of affairs between women and men. Of course, Schermbrucker, Lynch and Maillard have themes to develop outside the one I have mentioned, so they document contemporary masculinity with varying degrees of intensity.

The title of Schermbrucker's story collection points to things associated with conventional masculine activities. In his brief "Written in Car: A Preface," the author recollects that at a very early age his father would drive him around as a means of calming his tears. Since then cars and driving have played a significant part in his life. And motor vehicles figure prominently in the stories. The youth in "The Right Tools" drives in a rickety 1949 Austin from Nairobi to Johannesburg through desert terrain and tsetse fly infestation. In another, a drunken academic hitchhikes from his home in the Gulf Islands and assesses the people in whose vehicles he rides.

Motortherapy is a baker's dozen of stories that describe life in places near and far-flung—from Kenya and England to Toronto and the Gulf Islands. Schermbrucker's stories are economically designed and matter of fact. By and large they focus on men and the bonds between them. Women, though clearly important in the lives of the men, remain background figures outside the primary focus of the stories. Whether as drinking buddies, rivalrous siblings or partners sparring over metaphysical questions, Schermbrucker quietly celebrates male relationships without looking too closely at the complex mechanisms which propel them.

The stories are often imbued with a sadness that comes with realizing things have not turned out as expected. Schermbrucker's characters are plagued by divorce, lost opportunity, lack of direction and general unhappiness. They are befuddled—it is as though the bravado they were taught to exhibit has led nowhere, and now they merely have diminished hopes and memories, or worse, alcohol and a refusal to grow up.

Unfortunately, the stories are often too transparent and, at times, Schermbrucker seems overly eager to highlight his principal point. In "North Burnaby, The Herdsman and Freud," or "Spears," for instance, he labours his point—the Freud of the former and the *femme fatale* of the latter remain cardboard devices utilized for an obvious effect. Schermbrucker seems most comfortable when he is elegizing male camaraderie. In trying to incorporate other topics—whether Africa or Freud—he is less successful.

Not for a moment melancholic, *Troutstream* is a funhouse of misanthropic satirical intent. With (at least) seven men describing their takes on life in Troutstream, Ontario, it is also a skilled ventriloquist's act featuring both bizarre and mundane voices. The place itself, an award-winning 1958 design representative we are told of "the epitome of the 1950s suburban dream," has more to it than meets the eye. Like David Lynch's film, *Blue Velvet*, Gerald Lynch shows that beneath the spotless "heritage" veneer reign corruption and misguided passions. It turns out the "suburban dream," so much a part of the architect's vision, is easily dispelled once humans come to town.

Lynch intersperses first-person narration with chapters dictated by an all-seeing narrator who points out connections and provides background. The narrators range in demeanor from the garden-variety jealous to the certifiably sociopathic, and in profession from graduate student to tavern proprietor. Lynch's narrative strands never entirely coalesce, and I suspect that is the way they were designed: by displaying the multitudinous idiosyncrasies of Troutstream's citizenry, Lynch is interrogating the boundaries of community and disputing the very possibility of a human settlement with no discord.

On a less serious note, Lynch is just having satiric but affectionate fun peeking into suburban life while simultaneously stretching his largely realist narrative to the breaking point. In *Troutstream*, psychic visions, grisly murders and tea-cup divination go hand in hand with interdepartmental rivalries and tense backyard barbecues. Troutstream is like one of Robertson Davies' strange little towns, but more twisted and far less cohesive.

The carnivalesque finale, "Troutstream Fun Fest," with its missing persons, Elvis impersonators ("Elvii"), blind child and ironic affirmation of community values, brings all Lynch's characters in one place. Frank O'Donaghue, high school teacher and self-confessed incarnation of Elvis and Evil (at once) is pushed off stage by an angry bouncer—normalcy returns to Troutstream, Lynch implies with a smile.

Keith Maillard's *Hazard Zones* flows casually and is reminiscent at a glance of Saul Bellow and Walker Percy. It tells a familiar story of a man forced by circumstance to return to a hometown he associates with sadness, loss and disappointment. Once in town he revisits the past, comes to terms with it (sort of) and finally leaves it behind.

My immediate difficulty with Maillard's novel is that Larry Cameron, its problem-beset hero, is difficult to like and because of that his angst seems insincere and of passing interest. Middle-aged and comfortably situated, Cameron is nevertheless plagued with personal problems and self-doubt. Once he returns to Raysburg and his problems intensify he becomes even more sullen, moody, uncommunicative. Cameron, a recovering alcoholic who still drinks frequently, often comes across as whiny and smug. He has problems but is unwilling to look into himself or challenge his beliefs. When, for instance, he speaks about university politics or literary theory, and even when he walks around Raysburg, he seems so self-satisfied that it is difficult to empathize with his current or past problems. It is clear in the way he has structured his book that Maillard wants readers to understand Cameron's journey into his past has psychological resonance, but for me it was hard to accept.

Hazard Zones is also hindered by its failure to add much new to a conventional theme. Even with allusions to Conrad and Twain, Cameron's trip home, to his past, himself and his heart of darkness, remains firmly within the boundaries of convention. As such, *Hazard Zones* risks appearing like a pat literary exercise. When Cameron leaves Rayburg to return to his comfortable home, career and family life, it feels like nothing has happened at all.

Live Subjects

Gabriele Schwab

Subjects without Selves: Transitional Texts in Modern Fiction Harvard UP US$34.50

Reviewed by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young

Welcome to a kinder and gentler poststructuralism. Subjects may enter provided they adopt an unpretentious demeanour. After plummeting from the heights of René Descartes—the imperial self grounded in certainties—to the depths of Rodney Dangerfield—the concept that gets no respect—the time has come to rediscover the subject "not only in its psychological but also in its theoretical constitution."

This announcement sets the stage for Gabriele Schwab's analysis of the dynamics of literary subjectivity. Schwab knows that the success of her project depends on whether she can provide a "theoretical constitution" of subjects and subjectivities which will not be pronounced DOA by a critical discourse that delights in proclaiming the death of this, that and the other. She enlists D.W. Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of play and object relations and

enriches it with Anton Ehrenzweig's theory of creativity. The story goes like this: As infants learn to create mental support structures to cope with the mother's absence, they develop a "transitional space." Initially located between mother and child, this "no man's-land between I and not-I" employs transitional objects like security blankets and teddy-bears to stage differentiation and otherness to help endure real-life partings and boundary shifts. In time, children develop a capacity for symbolization that will eventually enable them to handle somewhat more sophisticated cultural objects such as *Moby Dick* and *Gravity's Rainbow.*

These "transitional texts" have less to do with mother-child boundaries than with the fluid "horizontal" rupture within the self separating primary and secondary processes. To assess Schwab's (re)evaluation of the primary processes of the unconscious, it is important to realize what, in her reading, the unconscious is *not.* It is not the unruly Freudian cesspool waiting for analytic drainage; it is not some pseudo-Lacanian Bastille of the symbolic order; and it is not something to be "liberated" by reversing the traditional hierarchy of secondary and primary processes and letting the juices flow. Rather, poetic language serves as a "mediator" tapping the creative potential of the unconscious by bridging the gap between primary and secondary processes, thus creating a "third-order level" where these processes "are mediated in a significant way".

Schwab proceeds to analyse *Moby Dick, The Waves, Finnegans Wake, The Unnamable* and *Gravity's Rainbow.* These chapters tend to be less original than the introductory theory sections, frequently rephrasing, albeit very precisely, standard critical insights. Many critics have argued that the texts in question—witness Joyce's debunking of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* as "cog it out, here goes a sum"—are subverting linguistic, cultural and psychological conventions that come with a petrification of secondary processes; and they did so without the help of Winnicott and Ehrenzweig. This, however, is what makes the discussion of *Gravity's Rainbow* so interesting. While many celebrate Pynchon's alleged celebration of released primary processes, Schwab argues against such a "postmodern infatuation with transgression", emphasizing that in the "third-order" rendezvous of primary and secondary processes the latter's structuration is every bit as important as the former's destructuration, a case the text itself makes by pointing out how easy it is co-opt undifferentiated transgressions.

In two concluding chapters, Schwab links her findings to epistemological shifts in other areas, speculating on a "holonomy of texts and subjects" by drawing connections to systems theory (Bateson), (re)interpretations of entropy (Arnheim), and the holographic paradigm of Bohm and Pribram. Ambition breeds generalization. As interesting as these analogies may be, they force her to ascend the abstraction scale and offer formulations like "differentiation and dedifferentiation as complementary processes of systemic regeneration and reorganization", which is a very elaborated way of saying the very obvious.

Nevertheless, this is an engaging and original study; its originality rests to no small degree on its informed return to earlier formalist and psychoanalytic models. For all those lost in the "twilight of the age of poststructuralist and postmodern sensibility," here is an approachable camp-fire. You just have to step back a bit.

Voices and Choices

Jason Sherman, ed.
Solo. Coach House $17.95

Jerry Wasserman, ed.
Modern Canadian Plays, 1970-1990, Volume II. Talonbooks $19.95

Reviewed by Mark Blagrave

Given that printing a collection of texts will almost inevitably be interpreted by someone somewhere as an attempt at canonizing, and given current pressures to represent "otherness" (while somehow maintaining some kind of balance), the very act of making any anthology is fraught with hazards. Such hazards are compounded when the material collected is gathered under the rubric "Canadian"—the country is so large, so diverse.

Jerry Wasserman and Jason Sherman have braved these challenges to produce two worthwhile additions to the available selection of anthologies of Canadian drama. Their volumes are as different in content and presentation as it is possible to imagine, suggesting that the rich variety of contemporary Canadian theatre is only to be properly reflected through a collection of collections and not through any singular "textbook."

Wasserman's collection replaces his 1985 pioneering anthology. The second volume, under review here, concentrates on plays of the late 1970s and the 1980s: *Zastrozzi, Billy Bishop Goes to War, Balconville* (all included in the earlier edition too), *Doc, The Occupation of Heather Rose, Toronto, Mississippi, I Am Yours, Moo, Polygraph,* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing.* As his introduction states, the selection features plays frequently produced and critically acclaimed (even commercially successful), being careful to include women's writing (50%), Native writing, and Quebec writing. Specific choices seem to rest at least in part on Wasserman's personal taste and in part on the availability of rights, but the editor recognizes the constant need to revise "The List" of modern Canadian plays.

Sherman's anthology, building on a component of his earlier work in editing, also for Coach House, *Canadian Brash,* limits itself to plays for one performer (a genre represented in Wasserman's collection by Wendy Lill's *The Occupation of Heather Rose,* and, in a different way, by John Gray's *Billy Bishop Goes to War*). Writers represented include Robin Fulford, Ken Garnhum, Linda Griffiths, Joan Macleod, Judith Thompson, and Michel Tremblay. Notwithstanding the book jacket's aesthetically baffling claims that the pieces are "intoxicating hybrids of theatre and fiction" (as if theatre were usually something other than fictional) and that they are evidence of "drama's enduring role as the muse of literature," the plays represent a broad spectrum of approaches to the formal challenges of single-performer drama. Device-motivated confession (talking to tape recorders, videocameras, absent friends or lovers) is joined by self-consciously theatrical confession and by overt performance art.

Some of the differences of approach between these two anthologies may be explained through the differing backgrounds and pursuits of the anthologists. Sherman, himself a playwright and former editor of *what magazine,* adopts a deliberately hands-off style as editor: "I wish I'd written each one myself. But since I didn't, I did the next best thing. I put them together in this book, so that more people could hear them." Apparatus is limited to a simple but informative listing, at the back of the book, of production histories. The "foreword" is written in a style intended to be savoured for itself. While its apparent thesis that 'these people are lonely' hardly does justice to the works (who could be lonely with so many voices inside themselves?), it at least does little to interfere

with readers' own responses to the texts.

Wasserman, on the other hand, goes beyond simply reprinting the texts themselves to provide a wealth of additional grist to the critical mill. His volume, true to the aspirations of its academic editor, provides an excellent bibliography section, including both a listing of biographical and critical citations and a select listing of newspaper reviews—where possible, of more than one production. His general introduction to the volume provides a useful overview of developments in Canadian theatre for the period covered by the anthology. The general introduction also seeks to offset the canonizing tendency of anthology-making by providing critical notices of dozens of plays that are not included in the collection. Each of the individual plays in Wasserman's collection is, in addition, provided with its own introduction. These describe production histories, and place each play within its author's entire work, as well as providing a short descriptive and analytic critical essay. As a consequence of all of these measures, Wasserman's volume appears very well suited to use as a textbook.

The respective decisions to provide extensive critical apparatus for one collection and relatively little for the other may also relate to the differing contents of the two volumes. Considerable attention is currently being paid to the relative potentials of conventional dialogue-based drama on the one hand and monologue on the other to give equal play to several voices—the argument being that a finished conventional drama usually bears the sound of a single authorial voice and is susceptible to unified interpretation, while monologue, paradoxically, may often present a much less unified view, thus allowing many voices to be heard. On the surface, it might appear that Wasserman's efforts to analyze for his reader the dramatic texts in his collection represent a need to tame and unify the multiple positions expressed in the plays—to compensate, in a sense, for their "dramatic" nature. His success in providing cogent analyses, however, may in fact indicate the essentially "monologic" nature of his material: it is amenable to a unifying view. By contrast, the absence of analysis of the plays in *Solo* may be best suited to the essentially "dialogic" nature of these monologues: their many voices must be allowed to speak separately for themselves.

In compiling their anthologies, both Wasserman and Sherman have given "air time" to many of the important writing voices in contemporary Canadian theatre and to the various kinds of voice and numbers of voices involved. Neither Sherman nor Wasserman confuses anthologizing with canonization. These are not intended to be "last words"; we can look forward to further volumes. It is interesting to note, moreover, that in neither anthology is there any attempt (by editor or by playwright) to be explicitly "Canadian" or to define "Canadian" or "Canada." The transcendence of self-conscious "Canadian-ness" by both of these volumes of Canadian plays may be their most significant comment on the state of contemporary Canadian drama.

Littératures et altérité

UNEQ
Développement et rayonnement de la littérature québécoise: un défi pour l'an 2000. Nuit blanche n.p.

Sherry Simon
Le trafic des langues: Traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise. Boréal $24.95

Reviewed by Alain-Michel Rocheleau

À l'aube de l'an 2000, force nous est d'admettre que les littératures nationales, historiquement liées à la définition des espaces culturels, sont désormais marquées par diverses formes d'altérité. La littérature québécoise, qui s'est autonomisée au fil du

temps à coups de coeur et d'ambitions identitaires, n'a pas échappé à ce phénomène. À titre d'exemple, nombreux sont les auteurs qui, par le biais d'oeuvres traduites et diffusées dans plusieurs langues, rejoignent aujourd'hui la sensibilité de nombreux lecteurs vivant à l'extérieur du territoire québécois ou, encore, témoignent de la présence de l'«Autre» dans un Québec de plus en plus cosmopolite. En quels termes peut-on définir la littérature québécoise contemporaine? Est-elle toujours synonyme d'identité et de fierté chez ceux—écrivains, éditeurs, professeurs, critiques, traducteurs et lecteurs—qui en font la promotion? L'altérité, de plus en plus visible dans les textes d'auteurs québécois, correspond-t-elle à un désir de reconfiguration sociale et identitaire sur le territoire du Québec? Telles sont, entre autres, les questions abordées par les auteurs d'un ouvrage collectif intitulé *Développement et rayonnement de la littérature québécoise: un défi pour l'an 2000* de même que par Sherry Simon dans *Le Trafic des langues.*

Le premier ouvrage, qui correspond aux actes d'un colloque tenu en mai 1992 par l'Union des écrivaines et écrivains québécois (Uneq), est le fruit d'une vaste réflexion sur l'évolution de la littérature faite au Québec. Cinquante-quatre textes, regroupés autour de cinq grands thèmes de discussion—la «spécificité» de la littérature québécoise, sa promotion et sa circulation dans les médias, le rôle de l'écrivain dans une société en mutation, l'avenir de la lecture de même que celui de l'industrie et de l'économie du livre—, guident l'intelligence du lecteur dans le double sentier de la «retrospection-prospection» tout en faisant un bilan de santé de l'institution littéraire québécoise. Si pour certains participants la littérature québécoise s'identifie encore beaucoup trop à un geste de repli, donnant du même souffle autorité à un discours nationaliste quelque peu étroit, pour d'autres, au contraire, le rapport entre culture et littérature québécoises se déploie, depuis quelques années, sous l'angle de l'altérité en permettant à des auteurs d'origines diverses—italienne, marocaine ou haïtienne—de s'affilier à la littérature d'expression française du Québec. Ce nouveau type de rapport forcerait les intervenants du monde littéraire à s'interroger sur les liens que l'on peut établir entre une littérature dite «nationale» et la pluralité des écritures qui la constituent. Plusieurs participants au colloque font également allusion dans leur texte à une mutation du rôle de l'écrivain que l'on reconnaîtrait dans la diversification des écritures et dans les références faites, par bon nombre d'auteurs québécois, à des contextes culturels multiples. Évoluant dans un monde pluraliste et étant sollicité par le multiculturalisme qui l'entoure, l'auteur de textes littéraires ne pourrait plus écrire en vase clos. Cette diversification dans l'écriture vaudrait tout autant pour la lecture. Les différents auteurs de *Développement et rayonnement de la littérature québécoise: un défi pour l'an 2000* s'entendent également pour affirmer que la littérature, à la remorque des médias électroniques, est mal desservie par ces derniers et que, dans l'ensemble, le milieu médiatique reste assez indifférent—pour ne pas dire ignorant—face à la littérature québécoise. La politique éditoriale concernant la couventure des livres semblerait privilégier, aux dires de plusieurs, la littérature des «autres»—Français et Américains—et laisserait de côté la plupart des écrivains québécois. Bien que l'actualité littéraire ne tienne que très peu compte de la présence des auteurs du Québec, plusieurs admettent toutefois dans leur communication que la situation générale de l'industrie et de l'économie du livre au Québec s'améliore au fil du temps. Le livre québécois serait traîté, selon certains, sur le même pied d'égalité que les productions étrangères, autant en bibliothèque qu'en librairie.

Dans *Le Trafic des langues*, Sherry Simon aborde, quant à elle, des oeuvres de la littérature québécoise qui mettent l'accent sur la traduction entrevue comme un processus de négociation linguistique et culturelle. En "faisant de la relation d'altérité culturelle la matière [. . .] de leur travail textuel," bon nombre de productions culturelles du Québec interrogent, aux dires de l'auteure, "cette étrangeté «en nous» qui est aujourd'hui caractéristique de toute identité culturelle." Partant du principe que la traduction d'oeuvres québécoises actualise les frontières linguistiques et crée le rapport à l'altérité, madame Simon examine tout abord le travail de Jacques Brault pour démontrer comment la «non-traduction» illustre le caractère tributaire de toute parole poétique. Puis, en explorant l'oeuvre de Nicole Brossard, Sherry Simon montre de quelle manière les traductions en langue anglaise de certains textes de l'écrivaine québécoise, en parfait accord avec les versions originales, interrogent les structures repressives du monde patriarcal. L'auteure du *Trafic des langues* parvient également à illustrer comment l'écriture d'A.M. Klein intensifie différents mécanismes de dépaysement linguistique, à prouver que la mixité langagière des personnages de Daniel Gagnon et de Jean Forest témoigne des problèmes d'expression de soi dans un contexte de non-maîtrise culturelle et à expliquer de quelle manière Régine Robin, Francine Noël et Monique LaRue réussissent, dans leurs oeuvres respectives, à traduire la confusion qu'engendre le caractère cosmopolite des villes lorsque différents codes—linguistiques et culturels—entrent en contact. Madame Simon explore enfin les effets engendrés par le pluralisme linguistique dans les oeuvres théâtrales de Marco Micone et de Robert Lepage, à savoir, la mise en cause des évidences de l'ethnicité et la mise en valeur des processus d'affrontement et d'accommodation culturels qui en résultent.

S'il faut saluer la qualité du travail accompli par Sherry Simon, comme l'ont déjà fait d'ailleurs plusieurs critiques, on peut du même souffle déplorer la «minceur analytique» des propos consacrés par l'auteure à la *Trilogie des Dragons* de Robert Lepage. *Développement et rayonnement de la littérature québécoise*, bien que négligé par la critique, prend l'allure d'une réflexion pertinente et nourrie sur la littérature—roman, poésie et essai critique—du Québec. On peut cependant regretter qu'aucun espace de cet ouvrage n'ait été consacré au théâtre québécois, comme si les textes dramatiques joués et publiés au Québec n'avaient que très peu contribué au rayonnement de la littérature québécoise.

Cultural Elegies

Terry Watada
A Thousand Homes. Mercury $11.50

Pindar Dulai
Ragas From the Periphery. Arsenal Pulp Press $12.95

Reviewed by Scott McFarlane

These two recent volumes of poetry engage the limits of identity politics in interesting ways. I'll start with Terry Watada's *A Thousand Homes*. The Japanese Canadian community is undergoing radical self-critique in the "post-redress" (1988) era. The dominant socio-historical narrative which traces the arrival of immigrants and the struggles to adapt by succeeding generations is falling sway to a less stable sense of history and self characterised by global migration and an identity politics foregrounding cultural differences within the community. The post-redress period is also characterised by an outburst of writing by Japanese Canadians whose texts are not centred on the internment.

The lyrics that compose Watada's first volume of poetry seek both to "coax the voices/ of [the] dead" and to presence the permanent spirit of his various family

homes symbolically represented by *Genyo*, the name of the family estate:

> The ghosts were everywhere.
> The creaks of *Genyo*
> betrayed their presence.

The text is replete with ghosts and hauntings, head stones and graves, death and funeral pyres as the poet honours his parents and mother in-law, searching for a spiritual ground within the flux of history.

The volume is composed of two sections, *Waka*, and *A Thousand Homes*. Watada is a well-established musician in the community with several recordings to his credit and Waka, or songs, is a collection of sixteen poems written between 1981 and 1992. These ballad-like "folk songs" offer portraits of family members and homes forged through a communion in music as the poet echoes the laughter that lay "beneath old Japanese songs."

The second section conjures the life of the poet's mother, *Chisato*, which literally translates as "a thousand homes." These elegies record the arrival of Chisato from Japan and her experiences of both the internment and the dispersal and the raising of children in a variety of "homes" in Canada. This poem-series is steeped in the narrative of immigrant arrival and adaptation while trying to cling to a cultural essence. Interestingly, the poems continually struggle against the poet's hesitations, self-doubts and sense of alienation and blindness. One can only have so much confidence in a vision of ghosts and the making present of those departed. It is this tenuous vision, this sense of a fragile dream-scape which most eloquently and persistently records not only the poet's relationship to his mother and past generations but also honours the death of a particular way of recording Japanese Canadian history. The elegiac here, has become the necessary discursive mode for the haunted historical narrative of immigrant arrival and adaptation—as well as the cultural identities established by it.

The cultural relations between what the poet refers to as the "dominant culture" and those on "the margins" are the subject of Pindar Dulai's *Ragas from the Periphery*. "Raga" refers to the melodic conceptual system of Indian classical music and is a Sanskrit word derived from the verb *rānj*, meaning "to colour, to tinge with emotion." The extremely subtle melodic structures of ragas coupled with the stress on imparting emotions—often at a particular time of day—makes them highly performative in nature and not readily rendered from script or recordings. Some masters will only perform "truly" for their disciples. Dulai thus takes on quite a challenge in trying to produce ragas for his first volume of poetry.

Dulai works by means of melodic interventions, incorporating the sounds of the tablas drum, often in order to fragment words and their metre. Slashes, brackets and the insertion of other sounds are also used to this effect. The play of rhythm contests the grammatical drive of the English, insisting on "peripheral" melodies from which the lyrical quality of the poems emerge. It is the need to be heard and to make present a sense of his own peripheral experiences that drives the emotional range of this text from anger and surly disillusionment to celebration and love.

These emotions from the margins are always rallied against a dispassionate "centre" which takes the form of a monolithic (read "white") national culture, a traditional English canon, or a culturally impoverished cityscape:

> This retrospect explosion
> of nightmare syncopation
>   adds subtlety to the scream
>   that carries down the ear
>   of a deaf suburb

Dulai does not take on the many pitfalls of the centre–margin binary he employs to understand cultural relations and as a

result the poet often engages with clichés and risks simplification. On the one hand this problem seems with the poet's own experimentation with melody. On the other hand the melodramatic, perhaps, emerges as an important means of articulating racialised experiences in Canada. We see this in the nine poems dedicated to the poet's experience as a parking lot attendant—particularly in poems such as "The Monthlies." In "The Booth," stereotypes drive in and out of the melodramatic underground that seems to be both our suffocating "lot" and the machine-like ends of an identity politics vacant of ethics. Ground level and underground are both places of alienation, though of different forms. At street level people come and go, talking of Michelangelo:

> On the street
> I wear a Michelangelo
> tie
> and my navy blue
> pants
> flap in the breeze . . .
> Enter the booth . . .
> [and] i become
> part of the parking
> machinery

When both the "periphery" and "centre" cruise and crash within the autos of liberal identity politics the question is asked: "Who's financing the assembly line?" As our literary industry continues to assemble and bind the lines which commodify race and race politics, in what ways is "race" becoming a discursive fact? It's cultural elegies and melodrama here, haunted by the force of a global political economy.

Sketches, Fragments and Echoes

Carol Anne Wien
Turtle Drum. Oberon, $25.95/$12.95

Helen McLean
Sketching from Memory: A Portrait of My Mother. Oberon, $23.95/$11.95

Reviewed by Coral Ann Howells

> There is still one more Brazil story somewhere in the back of my head, but I cannot quite get the shape of it. It's not one of those stories where you start with a single taut sentence . . . It's just three images, fragments that roll over the floor of my mind like shells on polished hardwood: they leave an echo.

The opening of "Shells" from Wein's first collection signals both the promises and frustrations of narrative, together with the narrator's search for significant form which would give order and sense to raw materials which haunt the memory. Such quests for meaning characterise the efforts of Wien as fiction writer and of McLean as biographer, so that generic borders blur in the storytelling process.

The eight stories in *Turtle Drum,* mostly about nomadic women, are held together in a loose design which comes into focus with the title story at the end. They represent a variety of women as narrators or protagonists—naive young students, brides and middle-aged divorcees, old women remembering—and a variety of locations, from early stories set in Toronto and Cape Breton Island, through a group of three set in South America: "Transient," "How Far Is It to Ouro Preto?" and "Shells," to a final story set on a Native reserve on an island in the Great Lakes. Scattered locations and diverse experiences, but there are common denominators: thematically, in these women's awareness of being outsiders sometimes even in their own lives and their dawning realisations of what they do not—cannot

possibly—understand; and stylistically, in the use of bizarre and spectacular images like the monstrous severed head of a cow in "Bride on a Carousel" or the terrible face of the monkey "like a Hallowe'en mask" in "Shells." Indeed, the criticism might be made that these images generate more meanings than do the stories in which they are embedded.

Despite such imagery, these are stories in a minor key where well-meaning white middle-class Canadian women try to come to terms with otherness in cross-cultural encounters, and signally fail to do so. Lisa, a young student from Cornell, finds herself holding an abandoned baby in a red jumpsuit on a deserted railway platform in Mexico, and an enthusiastic young woman on a summer job at a Native reserve "accepts turtle claws from Fox and dancing bells from Montgomery and for the first time it occurs to me that maybe a native girl wouldn't do this." Whether stories are in the first person or the third, it is as if the author is wiser than many of her characters, for they are revealed as dangerous innocents abroad who wreak havoc with the best will in the world:

> I would protect Fox if I could from my culture, but it is already too late. I have nothing to give back, nothing to give back, and Mink and Fox's child are lost.

However, not all the stories are quite so devastating in their social critique. There are moments of grace and forgiveness contained in revelations of human intimacy although Wien's protagonists remain "watchers on the outside" and are left with nothing but glimpses and echoes.

Helen McLean's *Sketching from Memory: A Portrait of My Mother* shares this fragmented quality as she tries to figure out her mother's life, first in the cover sketch (for McLean is best known as an artist) and then in the narrative. It is an unfinished portrait which retains some of the tentativeness of a sketch, as the ambiguously weighted title would suggest. The story opens with the sight of a ninety-year old woman in a nursing home suffering from Alzheimer's Disease and a daughter's flood of grief at the prospect of losing Mother: "I had never before imagined this world without my mother in it. I hadn't realized how much I loved her until now." This is a curious and fascinating biography, written undoubtedly out of love but love of a sometimes tormented kind, and it is as much autobiography, family history and social chronicle of life in Toronto in the 1930s and 40s as it is the mother's story.

McLean manages to write without sentimentality; she who is now the keeper of memory goes in search of her lost mother—as an unloved foster child from Georgian Bay, later as the wife of a farmer's son who becomes a Toronto lawyer and as a mother who is who is "alternately affectionate and ferocious." McLean's narrative, like Wien's, is constructed from images or "mental snapshots" as she calls them, which cannot be fitted neatly together although they occur in chronological sequence. The most vivid memories of the mother are from a child's perspective: of being ill with scarlet fever in the 1930s (in the days before "antabeeotics") with "Mother leaning over me in lamplight at night, raising my head to get me to drink," or of Mother as family tyrant whose emotions "would make or break any occasion for all of us."

As if to contain these irreconcilables, McLean offers brilliantly detailed Munroesque descriptions of 1930s house interiors (several of them) for her family moved many times during the Depression and then again to Forest Hill during the upwardly mobile 1940s, when automatic washing machines and supermarkets were new and exciting. She is an astute chronicler of the subtleties of Toronto middle-class life, though her forte is the bizarre,

like the sign of her mother's worsening mental condition: "Her mink scarves and stoles had deteriorated to the extent that I would find, with a shriek, their detached paws and tails among her blouses and underwear."

There are traces of ferocity and pain in this narrative where the mother's life remains as unaccountable as an "irrepressible natural force." Yet storytelling does effect a kind of reconciliation for the narrator at least, when she is able to resolve contradictory emotions into elegiac contemplation of her mother's death:

> When that time comes, we will go back to the rattling pebbled shore where she once supervised our swims, play a little Bach on a portable machine and add her ashes to the memories, one superimposed upon another.

Repulsion and Desire

Robert J.C. Young
Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. Routledge n.p.

Sui Sin Far
Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings. Ed. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks. University of Illinois P US$39.95/$15.95

Annette White-Parks
Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton. A Literary Biography. U of Illinois P US$34.95

Reviewed by Maria Noëlle Ng

It is a convenient but misleading belief that the relationship between nineteenth-century colonizers and their colonized subjects was implacably hostile, that the colonizers despised the natives, and in turn, were hated by the colonized people. If the situation were truly of such manichean simplicity, research on colonial and postcolonial topics would soon have come to a halt. Historical realities indicated a somewhat different picture, one of cross-cultural complexities and ambivalent responses. Robert Young is one of the scholars who desire to unravel the intricacies of colonial relationships. He believes that contacts between races invariably leave traces which become incorporated into both cultures, and in *Colonial Desire*, he argues with rigorous scholarship that the dialectics of colonial culture in the nineteenth century involved unconscious practices of acculturation, and sometimes, intentional transgression and subversion. Young's purpose in *Colonial Desire* is to examine the "historical genealogy" of cultural hybridity by tracing "the strange and disquieting ramifications of its complex, forgotten past."

He begins his exploration of the "forgotten past" of cultural hybridity with a discussion of Johann Gottfried Herder, the eighteenth-century German philosopher and philologist. Some of Herder's writings are fine expressions of the dilemma culturalists faced, and are facing still, in discursive relation to the "Other": how does one discuss another culture without assigning alterity and value judgement? Herder, according to Young, wrote against ethnocentrism, yet at the same time he had to come to terms with the "obvious" racial differences between the Europeans and the inferior Africans. This pattern of cultural desire tempered by racial repulsion was repeated by various anthropologists, ethnologists, biologists and so on throughout the nineteenth century.

Young reminds the readers, in his discussion of the rise of racialism and its entrenched position within nineteenth-century thinking, that "modern racism was an academic creation." This claim is supported by careful readings of works by influential culturalists such as Arnold and Gobineau. Perhaps the best illustration of the ambivalent attitude Europeans nursed towards racial purity and contamination is a long poem by Issac Teale, which was included in a history of the West Indies colonies by Bryan Edwards in the 1790s. In

this poem, both the "sable and saffron beauties of the West Indies" are praised as desirable objects. Edwards made quite clear in his colonial text that he would condone such an attitude only for commercial reasons; otherwise, white men desiring native women would be "a violation of all decency and decorum." To Young, this is an instance of "the corrupt conjunction of . . . hybridized sexual and economic discourses" which has fuelled the concept of race.

The last chapter of *Colonial Desire* seems to be a brief revisit of subjects Young has discussed in his previous book, *White Mythologies* (1990). Indeed, his latest book will read very well as a companion volume to the earlier one.

One of the products of cultural contacts is the children of mixed-racial origins. These results of "miscegenation" historically occupied a position fraught with anxiety and shame within European society. Sui Sin Far, an Anglo-Chinese writing at the turn of the century, addresses this situation in some of her writings. Born Edith Eaton, Sui Sin Far came from a large Victorian family of shabby gentility. Unable to make a comfortable living in England, Mr. Eaton moved his family to Montreal in 1872/73. At an early age, Edith Eaton tried to support her family by writing. She changed her *nom de plume* to Sui Sin Far when she began to explore more exclusively the world of Chinese immigrants in Montreal and along the Pacific coast. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* is a selection from her journalistic and fictional works, edited by Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks.

This collection is divided into two parts. Part 1 contains short stories from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, published in 1912, and Part 2, newspaper articles and other uncollected stories. As the name of the eponymous character suggests, there is an old-fashioned quaintness in all the stories. That Sui Sin Far herself did not know the Chinese language contributes considerably to this stylistic archness. Writing to her husband, Mrs. Spring Fragrance coyly pens, "Greeting from your plum blossom, who is desirous of hiding herself from the sun of your presence . . . ." The writer no doubt was desirous to convey the syntax of a foreign language; the effect is to render the characters cartoonish.

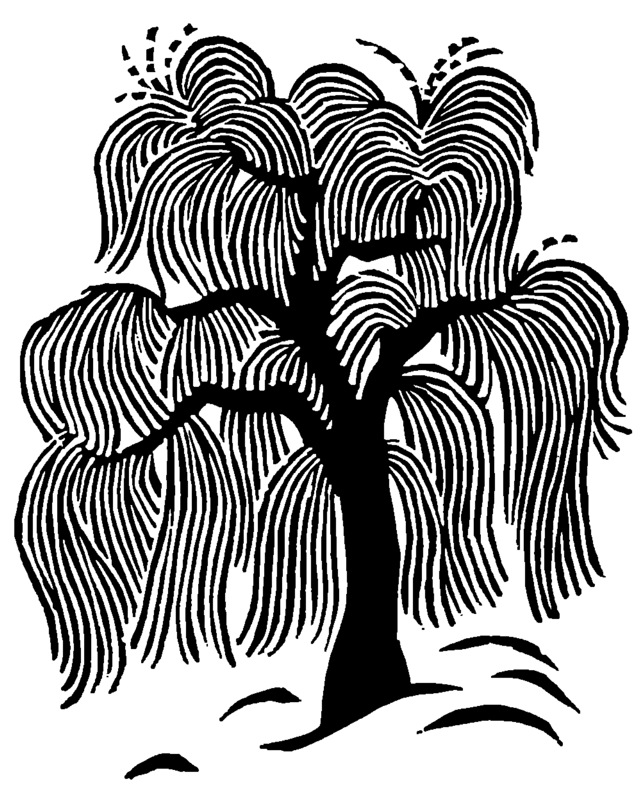
In contrast, her newspaper and magazine articles are written in an unembroidered style, and are some of the most interesting records of early Chinese immigrant lives in Canada and in California. One can detect a shift in allegiance in Sui Sin Far's writings. In her reports in the early 1890s, Sui Sin Far sees the Chinese immigrants with an outsider's eye. But her later pieces, such as "A Plea for the Chinaman" (1896), prove that she had come to identify more strongly with the Chinese side of her background.

Annette White-Parks' *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton* is an exhaustive and generous biography of this Eurasian writer. The book provides a detailed account of the Eaton's family life as well as an analytical summary of Sui Sin Far's writings. The biographer is well aware of the question of quality which besets any evaluation of non-canonical writers, and she returns to this issue periodically throughout the book. For White-Parks, Sui Sin Far's pioneer status as the first Eurasian woman writer in North America itself merits critical attention. "[T]he issue of quality in [Sui Sin Far's] writings cannot be addressed in the absence of the cultural and literary contexts within which she wrote," contends White-Parks.

Thus the first two chapters of *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton* deal with the beginnings of the Anglo-Chinese union between Edward Eaton and Lotus Blossom in Shanghai in the 1860s, and the large family (fourteen children) which they eventually engendered. This marriage alone deserves the interest of Asianists. How did Lotus Blossom meet Eaton, and what kind of courtship did they conduct, during the very

tense decades when western nations first forced their attentions on an unwilling and xenophobic China? Why did Edward Eaton not desert his Chinese woman, as was the custom of so many of his compatriots, and return to England for a conventional married life? Of course these are not the main concerns of White-Parks' study, but the answers would no doubt provide further insight not only into cultural contact in the nineteenth century, but also into the consciousness of cultural hybridity.

The brief comparison between the two eldest Eaton daughters also makes for fascinating reading. Edith Eaton became Sui Sin Far, a champion of Chinese immigrant culture, while Winifrid Eaton wrote popular novels with Japanese themes under the pseudonym of Onoto Watanna. She also denied her Chinese ancestry by concocting a highly romanticized imperial Japanese and aristocratic English background for her family. One could not but be reminded of Young's contention that in cross-cultural situations, repulsion is in constant conflict with desire. The sisters represented both sides of the equation. Although White-Parks does not dwell on this aspect of the Eaton relationship, the materials are certainly there for further research.



Mapping 1996

W.H. New

At the beginning of Gerald Lynch's new edition of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches* appears a "map" of Mariposa. The streets are carefully laid out, the sites indicated where fictional episodes "take place." In a way, this impulse to map—to map there and here, then and now, and maybe a world to come as well—epitomizes the literary publications of 1996. The desire to make relationships clear, to explain *why* the world is as it is: that seems to have been of overwhelming concern—even if it led sometimes to a certain arbitrariness of solution. The illusion of *knowing all* took a kind of precedence over the will to enjoy ambiguity.

Consider some of the other reprints of the year. Besides Leacock's text (which comes from Borealis, complete with critical essays), Tecumseh Press published Agnes Maule Machar's *Roland Graeme: Knight* from 1892, a didactic account of the American social gospel movement, and Basil King's *The Garden of Charity* from 1903, in which a bigamous Nova Scotian dies, leaving two wives, who courageously if sentimentally resolve to bring up his/their one child together. I admire the editing here, and as always the desire to know more about the past; but some texts really don't reward rereading. I enjoyed D.W. Higgins's *Tales of a Pioneer Journalist* (Heritage House) more—journalistic accounts of history reprinted from Victoria newspapers of the 1860s; and the 54 excerpts from Roderick Haig-Brown's writings that his daughter Valerie collected in *To Know a River* (Douglas & McIntyre)—including one of my favourite of his essays, "The Nature of Estuaries"—though in a number of cases the excerpts do read a lot like duty columns, stylish but less far-reaching than one might hope. I am less persuaded by the essays that Arthur Davis has collected as *George Grant and the Subversion of Modernity* (UTP); though Davis earnestly argues that Grant sought a religion to replace the "religion of progress," what troubles me is that Grant seemed to want everyone to be like him: that's order of a peculiarly limiting kind.

Collections of letters seemed also to serve a desire to *know all*, and I found the edition of the 266 personal letters between Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp (*The Correspondence. . . 1932-1939*, ed. Robert Denham, UTP) to be, frankly, an intrusion into two perfectly ordinary people's private lives. Yes, the letters provide insights into their circle, their devotion, their interdependence, and Helen Kemp's role in Frye's life; and yes, the "Collected Works of Frye" is not truly "collected" without them; but does a reader need to be cast as voyeur? Or is it just temporal proximity that worries me here? I seem to have fewer qualms about reading the selected letters of Catharine Parr Traill (*I Bless You in My Heart*, ed. Carl Ballstadt et al., UTP); the insights here into the specifics of pioneering, into the nascent

publishing industry, and into the intricacies of family hopes and hurts all inform Traill's (and Moodie's) published works—perhaps the difference lies in the editorial decision to print a *selection.* Similarly, Allan Pritchard's admirable edition of the *Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney 1862-5* (UBC Press) also provides some fascinating insights into colonial history, and into the competing circles of social power in early Victoria; Verney, with his upper-class English family connections (to Florence Nightingale and Lord Shaftesbury, among others), was contemptuous of Natives and of local politicians such as Sebastian Helmcken ("gross, treasonable, insolvent"), dismissive of American notions of equality, and keen to have B.C.'s first governor, Sir James Douglas, dismissed, perhaps with himself in mind for a position of favour and power. William Christian edited George Grant's *Selected Letters* for UTP: they occasionally reveal a sense of conflict within Grant, as well as between him and the world.

A different kind of selection governs a range of 1996 anthologies. Oberon's *Coming Attractions 96,* ed. Diane Schoemperlen, includes stories by Murray Logan, which experiment interestingly with point of view, though they do not always lead satisfyingly to narrative conclusion; U Ottawa Press published *The Quebec Anthology 1930-1990,* ed. Matt Cohen and Wayne Grady, an historical range of translated texts; Joel Maki's *Let the Drums Be Your Heart* (Douglas & McIn-tyre) introduces 40 "New Native Voices," none of whom (despite their quests and their dissatisfactions) yet captivates attention; Douglas Glover's *Best Canadian Stories 96* (Oberon) gathers nine writers, of whom Thomas Wharton (on the categories of the novel), Connie Gault (for sheer liveliness), and Alan Cumyn (for a wonderful story called "Survival Golf") stand out; Olive Senior's *The Journey Prize Anthology* (M&S) includes a good story by David Elias; and the retrospective, celebratory *The PQL Reader* (Porcupine's Quill), edited by Tim Inkster and John Metcalf, demonstrates by its selection from PQL writers—Adderson, Blaise, Fraser, Heighton, Elise Levine, Urquhart—just how important this press has been in advancing the art of contemporary short fiction. Poetry anthologies were, on the whole I think, of less interest in 1996. I like Carmelita McGrath's own poetry in her collection of Newfoundland women writers, *Signatures* (Killick); and the baseball poems that William Humber and John St James collected for UTP; and Smaro Kamboureli's continuing consideration of the range of the multicultural character in *Making a Difference* (Oxford). Yet in some ways none of these anthologies matches the quirky range of Peter White's *It Pays to Play: British Columbia in Postcards 1950s-1980s* (Arsenal Pulp); it is not the quality of art that impresses here, but the lively analysis of social mores: "while postcards are banal," the editor writes, "their fictionalized quotations of reality are not altogether innocent." Derrida runs up against Bermingham here, in a clever study of the ideologies that the prevailing myths and symbols of a given time project; there are sharp comments here on nature, ecology, and industry, on gender hierarchies, and on the culture of the family and the car.

This recognition of the relation between history and the present—perhaps even of an integration between the two—governs the strategy of a number of works of fiction, prose, and poetry as well. (And drama, as in Guy Vanderhaeghe's *Dancock's Dance* [Blizzard], about a soldier in an insane asylum who has to come to terms with his own actions in wartime.) Perhaps most obviously, it generates the tensions of both Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (M&S) and Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy* (M&S). To be clear, I declare right off my huge enthusiasm for the latter, my reluctant distance from the former. Unlike

a lot of readers, I could never connect with *Alias Grace*—nor, for that matter, with another book that attracted some people's attention, Ann-Marie MacDonald's pioneer saga *Fall On Your Knees* (Knopf). To be fair, Atwood takes substantial risks with this new book, and significantly extends the range of her prose style, creating this time a fuller male character than her works have previously managed, as well as a female with an imaginably documentable history, a woman victimized by desire as much as by social regulation. The woman is "Grace Marks," the celebrated murderess (or was she?) whom Susanna Moodie once attempted to free from incarceration. Extensively researched, the novel recounts—through Grace's relentlessly sequential talks with her doctor—the life that led (perhaps) to murder; and then the narrative turns its attention to its subplot and closes in a kind of parody. Those who admire the book are intrigued by the mystery; I found far more interesting the novel's enquiries into the nineteenth-century "sciences" of the mind: phrenology, mesmerism, spiritualism, and the like. Indeed, Atwood's interest in science—ecology, archeology, string theory—remains yet to be adequately examined.

The Englishman's Boy, however, I think is nothing short of brilliant. Juxtaposing two stories—one tells of the title character, and of the events in which he became involved, events in the US that crossed the Medicine Line and led up to the Cypress Hills Massacre in southern Saskatchewan in the 1800s. The other records the quest of a young Canadian scriptwriter in 1920s Hollywood, who (like the Englishman's boy, in some respects) comes under the influence of the local moguls; handed an assignment, he sets out to find an old reclusive cowboy, in order to get him to tell his real-life story, for money; a writer, he then takes over the old man's life—but also finds himself resisting taking it over, or rewriting, with moral and monetary consequences for them both. Is the old man (with a Scots name) the "Englishman's boy"? I don't think so; but I think he's been along on the trip, himself noting down the lives of others, until the nature of "real life" becomes indistinguishable from narrative. Who then is the listener? And to what ends? This is a narrative of narratives, rich stylistically, rich in implication; read it and marvel.

The *Selected Stories* of Alice Munro and Mavis Gallant (both M&S) separately range across each writer's extraordinary work; each book offers opportunities to savour how perception, in the hands of an accomplished stylist, turns into understanding. Short story collections by newer writers do not yet have either the history or the range of these, but among such writers, the works of several stand out: Michael Kenyon's *Durable Tumblers* (Oolichan), with its seemingly intuitive recognition of hurt and isolation; Eden Robinson's *Traplines* (HarperCollins), a series of devastating glimpses into the lives of teenagers who are torn into violence by their surroundings, their families, their friends, and their divided loyalties; Keath Fraser's *Telling My Love Lies* (Porcupine's Quill), a unified collection wittily designed as the creative (and competitive) accomplishments of the members of a book club; Andrew Pyper's *Kiss Me* (Porcupine's Quill), with its portraits of under-30s youths and their discussions of sexuality, inadequacy, violence, and the impermanence, the *disarrangements*, of love. There were also able, if less universally compelling, narratives by Marilyn Gear Pilling, Isabel Huggan, Meeka Walsh, and others, and the collections of stories by James Reaney and L.M. Montgomery, reprints and rearrangements, are tributes to the continuing interest in these writers' works.

Once again: that endeavour to map the past, or to redesign its relation with the present. So many fictions took up this strategy, so often without quite making it work. Daphne Marlatt's *Taken* (Anansi)

comes alive when it tells of the past, of the wartime separations of the narrator's parents' generation, when battle, prison camp, distance, and the Coral Sea separated Australia from the Malay Peninsula; but the "present-time" story, of the narrator's separation from her lover, provides only an intellectual counterpoint. So with Anita Rau Badami's *Tamarind Mem* (Viking), in which a young woman seeks to find out the conditions in India that made her mother a rebel. So with William Chalmers' *No More Worthy* (Oolichan), about the James gang in the Okanagan, and Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here* (Knopf), about race and lesbian love. Peter Trower's *Dead Man's Ticket* (Harbour) demonstrates an accurate ear for 1950s idiom, but puts it awkwardly into represented conversation; Paul-Michel Ratté's *The Gathering of the Aspects* (Cormorant) engages earnestly with apocalypse; Leo Simpson's *Sailor Man* (Porcupine's Quill) seeks the comedy of elegant language and an extravagant plot. Timothy Findley's lyrical novella *You Went Away* (HarperCollins), about family loss during World War II, is more engaging, if not always, it feels, precise.

More sustained are the translations of Lise Bissonette's *Affairs of Art* (Anansi) and particularly François Gravel's *Ostend* (Cormorant), the latter a close analysis of the way a Montreal boy becomes involved in political ideologies following the death of JFK (Che, Jimi Hendrix, Allende, Lennon, Mao), but who finds that defying the system (which he does) is often as self-indulgent as the system being defied. But there were other successes as well. I enjoyed the energetic individuality of Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (Cormorant), with its lively portrayal of an outport community; and David Adams Richards' *Hope in the Desperate Hour* (M&S), about pretense, and the sources of moral fortitude. Matt Cohen's *Last Seen* (Knopf) represents, I think, a major breakthrough stylistically, telling a moving, funny, sad, fragmented story about a man's slow acceptance of his brother's death. Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* (M&S) is something of a tour-de-force, juxtaposing two separate narratives whose centre is the Holocaust: the survivors deal with memory; the children of survivors deal with the impact of memory *and history*, and with the (moral, social) challenges that face them as they deal with the fact of living in a post-Holocaust world. Nancy Huston's *Slow Emergencies* (Little Brown)—her own translation of *La virevolte*—is another narrative whose effect derives from its stylistic measure; it tells, seemingly simply, the life of a dancer, from the sexual enjoyment of love, through childbirth, friendship, jealousy, and separation, to some form of reconciliation—but the story reads as though it were being *danced*, the choreography of being alive serving as a way of expressing the central character's relation with experience: not of resolving it (indeed, her children end up repeating, re-enacting, the forms of removal that she has danced), but of accepting the distances out of which her life is composed. And Gail Anderson-Dargatz's wonderful *A Cure for Death by Lightning* (Knopf) is in a category by itself. Like other books, it is a narrative about youth and the back country, and like other books it tells of molestation, attack, protection, strangeness (Coyote?), treatment, recovery, and access at the last to friendship, self, and power—but in addition it is told through recipes. If Huston asked the reader to dance, Anderson-Dargatz asks the reader to taste: in this access to memory, entire lives come to life.

David Helwig's *A Random Gospel* (Oberon) wrestles with related issues: the Christian gospels and life's mysteries in part; Gregory Scofield's *Native Canadiana* (Polestar)—a series of vernacular "songs from the urban rez"—wrestles with street life, street language, and the disparities

between inheritance and environment; Roo Borson's *Water Memory* (M&S) evokes a sense of relationship with other writers: McKay, Zwicky, Bowering, McFadden; Crispin Elsted (*Climate and the Affections*, Sono Nis), Charles Lillard (*Shadow Weather*, Sono Nis), Al Purdy (*Rooms for Rent in the Outer Planets*, Harbour), and Dennis Lee (*Nightwatch*, M&S) also produced volumes of new and selected poems. Purdy's occasional comments on the nature of poetry punctuate this selection from the last three decades; and Lillard's occasional demons counterpoint the poet's engagements with B.C. coast and history; while they fasten repeatedly on the specific, Elsted and Lee produce more extended, meditative works—Lee's new "Blue Psalm" series being particularly striking. Close observations of natural cycles centre John Reibetanz's *Midland Swimmer* and Mike Barnes's *Calm Jazz Sea* (both from Brick Books). Reibetanz ranges from science and language to painting and parks, from sex to street scenes and political morality; fishing is Barnes's main metaphor, which the poetry takes to the observation of relationships—male-female arguments and reconnections, male-male recognitions of lust, pity, concern. Steve McCaffery in *The Cheat of Words* (ECW) pursues the artifice of language; Lorna Crozier, in the less successful *A Saving Grace* (M&S), tries to reanimate Sinclair Ross's character Mrs. Bentley; strong volumes appeared from Margo Button (her text an agonizingly personal account of her son's schizophrenia and suicide) and from Ted Blodgett. Marilyn Dumont, in a fine volume called *A Really Good Brown Girl* (Brick), writes a deeply committed Métis statement about place, language, race, exclusion, and education; the poems include reflections on railway dreams and notions of a united Canada, with a "reply" to Sir John A. Macdonald, and a brilliant third section of protest poems proving especially powerful. And in a scintillating series of nonsense rhymes for children, *Eenie Meenie Manitoba* (Kids Can), Robert Heidbreder proves once again that the joy of language lies at least in part in the rhythms of the imagination.

Among reference and critical books of note—a class of books that by definition tries to make present sense of the past—are dictionaries (W.B. Hamilton's lively *Place Names of Atlantic Canada*, UTP; volume 4 of M.K. Aubrey's *Place Names of Alberta*, U Calgary P, which is unfortunately undermined, like the earlier volumes in the Alberta series, by the format in which it has been published; and the useful volume 31 of *Who's Who in Canada*, UTP); bibliographies (Robert Lecker's *CWTW Fiction 12*, ECW, with extended commentary especially on Birdsell, Kinsella, and Richards); cultural data-bases (N.M. Distad's solid, fact-filled analysis of categories of 19th-century Canadian papers and magazines, in J.D. Vann and R.T. VanArsdel's *Periodicals of Queen Victoria's Empire*, UTP; and Rosemarie Tovell's *A New Class of Art*, National Archives, an account of printmaking between 1877 and 1920, by such painters as Homer Watson, Clarence Gagnon, Walter Phillips, Dorothy Stevens, and C.W. Jefferys); anthologies (Ian McKay's edition of Colin McKay's *For a Working Class Culture in Canada* [Memorial University History Department], a collection of writings from the period 1897-1939 on economics, trade unions, Marx, the failure of Bolshevism, capitalism and property, and the degree to which women are women's foes in the labour movement). Lien Chao's essay on Chinese-Canadians' modes of cultural communication is one of the most arresting of the statements collected in Winfried Siemerling's *Writing Ethnicity* (ECW). Other critics brought psychoanalysis and phenomenology to bear on Atwood, religion to bear on Davies, Glenn Gould to bear on Mazo de la Roche, and (in Dennis

Duffy's instructive *A World Under Sentence*, ECW) James Fenimore Cooper to bear on John Richardson's regionalism. Irene Gammel's *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism* (UCalgary P) brings solid close commentary to a reading of Grove and Dreiser; informed by a theory of the sexuality of naturalism, this critic writes in a particularly illuminating way about *A Search for America*. In *On Coasts of Eternity* (Oolichan), J.R. (Tim) Struthers brings together the first booklength collection of essays on the work of Jack Hodgins. And in *A Celebration of Canada's Arts 1930-1970* (Canadian Scholars' Press), Glen Carruthers and Gordana Lazarevich assemble a series of cross-disciplinary essays on the arts: especially on music, literature, broadcast policy, and the corporate world of the 1930s and postwar decades.

In works of general prose, where one might anticipate unbounded range, 1996 saw yet another desire to map the past more than to hazard plans for the future, at least in the few dozen books that I had the opportunity to read. Whether dealing with art, local history, Native identities, ecosystems, women's lives, class, or other subjects, writers seemed to be trying to find order in the present by trying to prevent anything else from going wrong. Some works were frankly recuperative, such as Brian Maracle's *Back on the Rez: Finding the Way Home* (Viking), a well-written recovery of the writer's Iroquois post, and (in its expression of a desire for the longhouse) a personal reassertion of the power of community that it might be possible to experience if *community territory* can ever itself be reestablished or reclaimed. Lily Chow's *Sojourners in the North* (Caitlin), though it badly needs further editing, reclaims another forgotten or suppressed history; gathering available records, the book reestablishes the presence of Chinese settlers in northern British Columbia—what is now needed is an extended analysis of the importance of their contributions to the culture at large. In a way, works such as Richard and Sydney Cannings' *British Columbia: A Natural History* (Greystone/Douglas & McIntyre) also claim to locate a community territory—or, by bringing scientist and photographer together to focus on the intricately related world of land, water, animal, and vegetation—they recall the necessity of the community of nature to ecological survival.

Personal encounters with the world do not always prove so engaging. Pierre Elliott Trudeau's essays, collected in *Against the Current* (M&S) continue to make politically arresting reading. But, oddly, Kristjana Gunnars' *Reading Marcel Proust* (Red Deer College P) and Marie-Claire Blais's *American Notebooks* (Talon) are likely more interesting for the student of other books by Gunnars and Blais than for what they say here. Joan Murray's *Confessions of a Curator* (Dundurn), by contrast, has some fascinating, forthright things to say about foreign condescension and the taste that once shaped Canadian cultural institutions; and John Herd Thompson's essay on Canada and cultural sovereignty, in S.J. Randall and H.W. Konrad's *Nafta in Transition* (U Calgary P), offers some cautionary models of current economic and political trends. Neither attention nor inattention, of course, guarantees objectivity. Allen Sapp's autobiographical essay in *I Heard the Drums* (Stoddart), which contextualizes the 75 paintings reproduced here, somewhat plaintively asks if he is looked at because he is a painter or because he is an Indian. Robert Lanning, in *The National Album* (Carleton UP), traces—largely through statistical analysis—the relation between the "collective biography" (the biographical dictionary, for example, or a book such as Lisa Hobbs Birnie's *Western Lights* [Raincoast], a collection of brief, somewhat impressionistic lives of fourteen contempo-

rary British Columbians) and the shaping of middleclass values. Chris Gudgeon looks at Milton Acorn's resistance to middleclass values, at least at one level, in *Out of This World* (Arsenal Pulp). Stephanie Kirkwood Walker, in *This Woman in Particular* (Wilfrid Laurier UP), though there are a number of typos in the copy I read, nonetheless raises interesting questions about the character of the *assumptions* that have been brought to the writing of the life of Emily Carr: was she insider or outsider, a person of soul, a nationalist, an interloper, a nature-lover—and what do these characterizations say about the person, and about the biographer?

Categories often coalesce, of course, so that Robert Stacey and Hunter Bishop's magnificent *J.E.H. MacDonald: Designer* (Carleton UP) is both a visually splendid catalogue of MacDonald's career as an illustrator of book jackets, menus, Christmas cards, and the like, and a document in the history of book design in Canada, for MacDonald's illustrations of McArthur, Stephen, Sullivan, Salverson, and Johnson, among others, stand as benchmarks of accomplishment. David P. Silcox's *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David B. Milne* (UTP), likewise, ably traces the painter's life, from childhood, through adolescence, to his life in New York (vividly illustrated), his experiments with "non-colours," his wartime experience, and (in to my mind the most absorbing passage of the entire book) his less-than-happy relationships with his would-be backers, the Masseys. Matthew Teitelbaum's collection of essays on *Paterson Ewen* (Douglas & McIntyre), with an introduction by Michael Ondaatje, admirably draws further attention to this painter. George F. MacDonald's *Haida Art* (Douglas & McIntyre/Canadian Museum of Civilization) brilliantly moves beyond cataloguing artifacts to take account of the individuality of the artists (Charles Edenshaw, Bill Reid, Robert Davidson), and the character of social conventions: myth, shamanism, social organization, warfare, trade, feasting. Grant Arnold, Monika Kin Gagnon, and Doreen Jensen, in *Topographies* (Douglas & McIntyre), bring together three separate visions of current B.C. art, chief among which (to my eye) are the works of Jin-me Yoon (inserting Asian faces into local scenes), Susan Point (for contemporary Salish design), Judith Currelly (for an extraordinary 1994 triptych called *Landmarks: Tracks, Maps, Memories*), and Janis Bowley (reinterpreting the conventions of landscape by siting it against and through the urban). David Morrison and Georges-Hébert Germain's *Inuit: Glimpses of an Arctic Past* (Canadian Museum of Civilization), where one might have expected to find similar range, provides information and some fine illustrations, but tends to read rather archly, not pushing beyond the limits of museum catalogue format.

Another Arctic book, however, does reach widely; Richard C. Davis's *Lobsticks and Stone Cairns* (U Calgary P) looks at the North as a place, and conceives of the North as an idea, and then goes on to sketch the lives of a hundred Arctic persons, looking for their "landmarks": John Ross to John Hornby, Matonabbee to Henry Larsen, R.M. Ballantyne to Catharine McClellan, Franklin, Belcher, James, Bering, Peary, Sverdrup, Davis, Frobisher, and none more strange than Warburton Pike! Davis ranges widely; so does Arthur Ray, in *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began* (Key Porter), an illustrated, accessible history of the First Nations. Jan Peterson, in *Cathedral Grove* (Oolichan) looks at the world much more closely, at a single forest on Vancouver Island, its survival related in part to the work of Martin Allerdale Grainger. Robert McDonald's *Making Vancouver 1863-1913* (UBC Press) usefully distinguishes between class and status, emphasizing the latter as the working category of Canadian social

power. Cole Harris's *The Resettlement of British Columbia* (UBC Press), analyzing the historical geography of distance, disease, and multiculturalism, demonstrates how elegantly and gracefully the social sciences *can* be written, and how much historical data there is on subjects too often considered to have been invented in 1995.

Three remaining books, all more personal, and all ecologically committed, conclude this mapping of 1996 publications. Don Gayton's *Landscapes of the Interior* (New Society Publications) is a series of meditative essays on the nature of nature and the need for "strangeness," both in the external landscape and in the human spirit. "There is a subtle coherency and trueness to the way nature arranges its objects in space, and its trees on this mountain ridge," Gayton writes, appreciating ecosystems, acknowledging the life of cities, enthusing about Jane Jacobs and cowboy fiction, and celebrating, finally, love. *Deeds/Abstracts: The History of a London Lot* (Brick), by the late painter Greg Curnoe, is one of the year's most idiosyncratic and fascinating books. It traces the particular history of Curnoe's own studio and home (38 Weston Street in London)—by description, by ownership transfer, by Indian treaty, from 1797 to 1992. A kind of year-by-year directory of occupancy, together with appendices naming successive occupants (Weston, Gumb, Bartlett, Knowles), Curnoe's book attempts to understand the idea of history not through broad generalizations but through its local detail. The cumulative effect of his enquiries is to question the very legality of ownership, to call attention to the ambiguous nature of "deeds" and "abstracts" (and of *misdeeds* and *the abstract*), and so to question the conclusions about history—the conventional map—that still serves generally as National Truth. The final book in this survey, E.N. Anderson's *Bird of Paradox* (Hancock House), which edits the previously unpublished writings of the anthropologist Wilson Duff, in some ways takes up this disquisition. Duff's name will be familiar to readers of Phyllis Webb as well as students of Haida culture. These writings, not always rising beyond notebook jottings, nevertheless invite participation in a personal attempt to unlock meaning in a world that for Duff often remained persistently obscure. Freud governs some of his attempts to understand—to understand sexuality, often; so does Raven, in a series of almost incantatory poems. Duff, as the writings, and Anderson's extensive introduction, make clear, tried hard to find pattern ("We say that the basis of culture . . . is the shaping of symbols. What is most crucial is that the symbols we share have the form of patterns"). He also knew that the patterns he found were fundamentally a fiction, a recognition that articulated for him the dilemma he never knew how to resolve ("Art is the making of beautiful disguises," he observed, "and its essence is the system of disguises. . . Style is the contrived answer to the brute inside").

Academic Debates

Margery Fee

A new interest in English as a discipline, in what constitutes a discipline, and in the social function of the university has produced a group of books that add to the work of Edward Said, Gerald Graff, Terry Eagleton, Etienne Balibar, Pierre Bourdieu, and Gauri Viswanathan, among many others. Clearly these books are an attempt to answer questions about new trends in the university, including a rise in interdisciplinarity, the impact of theory on many Humanities subjects, the cutting of university budgets even in the face of rising enrollments, and the debates about Western culture/ Eurocentrism in the curriculum.

Further, Bourdieu's assertion that universities exist to reproduce social stratification rather than to challenge received notions has encouraged a certain self-consciousness in the field.

The founders of the universities studied in A.B. McKillop's *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario 1791-1951* certainly agreed with Bourdieu: all "regardless of religious affiliation, saw the fundamental purpose of their institution to be the continued preservation of a social order that because of its British and Loyalist origins was more conservative than that of the American colonies" (xviii). This massive and fascinating book (568 pages of text, 50 figures and tables, 112 pages of notes and 31 of index) sensibly takes an "issues" approach, tracing such matters as university governance, the woman question, and nationalism through time. A complementary focus on crises such as wartime, funding cuts, enrollment spurts and various media-driven calls for the resignation of outspoken professors reveals the faultlines in university administrations. McKillop's overall theme is the struggle between those who saw universities as preservers of Christian morality and guardians of tradition and those who saw them as agents "of social and intellectual transformation firmly rooted in the industrial order".

Heather Murray's *Working in English: History, Institution, Resources* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1996) is divided into three subsections, with the headings of the subtitle. The first section contains three chapters, the first of which gives a detailed account of the controversies swirling around the appointment of the first professor of English at Toronto, W.J. Alexander, appointed in 1889. The second examines the Margaret Eaton School of Literature and Expression, a school for women in Toronto which flourished between 1907 and 1926, focusing on physical education, dramatic arts and literature. The third examines, through a focus on the ideas of Charles G. D. Roberts, some of the backgrounds to literary theory in Canada. The second section contains six chapters: on women in English; close reading as a critical and pedagogical technique; the relations between canon and curriculum; an examination of the "psychoanalytic classroom" as gendered; an analysis of those staples of literary studies pedagogy, the lecture and the seminar; and finally, the debate as the structure as academic life. The final section contains a bibliographic essay on English studies in Canada to 1945 followed by a chronological handlist of works on the same subject from 1945-1991, briefly annotated to indicate content when the title does not do so. Murray's accounts are informed by critical theory, including the ground-breaking work on pedagogy of feminist theorists and the most recent work on education as an institution. It is also full of fascinating anecdotes about the history of the university in Canada, particularly the University of Toronto, and rewarding moments of mordant wit, as where Murray ascribes the rise of the "feminist authored English department murder mystery" to the resistance in the discipline to women in positions other than those of transcendent muse or submissive student. It provides a remarably variegated, stimulating and theoretically informed survey of the field.

David Simpson's *The Academic Postmodern and the Rule of Literature: A Report on Half Knowledge* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) argues that "we risk mistaking the internal migration of terms and priorities among the disciplines inside the academy for a radical redescription of the world outside the academy." What we see as new, he feels, is "not . . . the world in general, but rather the degree to which 'radical' philosophers, social scientists, historians, anthropologists, historians of science, and even some scientists are prepared to accept the traditional vocabularies of literary criticism as viable for their own descriptive

tasks." The move to the fictive, the anecdotal and the personal in many disciplines, in reaction to any concept of the universal, has at least some of its origins in the Romantic period, and Simpson argues for the rethinking of what this means for our concepts of the postmodern. He cautions that "we would be foolish to pretend that little narratives are true alternatives to grand ones rather than chips off a larger block whose shape we can no longer see because we are not looking." The book ends by examining the popularity of the "postmodern postdoctoral romance," including such works as Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Carol Shield's *Swann* (reprinted as *Mary Swann* in 1993) and A.S. Byatt's *Possession*.

Stanley Fish, in *Professional Correctness: Literary Studies and Political Change* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995 The Clarendon lectures for 1993), asserts (as he has elsewhere) that academics cannot act as public intellectuals, at least in the United States in the late twentieth century, because the structures of power in modern society prohibit contact between the academy and the public sphere. He suggests that if academics want to reach the public, they insist that their university presidents take up the challenge, or better still, act like any other interest group and hire a lobbyist.

Three recently published collections deal with the study of disciplinarity and literary studies in India: *Literary India: Comparative Studies in Aesthetics, Colonialisim, and Culture*, edited by Patrick Colm Hogan and Lalita Pandit (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1995), *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India*, edited by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1993) and *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, edited by Partha Chatterjee (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995). *Literary India* examines basic concerns in Indian and Western literary theory and aesthetics with a view to expanding the possibilities of comparative and post-colonial literary critique to examine not only those texts that "write back" to Western texts, but also indigenous literary traditions and noncolonial contemporary literary concerns in non Western literatures. The collection includes interviews with Anita Desai and Homi Bhabha, a discussion of literary translation into English, as well as studies of similarities between 8th century Sanskrit romances and Shakespeare's late plays, between contemporary Indian cinema and Sophocles, between Asian folk and popular theatre and Brecht's epic theatre, between Kipling's *Kim* and Tagore's *Gora*, as well as theoretical articles by Ashis Nandy and Patrick Colm Hogan.

The Lie of the Land is not a study of literary texts as such, but of the ways in which these were and are deployed in Indian classrooms, sometimes quite specifically located classrooms. The authors, including Gauri Viswanathan, Meenakshi Mukherjee, and Gayatri Spivak, cover a range of topics, from the Indian resistance to theory, through studies of particular texts, such as *A House for Mr Biswas, Nectar in a Sieve and Mansfield Park*, official education policy, the British Council, social attitudes to English to pedagical concerns.

Texts of Power comes out of work done at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences in Calcutta, where four of the six authors including the editor are employed. It collects "exploratory studies into the genealogy of . . . contemporary intellectual modernity in India," with chapters on printing/publishing, art, political science, child rearing, cartography and history.

Many Mansions

Iain Higgins

In my father's house are many mansions, Jesus is said to have said, and though he wasn't talking about poetry, his words

apply nonetheless. The house of poetry, which until recently has been pre-occupied by the earthly Father and his traditions, truly does have many mansions or dwelling places (from the Latin *manere*, to remain); they range in kind from the architectonically elaborate constructs of the epic through the exquisite private chambers of the formal lyric to the makeshift lean-tos of the free-verse anecdote—not to mention the disparate antechambers and outbuildings set up in protest by dissenting insiders and independent extraterritorialists, whose irregular ranks include men as well as women poets. Poetic traditions, in this view, are nothing so much as sprawling mental domiciles under perpetual (de/re-) construction on a singular, semi-autonomous site without location in Newtonian spacetime and open to all who can crack the local building codes.

One measure of a poet, whichever codes she works with and whatever her stance towards the Fatherdome's presumptive and overarching reach, is the habitability of her verbal dwelling places, the capacity of their cadences, their silences, their soundings to get inside you as you read to get inside them, unsettling you even as they welcome you in. If a poet's poems are places that readers can and will go back to or through because taken by the words, sometimes against their will, then these shared spaces are on their way to becoming permanent structures. Much of Milton, for example, rubs me the wrong way as a human being, and yet parts of *Paradise Lost* have a permanence independent of their disagreeable theology or reactionary sexual politics, since they have what Dr. Johnson called the force of poetry, the irresistible power to dislodge me as a reader from my present place and transport me into the poem's commodious space—which power, incidentally, is not simply a function of poetic scale: some of Sappho's or Li Po's lyrics have the same effect, as do early English songs like "Westron Wynde" or "Sumer is icumen in."

The direct experience of that power typically and perhaps ironically requires mediation, but mediation of a sort that clears a way towards the poems themselves. Sometimes the clearing will be critical, the result of someone else's published meditations and advocacy (Kenner, Perloff, and Dragland spring to mind as exemplary go-betweens), but as often as not it will be editorial, the result of selective representation, either in an anthology or in a separate volume. Anthologies serve a real need, of course, but they do not serve most good poets any better than does the publication of a collected poems; for if the former can easily mis- as well as under-represent a poet's distinctiveness, given that anthologies by definition have their own designs, the latter too often resembles an archaeological digsite, where the deadweight of a life's work obscures or crushes the odd genuine achievement. Hence the value of a selected poems: it offers readers the contours and context of an oeuvre within which to appreciate the pleasures and insights peculiar to the poet in question, thereby confirming (or not) earlier guests in their original impressions and attracting new company as well.

In the past year or so, some ten selecteds have come my way, most of them by poets now in their forties or fifties (Bringhurst, di Michele, Elsted, Geddes, Jiles, Lee, Shikatani, Whiteman), a couple by poets whose lives are done or whose reputations have long since been made (Nowlan, Purdy). Commemoration and reassertion are the primary aims of the latter selections: remember me, they say; my stanzas (from the Italian for *room*) can still accommodate you, whatever the attractions of the mansions built by newer wordsmiths. In contrast, the selections by the younger poets are at once retrospective and prospecting, attempting not only to define

for each an oeuvre that will both confirm and expand a circle of readers, but also to stake a claim for the possible permanence of certain word-dwellings. Literary forecasting is an older practice than economic, and about as accurate, but if I were to play building inspector and no-stakes roller, I would wager that Bringhurst, Lee, and Purdy will be seen as significant architects when I am no longer around to care whether I have lost or won. Which is not to belittle the work of the others—Elsted and Whiteman in particular and di Michele and Geddes at times write compellingly—since most of them offer the modest but revitalising pleasures of resting in well-made, deeply-felt, or morally-worthy wordworlds. What follows is in any case only one reader's likings and impressions, set down in full cognizance of the Chaucerian maxim, *Diverse folk diversely they sayn.*

Every place-in-time has its poetic eccentrics, and they are therefore central there, though typically little known. Now and here on the west coast two such poets are Robert Bringhurst and Crispin Elsted, and the measure of their at once local and larger eccentrality is a pair of selecteds that complement each other like the foci of an ellipse—or more accurately, like the major and the minor modes of an idealized poetic scale. Bringhurst's creative reach and achievement are greater, that is, while Elsted's smaller ones (and it is no insult to call them smaller, since Elsted would be the first to recognise Bringhurst's capaciousness) sometimes take in what the former's do not (ordinary erotic love, for example); but both have composed poems that move those who care to dwell in them: releasing the breath, unfurling the tongue, refocussing the eye, attuning the ear, opening the mind, steadying the hand, flexing the heart, and enlarging a part of language and the world. Few readers would ask for more.

Elsted's *Climate and the Affections: Poems: 1970-1995* (Sono Nis, 1996, $12.95) offers only twenty-one poems in its ninety-odd pages, not even a poem a year for the quarter century of making that the volume documents. "I have gathered / what I can gather in one hand and spread it / on the floor at my feet," Elsted says in one poem, speaking perhaps of what Stevens called "The Planet on the Table," both of which images acknowledge the "affluence . . . / In the poverty of their words." More than ever, I am grateful for such affluent reticence; it is a rare quality amongst writers, and marks Elsted out as a resident alien on the poetry scene, where some poets publish books as often as Conrad Black acquires newspapers. What most distinguishes Elsted's published handful is the unpredictability of the poems. There is no such thing as "an Elsted poem," the sort of piece that reads like the poet writing like himself instead of writing (late Layton, for instance, as well as early); rather, there is considerable formal variety, and the poems assume a reader able and willing to follow the intelligent, extended play of lineation and syntax; you never get that sinking feeling after a couple of lines that you've seen this poem before, that your temporary dwelling is just another seat on a routine poetic route followed by a writer on autopilot. This instead: "Someone playing various instruments skillfully / in another room, someone intent on scales, / modes, privations of tunings, someone / living in the possibilities of song, plays, / plays. . . ." Where Elsted's selection is somewhat less varied is in its tonal range, a range that, like the book's reticence, has a visual echo in its evocative cover: the title and author's name in black inline capitals on a grey background neatly frame and themselves echo a black-and-white photograph of a leafless copse, a leaf-strewn ground, an unpeopled bench; the result is a picture paradox bespeaking the richness of limits, the poignant fullness of the biological arc—unique, final, and yet recurrent—towards absence.

Bringhurst's *The Calling: Selected Poems 1970-1995* (McClelland & Stewart, 1995, $16.99) resembles Elsted's book in articulating the richness of reticence: it is "no more than a spindrift of language," suggests its author, "a planktonic bloom of thought, on the surface of the flood, instead of anything so fancy and consoling as an ark." But what a bloom, what a drift; for me personally, this is one of *the* books of post-WW II English-language poetry, built—like plankton and unlike arks—to last, and far too bio-poetically diverse to appreciate fully in a brief review. Indeed, there is nothing like it at all anywhere else in English, a sure sign that Bringhurst has understood that a poet's purest task is to achieve that originality which comes of a profound dialogue with one's forebears, paying them homage while yet finding out places they could not reach (in "The Book of Silences," for example, or "New World Suite No. 3"). The Swedish Academy has in recent decades several times reaffirmed the high calling of poetry by giving its literary prize to poets, including a couple of Anglophones whose work is certainly no worthier than Bringhurst's of such recognition; Bringhurst clearly shares that rarified vision (audition?) of poetry with laureates since Milosz in 1980, but differs from all of them in being an eco- rather than a socio-poet, raising his exquisitely chiselled and stunningly spun word-dwellings within a radically different conception of the spacetime of history and tradition: not only are Bringhurst's poems more actively, consistently, and deeply engaged with non-Western thought- and word-worlds, recording elemental conversations with worthies dead only in body; they also pointedly neglect to centre themselves in the lyric ego, or even sometimes in the human sphere; whereas many of us habitually truncate the phrase "human being" to "human," Bringhurst effectively truncates it to "being," and his poems haunt an ontic domain unconstrained by the anthropic: "The mind is light rain gathered / on the ice-scarred rock, a crumpled mirror." Not for him the stock-in-trade poetic personae of sensitive soul, wild bore, or hardboiled egghead; rather, a set of unlikely, often archaic avatars and totems, amongst them toad, squid, and the stone bone of the earth's breathing body. The result of this anti-Viconian and stateless independence is a book of fiercely intelligent poems that regard their readers as certain birds do their watchers: like northern flickers, they are at home in the air, the trees, and on the ground, refusing to be known except in motion and only then if you dwell with them as they go.

It is hard to think of a poet more unlike Bringhurst than Dennis Lee, whose *Nightwatch: New & Selected Poems 1968-1996* (McClelland & Stewart, 1996, $15.99) is crammed with the very poetic stuff that the former's poems seemingly repudiate ("true" confessions, for one); yet it is also possible to think of their work as traversing similar ground from opposite directions, with opposite sensibilities, and in opposite ways (opposite, not necessarily opposed), each poet composing his poems from what the other ignores. Both are, above all, highly musical poets; but whereas Bringhurst's strict and searching thought-song rises in mobile structures learnt from early polyphonic music, as well as from Bach, Beethoven, and Coltrane, Lee's agile, loopy, and often self-lacerating meditations flit and flow (and sometimes flatulate) like bravura sax solos, highly articulate improvisations determined to wring from a single instrument whatever it will give: elegiac, jazzy, bluesy, psalmic, cheesey, squawky, ecstatic, wacky, classic, slangy, tangy, frothy, and variously filling. Worrying their way through the national, the civic, the social, the literary, the psychological rather than concentrating against them, as Bringhurst's do, Lee's poems nonetheless often share the same aim of getting at a profounder appre-

hension of being; and like Bringhurst's, they are too discontinuously continuous to be easily or adequately caught in quotation. Where Lee differs most decisively from Bringhurst is in this: like Jorge Guillén (or Pound, or Zukofsky), he has in effect been writing the same self-obsessed poem all his mature life, varying its modes, its moods, but not its fundamental concerns: the characteristic metaphysical hankering, psychosocial autopsying, and carnal hunger course and pulse corpuscular through the brooding largo of *Civil Elegies* and the scherzando gambol of *Riffs*, mating with the probing musics of Dylan, David the Psalmist, and San Juan de la Cruz in the new—at times marvellous, at times maudlin—sequence entitled "Nightwatch": "*Y'gonna hafta / serrve some-body*; thankin / yew Mister Dylan. / But it's out past words, to the thrash of calamity midnight; / where the bass line skids like a whip, like / acetylene balm, like a liquid wisp of forever and / what am I being? / Lost in the dark, with a slam-bang case of extremis. / Lost in my molten body. . . ."

The molten body—especially in the sexual fusion of two separate bodies—figures almost everywhere in Bruce Whiteman's *Visible Stars: New and Selected Poems* (Muses' Company, 1995, n.p.). Unlike Lee, Bringhurst, and Elsted, whose work I have known since I began reading poetry in my twenties, Whiteman is a discovery for me, another admirable outrider whose writings are deeply informed by music (he is also an able translator, as witness his and Francis Farley-Chevrier's *After Ten Thousand Years, Desire: Selected Recent Poems* [ECW, 1995, n.p.] by François Charron, Whiteman's Québécois coeval and yet another poet of note). As selected here, Whiteman's nimble and engaging poems recall Rexroth's in their commingling of erotic ardour, tongue-in-cheeky wit, and speculative intellection—nothing so erogenous as the mind embodied, they suggest—but derive formally from seventeenth-century song (Donne in Lovelace, so to speak, made slightly Creeley) and the *poème en prose*. Two examples, though like the others' poems Whiteman's motile and self-aware makings are hard to quote without falsifying their manysidedness: ". . . O laugh / at my metaphors & / take me in your / arms. I tell you // there are no words / where we're going, / or they are shards / & bits of shredded // cloth . . ."; "The world, then, is dearer to the body than its own interior preoccupations. Whose body is whose body becomes finally a necessary confusion. This is the care and saving grace of passionate attention. What heron, plane-tree, and snail draw from the body is its sheer naive physicality. The metaphor of outer space which is where the heart starts. . . ."

The heart's starts, false and true, flutter and thok through Mary di Michele's *Stranger in You: Selected Poems & New* (Oxford UP, 1995, $12.95)—Oxford's other 1995 selected, Paulette Jiles's *Flying Lesson* never got off the ground with me; Jiles looks in my view like a stronger poet in Lee's choice in *The New Canadian Poets* (1985), but only three of Lee's ten poems find their way into the recent book. The poems in di Michele's gathering resonate with something of what I would call the creative-writing-school-beat, centred as they are in and on the confessional lyric ego expressed anecdotally and defined in relation to the personal, the domestic, the familial (specifically, the self-forming, self-dividing experiences of immigration, bilingualism, and female-into-feminist consciousness); and yet as Jan Zwicky writes in her accomplished *Songs for Relinquishing the Earth* (self-published, 1996), "though it cannot fly, the heart is an excellent clamberer"—which is to say that di Michele's tones and turnings sometimes get her out of school, as here: "Because it is dark because / the room must be illuminated / and because in winter chill the crickets /

retire their legs, those cellos locked in cases, / we write music as if we were caged, / as if we were the moths, white and thin- / winged stumbling against the pane."

The poems in Gary Geddes' *Active Trading: Selected Poems 1970-1995* (Goose Lane, 1996, $12.95) share with di Michele's a formal commitment to the apparently documentary and testamentary transparencies of the plainspoken, but expand the poetic domain to the historical and the political (in perhaps the traditional sense, since di Michele's feminist psycho-poetics thoughtfully explore the politics both of the patriarchal family and of the mating game); in addition, his poems rely much more than hers do on ventriloquism, the speakers typically being given a lively demotic idiom and an "unrealistic" self-consciousness that allows them to be who they are while yet reflecting upon their situation. They are mouthpieces, in other words, but often in the best sense, articulating Geddes' alive and thorough decency and his humane responses to strangers, friends, and family. Capable at times of the lamest verse ("Sometimes during spelling bee / I get to wondering about the origin / of words."), Geddes writes most engagingly when there is a leaven of humour (e.g., "Mahatma Gandhi Refuses an Invitation to Write for Reader's Digest"; "Kravinchuk"; "At the Downtown Hotel"), or when he is outside himself, as in *The Terracotta Army, Hong Kong*, or "Girl by the Water"—perhaps because in such cases he cannot evade art's cold mandate to qualify, complicate, and transform what it purports to document.

Al Purdy has long understood the claims of poetic art on experience, which is one reason why the overfull 150 pages of *Rooms for Rent in the Outer Planets: Selected Poems 1962-1996* (Harbour, 1996, $16.95) are so much richer and more satisfying than the crammed 400 of *Starting from Ameliasburgh: The Collected Prose* (Harbour, 1995, n.p.), both edited by Sam Solecki (the poems with Purdy's assistance). The latter book, which is actually a selected, shows Purdy to be a thoughtful as well as a regular guy (we know this anyway from the poems) and a fitfully insightful reader of his poetic compadres, but most pieces leave you feeling that the author's getting paid by the word and (understandably) determined to make the most of an income his poems will never bring. Even some of the poems can leave you feeling that way, since the characteristic Purdy mode is the loose, sometimes goofy, yet paradoxically alert and controlled personal, meditative ramble (shades of Purdy in Lee): a mode that misses more often than it hits, firing as it does on any number of grey-cell cylinders, but when it hits, as in "The Horseman of Agawa" or "The Country North of Belleville"—well hell, it's a purple surprise in the river's white racket, as the man sez of arctic rhododendrons. What's more, the loutish-husband and horny-toady shtick happily collapses under the force of the most moving poetry, becoming mere grit in the deliberately unpolished pearls. *Rooms* offers the whole range of Purdy's poetic—in the first five poems, in fact—and so has begun the process of sifting out the essential work, if not always certainly: the Birneyesque throwaway "When I Sat Down to Play the Piano," for example, which must get the yuk-yuks going at readings, takes up two and a half pages that could have been given to more compelling pieces like "Love at Roblin Lake," "Private Property," or "News Reports at Ameliasburg." "I regard myself as an odd kind of mainstream poet," Purdy wrote recently, ". . . as eccentric-conventional," a self-evaluation that the present selection confirms and that explains why some poems should last, pitted, like the painted Horseman, against oblivion: "which is kind of ludicrous or kind of beautiful I guess."

That habit of confirming while undercutting, of mocking without quite negat-

ing, the conventional response—the real tears amongst the glycerine drops on the clown's painted face—sets Purdy apart from a poet like Alden Nowlan, whose *Selected Poems* has now been edited and introduced by Patrick Lane and Lorna Crozier (Anansi, 1996, $18.95). Nowlan emerges in this book as a genuinely fine fellow, one you might invite home for dinner or trust your life to, but his quiet, competent poems (too many)—"messages of love and wisdom," the editors call them—rarely fail to dissolve their potential power in a closing wash of awkward mawkishness, a tonal timidity oddly celebrated in the editors' introduction (e.g., "It takes a fine poet to realize that such huge concepts as patriotism and love of country can be eloquently expressed by focusing everything upon a single thing, an image, an ordinary man."). How many times in these 175 pages of conventional eloquence did I long to be as thrown by a poem as Nowlan's poetic ego is by a fantasy come-on near the frozen-food bins: "It's a kink that I have: / my nipples harden when I envision / those mountainous moons of flesh above me."

Fleshy encounters occasionally punctuate the touristic wanderings recorded in Gerry Shikatani's *Aqueduct* (Mercury/Underwhich/Wolsak and Wynn, 1996, $19.95), but the prevailing concern is *veni, vidi, scripsi,* most of the scribbling offered up in a sort of portentous murmuring about innumberable teas, espressos, etc., etc. *Aqueduct* is not strictly speaking a selected; rather, apparently, an unselected: 400 pages of what the cover describes as *Poems and Texts from Europe 1979-1987*. Stephen Scobie's blurb calls the book "a travelogue of ecstasy," but Lola Lemire Tostevin's backcover praise ("the vibrant hum of words where there is never too much noise") strikes me as more accurate, since you have to be awfully fond of humming to enjoy page upon page of this kind of thing: "And so, Kate, / we've come here: / smell of fish / 'n' chips, hands / grease 'n' vinegar / lingering // in the coach"—complete with earnest endnotes explaining such things as "*Le Figaro*: A Paris newspaper" or "*Exterior Façade*: Much of this text is from a tourist information leaflet from Perugia." Found Pound poems apart, most of us expect to read tourist brochures only out of an immediate and transient need, and while we all know that coaches can be as habitable as any other verbal mansion, most of us expect them to move a little.

Correction

In Marjorie Garson's article "I Would Try To Make Lists: The Catalogue in *Lives of Girls and Women*" in CL 150, pp.45-63, "prerequisites" (p.57) should read "perquisites."

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Français du Canada – Français de France IV

Actes du quatrième Colloque international de Chicoutimi, Québec, du 21 au 24 septembre 1994

Publiés par Thomas Lavoie

1996. VI, 405 Seiten. Kart. DM 192.– / ÖS 1402.– / SFr 171.–. ISBN 3-484-56012-6 (Band 12)

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Actes du Colloque scientifique à l'occasion du quinzième anniversaire du »Centre d'Études Québécoises à l'Université de Trèves«, 2–5 décembre 1993

Edités par Hans-Josef Niederehe

1996. V, 225 Seiten. Kart. DM 112.– / ÖS 829.– / SFr 100.–. ISBN 3-484-56011-8 (Band 11)

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André Magord

Une minorité francophone hors Québec: les franco-terreneuviens

1995. IX, 234 Seiten. Kart. DM 106.– / ÖS 774.– / SFr 94.–. ISBN 3-484-56010-x (Band 10)

La minorité francophone de Terre-Neuve constitue le groupe franco-canadien le moins bien connu, le plus restreint et le seul, en dehors des Acadiens, à ne pas être d'origine québécoise. Promis plusieurs fois à l'assimilation ethnolinguistique complète ces descendants de Terre-neuvas et d'Acadiens ont su déjouer les pronostics les plus pessimistes et maintenir leur langue et leur culture jusqu'à aujourd'hui. L'étude présentée est, dans un premier temps, menée selon une approche socio-historique puis ethnologique. Le concept d'identité ethnique est ensuite analysé avec une attention particulière puisque les phénomènes d'identification collective, d'assimilation et de renaissance ethnolinguistique, propres à l'évolution de l'identité ethnique nord-américaine, s'y sont tous développés de façon distinctive. Le modèle analytique utilisé propose d'étudier le phénomène d'identité ethnique au travers des processus interactionnels qui se forment dans le jeu entre des variables objectives issues de contextes structuraux, groupaux et supra-groupaux, et des variables culturelles subjectives d'ordre psycho-sociologiques. Les sentiments identitaires, notamment ceux d'appartenance, de valeur et de confiance, plus spécifiques à l'évolution de l'ethnicité, émanent du rapport entre ces variables parfois complémentaires mais souvent concurrentes. Les résultats d'un ensemble d'études pluridisciplinaires et multidimensionnelles permettent, en dernier lieu, de proposer une synthèse prospective de la situation identitaire des Franco-Terreneuviens.

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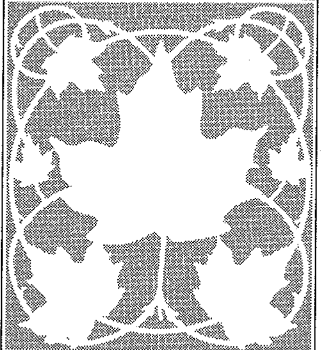

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