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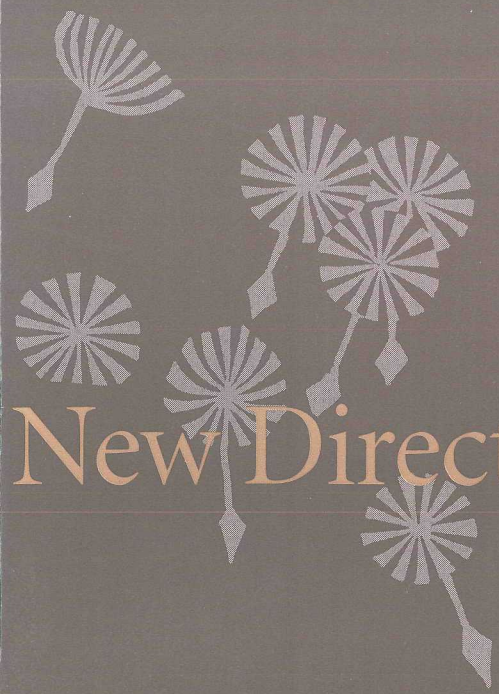

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Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

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

Canadian Literature reçoit des soumissions d'articles, d'entrevues et autres portant sur les écrivains du Canada et sur leurs oeuvres, de même que des poèmes inédits d'auteurs canadiens. La revue ne publie aucune fiction narrative.

Les manuscrits doivent être soumis en trois exemplaires (dont deux articles anonymisés), adressés à l'Éditeur de *Canadian Literature*, 1855 West Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, C.-B., Canada V6T 1Z2, et accompagnés d'une enveloppe de retour pré-adressée et pré-affranchie (timbrée ou munie de coupons-réponse internationaux), sans quoi ils ne pourront être retournés à leurs auteurs.

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Call for Submissions

Canadian Literature invites submissions for a special issue on East Asian Canadian Writing (working title). Topics could include identity politics and poetics, gendered spaces, bicultural encounters, the popularization of East Asian writers, and theorizations of comparative Asian Canadian and Asian American studies. Contributions may be theoretical, critical, or personal. The maximum length for the scholarly essays is 7500 words, including critical apparatus, while personal creative pieces should not be longer than 3000 words. We also invite submissions of poetry.

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The deadline for submissions is 15 January 1999.

Editorial

Articulating New

Neil K. Besner

I

Past a certain point, to know someone both personally and professionally can be offensive, a constant and instantaneous transgression: Bill and W.H. New. In memory as at present, Bill is sitting in his office, fourth floor Buchanan Tower, with the door open (there used to be a map of Africa on it), in bright light and amidst sheaves of paper in many configurations of finely managed disarray—manuscripts, half-used pads of paper, stacks of notes, letters. (There, too, sits the domed kettle, the jar of instant coffee, and their bitter issue, brewed impossibly strong—accusatory flecks of powder pocking the surface—with false salvation in the old Styrofoam cup where cubes of sugar dully glisten. Graduate students emerge with crazy eyes, only partly besotted with a mightily tendentious thesis.)

A bald eagle can fly by the window, eye level, and it does. Outside, a drizzled and misted smell of woodchips; the evergreens; and, looking north across the bay, a lowering rumour of mountain-tops (I used to think of Birney sitting there on a brutish forehead.)

Here sits one incarnation, Bill actual and prospective: laughing over the phone, or, more recently, unknowingly, shamelessly naming himself on screen—"New Message. . . ." This cordial Bill, long known for signing his letters "Cheers," sits, arms folded high over his chest, at one of the two desks he rearranges every five years, while around him the legion shelves eddy and flow with books in perpetually shifting dissonant rows. In their midst, among worlds, Bill.

Or, Bill in the classroom. In the late seventies, early eighties, arriving with the kettle, with bevies of books, newspapers, magazines—to the seminar on

New Zealand fiction he brought copies of *The Listener*, have I remembered right, Bill?—and a map, bibliographies. *Dreams of Speech and Violence* was in the making. In the first class Bill gave us the magazines, told us to read around in them, gain some small sense of a culture. Remembered that he'd forgotten to include his own book in the bibliography. Asked us to draw an impromptu map of Canada. Sat, an alert sphinx, listening to us—Williams, Ingham, Besner, the usual suspects—opine on P. Grace, V. O'Sullivan, M. Duggan, S. Ashton Warner, B. Pearson, on Mansfield, Frame, Mincher; solicitously mispronounce *Mutuwhenua*. Brought, to the last class, another wheelbarrow of books from his office to give to us, Canadian books among them (I have from that occasion the beautiful Press Porcépic edition, 1973, of Godfrey's *Death Goes Better with Coca-Cola*; from others, in his office, anthologies—"have a look through these, tell me what you think"—Daymond and Monkman, Vols. 1 and 2, Colombo's *Other Canadas*, many more).

Or, Bill at the old West Mall office of *Canadian Literature*, a mug of tea to hand, editing. Next door I'm making a mess of the subscriptions. Journals are sliding everywhere down the table. A cup of coffee is spilled. I turn around to see, at the door, the quizzical bright eyes and an eyebrow, up. Silence. Or, Bill at the Faculty Club. There is a bunch of sessionals at a table, where we're arguing across our trays about the Lowry documentary, *Volcano*; he quietly joins us ("May I?"). We become more vociferous. What is striking about most of the memories—including memories of last week—is that compared to everyone around him, Bill does not say much. But I can hear, vividly, the tone, the quiet desire to be casual. This is difficult, because everything to do with books, writers, reading, and writing matters, all the time.

Bookends: summer 1980, and Bill is standing with me outside his house, I'm biking home, I've come to say goodbye (I'm going to teach in the Okanagan for at least a year), he says, "I want a thesis out of you," and we both laugh. Bill at home, a December morning, 1982, handing me the final draft of my thesis (I'd been back at UBC for fifteen months and I'm going to Calgary to work at Mount Royal). There is a cat musing around our feet. Bill laughs and says, "Get yourself a snowsuit." February 1998: we're out to dinner in Kits and find we disagree over the film of *The Wings of the Dove*. I live through, all over again, that familiar, arithmetically ineluctable experience wherein I say exponentially more, Bill elliptically less; he persuades me that he might be right; and I get the last word.

II

Meanwhile, the anxiety of influence: W.H. New in print, the initials down too many spines. There are more News than can be told. Best intentions notwithstanding, the documentary evidence of his protean presence among us these last thirty years and more cannot be cited, much less narrated, without appearing parodic at worst, ironic at best. In some of his professional lives, he continues to follow his encyclopedic vocation as an editor, critic, and bibliographer: editor of *Canadian Literature*, Number 74, Autumn 1977, to Number 145, Summer 1995, and author of fifty-five editorials for the journal. In the last issue, two W.H.N. opening pieces: his moving tribute to George Woodcock (1912-1995), and "Looking Back to 1994", an archetypal New piece, reflecting on approximately seventy-three books published in 1994—fiction, drama, poetry, anthologies, biography, criticism, reprints, art and architecture books. As always, the judgements are specific and explicit. Some 100 other editorials and articles and well over 100 reviews in scholarly journals around the world. The many books he has written to date range from monographs (*Malcolm Lowry*, 1971) to broader studies (*A History of Canadian Literature*, 1989), to books of poetry (*Science Lessons*, 1996) to critical works (*Land Sliding*, 1997). He has edited twenty-seven books and contributed chapters to at least twenty-seven others. As I write I know of at least three works in progress and another in press. At sixty some of us are burned out; W.H.N. appears to be in mid-career.

As teacher, editor, and critic, there is no one in Canada who has opened out so many ways to think about so many kinds of writing. There is no one with a view at once so comprehensive and so grounded in the particular. There is no one who has done more, first, to contribute to the definition of the discipline, then, to interrogate and redefine his involvement with the discipline. And it might well be that as a teacher, he has had as much or more influence. W.H. New does not talk about the Order of Canada or about the teaching prizes he has won, most recently at UBC from the Faculty of Graduate Studies (1996).

III

How, then, could a collection of essays in honour of Bill, all contributed by his former students (except for one which was written by a student currently completing his doctorate), truly reflect the range of his work? Is it disingenuous to suggest, by being as different in subject, scope, approach, theoretical frame, as possible? Bill began his career when approaches to

Canadian literature and postcolonial criticism were all too often understood as separate precincts, although not by Bill. Stephen Slemon's "Climbing Mount Everest" speaks directly, and now, in the late nineties, necessarily differently, to Bill's longstanding explorations of Empire's ascents and declines. Where better to chart the rifts in such culturally contested territory than at a site so alluringly depicted and imagined at several borderlines—geographical, topographical, disciplinary—converging at the alleged top of the world? And what more fittingly fragmented subject, both as text and context, for such an inquiry than the alloyed demands of mass, popular, and high culture that drive both contemporary and historical visions and versions of Everest and our access to its significance?

Penny Van Toorn opens her essay on discursive regimes and indigenous Canadian and Australian historiography with the assertion that "'indigenous history' was for many years a contradiction in terms, because Westerners defined 'history' precisely in terms of what Indigenous cultures lacked." With its foregrounding of the problems of record, writing, text, and history as these would silence or control indigenous voice, the contradictions afoot in Van Toorn's formulation continue to inhabit and inhibit territory of particular interest for Bill. Van Toorn's account of the contemporary struggle for control over four venues for Indigenous historiographic production proceeds from her theoretical introduction into four "case studies" (a poem by Ron Hamilton, "Our Story Not History," Daisy Sweid-Smith's essay, "In Time Immemorial," the autobiography *Wandjuk Marika: Life Story*, and Thomas King's children's book, *A Coyote Columbus Story*). Van Toorn's careful inquiry into the meanings of history and its discourses resonate across much New criticism.

With its close attention to the implications of structure—to the meanings of the shapes that fictions make and unmake—Tamas Dobozy's essay on Mavis Gallant plays across another of Bill's longstanding interests: his studies of the work of individual writers that consider form as it reveals meanings (think of his work on Janet Frame, Laurence, Kroetsch, Richler, among many others). Dobozy's conception of "designed anarchy" moves across the shape of many Gallant stories to show how disruptions of order and disassemblies of convention work to reveal havoc and conflict as supervening semblances of cool irony undo themselves.

Carole Gerson's "The Most Canadian of All Canadian Poets" shows clearly how one powerful version of Canadian national and literary identity—high modernism in the ascendant—shaped fifty years of response to Pauline John-

son's poetry, and moves from this particular instance both to a wider consideration of "the erasure of early women poets from Canada's literary history," and to a different reading of Johnson's poem "The Corn Husker." The conflicted forces shaping Canadian literary history—both within and beyond national contexts—have engaged Bill for at least three decades; Gerson's rereading of Johnson, I expect, will constitute another welcome intervention.

As noted above, Bill's first book was *Malcolm Lowry* (1971), and for a long time it intrigued me that he should have such an abiding interest in a writer so apparently foreign in so many ways to his own temperament and taste. It now seems entirely fitting. Alongside Bill's encyclopedic editorial and bibliographical inclinations runs the most thoroughgoing catholicity I have ever known, and Lowry, inspired, demonic, and damned (talking about Day's biography when it came out, Bill remarked to me that Lowry was "a labyrinth") continues to fascinate him at several levels. Therefore I expect that David Ingham's many-layered reading of "The Forest Path to the Spring" in the light of Lowry's neo-Platonism might bring Bill back to another home ground he has never really left for very long.

A precise consideration of text—by which I do not mean simply close reading—has always been one important point of departure and return for Bill in his work on voice (think of "Every Now and Then" on *The Stone Angel*, among others), and I understand Claire Wilkshire's loving attention to voice in Glover's story "Red" both to develop this line of inquiry and to show, again (if some of us have forgotten), the riches that such a reading can yield.

IV

Dear Bill,

All right, so I've got it all wrong. And I've said nothing explicit about your sense of humour. (But thank you for all these years of laughing at my jokes.) I've said nothing about your extraliterary avocations, your garden, your painting. I haven't mentioned that I have, at certain moments, been gravely concerned at the state of your office. I will, however, admit in print that your skills in reading irony are too good for me.

All right, so you know that I mean more than I can say.

V

Bill—on behalf of all of your students, friends, colleagues around the world: thank you.

Linda Rogers

The Saning*

It might be one of those mornings
when the city is no longer a miracle.
You would be running through the woods,
concentrating on your breathing,
when its little hand reaches up
from a pile of leaves
and grabs your ankle.

This is the saning.
It is there for you to discover;
dirt in its eyes,
its umblical cord uncut.

You are alone in the forest
with the ghosts of your ancestors
and an inarticulate child.
You have fallen into
one of the holes in the fire,
but you know what to do.
because you have eaten kangaroo meat
and dreamed of a moment like this.

You've been running for years
and your hair has turned white,
but you still have what you need;
your mother's sewing scissors
engraved with roses, and a red
washcloth that won't show the blood.

You pick it up in your arms.
You cut the cord with the scissors
and clean its eyes and its mouth,
then you breathe into it.
This is the moment
you get to invent your own religion.
The poem becomes bigger than you.
It is filled with your breath.
It makes you remember yourself
as a child, standing in front of a door.
You have been bathed and powdered
and you want to leave because
you have fallen in love with your
footprints in the sweet smelling dust.

This is what you are following
now, when the poem goes to the light.
You watch it walk away.
Perhaps it will turn to thank you.

* *The first time I met Mister Bill, he gave me breathing lessons for natural childbirth. Hence, the poem. He was supposed to be discussing my thesis with me. I especially like the way Mister Bill's glasses slip down his nose. It is not very professorial.*

Laurie Ricou

Plum Dried Out *

How can I put this? W.H.N.

Intently
at the nub
he trims kiwi vine
and sedum
hemlock
or yellow jasmine
gathers the cuttings
in jars
on the office counter.
Pruning untangles
the garden of his Sundays
surprises the tangle
of our Mondays.

The hand
teaches
the mind
to find an angle
cut upward
through each stem
always finish
slightly above
a healthy bud.
Pruning imagines
new branches
the take and give
of love growing.

When I ask him
to edit
an essay
that wants to be
a poem
he slices
with the gentle
sickle of a
question mark.
Pruning cuts
both ways
never insisting
never relenting.

Plum words
wrinkle on his
tongue
sing the blues
plumb the deeps
of purple
when the light
goes inside.
Pruning gathers the joy
of our cutting up
the gift of his hands' doing
in a garden
of language.

* *This poem is prompted by Bill's habit of pruning his garden every weekend, then arranging the debris in bouquets in the department's main office every Monday.*

Congratulations from W.H. New's former and current students on his 60th birthday

Neil Besner
University of Winnipeg

Deborah Blenkhorn
University of British Columbia

Noel Currie
Simon Fraser University

Charles Dawson
University of British Columbia

Tamas Dobozy
University of British Columbia

Carole Gerson
Simon Fraser University

Alexander Hart
University of British Columbia

Graham Huggan
University of Munich, Germany

David Ingham
Peterborough, Ontario

Chelva Kanaganayakam
University of Toronto

Sunita Kumaran
University of British Columbia

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University of British Columbia

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West Hindmarsh, Australia

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University of Canterbury, New Zealand

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Vancouver, BC

Claire Wilkshire
St. John's, Newfoundland

Stephen Slemon

Climbing Mount Everest
Postcolonialism in the Culture of Ascent

It scarcely needs saying that "Mount Everest" is *not* just "there."[1] As just about every book on Himalayas mountaineering likes to point out, "Mount Everest" was hoisted into physical—and cultural—ascendency through a prodigious act of imperial technology: the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India.[2] Mount Everest began as a theodolite measurement taken from a hundred miles away in 1847; it became a notation called "Peak XV" within an archive of survey records which reproduced the Indian subcontinent (or at least the parts the British could get at) as a vast grid of measured, criss-crossing triangles; five years later these measurements passed into the hands of two rows of mathematicians, or "computers" as they were called, seated at a long table in Calcutta, who refigured them through logarithm into the measurement of "29,002 ft."[3] After this legend sets in.[4] The chief computer, Radhanath Sickdhar, is said to have sent a message to the Surveyor General of India, Colonel Andrew Waugh, saying "Sir, I have discovered the highest mountain in the world" (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 13; Bilham 26). Colonel Waugh reported to the Royal Geographical Society in London: "here is a mountain, most probably the highest in the world, without any local name that we can discover, or whose native appellation, if it have any, will not very likely be ascertained before we are allowed to penetrate into Nepaul [sic] and to approach close to this stupendous snowy mass." Waugh therefore proposed that Peak XV be named "after his respected chief and predecessor in office," Colonel George Everest. A political officer named B.H. Hodgson objected, writing from Darjeeling to say that "although he agrees

with Colonel Waugh as to the fitness of the name of Mount Everest, and sympathises with the sentiment which gave rise to it, he must add . . . that the mountain in question does not lack a native and ascertained name; that the name is Deodhunga, Holy Hill, or Mons Sacer." The President of the Royal Geographical Society thanked Mr. Hodgson for his contribution but nevertheless concluded that "all who were present would be delighted if this mountain should for ever retain the name of th[at] distinguished geographer who . . . ha[s] been the means of carrying on that magnificent operation" ("Tea In India"). And so it was that the mountain that Nepalese speakers now call Sagarmatha, which is usually translated as "goddess of the sky," and that Tibetans call Chomolungma, which is almost always translated as "Goddess, Mother of the World,"[5] became universally known as "Mount Everest," "the roof of the world." Later, when George Leigh Mallory was asked by a U.S. reporter in 1923 why it is that he wanted to climb Mount Everest, Mallory produced the legendary reply: "Because it is there" (Unsworth 100).

What put Mount Everest "there" at the top of the world was technology and a powerful act of colonial naming, but what put the discourse of mountaineering into play—what it was that added the language of climbing the mountain to the meaning of "Mount Everest"—was Mount Everest's geopolitical location on the frontier of colonial control in British India. The act of naming "Mount Everest" took place squarely in the historical period that mountaineering literature now calls the "Golden Age of Alpine climbing"[6] (Unsworth 73); but in this mid-nineteenth century "Golden Age" the summits coveted by mountaineers were all in Europe. The Himalayas belonged to Tibet and Nepal—boundary sites for British colonial administrators. These were secret kingdoms to the British, places defined by their inaccessibility and by the burgeoning need to *know* about them as the competition between British and Russian interests in imperial expansion intensified in the region (Hopkirk; Richards 11-22). Thomas Richards has argued that a dominant mode for managing a developing sense of crisis over the actual administration of an expanding British Empire in the latter nineteenth century was a specific form of symbolic management that he calls "archival confinement" (Richards 11)—that is, the act of amassing data about colonial regions at both a physical and an ethnographic level, tabulating that information, storing it, building up the "imperial archive," finding new and increasingly complicated ways of filing and indexing the archive, and all this as a way of managing—but only on a *symbolic* plane—a sense of

administrative drift in the actual practice of British imperial control. Tibet and Nepal, Richards argues, were crisis sites for the imperial archive: they were framed within a discourse of absent information[7] at precisely the moment that the armature of surveillance and knowledge-construction was being made to stand in for actual administrative colonial control. As I read it, the inaccessibility of the highest mountain in this secret region on the colonial frontier took on *allegorical* purchase: it became an allegory for the inaccessibility of that information which would provide the material for knowledge-construction in the symbolically controlling imperial archive. The English regarded Everest as "the British mountain" (Morris xiv);[8] and though it was obvious that actually climbing to the top of it would mean little to the imperial archive in terms of useful scientific data, and absolutely nothing to the archive in terms of ethnographic or human information, the idea of a British climber triumphantly *on* Everest—one foot in Nepal, the other in Tibet (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 5; "High Drama" 19), symbolically "the- monarch-of-all-I-survey" (Pratt 201; 205-06)—sutured mountaineering to the principle of imperial paramountcy, and "Everest" became the inevitable site for an allegory of colonial continuance. "English being the first mountaineering race in the world," wrote Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, "an Englishman ought to be the first on top..." (Unsworth 18).

Later, after Peary bagged the North Pole in 1909 and Amundsen the South in 1911, this imperial allegory took on universalizing dimensions. Everest came to be talked about as the earth's "third pole" (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 14). Francis Younghusband—the famous "Great Game" political officer—called Everest "the embodiment of the physical forces of the world" and said that the attempt to climb it tested nothing less than "the spirit of man" itself. (Unsworth 125). George Leigh Mallory claimed that ". . . there is something in me which responds to this mountain and goes out to meet it; . . . the struggle is life itself, upward and forever upward" (Morrow 63). But the original grounding of what it means to climb Mount Everest in the allegory of colonial authority—in a discourse in which symbolic management stands in for the handling of an actual crisis in colonialist information and administration, but can only ever be *symbolic* management—has specific consequences for what the literature of climbing Mount Everest will come to look like.

The first of these consequences is that triumph on the mountain, getting to the top, calls the apparatus of allegory into play—and allegory, as every reader of Edmund Spenser knows, traditionally associates mountaintop vision

with the principle of revelation. The principle of revelation informs just about all descriptions of the first sighting of Everest, and it comprises one of the structuring principles of the writing: "We had seen a whole mountain range, little by little, the lesser to the greater," writes George Mallory, "until, incredibly higher in the sky than imagination itself had ventured to dream, the top of Everest itself appeared" (Coburn 23). What remains foundational in the literature of climbing Mount Everest, however, is the extent to which the motif of revelation needs constantly to be *staged.* Mallory's description is characteristic of how writers describe their first sighting of the Mountain—the organizing category is "the sublime" (MacLaren "Retaining" 58-59; "The Aesthetic Map" 90-91)—but what is remarkable about the topos of revelation concerning Mount Everest is the extent to which the revelation of triumph on the mountain is physically over-produced in order explicitly to allegorize the principle of colonial continuance.

The paradigmatic moment of this staging, of the claiming of Everest as an allegory of imperial continuance, is the brilliant First Ascent of Everest in 1953. (This paper will address three "great" moments in which climbing on Mount Everest becomes world news, and this moment historically is the second of those three.) Everyone knows the story: Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal summiting from the South Col route on May 30th; the news reaching the young Queen Elizabeth the night before her coronation on June 2nd; word passing along the street as people gathered patriotically in the post-war early morning to watch the Coronation procession go by; newspapers around the world reporting the triumph — "The Crowning Glory"; "Everest is Climbed"; "Tremendous News for the Queen"; "Hillary Does It!"; Everest not only conquered, but conquered by the "new Renaissance Men" "of British blood and breed" (Tiffin and Lawson 1; Morris xi-xii). It hardly needs to be said that "in Britain at least the linking of the two events was regarded almost as an omen, ordained by the Almighty as a special blessing for the dawn of a New Elizabethan Age" (Unsworth 340). What Jan Morris makes clear in her astonishing book entitled *Coronation Everest,* however, is the extent to which this remarkable coincidence between mountaineering paramountcy and imperial coronation depended upon a conscious, staged, manufacture and manipulation of this moment of allegorical revelation. James Morris, then a correspondent for the *Times* (and later to become the famous travel writer Jan Morris) writes here about how, in anticipation of stage-managing the Coronation

Everest coincidence, he left Base Camp on the morning of May 29th and climbed up to Camp IV, how on the next day he met the triumphant climbers descending to their tents, how he raced down to Base Camp and in a state of exhaustion sent a runner to the transmission office at Namche Bazar, how the transmission went out to world, but in cipher—"snow conditions bad stop advanced base camp abandoned yesterday stop awaiting improvements"[9]—and thus how it was that triumph on Everest was stage-managed in coincidence with the great imperial moment of Elizabeth's coronation, and why it was the *Times* of London had its scoop.

My thesis is that this language of triumphalism in climbing Mount Everest is predicated on an allegory of symbolic management for actual colonial relations. The association of this language of triumphalism with the literary device of allegory accounts for the ubiquitous figuration of revelation in the discourse. The practice of symbolic management, however, depends on the assumption that the social and political field is organized by representations—not merely on the assumption that representations have social and political effects—and this assumption gives rise to the anxiety that symbolic management can only ever be symbolic management. This anxiety, when it takes root within the language of triumphalism, has generative purchase: revelations of triumph on Mount Everest are anxiously overproduced or staged in the writing. The language of triumph on Everest is grounded in colonial allegory, and this structure of predication accounts for the curious undercurrent of nostalgia that inhabits the writing. For underneath the language of triumph in ascent runs a constant murmur of awareness that symbolic imperial management can never actually do its real political work: nostalgia is the affect of this awareness of crisis in the discourse of colonial continuance. Early figurations of this nostalgia pertain to the space of Mount Everest itself—this is the general tenor of an editorial that appeared in *The Evening News* in 1920, opposing the idea of the first British attempt on Everest on the grounds that "Some of the mystery of the world will pass when the last secret place in it, the naked peak of Everest shall be trodden by . . . trespassers" (Unsworth 24). But later the focus of nostalgia changes: it becomes not so much the mountain that is to be lamented but the mountaineer who attempts to claim it. This suturing movement—this surrogation of the climber for the place to be climbed, the self for the site of otherness—is in my view precisely what it is that defines the cultural work of mountaineering literature and gives it its social force.

To ground this argument, I want to turn to the first of the three great historical moments in which the climbing of Everest made world news.[10]

In 1924 the British made the third of their consecutive attempts at a First Ascent of Everest, this by the North Ridge through Tibet. All eyes were on George Leigh Mallory—a vain and careless climber, but wildly handsome, a *Boy's Own Paper* figure adored by Lytton Strachey, and regularly called "Gallahad" in the British press (Unsworth 41-43; Wainright 9-14). On June 8th, this time wearing the oxygen mask that he had previously dismissed as "unsporting, and therefore un-British" (Unsworth 78), Mallory, accompanied by the young and inexperienced Andrew Irvine, set out from Camp VII on the North Shoulder into what has become without doubt the most famous failed summit bid in mountaineering literary history. Noel Odell, clearly the strongest climber of his day, but left behind by Mallory at Camp V to watch,[11] recorded his last sighting of Mallory and Irvine before they disappeared into the mountain, and his description of this last sighting has become the most famous paragraph in mountaineering literature. Notice how Odell employs the language of revelation and then of loss to capture his sense of the moment:

> . . . as I reached the top there was a sudden clearing of the atmosphere above me and I saw the whole summit ridge and final peak of Everest unveiled. I noticed far away on a snow slope leading up to what seemed to me the last step but one from the base of the final pyramid, a tiny object moving and approaching the rock step. A second object followed, and then the first climbed to the top. As I stood intently watching this dramatic appearance, the scene became enveloped in cloud once more. . . . (Unsworth 127).

This passage, I believe, marks the tropological centre of mountaineering literature in its classic, colonialist mode. It fixes the moment of passage from revelation to nostalgia, the passage of the human climber *into* the mountain he tries to climb, the moment where revelation of the mountain becomes coterminous with revelation pertaining to the mountaineering self. This is the moment where the mountain becomes *peopled*, and this by death: this is the transformation that sits at the figurative centre of mountaineering writing. "If anything could mitigate our sorrow in the loss of Mallory and Irvine," wrote a mourning team member, "it is the knowledge that they died somewhere higher than any man has ever been before, and it is possible for their relatives to think of them as lying perhaps even at the summit" (Unsworth 133). The news of Mallory's death, along with Irvine's, produced a national display of mourning in England. The deaths, inevitably,

produced fierce debate over the question, was the sacrifice worth it? An editorial in the *Morning Post* on June 24, 1924 gave the following answer:

> In the days of peace England will always hold some who are not content with the humdrum routine and soft living. The spirit which animated the attacks on Everest is the same as that which prompted arctic and other expeditions, and in earlier times led to the formation of the Empire itself. Who shall say that any of its manifestations are not worth while? Who shall say that its inspiration has not a far-reaching influence on the race? It is certain that it would grow rusty with disuse, and expeditions like the attempt to scale Everest serve to whet the sword of ambition and courage. (Unsworth 141)

In a recent article in *Harper's Magazine*, Bruce Barcott argues that mountaineering has become "the most literary of all sports," and the only participatory sport that ritually insists that some of "its players die" (65). This narrative need for death, in my view, is grounded to the suturing of nostalgia for the mountain to nostalgia for the mountaineer, and in order to locate the ideology of mountaineering literature with a bit more precision I want to identify some additional features, which seem to me definitive of the genre. First, the classic literary texts of mountaineering focus on first ascents and new routes: the values they extol are self-discipline, privation, training, technical knowledge, the ability to improvise, and the capacity to carry teamwork to its absolute limit. Second, the organizing genre of these texts is travel, but mountaineering literature differs from imperial travel writing in that mountain climbers journey towards fetishized arrival points that are by definition *unpeopled* by cultural others. Third, mountaineering literature almost uniformly suspends the generative agency of the enabling, "native" guides on climbing expeditions. "Native" figures in climbing writing never really stop being just coolies or porters, and even when they climb as team-members on the final pitch, they are never route finders, and they never get there first. Collectively, these features define mountaineering literature as a travel genre in which all transformations are entirely internal: the genre never breaks with the Manichaean logic of separate spheres that Syed Manzurul Islam sees as the primary obstacle to the latent transformative potential of actual self-other cultural encounters. Instead of cultural encounter, classic mountaineering writing articulates a map, it charts an assault line. But it is axiomatic to the genre that *great* climbing writing produces a map that virtually no reader, as a physical traveller, could ever actually follow.

If the text of "climbing Mount Everest" has an originary grounding in an allegory of colonialism, it should come as no surprise that when colonial political relations reformulate themselves into neo-colonialism, and when most of the potential routes for a first ascent on Everest come to be exhausted, the meaning of "climbing Mount Everest" is going to have to change. The turning point for this change came in 1985 when a wealthy Texas oil tycoon and resort owner named Dick Bass, a man with "limited climbing experience" (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 21), "clienting" his way up Everest at the age of fifty-five—accompanied by his climbing partner Frank Wells, president of Warner Brothers—under the wing of one of the world's best mountain guides. Bass and Wells thus became the first human beings to reach the top of each of the highest mountains on each of the seven continents on earth, and their climb of Everest became the first in a new line of Everest climbing identities, and the last of the old firsts—though the first Everest paraglider, the first father-and-son success, the first husband-and-wife team to summit remained just a little in the future (Coburn 249). Bass's book, *Seven Summits*, foundationally changed the meaning of climbing Mount Everest (Dowling 40). As Jon Krakauer puts it, the book "spurred a swarm of other weekend climbers to follow in his guided bootprints, and rudely pulled Everest into the postmodern era" (*Into Thin Air* 22).

Bruce Barcott locates one of the central changes in this shift *beyond* colonialism into the neo-colonial moment in mountaineering writing when he notes that "the early Everest books were driven by the climb; now the climbs tend to be driven by the books" (66). In the spring of 1996—and this is the third of those three moments when climbing Mount Everest became world news—300 climbers from thirty separate expeditions gathered at Everest Base Camps, sixteen of those expeditions planning to summit via the Hillary-Tenzing route of 1953.[12] Ten of these expeditions were commercial ones, with clients paying up to $65,000 U.S. apiece for a crack at the top. Two others were national teams seeking their first national ascent. In recent years, with the globalization of sports competition, it has become *de rigueur* for countries seeking to relocate their position on the postcolonial world stage—for countries hoping to send out the message that they have redefined themselves in relation to a colonial past and have fully arrived within the ambit of unquestionable self-determination—to invest very heavily in trying to put a national team of climbers on Everest. The Canadians did it in 1982: the picture of the Canadian flag on top was given a fanfare in

the press, and the two climbers who summited had lunch with Trudeau (Morrow 96). In the spring of 1996 a South African and a Taiwanese team were attempting to stage *their* moment of postcolonial nationalist triumph on Everest (Wilkinson 45). The following year an Indonesian national team and a Malaysian national team would try for their own picture of the flag on the summit, but those teams would be clienting their way up under the tutelage of highly paid Western climbing guides (Wilkinson 45; Child). In the spring of '96, several of the Everest climbing clients arrived at Base Camp with publishing contracts already in hand. One of those clients—a wealthy social climber, Sandy Hill Pittman—posted daily messages to the Today Show through the NBC Interactive website (Dowling 36). School children across the United States followed Hill Pittman's progress on the mountain by clicking on the "KidsPeak" icon on the Global Schoolhouse Net homepage, and carried out a series of integrated pedagogical activities across the curriculum which were designed to help them identify with Hill Pittman as she bagged the summit.[13] Hill Pittman's was already, as *Outside Online* reported, "the most-watched commercial expedition of all time"(Balf).

Climbing Everest by the Hillary-Tenzing route has become big business. Nepal now charges $70,000 U.S. per expedition for a permit, plus an additional $10,000 for each climber after the seventh (Coburn 38-39). Climbing Mount Everest by the Hillary-Tenzing route has also become blasé. The route gets called "the yak route" (Unsworth 514), and it involves only forty feet of technical climbing, this near the top of the mountain at the famous "Hillary Step." Difficult climbing on the route takes place just above Base Camp, however, in the Khumbu glacier icefall. By 1996 the Khumbu icefall had been transformed into a toll route: a British team had it roped and laddered, and other expeditions paid the British $2,000 apiece in order to pass through (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 76). Beyond the icefall, the significant difficulties on Everest are really the height and the weather: climbers on Everest cover more vertical feet above 25,000 feet, in the oxygen-scarce "Death Zone" (Krakauer "Into Thin Air" 5), than they would on any other mountain, and storms can come on suddenly. To deal with this problem, the commercial expeditions employed top-notch Western climbing guides and paid them between $20,000 and 25,000 each; they also employed top-notch Sherpa climbing guides to do exactly what the Western guides were doing, but for a tenth of the salary (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 44-45; Coburn 33). Jon Krakauer records how Scott Fisher, expedition leader of the commercial

outfit called Mountain Madness, promoted the yak route: "We've got the big E figured out, we've got it totally wired. These days, I'm telling you, we've built a yellow brick road to the summit" (*Into Thin Air* 66).

On May 10th, twenty-nine climbers from three separate expeditions attempted a summit bid. But Lopsang Jangbu Sherpa, who was supposed to fix guide-ropes on the summit ridge on the morning of the final assault, did not arrive at the summit ridge before the client climbers: he had exhausted himself the day before carrying Hill Pittman's satellite phone from Camp III to Camp IV (where it no longer worked), and by shortroping Sandy Hill Pittman on summit day up the slope like a water skier.[14] With their expedition leaders lagging behind, client climbers waited too long at the South Summit for permission to forge ahead, then clustered in long traffic jams at the Hillary Step, and then partied too long on the top of the mountain waiting for the expedition leaders to come up and tell them that it was O.K. now to get off; an unpredictable storm blew in; eight people died in the blizzard, two others lost their fingers and their noses to frostbite; and for the third time Everest became genuinely global news once again.

In the riot of condemnation, rumination, and debate that followed May 1996 on Everest—in *Life* magazine, *Men's Journal*, *Vogue*, *Outside*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, on web sites, in town-hall debates, and in Jon Krakauer's best-selling book *Into Thin Air*[15]—a central problematic emerges, and the general tenor of this problematic marks the moment at which mountaineering writing about Everest enters into the ambit of discursive *post*coloniality. "The commercialized trips and the overcrowding are what caused this thing," said Edmund Hillary: "it was inevitable"; it showed "disrespect for the mountain" (Dowling 41; Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 34). Special condemnation accrued to the practice of taking guided clients beyond the point of self-sufficiency—past the point where they were able to get down from the death zone if their oxygen ran out. Much was made of the fact that clients paying $65,000 apiece thought they were paying for the summit, not for the opportunity of doing the work that would get them there. Professional mountaineers pointed out again and again that clients who didn't haul loads, didn't prepare camps, and didn't *plan* not only became dependent on their guides but lost the enabling sense of teamwork. Much criticism focussed on the cavalier attitude displayed by a Japanese team on the mountain's north side, which continued on to the summit without stopping to assist three dying climbers from Ladakh—"morality," said one mountaineer, "goes

away when it becomes a commercial enterprise." Everest, it was agreed, had fallen subject to what one commentator called "Disney-fication." Blind, ambitious "me-firstism" had become the mountain's dominant mode.[16]

My argument to this point has been that what makes Everest the paramount object of mountaineering desire within popular culture is not simply its height but its history. In classic mountaineering mode, to climb Mount Everest is to enter the space of narrative—narrative that allegorizes colonial continuance and control. This is because the inaccessibility of Everest stands in for the paucity of information that can be captured for the imperial archive about a "last secret place" located in a power vacuum on the colonial frontier; and so to triumph on Mount Everest is allegorically to know this information and to deploy it in a structure of symbolic management for colonial anxieties about administration and control. But this is *only* symbolic management; the triumph of imperial revelation has to be anxiously staged, and it produces nostalgia for the place that triumphalism has transformed. The social role of classic mountaineering literature is to suture that nostalgia for the mountain to nostalgia for the mountaineer. Death on the mountain becomes the paradigmatic and paradoxical figure for the consolidation of imperial authority in a narrative of triumph and information. Since Everest climbers seek their triumphs at a point above human dwelling, in a place defined by its exclusion of cultural others, Everest travel writing also ensures that all transformations of the imperial traveller take place only within the contained and culturally unconnecting ambit of the self.

But when Everest gives way to "Disney-fication," a new climbing subjectivity emerges, and writing about Everest abandons the narrative of imperial allegory for the genre of critique. The old colonial question—whom does Everest belong to?—becomes postcolonial, self-reflective and brooding: "who belongs on Everest?" (Cahill 17). Everest's paradigmatic inaccessibility, its figuration of otherness without cultural others, becomes violently translated—by commodification, by commerce, by the staging of postmodern nationalist arrival—into exactly its opposite: Everest becomes a mainstreet, a traffic jam, a ship-of-fools party on the rooftop of the world. Triumphs remain stageable, but triumph allegorizes nothing: triumph on Everest is too easily staged. Unsurprisingly, a recent $65,000 Everest client is now suing for his money back because his expedition leader *failed* to get him to the summit (*Outside* symposium; Krakauer 23). Nostalgia for Everest also remains rampant—but it takes two forms, and they are incommensurable.

The first is a nostalgia for Everest's return to the imperial archive: it was as though the summit "was like some children's storybook paradise," writes Tim Cahill (17), "where only the pure of heart and the well-intentioned were admitted." The second is a nostalgia for an Everest *before* imperial history. But for mountain climbers, this second form of nostalgia is impossible and self-annihilating: it is nostalgia for a perfect, untravelled, non-signifying Everest—an Everest before mountaineering passed through its mirror phase into desire and the Symbolic order, before climbing consolidated its self into a "culture of ascent" (Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 20). Even death on Everest has lost its suturing power. The bodies of dead climbers now litter the standard assault routes on Everest, and climbers take photos; but dead mountaineers now can never quite *become* the mountain—mourning is trivial, and the suture will not take place. Climbing Mount Everest still carries enormous symbolic capital—the capacity to consecrate—but only for those benighted national administrators and those calculating corporate entities sufficiently distant from contemporary Everest realities to know what climbing Mount Everest, now, really means. Mountaineering professionals are fast deserting Everest—not at the level of their labour, for there is still money to be made from guiding. Their desertion takes place at the level of meaning. Everest, as imperial allegory, no longer carries a capacity to transform.

My thesis for this paper is that this current moment of suspended allegorization—this moment that frames the question "what does it mean to write about Mount Everest?"—is capable of lending unusual, and disturbing clarity, to the inescapably contingent but nevertheless oppositional concept of "postcolonialism" itself. What defines this moment is its predicative stasis—for the genre of mountaineering literature, that is, but not for the many other modalities in which "Everest" can be thought about and represented. This predicative stasis rests on a structural opposition, one that seems unresolvable from within. On the one hand, it is impossible for mountaineering literature to ground a critique of present (neo-colonial) climbing practices on Everest without drawing on the discourse of classic mountaineering: to critique the present is implicitly to endorse the imperial allegory of Everest's colonial past. On the other hand, it is impossible for mountaineering literature in its current postcolonial moment to frame a critique of classic Everest climbing practices without implicity endorsing the neo-colonial discursive contract that underwrites the dominant idea of

"Everest" in the present. Critiques of *present* modalities for being on Everest—that is, critiques of present forms of commodification, of postmodern nationalism, and of privileged individual access on Everest—cannot help but reiterate the logic of a *past* colonialist discourse: a discourse of "Western" prerogative, of border patrolling, of exclusivist professionalism, and the grand narrative of imperial meanings. At the same time, critiques of the *past*, high-imperial, modalities for being on Everest cannot help but underwrite a narrative of presentist permissiveness, where cross-culturalism by individual volition, and by the wealthy, becomes definitive of travel in the contact zones, where nations join together in the making of freely negotiated but profoundly unequal commercial relations that produce overwhelming environmental damage and translate entire populations into service-industry providers, and where a class-based identification with a surrogate, travelling self in the virtual community of Internet participation becomes foundational and normative in a new, postmodern pedagogy for engaging with the world.

In postcolonial critical theory, one of the terms now being used to identify a predicative stasis of this kind is the term "complicity/resistance dialectic" (see Gikandi 123-25)—a schema in which resistance against a single and specific axis of domination within the multiple and interwoven axes that comprise a discursive formation (race, class, gender, sexuality, and so on) entails complicity with at least one other axis of domination within that discourse. And one of the most urgent debates within postcolonial critical theory is over how we are to understand the social productivity of writing that seems framed within this complicity/resistance dialectic—a zero-sum game, or an ambivalent but generative way to the production of social change? In closing this paper I want to suggest that this postcolonial moment of predicative stasis, of complicity and resistance, in the genre of Everest mountaineering literature might itself allegorize the structure of at least one form of professional postcolonialism as it seeks its own triumphs in university institutions today. In this allegory, the "native guide" whom Helen Tiffin places at the centre of the paradigmatic colonialist travel narrative—the journey from the "sick heart of Empire" to the transformative colonial frontier (147-48)—has become translated by institutional postcolonialism into the "non-native" *academic* professional, whose job it is to client students up the slopes of cultural otherness, breathing theory as they reach for the top. In this allegory, the idea of marginality has been transformed into a mountain: it is marginality itself, says Spivak, that postcolonialism has commodified (Young 163).

Cultural difference, in this allegory, has been translated into a celebration of the borderless. Cross-culturalism has been made virtual on the Internet frontier. The pedagogy of cross-culturalism has surrendered into travel writing. And genuine, postcolonial encounter has frozen on the mountainside—a photo-opportunity for social and literary criticism, and then criticism climbs on.

It is conventional to end a paper that describes a problem by volunteering a solution, but in lieu of that difficult work I want to provide four very brief snapshots of how the complicity/resistance dialectic of climbing Mount Everest has actually been navigated. In what follows, I will draw only on Canadian examples—not simply "because they are there" but also because collectively, they say something about the curious compromises that can attend a rhetoric of oppositional self-emplacement, and about the unexpected fissures that can fall out of a rhetoric of seamless compliance, when the locus of representation is that ambivalently positioned middle-ground between the massive binaries of coloniser and colonised—a middle-ground which currently supports many critical discussions of how Canadian invader-settler cultures might be positioned within the binaristic tropologies that are commonly used to articulate imperial relations. In what follows, one might trace the beginnings of my own allegory of disciplinary postcolonialism in its current seizure of narrative contradiction.

The first snapshot comes from 1997, and features two Calgary climbers—Jamie Clarke and Alan Hobson—who managed to fund their Everest expedition through sponsorship from a multinational real-estate company and a U.S.-based computer firm. The "Colliers Lotus Notes Everest Expedition" of 1997 maintained a daily website that permitted "subscribers" to follow the climbers' progress towards triumph: Clarke and Hobson summited on May 23rd, two of twenty-two climbers to summit on that day. Twenty-five employees of the real-estate firm holidayed at Base Camp as the Canadians reached the top. "Everest," said the Chairman of Colliers International on the promotional web page: "the teamwork, commitment and dedication it involves—is symbolic of the challenges we face day-to-day in our business. Overcoming obstacles, using weaknesses to find strength, operating as a team in pursuit of a grand vision—this is what the Colliers Lotus Notes Everest Expedition is all about." "Through team work," added the Everest project manager for Colliers International, "we are well positioned to provide our clients with first-rate commercial real estate services in markets

worldwide" ("Colliers Lotus Notes"). After the climb, *Maclean's* magazine did an exclusive feature of the Canadian ascent. "The story of the climb by Clarke and Hobson is one of determination, bravery, teamwork—and very high danger," wrote *Maclean's*. Hobson and Clarke contributed a brief piece of their own to *Maclean's*: "Our adventure safely concluded," they declared, "our goal will be to demonstrate how the lessons we learned on Everest can be applied to the world of business and the business of life" ("High Drama" 20).

The second snapshot comes from 1986, and it features the second Canadian to summit on Everest—Patrick Morrow. Morrow was also the second, after the Dick Bass and Frank Wells team, to climb to the top of the highest mountain on each of the seven continents in the world, and he wrote about it in a book entitled *Beyond Everest: Quest for the Seven Summits*. In that book, Morrow argues persuasively that Bass and Wells bagged the seven summits first because they had no need to seek corporate sponsors. "Bass and Wells brought to the project the type of élan that had been lacking in the climbing world since the days of steam, when climbing was a rich man's sport," wrote Morrow. "[They] were able to take an important time-saving shortcut because they did not have to search for sponsors. They surrounded themselves with the best climbing guides available, who led them in safety up the mountains and prepared their camps and meals" (96). Morrow also suggests that Bass and Wells' *idea* of the seven summits was faulty. Morrow argues that, instead of climbing Kosciusko, Australia's highest mountain, Bass and Wells should have climbed the highest mountain in Austral*asia*—Carstenz Pyramid, on Irian Jaya. Morrow went on to climb Carstenz Pyramid: left to the vagaries of implication is the argument that Morrow's placement of "second" in the "seven summits" competition should retroactively now be upgraded to a "first."

The third snapshot features a 1997 novel by the Halifax writer J.A. Wainwright: its title is *A Deathful Ridge*. Wainwright retells the story of George Leigh Mallory's and Andrew Irvine's famous 1924 climb, but this time with a difference. In Wainwright's retelling, the narrative of a glorious British failure on Everest explodes into a cluster of alternative narrative possibilities about what really happened on the mountain, each of them opening into new ways of thinking about colonial history and the "rock of Empire" (30). The most interesting of these narrative possibilities, for my purposes, is the suggestion, made early in the book, that on Everest Mallory actually *didn't* die: instead, he went crazy with the mixture of ambition and

elevation, whacked his iceaxe into Irvine's head, and had to be squired away by his expedition leaders to a secret hideout in Wales.

The fourth and final snapshot comes from 1947 and features Earl Denman, a Canadian engineer who made his way to Rhodesia and then, with no real climbing experience behind him, nonetheless decided to climb Mount Everest, alone and in secret (Unsworth 246-50). "[I]t was always the distant heights which fascinated me and drew me to them in spirit," wrote Denman in his 1954 book *Alone to Everest.* "[I was] determined to see at least one major dream through to fulfilment" (cited in Unsworth 246). And so without a permit and with scarcely any credible climbing equipment, Denman made his way to Darjeeling, hired just two Sherpas—one of them the young Tenzing Norgay himself—and actually managed to climb with them to the foot of the North Col, before being driven back by the inevitable storms. Denman set out to climb Mount Everest again the next year, but this time the authorities were on to him about his lack of permit, and none of the Sherpas was willing to risk another maniacal run at the mountain, though Tenzing Norgay, it is said, still found the idea of an unofficial attempt deeply attractive. Walt Unsworth, author of the book *Everest: The Ultimate Book of the Ultimate Mountain,* describes what happens next. "He returned home to Rhodesia," writes Unsworth (250), "wrote a book about his adventures, and was planning to attempt the mountain through Nepal in 1953 when the news came through of the British success. He turned his back on the mountain for ever."

NOTES

1 An earlier version of this paper was given at the "Commonwealth in Canada" Conference, sponsored by the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, and held at Wilfrid Laurier University, November 1997. My thanks to Rowland Smith and Gary Boire, organizers of that conference, and to Guy Beauregard, Alan Lawson, Ian MacLaren, Nima Safipour Naghibi, Cheryl Suzack, Paul Tiessen, Asha Varadharajan, and Jo-Ann Wallace for helpful commentary along the route. For guidance into the practice of mountain climbing, and thus into its literature, I owe enormous thanks to two extraordinary mountaineers, Kerry Best for introducing me to climbing, and David Cockle for thereafter being my mentor and guide. The phrase "the culture of ascent" is Jon Krakauer's (1997 20).

2 The definitive document on the Great Trigonometrical Survey is Edney. Bilham provides useful information on the technical measurement of Mount Everest's height. Jon Krakauer's chapter "A Mountain Higher than Everest" (*Eiger Dreams* 116-29) offers

background information on the Everest legend (much of it repeated in Krakauer *Into Thin Air* 13-14); see also Unsworth (especially 2-24, and 541-50). Hopkirk discusses the political background. Baber (147-51; 246-49) provides a history for trigonometrical survey in India going back to the early eighteenth century, and explains the relation of this practice to topographical and statistical surveys in the building of an empire of science for British India. Bayley discusses the "extraordinary bureaucratic chaos and conflict" that attended the Great Trigonometrical Survey and points out that it did little to serve utilitarian aims in British administration in India—instead, according to Bayley, the Survey was "a huge exercise in Newtonian triumphalism" (307-09).

3 Krakauer (1990) points out that the height of Everest was "pegged" in 1975 at 29,029 ft by a Chinese team; Bilham notes that an Italian/Chinese team in 1992 corrected this measurement to 20,023 ft.

4 Edney makes clear that this narrative of Everest's "discovery" as the world's highest mountain is indeed legend, and that Radhanath Sickdhar's role in this "discovery" was not as Krakauer, Bilham and others have described it. "[T]radition incorrectly describes the computations which established Peak XV in the Himalayas as the world's highest mountain," he writes (262).

5 Morrow mistakenly reports that Sagarmatha means "Churning Stick of the Ocean of Existence" and that Chomolungma means "Goddess Mother of the *Wind*" (62, 63). Unsworth concludes that "the evidence rather suggests that the Survey of India knew all about Chomolungma [as the mountain's name] but chose to ignore it..." (548); he further notes that the name Sagarmatha is a very recent invention, promoted by the Nepalese Government.

6 Irwin notes that the British Alpine Club was formed in 1858, and that "the growth of a literature of mountaineering was contemporaneous with the growth of the sport". He also notes that the association of mountaineering with scientific study, which begins with the natural philosophers in the early nineteenth century, continues to prevail in the literature: "*The Alpine Journal* has retained its original subtitle, 'a record of mountain adventure and scientific observation'" (xv-xvi).

7 Bayley elaborates the concept of the "information order" for British India, and he examines the processes by which "information" about India—"observations perceived at a relatively low level of conceptual definition"—was transformed under various colonial modes into units of "knowledge"—"socially organised and taxonomised information" (3-4, n.9). Bayley argues that in India between 1780 and 1870, the British "could not count on an inflow of 'affective knowledge' and so were forced to manipulate the informational systems of their Hindu and Mughal predecessors" in order to manage their crisis of authority: this involved a range of procedures for gathering information and translating it into knowledge, such as the creation of "a new type of native informant." "The statistical movement, which gathered pace after 1830, had a powerful impact" (7-8) on the making of that "information order."

8 Sir John Hunt, leader of the successful 1953 British expedition to Everest, writes: "It was as if an agreement existed in those years, by which it was tacitly understood that certain of the big peaks were the special concern of climbers of a particular nation" (6).

9 This was code for the message: "Summit of Everest reached on May 29 by Hillary and Tenzing" (Morris 117).

10 Although I have attempted in Note 1 to map out the trajectory of this paper's progress, I want at this point to acknowledge, and to thank, the two anonymous readers who refereed this paper for *Canadian Literature*. I have found their comments extraordinary helpful. These readers located a number of alternative routes by which this paper might have attempted its theoretical assault on Everest writing: specifically, through a meditation on melancholia and mourning (in the footsteps of Freud and Lacan); through an examination of the generic affinities between mountaineering writing and both "the wider stylistics of exploration" and the "production of visual images through sketching and photography"; through a consideration of masculinities and homoerotics in mountaineering and exploration writing (see Lisa Bloom's excellent monograph *Gender on Ice*); and through the "complex spaces of transculturation involved in portering" (see Butz). One reader, accurately I think, argues that the concept of "symbolic management," in the paper, needs belaying: "for Bourdieu symbolic power is to be taken as seriously as administrative or bureaucratic power." Clearly, the troublesome and powerful relations between productivity and constraint within narrative acts of symbolic management, and between narrative representation and broader modalities of social management, remain very big questions for critical theory, but my own thinking on symbolic management—thinking which has yet to summit—has been advanced by Mary Poovey's examination of the structure of "corrective substitution" in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. Poovey considers the ways in which social anxieties about financial instability and race, for example, are addressed through symbolic stabilisations of "woman as other," and she argues that at a certain point the "neat parallelism" of narrative founders in Dickens's productive contradiction. Exactly how such forms of narrative contradiction are to be read as productive is not so clear, and the elaboration of this problematic obviously needs to be grounded and theorized. Homi Bhabha's speculations on the productivity of narrative contradictions through their circulation in the "time-lag" of social-symbolic ordering (337ff) may provide a useful place to begin this theoretical work.

11 Unsworth argues that Mallory's insistence that Irvine accompany him in the summit bid, rather than Odell, cannot be accounted for in the logic of climbing. "Mallory," Unsworth claims, "chose Irvine partly on aesthetic grounds" (124).

12 The most comprehensive, and most interesting, account of the 1996 Everest "tragedy" is Krakauer's book *Into Thin Air* (1997), which contains important corrections to his 1996 article of the same title. Beidelman, Dowling, Kennedy, and Wilkinson tell different facets of the story, and I have drawn the information in the following paragraphs from all of these sources.

13 The Global SchoolNet Foundation—"Linking Kids Around the World!"—is "a virtual meeting place where people of all ages and backgrounds can collaborate, interact, develop, publish, and discover resources." Its main objectives are to promote Internet use in schools, with a view to teaching "students to become active learners and information managers" and to "encourage business, government, school, higher education, and community partnerships for on-going collaboration" [http://www.gsn.org/who/gshistory.html.]. "Education today," claims the GSN web page

on the GSN Program Vision, "is severely missing the mark. We suspect that one solution to having a more effective school lies in a more advanced communications system, including the use of electronic tools." The GSN is a "non-profit consortium comprised of educators around the world," and it "provides its services to all schools *free* of charge." Its "Executive Sponsors" are Advanced Network & Services, Cisco Systems, MCI Corporation, Microsoft, and Network Solutions; its "Associate Sponsor" list includes Canon Communications, Eastman Kodak, and Pacific Bell, http://www.gsh.org/who/partner/spon.html. The GSN KidsPeak web page offered "a real-time, day-by-day virtual web adventure of Climber Sandy Hill Pittman and her team as they try to ascend Mt. Everest along the same route of [sic] Sir Edmund Hillary," http://gsn.org/past/kidspeak/index.html. The list of the Virtual Field Trip activities for Kidspeak included the following: "Imitate the distance of Sandra's trek: track how far Sandra Hill Pittman has trekked, round trip, and translate that to a number of times around the school track"; "Develop a [web] page that tells how you are using the information you learn from Sandy's reports"; "Have students research the cost of an expedition. Who are the Sherpas? What are the costs associated with feeding all the trekkers? Where does the food come from? Does it generate revenue for the local merchants?"; "Tell students to consider the amount of money put into the local economy as a result of the expeditions," http://www.gsn.org/past/kidspeak/procon.html.

14 Sandy Hill Pittman was attempting to be the first woman to claim the "seven summits," and had a contract with Chronicle Books (Mitchell) for a book entitled *Seven Summits of My Soul.* In the debate about what went wrong in May 1996— a debate carried out almost entirely by men—Hill Pittman became "a lightning rod for criticism" (Mitchell): the "Susan Lucci of the continuing Everest soap opera" (Wilkinson 101-03). Wilkinson correctly points out that the debate was—and is —inflected with "more than a hint of sexism" (101). I have not engaged with the dynamics of gender in this paper; but in anticipation of the allegorical relation this paper later posits between Everest in May 1996 and the field of postcolonial studies, I cite the following from Gikandi: ." . . students of colonial discourse and postcolonial theory do not know what to do with the women of empire—whether these women are European or native. They don't know how to read them within the project of the Enlightenment and colonial modernity, nor do they know how to explain or rationalize female subjectivity and institutional function beyond the existence of women as objects of male discourse of desire" (121).

15 See Wilkinson 43. An ABC "docudrama," which aired on 9 Nov. 1997, is the latest in an on-going series of popular-media meditations on the climb. The *Edmonton Journal T.V. Times* writes: "It was the deadliest ascent of Mount Everest in history—claiming eight lives, including two renowned mountaineers. The 1996 saga is now chronicled in *Into Thin Air: Death on Everest,* . . . a TV-movie based on the book by Jon Krakauer. The drama teams *Veronica's Closet*'s Christopher McDonald (as Krakauer) with Peter Horton (*thirtysomething*) and Nathaniel Parker (*David*), as ill-fated expedition leaders Scott Fisher and Rob Hall."

16 The information in this paragraph is drawn from the "*Outside* symposium on Everest," involving climbers Alex Lowe, Charlotte Fox, Ed Visteurs, John Cooley, Al Reed, and Todd Burleson, and moderated by Mark Bryant.

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Iain Higgins

Aerial

How absolute the knave is! he must speak by the card
or equivocation will undo us.
Hamlet, V.i

Why? the child asks, why is the sky so high? A pause, and then he finds his feet: because it starts where the ground stops. Which makes us flightless birds. To compensate we make like insects and fish the air with enterprising wires. But of course we have already stocked the lake. Are you in the cord? the child asks, hearing him through the phone—as though in already on the game: what you find is what you make.

So it's poet as child yet again, then? Why not poetry as R & D? Why not, except the lab technician's now the hexametric bard, blind primary pipetting out recombinants, answering our urge to make it new, make it mine. So trust the tale and not the godly toddler? What you get is never only what you see; the humours of the eye make sure of that, the tongue's turns.

Even his own language defeats him daily, and he enjoys it. Handles his tongue like a foreigner. Feels it thrum inside another's body, sees it shoot froglike out at the world's palpable intangibility and subtly gum the works. Unsure how to square himself with its buried root, he works the blade to try and wipe his lipslate clean, and still he finds himself forced to winter over, blunt utterance stuck

flat to a conceptual fence. And suppose he were to learn his tongue (a tongue not one but many), how would he know? Right now the sun is low, the ship sailing into a narrow pass, where the eagles and the seabirds talk amongst themselves, unmindful of the marksman or his glass-eyed shots—he thinks he needs a dead reckoning. The curling tidelines catch more than any verse, hold you fast by force.

The robin not robin but plain unvaried thrush rises to the cedarcrown and sings the sun down—or so we say to hold our moving ground. The cedar too stands miscognito in the blue, fossil fuel within a flayered tongue, old groats oiling the way, dead ahead. *'TENNNshun* the wing commander shouts, wrong as always; a good eye's not got by agitating the kidney tops. *Ah fuck it!* words spat out a million times a day, force of habit. Says it all.

Or nothing. What kind of math is this, when empty sets are full? A sparrow falls and God is thought to care. That gets the human creature off the hook. But why hang the albatross of oversight around His neck whose Word requires recurring fades to black? What gives? the common tongue might ask the scriptured, though it knows already: everything. God's will is always away; all falls before it.

Moses supposes his toeses are roses, but Moses supposes erroneously. This from one of the apocrypha, the prophet as vaudeville poet. And a toe by any other name?—one of the bronchial tubes through which we breathe the earth; a clitoral homologue rubbing us right whenever we move (hence the wearing of shoes in civilized cultures); a stylus shared by all legged creatures, though each steps in with its own brand of choreography.

(The odd thing about his body is, he can't find where it ends, and not just in lovemaking. The sky weighs on him, another lover, weathering his changes, never dwindling down and out; the earth too is touchingly constant. The older he gets, the more he's pulled mooningly out of shape, flooding suddenly into this or that, another, then ebbing back into his solvent self, rip tide of purgeless yearning, tongued, untongued at every turn.)

Vainly he fashions a dustjacket portrait for a book he has yet to write: the man with his tools (stylus and prayer beads in medieval icons, recently the smoke-plumed cigarette). But he is struck allegorically dumb. His tools? Trying to imagine he sees his endflapped likeness swell, absorb the book until a reader cracks him open and slips off into the fretwork, tongue-tied.

Why does one metaphor carry you away, another lose you in the soundless narrow? *Information highway:* a turn he's missed a zillion times already. Spring informs the maple tree outside, bursting through wherever winter'd blocked the way. But aren't the branches just a backroad, no place to cruise, don't you have to wait till fall to download (except with flowering trees: they double your return)? The swordfern unsheathes its digital blades.

A boom of light falls through the leaves, mothering him. You see the sky like that sometimes, leaf-lipped; his body bruises where the kisses fail to rest. Stickiness falls from the breathing leaves, glazing him, the wind a grazing glove covering nothing, the vacancy so palpable it hurts and is desired. Slowly the grassblades cleave the sleeping meat from his bones, stones slip in like squatters. Next door the mower clears its muffled throat.

Another kind of crossing: the standing manzanita mates with kinnikinnick wherever they meet, and their offspring goes between. The rose that is his love is neither rose nor love, but fertile mule meant for bearing them together. Should it puzzle him that the bridge between manzanita and bearberry lacks a local name?

The pleasure of drystone joinery. Laying rock on rock, just so, the quirks of the stone just placed, if it fits, shaping space for a next. Sometimes he even knows where he's going: a small wall for ferns to spill over, a settlement for stonecrop—and yet the hard joy of getting there. Courtship and coupling at once, true to their own rhythm, the weather, serendipity, stone's grain. No question why Demosthenes pebbled his tongue.

He watches a crow in the hawthorn. Not preening, as he supposed, but working a twig free; the twig disappears, beak-borne, and the crow returns. The crow is not a hired hand, but still will do for reflection. There's a moral there, in the twigs carried to the crowkids who learn that bundled they resist the easy breakage a single suffers. Damn: wrong moral. Where's the right one now? Ah, here it is, a bit cryptic:

ramifications: starlings are partly the Bard's fruit. Faced with that he lets crow-watching go and turns to TV: too slow. Raises an aerial then and settles in beneath it. Birds mistake him for a statue and he soon grows sagely white-haired; the neighbours think the trellis needs honeysuckling. So far, so good—the reception, that is. The ozone thins, the holes fill with the fattening flux of telecommunications, and he crumbles slowly, content

to be a nurse log, no longer flighty but at least a punky centre of biosemiosis. Heaven on earth. The trouble with TV is, he finds it hard to shave before the flickering set. More exciting, granted, than the bathroom mirror, where his image fails to show, but unsettling to know yourself so often. He takes to scraping with the sound off, radio on, until the gap between its utterances and the flapping lips grows too close to his own breaches.

Needs a reality check, someone says. Get real. Use your common sense. Birds like that fall from the sky; peck at the grain in his ear; make it seem like shopping on easy street. But when he tries to get real it's out of stock. Common sense is held by acronyms and analphabetics: Ltds, CEOs, SOBs. One-off shares have shrunk, no longer tender. So much for recycling.

Officially the coins were stamped with a dead tongue: *homo sapiens,* though on the black humour market there was a towering ivory trade in woollen nickels signed *philosopher* and everywhere else the jetstream flotsam marked *talking head*; but he'd always banked on the return of the clipped argot, long gone for a technical term: *wise guy*. All right, all right! a penny for the guy! So often fired, and still he aspires to being solvent for a change.

Climbing from the bath, the child catches sight of its knee: who builded me? Can't say, he might've answered, launching a raft of words on inherited articulation: we're always moved before we know it, bagpipes blown in broken time and bonesong sung in beaten blood, tongued and unstrung pinocchios of a past we never learn to forget, seedy outcasts hung up on bodies that open, abandon us to need, unscreened

dreams: reality forever reeled over in camera. The hard part is changing the daylight filters—if you can find them in the neurotropical forest. Wetsuit and aqualungs get stripped from us at birth, the breathtaking drop *in medias res* when we cry quits with the cord, and by the time we lose our sealegs we're being borne by metaphor wherever we'd go. Oh what shall we do with the drunken sailor?

Lock'm in words beyond the captious waters? Free'm on a ridge with memory's daughters? Run'm out of town on Plato's orders?

He was just a young man with a pen
who wanted to sing things again
but when he sang for his supper
from Old Mother Hubbard
she said: enough of the leavings of men!

Bah bah blackbird hum the diesel caterpillars while they scrape their fill. Forward marsh. To mark it, to mar it, then Rome again, Rome again, piggety dig. Does nature abhor the vacuum that cleans it dry? The first washing machine he knew had a labour-saver—a mangle. Was this an alternative press? He'd ink the high rollers, but his returns were always interest-free: cleanbreasted spreadsheets. Never did get a handle on it.

Gobstopper: a name he'd squirreled away from his mother's other tongue. Jawbreaker here. Either way, though, dandy for the mouths of babes, fill against claims that rise from gaps, gobs, jawbones whose infant eyeteeth are as knives. Nuisance grounds—that's an old name too: sanitary landfill, where the glaucous-winged gulls wheel and feed. His owlish eyes get cloudy—did someone say *glaukópis Athénē*?—his head's a little leaky. Humour him.

He thought he'd arrived the day he raised his trademarked hood ornament: a plumb bust of Priapus. Now he too could hustle hermeneutically between the gods and ordinary plods as mercurial arbiters charged with tele-heli-development jumpstarted dead metaphors by satellite. Global accords: a fine mesh, that. But nothing to get hung up on, no? Ships' shrouds were once crossroped, a highway out if the float went down: *rutlins* the sailors said, though the word was written *ratlines.*

And flying hap'ly up 'em's got its jargon too: skylarking. Aboveboard or down and out of the crowsnest to give the old guywires a run for the money, uncaucused crowkids · *unhidden In the light of thought, Singing hymns unbidden Till the world is wrought.* Safe home! the Irish say; home safe, the Yanks. A scattered tongue in double-crossing, trolling the tidal pool; *x* marks the wanting spot, just perhaps the gap to see. Well sailor?

Penny van Toorn

Stories to Live In
Discursive Regimes and Indigenous Canadian and Australian Historiography [1]

One "fictions" history starting from a political reality that renders it true, one "fictions" a politics that doesn't as yet exist starting from an historical truth. (Foucault *Michel Foucault* 74-75)

I

"Indigenous history" was for many years a contradiction in terms, because Westerners defined "history" precisely in terms of what Indigenous cultures lacked. Whether describing a body of significant events and universal causal principles, or a set of epistemological conventions and scientific textual practices, "history" was delimited by Western thinkers in a manner that ensured it could never, by definition, be made or used politically by tribal peoples.

Yet no matter where the boundaries of "history proper" are drawn, every culture has its own characteristic ways of remembering, its own distinct array of social memory practices, formal and informal. In the period since Canada and Australia were first colonised by Europeans, traditional Indigenous modes of preserving and transmitting knowledge of the past were either destroyed outright as populations were decimated by frontier violence and disease, or were severely disrupted by government and church policies. These policies involved driving Native peoples away from their traditional homelands, breaking up their families, prohibiting their languages and ceremonies, and deauthorising their traditional story forms.

Although allegedly doomed to extinction, First Nations and Aboriginal peoples survived. Although disqualified as historians, they did not forget. Memories were preserved and transmitted orally inside Indigenous communities, largely out of earshot of white academics and the wider non-Indigenous community. Behind the biases and silences of white history, Indigenous social memory persisted, some practices continuing virtually unchanged to the present day, others adapting and transforming often in

response to pressures imposed by the dominant culture. Although history is written by the winners, social memory cannot ever be completely eradicated (short of committing genocide) because memories remain lodged in people's minds and encoded in their everyday speech- and life-practices.

At present, four sites of Indigenous historiographic production are particularly significant. First, traditional Indigenous communities continue to practice oral modes of transmission, and certain of their oral narratives have been reproduced and disseminated to wider audiences in printed texts, on film, TV and radio, on the internet, and on multimedia CDs.[2] Second, Indigenous people's accounts of the past are produced and transmitted throughout the literary, visual and performing arts, in the form of poems, short stories, novels, biographies, autobiographies, paintings, sculptures, films, photographic exhibitions, plays, dances, and songs. Some of these histories have reached enormous national and global audiences. They have played a crucial role in forming Indigenous imagined communities and in raising non-Indigenous levels of historical and political awareness.[3] Third, academically trained Indigenous historians produce work that appropriates the power of the discipline of history for Indigenous purposes. Indigenous historians also observe and/or contest disciplinary norms and protocols from positions outside the academy.[4] Fourth, in legal-governmental settings such as land claim hearings and official government inquiries, Indigenous people's historical testimonies are included in the official records. From there they pass into public circulation through the mass media as news and current affairs, and occasionally through commercial publications.[5]

Indigenous Canadian and Australian voices have now well and truly broken into history. However, a serious political problem remains to be addressed: although Indigenous people are retelling the past, the means of reproducing their enunciations, disseminating them, and ascribing historical authority to them—all the processes necessary to making social memory public and politically effective—these processes remain largely in the hands of non-Indigenous individuals and institutions. Other than those produced by, about, and for the most isolated traditional communities, Indigenous histories remain for the most part tactical in de Certeau's sense of being produced, transmitted, and evaluated in cultural territories predominantly under someone else's control.[6]

How is that control asserted? Indigenous historiography is governed by four discursive regimes, or sets of regulative mechanisms, that determine

who can say what to whom, under what circumstances, and in what manner. Three of these four regimes are largely non-Indigenous controlled. The four regimes are:

(1) Indigenous cultural tradition—in which Indigenous people assert their own cultural values by producing, transmitting, and utilising their own stories in traditional or semi-traditional ways for their own purposes;
(2) the market—through which the cultural values and financial power of White audiences are exercised;
(3) the discipline of history—through which scientific norms and standards of scholarly research and writing are enforced; and
(4) legal-governmental mechanisms—where the rules of evidence and the terms of reference in land claim hearings and official inquiries effectively elicit some kinds of histories and suppress others. Other regulative devices within this regime include copyright, defamation, and heritage legislation, and government policies pertaining to arts funding, the media, research funding, and school education.

These regulative mechanisms shape Indigenous histories at the four sites of production previously described, as well as at the manifold points of textual transmission and consumption. They set limits on the field of objects of study, determine who can be the agents of knowledge (who can produce it, have access to it, and transmit it), and decide how that knowledge must be represented, organised, authorised and interpreted.

Most texts exist in a space of overlap between two or more regimes. Non-Indigenous mediators and collaborators often play a vital role in the process of negotiating between conflicting regimes.[7] Texts also have the potential to move from one discursive regime to another in the course of being transformed from one medium to another. They can also shift between different regimes depending on whether we view them at the moment of production, transmission, or consumption.

In the remainder of this paper I will focus on three case studies which illustrate some of the issues that arise when Indigenous authors and artists enter into dialogue with the discipline, and when traditional Indigenous oral regimes meet alien communications technologies and market pressures to commodify and aestheticise Indigenous cultural products.

Before moving to the case studies, however, it is essential to emphasise from the outset that the working of these regimes does not make histories

produced by Aboriginal singers, storytellers, painters, or film makers any less "true" than, say, those produced according to traditional academic protocols. All cultures have their own characteristic canons of truth. All histories are generated, transmitted, authorised, and empowered (or disempowered) by regulative mechanisms specific to their time and place. No historical representation—Indigenous or otherwise—is produced in free space outside any system of cultural, financial or political regulation.[8]

II

It is perhaps not coincidental that the West's institutionalisation of scientific historical research and citational methods took place at a time when rapid and aggressive imperial expansion necessitated a devaluation of traditional Indigenous knowledge-forms and cultural practices. Western scientific history—defined as objective, properly documented, chronologically ordered knowledge of the past—denied the possibility of traditional Indigenous oral accounts being classified *as* histories, or of being accorded the authority and political instrumentality *of* "history proper." The Eurocentric discipline of history pushed non-Western and other unscientific forms of historical representation out of history's official realm of the true. The protocols of Western academic historiography activated "the rules of a discursive 'policing'" (Foucault "The Order of Discourse" 61) which banished traditional Indigenous historical discourses to "the space of a wild exteriority" (61) where their historical statements would not be recognised as such. Indigenous accounts of the past thus became part of a "whole teratology of knowledge" (60) that was pushed back beyond the margins of history as defined by the West.

Since the 1960s, however, the discipline of history has undergone some profound changes, and is now internally fissured along political and theoretical axes. Intra- and inter-disciplinary dialogues have made for high levels of political and cultural self-consciousness in some quarters of the profession. The question of what counts as history has been reopened. This is a political issue as well as a theoretical one. Historical knowledge is an immensely powerful political resource, and the breadth and variety of what counts as historical knowledge in a society at any given time reflects and reproduces the distribution of power and privilege in that society. Some historians argue that the term "history" should remain firmly anchored to its European origins. They claim "the idea of history is a western concept,

developed over time in European culture," and that it is therefore assimilationist to pull Indigenous peoples onto centre stage in history, or to categorise non-Western understandings of the past as historical.[9]

Opponents of this view see the term "history" as somewhat more elastic. Maintaining that "history is culturally ordered, differently so in different societies" (Sahlins vii),[10] they argue that it is narrowly Eurocentric to deny historical status to non-Western ways of constituting, representing and understanding the past. In their view, the experiences of all the world's peoples should be included in the field of objects open to historical inquiry; likewise, culturally diverse ways in which human beings know the past should all be regarded as varieties of historical awareness. The word "history" has a history of its own; to essentialise the word is to freeze it in time and space, denying its historicity and its amenability to cultural diversification.

The poem, "Our Story Not History," by Ron Hamilton (Ki-ke-in) from the West coast of Vancouver Island, contributes to this debate by de-essentialising the concept of history, exploring the semantic limits of the word, and surveying a range of Indigenous relations with history as action and as discourse:

> We are walking up the road
> That leads to history.
> Some are being led peacefully
> Others are driven from within.
>
> Some are dragged kicking and screaming.
> Pulled forcefully
> Down the road that leads
> Away from their history.
>
> A very few are changing history.
> Redefining the meaning of history.
> Making history responsible
> To those caught in its sticky web.
>
> Sadly some are prisoners of history,
> Their very lives defined,
> And their futures determined,
> By a history compiled by their enemies.
>
> Some are being made by history
> Some are "making" history.*
>
> (Ron Hamilton [Ki-ke-in] 87)

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In this poem, as I read it, the meaning of the term "history" is unfixed; "history" slides strategically from one meaning to another. The poem's title, "Our Story Not History," makes an initial clear distinction between First Nations oral narrative traditions and Western historical discourses. At this point in the poem, the two traditions are strictly foreign to each other: First Nations oral traditions are not assimilable into Western historiography.

In the first and second stanzas of the poem "history" is a Western imperial vortex of action and discourse into which First Nations peoples are being inexorably pulled, like it or not. Yet paradoxically, Native people are moving both *to* and *from* "history." In line 2, "history" refers to Western history, and Indigenous peoples are walking *towards* it; in line 8, "history's" meaning has expanded to incorporate an Indigenous life-world, a place Native people are being pulled *away* from. The end of stanza 2 refers to traditional Indigenous ways of being and knowing as "their [own] history," a move which implicitly annexes such ways to the domain of "history's" referents.

In stanza 3, "history" shifts again; the text enacts the semantic change it describes. "History" is now explicitly susceptible to redefinition and appropriation for First Nations purposes. Yet at the end of stanza 3 and in stanza 4, "history" is again a white story that has the power to imprison and destroy Indigenous people. It is a "sticky web" woven by the enemy. In stanza 4, the text alludes to "history" as a real-life story within which government policies and laws are framed and enforced. As such "history" is capable literally of imprisoning Native people, and of governing their lives on a day-to-day basis.

In the final two lines of the poem, Ron Hamilton presents two opposing orientations to "history": Native people can either be history's victims or they can grasp it and remake it as their own. In the poem's last line the semantic limits of "history" have been stretched even further than in line 8, to include all the ways in which Native people may know and textualise the past. The suggestion is that instead of being colonised by and assimilated into Western "history," Native people are breaking into "history," invading it, changing it, and appropriating "history's" power while demanding recognition of culturally different canons of truth. "History," once foreign, and still a tool of the enemy, can be redefined and put to work by Native people in the service of their own objectives.

"Our Story Not History" enters into dialogue with the discipline, but as a poem the text situates itself outside the protocols of the discipline as traditionally practised in Western societies.[11] Yet the poem is not free from other

mechanisms of regulation. By writing a poetic interrogation of "history," has Ron Hamilton jumped out of the frying pan of the discipline only to land in the fire of a different white-dominated discursive regime—a publishing market that enforces Western high-cultural criteria of artistic excellence?

Ron Hamilton clearly recognises the potential disjunction between Western literary values and Indigenous modes of writing "not necessarily recognisable as prose or poetry" ("I invite" 91). Yet his response to that disjunction appears contradictory. On the one hand he asserts, "I don't want to have to launder my thoughts and bleach my words 'white' in order to have them published." On the other hand he maintains, "I invite honest criticism, and look forward to improving and learning from it" ("I invite" 91). The questions that arise for me here are: Is "*honest* criticism" culturally unbiased? And by what standards would poetic improvement be measured?

Despite this apparent contradiction, I would argue that "Our Story Not History" succeeds in jumping out of the disciplinary fry-pan *without* landing in the fire of the literary publishing market. The site and occasion of the poem's publication are crucial. The poem was not published in a *literary* journal nor with a commercial literary publisher, where white financial power and cultural preferences would have shaped editorial values. Instead Ron Hamilton spoke from a space relatively free of white mechanisms of constraint. But it was a space only momentarily available—a special issue of the multidisciplinary journal *BC Studies*, entitled "In Celebration of Our Survival: The First Nations of British Columbia," guest-edited by two distinguished members of British Columbia's Indigenous community, Doreen Jensen and Cheryl Brooks.

Without casting aspersions on anyone involved with editing and managing *BC Studies*, I would suggest that even this space may not have been absolutely free of indirect constraints. It would be interesting to know precisely how the journal's regular editorial team were involved in the work of the guest editors, and to ascertain whether the editorial process was shaped at all by a sense of accountability to the organisations that financially assisted the volume's publication—the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, and the Hamber Foundation. It is even possible that, in spite of the best intentions of everyone involved in editorial decision-making, special issues of academic journals can sometimes function as a mechanism of containment, like little reserves specially granted in the dominant culture's textual space.

That said, I would reiterate that in a forum such as the special "First Nations of British Columbia" issue of *BC Studies*, Indigenous historiography is much less subject to regulation by white market forces and cultural values than is the case when it is disseminated through commercial publishing outlets or in journals edited by ethnocentric non-Indigenous scholars.

III

The extent of this difference can be seen by comparing Daisy Sewid-Smith's historical essay, "In Time Immemorial," written for the special issue of *BC Studies*, with an Aboriginal autobiography, *Wandjuk Marika: Life Story*, published commercially as a glossy, lavishly illustrated, large-format book by the University of Queensland Press in 1995.

Daisy Sewid-Smith's text was composed as a written historical essay, while Wandjuk Marika's story was told orally to a non-Indigenous woman, Jennifer Isaacs, who recorded, transcribed, and edited the narratives. Yet the two histories have many elements in common, and many elements which can be read as evidence of the continuing regulative influence of their authors' respective traditional cultures. They both offer accounts of sacred events that took place in mythic time, and that resulted in the formation of the land, the social order of the clans and tribal groups, and certain of their customs. Both use written and oral sources—"My grandmother told me..."; "My father told me..."—the oral sometimes supplementing or correcting the written, and the written cited usually to corroborate the oral. Both histories use features of the landscape in the way professional historians use documents, to certify the truth of their narratives. And each text uses a special orthography to capture the distinct sounds of Indigenous language words.

In many ways, *Wandjuk Marika* appears more tightly regulated by traditional Aboriginal cultural standards of propriety than Daisy Sewid-Smith's essay. In traditional Aboriginal Australian cultures, information flows are restricted by differences of age, initiation level, gender, kinship connections, and affiliations to country. Only certain people can speak about events that occurred in certain places or to certain people; only certain people are permitted to hear those stories. Violations of the dividing lines between secret and public domains of knowledge are met with severe punishments. Many communities also have mortuary restrictions against naming and displaying images of the deceased, and against reproducing their songs, stories,

clothing, or other possessions. So in traditional Aboriginal oral discursive regimes, information movements across time and space are highly restricted. In addition, representational codes are relatively fixed. Wandjuk Marika tells a story of how, one day, after years of painting in the traditional black, white and ochre, he happened to make green by mixing two colours together. His father told him that green was outside the Law, so he never painted with green again.

Wandjuk Marika was an elder of the Rirratjinu people, one of the communities of north-east Arnhem Land who collectively call themselves the Yolngu. He was an artist, musician, dancer, political activist, and Chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board. He was also a senior ceremonial leader and traditional custodian of the sacred site of Yalanbara, a beach in north-eastern Arnhem Land where the creation ancestor, Djankawu, first came to land. From both his mother's side and his father's, Wandjuk Marika was uniquely placed within the Yolngu kinship system network so as to have access to the most secret and sacred knowledge. He also traced his descent back in a direct line back to the creation ancestor, Djankawu. The book presents these facts not only because they are intrinsically interesting, but because, according to Aboriginal Law, they are Wandjuk Marika's credentials to speak, paint, sing and ritually reenact the sacred history of his traditional country.

The interesting thing about Wandjuk Marika's *Life Story*—the text and the design of the book—is the way it negotiates between the conflicting requirements of two discursive regimes: traditional Yolngu culture and the white-dominated book market.[12] The timing of the book's publication was determined by Yolngu cultural tradition. Wandjuk Marika died in 1987, and in conformity with Yolngu mortuary restrictions, his name, words, and images could not be spoken or shown, until the family gave permission, eight years after Wandjuk Marika's death. We are also told that other recently deceased members of his family cannot be named, and that since uninitiated children may read the book, the secret, sacred version of the Dreaming stories won't be told. Nor can secret aspects of ceremony be described or photographed. The traditional Yolngu regulative system is clearly operating here.

The oral feel of Wandjuk's narratives is preserved as far as possible on the printed page. Grammatical errors are not corrected, and sections of his stories are laid out on the page in short, left-justified lines that look like poetry. (The publication details name Rodney Hall, a senior member of the White

Australian literary establishment, as the "consulting poet.") This poetic layout is now a well-established marker of "authentic Indigenous orality."[13]

There is also a note, positioned prominently above the book's publication details, informing readers that

> The Literature Centres in Yolngu have developed their own phonetic script which reproduces the languages of north-east Arnhem Land more accurately than can be achieved with the English alphabet. This is the first book to utilise this typography for general readership.

Five special symbols are listed, which, while serving to guide pronunciation, do not interfere in the least with the text's readability by the "general readership." Like Wandjuk's grammar and the poetic page layout, the orthography works to authenticate, and perhaps even exoticise the text, without alienating mainstream readers from it. This readability is in marked contrast to Daisy Sewid-Smith's special orthography—forty-eight symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet—which looks very foreign on the page, and proves disorienting for that majority of the general readership who cannot translate the symbols into sounds. Daisy Sewid-Smith does not need to accommodate the tastes of a general readership, whereas the publishers of Wandjuk Marika's *Life Story* can't afford to alienate the mainstream market.

In times gone by, Aboriginal texts would often begin with a preface by some well-known white author, whose job it was to assure the (white) audience that the Aboriginal writer was worth reading. These days, the points of entry into Aboriginal-authored texts are more elaborately organised. Jennifer Isaacs' Preface, which introduces Wandjuk Marika and explains why his life story is significant, is itself preceded by a Foreword written by Wandjuk Marika's son, Mawalan, explaining how Jennifer Isaacs has been adopted into the family, and how she is a most appropriate person to be editing the book. We are told that Wandjuk Marika invited Jennifer Isaacs to help him with his life story; as a result, this is not a case of an intrusive researcher going uninvited into a traditional Aboriginal community to seek out exotic life stories to market to the world at large. Explicit mention is made at a number of points in the text that the book was produced with the cooperation and endorsement of Wandjuk Marika's family, who advised Jennifer Isaacs on matters relating to the transcription of the audio tapes and the selection of photographic images.[14]

There is no cause to doubt any of this. It is worth remembering, however, that Jennifer Isaacs has made a career out of adding commercial value to

Aboriginal knowledge, cultural products and practices. She has published numerous large, glossy, expensively produced, coffee-table books about Aboriginal art, music, food, and culture. Some are published internationally; in Australia they are distributed through major bookstore chains and through retailing centres catering to the tourist market—airports, souvenir shops, art galleries, and craft stores. Clearly, Jennifer Isaacs is an experienced negotiator between the life-world of Wandjuk Marika's family, with its traditional Yolngu regulative systems, and the white-dominated discursive regime of the market. This is not to say that Jennifer Isaacs is some kind of traitor. She too is caught in a complex web of commercial influences and cultural constraints. It may be that while Jennifer Isaacs holds herself scrupulously accountable to Wandjuk Marika's family and the Yolngu community, her publishers are using her mediating skills as a marketable commodity. Her name is part of the packaging of Wandjuk Marika's story; it is a design element employed to attract the general readership.

Mawalan Marika's Foreword stresses that his father's life story is not only for his family, and not only for Aboriginal people, but for all people. I would suggest that it *has* to be for all people—it is an expensive publication. Retailing at $34.95 it would probably be out of the financial reach of many Aboriginal people. The necessary appeal to as large an audience as possible is apparent in the self-positioning of the text in a number of genre categories familiar to a mainstream readership. The front cover flap tells us that the text is an autobiography, a "major literary work [that] reveals the beauty and integrity of Aboriginal English in the oral narrative...." The paintings are described as "religious documents," and we are told that Wandjuk Marika's story "reveals the Yolngu (Aboriginal) side of history."

At times, Wandjuk Marika speaks as the voice of the land: he says, "Many are the stories I could tell you—*already there in the land*" (22). As he relates the sacred histories of the land, the accompanying photographs of the beach and rock formations at Yalanbara show readers the physical landscape which Wandjuk Marika himself is reading. The photographs document the land-as-document; they provide visual proof of the truth of his story. By allowing us to read the landscape as if it were a historical document, the book observes the rules of verification that operate in the Yolngu discursive regime.

This regime overlaps, however, with the regime of the market at the moment when the place-name "Yalanbara" is followed in brackets by the words "Sunrise Beach." The sunrise is significant in the traditional creation

story because Djankawu followed the beams of sun over the ocean to the beach. But still, "Sunrise Beach" is jarring because it articulates the book's orientation towards the white Australian and international tourist markets. The beautiful colour photographs of pristine white sand, clear turquoise waters, voluptuous tropical cloud formations, and spectacular sunsets position the text inside a discourse of eco-tourism. The front cover flap tells us that "The full colour photographs, which . . . reveal the power and mystery of Yalanbara's sacred sites, will be enthralling to the general reader as well as students." (No mention of Wandjuk Marika's family here, nor of the strict secrecy of many Aboriginal sacred sites.) Similarly, the book participates in a discourse of cultural tourism, with images of grinning, dark-skinned children, woven baskets, colourful ceremonies, and perhaps most intriguing of all, Wandjuk Marika's traditional paintings.[15]

So here we have a book that attempts to respect the prohibitions and requirements of the traditional Yolngu discursive regime in terms of its language, text-layout, orthography, mortuary restrictions, and the ways in which it authorises Wandjuk Marika and Jennifer Isaacs. Yet it is also designed to seduce an affluent mainstream national and international readership, which makes it subject to constraints and requirements imposed by the publishing market. The question that arises here is whether, at least in mainstream contexts of reading, the book *obeys* the Yolngu rules of signification in such as way as to *display* those rules too conspicuously as yet another exotic, consumable, Indigenous cultural commodity—a feature of the book that makes it worth buying. Can Wandjuk Marika's *Life Story* work inside the Yolngu rules, while at the same time objectifying them as a commodity available for White consumption?

Some Indigenous texts have been able to enter the arena of historical debate through the back door, heavily disguised as marketable cultural commodities, so as not to place themselves wholly under the jurisdiction of the discipline. But tricking history in this way is a risky business: if the disguise works too well, the trick backfires. At the moment of reading these texts can be transformed into what they pretend to be—decorative coffee table books that offer momentary light entertainment, quaint myths, fictions, or native artifacts. The potential political force of such histories can easily be deflected or dissipated by the very conditions under which they are disseminated and made meaningful. The contingencies of the reading context can annex them to depoliticised zones such as the aesthetic, the mythic, the romantically exotic, or the playfully postmodern.

IV

Perhaps the challenge for Indigenous authors seeking to rewrite history is to trick the market and the discipline at the same time. Cherokee author Thomas King does precisely this in his children's book, *A Coyote Columbus Story*. Published in 1992, the book took advantage of the wide public interest in Columbus stimulated by the celebrations marking the five hundredth anniversary of his "discovery" of the Americas.[16] As well as picking his moment, King exploited the full potential of his genre. He turned the tables on those custodians of "history proper" who dismissed Native oral histories as childish fairytales by rewriting the Columbus story as a crazy tale for children (and of course adults).

King's version of the story begins some time before Columbus's arrival, with Coyote's creation of the world. She creates beavers, moose, and turtles to play ball with her but they prefer to do other things. She creates human beings to play ball with her. They agree, and become Coyote's good friends. But Coyote keeps changing the rules so she can win every time; the human beings get fed up and refuse to play. Coyote becomes bored, and "doesn't watch what she is making up out of her head." Voilà: "three ships and some people in funny looking clothes carrying flags and boxes of junk." The arrival of Christopher Columbus means "big trouble." Columbus doesn't want to play ball with Coyote either. He's too busy looking for gold and other "stuff they can sell." The newcomers have bad manners, and "act as if they've got no relations." Columbus "grabs a big bunch of men and women and children and locks them up in his ships." "Hey," says Coyote when she sees what's happening, "Where are my friends?" Columbus takes them back to Spain to sell "to rich people like baseball players and dentists and babysitters and parents."[17] Realising she's made a big mistake in creating Columbus, Coyote tries to undo her creation but instead Jacques Cartier appears. Beavers, moose, turtles, and human beings escape on the first train to Penticton.[18] The story ends with Coyote trying to talk Jacques Cartier into playing ball.

According to standards traditional to the discipline of History, King's *Coyote Columbus Story* is spectacularly wrong. But this is a children's book: "errors" are committed ostentatiously, obviously to create laughter, but also to serve strategic purposes. The reference to Penticton, and the illustrations of the landscape by William Kent Monkman situate the story thousands of miles away from the sites where Columbus's records indicate he landed. You

have to know the "proper" story to get the jokes. Yet this geographical "error" is on one level not a joke: as far as the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were concerned there were thousands of Columbuses. In King's retelling of the story, the name "Columbus" ceases to signify a particular individual, and instead refers metonymically to the European presence all over the Americas.[19]

As well as getting the setting "wrong," King's *Coyote Columbus Story* is also full of flagrant anachronisms. When Coyote created the world, she created modern Western technologies alongside the rainbows, flowers, clouds, and rivers. In the foreground of the book's first picture, a turtle wearing earrings and covered in sunblock watches a commercial for prune-juice on a TV plugged into a tree. The effect of mixing the past and present is to close the gap between 1492 and 1992. This move invites children to imagine what it would it be like if a stranger like Columbus suddenly arrived on their own doorstep today. It also emphasises that the process of invasion continues.

King also unmakes the distance between 1492 and the present by telling the story in both the past and the present tenses. Orthodox historical narratives are written entirely in the past perfect tense, the effect being to draw a sharp line between past and present, as though the historical events in question were entirely finished, complete, and closed. Yet for many Indigenous people of the Americas and elsewhere, the past is not invariably a distant place in time. As a source of cultural traditions to be maintained, it is sometimes painfully far away; as a source of injustices to be overcome it is often too close for comfort. In Aboriginal poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal's words: "Let no one say the past is dead / The past is all around us and within" (99).

Native peoples were once thought to be themselves a historical anachronism, relics of a time left behind long ago by Europeans. This "denial of coevalness" had far-reaching political implications (Fabian 29-31). Forming a basis for evolutionary hierarchies of cultural and biological development, its ideological effect was to legitimise European domination over Indigenous peoples. In *A Coyote Columbus Story*, Native people—"the human beings"—are pictured as both modern and traditional at the same time. They are neither primitive nor assimilated; neither just like whites nor entirely different. They were present in the past, and many of the old ways are practised in the present.

Thomas King enacts the continuity of First Nations traditions in a number of ways. By suggesting that Columbus is Coyote's creation he assimilates

a White American culture hero into traditional Indigenous cosmology. King also preserves the flavour of Indigenous oral storytelling in this and other stories. Children's literature, which is often read aloud, is an ideal vehicle for preserving and popularising oral narrative modes. King's tone in *A Coyote Columbus Story* is casual and conversational. Readers (and those listening to the story as it is read aloud) are addressed directly as "you."

At the point of reception, some discursive regimes regulate the dialogic process of making texts meaningful by standardising the rules, rituals, and contexts of interpretation. In the market regime, however, texts are scattered into various contexts, where random contingencies can shape the ways readers assign meaning to the text. A story produced as history may look like something rather different in the eye of the beholder. Having tricked the discipline of history by utilising the freedoms of children's literature, can Thomas King also trick the market by overcoming its power to dehistoricise and depoliticise his narrative?

With his illustrator William Kent Monkman, King conjures readers imaginatively out of their diverse actual contexts by providing two texts rather than one—a verbal text and a visual text. By framing and reinforcing one another, the visual and verbal texts insulate the story from a certain amount of random contextual interference. *A Coyote Columbus Story* positions its geographically and culturally scattered readership as though they were physically together in a shared spatial context of telling. The illustrations are crucial to this process: they standardise the context of reading by physically framing the text uniformly for all readers. When King refers to "those beavers," and "those human beings," every reader can look at an identical set of images on the page, in the same way as a group of people listening to an oral storyteller might direct their eyes to something to which the speaker points in their immediate vicinity.[20] King's words and Monkman's illustrations draw the book's scattered readers together centripetally into something resembling a united community of listeners. The many different actual readers addressed by the pronoun "you" congregate into an imaginative community around the storyteller. From that perspective, as Columbus takes members of what is now our community away, the culture hero looks like a rather nasty piece of work.

Younger children would read this book (or have it read to them aloud) before, or around the same time as, they encounter the Columbus story at school. Educational policies in general, and school history curricula in par-

ticular, are among the regulative mechanisms making up what I have called the legal-governmental discursive regime.[21] Until recently, school curricula in both Canada and Australia offered only whitewashed heroic-romantic versions of European discovery, exploration and "settlement." In these stories, Indigenous people were either omitted altogether, or cast as treacherous villains, helpless victims, or faithful helpers to whites. Today, Indigenous historical perspectives are being incorporated into school curricula, sometimes in ways that cause new problems in the process of solving old ones. Thomas King's *Coyote Columbus Story* may well make a difference to the way children hear their history teacher, or read their history text books, or receive the Columbus stories that circulate as popular white mythology. Non-Indigenous adults who read this story to their children may find some of their old certainties disrupted. They may even re-imagine Columbus's arrival through the fresh eyes of their children, and share in childhood's passionate, unerring abhorrence of injustice.

Western scholars and philosophers once disqualified Indigenous peoples as both actors and knowers of history. They believed that without the technologies of writing and a sense of linear chronological time, Indigenous peoples had no understanding of historical cause and effect, and no objective means of distinguishing "history proper" from "mere myth and legend."[22] Thomas King overturns these Western epistemological and narrative hierarchies. By retelling the Columbus story in a humorous children's book, he is able to make "liabilities" work as assets. Children's literature is a crack in the edifice of Western historical discourse. It is a genre that offers Thomas King a range of rhetorical opportunities that would not otherwise be available. King is able to trick all three white dominated regulative systems—the academic discipline, the market, and the legal-governmental (school educational) system. In *A Coyote Columbus Story*, King's chosen genre allows him at once to defy the protocols of academic research and writing, to use pictures which seduce the market and frame and control verbal meaning, and to counter the ideological and political biases disseminated for so long to children through the school system.

V

At the end of the twentieth century, the field of historical enunciation in Canada and Australia is at one level more open, democratic, and diverse than at any time in the past. The media, the arts, and the school system are

bringing Indigenous histories out of the local communities, the archives, and the academy, and are disseminating them in mainstream public domains. In the world arena, Indigenous peoples of Canada and Australia are speaking out at international human rights forums, and seeking moral redress and financial compensation under international laws and agreements. No longer is history enunciated only by those who think of themselves as the winners. Indigenous histories ask the winners to acknowledge and ameliorate the human cost of their victories. Consequently, "settler" societies in "new world" nations such as Canada and Australia are now struggling under the weight of their own burdens of history, as Europeans did a hundred years ago.[23]

While Indigenous groups and their supporters may celebrate the growing public awareness of Indigenous history, there are powerful forces on the political right, and in rural, forestry, and mining industry groups, who would like to consign Indigenous perspectives to oblivion. In Australia, hostility towards Aboriginal histories has come from the highest levels of government. The Prime Minister, John Howard, and his Aboriginal Affairs Minister, John Herron, have refused repeatedly since the release of the "Stolen Generations" report in April 1997 to apologise for the suffering caused by past government policies of removing Aboriginal children from their families. (In response to the Canadian government's official apology, they alleged the Australian situation was different.) John Howard has also publicly castigated Aboriginal leaders for exposing Australia to international opprobrium by their speaking of the stolen generations at overseas conferences and human rights forums. He has dismissed as un-Australian "the black armband version of history," by which he means those versions of history which foreground the killing, rape, and exploitation of Aboriginal people by Whites. On many occasions since the Liberal-National Government came into power in March 1996, Howard and Herron have publicly urged the Aboriginal community to put the past behind them and move into the future.

The future holds a special allure for those who want to shrug off an embarrassing past. As Canada and Australia sail inexorably towards the coast of the new millennium, the future comes into view as though it were a new place in time, a *tabula rasa* where history can begin afresh, and where nations can reinvent themselves in ways calculated to serve the interests of the powerful. The new millennium allows "new worlds" grown old to draw

a line across history's account book and pretend they have left the bad old days of racial oppression far behind. Yet in far too many respects the bad old days are still with us. As the white-dominated republican movement pushes to cut Australia's ties to Britain by the year 2000, Aboriginal deaths in prisons and police cells continue to increase in every state, and Aboriginal land rights are being eroded by the Howard Government's proposed amendments to the 1993 Native Title Bill.[24]

So while the gains already made by Indigenous historians in Canada and Australia are to be celebrated, the continued operation of oppressive forces should not be underestimated. Indigenous histories are indeed proliferating in Canada and Australia, but it would be erroneous to imagine that either nation now has a nice, permanent smorgasbord of equally authoritative and accessible histories. In historical actuality, people rank different histories into hierarchies. In the process of formulating policies and arriving at legal judgements, governments and courts give precedence to certain versions of history over others. White people's private attitudes and behaviours towards Indigenous peoples also take shape inside some versions of history rather than others. The static, monoplanar, smorgasbord model of historiographic diversity is inaccurate in so far as it pictures Indigenous histories as static objects rather than as dynamic political forces that are generated, disseminated, utilized, or subdued in specific contexts of social struggle.

It is one thing to get Indigenous histories into print, or onto canvas, film, or radio. That is a major achievement. But it is quite another thing to turn these histories into effective instruments for change. The crucial questions are: What power will accrue to which histories, and by what mechanisms? What kinds of work will these histories do in the world? Whose interests will they serve? These are questions that have to do not only with the content of Indigenous histories, but also with the historicity of the texts themselves as they move within and between different discursive regimes. It is crucial to understand what happened and is happening to Indigenous peoples. But it is also necessary to identify the specific institutional mechanisms through which Indigenous histories come into being, are disseminated, and put to work (or not) as a historical force in their own right.

NOTES

1 This paper comes out of research in progress. I would greatly appreciate any feedback readers might care to offer, especially from Native Canadian and Aboriginal historians. My postal address is: Department of English, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia. E-mail: penny.van.toorn@english.usyd.edu.au

2 Printed texts, audio tapes, and films made by non-Indigenous anthropologists account for a large portion of the Indigenous oral narratives that have been transformed into Western media. See, for example, Robinson and Bird Rose (1991).

3 Australian examples include Yothu Yindi and Morgan.

4 For example, in Australia, see HREOC and Bird; in Canada, see Adams and Miller.

5 In Australia, *Bringing Them Home*, the official report of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Children From Their Families was widely publicised in news and current in the mass media. The 700-page Report became a best-seller, retailing to the public at $60 per copy from government bookstores. In March 1998 Random House published a selection of Aboriginal testimonies from the report, *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*, edited by Carmel Bird, a writer and university lecturer in creative writing.

6 De Certeau quotes von Bülow to distinguish between tactical and strategic practices: in warfare, "strategy is the science of military movements outside of the enemy's vision; tactics, within it" (212 n.14). Indigenous histories produced within non-Indigenous institutions are tactical in that they "must play on and with a terrain imposed . . . and organised by the law of a foreign power" (37).

7 I worked in this capacity with Bundjalung author Ruby Langford Ginibi on her son's biography, *Haunted By the Past* (1998). In this paper, as in my teaching, research, and editorial work on Aboriginal literature and historiography, I cannot pretend to be outside the systems of control and regulation I am attempting to describe.

8 For example, market forces have shaped the ways in which non-Indigenous histories of Canada and Australia were written. Before local scholarly publishing became financially viable, historians often wrote in the colonial adventure romance genre partly in order to appeal to the largest possible British audience. See Macintyre (71-90); Francis (158-67), and Trigger (19-44).

9 See Munz; Coltheart.

10 I am appropriating Sahlins's formulation to present an argument somewhat different from Sahlins's own.

11 The academy gives the discipline an institutional base of operations, but is not identical with it. Traditional disciplinary protocols can be observed or contested from positions inside or outside the academy.

12 The book also unobtrusively observes the conventions of citation and acknowledgment required by copyright legislation and disciplinary protocol.

13 See, for example, Roe; Benterrak, Muecke, and Roe; and Robinson.

14 Copyright on the text and paintings belongs to Wandjuk Marika's family; copyright on the editorial arrangement and notes belongs to Jennifer Isaacs.

15 Cultural tourism is the main source of income for many Aboriginal communities in northern and central Australia. Paintings, and cultural artifacts such as didgeridoos, boomerangs, clap-sticks, and woven baskets are sold locally to tourists or shipped to dealers in the regional centres, the major capital cities, and overseas.

16 This seizing of a special moment officially designated for other purposes is characteristic of tactical manoeuvres. De Certeau notes that "a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing.' Whatever it wins it does keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities.' The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them" (de Certeau xix). In Australia, Aboriginal protesters took tactical advantage of world media coverage of the Bicentenary of British "settlement" in 1988 to proclaim on placards and T-shirts that "White Australia has a Black History." In front of the world media on Australia Day, 1988, at the harbourside launch by Prime Minister Bob Hawke of the officially commissioned *Penguin Bicentennial History of Australia*, an Aboriginal protester seized the volume and threw it into Sydney Harbour.

17 In 1495, during his second voyage, Columbus shipped a large number of Native people to Spain, intending to sell them as slaves. Queen Isabella objected, however, and ordered Columbus to return them to their homeland.

18 Penticton is a major centre of First Nations literary activity. It is the home of Native-controlled literary institutions such as Theytus Books, the En'owkin International School of Writing, the En'owkin Centre, and *Gatherings: The En'owkin Journal of First North American Peoples.*

19 The same kind of metonymic references to Captain Cook are found in Aboriginal Australian accounts of early white contact, even in regions far distant from the routes recorded in Cook's logbooks and journals. See Bird Rose; Healy 42-72.

20 Thomas King's oral style echoes aspects of the speech of Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson.

21 In most states of Australia, school curricula are a state responsibility, and are therefore highly standardised across all public schools in each state.

22 For example, Walter Murdoch's *The Making of Australia: An Introductory History*, a text written for Australian schoolchildren, informed readers that "there is good reason why we should not stretch the term [history] to make it include the history of the dark-skinned wandering tribes . . . for they have nothing that can be called a history. They have dim legends, and queer fairy tales, and deep-rooted customs which have come down from long, long ago; but they have no history, as we use the word. Change and progress are the stuff of which history is made: these blacks knew no change and made no progress . . ." (ix-x).

23 See White.

24 The Native Title Bill, passed by the Keating Labour Government in 1993, encoded in law the High Court of Australia's findings in the Mabo case (1992). In the course of their ten-year court battle, Eddie Mabo and his co-claimants from Mer Island in the Torres Straight lodged historical evidence that eventually caused the High Court to overthrow the legal fiction that Australia was *terra nullius* (a land belonging to no one) at the time it was first settled without treaty by the British. In the face of manifest evidence to the contrary, the *terra nullius* myth had been upheld for 204 years. The 1993 Native Title Bill gave Aboriginal communities the right (subject to certain conditions and to their meeting strict eligibility criteria) to claim crown land that had never been sold into freehold. Mining and pastoral leases were a grey area in the 1993 Bill; however, in The Wik case of 1997, the High Court found that pastoral leases did not automatically extinguish native title, and that the two could coexist (with the pastoralists' interests prevailing over the Aborigines' if they conflicted). The Howard Government's proposed amendments to the

1993 Bill extinguish native title on pastoral leases and remove Aboriginal rights to negotiate with mining companies on mining leases. The proposed amendments also introduce stringent new conditions and eligibility criteria that make it far more difficult for Aboriginal people to claim any land at all.

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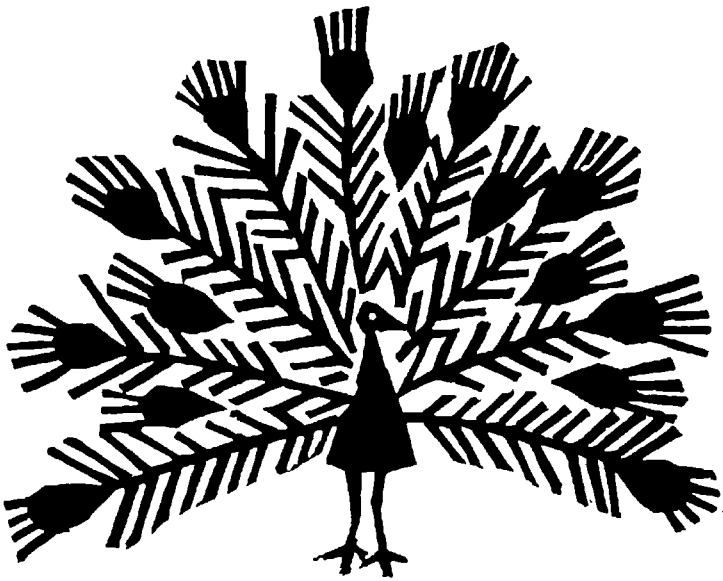

Robert Kroetsch

from *The Poetics of Rita Kleinhart*

Hornbook #15

I am one nervous poem. Can a poem be nervous?
Well of course a poem can be nervous. Just think about it.
First things first. How am I to view the end of the millennium?
Who the fuck wouldn't be nervous? Things change.

It's my nerves. Consider, for instance, the annihilation of species.
My habitat is on the way out. The forests are burning.
Recycle, recycle they tell us. The humans, I mean.
It's my frayed assumptions. I don't know where to begin.

Language, apparently, changes. Then where does the ego hang its hat?
Listen, I'm not telling you. I'm asking a simple, obvious question.
And the oceans are rising. The ozone layer is full of holes.
I'm not asking for pity. Pity up your royal rectum.

I'm trying to make adjustments. So off with my end rhymes.
When does the end justify the moans? Ha, funny.
It's my wrecked nerves. I suppose the eternal would be even worse.
Once upon a time, and later, and later again. Holy shit.

Tamas Dobozy

"Designed Anarchy" in Mavis Gallant's *The Moslem Wife and Other Stories*

An anarchic aesthetic preoccupies both the early and later stories of Mavis Gallant. The texts in *The Moslem Wife and Other Stories*[1] challenge and expose the impulse to craft a "master narrative" that would subordinate or silence alternative renditions of history. Gallant's fiction allows a polyvocality of competing or multiple narratives to displace or subvert this master narrative, exposing "the story" as an aesthetic configuration, capable of infinite recombination, and storytelling as a tool whereby characters attempt to escape, master and subvert history. The stories expose the reader to an aesthetic not of collaboration, wherein plot, character and language unite under an overriding vision, but one of independence, wherein the disparity between various narrative components prevents the emergence of a unified vision. Gallant celebrates rather than eliminates anarchy.

Any aesthetic, including an anarchic one, requires coordination. For this reason, I refer to Gallant's stories as "designed anarchy." This paradox may sound purposefully provocative, but consider the writer in front of the typewriter, word-processor or notebook. Every story develops from a process of arranging text on a page. Even discussing a cut-up novel such as *Naked Lunch* (perhaps the most uncontrolled aesthetic yet devised), the critic recalls Burroughs' technique, as does Burroughs himself (Hersey 306). A reader experiencing "Grippes and Poche" for the first time may find its disjointed leaps unsettling, but after perusing several more stories like it, distinguishes disjuncture as a common stylistic feature of Gallant's work. In this way, her narrative incongruities may become predictable, even comforting. Perfect

anarchy (a paradox in itself) eludes spatial, and therefore fixed, arrangement on the page. Like Janice Kulyk Keefer, I find "order" within the chaos of Gallant's writing: "Gallant's fiction, then, imposes a purely nominal order on the 'useless chaos' of experience" (Kulyk Keefer 59). What the reader would call "chaos," or textual anarchy, represents nothing more than a rearrangement of standard fictional elements in an unfamiliar, disparate way. Rearrangement suggests design, hence "designed anarchy."

In designed anarchy, form and content cooperate in nullifying the emergence of any one supreme narrative. Relying on a statement made by Gallant herself, Danielle Schaub presents this cooperation in her essay "Structural Patterns of Alienation and Disjunction: Mavis Gallant's Firmly-Structured Stories": "Gallant once remarked that 'style is inseparable from structure,' so that both the expression and presentation of events, feelings, thought and conversations convey the message of fictional pieces" (Schaub 45). If the disjunction between paragraphs and sentences initially conveys arbitrariness, then the "message," that is, the meaning, of Gallant's words also reinforces this impression:

> He never told the same story twice, except for some details. He said he was picked up and deported when he was ten or twelve. He was able to describe the Swiss or Swedish consulate where they tried to save him. (Gallant 83)

The speed of these sentences, from "An Autobiography," mimics the terseness of a grocery list. The repetition of "he was" asserts not biographical truth but Peter's ability to manipulate history. The pronoun "he" drones mechanically, rendering a stylized and rhythmical, rather than earnest, set of sentences. Finally, the imprecise clause, "except for some details," suggests an equality between signifiers, an equality between his stories' features. Gallant wants us sliding on ice, not scuba-diving. Like anyone on ice the reader stands imbalanced, uncertain of where to place weight. Gallant's central design-principle is narrative instability.

Kulyk Keefer isolates this instability in Gallant's narrative strategy by filing the stories into three groups:

> Her own fiction can be divided into three kinds: short, "perfect" stories . . . which delight by the succinctness of their observations and the compression of their wit; longer "opaque" or discontinuous narratives . . . and, finally, fictions . . . in which wit opens rather than tightens the situation observed, and obliquity, not opacity, determines the "message" the fiction encodes. (Kulyk Keefer 66)

Kulyk Keefer's distinctions highlight key adjectives describing Gallant's

work: "short" and "perfect," "opaque" or "discontinuous," and "oblique." But even the earliest fiction in this collection, "About Geneva," published nearly ten years before "An Autobiography," presents a "message" as "encoded" as those of later stories, such as "Overhead in a Balloon."

Such dating, like the chronological sequence of stories in the collection itself, offers an illusory sense of "order" or "progression" in Gallant's aesthetic, where none may in fact exist. Gallant herself, in Geoff Hancock's "An Interview with Mavis Gallant," admits to "start[ing]" a story "in the sixties and then put[ting] it away" (Hancock 53). The long gestation of her works makes their compositional chronology difficult to determine. The interview also points out that Gallant's style, from the very start, avoided straightforward sequencing: "The story builds around its centre, rather like a snail" (45), and that William Maxwell, her editor at *The New Yorker*, remarked that the stories went "around and around" (46). Here, the interview suggests Gallant's style has grown increasingly "linear" (45), though she feigns ignorance: "I had no idea I was doing it" (46). However, the wide range of writerly devices Kulyk Keefer mentions above (among which we might include "linearity") does not evince progress so much as Gallant's wide palette: the range of techniques that recur *throughout* her career. Gallant herself testifies to the "shifting" or instinctive nature of her aesthetic: ". . . I've never read [my work] as something with a pattern. I can't help you there. I don't begin with a theory" (Hancock 24). Gallant's refusal "to help" provide any "patterned" or "theoretical" reading of the stories places responsibility for such an undertaking on the individual. Refusing the authoritative position, she simultaneously reminds and warns us that any reading (including the author's) is only one possibility among many; and throughout the interview she defers to Hancock's scholarly aptitude (Hancock 45). In the introduction to *The Selected Stories of Mavis Gallant*, Gallant counters the very idea of a programmatic reading: "Stories are not chapters of novels. They should not be read one after another, as if they were meant to follow along" (xix). In this way, she authorizes a reordering of the stories according to individual aesthetic or (in the case of this essay) theoretical prerogatives, challenging critics who would rank them in an developmental or maturational narrative. When all ordering procedures (history, narrative and chronology) are imposed and therefore unstable, we can, at best, make only provisional statements about a "mature" style.

"About Geneva," therefore, offers, alongside "Overhead in a Balloon," not

so much an *earlier* (speaking developmentally) as *another* view into the language of Gallant's "encoded" fiction. The story depicts the characters' behavior as incongruous and un-psychological. "They might have known how much those extra twenty minutes would mean to granny" (Gallant 9). Use of the word "might" prevents any privileging of the psychological. Did they or did they not know? asks the infuriated reader, experiencing a moment of the opacity described by Kulyk Keefer. Words and sentences come on cue, ritualistically rather than naturally. An unease marks the border between sentences:

> She stretched out her arms to Ursula, but then, seeing the taxi driver, who had carried the children's bags up the stairs, she drew back. After he had gone she repeated the gesture, turning this time to Colin, as if Ursula's cue had been irrevocably missed. (9)

The gesture of affection turns mechanical; the grandmother switches the object of her gesture according to "cue" rather than emotion. A cogwheel has slipped but the gears grind on. Gallant mimics this mechanical slippage in her typically rapid-fire prose. The next sentence reads: "Colin was wearing a beret" (9). Instead of the expected break, as the focus of the writing shifts from Ursula to Colin, Gallant conflates the two into one paragraph. Together the syntax and structure convey disjunction in expected patterns of paragraphing and subject focus, as well as in patterns of human relationships.

The story ends in a sense of loss: the mother's realization that descriptions of events (such as walks and feeding swans) do not divulge the "message" she covets, namely, that the children esteem her above their father, a "message" that conveys her moral superiority as the innocent, injured party of divorce. "Perhaps, as she had said, one day Colin would say something, produce the image of Geneva, tell her about the lake, the boats, the swans and why her husband left her" (16). The "why" that Colin should "one day" explicate will hopefully provide the idealized image of herself as the better parent. But in the time-frame of the story the snippets of Geneva offer nothing to soothe her psyche, nothing "about" the children's feelings for their father. She gets the mechanism of the Geneva experience, its constituent parts, but not their understanding of the "why" of the divorce or the reason their father chose to live so far from them. Ronald B. Hatch critiques such an impulse for a "why" in his article, "Mavis Gallant and the Fascism of Everyday Life": ". . . fascism . . . is conservatism of the mind that endeavors to resolve the confusion of everyday life by imposing a doctrine

that gives total and unbreakable shape to all relationships" (Hatch 13). According to Hatch, Gallant's stories discover fascism not in the larger, historical picture, but in the "everyday," in the "conventional patterns" that dominate and order our existence; and the primary coordinator of experience is language, which, as Gallant's quotation in Hatch's article suggests, can brutalize as easily as a truncheon. Recalling an article Gallant wrote on the Nazi concentration camps, Hatch points out how the editors chose to replace her copy (calling for an investigation into German society) with "an article that 'was a prototype for all the clichés we've been bludgeoned with ever since'" (Hatch 9). The word "bludgeoned" gives conventional language (the cliché) an abusive power. The mother in "About Geneva" commits exactly this abuse against her children by attempting to elicit the expected narrative from them. Her desire for a definitive account dispelling the "confusions" around her marriage betrays a "fascist longing."

In her article, "The Fascist Longings in Our Midst," Rey Chow describes fascism as a process of "sacrificing . . . knowledge of history in submission to the mythic image" (36). The children in "About Geneva," by not offering "self evident" imagery (36) to describe the emotional tenor of the trip (for instance, that they missed their mother), refuse to validate the mother's "mythic image" as the superior parent. The children will not "submit" to her longing for "taking charge" (35) of the marital and family narrative, and of their imaginations (35), to elaborate only one conclusion. Gallant imparts paradox: the lack of any unifying principle or dominant message in the children's Geneva experience and its fallout *is* the message; the story observes and critiques the mother's impulse to generate fixed positions of value and reference, an ideal narrative to replace her children's experience (of history). The structure of "About Geneva," with its disjunctions and evasions, counteracts the mother's attempts at forging a comprehensive, and therefore dominant, psychological and narrative sequence befitting her expectations.

"Overhead in a Balloon" similarly attacks the domineering and bludgeoning positions fostered by narratives glossing over uncertainty or alternatives. Robert, in his avarice, fails to "understand [Walter's] story—something incoherent to do with the office safe" (Gallant 243). Instead of reacting to Walter's incoherence as a sign of desperation, he subjects it to his "understanding"; when his understanding fails to order it "coherently," Robert gives up and returns to his devious (but carefully premeditated and linear) plot to deprive Walter of his space. Robert's rejection of any narrative line

apart from one that he can subject to his own conceptions ultimately leaves Walter out in the cold. Likewise, Walter's emotionally vacant home life results from a lack of narrative surprise: "There were no secrets, no mysteries. What Walter saw of his parents was probably all there was" (Gallant 245). Gallant's fiction warns us against the tyranny of "all there was," its air-tight summation, its erasure of the individual. She denounces the fascism Robert falls into at the end of "Overhead in a Balloon," where he wonders "if there was any point in trying to say the same thing some other way" (246).

Just as Chow's article refers to the "ultimate authority" of the totalitarian "Stalin-image," which recrafts history in service of itself (Chow 35-36), Gallant's narrative depicts Robert using his authority as dream interpreter to recast Walter's position in the household. Chow distinguishes fascism as "a search for an idealized self-image through a heartfelt surrender to something higher and more beautiful" (26). Walter's search for the artistic ideal fixes on Robert: "Walter admired Robert's thinness, his clean running shoes, his close-cropped hair . . . . He could sit listening to Walter as if he were drifting and there was nothing but Walter in sight" (Gallant 231). Initially the illusion, the "as if," of Robert's perfect attentiveness acts as a mirror wherein Walter apprehends only his own presence, his own self in the midst of oration, his own discourse: "nothing but Walter in sight." In this way, Walter relies on Robert to validate his self-image. As Chow indicates, fascism breaks down the barrier between the inner person and the outer world; the "subject" identifies so closely with the "leader" that the two merge indistinguishably (Chow 30). Sacrifice soon enters into the two men's relationship. Boundaries marking private space and possessions entirely disappear. Robert stops returning Walter's books; the other tenants treat Robert's television as public property. Robert's readings of dreams do not leave the, by now, totally reliant Walter "reassured." Authority over reality (the "tracing of new boundaries" [Gallant 246]) transfers from Walter to his landlord. Robert hijacks Walter's dreams, superimposing his own narrative designs over Walter's fate, a design to which Walter meekly acquiesces. Robert deftly exploits Walter's search for the "ideal image" to his own ends. As any apartment tenant knows, the landlord narrative often substitutes for the master narrative. Against this "fascism of everyday life," wherein one character, such as Robert, by restricting narrative possibilities (or Chow's "imaginary"), controls another's self-actualization, Gallant offers the alternative of designed anarchy.

This "everyday" fascism recurs throughout Gallant's stories, early and late. Her "fiction as a whole presents aspects of human nature that indicate the vulnerability of individuals and societies to potentially fascistic systems of thought" (Hatch 9). Like Walter, the character of Jeannie in "My Heart is Broken" exemplifies a "vulnerability" to fascist "systems of thought," to relinquishing her individual rendition to a master narrative. From the start of the story Mrs. Thompson overrides Jeannie's story with a different "Jean" story, supplanting fallout from the rape with the fallout from Harlow's death. Her opening speech spirals into greater and greater digression, as if to control even the incidental details: "All the men were unemployed in those days, and they just sat down wherever they happened to be. You wouldn't remember what Montreal was like then. *You* weren't even on earth. To resume what I was saying to you . . ." (Gallant 28). The tangential writing attempts a kind of omnipresent consciousness to account for *everything*. The "you," or audience, changes position three times: the person addressed in the first sentence, then the "you" who wouldn't remember Montreal, followed by the unborn "you." The last sentence returns to the audience "you" of the first line. Using aspect, which Laurel J. Brinton describes as "a matter of the speaker's viewpoint or perspective on a situation" (Brinton 3), Mrs. Thompson manipulates the subject in time, accounting for all aspects of the "you's" relation to her story, tyrannizing the subject's viewpoint. The circularity of her statement, returning to where it started, attempts to contain and speak for all perspectives on the story, censoring any dissent. Mrs. Thompson's ventriloquism silences Jeannie's narrative: "Jeannie had nothing to say to that" (28).

Though published twenty-three years previous to "Overhead in a Balloon," "My Heart is Broken" displays the hallmarks of Gallant's designed anarchy. Near the end, she begins to withhold what we think we need to know: "Jeannie might not have been listening. She started to tell something else: 'You know, where we were before, on Vern's last job, we weren't in a camp'" (35). Does Jeannie react to Mrs. Thompson's dialogue with dialogue of her own, or do her sentences reel off spontaneously, out of trauma? Gallant nixes the psychology behind the remarks, heightening instead the presence of narrative. Again, the use of the word "might" indicates Gallant's manipulation of aspect: "In the most general sense, aspect is 'a way of conceiving the passage of time'" (Brinton 2). Gallant purposefully denies the passage of time; her auxiliary verb, "might," leaves time suspended, or at least the

notion of linear consequential time. The reader's position, generally thought inviolate, cannot take cognitive stock, and therefore control, of the story. The progress of Jeannie's psychology remains outside the reader's vision. In fact, the story hinges on the presence of three simultaneous narratives: Jeannie's, Mrs. Thompson's and the reader's. Mrs. Thompson lobbies for a reactionary view of rape; Jeannie tries desperately to stop her naiveté from impeding her reaction; the reader forages for psychological links between the two women's confrontation. The story never quite coalesces into a uniform line. Mrs. Thompson commiserates and condemns at the same time. Does she want to gossip about the culprit or not? Has the rape had any long-term effect on Jeannie? The lack of a certain frame, psychological or narrative, around the picture imparts a sense of flux. When the topic is rape, the lack of moral certainty that a progressive, psychological narrative would have provided leaves us uneasy and imbalanced. Gallant's use of aspect crumbles the reader's all-knowing and therefore all-powerful position; it exposes our culpability (along with Mrs. Thompson's) in wanting Jeannie to conform to our vision, ignoring the trauma this may cause her; but Gallant's aspectual disorder makes us aware of the fascist longing embodied in our desire for a unified storyline; we are cautioned.

This aspectual manipulation, however, is lost on Mrs. Thompson, whose recounting of Harlow's death throws further blame on Jeannie for the rape. The allusion to "harlot" (which Harlow's name inspires) suggests a judgment passed by Mrs. Thompson over a certain "type" of woman, whom Jeannie emulates with her "nail polish" (Gallant 29), "high-heeled shoes" (30), the short skirts she must "[pull] around her knees" (31), and "Evening in Paris" perfume (32). This judgment victimizes not only Jeannie but a whole class of women whose dress and manners Harlow epitomizes. In short, Mrs. Thompson regards Jeannie as the prime culprit in the rape: "Some girls ask for it, though" (34). When she tells Jeannie that she "let it happen" (33), Mrs. Thompson supports the contention of Mr. Sherman, who considers a man incapable of raping a girl by himself, implying that either Jeannie allowed the act to proceed or that she invented the entire story. Mrs. Thompson suggests that household chores provide the best outlet for female energy in the work camp (33). The older woman reads events strictly according to her own vision of cause and effect, rendering a verdict not only on Jeannie but on herself and all women: unless they behave according to pre-established conventions, dire consequences will ensue, consequences

for which they can only blame themselves. "In winter it gets dark around three o'clock. Then the wives have a right to go crazy. I knew one used to sleep the clock around" (33). The women must earn their right, through suffering, before exhibiting individuality or affecting behavior outside the conventions. Mrs. Thompson refuses to allow Jeannie to tell a different narrative: one in which she represents an individual rather than an icon and in which the norm of behavior for a man is not rape. Through Mrs. Thompson, Gallant hints at an even larger narrative, one that not only stifles Jeannie's story, but that of Mrs. Thompson and all women as well: the patriarchal order determining the role of women in history and society. By downplaying Jeannie's version of events, by subordinating the younger woman's story, Mrs. Thompson endorses the dominant order.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in her book *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, argues that subordinate narratives within a larger narrative inscribe hierarchy. "Such narratives within narratives create a stratification of levels whereby each inner narrative is subordinate to the narrative within which it is embedded" (91). In a story such as "My Heart is Broken," Gallant counts on the reader to notice the patriarchal, master narrative ruling the "embedded" narratives of Jeannie and Mrs. Thompson, and, in doing so, to question that narrative "stratification," or hierarchy, itself. The disparity between Jeannie's, Mrs. Thompson's and the reader's sense of narrative forms an essential strategy of Gallant's designed anarchy: to expose the various strata; their existence made plain, the status quo cannot reassimilate these contrary renditions into a seamless hierarchy, and Rimmon-Kenan's (and the patriarchy's) "stratification of levels" falls to pieces.

"Grippes and Poche" illustrates Gallant's continued obsession with the "stratification" of narrative "levels," with the manifold versions of narrative, this time adapting designed anarchy to a discussion of aesthetics (the nature of the interface between author and world, and the way experience composes fiction). Testing a fickle public's taste for politically paradoxical stories, Grippes maneuvers his writing to mass popularity:

> The fitfulness of voters is such that, having got the government they wanted, they were now reading nothing but the right-wing press. Perhaps a steady right-wing heartbeat ought to set the cadence for a left-wing outlook, with a complex, bravely conservative heroine contained within the slippery but unyielding walls of left-wing style. (Gallant 219)

As the translation of his name suggests, Grippes shimmies between political

stances like influenza between hosts. He infects doctrines with his personal experiences. Gallant's parodic language (mocking the jargon of academic response) makes it difficult to decipher exactly what she means in the above passage. How can "a steady right-wing heartbeat . . . set the cadence for a left-wing outlook?" Her words leave us deeply aware of language as a surface. How can a left-wing "outlook" present a "bravely conservative heroine?" The answer arrives with the last words, "unyielding walls of left-wing style." Gallant's art functions by opposition, in this case (mirroring results of recent democratic elections) a right-wing heroine struggling against the limitations imposed on her by an "unyielding" left-wing dogma. "Grippes and Poche" offers a warning against political legislation: "He had transformed his mistake into a regulation and had never looked at the page again" (Gallant 218). Multiple viewings of the page (or multiple "aspectual" levels on a page) would preempt the formation of regulations, of the single narrative line unflinchingly followed by the bureaucrat, Poche. Grippes offers several contradictions: a populist writer recognized in academic journals, a tax-cheat who invariably votes left, a humanist who feeds parasitically on others' lives. Poche represents "the pocket," the neatly organized dossier, the cubicle in the office, the boxes filled out on a tax form, the man, guided by regulation, from whom nothing should escape. Yet the slipperiness of the printed word prevents his capture of Grippes' storyline in a "pocketable" way. Conversely, Grippes channels Poche's story into a hundred variations. "No political system, no love affair, no native inclination, no life itself would be tolerable without a wide mesh for mistakes to slip through" (209). The fallacies inherent in reading provide for a tolerable life. Poche's misreading of Grippes' tax forms gives Grippes the excitement and inspiration necessary for art. Misreading, or multiple reading, forms a crucial issue in Gallant's storytelling. Through the example of Grippes, though satirical, Gallant shows how an aesthetic of designed anarchy, of encouraging alternative narratives, can disrupt, alter, or confuse the legislated plotline, allowing a space for the individual to "slip through."

The notion of life as a plot that is subject to aesthetic strategy also appears in the accretion of anecdote and description in "Grippes and Poche." The extended discourse on Karen-Shue (204) highlights a digressive narrative, arbitrary as the dawning of inspiration. Grippe's critical analysis seems forced in the face of Grippe's and Poche's confrontation (only later does its relevance emerge, and in a way that pertains exclusively to Grippes). The

digression into Prism (215), as the name suggests, diffracts what seems the essential storyline: the human relationship. Meandering away from confrontation becomes central to the story's explication of the irresolvable divide between the two men:

> Poche turned over a sheet of paper, read something Grippes could not see, and said, automatically, "We can't."
>
> "Nothing is ever as it was," said Grippes, still going on about the marbled-effect folder. It was a remark that usually shut people up, leaving them nowhere to go but a change of subject. Besides, it was true. Nothing can be as it was. Poche and Grippes had just lost a terrifying number of brain cells. They were an instant closer to death. Death was of no interest to Poche. (211)

Aspect becomes important in unraveling this excerpt. Brinton divides the aspectual into "aspect" and "aktionsart," into a subjective and objective view of action within time: "Aspect is subjective because the speaker chooses a particular viewpoint, whereas aktionsart, since it concerns the given nature of the event and not the perspective of the speaker, is objective" (Brinton 3). Poche's verb "can't" signifies an absolutism, a denial of change, whereas Grippes' transition of the verb "was" to "is" signifies a complete change over time. The two speakers subject events to their particular "viewpoints" on the temporal. Grippes, in fact, employs his notion of action (change) within time to alter Poche's absolutist viewpoint, but fails because "death was of no interest to Poche." Grippes attempts to communicate change and possibility by deploying aspect, and his paragraph uses the continuous, present, past and future verb tenses. Typically, Poche responds with the absolute of "was." This excerpt evinces the lack of communication and world-views between the two men. Poche ponders information unavailable to Grippes and speaks not out of himself but "automatically." Grippes, on the other hand, talks of something else entirely, and not to involve Poche in debate but to shut him up, to evade Grippes' comment, to reach a new plane ("subject") of discourse. As each man attempts to subject the other to his way of ordering or disordering a tax history, the conflict revolves less around an interplay of human passions than around the unassimilable difference between two aesthetics (bureaucratic and artistic) and their application.

As "Grippes and Poche" continues, Poche, and his restrictive aesthetic, disappears amidst the convolutions and contingencies of the story. By jettisoning straightforward drama for a construction based on digression, dislocation and alternating aspect, Gallant again exposes us to instability, to a shift away from the narrative's perceived centre (and the expectations this

entails). "Poche did not send for Grippes again. Grippes became a commonplace taxpayer, filling out his forms without help" (Gallant 216). The relationship, as this turn in the story indicates, did not, and will never, occur from Poche's point of view. The narrative continues after their relationship officially ends, and the issue of Grippes' artistic inspiration fills the narrative void left by Poche's removal; the story becomes an artist parable. Yet, until this point Gallant gave no indication of Poche's extraneous position (allowing the character a potential never ultimately realized). In the end, her fiction draws attention not to the facts of life in Paris or America or the threat of economic legislation but to how personal aesthetic determines reality: ". . . he had got the woman from church to dining room, and he would keep her there, trapped, cornered, threatened, watched, until she yielded to Grippes and told her name (as, in his several incarnations, good Poche had always done)" (222). "Yielding" the name for artistic use implies that identity, the ultimate signifier of being, hinges not on legislated position but on aesthetic strategy. Like the Mother in "About Geneva," Grippes harasses his subject until it "yields" a serviceable story; but Grippes' position differs from hers in that he doesn't know beforehand the story he wishes the subject to "yield." He remains open to the many possibilities of narrative, not trapped in eliciting a particular viewpoint. In the process, Gallant raises our own awareness of aesthetic strategy and expectation.

As in "Grippes and Poche," the structure of "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" offers a contrast between narrative versions. The story opens long after the end of the main narrative episode. The opening unveils Peter and Sheilah as paragons of wisdom: people who have lived and learned. "Now that they are out of world affairs and back where they started, Peter Frazier's wife says, 'Everybody else did well in the international thing except us'" (37). "Back where they started" indicates a return to beginnings. Gallant leads the reader to believe that the Fraziers, because of an inevitable return (the word "now" conveys the inevitable) to their beginnings, have realized their folly in leaving. But, in fact, as the story progresses, this statement instead functions ironically to reveal their resignation, defeat and immaturity; they have learned nothing from the foreign experiences. The story does not return to where it begins. The structure develops character in reverse, not from past into present, but from the present into the past. Gallant departs from the standard linkage between character and structural development. The past of the story functions as its future, and the story

approximates Kulyk Keefer's moebius strip rather than a circle; in showing the past, Gallant makes the initial, secure position untenable. The story might convey a sense of maturation only if read back to front. "No, begin at the beginning: Peter lost Agnes. Agnes says to herself somewhere, Peter is lost" (64). The last sentence becomes the first sentence and the Fraziers' sense of maturity a naiveté and delusion. The narrative employs other red herrings: the supposed relationship between Peter and Agnes and between Sheilah and Simpson prepare us (an expectation based on social setting) for torrid love affairs that never materialize; the extended description of the relationship between the Fraziers and the Burleighs (42) points to a plot development on this axis, whereas the Burleighs have only an incidental role in the story. Gallant plays with convention to indicate not how stories converge, but how they diverge (the opposite of readerly expectation). Both Peter and Agnes consider the other lost, fallen outside of their narrative conception of the world.

After this ending, the first page of the story finds a Peter and Sheilah still interred within their exclusivist thinking. Both consider it fated that they never achieved any successes abroad. They whisper the names of those who did like magical incantations (37). They consider the Balenciaga dress a notable trophy of their travels, a "talisman," a "treasure." ". . . And after they remember it they touch hands and think that the years are not behind them but hazy and marvelous and still to be lived" (38-39). What initially strikes the reader as a quiet act of optimism now appears as self-delusional escapism. By admitting to not being "crooked" or "smart" they evade responsibility, placing their actions into the context of a random and capricious fate. This stands in direct opposition to a character like Agnes, who believes in hard work and self-promotion as a sure road to success. In the last long paragraph, Gallant refers to the sense of sight seven times, using words like "sees," "watched," "eye" and "looking." Freed from Sheilah's piecing together of "puzzles" for him, Peter has a revelation: "Let Agnes have the start of the day. Let Agnes think it was invented for her" (64). Gallant stresses here the need to let others have their illusions, raise their own effigies. But Peter ultimately hands his story over to Sheilah's authorship, and turns his back on the lesson of Agnes. Peter (like Netta in "The Moslem Wife") relinquishes control over the past to avoid a more painful narrative (though infinitely less horrific than Netta's war-time experiences); Peter avoids the narrative that would disclose his immaturity and irresponsibility.

By doubling back into the past, the story in fact advances our knowledge of the Fraziers, whereas we expect the past narrative to affirm the initial impression. Moreover, we expect the incidental narratives touching on their time in Geneva to lend further credence to the mood of recovery present in the initial scene, but it only undoes it further, pointing to the Fraziers as disconnected, deluded and grasping characters.

Gallant's anarchy, however, does not stop at narrative structure and character portrayal. Neil Besner's *The Light of Imagination: Mavis Gallant's Fiction* illustrates how Gallant deploys designed anarchy on the level of language as well. Besner invokes Roland Barthes' "Style and its Image":

> . . . Barthes suggests that a text should not be thought of as "a species of fruit with a kernel . . . the flesh being the form and the pit the content," but as an "onion": the text, writes Barthes, is a "construction of layers (or levels, or systems) whose body contains, finally, no heart, no kernel, no secret, no irreducible principle, nothing except the infinity of its own envelopes (which envelope nothing other than the unity of its own surfaces) [10]." (Besner 37)

This theory does not apply evenly to Gallant's texts, but helps us understand further how "form" and "message" interrelate in the stories under discussion. Using words like "systems," "secret" and "principle," Barthes (or rather Besner, because he quotes this snippet to furnish his argument) speaks of how a text resists reduction to a core meaning, instead containing a multiplicity of meanings that overlap, support, and contradict each other. The words "levels," "envelope" and "surfaces," almost suggest some kind of architectural metaphor working underneath Barthes' conception. The form a story takes, then, distinguishes the issues at play within it, and, as already seen, Gallant fuses form and meaning in such a way that a discussion of either necessitates a discussion of the other. However, this does not preclude another writer melding a similar structure to an entirely different system of issues or principles. Form and content may be separately discussed at the level of critical abstraction (or when comparing two different writers on a purely technical level) but in the moment of application to any one particular text distinctions between them usually blur. But I do not entirely agree with Barthes. Placing his onion under the critical microscope exposes a very basic unit of structure: the word. If overlapping systems render it impossible to locate a core of meaning in a story, words still supply the originary point of all texts and syntax invariably tells us something substantive.

Earlier, discussing Schaub, I pointed out how word choice, punctuation

and sentence construction lie at the heart of Gallant's narrative, like, say, a kernel in a fruit; but this "heart" remains resolutely anarchic. In "When We Were Nearly Young," Gallant admits:

> I did the Petit Jeu, the Square, the fan, and the thirteen, and the Fifteen. There was happy news for everyone except Carlos, but, as it was Sunday, none of it counted.
>
> Were they typical Spaniards? I don't know what a typical Spaniard is. (Gallant 22)

The sentence ending "none of it counted" kills the painstaking and terse list of variations on fortune-telling in the preceding sentence with its own device: plain, laconic assertion. Gallant turns the monosyllabic rhythm against itself. The series of "ands" creates a series of identical alternatives; no matter what the choice, "none of it count[s]." The second sentence negates the first and itself loses definitive primacy by the complete break and ninety-degree tangent of the following; this sentence, in turn, needs to be stripped of its scene-stealing position and the final sentence provides the required negation. The abrupt sentences, stacked one on top of the other, recall the limited picture offered by the narrative and foreshadow the abruptness with which the divergence between the narrator and other characters arrives. These parsimonious sentences imitate economic poverty; poverty anchors both the phrasing and characters, who drift in various directions but can never leave. "Poverty is not a goad but a paralysis" (23). Gallant's anarchic technique, which constantly seeks to undercut the primacy of individual sentences and therefore narratives, gives one the sense of a very careful, meticulous arrangement.

Gallant's chaotic patterning of language recalls the musical form of the fugue, in which composite and often contrary musical elements rise to the surface only to fade out as others replace them, and then resurface and fade again. For example, in "Grippes and Poche," Gallant juxtaposes death against the relationship between the two men. "Even his aspect, of a priest hearing a confession a few yards from the guillotine, seemed newly acquired" (201), or, "But he had suddenly recalled his dismay when as a young man he had looked at a shelf in his room and realized he had to compete with the dead (Proust, Flaubert, Balzac, Stendhal, and on into the dark)" (205), or, "Don't praise me. Praise is weak stuff. Praise me after I'm dead" (213); these phrases connect the notion of mortality with the relationship between the two men. Rather than flatly address the nature of this connection, Gallant lets the topic rise to view and then recede, rise and recede, never fully

explaining its relevance, and always recalling it in a slightly different context. As Kulyk Keefer suggests, language forms the matrix, the cement, binding the narrative elements:

> Were it not for the sharpness and rightness of the language these narratives might collapse at their joints, work themselves loose, and rattle away from both characters and readers. They tend to be filled with unexpected, unconnected observations and incidents: the narratives sometimes resemble odd bits of string dexterously knotted into one peculiar line. (Kulyk Keefer 67)

The stories fascinate the reader precisely because of the "dexterous" way in which Gallant uses language to bind these disjunctive or dissimilar elements, and to mold the chaos on the level of character, plot and theme into a "peculiar line"; syntax permits us to force a "design" on anarchy, to create a self-sustaining narrative out of the odd and disparate components of our lives.

In the protocols governing conversational syntax Gallant detects the vocabulary needed to subvert master narratives in the individual's favor: "She chooses and rejects elements of the last act; one avoids mentioning death, shooting, capital punishment, cremation, deportation, even fathers" (Gallant 152). The "act" comprises various "elements" chosen and rejected depending on their level of social sanction. Gallant knows, like Linnet, which words offend the "peacetime" sensibility, which words affect wartime tragedies. She uses these conventions to unite the incongruous elements of life. Linnet's intrusion on (or, more precisely, interrogation of) her father's friends allows for her self-definition, not within the "fable" (146) "they" have constructed, but in opposition to it. When Archie McEwan tries to contextualize her, she stymies him by not supplying the missing word. "Who inherited the — ?" he asks, and Linnet replies, "The what, Mr. McEwan?" (150). Linnet's refusal to provide language denies him entry into a "sensible context," into absorbing her presence according to his disposition. Linnet recognizes the source of her power: "He had not, of course, read 'Why I am a Socialist'" (150). Again, because he does not have access to the text, the grouping of words, he cannot splice her into his narrative. In the end she abandons the vocabulary that binds her story to the stories of her father's friends: "I wrote in my journal that 'they' had got him but would not get me, and after that there was scarcely ever a mention" (153). Linnet recognizes that a command of language gives her a command of time; by setting down her experiences in her journal she relegates them to a page she can turn over or revisit as she desires. Linnet's awareness of language as unfixed

and strategic allows her to avoid entrapment in her father's history.

Time, and its configuration, plays a crucial role not only in "In Youth Is Pleasure," but throughout Gallant's fiction:

> The home ground of her fiction is the amorphous and exigent present; she chronicles our attempts to close it off, to contain and control it. Even those of her fictions that remember time past . . . seem a species of narrative magic, transforming memory into present consciousness, making the border between past and future vanish into an all-inclusive but shifting present. (Kulyk Keefer 59)

As Kulyk Keefer says, mastery of the present depends upon memory informing consciousness. In Gallant, a character's power results from his or her ability to assimilate "past and future" into a present whose "shifting" they engineer. *The Moslem Wife and Other Stories* does offer control over, and escape from, time. Her manipulation of time-frame within the narrative often has an analogue of a character, such as Linnet, manipulating time within the story itself; she ends with " . . . time had been on my side, faithfully, and unless you died you were always bound to escape" (Gallant 155). Unlike the Spaniards in "When We Were Nearly Young," whose anticipation of the postman bringing fortunate news casts time in the role of a savior capriciously bestowing opportunities (opportunities you can see coming if you watch for the signs), Linnet considers time a tool, something to manipulate to her advantage. The narrative of her future does not remain contingent on that of her past because she has recognized that, through language, she can alter both narratives at will, freeing her from a particular position in time. The Spaniards, on the other hand, do not deploy language as Linnet does: "But they had thought I was waiting in their sense of the word (waiting for summer and then for winter, for Monday and then for Tuesday, waiting, waiting for time to drop into the pool)"(26). Linnet supplies words to give the present meaning while the Spaniards impotently accept the time-worn designations of "summer" and "Monday" and bind their futures to the static and undifferentiated cycle those words represent. As the phrase "their sense of the word" indicates, the significance of "waiting" depends entirely on an individual's "sense" of the term, and the Spaniard's sensibility regarding time remains entirely passive, a "waiting for time to drop into the pool." Where Linnet crafts time, the Spaniards allow time to craft them. They do not grasp the escape offered by language.

Like Linnet, Thomas, in "The Latehomecomer," also manipulates time through language to overcome the narrative imposed on him by Martin's

generation and to replace it with his own. Willy tells Thomas that the key to recovery rests in the ability to "forget" (130), but Thomas knows that precisely the opposite lends him his power; the ability to put the past into language guarantees him a central position in the present and future: "French was all I had from my captivity; I might as well use it. . . . 'Translations' and 'scholarship' were an exalted form of language . . ." (132). A language (in this case French) represents opportunity, and the appropriation of certain privileged titles such as "translation" and "scholarship," both textual occupations, cedes him primacy, just as his invocation of war-time experience grants him power over Martin. His use of the past undercuts the present immediacy of the Toepplers' lives. Gallant undercuts the structural primacy of the present narrative with Thomas's war-time experiences. Ensuing revelations about Thomas nail home the source of his discontent:

> . . . Martin Toeppler need not imagine he could count on my pride, or that I would prefer to starve rather than take his charity. . . . He had a dependent now (a ravenous, egocentric, latehomecoming high-school adolescent of twenty-one. The old men owed this much to me) the old men in my prison camp who would have sold mother and father for an extra ounce of soup. . . . (133)

History has no remedy, only a pay-back, and vengeance will not come in the way of physical reprisal but a slow parasitic dependence that seeks compensation from the institutions it suffered for. Thomas knows that ultimate power depends on the ability to suppress the stories of others. He uses this knowledge to overcome his step-father: "He [Martin Toeppler] looked at my mother as if to say that she had brought him a rival in the only domain that mattered (the right to talk everyone's ear off)" (128). From now on "The Latehomecomer" takes its momentum not from what happens in the Toeppler's household, but what might happen after each of Thomas's revelations; the flashbacks guide the present narrative. David O'Rourke suggests in "Exiles in Time: Gallant's 'My Heart is Broken'": "Exile may well be Gallant's preoccupation, but it is not so much exile of space as it is one of time" (98). In this case, the exile attacks from a position of experience, while Toeppler takes the weaker, philosophical (and therefore abstract) stand. By not having any roots in the Germany of the present, Thomas can forge the links he wishes with the past, varying the facets of an unrecoverable history to suit his needs. However, as a counterpoint to Thomas's need for vengeance (and here the psychology becomes complicated) Thomas cannot shake hope and therefore the desire for recovery. The paradox of the human heart consists

of a knowledge of the irrevocable versus a desire to regain time. "As for me, I wished that I was a few hours younger, in the corridor of a packed train, clutching the top of the open window, my heart hammering as I strained to find the one beloved face" (Gallant 135). Like the readers of tarot cards in "When We Were Nearly Young," he wants the moment before possibility narrows to disheartening fact. Thomas remains cut off from restitution; control over history only helps him exact vengeance.

O'Rourke's notion of exile in time also informs "The Moslem Wife," but to present a different handling of history. The narrative of the war years at Netta's hotel undergoes an abrupt shift (represented by a blank between paragraphs) when, five years after the last sentence of the preceding paragraph, Netta contacts Jack. This blank, between the beginning of the war and Jack's return, belongs exclusively to Netta, to fill by choice. Positioning the blank before Netta's recapitulation of the war, Gallant turns narrative into a personal decision to occupy space on the page. Netta says: "That lack of memory is why people are unfaithful, as it is so curiously called. When I see closed shutters I know there are lovers behind them. That is how memory works. The rest is just convention and small talk" (192). When the doctor immediately questions Netta's supposition about the presence of lovers behind shutters, she sticks to her original line. Knowledge depends upon whittling away the possibilities. Netta's problem with the word "unfaithful" suggests its inappropriateness to the application of memory, since memory entails not safeguarding but a choice of certainties. Any other form of memory (or history) originates solely in convention and the ephemera offered by "small talk." But the way Netta fills the blank space proves too much of an ordeal: "No one will ever realize how much I know of the truth, the truth, the truth, and she put her head on her hands, her elbows on the scarred bar, and let the first tears of her after-war run down her wrists" (194). Netta "knows" the truth about the war just as she "knows" the truth about the rooms behind closed shutters. Gallant designates her tears as "after-war," indicating that the experience during the war does not cause the tears but the memory of that experience, the mind setting out the experience in one particular narrative line, as in the "writing" of Netta's letter.

Unlike Thomas, Netta cannot use her position of exile (she is the "only one who knows," separating her from the rest of the characters) to create narrative momentum; she remains trapped in a design very much like the one her father and husband envisage for her. Yet, in some way, she learns

something about narrative possibility that escapes Thomas. By relinquishing the "truth" about the war to Jack, Netta hands over the responsibilities of narrator to him (as Peter relinquishes his story to Sheilah). Thomas passes the responsibility on to no-one and remains incapacitated by the awareness of his exile from the possibilities of a time that eludes his machinations. Now Jack will once again dish up Netta's happiness. At the end of the story Netta realizes the debilitating effects of precision in memory: "And I am going to be thirty-seven and I have a dark, an accurate, a deadly memory" (198). Instead of remaining rooted within her version of events (which, as the word "deadly" suggests, means a kind of death) Netta opts for the freedom of Jack's immediacy, his refusal to become fixed by precedent: "Memory is what ought to prevent you from buying a dog after the first dog dies, but it never does" (199). Netta's darkness and ghosts represent a solid reality that Jack's reality of imminent sensual experience (presented in the "dance" of light off mirrors and the "indestructible beauty" of visual appearances) effectively counteracts. Netta chooses Jack's free-flowing, unhindered narrative over her own, straitjacketed one: "What else could I do, she asked her ghosts, but let my arm be held, my steps be guided" (200).

The end of the story returns us to the beginning, where Netta's father announces the end of all "man-made" catastrophes in Europe, and Netta's unquestioning acceptance of his version of "life" as a commercial enterprise (Gallant 156). Only now, Netta returns by choice to a viewpoint more bearable than memory's offering. Just as Gallant permits the unexpected, the unexplained, and the tangential to enter her stories (in fact, purposefully constructing her stories to allow this interplay) Netta also allows Jack's outlook to mingle with, and ultimately control, her version of events. She allows his design of history to suppress her own narrative, a suppression that, paradoxically, frees her from the ache of memory to return to a life and place otherwise uninhabitable.

Unlike the Mother in "About Geneva," Netta, Thomas and Linnet's success in manipulating narrative arises from the fact that they understand the provisional, subjective and strategic aspect of history, an aspect they use to prevent the narratives of others from converging on and determining their lives. They remain aware that alternative narratives do exist, while the weakness of those around them originates in their failure to recognize this fact. The Toepplers, Spaniards and Montreal businessmen remain beholden to one particular history, one particular "fable" or image, while Netta,

Thomas and Linnet erase and/or redesign history at will, knowing that no particular narrative need assume primacy. The failure of the Spaniards in "When We Were Nearly Young" and the Mother in "About Geneva" to conceive alternative histories leaves them enslaved to one particular version of it. Chow writes, "When fascism took power, it took charge of the imaginary" (35). The surrender of the Spaniards and the Mother to one particular rendition represents a surrender of the imagination, a subjugation to narrative tyranny. The Mother's happiness becomes reliant on the image of herself as better parent, an image (because of her children's indifference) she cannot verify. "The glorifying films have the effect of mummifying and monumentalizing Stalin, so that it is the Stalin-image which becomes the ultimate authority, *which even Stalin himself had to follow in order to 'be'*" (Chow 35; emphasis mine). As Chow's paraphrase from André Bazin (40) suggests, the Mother creates a version of herself that she must "follow in order to be." But, since the reality of this image requires not only her own projection, but the (withheld) corroboration of her children, the mother literally finds herself deprived of a satisfactory self-image. She cannot divert her children's story to coincide with her preferred history; the children prove too adept at neutralizing language. Because of its communal criteria, the very image she created for herself confines her. The story ends in a sense of her "mummification," the "monumentalization" of her unattainable self-image, while Thomas's, Linnet's and Netta's stories end in an understanding of narrative fluidity, in some possibilities for release and fulfillment.

In destabilizing narrative and syntactical patterns, Gallant's designed anarchy reacts against the fascist absolute implicit in the conventions of "totality" and "unity of effect" (Poe 66) governing earlier short stories. Susan Lohafer's article, "A Cognitive Approach to Storyness," in elaborating various paradigmatic endings for short stories throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, finds that nineteenth-century stories employed a far more regulated syntactic, visual and internal structure. Certain conventions within the nineteenth-century form allowed readers to prepare for the closure of stories more easily. In the twentieth century, however, she notes that such pace-makers have either disappeared or been altered and subverted. This change demands that the reader bring new modes of cognition to reading: "This is a change to which the text processor, whether human or artificial, must adapt: in twentieth-century stories, signals of closure are less reliably encoded in the visual structure of the story" (Lohafer 304). No

longer can we claim a "master narrative," a model of short storyness that panders to expectations or, in Chow's words, offers an "ultimate authority" either in an aesthetic or hierarchical sense. The nineteenth-century world of imperialism and cultural imposition has lost out to an urge for greater democracy, more individual interaction. This reflects in the products of the culture, such as *The Moslem Wife and Other Stories*; Gallant is aware of a need (particularly after the Holocaust) for a deregulation of the narratives through which we enforce history.

Throughout her career, Gallant blasts away assumptions delimiting the organization of experience offered by the traditional short story. Her stories require constant adaptation, an ability not only to follow a new set of structural clues to a different "ending," or conclusion, but to decentre the reading self from a position of security (in aesthetic, citizenship, nationhood or culture) to a provisional position whose major characteristic consists of enjoyment of language for the sake of language, not for the fact that it affirms or teaches any one particular system. Her stories very much require an altering of "cognition," of the way in which we process the text. In this case, the processing itself takes precedence, not the end product of that processing. None of her stories posits place or character as prime, but the sudden shifts in structure draw our attention to that on which Gallant does place the most emphasis: the ambiguous ability of language both to fix history and meaning and to reroute them: "Eventually they were caught, for me, not by time but by the freezing of memory. And when I looked in the diary I had kept during that period, all I could find was descriptions of the weather" (Gallant 27). "When We Were Nearly Young" closes on the irresolvable displacement of memory by the equalizing force of language. In "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" neither Geneva nor Canada nor Paris acts out any unique function, the three places becoming interchangeable fields of failure; nor do relationships or emotions absorb our attention. Perhaps "The Latehomecomer," more clearly than any other story in the collection, undoes the standard relationship between the master and peripheral narrative. In this story the peripheral narrative dominates the central story:

> "I know that you are judging me. If you could guess what my life has been (the whole story, not only the last few years) you wouldn't be hard on me." I turned too slowly to meet her eyes. It was not what I had been thinking. I had forgotten about her, in that sense. . . . What I had been moving along to in my mind was:

> Why am I in this place? Who sent me here? Is it a form of justice or injustice? How long does it last? (Gallant 134-35)

The presence of one narrative does not disqualify the existence of others. Though Thomas "forgets" his mother's "story," Gallant does not; nor does she allow the reader to overlook its presence.

Throughout *The Moslem Wife and Other Stories*, by consistently showing the strategies by which one particular narrative silences the other voices (the other stories) whose presence prevents history from ossifying into an inescapable vision, Gallant instructs us on how to avoid falling prey to the "master narrative." She uncovers history as a series of stories impinging on each other, existing simultaneously, or history as a choice, a willful relinquishing of personal experience to an alternate, and more acceptable, narrative. Nowhere does she allow the reader to escape responsibility for permitting history to assume a particular design. As proof against the master narrative she gives us stories of estrangement, renditions meeting in opposition or connection, and a "designed anarchy" rendered in exceptional language.

NOTE

1 This book provides a cross-career sampler of Mavis Gallant's short fiction. The stories under discussion in this paper date from the following collections: "About Geneva" (*The Other Paris* 1956), "When We Were Nearly Young" (*In Transit* 1988), "My Heart is Broken" (*My Heart Is Broken* 1964), "The Ice Wagon Going Down the Street" (*My Heart Is Broken* 1964), "In Youth is Pleasure" (*Home Truths* 1981), "The Latehomecomer" (*From the Fifteenth District* 1979), "The Moslem Wife (*From the Fifteenth District* 1979), "Grippes And Poche" (*Overhead in a Balloon* 1985), "Overhead In A Balloon" (*Overhead In A Balloon* 1985). The aforementioned citations and dates are taken from David Staines's "Acknowledgements" to the same collection. Prefacing his chronology, Staines addresses its provisional character: "The year printed at the end of each story indicates its original date of publication. In this collection I have reprinted the text of each story as it appeared in the author's most recent published version...." (6). Since I use Staines's "version" of the texts, I have retained his dating, though it differs somewhat from those given in Gallant's *Selected Stories*. Gallant's canon problematizes the determination of definite dates for, or versions of, specific stories.

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Deborah Schnitzer

The Walls Are Too High

The walls are too high
Broken finger-nail talk
Runs down the well
And Jacob's children are so thin
They hardly matter.

Flyers stuffed in mailboxes
Even note paper is thicker, lasts longer
Than children scrawled from blocks of the ghetto.

Cinders shave the well's dry wall.

Nothing rises.

Joseph has taken in his brothers.
He can read the writing-on-the-wall in his sleep.
But, he cannot get to Pharoah;
He cannot even get to the corner stores; nothing is saved.

So, the dream's gain grows against him,
Against the ribbed oesophagus to the well.
Against the saucers of his brothers' dried bellies.
There is nothing to eat.
Hate sets the table at the bottom of the well.

Carole Gerson

"The Most Canadian of all Canadian Poets"[1]: Pauline Johnson and the Construction of a National Literature

On March 10, 1913, the City of Vancouver publicly observed the funeral of Pauline Johnson with office closures, flags at half-mast, and a funeral cortege. Three days later, the municipal Parks Commission supervised the burial of her ashes in Stanley Park, which required special permission from the admiralty, as the land was officially still a naval reserve. Both events were without precedent, testifying to the amazing popularity of this part-Mohawk woman poet,[2] an appeal all the more remarkable for its occurrence in a national culture usually characterized as less than encouraging to women, to First Nations Canadians, and to literature.

In 1961, on the centenary of Johnson's birth, the Canadian federal government issued a commemorative stamp, rendering her the first woman (other than the Queen), the first author, and the first Native Canadian to be thus honoured. On this occasion, Vancouver newspapers cited a number of assessments by Canada's literary authorities. In his capacity as both poet and professor, Earle Birney dismissed Johnson as not "at all important in Canadian literature." R.E. Watters, who had excluded Johnson from the scores of western authors gathered in his 1958 *British Columbia: A Centennial Anthology*, faulted her verse for lacking "philosophical or intellectual content" (as quoted by N. Hamilton). Robertson Davies described her poetry as "elocutionist-fodder" and Johnson herself as "not given to reflection," thereby justifying the decision of A.J.M. Smith to omit her entirely from his 1960 edition of *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*.[3] In a column for *Maclean's Magazine* reprinted in the *Vancouver Sun*, Mordecai

Richler derisively reported on the launch of McClelland & Stewart's reissue of Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*. The same year, in his *Creative Writing in Canada* (1961), Desmond Pacey scorned her poetry as "meretricious" (68) and disdained from further consideration of a writer whose work he elsewhere described as "cheap, vulgar, and almost incredibly bad."[4]

The decline of Pauline Johnson's reputation, in the decades between 1913 and 1961, provides insight into the way Canada's literary identity and literary history were shaped by a characteristically nationalistic rendition of modernism whose echoes still resonate today. At the popular level, Johnson maintained a presence that kept her books in print and preserved her name in schools and schoolbooks, a chocolate company, and almost in a major Vancouver theatre.[5] But at the level of elite culture, she experienced a dramatic downward trajectory. David Perkins claims that "[t]he possible plots of narrative literary history can be reduced to three: rise, decline, and rise and decline" (39). After discussing the context of Johnson's decline, this essay posits a fourth pattern that has become increasingly familiar in women's literary history—decline and rise—by proposing the recuperation of Pauline Johnson in light of current critical interests in race, gender, and Native Rights.

Twentieth-century literary canons, as we know from the analysis of critics like Leslie Fiedler, Barbara Herrnstein Smith, and John Guillory, have for the most part been constructed by, or on behalf of, institutionalized education, especially at the post-secondary level. The canon of Canadian literature—as transmitted in colleges and universities—was confirmed from the 1950s through the early 1970s by several major projects whose goal was to legitimize Canadian Literature as a distinct scholarly field. Most influential in this process were Desmond Pacey's *Creative Writing in Canada* (1952; rev. 1961), the establishment of McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library series (initiated in 1959), the multi-authored *Literary History of Canada* (1964; rev. 1976, 1990), Dudek and Gnarowski's *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada* (1970), and the final edition of Klinck and Watters' *Canadian Anthology* (1974). The overtly nationalist agenda of these various undertakings—to determine the uniquely Canadian features of Canadian writing—was underpinned by the academic high modernism in which their editors and authors (almost exclusively male)[6] had been trained. Scorning romanticism and sentimentality, they valorized detachment, alienated individualism, elitism and formalism over emotion, domesticity, community,

and popularity, a binarism that implicitly and explicitly barred most of Canada's women writers from serious academic consideration. The literary history that these projects constructed was based not on what the majority of Canadians had in the past written and read, but on the elitist vision that prevailed among Canadian scholars and critics. Applying these principles to the 1920s, for example, Northrop Frye's vision of "the indifference of nature to human values" as "the central Canadian tragic theme" ("Preface" 171) esteemed A.J.M. Smith's poem "The Lonely Land" and Frederick Philip Grove's naturalistic prairie fiction over the much more popular—and therefore arguably more representative—fiction and poetry of L.M. Montgomery, Marshall Saunders, Nellie McClung, and Marjorie Pickthall. While male popular authors such as Robert Service and Ralph Connor received recognition in anthologies and reprint series as regional writers, their female counterparts were usually dismissed. Indeed, the endurance of Frank Scott's 1927 poem, "The Canadian Authors Meet," which mocks the female members of the Canadian Authors' Association, demonstrates the extent to which "poet" and "woman" were treated as incompatible concepts.

In my view, the single most powerful contribution to the erasure of early women poets from Canada's literary history was Malcolm Ross's anthology, *Poets of the Confederation*. Published in the New Canadian Library in 1960, this book not only reduced the complex field of early Canadian lyric poetry to four of Johnson's male peers, but also formalized the subsequently solid quartet of Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman and D.C. Scott as "The Confederation Poets."[7] All, like Johnson, were born between 1860 and 1862 and achieved recognition in the 1880s and 1890s. Roberts always viewed Johnson as an equal: in 1895, he described her as "one of the acknowledged leaders of our Canadian group," and in 1933, he retrospectively identified the "men & women of the 1860 group (1860-61 & 62)" as "Carman, Lampman, D.C. Scott, F.G. Scott, W.W. Campbell, Gilbert Parker, Pauline Johnson,—also Helena Coleman & Albert E. Smythe."[8] The authors of the spate of serious studies of Canadian literature published during the 1920s situated Johnson likewise: according to W.A. Deacon, she was "in skill, sentiment and outlook, one of the powerful 'Group'," and wrote "with a mastery equal at times to the best of them, and seldom much below it" (164-66). Professors Logan and French judged her to be "[i]n some respects . . . the most original and engaging singer in the company of the Canadian lyrists who were born in 1860, 1861, and 1862" (195). Lorne Pierce

described her as "one of the most gifted singers of Canada" (79), and O.J. Stevenson found her "in one sense, the most Canadian of all Canadian poets" (148).[9]

For the next generation of cultural taste-makers, the reception of Pauline Johnson was inflected by representations of the Indian in popular culture. The rise of modernism in Canada coincided with the increasing commercialization of the image of the Indian princess, visually documented in the recent exhibit, "Indian Princesses and Cowboys," which has appeared in Montreal and Vancouver. According to one of the curators, Gail Guthrie Valaskasis,

> From about 1915 through the 1940's, the dominant representation of the Indian Princess was the "red tunic lady," a maiden draped in a red tunic, wearing the requisite headband and feather, and posed with mountains, waterfalls and moonlit lakes. These romanticized princesses which adorned calendars, advertisements, paintings and postcards—with names like Winona, Minnehaha, Iona and even Hiawatha—worked in consort with their male counterpart, the Indian warrior, to establish the historicized Indian as "one of the icons of consumer society" [Francis 175]. Calendar princesses, gazing wistfully or longingly, appeared in a remarkable range of poses and settings. There are paddling princesses and fishing maidens, sewing princesses and maidens of the feathers or the flowers; but most common are maidens . . . merely posed as imaginary Indians amid pristine, romanticized scenery. (27, 31)

Although Johnson was described as "poetess" far more often than "princess" while she was alive, the term "poetess" disappears after her death, with "princess" becoming the primary signifier. The seriousness of the first full-length study of Johnson and her works, published by Mrs. W. Garland Foster in 1931,[10] is belied by its title, *The Mohawk Princess*, which not only describes Johnson's heritage incorrectly, but also plays directly into the prevailing stereotype. Earle Birney's dismissal of Johnson cited earlier in this essay includes the comment, "I don't read her." This statement raises the question of whether Johnson's work was actually read by any of her 1961 detractors, given that by this time her image was so tainted by the category of Indian princess that no self-respecting mid-century man of letters would likely take her seriously. If we regard the metonymy literally, we can see that Earle Birney had indeed read "her"—as person—and that having read Pauline Johnson's identity as the commodified Indian princess of popular culture, he rejected the notion that her poetry could deserve his attention. Birney's statement replicates R.E. Watters' decision to omit Johnson, as author, from his British Columbia *Centennial Anthology*, and to represent her instead with a 1952 *Maclean's* article about her, titled "The Passionate Princess."

During the 1930s, Johnson's admirers continued to praise her work in the pages of *The Canadian Bookman*,[11] the journal of the Canadian Authors' Association. However, in the more august *Canadian Forum* John Ayre assessed the subject of "the Pauline Johnson legend" as merely "a very genteel lady in a bustle who has nice thoughts about Nature and the proper sentiments toward love and yearning, motherhood, and the manly virtues," and "is no more Indian than Henry Wadsworth Longfellow."[12] The first extensive modernist treatment of Johnson, this article demonstrates that her devaluation was largely due to three features that make her especially interesting today: she was female, she claimed a First Nations identity, and she was amazingly popular. Attention to Canadian modernism's treatment of women, natives, and popularity assists our understanding of several important features of Canadian cultural history.

Gabrielle Griffin's comment that "woman constitutes high modernism's other" (9) is well illustrated in Canada. While many feminist and post-colonial critics have been deconstructing the history of American and British modernism in order to recuperate eclipsed female modernists as well as earlier women writers, in Canada so effectively has modernism "suppressed its origins" (Levenson xi) that far more Canadian scholars focus on modernism's relation to the postmodern than to the premodern.[13] Canadian modernism's insistence on its own immaculate conception at McGill University in Montreal in the late 1920s led its proponents to pillory its female companions and precursors as "virgins of sixty who still write of passion" (to return to Scott's "Canadian Authors Meet"). The project of re-inscribing women writers into Canadian literary history challenges the self-fashioning of Canadian modernists: for example, could Irving Layton, the most outspoken iconoclast of the next generation of Canadian poets, have posed so vehemently as the inventor of eroticism in Canadian poetry if Pauline Johnson's "The Idlers" were better known?

Two landmark publications suffice to illustrate how, to cite Griffin again, "Boys will see boys, especially if they look like themselves" (2). The first is the 1936 anthology *New Provinces*, retrospectively canonized as a foundational monument in Canadian literary modernism.[14] This assemblage of six male poets of the inter-war generation omitted Dorothy Livesay, the major Canadian woman poet of this period. Forty years later, Livesay attributed her exclusion to her political radicalism,[15] yet two of the included male

poets, A.M. Klein and F.R. Scott, were also outspoken left-wingers (albeit not as far to the left as Livesay). The second book is Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski's *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, a 1970 collection of 55 articles, manifestoes, letters, and the like, of which only two were written by women (P.K. Page and Joan Finnigan). The missing female presence includes Louise Morey Bowman, Florence Randal Livesay, Floris Clarke McLaren, Dorothy Livesay, Anne Wilkinson, Constance Lindsay Skinner, and Elizabeth Smart.

In addition to misogyny, intellectual colonialism shaped the stream of academic modernism that became dominant in Canada. The well-known dispute over the preface to *New Provinces* evinces disagreement among its contributors concerning the extent to which the "new poetry" should be politically engaged; despite the rejection of his initial preface, the vision that triumphed was that of A.J.M. Smith. Smith's elevation of intellectually difficult "cosmopolitan" poetry over "provincial" romantic verse prevailed in his very influential anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, whose three editions (1943, 1948, 1957) established the canon of early and mid-century Canadian poetry that still obtains today[16] and underscores the master narrative of Canadian modernism subsequently constructed by Dudek and Gnarowski. This narrative can now be seen to have incorporated those who apparently challenged it, as in the intellectual Marxism of John Sutherland's call for a national proletarian literature, and the egotism of Irving Layton's misogynist attacks on gentility (Prefaces). Sutherland's manifesto on behalf of poetry that is "the embodiment of the common man, completing in poetic terms what the average Canadian thinks and feels," clings to a limited conception of the literary and a rather idealized notion of the interest of common men (and women) in "poetry on a high creative level" (60).

Another concept inflecting the modernist assessment of cultural value was a conflicted attitude towards material success. Canada's most influential modernist poets and critics upheld the ideology that "resisted the commodity-text" (Li 38) and "held art and money to be antithetical" (Wexler xii), an attitude reinforced by Northrop Frye's discomfort with popular writing, evident throughout his Canadian criticism.[17] During and before the modernist era, popularity—and occasionally even commercial success—were offences frequently committed by women writers, such as Pauline Johnson, Nellie McClung, L.M. Montgomery, Mazo de la Roche, and Edna Jaques.[18]

To the mind of the academic modernist, poetry presented in costumed performances aimed at audiences of the semi-washed could not possiby inhabit the same realm as poetry published in small university-based magazines. Poems written for oral performance, which would have been dignified with the term "dramatic monologue" if authored by a Robert Browning, earned denigration as "elocutionist-fodder" (to return to Robertson Davies's phrase) when penned by a Pauline Johnson. Today it is amusing to read the page allotted to Johnson in the *Literary History of Canada*, where the inability of modernist criticism to account for Johnson's enduring appeal leads Roy Daniells into uncharacteristically tentative phrasing and puzzlement.

Further complicating the picture was Canada's marginality in the larger spectrum of modernist culture. In a recent article on A.J.M. Smith, Sandra Djwa captures a major problem with a simple question: "could one be modern *and* Canadian?" ("Who" 206). Balancing the aim of Canadian modernists to ally themselves with the mainstream of British and American modernism was the desire to assert a sense of national distinction. This feat was accomplished by invoking geography to construct the trope of the empty land, usually humanized as the "lonely" land (Djwa "A New Soil"). Northrop Frye further mythologized this image into the hostile land, an inflection created by "an introverted boy who grew up in the relatively harsh climate of New Brunswick, and who in his early student days in Toronto lacked the money to buy warm clothes" (A.C. Hamilton 9). Now almost a cliché to most Canadians familiar with the painting of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven, this view required the erasure of the First Nations to whom the land was neither empty nor lonely, a feat that Scott Watson argues was underpinned by a development agenda, and that Graham Carr suggests may have been assisted by the American-oriented continentalism of the major Canadian modernists.[19] Whereas pioneer writing attempted to bring order to the wilderness by containing its representation within European conventions, modernist primitivism aimed to decivilize the land by depicting its elemental qualities. To be questioned is the extent to which the notion of Nature as challenging and even hostile is both masculine and urban, in that it elevates the lone male seer/adventurer—the hinterland *flâneur*—in his canoe with his pen or paintbrush, as master of the wilderness.[20] As soon as women glide into view, this picture is

disturbed: visually by Emily Carr, whose paintings of Coastal British Columbia are infused with images from First Nations cultures, and in poetry by Pauline Johnson, whose expertise as a solo canoeist was well publicized in her verse and her New Woman recreational journalism of the early 1890s.

Most remarkable about Indigenous Canadians in modernist art and writing is their virtual absence. Looking specifically at poetry, we can see that their sparse appearances fall into several categories. The dominant image is the Indian as museum piece, a remnant of the past. This depiction enters Canadian modernism with the transitional figure of Duncan Campbell Scott. As Deputy Superintendant General of the Department of Indian Affairs, Scott collected West Coast Native art while supervising the repression of the potlatch, and administered the government policy of assimilation while naturalizing the disappearance of Native Canadians in elegaic poetry. Published regularly throughout his career, from the 1890s to the 1930s, were poems focussing on Indian women whose intermingling with white men poetically enacts the absorption and miscegenation desired by government policy.[21] From Scott, it is not far to E.J. Pratt's epic *Brébeuf and His Brethren* (1940), much admired throughout Frye's Canadian criticism for the way Pratt's "Indians who martyred Brébeuf" represent "the capacity in man that enables him to be deliberately cruel" (*Conclusion* 845-46).

Rarer are poems that acknowledge the Indian in the poet's own present time. The alienness of Douglas LePan's "lust-red manitou" teetering at the conclusion of his well-known 1948 poem, "A Country Without a Mythology," was preceded by a more obscure articulation in Frank Prewett's "The Red Man" (1924). This poem describes the relation between Native and Euro-Canadian as utter incomprehension and unknowability, concluding: "His ways are strange, his skin is red / Our ways and skins our own" (5).[22] A.M. Klein's "Indian Reservation: Caughnawaga" (1948) may be the only occasion when leftwing modernism's call for social justice was extended in poetry to Native Canadians.

Modernism was most comfortable with Indians when they were cast as primitives and studied by anthropologists, whose salvaging of "original" native culture furnished materials to corroborate the modernist effort to discover new, more authentic modes of expression.[23] The connection between Imagism and the recording of Native American songs at the beginning of this century has been noted by several critics.[24] Indian poetry became especially visible in 1917 in a special issue of *Poetry* (Chicago), followed the next year

by *The Path on the Rainbow*, the first anthology of North American aboriginal verse. Consisting largely of translations by anthropologists, this book also included poems by several interpreters of Indian culture. Pauline Johnson, the only Native literary author, was admitted on the insistence of the publisher, despite the view of the editor that her poems "show how far the Indian poet strays from her own primitive tribal songs, when attempting the White Man's mode" (Cronyn 162-63, qtd. in Castro 31-32). She was singled out in reviews and in subsequent criticism as "ironically, the most traditionally Western and the least Indian in both content and form," an attitude still dominant in 1983, when an American critic studying primitivism in modern American poetry faulted Johnson's work as "excessively romantic," and having "little to do with actual Native American modes of life and expression" (Castro 31). Canadian critics who sought to valorize Johnson's Indianness by placing her within the primitivist paradigm did so by reifying her self-dramatization. One person who knew her personally remarked that "She was in one way quite patrician in mind and spirit," and therefore "not quite as primitive as she pretended" (Stringer). Others, nonetheless, preferred to accept her performance as—to cite the title of Henry James' allegorical story about authenticity and representation—"The Real Thing," and praised her embodiment of "the valkyrie-like wild passion of the traditional Red Indian" (Forster 234).

While 1961, the year of the Pauline Johnson centennial,[25] was not a high point in the general Canadian assessment of Native culture, Hartmut Lutz points out that the 1960s were to prove a foundational decade for the upsurge of Native writing that is underway today ("Canadian Native Literature"). Yet despite the groundwork laid by Betty Keller's 1981 biography (*Pauline: A Biography of Pauline Johnson*), Johnson has been less prominent in this movement than one might expect. One reason may be that scholarly attention to Natives in Canadian literature began with critical analysis of representations of Indians in writing by white authors, hence the greater attention paid to Duncan Campbell Scott than to Johnson in 1980s studies by Leslie Monkman and Terry Goldie. In a 1985 article, Margaret Harry calls attention to the lack of critical interest in Johnson relative to that given to Isabella Valancy Crawford, a point restated five years later by George W. Lyon, whose thoughtful 1990 reconsideration constitutes the only sustained scholarly attention Pauline Johnson has received in Canada since Norman Shrive's 1962 attempt to reconcile her romanticism with his

modernism.[26] The cluster of studies and anthologies of Canadian First Nations literature which appeared in the early 1990s allow Johnson a few pages apiece, to the extent that Margaret Atwood claimed in 1990 that "she is undergoing reclamation today" ("A Double-Bladed Knife"). Yet Johnson receives more deliberate reclamation in Atwood's rather idiosyncratic 1991 Clarendon lectures on the North in Canadian literature than in the books specifically dedicated to Native writing, including the special issue of *Canadian Literature* in which Atwood's comment appeared.[27] Perhaps most telling is the fact that Joan Crate's fine volume, *Pale as Real Ladies: Poems for Pauline Johnson* (1989, 1991), remains virtually unknown, to the undeserved disesteem of both Johnson and Crate—who has also authored an excellent novel, *Breathing Water* (1989), which has similarly been overlooked. Moreover, all of Johnson's titles have now been allowed to slide out of print, with the exception of *Legends of Vancouver*, which has appeared in a fresh 1997 illustrated edition aimed at Vancouver's residents and visitors.

Several First Nations women authors, especially those in or from geographical regions associated with Johnson, write with an historical awareness of her achievements: in an interview, Lee Maracle commended Johnson's handling of Joe Capilano's voice in *Legends of Vancouver* (Lutz *Contemporary Challenges* 171), and Beth Brant, in a more extensive discussion, declares "It is . . . time to recognize Johnson for the revolutionary she was," whose bequest is to have "walked the writing path clearing the brush for us to follow" (6-8). The focus on current writers shared by the contributors to Jeannette Armstrong's *Looking at the Words of our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature* (1993) precludes attention to Johnson other than a few passing references. Non-native Canadian scholars, their perspective still shadowed by the modernist shaping of literary value and Canadian literary history, now work on current First Nations writers without much effort to recuperate their historical antecedents. However, the same cannot be said of our neighbours to the south, whose dragnet quest for Native American literary history has appropriated Pauline Johnson into the American canon.[28] Needless to say, their understanding of Johnson's antipathy towards the United States, patriotism towards Canada and loyalty to the British Empire is rather limited.

A turn-of-the-century woman who both upheld and transgressed cultural codes and structures of a society in transition, Johnson is always highly mediated: by the reportage of those who wrote

about her, by her own various self-representations on stage and in her writing, and now by feminism and post-colonialism. In line with current interests in addressing and redressing historical power imbalances, I would like to conclude by discussing several poems that show that Pauline Johnson was not only "given to reflection" (in retort to Robertson Davies), but is especially relevant today, as we work to unravel constructions of gender, race, ethnicity, empire, value, and national literary history.

"A Cry From an Indian Wife" appeared in *The Week* 18 June 1885, during the Northwest Rebellion, between the surrender of Poundmaker (May 26) and the surrender of Big Bear (July 2). This poem marks Johnson's first public self-positioning as native/woman/other, and is one of her few overt textual engagements with her own hybridity, albeit in this case the hybrid is the nation, rather than a person. This dramatic monologue's self-interrogating and self-interrupting voice, as the speaker alternates between advocating the cause of the dispossessed Natives and expressing sympathy with the Euro-Canadian perspective, rendered it one of her most successful performance pieces. There is no acknowledgement of the Métis as a major element in the Northwest Rebellion; rather, the poem's dramatic conflict oscillates across an unresolvable either/or, white/native binary, its tension underscored by an additional opposition of male and female that constructs woman as powerless to intervene in masculine warfare. In giving voice to the unnamed "Indian Wife," Johnson demands recognition for the silenced figures of colonial history, a position reinforced by her revision of the ending for publication in *The White Wampum* (1895). The original 1885 version simply yields to divine and national destiny, concluding, "God, and fair Canada have willed it so." However, the later version inserts three penultimate lines asserting Native rights, followed by a challenge to "the white man's God" that locates the speaker outside European Christianity. In addition to the questions posed within this poem by its speaker and externally by its composition history, there is also a question of the larger social role assumed by the poet in that her description of a plains warrior as a "Forest Brave," armed with knife and tomahawk, suggests the assumption of a pan-Indian identity. In other words, while writing as woman seems to have been a clearly defined position for Johnson in 1885, writing as Native appears to have been complicated by a need to speak for all Natives.

"The Song My Paddle Sings" (1892), along with Johnson's other poems and prose about canoeing, awaits feminist rereading. Probably her best-known

poem, like much of Johnson's verse it is articulated in a first-person voice that accentuates the oral and performative presence of the speaker. As an expression of female agency, it celebrates the physical prowess of a solo woman canoeist fearlessly making her way through a sensual, wild landscape that hums with its own vitality, but whose challenges invite collaboration—the paddler and her canoe become "we"— rather than confrontation. The title metaphor of "song" suggests a harmonious relationship between paddler and river: the rapids that "seethe, and boil, and bound, and splash" are overcome by being "raced" rather than conquered, with the paddler then continuing in the river's "silent bed" where the only sounds are the "tinkling tune" of bubbles and the "lullaby" of the wind in a fir tree on the hill. Here the canoe supplies a Canadian iconographic counterpart to the New Woman's bicycle as a very physical symbol of freedom of movement. Moreover, the canoe, unlike the bicycle, can provide a site of sexual liberation,[29] as in "The Idlers" (1890) and a cluster of similar poems of such erotic power that one critic gendered the paddler of one poem, "Re-Voyage," as "presumably masculine" (Lyon 148). The fact that there is surprisingly little contemporary and subsequent response to this aspect of Johnson's work gives rise to a number of questions: was Johnson, as Native, permitted greater leeway in openly expressing sexuality during the decadent 1890s? Is the subsequent exclusion of these poems from the Canadian canon attributable to our legendary cultural puritanism, or to the race and gender of their author? Had they been written by Lampman (whose canoeing poems are scarcely erotic) or Roberts (known to have penned a naughty verse or two), would they now be taught and studied? And finally, why have critics so eagerly sought expressions of female sexuality in Isabella Valancy Crawford's poetry while ignoring Johnson's more explicitly erotic verse?

The canon has allowed the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott to represent Native concerns in early Canadian literature, while ignoring Johnson's earlier advocacy in "The Corn Husker," first published in 1896. This poem counterposes Scott's well-known 1898 pair of sonnets, "The Onandaga Madonna" and "Watkewenies," which likewise focus on a single woman as the embodiment of a people thought to be in decline. Like Scott, Johnson presents Indians as a people of the past—the woman is thinking only of "the days gone by"—but she also calls attention to the present—her people "to-day unheeded lie." Unheeded, one might add, by the likes of Scott himself, as senior administrator in the Department of Indian Affairs. And whereas

Scott's poems place responsiblity for the decline of indigenous culture on its own perceived weaknesses (promiscuity in "The Onandaga Madonna" and violence in "Watkewenies"), Johnson cites the cause as "might's injustice": a carefully crafted phrase which allows her to use the powerful word "injustice" while attributing its origins only to the abstract noun "might."

The Corn Husker

Hard by the Indian lodges, where the bush
Breaks in a clearing, through ill-fashioned fields,
She comes to labour, when the first still hush
Of autumn follows large and recent yields.

Age in her fingers, hunger in her face,
Her shoulders stooped with weight of work and years,
But rich in tawny colouring of her race,
She comes afield to strip the purple ears.

And all her thoughts are with the days gone by,
Ere might's injustice banished from their lands
Her people, that today unheeded lie,
Like the dead husks that rustle through her hands.

"Might's injustice": an appropriate phrase with which to close this essay. Rather than finish with a conclusion whose tidiness might belie the complexity of the issues that constellate around Pauline Johnson, I would simply like to end by leaving these words on the page, to demonstrate Johnson's relevance to current concerns with power, literary value, race, and gender, and to illustrate her challenge to the historical construction of Canadian literature.

NOTES

1 Stevenson 148. Research for this project was assisted by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

2 Most readers of *Canadian Literature* should be familiar with the basic details of Johnson's biography. She was born in 1861 on the Six Nations reserve, just outside Brantford, Ontario to an English mother and a mostly Mohawk father. Her first poetry and prose began to appear in periodicals in the mid-1880s; after a dramatic Toronto debut as a recitalist in January 1892, she embarked on a strenuous 17-year international career as a performer of her own work. Her first book of poetry, *The White Wampum*, was published in 1895 in London by the Bodley Head, followed by *Canadian Born* (1903), and *Flint & Feather*, misleadingly subtitled "The Complete Poems of Pauline Johnson," in 1912. Three volumes of her selected magazine and newspaper stories were published as *Legends of Vancouver* (1911), *The Moccasin Maker* (1913), and *The Shagganappi* (1913). She retired to Vancouver in 1909 where she succumbed to breast cancer in 1913.

3 In 1982 Margaret Atwood readmitted her, to *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, with "Marshlands" and "Ojistoh."

4 Pacey to Mrs. Olive Dickason, 6 March 1961, Desmond Pacey papers, MG 30 D339, vol. 2, NAC. See also Rashley, which barely acknowledges Johnson because she doesn't suit his organizational scheme, and Bissell, which omits Johnson from his selection of seventy-five men and only nine women.

5 Other suggestions included Princess Margaret and Princess Anne; in a moment of civic inspiration it was eventually christened the Vancouver Playhouse.

6 A few women contributed minor chapters to the *Literary History of Canada*: Edith Fowke on folklore, Elizabeth Waterston on travel writing.

7 Janet Friskney, who is currently engaged in dissertation research (History, Carleton) on the New Canadian Library, has generously forwarded references to Malcolm Ross's correspondence which indicate that the term "Confederation Poets" was his own coinage, beginning in 1954 when the volume was first contemplated, and confirmed in response to an enquiry in 1982. See S. J. Totten to Malcolm Ross; Ross to William Toye.

8 Roberts to Richard Watson Gilder, 12 October 1895; Roberts to Howard Angus Kennedy, 27 May 1933. Both are quoted in Boone 210, 449.

9 Her omission from Archibald MacMechan's *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924) may be attributable to MacMechan's strongly Atlantic perspective.

10 The University of New Brunswick accepted the book in lieu of a thesis, and granted Annie Ross Foster (later Hanley) an MA in 1932.

11 See Walker, Foster, "The Lyric Beauty of Pauline Johnson's Poetry," and Foster, "Pauline Johnson's Gift to Vancouver."

12 The reference to Longfellow relates Johnson to the image of the commodified Indian princess, in that he was the source of most of the poetry on the postcards in the "Indian Princesses and Cowgirls" exhibit.

13 For example: Slemon, Hunter, and Neuman. Canada has yet to produce studies like the work of Bonnie Kime Scott, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Ann Ardis's *New Women New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (1990); Suzanne Clark's *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* (1991); Margaret Dickie and Thomas Travisano, eds., *Gendered Modernisms: American Women Poets and Their Readers* (1996); and Gabrielle Griffin, ed., *Difference in View: Women and Modernism* (1994).

14 F.R. Scott recounted that "New Provinces sold only 82 copies in the first eleven months and 15 the following year. Of these I bought 10! Two years later I bought the remainders back for 0.18 cents apiece. The last of these I sold for $25.00" (82).

15 See Wayne and Mackinnon (esp. 35-37, 16-18), who state that in the Dirty Thirties Livesay joined the Young Communist League, and Arnason.

16 See Gerson, "Anthologies." Also note Desmond Pacey's comment that "Smith . . . with E.K. Brown as his principal lieutenant, became the representative critic of the forties and fifties" ("Course" 21). According to F.R. Scott, "Northrop Frye has said [Smith] brought Canadian poetry into focus with his *Book of Canadian Poetry*, now in its third edition. This is no mean achievement for a man who, when I first met him, spoke disparagingly of all Canadian poetry then existing, with the possible exception of Bliss Carman" (81).

17 Despite his rejection of evaluative criticism in his international writing, evaluation was a consistent thread in Frye's Canadian criticism, from his annual reviews of "Letters in Canada" in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* in the 1950s, to his two influential conclusions to the *Literary History of Canada*, to his last speech before his death. See Hutcheon 110-12.

18 Charles Lillard's review of the 1987 reprint of *The Moccasin Maker* reproduces this attitude in his description of Johnson's readers as "tourists, grandmothers buying their childhood favourites for their grandchildren, and the curious." See also Gerson, "Sarah Binks."

19 See Watson and Carr. On political aspects of the emptying of the land, see Owram e.g. 131-33.

20 On the flâneur as the figure of the European urban male modernist, see Li. On the artificiality of the Group of Seven's representation of the wilderness, see Underhill and Tippett 84.

21 "The Onondaga Madonna", "At Gull Lake: August 1810," "The Halfbreed Girl." See also Salem-Wiseman.

22 Ironically, Prewett gained an entrée into elite English Georgian cultural circles by occasionally representing himself as Indian: see Meyer.

23 "Modernists, in America as elsewhere, drew on 'primitive' art as a critique of bourgeois philistine modernity. Native Americans were now seen not as an 'immature race' but as inheritors of ancient wisdom. Primitivism was reborn" (Carr 200).

24 See Colombo 103-04, and Carr 222-29. Sandra Djwa, in "'A New Soil," links the beginnings of imagism to the Northern landscape, but without any reference to aboriginal culture (7).

25 The July 1961 issue of *The Native Voice* was designated a special Pauline Johnson Centenary Edition.

26 See Harry, Lyon, and Shrive. The shrewd observations of Collet's recent paper are unfortunately undermined by a number of historical errors.

27 Atwood's lectures were published as *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature*. See also Petrone, Grant, Moses and Goldie. Francis keeps Johnson more consistently in sight—due, perhaps, to his Vancouver perspective.

28 Erika Aigner-Varoz (University of New Mexico) is writing a dissertation on Johnson and Christine Marshall (Northern Arizona University) has just completed another. LaVonne Brown Ruoff, at the University of Illinois (Chicago) has been the most dedicated Johnson scholar. Entries on Johnson or selections from her work appear in the following recent American publications: *Oxford Companion to Women's Writing in the United States* (1995); *Dictionary of Literary Biography* no. 175, *Native American Writers of the United States* (1997); Bernd C. Peyer, ed., *The Singing Spirit: Early Short Stories by North American Indians* (1989), Paula Gunn Allen, *Voice of the Turtle: American Indian Literature* 1900-70 (1994).

29 Anderson notes that "romance on the river" was a common motif in Victorian popular culture (although not as common as courting at the piano). While Benedickson questions the pragmatic side of the canoe as a trysting-place, one of my students has testified that anything is possible in a canoe.

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Susan Glickman

Envy: A Botanical Description

Not in some shady corner, screwed down into the moss,
ferns cooing protectively "There, there,
next time it will be your turn"

not rootbound, no, nor stagnant
filtering swamp scum
not parasitic not
a clinging vine

in full sun on the south wall
multifoliate
charming really, if a little excessive
trying too hard

not green
but red

oddly unvisited by bees, though aphids like it,
and certain tiny blue caterpillars we've never seen unfold
as butterflies or moths

its annual exhibition by now
predictable, though the effort
not entirely unappreciated

a stalwart in the garden
useful for filling out a bouquet
perennial, in other words

David Ingham

Neo-Platonism, Integration, Identity
Malcolm Lowry's "The Forest Path to the Spring"

In what has by now become a substantial body of scholarship dealing with Malcolm Lowry, critics have brought to light at least as many aspects of Lowry the writer as the writer himself created literary personae: the alcoholic autobiographer, the poet (recently rehabilitated by Kathleen Scherf), the cabbalist, the genius-who-feared-he-was-a-plagiarist, the expressionist, the epic modernist/symbolist, the romantic, and the metafictionist, to name some of the best known. Nonetheless, as far as I know Geoffrey Durrant has been the only critic to deal explicitly with Lowry the Neo-Platonist in any real detail—though not for any lack of Neo-Platonic themes in Lowry's work—and it is this aspect of Malcolm Lowry I propose to explore further, specifically in "The Forest Path to the Spring."[1]

It should first be noted, however, that these various Lowrys, like his various personae (Geoffrey Firmin, Sigbjørn Wilderness, Kennish Drumgold Cosnahan and so forth), while all different, are not completely differentiable: they interpenetrate, just as Lowry's work and his life did. Indeed, to a remarkable degree, the concept informs the elements of all of his works individually and collectively, as he believed all the elements in the world around him resonated with an interior consistency: everything in the universe was cut from the same cloth, and the whole could be seen in all of its parts.[2] Not surprisingly, this sort of interpenetration is also fundamental to Neo-Platonist thought. As R. T. Wallis notes, Plotinus agreed with "the Stoic doctrine of 'cosmic sympathy' [namely] the view that since the world is a living organism, whatever happens in one part of it must produce a sympathetic

reaction in every other part (II.3.7, IV.4.32ff). . . . Similarly [Plotinus believed], just as it is possible to discern an individual's character from his eyes, so human destiny may be read in the stars (II.3.7.4-10)" (70-71).[3] Needless to say, images of interpenetration—of various parts of the physical world, and especially of the physical and spiritual worlds—figure prominently in "Forest Path," as do references to the constellations, especially Eridanus.

In his 1970 article, "Death in Life: Neo-Platonic Elements in 'Through the Panama'," Durrant persuasively demonstrates that "Panama" is informed by Neo-Platonic myths of the journey of the soul, from the fall from heaven into the world of the senses through the long voyage home, ascending through the elements to the heavenly region of the stars, the soul's true home. "Forest Path" describes a similar journey, but it is less a physical voyage than a mental and spiritual one, though there are a number of similarities and parallels with regard to the mythic referents detailed by Durrant, some of which are striking. For example, Durrant notes that "[t]he journey of the soul is variously represented as the flight of a bird, a voyage over the dark sea of matter, or a fall into dark waters" (14). Lowry's narrator in "Path" mentions the gulls returning home from the city (which the story identifies largely with the dark, fallen, hellish world) no less than six times (216, 224, 256, 262, 273, 287);[4] the narrator further increases the potency of the image by referring to their "angelic wings" (287), calling them "dove-like" (268), and explicitly linking them with the spring by observing that in this season they "pecked their old feathers off to make room for their new shiny plumage like fresh white paint" (226). Moreover, the "Death in Life" motif that gives Durrant his title finds itself echoed repeatedly in "Path": the narrator talks of "the starry constellation Eridanus, known both as the River of Death and the River of Life" (227); one morning the sun "looked like a skull," but soon the narrator discovers that this was only "a pose" (240-41); ice can be "dead" and can also be "alive" (246); through the offices of his wife, ever his spiritual teacher and guide—Beatrice to his Dante—the narrator becomes "susceptible to the moods and changes and currents of nature, as to its ceaseless rotting into humus of its fallen leaves and buds . . . and burgeoning toward life" (249). The narrator reinforces the motif of cyclical death and rebirth as it applies both to the seasons and human life when he wonders "if what really we should see in age is merely the principle of the seasons themselves working out, only to renew themselves through another kind of death" (281), and earlier links the process to creativity,

asserting that his "whole intention seemed to be to die through [the creative process], without dying of course, that [he] might become reborn" (271). Further reinforcing the interpretation that the story primarily recounts a spiritual journey, the narrator ten times calls the twenty-minute trip to the spring a "journey"; significantly, he does not use the word to refer to the much longer trip to the library in Vancouver (254-55).

In addition to these mythic and thematic correspondences, Lowry points directly to a connection between the two stories, referring explicitly to "the becalmed ship of the Ancient Mariner" (260; the gloss from Coleridge's poem provides a key element in "Panama"), as well as mentioning once and quoting four times from "Frère Jacques" (274; 218, 244, 279, 280)—which as Durrant notes Lowry quotes no less than "*seven times*" in "Panama" and the significance of which he explains as follows: "What it asks is 'Brother, are you asleep?' It also calls for the ringing of the matin bells (of spiritual awakening)" (25; italics Durrant's). Once again it comes as no surprise that the first three times that "Path" quotes the song, only the first four lines appear, while the last quotation includes "Sonnez les matines." Lowry underscores the importance of the bell motif by prefacing the final quotation with the observation that

> The bells of a train, slowly moving northward along the coast tracks, began to sound through the fog across the water. I could remember a time when these bells had seemed to me exactly like the thudding of school bells, summoning one to some unwelcome task. Then they had seemed like somber church bells, tolling for a funeral. But now, at this moment, they struck clear as gay chimes, Christmas bells, birthday bells, harbour bells, pealing through the unraveling mist as for a city liberated, or some great spiritual victory of mankind. (280)

The sound of a ship whose engines thud the rhythms of the song merges with these other bells (not to mention the cabin named Four Bells) as physical reality interpenetrates with memory and spiritual reality to form a potent symbol of spiritual awakening and of the movement from death to life, a theme Lowry's narrator confirms while merging it with images of light and darkness when (referring to his wife) he talks of "a continual sunrise in our life, a continual awakening. And it seemed to me that until I knew her I had lived my whole life in darkness" (235).

While images of light and darkness are central to the Neo-Platonic myth of the soul's journey, with the sun and stars representing the soul's celestial home, and darkness (especially that of the cave) representing the soul's descent into the fallen world of the senses, few would dispute that light and

dark also form the basis for the most dominant strain of imagery in all of English literature; hence there is little point in belabouring all of its iterations in "Path." Nonetheless, a few bear mentioning.

The narrator's earlier life, the one he comes to Eridanus to transcend, he characterizes as excessively nocturnal ("I had been a creature of the night," he remarks [248], and recounts how he spent most of his waking hours in the cavelike atmosphere of jazz bars); the city itself is almost invariably described in terms of night, darkness, and even hell. Moreover, while it strains credulity when the narrator, who claims to have been a seaman, tells the reader that he has no knowledge of the stars, it nicely fits the purposes of the story to have his wife and spiritual mentor explain to him the names of the constellations (especially Eridanus)—to point out, that is, these images of the soul's true home. There are a great many other images of light, of course, and because a number of them resonate strikingly with Neo-Platonism it will be appropriate to return to them, but first it will be necessary to outline some aspects of Neo-Platonism that Durrant does not cover.

The cornerstone of Neo-Platonic thought is its refinement of the platonic distinction between the world of ideals and the sensible world, which is made up only of shadows or imperfect manifestations of those ideals. Both the world of being, or true existence, and the transitory world of becoming are arranged in *continua*. Plotinus presupposes a source from which all things emanate, becoming less like the source the farther they are from it, like ripples on water (V.1.7; V.2.1). The twice-told "parable of the raindrops" in "Path" provides the most obvious example of resonance with this aspect of Neo-Platonism; here is its second iteration:

> Only when my wife felt the warm mild rain on her naked shoulder did she realize it was raining. They were perfect expanding circles of light, first into circles bright as a coin, then becoming expanding rings growing fainter and fainter, while as the rain fell into the phosphorescent water each raindrop expanded into a ripple that was translated into light. And the rain itself was water from the sea, as my wife first taught me, raised to heaven by the sun, transformed into clouds, and falling again into the sea. (286)

In Neo-Platonic theory, moreover, these emanations from the source are continuous: each bears the imprint of its predecessor, though more and more faintly, but the divine source is present and can be apprehended even at the lowest levels. Briefly, the source is the One: absolute, devoid of quality, subsuming all into indivisible unity. The next level, ὁ νοῦς (*ho nous*, often translated as "intellect"), while not sensible, provides the *potential* for

thought, for intellection, and is the repository for the platonic ideals. Next comes the "all-soul," ὁ λόγος (*ho logos*)—the Word—which has the power to realize intellection. From this emanates the cosmos: all physical objects are thus emanations, and it is possible to work back from the world of the senses to gain an apprehension of the divine source (V.1.10; V.2.1; V.2.2).

In this context, some of the images of light become more significant, especially those of a portion of the physical world, often with a metaphysical dimension, silhouetted against the source of light. For example, the story's first page describes "a huge sun with two pines silhouetted in it, like a great blaze behind a gothic cathedral"—an image that is repeated twice more in the story (229, 235). The description continues, "[a]nd at night the same pines would write a Chinese poem on the moon." (As Durrant notes, "the Moon is regarded in this philosophy as the sphere of judgement, the staging post between the divine and the fallen worlds" [14], so the image is particularly appropriate for the beginning of the story.) Later, a pine tree is transformed into a sailing ship, first against the moon, and later against the sun, before again "changing into the tallest pine on the hill" and becoming associated with the tragic story of his heroic and self-sacrificing grandfather, who was, like the ancient mariner, "becalmed" (259-60). The Neo-Platonic import of these images is considerable: they represent the soul's aspiration towards its true home, and further emphasize the stages that it must transcend: the physical world (the tree itself), and also a higher, metaphysical world of which the physical world is an emanation (poetry, spirituality, self-sacrifice, and the archetypes of "journey"). The most striking image of the divine source's presence even in the lowest levels of emanation, and of the soul's aspiration to return to that divine source, appears later in the story, and also illustrates how Lowry uses "reflection" to convey both interpenetration and emanation:

> I dreamed that my being had been transformed into the inlet itself, not at dusk, by the moon, but at sunrise, as we had so often also seen it, suddenly transilluminated by the sun's light, so that I seemed to contain the reflected sun deeply within my very soul, yet a sun which as I awoke was in turn transformed, Swedenborgwise, with its light and warmth into something perfectly simple, like a desire to be a better man, to be capable of more gentleness, understanding, love—(272)[5]

While light imagery conveys much of the story's Neo-Platonic import, Plotinus also speaks directly of music: harmonies unheard in sound provide the harmonies we hear, awakening the soul to an awareness of beauty and of

the divine, he believed (I.6.3), a concept that strongly influenced the English Romantic poets. Consider, for example, these lines from Keats' "Grecian Urn":

> Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
> Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on:
> Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd
> Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone. (11-14)[6]

Compare this from "Path": "As the mist rolled up towards us . . . it was as if the essence of a kind of music that had forever receded there . . . became unlocked, began to play, to our inner ear, not music having the effect of music . . . [but] like a whispering of the ghosts of ourselves" (278), or "What I am really getting at is probably that in some composers I seem to hear the very underlying beat and rhythm of the universe itself" (270).

It is no accident that the narrator of the story is a musician, and is writing an opera called *The Forest Path to the Spring*, which contains all the elements of the short story he actually narrates. The metafictional aspects of this interpenetration—the familiar sense of *mise en abyme* where Malcolm Lowry writes a short story called "The Forest Path to the Spring" in which he creates a narrator who closely resembles Malcolm Lowry and who creates a work of art called *The Forest Path to the Spring*, which, like the story, uses as its raw materials the actual experiences of the narrator, which are highly similar to the experiences of Malcolm Lowry—also exemplify the interpenetration of art and life typical of Lowry and of the story's manifestation of Neo-Platonic theory. It is worth noting in passing, however, that unlike virtually all of Lowry's other fiction, "Path" is told in the first person by an unnamed narrator. While Lowry's other stand-ins to some extent more closely resemble Lowry (in their obsessive—and generally unsuccessful—attempts to establish a stable identity, especially one that will be separate from the works they are writing, and a stable relationship with the world around them, but with internal and external 'realities' as well as 'writer' and 'written' frequently becoming hopelessly entangled), all of them are given names. One plausible explanation is that in writing about figures who essentially share his own predicament—especially those for whom the interpenetration of art and life threatens to become overwhelming—Lowry chose to distance himself from them by giving them names and writing of them in the third person, although he was likely attempting to resolve these problems in his life by rendering them into fiction.[7] By the same token, since "Path" represents "what Lowry hoped would be the pattern of

his own life" (McCarthy 176), he chose an anonymous first person alter ego. I will return to the notion of identity later; for the time being, it suffices to note that the "Quaker Oats Box" sense generated by "Path" (and other fictions by Lowry) can also be seen as a Neo-Platonic emanation.

Moreover, the sense of emanation goes well beyond this individual story. If one accepts, as most critics do, that the overall shape of Lowry's work (his "macro-text," as Elsa Linguanti has called it [209]) was to resemble that of Dante's *Commedia*, with *Volcano* as the *Inferno*, *Lunar Caustic* as the *Purgatorio*, and "Forest Path" as the *Paradiso*, it is easy to accept Sherrill Grace's view that "*Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* is a miniature 'Voyage That Never Ends,' a paradigm or reflection of Lowry's great masterwork" (99). Further, "Path" itself embodies this same structure: the inferno is there, generally associated with the city (the narrator comes to Eridanus "almost from the underworld" [227]), and there are a number of images of cleansing and purgation (for example, the "oil slick" and "reeking slime" of their first day there are cleansed by the tide [228-29], the waterfall "was pure again" after the tide went out [239], and after a swim the narrator feels "baptized afresh" [273]). What he must purge or cleanse himself of or transcend is "that dark chaotic side of myself, my ferocious destructive ignorance" (234), which expresses itself most pointedly in his murderous hatred of mankind for creating ugliness and the hell of war (244-45). Thus "The Forest Past to the Spring" does not merely recount the discovery of an edenic paradise, it is above all a *quest* narrative: the word "spring" appears some thirty-five times, as befits one of its most obvious symbols, but the word "path" is by my count the most frequently used noun in the story.[8] "I had become tyrannized by the past," says the narrator, and it is his "duty to transcend it in the present" (283).

Needless to say, for a literary text to manifest such metaphysical themes, it must make extensive use of symbolism. Moreover, in order to highlight the Neo-Platonic aspects, symbolism works best when used self-consciously: a symbol uses a physical object to point the reader's attention toward the unseen world, but drawing attention to symbolizing itself makes the reader aware of the *act* of pointing, and not merely of that which is pointed at: aware, that is, of the two entire *worlds* that a symbol embraces, and of the interpenetration of those worlds—or, in Neo-Platonic terms, aware of the successive stages of emanation and of emanation itself, though by pointing away from the physical world, symbolism per se would in Neo-Platonic

terms be most closely associated with aspiration. Again, it comes as no surprise not only that symbols abound in the story, but also that the narrator explicitly and self-referentially talks of both symbols and reflections (the former is stronger, while the latter corresponds roughly to what C. S. Pierce would call icon and index, but the terms overlap and interpenetrate to some extent). "Reflection" (as indicated earlier) embraces both interpenetration and emanation (reflecting *back* where a symbol points *away*). In addition to the ten or so seemingly casual uses of the term, the narrator also on occasion uses it more pointedly, as in the following passage where the quasi-symbolic reflections are at once a representation of a higher order and an image of the interpenetration of the physical and spiritual worlds:

> It was not merely that the sunlight came in [the window], but the very movement and rhythm of the sea, in which the reflections of trees and mountains and sun were counter-reflected and multi-reflected in shimmering movement within. As if part of nature, the very living and moving and breathing reflection of nature itself had been captured. (276)

Symbolism, however, while explicitly joining the two worlds, also acknowledges their separation. Thus a lighthouse is both a physical object and "the highest symbol of civilization" (280). Similarly, the lion is "a mere lion," but at the same time is also "the embodiment . . . of those nameless somnambulisms, guilts, ghouls of past delirium, wounds to other souls and lives, ghosts of actions approximating to murder, even if not my own actions in this life, betrayals of self and I know not what" (266). Explicit as the lion's import is, though, an earlier passage concerning the squatters' shacks demonstrates an even stronger resonance between overt symbolism and Neo-Platonism:

> why had these shacks come to represent something to me of an indefinable goodness, even a kind of greatness? And some shadow of the truth that was later to come to me, seemed to steal over my soul, the feeling of something that man had lost, of which these shacks and cabins . . . were the helpless yet stalwart symbol, of man's hunger and need for beauty, for the stars and the sunrise. (233-34)

While a full discussion of the story's imagery and symbolism is obviously beyond the scope of this paper, the major patterns of imagery are entirely congruent with Neo-Platonic theory, in particular those of interpenetration, of the fusion of opposites, and those of circularity and cyclicality, of unity and wholeness—and of course these image patterns also interpenetrate. The spring is "a source of water, a source of supply" says the narrator,

and obviously it represents a good deal more. "[I]t is a nuisance," he continues, "but not insignificant, that I have to use the same word for this as for the season" (257)—and the seasons in the story come exactly one full circle. By the same token, the name of the submerged canoe, *Intermezzo*, points to this period in their lives as an intermezzo, the boat named *Sunrise* points to the story's many sunrises and their symbolic import, and Eridanus is "a ship and the name of our hamlet and seaport, and inlet, and also a constellation. . . . [D]id the confusion come from pinning the labels of one dimension on another? Or were they inextricable?" (258) This interpenetration is, if anything, even more explicit in an earlier passage in the same vein: "Eventually I realized that the hamlet was really two hamlets . . . though these two hamlets, like interpenetrating dimensions, were in the same place, and there was yet another town . . . by the sawmill round the northward point sharing our name Eridanus, as did the inlet itself" (221). Everything, it seems, is somehow a part of everything else.

Furthermore, in Neo-Platonic thought beauty stems not primarily from symmetry—the relation of the parts to one another—but from harmony and unity: their relation to the whole (I.6.2). Coupling this harmony with a transcendent awareness of its emanation from a higher ordering principle, the narrator relates the reflection-laden image of

> the moon reflected in the half-moonlit clouds in the water down there, and behind, in the same translunar depths, the reflection of the struts and cross-braces of our simple-minded pier . . . disposed sub-aqueously in some ancient complex harmony of architectural beauty, an inverse moonlight geometry, beyond our conscious knowledge. (256)

While the resonance of much of "Path" with Neo-Platonism is frequently compelling, many of the story's images are not unique to Neo-Platonism: a number overlap or interpenetrate with other traditions, and some are largely outside it. For example, there is a thread of explicitly Christian imagery that runs throughout the story: there are a dozen or so references to heaven and paradise (hardly surprising, considering the theme, but only three direct references to hell), more than half a dozen to "cathedral" (especially the "gothic" variety, as previously noted), as well as to churches, spires, monastic cells, prayers, hymns, baptism, the bible, and God. The "votive candle" (227) of the refinery has ironic overtones, with the "S" missing from the "Shell" sign linking it with the infernal.

Indeed, images of fire are at least as prevalent as explicitly Christian

images, from the blazing windjammer (259) to the murderous, destroying forest fire, symbol of the narrator's murderous hatred ("in my agonized confusion of mind, my hatred and suffering *were* the forest fire itself, the destroyer, which is here, there, all about" [245]) to the fire that destroyed their house—which also takes on overtones of purging, and of the phoenix and transcendence: they rebuild their house "on the same spot as the old house, using the burned posts for part of our foundations that now, being charred, were not susceptible to rot" (274), notes the narrator, and remembers the day when he and his wife

> had been drawn . . . to the still malodorous ruin of that house . . . and watching the sun rise, had seemed to draw strength out of the sunrise itself for the decision once more to stay, to rebuild that haunted ruin we loved so much that we created our most jubilant memory that very day, when careless of its charred and tragic smell we wonderfully picnicked within it. (283)

Another frequent fire image is the narrator's use of the word "blaze" or "blazing," usually referring to the sun, occasionally to the stars or ships, thus suggesting both the celestial source of perfection (the soul's true home) and the journey towards it.

"Blaze" also suggests another connection: with "gloomy old [Blaise] Pascal." In the passage in which he quotes Pascal, the narrator appears to denigrate him:

> 'He no longer loves the person whom he loved ten years ago. . . . I quite believe it. She is no longer the same, nor is he. He was young, and she also: she is quite different. He would perhaps love her yet, if she were what she was then.' So gloomy profound old Pascal, the unselfish helper of my youth in other ways, had once seemed to threaten our future age.

But the narrator demurs: "And yet not so. Surely I loved her now much more. I had more years to love with. Why should I expect her to be the same? Though she was the same in a way, just as this spring was the same, and not the same, as the springs of years ago" (281). He then goes on (in a passage quoted earlier [110]) to reflect on cyclical death and rebirth, with regard to both the seasons and human lives. As noted earlier, there are many images of cyclicality and flux in the story, and at one point the narrator explicitly links the concept with the Tao and with their lives: "within the inlet itself the tides and currents in that sea returned, became remote, and becoming remote, like that which is called the Tao, returned again as we ourselves had done" (286).[9] But the context of the quotation from Pascal (it is #123 of his

Pensées) makes it clear that he too is in fact talking about immutability, change, and return: he and the narrator do not really disagree.[10] *Pensée* #121 states that "Nature always begins the same things again, the years, the days, the hours . . . . Thus is made a kind of infinity and eternity," and #129 holds that "Our nature consists in motion; complete rest is death." Compare this with an earlier passage from "Path": the apparent upthrusting of pines as seen from a moving rowboat "seemed a reminder of duality, of opposing motions born of the motion of the earth, a symbol even while an illusion, of nature's intolerance of inertia" (230-31). The passage earlier acknowledges that the reference is to Wordsworth (it is from the *Prelude*), and serves as a reminder of the affinity between the Romantics and Neo-Platonism, which Epstein (speaking more widely of the Cabbala) underscores:

> By the mid-eighteenth century, German Pietism . . . reached men like Swedenborg, who entirely reconstructed an already reconstructed Cabbalistic system in conformity with his own very personal visions of heaven and hell. Blake, his natural successor, introduced a new literature of vision and prophecy, and the now totally unrecognizable Cabbala was fully assimilated into the mainstream of romanticism. (35)

While the last few paragraphs point to ways in which the imagery of "Path" overlaps with that of other systems—and as I have tried to indicate, Neo-Platonism, the Cabbala, and romanticism are to some extent intertwined—its Neo-Platonism can also emerge in virtually pristine form. Near the end, the essence of the story's Neo-Platonism, both in terms of explicating its theory and manifesting its quest, emerges in one remarkable sentence: balanced around colons, the Neo-Platonic emanations, verbal and "real," spread like ripples on water:

> If we had progressed, I thought, it was as if to a region where such words as spring, water, houses, trees, vines, laurels, mountains, wolves, bay, roses, beach, islands, forest, tides and deer and snow and fire, had realized their true being, or had their source: and as these words on a page once stood merely to what they symbolized, so did the reality we knew now stand to something else beyond that symbolized or reflected: it was as if we were clothed in the kind of reality which before we saw only at a distance, or to translate it into terms of my own vocation, it was as if we lived in a medium to which that in which our old lives moved, happy though they were, was like simply the bald verbal inspiration to the music we had achieved. (284)

In Neo-Platonic terms, then, McCarthy is slightly beside the point when he comments, "the description of a realm where words attain 'their true being' seems at first to imply a movement beyond appearances to true reality. But

when Lowry tells us that *that* reality 'symbolized or reflected' a still greater reality, we are once again caught up in the proliferation of symbols and levels of reality that characterizes Lowry's darkest visions" (207-08). The passage does indeed point to a "greater reality," specifically, from *ho logos* ("the Word") to *ho nous* (the repository for the platonic ideals): not a "proliferation" into a "forest of symbols," but an *integration* into (or aspiration towards) the *ideal* of "forest," if you will.

Ultimately, integration proves to be the central principle of the story, and the many instances and forms of interpenetration detailed above can be seen as manifestations of it. Not only does "Path" point out the integration of the physical and spiritual worlds, the narrator's descriptions and explicit comments also point to the integration and harmony of the natural world itself (the cycles of the seasons, and of life, death, and rebirth; plants and animals; sun, moon, and stars; and ultimately earth, air, fire, and water) and his growing sense of integration and harmony with that world (not to mention his sense of integration and harmony with his wife, and the integrating power of love in general). Everything is connected with and part of everything else, as is typical of Lowry's fiction, but here the sense is one of attaining an almost mystical unity, rather than arriving at a metaphysical abyss. Furthermore, the story itself achieves an integration and coming together of diverse philosophical and metaphysical strands: Neo-Platonism (the dominant pattern, which provides the unifying force for the others), Taoism, and Christianity, as well as the Romantics (Wordsworth and Coleridge), Swedenborg, and Pascal.

Two other writers are also integrated into the theme of "Path," however: Montaigne and Ortega. Each merits only a brief mention in the story, though both references touch on the theme of integration, and also identity. "[N]ow the joy and happiness of what we had known would go with us wherever we went or God sent us and would not die," comments the narrator, "I cannot really well express what I mean but merely set this down in the Montaigne-like belief . . . that the experience of one happy man might be useful" (285). Useful to whom, precisely? To the reader, ostensibly, but also to the writer.[11] To some extent the story may reflect a romanticised view of the life Lowry and his wife lived; to a much greater extent, it likely reflects (as McCarthy and Day, among others, note) the way Lowry *wanted* his life to be. "Ortega has it that a man's life is like a fiction that he makes up as he goes along. He becomes an engineer and converts it into reality"

(271). While the fear of *being written* was to haunt Lowry for much of his life, along with the concomitant fear of being unable to escape from his own fictions (especially *Volcano*), the narrator of "Path" clearly attains what Lowry's other protagonists and alter egos never fully achieve: a stable sense of his identity. He is at one with the natural world, in friendly harmony with his neighbours, and part of a loving union with his wife. Moreover, he has come to grips with his past and transcended it, discovering himself and meaning in his life's work: "Here [in his music] was the beginning of an honesty, a sort of truthfulness to truth, where there had been nothing before but truthfulness to dishonesty and self-evasion and to thoughts and phrases and even melodies that were not my own" (270-71; much has been made of Lowry's fears that he was essentially a plagiarist).

Why and how the narrator of "Path" achieves what Lowry's other protagonists cannot warrants further examination. One of the central problems for Lowry (as McCarthy accurately notes) was that "writing was both his life and a threat to his life: although he seems to have assumed that he could discover or define his identity only through writing, he also feared that the process of composition would leave him without any identity apart from the work" (6). Moreover, "Lowry himself appears to have found it difficult to maintain his own identity apart from the increasingly convoluted fictions that he attempted to write after *Under the Volcano*" (8)—or in other words, the loss of self in that which defines self. Beyond the works themselves (though in Lowry's case, embedded in them also), identity hinges on the establishment of a stable relationship with the external world (or more precisely between the internal and external worlds) and a stable relationship with other people. McCarthy notes that even in his early writings "Lowry was intrigued by the way questions of identity hinge on a character's response to external reality," and that all of his early works "focus on artist figures whose attempts to come to terms with their identity depend on their sympathetic identification with other people" (15). With regard to the latter, the Consul pays the price for his alienation from others (as do other protagonists), but there is danger in the obverse as well: identifying too closely with another (especially another author) risks a concomitant loss of one's own identity, a problem that is compounded when the "other" is a fictional self/not-self, particularly when one fears that one is "being written" but attempts to achieve a sense of identity by putting oneself into words—creating a character who is quite literally "being written" (and who might well be

an author also, creating a similar character in a similar predicament).

More important, though, for the problem of identity is the disastrous interpenetration of (and inability to distinguish between) internal and external reality. Thus for the protagonists of a number of works, including *Volcano*, there are "constantly proliferating symbolic meanings and numerous unstable correspondences between self and world," so that these characters "often fail to recognize any clear distinction between what [they] see when [they] look inside and outside [themselves]" (McCarthy 38). Similarly, "Reading the symbols of the outside world, the Consul inevitably discovers some relationship to his own situation; but since he cannot control the multitude of meanings engendered, in part, by his readings, the correspondences that he finds between himself and the world ultimately undermine his sense of his own identity": "[u]nable to find any meaning in the outside world except that which he places on it [the Consul] is eventually unable to discover any significance in his own existence," because "he can never find any stable reality upon which to base a secure sense of his own identity" (McCarthy 45, 59, 61). The irony is that the Consul, in seeking his identity by attempting to find "a sense of oneness with others and with the universe itself" [12] finds the opposite: "[f]or the Consul, however, this simultaneous involvement with, and isolation from, the world tends to result not in coherence and significance but in the fragmentation and dissolution of the self" (McCarthy 65, 97). McCarthy explains this failure of integration as follows:

> [T]he Consul would seem to be employing the Hermetic doctrine of correspondences between the spiritual and material worlds ('as above, so below'), which Lowry might have derived from Swedenborg [McCarthy here cites Ackerley and Clipper 30-31, 59]. This doctrine assumes the possibility of our rising above nature into a harmonious relationship with the spiritual universe. There are indications that this is what the Consul seeks through his mystic studies . . . . The result, however, is precisely the opposite, at least in part because he often reads correspondences backward, seeing the universe in terms of himself rather than assimilating his own situation to the larger patterns of the cosmos. (57-58)

This view has merit, not least because it affirms something of the Neo-Platonist view that informs "Path."[13] But the Consul, like Lowry himself, not only sees the universe in terms of himself, he also sees himself in terms of the universe, through the synchronistic view that everything is a part of everything else. The Consul's problem (and perhaps Lowry's as well) was in creating an *unstable* set of correspondences: the reflections back and forth

between self and cosmos multiply significances, acting like reflecting mirrors. There is a sense in which the spinning of the Consul's mind acts centrifugally, spinning significance everywhere. What Lowry uses and portrays in "Path," on the other hand, is the *centripetal* force of Neo-Platonism to create a *stable* set of correspondences: to *integrate* cosmos and consciousness. Lowry himself echoes this view in an oft-quoted letter to Harold Matson: "So far as I know this ["Path"] is the only short novel of its type that brings the kind of majesty usually reserved for tragedy (God this sounds pompous) to bear on human integration and all that kind of thing" (*Selected Letters* 266). The key, as McCarthy indicates, is that the narrator of "Path," unlike the Consul, is able (in Dr. Vigil's words) "to throw away [his] mind" (McCarthy 59 *et passim*). This does not mean, of course, that one must become insensible, but that one must relinquish one's position as a *creator* of meaning to accept the position of *perceiver*: meaning radiates from one source only, and while it is embodied in the individual and in the physical world, it is the task of the individual to perceive the traces of emanation and work back to the source: this is precisely Neo-Platonic aspiration, which holds the promise of stability and integration—and of identity, of knowing who one is, where one has come from, and where one is going, leading to (or resulting from) a stable relationship with the external world and with other people. In having his narrator follow this Neo-Platonic path, Lowry indeed succeeds in creating a "*Volcano* in reverse" (*Selected Letters* 338).

McCarthy mentions Yeats's "The Choice" in connection with Lowry (33), and also notes that he is hardly the first to do so; the aptness of the poem is striking. However the irony, too, is profound, even for this profoundly ironic man: for all his "raging in the dark," Lowry only rarely achieved "perfection of the work"—and that work was largely a (self)portrait of one who so raged—yet in one transcendent and lyric work he was also able to portray the "heavenly mansion" that he was never able to inhabit for long in life.

NOTE

1 While Durrant modestly notes that his article on "Through the Panama" "is meant as a mere footnote to such studies as Perle Epstein's of the influence of the Cabbala, and as a suggestion for possible further investigation" (13)—and the present article is certainly intended to continue that investigation—it seems to me that exploring Neo-Platonic elements in Lowry's other fiction still remains a potentially fertile field of inquiry. Without meaning to circumscribe such scholarly efforts, I would point to *October Ferry*, with its connection with the events of "Path," its paralleling of mental journeying and a journey

over water, and its preoccupation with the themes of the expulsion from paradise and death in life (and rebirth), as a promising place to start.

2 See, for example, "For the Consul, and at times for Lowry, everything is to be found everywhere, and nothing is devoid of personal and cosmic significance" or "[Lowry believed] that everything somehow relates to everything else" (McCarthy 7, 159).

3 The source for Lowry's knowledge of Neo-Platonism, as Perle Epstein has conclusively demonstrated, is the library of Charles Stansfeld Jones ("Frater Achad"): in it Lowry found a "convenient combination of Neoplatonism, pantheism, Orphism, Indian mysticism, and general occultism" (14). Which specific texts Lowry used is not crucial to the argument of this paper (though the writings of Thomas Taylor the Neoplatonist, as Durrant suggests, likely remains as good a guess as any); as Epstein makes clear, though, the Cabbala incorporates much of Neo-Platonism, so it is not always clear whether Lowry was using the Cabbala or purely Neo-Platonist sources. Lowry tended to read omnivorously, and take what he read (or misread) and incorporate it, *mutatis mutandis*, into his own vision. Because Taylor does not, however, follow Plotinus' textual divisions, in which each of the nine tractates that compose each of his six enneads is further divided into numbered sections, I have elected to use Stephen MacKenna's eminently readable translation, though a number of others exist, and follow the conventional system of reference that Wallis and most others use (ennead/tractate/section). Epstein, of course, provides a thorough treatment of the influence on *Under the Volcano* of Lowry's reading of occult and especially cabbalistic works, but see also W. H. New, "Lowry's Reading" and "Lowry, the Cabbala, and Charles Jones."

4 Because the Penguin reprint is so much more widely available than the original hardcover, page references will be to the reprint; the pagination is in any event fairly close, with the story in the original Lippincott edition occupying 215-83, and in the Penguin 216-87.

5 The theosophical Swedenborg was also an important figure in the history of Neo-Platonism. As Epstein notes, his views on the "correspondences between the spiritual and sensuous worlds" (to which the passage quoted from "Path" alludes) played a significant role in the dissemination of Neo-Platonic thought (8), and she observes that Lowry read and was influenced by his *Heaven and Its Wonders, and Hell* (220).

6 Lines 37-49 of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" also resonate strongly with Neo-Platonism, as they speak of a state of transcendent awareness in which "with an eye made quiet by the power / Of harmony . . . / We see into the life of things."

7 McCarthy quotes a 1949 letter from Lowry to Frank Taylor in which he "described the theme of *Dark as the Grave* as 'the identification of a creator with his creation,' [and] ominously added that 'since the philosophical implications might prove fatal to myself, I have to preserve a certain detachment'" (141-42, quoting *Selected Letters* 180).

8 See Sherrill Grace (*Voyage* 114-16) for a useful discussion of the quest theme, and especially the cabbalistic and occult significance of "path" on which Lowry drew.

9 See Barry Wood, "The Edge of Eternity: Lowry's 'Forest Path to the Spring'" for a cogent account of the story's Taoist connections.

10 The "unselfish helper of my youth" might well have been the Pascal who wrote "The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know" (#277), but a close reading of the *Pensées* reveals that this pious and profound thinker was also a mystic who shared many of the ideas of Neo-Platonism. He writes, for example, that even in the smallest part of a mite one can see "an infinity of universes, each of which has its firmament, its planets, its

earth, in the same proportion as in the visible world" and "[s]ince everything . . . is held together by a natural though imperceptible chain . . . I hold it equally impossible to know the parts without knowing the whole, and to know the whole without knowing the parts in detail" (#72). Epstein in fact lists the *Pensées* among the occult works read by Lowry (220), and they reflect virtually all of Epstein's "basic premises of occultism" (12).

11 For a theoretical analysis of the ontological status and interrelations between "addresser" and "addressee" in "Path," see Peter Dickinson, "'I Am Not I' . . ." 50-53.

12 Cf. Beebe, talking of Baudelaire and the "forest of symbols": "there is no separation, ideally, between self and cosmos" (131; qtd. in McCarthy 97).

13 Ackerley and Clipper (30-31)suggest that Lowry might have derived it from Swedenborg, whom he almost certainly read, though it could also have been from the Cabbala or other occult writers; nonetheless, the view itself, as Epstein (8, 14, 220 *et passim*) notes, is derived directly or indirectly from the Neo-Platonists.

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Margaret Avison

Within the Family

I

"Wonderful! Yes, you're swimming. . .
I see—you flounder
because you have to
feel for footing suddenly,
make sure there's bottom there still
under you, under the water."

"You won't go on towards the
main channel—not even to
the deep end of a pool—
for a while."

"Yes, there can be
overturned canoes,
speedboat calamities,
drownings (from cramp or exhaustion)."

- - - - -

But one day anyhow
the need for reassurance is instead for
contemplating lake-floor, there
under the water though
too far down to test it.

Swimming is then
absorption. And a sixth
sense makes you confident that when you need it,
that instant,
shore will be there.

II

Long-distance swimmers
risk other dangers:
the intruding of concern
with their prowess, with records,
collusion with a trainer
alongside in his boat
somehow invalidating the familiar
giving yourself to the water. . . .

The risks are real.

III

The learn-or-else tactics
of a hard taskmaster?
An overweening young athlete with his boat
forced you overboard, and let you alone to
make it to shore on adrenalin
—"See? You've learned to swim!"—
to hate forever after
cowering on a beach, blue under the
nails and lips, though when your children
were young you'd wade and duck
shivering, for them.

Or a warm-hearted father
well-meaning, but
too long at home with buoyancy, would
always let you go too soon
so that you'd gulp
and grope and strangle; so that
swimming would always mean
duress on top of panic and, pervasively,
your father's disappointment.

- - - - -

Which is the alien element?

This is atavistic dread
and tension and exhilaration,
a suicidal homesickness for ocean, a near-
paralysis that dares
farther out onto some knife-edge
of land,
commits itself to
anti-diluvian peril and promise.

Reading India

Lawrence A. Babb & Susan S. Wadley, eds.
Media and the Transformation of Religion in South Asia. U of Pennsylvania P US$16.95

Saskia Kersenboom
Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text. Berg US$19.95

Reviewed by Vijay Mishra

We continue to be fascinated by Western readings of India. Once the debates were about Indomania versus Indophobia, then it became a question of colonial dispatches and what they said about British rule, and finally, after further refinements of historical themes (Eric Stokes's work is exemplary here) the interest moved to questions of representation. Postcolonial theory has, in turn, brought to our readings of India alternative ways of exploring adversarial as well as complicit moments in the creation of Empire. The books I have before me are recent attempts to tell the story of India (or to speak about Indian encounters) that combine scholarship with a high level of self-consciousness about cultural sensibilities and the position from which one speaks about the "other." I begin with the Babb and Wadley volume which is, I would want to suggest, a rather unusual collection of essays on Indian cultural matters by a group of specialists who on other occasions may well have been seen as "Indologists." From what I can gather all the contributors to this volume can read at least one Indian language, and many are established scholars of Indian culture. What is remarkable about this volume is the manner in which Indian Studies specialists engage with the burgeoning scholarly field of cultural studies. In recent years cultural studies has been read as a field in which one brings a largely non-linguistic competence to readings of the popular. When it comes to non-western cultures this means that the cultural studies academic would be interested in such matters as the commodification of culture through video cassettes, television, cinema and so on. Babb and Wadley's volume touches on something rather different. It examines the huge impact the media have had on religious matters in India. In many ways the narrowing of the field to religion is both the book's strength and its weakness, a strength because religion gives the book a unity often lacking in other edited texts, a weakness because it unwittingly continues the orientalist tradition of reading religion as the core of Indian culture. And this is a pity since the act of living in India is also a question of survival in a harsh land, and while Indians may be more religiously inclined than other people, there are many other aspects of their cultural existence that require attention.

In spite of this qualification, the volume has some fine essays on subjects such as calendar art and "god posters," the use of comics for national integration, the mechanical reproduction of religious music and sermons, Hindi cinema, and television serials. A number of observations may be quickly summarized here. We are told by H. Daniel Smith that god posters and calendar art

have had an enormous impact on "patterns of Hindu devotionalism" by bringing images of gods and goddesses into innumerable homes. Stephen R. Inglis examines the career of one of the great masters of calendar art, C. Kondiah Raju (1898-1976) and makes some exciting theoretical interventions into Benjamin's argument about the decline of the auratic status of the original in the age of mechanical reproduction. This essay is followed by two complementary essays by Frances W. Pritchett and John Stratton Hawley on Anant Pai's *Amar Chitra Katha,* a series of very influential comics modelled on the American Classics Illustrated comics. In both these essays what emerges is the way in which Anant Pai's own commitment to Indian secularism skews some very complex ideological moments in the texts themselves. Hawley's comparative readings of the representation of key saints in the comics against the historical facts make this ideological selectiveness very clear. The age of mechanical reproduction has also affected audio recordings and this aspect is explored in Regula Burchardt Qureshi's fascinating essay on the Sufi inspired *qawwali.* The genre is one of the most popular forms of religious music in India and Pakistan and one which has been exposed to the West in recent times through the extraordinary singing of the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Scott Marcus examines the ways in which Hindu devotional music is being marketed through cheap and readily available cassettes. In the third section of the volume Steve Derne, Philip Lutgendorf and John T. Little analyse the relationship between religion and the visual media through cinema, television and video cassettes. In all three studies the power of the visual in transforming canonical religious texts or in transmitting religious messages to a national and global audience is seen as one of the decisive elements in the way in which contemporary Indian culture is represented.

There are, however, two general criticisms that may be made about this book. The first is that the book, written by specialists, requires considerable effort on the part of someone interested in cross-cultural studies: indeed a fair degree of familiarity with high Indian culture is the unstated prerequisite throughout. The second is the absence of any real critique of the current state of Indian culture. To claim that the serialized *Ramayana* on television is another addition to the *Ramayana* tradition is one thing; to marginalize the considerable unease of large parts of the Indian population about the politics and aesthetics of this serialization is quite another. One gets the uneasy feeling that somehow severe criticism and comparative judgements are no longer fashionable.

The Babb and Wadley volume deals primarily with North Indian material. Saskia Kersenboom's book is about South India, specifically Tamil India. She works from what one gathers is a Tamil mode of producing knowledge/meaning. Here she has in mind a way of reading the world as a complex semiotic system made up of, as the title of her book suggests, word, sound and image. The reference to the title of one of Roland Barthes' best-known books in the English-speaking world is obvious. However, where Barthes' *Image, Music, Text* examined the three as relatively independent semiotic systems, Kersenboom speaks of the three as constituting, in South Indian culture, a specifically Tamilian way of constructing meaning, or reading the world. In other words, the Tamil language itself constructs meaning by constantly relating "word, sound and mimetic image." Not surprisingly, in Tamil discourse is given priority over system. Modifying this argument a bit one could say that *parole* comes before *langue*, the surface structure before the deep structure so that worlds are constructed through specific articulations (of language and body) rather than through a pre-existent linguistic system. Recent work in the field of meaning-construction has

brought to our notice the importance of the body itself, and the extent to which any theory of textuality must engage with the world as other than just linguistic objects—both at the level of the world itself and at the level of how worlds are constructed. Where once there was the claim that worlds come into being only through language (and this idea remains strong in the tradition from Saussure, through Lévi-Strauss to Lacan), now the claim is that worlds are constructed through multiple modes of cognition in which all five sense organs as well as all the motoric organs in the body (to use a Samkhyan system here) are important.

Saskia Kersenboom's "proof" text is a short narrative that is the basis of a dance. In examining the relationship between the text and the dance as performed in the Bharata Natyam style, Kersenboom becomes conscious of the massive disjunction between a textual (that is a verbal) construction of the event through Western textual analysis and the Tamil construction of the same event that treats it as a complete social experience in which all the senses have participated. To be able to read this text as performed one has not only to describe it (in which case one also has to know the tradition of temple dancers in the culture as well as the dance/dancer's own prior history) but to view the event in the context of its performance. As she claims earlier on "no philological, historical, religious, moral, hermeneutic, psychological, functional, structuralist, semiotic, receptionist, sociological or (neo)-Marxist analysis and interpretation can represent what that textual event is." With this in mind the book comes with an interactive CD in which five minutes of the performance is included.

In South India the researcher is often asked "enta prayogam?" or "what's the use?" The value or utility of Kersenboom's research, as she explains at some length, is that her book is not simply a treatment of the object in a dispassionate way. Kersenboom herself is an accomplished performer of the Bharata Natyam and is therefore a participant precisely in the "text" that is the object of her analysis. Much of what she writes would be acceptable to a whole group of current writers on language and representation. The book perhaps makes too strong a case for Tamil difference at the level of its own way of defining language and in many places the theoretical underpinning is both needlessly heavy and sometimes far too repetitive. But in as far as it draws our attention to worlds and systems that require both intellectual and bodily investment, the book demonstrates that to know something well, you do have to live through that experience. Kersenboom shows a rare Western understanding of both the Tamil language and one of its finest cultural forms, the Bharata Natyam. Finally, she draws our attention to the unity of the dancer and the dance, an issue that still remains central to modernist aesthetics generally.

Both books discussed here draw us once again to what may be called readings of the "East" in the wake of Edward Said's influential *Orientalism*. While debates will continue to rage about the polemical nature of Said's work, it must be said that in drawing our attention to the link between power and knowledge, the text forced scholars to engage with archives with a certain respect for the cultures that produced that material. These books—and many more published recently—bear testimony to a new mode of research and engagement with the "other."

Transcendental Praxis

Anjali Bhelande
Self Beyond Self: Ethel Wilson and Indian Philosophical Thought Amalgamated P n.p.

Reviewed by Don Fisher

There is a quiet rebellion going on in the pages of Anjali Bhelande's *Self Beyond Self.*

The Indian scholar is clearly aware that her interdisciplinary, religious/spiritual study of Ethel Wilson's work runs counter to the current social-constructionist/post-structuralist vogue in Western literary criticism. Undaunted, however, she presents a lucid and convincing argument for the parallels between Wilson's fiction and key aspects of Indian philosophical thought as found in sacred texts such as the *Bhagvad Gita*, *The Upanishads*, and the writings of Indian sage Nagarjuna. Bhelande, consistent with the paradigm of Indian religious thought and with the spiritual perspective in so much of Wilson's work, is never dogmatic. Nor has she any "absurd intention of proclaiming the so-called superiority of Indian thought." Bhelande sets herself a clear task and outlines the boundaries within which she will pursue it: "I am in no way saying that Wilson was directly or indirectly influenced by Nagarjuna [or other Indian religious texts]. My chief intention in this study is to explore parallels for the purpose of elucidation." She then accomplishes this task admirably, clearly setting out such parallels and supporting them with ample textual evidence from Wilson's novels and short stories.

Bhelande anticipates that many of her readers may have only a cursory knowledge of Indian philosophical thought, and in her opening chapter provides enough background to provide a working framework for the uninitiated reader, but not so much as to overwhelm with arcane detail. She complements this with a useful glossary of key Sanskrit terms.

Ethel Wilson, by her own account, was "an unusually religious woman," but neither in her life nor her work was she ever dogmatic or moralistic. Bhelande provides a concept from Indian thought, "satva"—a force of equilibrium and harmony in Samkhya philosophy—which deftly and accurately characterizes the breadth, depth, and balance of Wilson's spirituality and that of a number of her characters. So many of Wilson's characters—notably Nell Severance and Maggie Lloyd in *Swamp Angel*— struggle with the balance between small ego-self and larger Atman-Self (the individual soul) and/or with Brahman (the Universal Self; the Absolute)—a struggle which is the central focus of much of Indian religious/philosophical thought. These characters strive valiantly to balance the inescapable demands of earthly, quotidian existence with their place in the cosmic "everlasting web." As Bhelande points out, Indian philosophical thought provides a framework, not readily available in Western thought, which encourages and facilitates the movement from immersion in small ego-self toward connection with Universal Self. She convincingly demonstrates how a number of Wilson's characters struggle—though not always successfully—toward this kind of transcendence.

At times, Bhelande struggles to keep her central thesis front and centre, and the Indian philosophical perspective becomes somewhat attenuated. In her second chapter, for example, her discussion of the metaphor of "being the other" presents only a vague connection with Indian philosophical thought. Even here, however, her analysis—although more generally thematic—remains incisive and useful. Some readers might be surprised at how much Bhelande focuses on Judeo-Christian themes and motifs in Wilson, given that this is an "Indian" reading of her work. Much of Wilson's writing *is* clearly rooted in a Christian framework (an obvious example would be the direct references to John Donne's sermon *No Man is an Islande*), a fact which no serious reading of Wilson could or should ignore. Bhelande's focus on Christian aspects is, in fact, central to her overall comparative approach; her "Indian reading" does not exclude, distort, or argue with Western religious faiths. On the contrary, Bhelande adroitly incorporates Christian aspects—at once identi-

fying key differences between anthropocentric Western thought and Cosmocentric Indian thought, illuminating compatibilities between the two approaches, and providing fresh insights into spiritual themes in Wilson's work. It should also be noted that Hinduism owes much of its longevity and vitality to its ability to accommodate and integrate other religious perspectives. The Atman/Brahma is decidedly non-denominational.

Bhelande's most compelling analysis comes in her treatment of *Swamp Angel*—a text which provides numerous clear parallels to Indian thought—but she also identifies and elucidates such parallels in *Hetty Dorval* and a number of Wilson's short stories. Nor does Bhelande shy away from the broader ramifications of her East-meets-West approach, noting how the holistic perspectives of Eastern thought have influenced other areas of Western life such as medicine and even the work place. First and foremost, however, Bhelande opens out Wilson's work in refreshing ways which counter the profoundly secular post-structuralist discourse which dominates so much current literary criticism. She searches for the spiritual heart of Wilson's fiction—what Yoga practice would perhaps identify as its fourth chakra or "anahata"—and she finds it.

Ways of Going North

James West Davidson and John Rugge
Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure. McGill-Queen's U P $22.95

Peter Larisey
Light for a Cold Land: Lawren Harris's Work and Life—An Interpretation. Dundurn P $49.99

Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

There are many ways of going North, and, as Stephen Leacock knew, the safest way is in your favorite armchair before a fire, with a good drink and an explorer's account of his (or her) adventures. The problem with actually going North is that you may not make it back, but if you do then you must decide what to do with your experience. The most common response of all who go North is to write about it, and there are many hundreds of such accounts from historical journals to geographical reports to personal narratives like Wiebe's *Playing Dead* or epic fictions like Richler's *Solomon Gursky Was Here.*

Great Heart has elements of all these narrative modes. As history, it offers a contemporary retelling and reconstruction of American journalist Leonidas Hubbard's fatal 1903 expedition across Labrador in search of the Naskapi, caribou, and a "dark continent" never before (or so Hubbard thought) explored by a white man. In fact, Canadian geologist and Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, A. P. Low, had successfully traversed Labrador. Hubbard was after a sensational story for the New York magazine *Outing*, but he starved to death on his retreat from the interior, so that no matter how one casts his story it remains a tale of death and failure brought on by Hubbard's inexperience, poor planning, and stubborn refusal to listen to his Canadian guide George Elson. Elson and Hubbard's friend, Dillon Wallace, an American lawyer, survived and both men returned to Labrador in 1905 to repeat the expedition. The second part of the history in *Great Heart* concerns the two 1905 expeditions, one undertaken by Hubbard's widow, Canadian-born Mina Benson Hubbard, the other by Wallace.

To reconstruct the histories of 1903 and 1905, Davidson and Rugge have drawn heavily on the journals kept by the four principals—Leonidas Hubbard, Dillon Wallace, George Elson, and Mina Hubbard—newspaper reports, interviews, and three books: Wallace's *The Lure of the Labrador Wild* (1905) and *The Long Labrador Trail* (1908), and Mina Hubbard's *A Woman's Way*

Through Unknown Labrador (1908). There are substantial quotations from the journals, often used to dramatic effect, woven into the narrative constructed from these sources, and at times this narrative attempts a fictional representation of feelings, private thoughts, and personal motivations.

Great Heart is fascinating reading; much more engrossing than either Wallace's or Mina's books. It is also, however, more frustrating because the authors' desire to unearth the stories hidden within the official record is limited by their reluctance (or inability) to *create* characters. For example, they assert that "George Elson's feelings toward Mina Hubbard constitute one of the most elusive, yet pivotal, elements of this narrative," but it is never clear how or why this possible attraction should be pivotal. Mina and George do not come alive enough, *as characters*, for us to care what he felt for her. The facts are that she mounted her expedition to vindicate her dead husband, and she hired George to guide, and he saw the expedition through in record time and to a successful conclusion. More important still is the failure to create Leonidas Hubbard. *He* is the *pivotal* character in this story. What about him inspired men like Wallace, Elson, and his intelligent, intrepid wife, to love and obey him? And why?

As the authors acknowledge in this 1997 reprint of their 1988 book, much of the story remains to be told. *They* are eager for more information on Elson, whom Mina called "Great heart"; *I* want to know more about Mina. Both George and Mina had to work around social constraint and prejudice: as a "half-breed," he could not sleep or eat with whitemen, let alone contradict them; as a woman, she should not have gone North at all, let alone returned successfully to write about it. Both were marginalized in or excised from Wallace's books. Although *Great Heart* constructs an American adventure narrative of masculine heroics around Hubbard and Wallace, it nonetheless puts George and Mina, the two Canadian heroes, back on stage in what is, finally, a familiar drama of the Canadian North, where to survive requires living with the land instead of fighting it.

For Lawren Harris, the North represented the essential purpose and identity of Canada; it was the inspiration for a national art and the source of spiritual purity and strength. What Harris brought back from his various Norths (Muskoka, Algoma, the Arctic) was his vision of the Canadian soul. In *Light for a Cold Land*, Peter Larisey offers us the first biographical approach to the entire career of one of Canada's most important modern painters. Harris died in Vancouver in 1970 after 65 active years as a painter, but he is known, almost exclusively, as a founding member of the Group of Seven and for his canvasses painted between 1918 and 1930.

Larisey begins with Harris's student years in Berlin and the crucial lessons of those years: the importance of regional landscape, the politics of fighting entrenched academicians, and the importance of the artist's inner life. It was during these years that Harris first saw the work of Munch, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Cézanne, the theosophist Kandinsky, and of German expressionists like Beckmann and Nolde. In the 1890s, Harris was taken to the northern Ontario lake country of Muskoka, but by 1908, when he returned to Canada, he was going North regularly to paint.

As Larisey traces the development of Harris's art and nationalist ideology, he provides the outlines of his biography. He speculates interestingly about the causes of Harris's 1918 breakdown and notes that the discovery of a new northern experience in the Algoma area triggered his recovery. From this point on the North became associated, for Harris, with Theosophy and his transcendental ideals. Although Harris was not a good writer, Larisey pays close attention to *Contrasts* and to many of Harris's

essays, and he uses these texts to elucidate the connections between Harris's paintings, philosophy, and nationalism.

Harris left Canada in 1934 to live with Bess Housser, and their five years in the United States marked a major breakthrough for his art, which moved closer to forms of abstraction revealing ties with the earlier landscape or an increasingly non-objective and symbolic representation of his spiritual beliefs. In 1939, with the outbreak of the war, the couple moved to Vancouver, and Larisey provides the most thorough and detailed analysis to date of the abstract works from this period. The influence of Surrealism, automatic writing, and the local mountain scenery all affected his approach to abstraction, but it was not until after the war that Harris re-dedicated himself to a renewed concept of Canadian nationalism. Larisey notes the differences between Harris's nationalism in the twenties and the forties by stating that Harris rejected the embarassing linkage of "North" with race—what he calls Harris's mystical racism—but on this important point, as on many others concerning Harris's private life, Larisey becomes very cautious.

Much remains to be said about Lawren Harris. The next study should be a full biography that probes the artist's pyschology, his attitudes towards sexuality, marriage, and his nervous breakdown, his need for homosocial bonds with fellow male artists, and his relationships with family and friends. Moreover, Harris's life, like his work, deserves to be contextualized in many ways only hinted at here. What role, for example, was played by the other arts—music, poetry, theatre, opera—in his life? Why did he strive to unite them and how did this interdisciplinary vision affect his painting? What is the extent of Harris's influence on other painters and artists, not to mention the cultural imagination of Canadians? The impact on Harris of Walt Whitman and R.M. Bucke should be developed, as could Harris's influence on a playwright like Herman Voaden.

But the key to Harris's imagination is the North, and it is his representations of Canada as North that continue to affect us today. The light he brings to this cold land has its dark, dangerous, deadly side, and that darkness emerges in the colours and spatial relations of his Algoma and Arctic canvasses or in the stunning duality of a late work like *Northern Image* (1950). Harris may not have faced physical death in the North, but he knew that the threat was real; the loss of Thomson was a great blow and he must have been aware of contemporaries like Hubbard, Peary, Stefansson, and Robert Flaherty. More than any other Canadian painter, Harris reaches across this century to touch Glenn Gould, R. Murray Schafer, and a host of other artists. What's more, his powerful, ambivalent light touches anyone who goes North, if only in an armchair.

Northrop Frye in Youth

Robert D. Denham, ed.
The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp 1932-1939. U of Toronto P 2 vols. $70 each vol.

Reviewed by Germaine Warkentin

I first encountered Northrop Frye when I was fourteen, in the Children's Room of the Wychwood Public Library on Bathurst Street in Toronto. A student assistant, I was processing returned books when the librarian, Miss Kelly, slammed a green brochure down on my desk. "You see the kind of books they're publishing these days," she fumed, "'*Fearful Symmetry*' indeed!" Miss Kelly's many strengths deserve their own chronicle, but her disgust at Frye's famous title precisely characterises the narrowness that Frye had been "writing against" as he polished *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) in his apartment farther up Bathurst Street during the war years. This correspondence—

the letters he and his future wife Helen Kemp exchanged in the 1930s as he prepared to tackle Blake—depicts with decorous intimacy that world, the Fryes' resistance to it, and their great generosity to each other. At first they exhibit the light-hearted disdain for their elders of two very bright young things living in "that overgrown Thanatopsis club called Toronto." But as the decade passes the letters present the increasingly informed and analytical critique of a couple beginning to consider how to shake off the forces that had produced them. That like most of us they would only partly succeed provides a resolution beyond the scope of these volumes; here our genre is comedy, with its happy ending, not romance, with its autumnal insight.

Northrop Frye's student letters to Helen Kemp were used during Frye's lifetime by his biographer, John Ayre. The particular achievement of these volumes, the first two of Frye's *Collected Works*, comes from Robert Denham's stubborn pursuit of Kemp's side of the correspondence, finally unearthed in the attic of the Fryes' eventual home on Clifton Road. Poverty, studies, obligations to their elders, all separated the young lovers for six long periods between their meeting backstage at Hart House in 1931, their marriage in 1937, and the end of Frye's last sojourn in Oxford in the summer of 1939. But they wrote to each other ceaselessly—long, gossipy, impertinent, *fizzy* letters that are a delight to read even when the humdrum politics of Victoria College—the little world on Charles Street that both fostered and infuriated them—are their main concern. To watch Frye's hyperactive intelligence staking out its ground, and Kemp seeking roles unanticipated by their elders, is like being inside a novel by Carol Shields.

Frye is a known quantity; an icon of modernist culture now somewhat isolated in an age of theory (a development shrewdly analyzed by A. C. Hamilton in *Northrop Frye: Anatomy of his Criticism*, 1990) he nevertheless remains—at least in *The Educated Imagination* (1963) and the essays of his middle period—among the most readable of twentieth-century critics: earthy, vastly-read, humane, intolerant of cant, and ever the teacher. I have been accused by critics of several different schools of being a "Frygian" (a word Kemp invented, it seems), but the truth is, I ignore the system-building and read him for sheer pleasure. Helen Kemp, on the other hand, is a new-found prize. This is not for the reasons you might think; latter-day Miss Kellys have used these letters to deplore the apparent suppression of Kemp's career during the 1940s by the escalating claims of her prodigious husband. But the letters themselves document the care with which, though two years younger and from a much less sophisticated background, Frye worked to build up what was at first her very frail self-esteem. Here, as in his writings, he tried to preserve what he believed to be the freedom of the subject: as he would later write, "I neither want nor trust disciples . . . I should be horrified to hear of anyone proposing to make his own work revolve around mine, unless I were sure that meant a genuine freedom for him."

What was freedom for Helen Kemp? She was in fact an authentic 1930s type: irreverent and uncertain at the same time, eager to shake off the prim rules governing the behaviour of a "Vic girl," yet intensely involved in a vigorous college community with its music club, its drama group, its beloved friends in successive Vic classes. She came from a craftsmanly family; her father, a commercial artist, was a friend of Tom Thomson; he worked at the engraving firm Grip with several artists of the Group of Seven, and belonged to that hatchery of Canadian modernism the Arts and Letters Club. The Kemps all seemed to draw or play an instrument, their politics were mildly radical, and Kemp's father was active in promoting birth control when it was still

illegal to do so. Indeed, Gertrude Kemp arranged two abortions for her daughter when Helen decided that was the only way to keep her man in school preparing for the only job available to him, which he would only get if he *stayed* in school. This was the '30s, remember; no post-docs, no day care, illegitimacy was a forbidden topic, and middle-class women left their jobs when they married.

But in taking this route Kemp was also safeguarding her own power to choose, which we see emerging clearly in the second volume from the uncertain, temperamentally variable personality of the earliest letters. Urbane, unacademic, ready to tell Frye he was a fool when she thought so, Kemp may have been fitting herself to be the wife of a great man, but she was advanced enough to know that if she had been the great talent their positions would have been reversed. By the time their many separations were over, "Norrie" was already becoming the socially reserved genius, "Professor Frye," and Kemp was observing shrewdly that "you and I have got ourselves involved in a public career that we'll find it hard to kick over." But this was a 1930s certitude; though she had an established professional life teaching at the Art Gallery of Ontario, her clear-headed and decisive letters of 1938-39 show that life as a faculty wife seemed to her fully compatible with equality in marriage. In the end, World War II wove them back into the pattern of life at Victoria College, and their earlier desperate measures ensured they would remain childless. The increasingly confident and inventive art teacher of the 1930s became the "Mrs. Frye" of later decades, a figure of genuine and fertile influence in college life, though one who, despite her merry eye, I would never have thought to address as "Helen" even as I approached my 50s. In the early 1980s Norrie repaid her early courage with silent, self-abnegating devotion as Alzheimer's disease returned her to that early, uncertain self. After her death in 1986 he married again—significantly, a friend from their old college class, Elizabeth Eedy Brown.

Well, that's Life; what about Art? Frye's half of the correspondence documents his discovery of Blake, but tells us almost nothing of what he was preparing to say about the poet. Instead it yields a picture of a private Frye there are now very few to remember: sociable, passionate about his girl, full of the inebriating projects of youth—the critic as big-footed puppy, not yet grown into his sober adult strength, but showing to every eye the lineaments of a future champion. He is a decent man, but not free of the prejudices of his time; appalled at Nazi anti-Semitism, he still thinks about the Jews in his own city as a social group apart; the brusque mannishness of his colleague Kathleen Coburn (yet to become the great Coleridge scholar) repels him as much as the satisfying curves of a restaurant waitress attract. And he is an urban Torontonian to the core; in his experience there proves to be little physical difference between the sweltering rural Saskatchewan of his 1934 summer ministry and his frigid rooms in Oxford except the distance to the privy (longer, it seems, in Merton College). Miserable as he was in the dust-bowl, he much admired the courage of the people he served in Saskatchewan; Oxford, however, he despised for its academic futility and class consciousness. What really fed his imagination was music and painting, which he and Kemp discussed with intensity and expertise. Kemp drew well (a number of her sketches are reproduced here, including the witty map of the '30s campus which was still in circulation when I was an undergrad at rival University College) and she played piano creditably; Frye was an expert life-long pianist and a fierce critic of weak performances, not least his own. Chamber music with friends in someone's living room was a central joy of his young

adulthood. It is surely the case that what Ayre called Frye's "adolescent dream of co-ordinated masterpieces" arose as much from this social/musical nurturing as from the Bible on which he was raised, and Blake on which he teethed as a critic. Besides documenting the alternate intensity and banality of Frye's early reading, the letters also provide an essential key to the secret of his own readability, to the racy style which, when he gave the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures in 1975, still caused Harvard audiences to gasp, and which makes him—with Robertson Davies—a priceless reservoir of the literate Canadian voice in that generation. Reading *Don Quixote* the twenty-year old Frye wrote "oh, boy, what a book! The translation I have is 18th-century, by a man who knew what concrete nouns were. *He* didn't say 'insides' when he meant 'guts' or 'perspiration' when he meant 'sweat,' or 'side' when he meant 'belly'." Can anyone teaching "Lycidas" resist quoting Frye's forthright account of Milton's preparation for writing elegy: "[he'd] been practising since adolescence on every fresh corpse in sight"?

The young Fryes' Toronto was in fact no Thanatopsis club; it was also the city of distinguished academics like Wilson Knight, Herbert Davis, and Eric Havelock. And if Kemp's letters document a generation of women in transition, they provide us as well with an exceptional account of Toronto cultural life in the 1930s, and proleptically, of the figures (Joyce and Nicholas Hornyansky, Marcus Adeney, Geoffrey Waddington, Bertram Brooker) who would animate it in the forties. Faced in 1947 with Miss Kelly's outrage, I was unaware that a peripheral member of the Fryes' circle, Earl Davison, was then my music teacher at Oakwood Collegiate, and that the concerts, plays and art shows I hung around were generated by such figures. (For the story of drama during those forgotten but nourishing years, see the superb account of the '40s and '50s in Judith Skelton Grant's biography of Robertson Davies.) Kemp supplies a running account of the politics of the Art Gallery of Ontario in which Arthur Lismer, her patron, emerges as an impressive figure, and her descriptions of the financing of students and artists in the thirties are an interesting prologue to the recommendations of the Massey Report two decades later. And there are other gems, such as her anecdote about overhearing Pelham Edgar raving to Duncan Campbell Scott in the National Gallery in Ottawa about a certain "*remarkable* youngster up at Victoria, yes a simply extraordinary chap . . . doing some fine work on Blake." What a bridging of the generations!

Newcomers to the Fryes and their setting will inevitably struggle with the intense preoccupation of these letters with Victoria College and its personalities—most, despite the academic eminence later attained by Frye and Coburn, now forgotten by all except college historians. But to ignore that little world on Charles Street would be unwise; both stranglingly provincial and unexpectedly cosmopolitan, Victoria College was almost entirely continuous in its culture from World War I to the 1970s, a period reaching from E. J. Pratt to Margaret Atwood, and encompassing a number of interesting writers of the time. No one seriously investigating any of them—let alone Frye—can ignore the powerful impact of the College on their formal resources or their visionary worlds. Yet Frye's version of Victoria College is not the definitive one. Kemp scolded him for not having time for her friend Kathleen Coburn, and anyone reading Coburn's scholarly memoir *In Pursuit of Coleridge* (1977) will encounter many of the same pressures the Fryes endured—radical Protestantism, female repression, a college life lived within rules the young didn't believe in—but refracted in this case through Coburn's more worldly intelligence, one that at least pretended to take the cosmos on its own terms rather than—as Frye would do—reimagining it so as to

bridge some profound cognitive dissonance.

As a grave end-note referring to *Rigoletto* ("an opera by Giuseppe Verdi, first performed in Venice in 1851") would suggest, Robert Denham's edition is meant to introduce the young Fryes' world to the widest possible audience; the annotation is painstakingly detailed, and the second volume contains a 37-page directory of persons mentioned in the letters. There are some bloopers, such as the confusion between Eaton's main downtown store and Eaton's College Street, and some failures of good sense; such as the otiose identification of the novelist well-known as Charles Morgan as "Charles *Langbridge* Morgan." The annotations rightly draw on Victoria's rich archival resources, but are not always sensitive to their nuances: at one point Kemp writes that one Norm Knight is concerned over "Herb Norman's state of mind" (that is, his politics, which were Stalinist). The note tells us that Knight was a Trotskyite, but says nothing of E. Herbert Norman, the esteemed scholar and diplomat whose suicide in Cairo, which shocked all Canada in 1957, was the result of US charges that he was a security risk. Anyone studying Toronto in the 1930s—a subject which merits a book of its own—will learn a lot from these volumes, but not everything.

Teaching modern Canadian poetry, I use the Victoria College classrooms in which my students sit to shape a "regional study" of these people and their writings, much as in other places one might work on the Tish group or the Fiddlehead poets. Why at this time and place did a major literary vision emerge capable of animating not only a specific group of poets but also a generation of critics? If we set aside the genetics of genius, we need to consider equally the setting and Frye's resistance to it. Victoria was both a provincial Methodist college full of petty squabbles and outdated regulations, and an institution firmly egalitarian in theology and confident it represented a coherent and meaningful culture. Given this collocation of the social and intellectual, it is not difficult to understand how and why Frye was encouraged in his natural bent: to become a builder of imaginative systems rather than an evaluative critic (or indeed why Coburn emerged from it a pure scholar, rather than an evaluative critic). In much of the contemporary criticism Frye knew, and particularly among his colleagues at other U. of T. colleges, the old class system was being displaced upon the act of criticism itself; a critic's rank was established by the exquisite care with which he weighed the merits of one work against another, and taught his students to do the same. It was the social integration, the cultural confidence and the egalitarianism of the little world on Charles Street that provided Frye with the resources to challenge that model of evaluative reading. In writing works like the *Anatomy of Criticism* he turned less against the forces that had formed him, into which by that time he had been re-absorbed, than against the pseudo-gentility of "Toronto English." Late in his life I suggested to him that he had been writing in opposition to this displacement all his life, and it was the only time I ever saw him at a loss for words; "yes," he said in a sudden rush, "oh *yes*—that's the way it was, that's *exactly* the way it was."

Trois romans jeunesse à la courte échelle

Sylvie Desrosiers
La jeune fille venue du froid. Éditions la courte échelle $7.95

Bertrand Gauthier
Les ténèbres piégées. Éditions la courte échelle $7.95

Raymond Plante
Véloville. Éditions la courte échelle $7.95

Compte rendu d'Anne Scott

Depuis plus de dix ans, la courte échelle publie des romans pour les premiers

lecteurs, des romans adaptés à leurs goûts et leurs préoccupations, et le succès de librairie et les prix littéraires n'ont cessé de venir couronner les auteurs qu'ils ont fait connaître aux jeunes, aux parents et aux éducateurs. Bertrand Gauthier et sa maison d'édition comprenaient bien alors qu'il fallait combler le vide entre les albums et les romans pour adolescents, en offrant des intrigues enlevées, des personnages vivants et susceptibles de parler au jeune public, des problèmes de leur âge, et ce la plupart du temps sans aucune condescendance ou fausse naïveté. La division nette entre Premier Roman, Roman Jeunesse et Roman Plus reconnaît précisément que l'on ne peut pas vraiment parler de la même manière ni des mêmes choses aux pré-adolescents, aux ados et aux grands adolescents. La production, cette année, a été particulièrement riche et nous espérons pouvoir y revenir dans des comptes rendus subséquents.

Depuis, *La patte dans le sac*, paru dans cette même collection il y a dix ans, Sylvie Desrosiers amuse les jeunes des enquêtes de l'inséparable quatuor de fins limiers, Jocelyne, Agnès et John, sans oublier bien sûr Notdog, qui compense sa laideur par son excellent caractère et son flair imbattable. *La jeune fille venue du froid* est le dixième volume de la série et il mêle le mystère, le courage, l'amitié, l'amour de la nature et de toutes ses créatures, et bien sûr l'humour, qui n'est jamais absent des romans de Sylvie Desrosiers. La magie et la poésie sont aussi au rendez-vous de ce récit qui ramène sur la scène les personnages bien connus, sympathiques, honnêtes et moins..., du petit village des Cantons de l'Est. Une mystérieuse jeune fille et un loup viennent troubler des jours où un froid intense devrait garder tout le monde chez soi devant un bon chocolat chaud aux guimauves. Ce texte incite les enfants à respecter profondément la faune et à condamner la chasse aux loups inhumaine. Encore une fois, comme dans beaucoup d'ouvrages contemporains destinés à la jeunesse, le loup s'y trouve réhabilité et c'est avec beaucoup de regrets, mais en même temps de compréhension, que nos héros verront la jeune fille-loup mystérieusement entrée dans leur vie choisir de les abandonner, pour retourner à la vie sauvage. La vraisemblance n'est pas bien sûr ici la préoccupation de l'auteur qui opte délibérément pour le rêve et la poésie envoûtante des paysages sauvages de l'hiver.

Daniel Sylvestre illustre encore une fois cette enquête de Notdog, avec l'humour qu'on lui connaît et ici, des effets magiques et poétiques très frappants de noirs et blancs.

Ce roman et ses illustrations sont bien adaptés au public de cette collection et les enfants riront des mésaventures de Bob Les Oreilles Bigras et s'émouvront à la découverte du secret de Monsieur Leboeuf.

Dans *Panique au cimetière* et *Les griffes de la pleine lune* de Bertrand Gauthier, Stéphanie Perrault, se captivait pour les romans du même nom de la célèbre romancière Blanche Dépouvante . . . Les brefs épisodes de la vie de Stéphanie, qui fête ici ses douze ans, ne servent que de cadre à ces textes, où Mélanie Lapierre est aux prises avec le Comité des griffes de la mort et son implacable chef, Justin Macchabée. Dans ce dernier volet de la série, illustré par Stéphane Jorisch, Mélanie va se mesurer encore une fois avec son redoutable adversaire (sans l'aide de son protecteur Fabien Tranchant cette fois-ci), et se débarrasser définitivement (?) de lui, non sans avoir au préalable percé son identité véritable, grâce à un journal intime que lui remettent des quintuplées d'outre-tombe. L'intrigue de ce roman est sans doute bien adaptée au public auquel il s'adresse, à savoir les jeunes de 8 à 12 ans. Les amateurs d'épouvante dans ces âges auront leur comptant de gémissements, ossements en déroute et messes noires à minuit . . . Comme dans beaucoup de ses autres textes,

Bertrand Gauthier se livre ici à sa passion des jeux de mots. Cependant, les allusions qu'engendrent ces derniers ne nous semblent pas entièrement adaptées au niveau linguistique du public auquel la nature, un peu simpliste et grossement ficelée, de l'intrigue destine ces textes. On peut espérer que ceci incitera les enfants à enrichir leur vocabulaire. Néanmoins, le décalage entre la simplicité et le caractère stéréotypé de l'intrigue et des personnages et les recherches au niveau de la langue pose problème à notre avis.

Les illustrations de Stéphane Jorisch vont bien avec le texte, dans leur aspect simple, un peu caricatural, et vieillot, et dans le jeu des noirs et blancs.

Lauréat du Prix du Conseil des Arts et du prix Brive/Montréal, Raymond Plante sait bien évoquer des personnages dont la personnalité est assez vivante pour amuser les plus jeunes lecteurs. Le roman *Véloville* a déjà près de neuf ans, mais le problème qu'il évoque de manière humoristique, à savoir la pollution dans les cités, est malheureusement loin d'être résolu. Encore une fois, les adultes semblent bien avoir perdu la tête et ce sont les deux jeunes héros, Paulo et Annie, qui décident de prendre les choses en mains. Ils ne déparent pas en cela la collection des héros de la courte échelle qui n'ont jamais froid aux yeux, ni peur d'exprimer vertement leurs opinions. Dans la capitale des automobilistes du dimanche, Paulo reçoit un cadeau inespéré, le vélo dont il rêvait depuis longtemps. Son magnifique véhicule, repeint en vert, aux couleurs de la nature, changera le sort du village et convaincra le maire d'en faire désormais la capitale de la bicyclette.

Les illustrations de Marie-Claude Favreau sont adorables, pleines de joie de vivre, d'innocence et d'humour, même si les figures d'autorité y sont, comme dans le texte, rabaissées et ridiculisées—adultes et enfants y trouvent leur compte : le climat actuel de la littérature de jeunesse en étant toujours au questionnement des systèmes et figures de pouvoir.

En conclusion, nous dirons que si ces romans ne nous semblent pas les meilleurs parus dans cette série, ils ne manqueront pas de remplir leur but, qui est de divertir, et parfois instruire, les 7 à 12 ans.

Peripheral Visions

Daniel Francis
Copying People: Photographing British Columbia First Nations 1860-1940. Fifth House $19.95

Liz Heron and Val Williams
Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from the 1850s to the Present. Duke UP
US$69.95/$24.95

Reviewed by Maureen Milburn

Reading *Copying People* is akin to visiting a 19th century picture gallery—compelling because of its photographic content but not, unfortunately, for its insight into the thought-provoking issues it raises or photographic processes it professes to address. By promoting the Euro-American perspective, Daniel Francis continues the convention of overlooking the interactive nature of the photographic dialogue—one in which Native American peoples participated or were instrumental in manipulating.

Francis' compilation of historic photographs opens with the following statement: "In many ways, the Indian is a figment of the white imagination." Thus Francis re-inscribes the "Imaginary Indian" on a collection of disparate images culled from British Columbia archives. The popularity of this concept centers in its ability to serve as an overarching public excuse for yet another round of image/imagining on the part of writers and scholars. This facile perspective glosses over issues of Native American self-representation or the complexity and ambiguities of individual Native American lives.

According to Francis the photographs are documents taken at a certain point in history (1860-1940) to serve Euro-American ends. In some cases the photographer's agenda is clearly evident. This is most especially true of those photographs taken for ethnographic purposes. But what of the multitude of ambiguities associated with commercial photographs or the reconstruction theater of the well-known photographer Edward Curtis? We know that Native American peoples commissioned images from commercial photographers and in some cases they were used for purposes such as family record-keeping and status validation. Yet Francis pays little attention to the nature of this exchange embodied in commercial *carte de visites* or studio shots. Bill Holm and George Irving Quimby, in *Edward Curtis in the Land of the War Canoes, 1980*, document Kwakwaka'wakw efforts to replicate images from a previous era, including the social ramifications of community participation in the event. Francis offers no discussion on the subject.

What of the political ramifications of many photographs? For example, in light of the anti-potlatch laws what of government agent William Halliday's "Family Group at Alert Bay, n.d." or the group photograph of Kwakwaka'wakw men displaying masks ca. 1926? Francis provides no illumination. Similarly, Francis fails to deal with the ironic nature of self-representation in much of the work. Instead the author's stated purpose is to present us with "images from the work of every important Euro-American photographer who chose to photograph BC aboriginal people prior to World War Two." Within these parameters Francis' criteria for inclusion are twofold: that photographs be clear and well-composed in order to show the photographer's art to the best advantage and that each of the First Nations tribal groups be represented. The scope of the publication is thus sweeping in both its attempt at overview and its multiple taxonomic/aesthetic agenda. A brief text allows for a cursory and fast-paced summary of contact-period ethnographic information and events. Format and organization are confusing, with geographical references to tribal groups interspersed with ethnographic information and short biographies of photographers. Some captions give brief details of Aboriginal clothing or political circumstances but such information is inconsistent and fails to distinguish between captions provided by the photographer and those added by the author.

In final analysis the author largely abdicates responsibility for the historical context of the images he chooses to reproduce, stating: "Viewers must ask themselves to what degree these photographs mirror reality and to what degree they create it." The result is a publication that reproduces turn-of-the-century "scientific" ideals which favoured recording or were biased towards observation over representation and interaction.

In contrast, *Illuminations: Women Writing on Photography from the 1850s to the Present* is rich with thoughtful discussion, commentary, and history but contains almost no photographs. As the title explains, text selection is limited to women historians, social commentators, and photographers engaged in the production or discussion of the photographic medium. The purpose of initiating this gender-specific text was, according to its editors, to offset the "self-perpetuating dominance" of men within the discipline. At the risk of appearing gender-biased, unlike *Copying People,* this text takes as its starting point the views of the marginalized group—it creates for the reader a multi-faceted review of the role of women in photographic processes/discussions. The editors have chosen texts which provide a fascinating immediacy, thus transcending an exclusively academic format. For example, the descriptions of American photographers Dorothea Lange (1895-1965)

or Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971) provide insight into the assignments of women photojournalists who documented the economic and social circumstances of American life at a particular point in history. Their recollections offer comment on the dual marginality and interaction between women photographers and their subjects in what was at that time a very male profession. The editors have done a skillful job of contrasting the photographer's reflections with historically contextualized discussions and debate over the seemingly contradictory uses of photography as art or photojournalism. Discussion ranges from Rosalind Krauss's piece on the alchemical nature of the photographic process, through Gen Doy on the limits of photography's democratization in the period of the Second Empire in France, to Abigail Solomon-Godeau on art photography and postmodernism. Articles on the photographic relationships of Tina Moratti and Edward Weston, Nancy Newhall and Ansel Adams or Lee Miller and Man Ray explore the intricacies of shared passions and historical insights, while critical reviews of the work of American and British photographers investigate concepts of identity, creativity, sexuality, marginalization, and the supercession of gender boundaries at certain periods in history. The excerpts from Lucy Lippard's *Partial Recall*, in which she explores questions surrounding Native American portraiture; Coco Fusco on photographs of Mexican women; Anne-Marie Wills on constructions of national identity in Australia and Jewelle Gomez on images of Afro-American women together raise questions pertaining to difference, self-representation and decolonization of the image. The writings in this publication engage the enigma of the photographic image in its multiple and irresistible visual engagements and entanglements in a way that will delight and enlighten the reader's exploration into this compelling artform.

(Ap)praising Milton Acorn

Chris Gudgeon
Out of This World: The Natural History of Milton Acorn. Arsenal Pulp P $27.95

Milton Acorn
To Hear the Faint Bells. Illus. Gilda Mekler. Hamilton Haiku P $7.00

Milton Acorn & Cedric Smith
The Road to Charlottetown. Unfinished Monument P n.p.

Reviewed by Thomas O'Grady

Given the two references to "that other Milton" that Milton Acorn makes just in his volume *Jackpine Sonnets*, one might suppose that this self-comparison with the great English poet was one of his favorite not-quite-joking conceits—personal as well as poetic. In reflecting, however, on how Acorn's reputation (measured by the appropriate scale of Canadian literary and academic circles) truly compares with the stature of John Milton—"a name to resound for all ages," as Tennyson decreed him—one might recall, with or without irony, those lines from Book I of *Paradise Lost*: "the work some praise / And some the architect." Although, as Chris Gudgeon laments in his account of Milton Acorn's works and days, his poems have generally been neglected in recent years by both book publishers and poetry professors, Acorn the man—or, more accurately, the larger-than-life poet-as-public-figure—seems still to be demanding a measure of the recognition that he enjoyed during his quarter-century of notice and notoriety in his self-styled role as Canada's "first professional poet." As Samuel Johnson once observed, even "censure . . . is oblique praise."

In fact, even while bemoaning the current devalued level of Acorn's stock, Gudgeon's book itself reflects the inchoate state of "Acorn studies." Prompted in the first place by the author's attraction to the poet's "unlikely, perfect name," the book proceeds

with every good intention of tracing the trajectory of Acorn's career from his inauspicious boyhood on Prince Edward Island through his emergence in the 1950s as a poet of promise on the Montreal literary scene to his rise to prominence on both the Toronto and the Vancouver literary scenes during the 1960s and his virtual apotheosis with his receiving first the People's Poet Award in 1970 and then the Governor General's Award in 1975. Unfortunately, Gudgeon's narrative is as erratic as the very trajectory that he attempts to describe. "The Taste of Victory," the chapter recording the controversy culminating in Acorn's being presented the People's Poet Award, is the highlight of the book, reconstructing with a keen sense of drama not only the poet's hurt at being overlooked for the Governor General's Award (a hurt multiplied exponentially by its being presented jointly to his ex-wife Gwendolyn MacEwen and his poetic "archrival" George Bowering) but also his profound appreciation for the respect afforded him by the self-empaneled jury of his peers that created a new title in his honor. While presumably reliable about the basic *facts* of Acorn's life—his cross-country travels and travails—much of the rest of the book yet suffers from a variety of substantive and stylistic shortcomings that qualify its achievement.

Substantively, the book fails first to recognize and thus to analyze the process by which this saw-crossed (as it were) carpenter, a modestly educated product of Charlottetown public schools, evolved from apprentice to journeyman to master poet commanding (sometimes just demanding) national attention. Gudgeon does not uncover or discover what directed Acorn to poetry in the first place—what Muse inspired him or what daemon provoked him to take up the tools of such an unlikely professional trade. An appreciative rather than evaluative reader of Acorn's poetry, he likewise seems insensitive to (or uninterested in) Acorn as *artist* at any point in his development: notwithstanding Acorn's own assertions about how "The Craft of Poetry's the Art of War," his poems surely deserve some informed scrutiny in terms of their essential "poetic" nature. As his consideration of Acorn as an exiled Prince Edward Islander typifies, Gudgeon prefers the reductive fallacy over any sort of rigorous estimation of his subject—prefers to view him more as a phenomenon than even as a person who wrote poems: "The longer he stayed away, the more of an Islander he became, until . . . he was an Island unto himself, not a hermit, but a distinct society within confederation, Canada's unofficial eleventh province." In short, the book disappoints not just because of its transparent bias resulting from the author's unabashed admiration for Milton Acorn but because of its fundamental transparency as a critical study.

Gudgeon's actual manner of telling Acorn's story further undermines his enterprise. Apparently a freelance writer by profession, Gudgeon yet presents his material with a distracting lack of polish. Early in the book, for example, he embarks on a lengthy digression about "Cape Breton's Dawn Fraser[,] . . . a popular regional poet of the 1920s and 30s whose work I came to know through my wife's uncle"—and whose work he ultimately concedes Milton Acorn was probably unfamiliar with. No less annoyingly, his more pointed discussions of Canadian poetic history, of socialist tenets, of dialectical materialism, all proffered to contextualize Acorn's poetry, while no doubt intended to sound off the cuff, read more like cribnotes written on a cuff than as fully integrated aspects of this particular narrative. Moreover, building on such self-evidently shaky premises, Gudgeon frequently grants himself the license to speculate, without any visible means of support, on the workings not just

of Acorn's creative imagination but of his very psyche: "The glory of proletariat socialism burned inside him, and at times he suspected that fate was calling him to be a great revolutionary leader; just as he used to lie awake at night imagining himself Joe Louis or Max Schmeling, he now imagined himself another Lenin leading his people out of the capitalist wilderness and into communism's promised land."

Undeniably, much homework—and legwork—went into the making of *Out of This World*; but as the recent publication of two other pieces of "Acorniana" advertise, a lot more work of a less pedestrian character remains to be done if Milton Acorn is ever to receive his just acclaim (whatever that may amount to) as a poet. On the one hand, a chapbook like *To Hear the Faint Bells*, a gathering of about two dozen haiku and another half-dozen "haiku-influenced" poems, could have a trivializing effect on Acorn's considerable poetic output. Obviously, even much of Acorn's most polemical verse contains imagistic elements; but according to an open letter (cited by Gudgeon) addressing George Bowering's proposal that he publish a book of short lyrics, Acorn himself would have disdained the very notion of *To Hear the Faint Bells*: "As for the suggestion that I should bring out a book consisting entirely of castrated verse, . . . no Mr. Bowering, I'll not join you or your claque of Establishment fairies."

On the other hand, *The Road to Charlottetown*, Acorn's only work intended for formal staging (co-authored with musician and performance artist Cedric Smith), adds an enlightening subtlety to the vigorous sort of poem—the "passionate polemical lyric" described by his current publisher James Deahl—most commonly associated with Acorn. A series of vignettes employing literally a cast of dozens, this seemingly unwieldy play eschews unapologetically any commitment to the classical unities; in fact, the play's "unity" may ultimately be not even in the eye of the beholder but in the various characters' holding forth in typical Acorn fashion on matters of social, economic and political import. Yet, in incorporating into the loose drama (based on several disparate incidents in PEI history) a number of Acorn's best-known poems, *The Road to Charlottetown* ultimately testifies to the difference between literature as judge, jury and hangman—frequently the effect of Acorn's most earnest lyrics—and literature as witness: that is, set in pre-Confederation PEI, the play provides the reader of Acorn with a scaffolding (as distinct from a scaffold) for understanding the relationship between his poems-as-communist-manifestos and his *intimate* identification with the plight of the underclass—represented here by the rackrented Island tenantry. As one of these disenfranchised characters, Old John Acorn (tellingly enough), remarks to a misguided politician: "trouble is you're trying to outsmart history and ye should be seizing it by the throat!" *The Road to Charlottetown* may well reveal Milton Acorn attempting (for better or for worse) to do both, and in the final appraisal that may be the story of his art—and of his life.

The English Anne Hébert

Anne Hébert
Aurélien, Clara, Mademoiselle, and the English Lieutenant. Anansi $14.95

Constantina Thalia Mitchell, Paul Raymond Côté
Shaping the Novel: Textual Interplay in the Fiction of Malraux, Hébert, and Modiano. Berghahn $49.95

Reviewed by Leslie Harlin

Readers of English can now find Anne Hébert's latest work of fiction translated by Sheila Fischman. *Aurélien, Clara, Mademoiselle, and the English Lieutenant* examines familiar Hébertian themes: isola-

tion, imprisonment, parental influence, as well as the legacy of an absent parent. This spare, haunting story recounts Clara's rise from infancy to early adolescence and the three people who are her teachers: her father Aurélien, the schoolteacher Mademoiselle, and the English lieutenant.

The short narrative flies over the space of almost fifteen years, first touching down to let us know that Clara's mother died in childbirth and that Clara is raised alone in the countryside by her father, Aurélien. In her early childhood, Clara learns about the natural world under the tutelage of her silent, but attentive, father. At age ten, Clara begins schooling with Mademoiselle who frenetically imparts all her knowledge before her abrupt death leaves Clara alone again with her father. Mademoiselle bequeathed to her a knowledge of music that connects these two disparate worlds. With the recorder inherited from Mademoiselle, Clara links her father's world of nature with Mademoiselle's world of academic learning. Aurélien can scarcely bear the sounds of the outside world when Clara sits on the grass beside the river and improvises music.

The narrative next touches down when Clara is almost fifteen and meets the English Lieutenant who will initiate her into the knowledge of men. Here things grow slightly sinister as the focalization shifts between Clara and the Lieutenant and the reader learns that their thoughts and desires run along divergent paths: "The Lieutenant will not know Clara's dream, any more than she will know his." Particularly worrisome is the Lieutenant's turmoil at finding her poised on the threshold between girlhood and womanhood: "Too many little girls who cross the frontier and meet up with the cohort of grown-ups who are huge and without pity. Only little girls . . . can lay claim to the sweetness of the world." This difficulty with female sexuality often expresses itself in Hébert's work through a female character entering adolescence. Indeed, as he prepares to flee the countryside, we learn of the Lieutenant's pedophiliac tendencies: "So many hasty departures already in his life. So many little girls adored and then abandoned, amid the blood of the first embrace." Naïve Clara rides her bicycle to the Lieutenant's cabin in order to become his wife, in order to rush into womanhood. The Lieutenant takes her in order to possess a bit of childhood before it disappears.

Fischman gives us a translation that reads very fluently for the most part. As elsewhere, her greatest strength is also her greatest weakness: she sticks to the original French like flypaper. Usually this provides the reader of English with a good sense of Hébert's quiet, but devastating, poetry. Sometimes, though, there is confusion as when we read: "From the road could be heard now and then the crying of Aurélien's child." Is the child or the listener on the road? This is followed by: "Aurélien chose to take care by himself of the small creature . . . " The translation would be better served by a little distance from the original French which is neither confusing nor awkward. These sentences appear at the beginning of the work and leave the reader in some despair. However, things improve quickly. There is one additional quibble which I also have with other Fischman translations: when Hébert inserts English into her French text, the translator should let the reader know this with something like a simple "He said in English." Nonetheless, the English version is quietly beautiful.

Hébert's novels are now enclosed by two short narratives which are, in some senses, mirror images of each other. *Aurélien, etc.* reminds one of *Le Torrent*, but with the sexes reversed. Certainly, Aurélien is not the monster that Claudine becomes, but one notes the similarity of Clara raised alone by her father in the countryside and

François raised in isolation with his mother. One turning point in *Le Torrent*, François's indecision and fear when he approaches the road in search of outside human contact, resurfaces in Hébert's latest narrative. Since encountering Clara, the Lieutenant has been isolated near his cabin, fearing any contact with a world that might give him additional information about the girl. When he must make the trip to town for supplies, he finds that he cannot force himself to walk along the muddy road and he retreats to his cabin.

In my mind's eye, I can see Côté and Mitchell, authors of *Shaping the Novel*, underlining this passage. They have written about the Hébertian road symbolism for some time now. In their present work, we read a detailed discussion of the road which begins: "The road, a metaphor for meditation and textual actualization, . . . frequently serves as the stage for dramatic discord." *Shaping the Novel* discusses Hébert's *L'Enfant chargé de songes*, but, as this example shows, the reader should turn to Côté and Mitchell for a general understanding of Hébert's work.

In *Shaping the Novel* , the authors show us how three wildly divergent authors—Malraux, Hébert, and Modiano—can be viewed together as exemplars of twentieth-century novelistic self-consciousness. Mitchell and Côté discuss each author separately and show us in admirable detail how the authors have created self-referential works which make the shape of the novel a vital part of the artistic expression. Each section ends rather abruptly; transitions that reinforce the connections between the novelists as well as the unity of the book itself would have helped. The book would have benefited from a conclusion as well. These are minor criticisms given the wealth of information provided.

For the Hébert scholar, the pages devoted to this author are invaluable. Mitchell and Côté use *L'Enfant chargé de songes* to illustrate how the structure of the novel reinforces its themes. The discussion of the spatial doubling of France/Quebec in the work and the way in which it provides a key to the past is particularly perspicacious, as is the view that Hébert's novel uses divergent roads in much the same way that Proust used two "ways" to signify antipodal forces and two means of escape. The authors give us a fascinating look at the way Hébert uses references to writing and art, as well as geography, to create character and to reinforce basic themes. They illustrate the textually generative relationship between main character Julien and the artists incorporated into the text. *Shaping the Novel* draws upon an extensive bibliography and a thorough understanding of how to incorporate critical theory.

One can criticize the ever-present voice of Jung in the discussion of Hébert. When discussing an author who creates characters damaged by imposed societal myths, it is inadvisable to accept as the last word the Jungian assumption that myths are inescapable and archetypal. One can use his ideas to understand the myths, but using such ideas as self-evident truths is a controversial road to follow.

Shaping the Novel remains an important addition to the criticism of Hébert. The work is an incontrovertible source for those studying *L'Enfant chargé de songes*, but also has value for the general understanding of Hébert. This illuminating look at how the shape of Hébert's novels reinforces its themes can be applied fruitfully to all of her work.

Worlds within Worlds

David Helwig
A Random Gospel. Oberon P $27.95/$15.95

Patrick Lane
Too Spare, Too Fierce. Harbour $10.95

W. H. New
Science Lessons. Oolichan Books $14.95

Reviewed by Allan Brown

At a writers' and publishers' conference held at Queen's University some years back, David Helwig remarked that a book of poems is always held together by "a world of connections known only to the poet." His comment—the tone of it, anyway—was partly ironic, even mildly sarcastic, but partly serious also. Such worlds, or hints of them, are present in each of these collections: Helwig's is a balance of shifting rhetorics; Lane's is a familiar personality lost in some unfamiliar forms; New's is a person and a perception revealed by a form we thought was familiar but which we may find here for the first time.

The world of *A Random Gospel* is one of shifting, modulating voices. In a prose stanza from the initial sequence, "A Messenger," Helwig offers a statement of his general purpose: "it is perhaps an inevitable part of the poet's situation that he is constantly on the watch for messengers, that he suspects that the fringes of the world unravel into silence and light." The effect is of a somewhat fatuous editorial aside, a throwaway, and this uncertain tone is a part of his general purpose. He understates his own deeper passions as well in his closely felt elegies for Tom Marshall, with the weary observation that "Love is the same old puzzle / and new mint sharp on the tongue."

Helwig the novelist—I think particularly of the soft focus effects of *It Is Always Summer* (Stoddart, 1982)—is never far away from the text, with his eye for the suggestively simple detail, in the final sequence "Five Days" where "I climb / the steps of the bus in the wet / early morning." For all his naturalistic touches, however, Helwig the poet never loses his essential sophistication, whether he is describing the streets of Montreal in "Le Quartier" (published in *The Malahat Review* 114, about the same time as this book), or the "Mornings in the temple" from the title poem here, where:

> They sat
> like regulars in a coffee shop
> each one in the usual place.

David Helwig's urban concerns contrast almost archetypically with the landscape-driven urgings of Pat Lane. Though they meet easily in terms of verbal skill: *Too Spare, Too Fierce*, Lane's 22nd volume, consistently exhibits the formal control that is a product of three decades of sustained versecraft. There are many familiar touches here: the confident yet unpretentious analysis of easily recognizable experiences, "What the body forgets is / what memory is" ("These Ones"); the clear, naturalistic description of the "Cougar" who "before she falls from her high limb / holds for one moment the ponderosa pine"; and even occasionally a touch of parody, as with the Purdyesque "the body full of whiskey . . . pissing on the dead roses" ("Musical Phrase"). Lane is also and more seriously aware of his literary predecessors and honours the novelist Howard O'Hagan, whose *Tay John* is so close in spirit to much of his own work, with the softly brooding elegy "The Story In His Bones."

There is a great deal of energy in *Too Spare, Too Fierce.* There is also a peculiar tension, a kind of anger (the "ferocity" of the title?) that seems to be in some way self-directed, or directed at least toward a new (more "spare"?) self image. His second *Selected Poems* (Oxford, 1987) showed a movement away from the early rages and broadly based satire of such collections as *Albino Pheasants* and *Unborn Things* to a more contemplative verse. This inclination

to abstraction continued and possibly culminated with the book-length sequence *Winter* (Coteau, 1990). Now approaching 60, Lane seems to be engaged in a new, or at least in another, personalization. He has begun to publish a loose series of prose "Memory Writings," as he terms them, beginning with the suggestively titled "Lives of the Poets," including "Falling Out of Night" and "A World Without Water," and most recently, and aptly to my suggestions here, "The Neurotic Poet." These intriguing snippets of a hinted-at whole, with their odd yet compelling blend of naturalism and phantasmagoria, show the poet still fierce, still (somewhat) spare, still juggling his personae.

Or more deftly and with greater daring, W. H. New juggling his. The 80 unrhymed sonnets of *Science Lessons* vigorously explore his youth, his countryside, his mind and emotions. Gary Geddes, in an earlier review of the book, compared New's sonnets with those of the late Roy Daniells in *Deeper into the Forest* (1948) and *The Chequered Shade* (1963). There's something to be said for this suggestion. Both are academics, intimately aware of the form's great tradition; but they have explored and expanded it differently. Roy's was the more conservative approach to Canadian sonneteering; his poems, no matter what their subject, always sounded like Milton with a Manitoban accent. New's poems are (almost) unselfconscious, as "inside his head, he's singing sonnets" ("RADAR") and echo themselves "in a hall of mirrors" ("FERMAT'S PRINCIPLE").

They echo other selves as well. The twentieth-century sonnet tradition in English is partly American, involving most aptly here the sardonic subversions of e. e. cummings. New's poem "X-Ray," for instance, begins with a flippant in-the-manner-of gesture ":is winter's season." Then, after some solemn play ("the world / is white, with black bones"), points a cummingsesque finger at "the white rabbit / dart[ing] across a field." But it is his own poem at the last, natural as well as supernatural, with "low light / turning early dark, and bitterchill."

Nature, of course, and the sense of awe at nature which is itself natural. This interchange—and here the tradition is Wordsworthian—is presented over and over in poems which variously use and that, indeed, *need* their persistent sonnetness to maintain some sort of centre of perception. What they see is what they are: a response, set of responses, to a richly detailed congeries of subtle and delicate clues from nature and cues from themselves. The lesson (science / *scientia*) they finally point to is their own community of responses, extending from "the field called *farm*" ("TIME"), through "the cold choice of raincoast streets" ("THERMODYNAMICS"), and out (or perhaps in) to "the rural, crystal, wild" ("UNCERTAINTY").

Framing the Past

Matthew Frye Jacobson
Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States. Harvard UP US$45.00

Henry Lilienheim
The Aftermath: A Survivor's Odyssey Through War-torn Europe. DC Books $15.95

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

Matthew Jacobson's *Special Sorrows* promises much, with its provocative title and its commitment to examine the experience of Irish "exiles," Polish "pilgrims" and Jewish "wanderers," all of whom arrived in turn-of-the-century America with a formidable attachment to the Old World. Jacobson's study begins by posing a number of compelling questions concerning the role of minority communities in mainstream American culture:

> What forms did immigrant nationalisms assume on American soil? How did Irish,

> Polish, and Zionist national ideologies translate into specific understandings of American citizenship and American state power? To what extent has life in the diaspora communities remained oriented toward the politics of the old center, and what has been the legacy of immigrant nationalism as immigrant politics has gradually become ethnic politics over the course of the twentieth century?

Jacobson's goal then, is a detailed account of a complicated period of American immigration, a social history devoted to the assimilation of three great communities into U.S. society, and an investigation of this history as it is experienced by the grand-children and great-grandchildren of turn-of-the-century immigrants. A single volume, however, can not possibly do all of this, and although there is much of interest in *Special Sorrows*, it leaves the reader with the sense that the weighty questions raised at its outset have remained largely unanswered.

In an effort to contain his subject, Jacobson offers an introductory summary of the histories of Jewish, Polish and Irish nationalisms. These three complicated histories do not come into focus in such short order, and *Special Sorrows* manages only to remind us of the key events in the growth of Zionism, Polish nationalism and the Irish-English conflict. This summary is followed by chapters examining the way each community's press, festivals, "vernacular theatre," and literary contributions functioned as "cultural texts," expressing "the salience of national questions in the everyday dealings" of new American citizens. Here, Jacobson's approach is detailed, as he catalogues numerous instances of national expression in popular culture. But a reader who is familiar with these communities will find much she already knows, and one largely ignorant of the communal histories being discussed will not gain a sense of their unique character, their contrasting differences from the other nationalisms under discussion. This is frustrating, since Jacobson's sources are suggestive and compelling; one wishes he had focussed in greater detail on some of them to deepen our appreciation of his subject. To truly convey the influence of the Yiddish press on its readers' notions of American identity and Zionism, he might have offered a more complete portrait of influential editors like Abraham Cahan and Benjamin Feygenbaum. In the same way, a closer examination of Yiddish newspapers as artifacts of material culture—a discussion of their readers, their writers' role in the larger community, even of the ads they carried—would have proven fascinating. Jacobson's discussion of the role of St. Patrick's Day and commemorations of important Polish national uprisings might also have taken on a deeper resonance. As it stands, we can sense in only a general way the manner in which these events maintained the new Americans' connection with "national memory" and helped constitute a "diasporic imagination."

The second half of *Special Sorrows* is dedicated to a lengthy discussion of how American exploits in Cuba and the Philippines brought about divided responses from Irish, Polish and Jewish Americans. Here Jacobson investigates the contradictions confronted by minority communities who could sympathize with the Cuban and Philippine yearning for national self-determination, but felt an urge to support American diplomacy, even if it led to war. Jacobson offers an interesting discussion of the realization among Polish, Irish and Jewish Americans that these wars relied in part on "racialized rhetoric," which celebrated the Anglo-Saxon character of American society while denying the right to self-determination to those with no claim to this character.

In his conclusion, Jacobson addresses the importance of events he describes as having "transnational political significance"—

events which draw our attention to the way ethnicity in America is complicated by emotional entanglements with an ancestral homeland. Here Jacobson discusses—again, in too general terms—John F. Kennedy's 1963 visit to Ireland. But there are other similarly significant events, such as the present Pope's visits to the United States and the Persian Gulf War, which bear on the discussion at hand but are not raised. A particularly suggestive subject might have been a more complete discussion of the influence of Adam Mickiewicz's writings on Polish nationalism at home and abroad. Mickiewicz's mixed Polish-Jewish heritage, his use of messianic rhetoric to prophecy Poland's future, his exile in Paris where he had contact with both Polish and Jewish emigrés, make him a fascinating crossover figure. His work addresses not only the bonds a particular diasporic community maintained with the Old World, but further, the possibility of a truly "transnational" identity that draws from the "special sorrows" of one's own community and those of another.

In her foreword to her father's memoir, Irene Lilienheim explains that in her youth, the Holocaust was "a forbidden subject. Even as a young adult, I did not read about it, even left the cinema if I inadvertently found myself watching a film about the subject." It is ironic then, that it was Henry Lilienheim's daughter who eventually convinced him to "knock the dust off [his] old manuscript" and prepare it for publication. Written shortly after the fall of Nazi Germany, *The Aftermath* contains descriptions of impressive detail and immediacy—both of the author's internment in a number of concentration camps and of his travels across postwar Europe. Lilienheim's narrative is framed by the search he undertook after his liberation from Dachau for his young wife, from whom he was separated early in the war. As he travels from one deserted camp to the next, asking strangers if they know of his wife's whereabouts, he reflects on his internment at Dachau, Stutthof, and Dautmergen. In many ways, Lilienheim's account will remind readers of other Holocaust memoirs. It includes the familiar litany of illness, abuse, constant movement, and senseless work that the camp inmates endured. But Lilienheim brings an impressive eye for detail to his description of seemingly mundane events. Of the camp-issue clothes worn by the prisoners of Dautmergen, he writes:

> Over my drawers I slip on my blue and white striped pajama-like trousers. I wrap my feet in some rags and try to pull my shoes over them. . . . I curse and, with two ruthless tugs, get my feet into the shoes. From under the mattress I take two thick paper bags used for packing cement. I put one bag on my chest and one on my back, and tie them with small strings.

Of the daily ritual of dispensing bread rations he recounts that this was

> the most important moment of the day. One of the five men cuts the bread for his group. He is someone who has a knife, and whom the others trust to divide the bread equally. Such knives are rare, and trustworthy people even more so.

In *The Drowned and the Saved,* Primo Levi reminds us that for knowledge of "the Lagers, the Lagers themselves were not always a good observation post: in the inhuman conditions to which they were subjected, the prisoners could barely acquire an overall vision of their universe." Lilienheim makes no effort to provide such an overall vision, but provides instead a provocative portrait of the minutiae of camp life.

Lilienheim's depiction of the state of postwar cities is equally vivid, from his surreal lodgings in the German Museum, where a dance hall appears with a jazz orchestra playing "old hits, tangos and foxtrots," to his encounter amidst the rubble of Warsaw with what he believes is a piece of the balcony that belonged to wife's family apartment.

The Aftermath includes in its afterword another feature common to survivor's memoirs: the portrayal of a family gathering, a celebration of the author's 85th birthday in his daughter's Montreal home, which foregrounds Lilienheim's success at overcoming the uprootings of his youth and at forging a new life. The role the author's daughter played in bringing her father's manuscript to light belies one of Primo Levi's more pessimistic claims, that the experiences of the "survivors of the Nazi Lagers . . . are extraneous to the new Western generation and become even more extraneous as the years pass." In the case of *The Aftermath*, it is a representative of this "new" generation who broke the circle of silence and enabled her survivor-father to pass on his memories of "family and friends, now long gone."

A Pretty Kettle of Fish

Mark Kurlansky
Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World. Alfred A. Knopf Canada $27.95

Peter Firstbrook
The Voyage of the Matthew: John Cabot and the Discovery of North America. McClelland & Stewart $35.00

Reviewed by Ronald Rompkey

The opportunity to examine five hundred years of human action does not occur every day. Even when it does, it may get lost amid the tourist promotion, the self-congratulation and the royal visits that are now a central part of governmental strategy. Books like the two under review here consider the broader issues associated with one such event, the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's landfall, offering a chance for sober reflection after the bands have packed up their instruments, the choirs have walked off stage and the replica of the *Matthew* has made its way obscurely back across the Atlantic.

Mark Kurlansky's *Cod* is not so much the "biography" of a species as an elegy for it. With its sweep of social history, its grasp of technological advances, its sense of the settlement patterns contingent upon the cod fishery and the riches gained from it, *Cod* lays out the conditions which produced the first explorers and the decline and fall of one of the world's richest resources. In reckoning the destruction of a species, it raises important questions about our dependence on the natural environment and our willingness to exhaust it without remorse.

The species *gadus morhua* was a durable fish. It was fecund, greedy, omnivorous, and resistant to cold. Above all, it was plentiful. Cod were expected to last forever, and no one fully suspected the fishery would ever cease to support the cultures developed around it—not until 1992, when it was shut down. Thus, Kurlansky's task is a delicate one. He wants to show the central importance of the cod fishery to the North Atlantic economy without engaging in a witch hunt, and he succeeds admirably. The book is packed with folkloric and linguistic associations, and there is much ironic play with early recipes and disoriented European explorers. Kurlansky is equally at ease talking about the idiosyncrasies of the schooner and the preservative qualities of salt. He takes us through the Anglo-French wars of the eighteenth century in a couple of pages and the fundamentals of trans-Atlantic navigation in a single paragraph.

About half-way through, however, the general tone changes. At the time when the idea of overfishing was still far-fetched, we learn, fishing technology advanced rapidly, and the industry found itself caught in a classic dilemma. Kurlansky writes, "Catches were improving not because the stocks were more plentiful but because fishing was getting more efficient. Nevertheless, as long as better fishing techniques yielded bigger catches, it did not seem that the stocks were being depleted." When the late nineteenth

century produced both steam power and better dragging techniques at the same time, the decline of the great age of cod had subtly begun. Kurlansky's book has thus been described as "tragic," since it appears to dwell so heavily upon depletion and exhaustion. However, it is more than that. It is a progress, drawn out in slow time from the Middle Ages to the present so as to reveal the limits of human expectation.

Peter Firstbrook's *Voyage of the Matthew*, first published by BBC Books, concentrates on the replica of John Cabot's caravel that sailed to Newfoundland in the summer of 1997. Published in a large format of less than 200 pages, it is designed to accommodate numerous illustrations evoking the maritime world of the late fifteenth century and photographs that record the construction project begun in Bristol in 1993. The running text is cast as a "fascinating story," told occasionally with a breathlessness that gives rise to oversimplification and unintended bathos. We are told, for example, that in Cabot's time, "Literacy was another powerful tool that was used by the Church and aristocracy, at least until Johann Gutenberg's presses began to tip the balance." Later, we learn, "Certainly raised a Catholic, it is likely that [Cabot] grew up with a sense of the uncertainty and insecurity of the world around him." And later: "Building a wooden ship is always labour-intensive." These observations aside, the book takes a fresh look at Cabot's world through its numerous illustrations and its attempts at reconstructing events still beyond our reach.

We begin with Cabot's contemporaries and the economic forces governing the search for a direct route to the Orient and the discovery of North Atlantic cod. Then, the central portion is given over to speculation about early ship design, based on circumstantial evidence. (There are no extant drawings of the *Matthew* or of any contemporary caravel of similar proportions.) Having deduced so much from scant evidence, Firstbrook brings forth some interesting theories about this class of vessel that will engage sailors, amateur historians and anyone else interested in marine architecture. How was wood selected by Cabot's contemporaries? What shipbuilding techniques were used? How did they provision ship for a long voyage? What were charts like without a method for measuring longitude? How did Cabot navigate? The book is especially engaging on the subject of life at sea: the size and the employment of crews, sailing techniques and ship-handling characteristics.

Firstbrook speculates further about Cabot's subsequent voyages and his death, but as he himself admits we are no nearer the truth now than before. Instead, the game of constructing replicas is placed in a certain perspective. The voyage of the new *Matthew* will be seen in later years as a triumph of the imagination of Col Mudie and an opportunity for investment. But what is perhaps more telling for us is the ultimate misfortune of actual explorers such as Columbus and Cabot, men who ended their lives without a band or a choir to honour them—and certainly no royal visit.

Apocalyptic (Re)Visions

Wendy Lill
The Glace Bay Miners' Museum (A Stage Play Based on the Novel by Sheldon Currie). Talonbooks $13.95

Michael O'Brien
Mad Boy Chronicle. Playwrights Canada P $11.95

Dianne Warren
Club Chernobyl. Coteau Books $9.95

Reviewed by Stefan Haag

I just heard a report on CBC radio on the dissolution of the Occupational Disease Panel (ODP) in Harris's Ontario. The ODP has been active primarily in researching and documenting links between cancer and

mining and has supported legal action of miners against mining companies. At regular intervals, this report featured an interview with a 72-year-old nickel miner who told of the conditions of mining such as breathing oil-saturated air from the machines and the effects these conditions have had on him, namely lung cancer. He ended up having his left lung removed, something he attributed squarely to mining and to unsafe conditions in mining. Getting any compensation from the mining company depends on the availability of research such as the ODP undertakes.

Wendy Lill's play is based on Sheldon Currie's short story (just like the film *Margaret's Museum*). All might have been inspired by the interview with the nickel miner both in a general and a particular sense. In general, because short story, play and film describe the impact of mining on individuals, a family, and a community. In particular, because the "museum" referred to in the title is not one that displays perhaps some machinery, photos of miners in heroic poses before going into the shaft or taking a shower to wash off the soot after their shifts, or even more conventionally, plans of the mines, technical data and so on. The "museum" in question, rather, is created by a miner's wife who dismembers the bodies of her husband and brother after they are brought home dead from the mine one day. She gets formaldehyde and fills a number of jars with lungs, penis, fingers, and tongue, all for different reasons. Together with these jars, she later exhibits her husband's bagpipes and a quart of the liquor he used to drink. The reaction of society is predictable: she is put away in an asylum, although soon her keepers forget why she is there and so she is released to come back and re-open her museum.

At first, I was tempted to think that the play provided an insight into a mining community and values, albeit with an odd grotesque ending. After listening to the CBC report, however, I thought again. Perhaps Wendy Lill's play is not grotesque at all but merely realistic. Perhaps it would take such a miners' museum to wake people up to the conditions in mining just as it took a drastic interview to alert me to these conditions. The dissolution of the ODP is widely seen as a step back and a return to government-condoned poor working conditions, especially for miners. Just as tragic as this devolution, however, is that the ODP was the first such panel in the world and seems to remain the last. Let's have a closer look at Margaret's jars and let's consider whether we can afford to remove bodies that investigate working conditions at arm's length from governments who have become powerless *vis-à-vis* multinational corporations.

O'Brien's *Mad Boy Chronicle* is a *tour de force* in twenty-nine scenes, a spoof of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but also more than that. Amidst the brutal obscenities of a Viking community, the play focusses on the human tendency to abuse doctrines to one's own advantage, here the Christian teachings abused by Fengo, aka Claudius. The mad boy Horvendal (Hamlet) is out to get him but is deeply confused by the Christian doctrine of forgiveness. After a hearty incarnation of Ophelia wreaks much havoc in chopping off her father's head instead of "giving" herself to the lecherous Fengo according to her father's wishes, a water-walking Jesus tells Horvendal to forget about the gospel and get on with it and kill Fengo. But Fengo now has the gospel on his side and is a triumphant winner in this farce. In the chilling conclusion, Brother Petri impales Horvendal on a cross just before he was about to lash out at the praying Fengo, who is only pretending. Thus, it's again hesitation that does Horvendal/Hamlet in, but it's set up differently: the play is less complex and on the verge of being a "Dummie's Guide to Hamlet." What saves it from that dubious status is

in my view some of the women characters (two washerwomen tell the ghost of Hamlet Sr. to "piss off" because he disturbs their meal) and the action, the obscenities, and the violence that are never gratuitous.

I remember the year of Chernobyl very well. It was, incidentally, my last year in Europe which seems fortunate in hindsight. I remember a friend who took all the cold-war rhetoric we grew up with terribly seriously and didn't believe there was going to be a future, or at least not an enduring one, so when the farmers tried to sell their contaminated fruits and vegetables, this particular friend went out, marvelled at the prices, and proceeded to stuff herself with the "healthy" foods she could otherwise not afford. Her state of mind seems very close to the ones depicted in Dianne Warren's *Club Chernobyl*, namely our obsession with the millenium, the apocalypse, and how these "overarching" themes impact on our private lives. Like Lill's play, this could be seen as a memory play with a frame that introduces the central character whom we then follow into his private world, after he struggles to wake up from a nightmare. This world is his own nightclub on opening night. The nightclub is built on the "concept" of Chernobyl, something he explains by analogy to an American club where there were real sharks lurking under the glass dancefloor. Being on the edge, then, is the concept of this nightclub. We are too tired to deal again with the doom and gloom that is predicted. But then it happens: torrential rainfalls turn the city into a lake, the corpse is found floating in the basement of an unknown woman and the central character and his girlfriend are very suspicious of each other. But as it turns out, the corpse is not one, she is revived and tells a cock-and-bull story about a crook being on her heels, which turns out to be true, but she follows him at the end as though nothing would be more natural—nothing has changed, how should it? And because no one ever orders a drink in this nightclub, it is a dead idea from the outset and we return to the nightmare in the closing scene, or maybe the nightmare is the nightclub and I got it all wrong...

What makes or breaks Warren's play is , I think, the bass player who is on stage at all times and improvises throughout to reflect the moods of the characters. If the bass finds the musical equivalents of these moods and transitions that are hard to bring across on paper, I think, this could be a marvelous play that provides some insights into the *Zeitgeist* via the interplay of music, staging and drama.

A Divinity of Self

David Little

Catching the Wind in a Net: The Religious Vision of Robertson Davies. ECW $20.00

Reviewed by Andréa C. Cole

With thorough documentation from primary sources, David Little argues that Davies's approach to religious belief is optimistic and regenerative; that "[f]aith is not static and therefore currently withering into irrelevance; instead, it reacts to cataclysmic events and is being continually reconstructed ." We have no excuse for spiritual stasis, as we are individually responsible for our own salvation.

Little chronicles the emergence of Davies's vision throughout his work, drawing examples not only from the novels but also from the plays and Davies's other extensive prose writings and interviews. His analysis is prefaced by a helpful religious biography of the author.

In the first three chapters, Little concentrates on the notions of God and evil. His discussion of Davies's presentation of the quest for a knowledge of God and the antithetical "devils" and evils that Davies presents in his work is largely thematic and informed by Davies's own comments. This

offering flows coherently into an interesting and provocative chapter on Davies's ambiguous presentation of good and evil. Little argues that Davies is certain that a deity exists, but that he is uncertain about that entity's characteristics. Davies quests continually but unsuccessfully (as do the characters Little uses for examples) "to make this uncertainty a certainty." Little aptly calls these unresolved discussions of God's nature "ideas in search of a story," a not-uncommon view of loose thematic and narrative strings in Davies's works. Davies has always been voluble in his interviews about his belief in a real evil in the world, a Devil to stand in contrast to the good; this tendency to produce a black versus white stance has been much critiqued in the past; contrast and juxtaposition are techniques that Davies prefers. However, the chapter on patterns of ambiguity, which I found to be very persuasive, undermines the views of those who feel Davies presents a simplistic oppositional world picture. Little admits, with disarming frankness, that exploring this topic is like "wrestling a metaphysical shark." He characterises the exploration as a schizophrenic exercise, supporting this novel point of view by claiming a common cultural awareness with the author. He supports this rather dangerous contention by making reference to cultural mores in the writings of Carl Jung. In fact, Little relies heavily on a Jungian perspective to shape many of his arguments; however, this is less overtly psychological than it is in much other Davies criticism. Rather, he traces Davies's debt to Jung's own eventual theoretical and spiritual evolution, showing how that same evolution creeps into Davies's mature works. This particular emphasis is a great strength in the book as it marks a new offshoot on a well-trodden critical path. That the inner search for self is primarily a religious journey is a new twist in the psychological criticism in Davies. Also linked to the quest for self is the pursuit of artistic excellence, which must of necessity take on a theological dimension: a good artist can thereby save his/her soul. Little offers a few quick examples, leaving the reader to mull over the idea that Davies eventually introduces in the paradoxical figure of Simon Darcourt, an Anglican priest who qualifies his Gnostic views—no accident in Little's analysis. He equates Gnosticism with psychology as a need to seek the divine spark within, through knowledge.

Perhaps the best writing in the book is Little's insistence on Davies's interest in Christianity's neglect of the feminine. To ignore the feminine in religion, is, for Davies, to trifle with eternity and to ignore half of one's spiritual life. To extrapolate a conclusion, without this integration of gender we cannot achieve a knowledge of self, and therefore, the divine. I found myself wishing that Little could have devoted more space to this topic.

Within the Jungian theoretical framework that Little chooses, his arguments are persuasive and provocative. He is at his best, however, in his own close readings. That Canada is the ideal setting to achieve a "selfish" inner quest with an implicit theological dimension (a partial knowledge of the image of God) is a fascinating metaphor, one which equates Davies's ideas about Douglas LePan's "savage land of rocks and forests" with his own of the "savage land of the spirit."

This book is well researched, useful for both the casual reader of Davies and the specialist in Davies criticism. I found the appendices thoughtful, and was particularly impressed by the exhaustive work Little undertook in citing and annotating Davies's biblical allusions, which are ordered chronologically by novel.

Economy and Art

Sir Andrew Macphail

The Master's Wife. Facsimile of 1939 ed., introd. Ian Ross Robertson. Institute of Island Studies $18.95

Reviewed by Brent MacLaine

The republication of *The Master's Wife* in this handsome facsimile edition rescues a document of considerable literary and historical scope—and not least, charm. Chief among the virtues of MacPhail's social history-cum-memoir of life in the small Prince Edward Island farming community of Orwell is the shrewdness of its judgment and the subtlety of its irony. Neither sentimental nor nostalgic, MacPhail moves deftly from finely observed details of landscape, home, church, and school to an analysis of the cultural and intellectual markers by which the pre- and post-colonial Scots guided their lives. However faded today, the patterns drawn in *The Master's Wife* are still visible in Maritime communities, one notable one being MacPhail's own outmigration—the bright, sensitive child lured by scholarship into the larger world, in his case, to medicine and belles-lettres at McGill.

The book's intellectualism is disguised by a curiously simple language, a feature explained in part by one of the finest chapters, "The Economy of the House," in which MacPhail details his mother's ingenious management of the farm's precious stores, including the particulars of kitchen craft. According to MacPhail, economizing was not born only of necessity; it was an axiom of life with the widest cultural, aesthetic, and even religious implications.

> The essence of art is economy, that nothing is wasted. To write as Mr. Kipling writes, to draw as Mr. Punch draws, to paint as Ver Meer paints, to live as we lived, is to practice economy, without waste, without meanness. The writer who wastes words becomes a journalist; the draughtsman who wastes lines, a fumbler searching blindly; the painter wasting colour a striver after impressions he has never felt.

Thus, MacPhail's style results from an application to his own prose of that rigorous standard which he saw at work on the Orwell farm. Quite simply, he is practising in literary terms what his mother and what "The Master"—his schoolteacher father and Presbyterian elder—preached to him in practical and theological terms.

As the above passage shows, there is no apologetic distancing from the cultural capitals of the world. In this regard, *The Master's Wife* is salutary for the ease with which it connects so-called provincial life with the larger world. Additionally, MacPhail's organicism is evident from the fact that there is no disruption between the principles of nature and the worlds of art, science, religion, or education. These are mutually supportive spheres of interests, all of which can be developed on the small farm—including, apparently, sound character development, for a child's "inner discipline arose from a systematic obedience to the laws imposed by nature . . . . By obedience to those inevitable laws he acquired a morality . . . ." The Romantic causal connection between nature and the betterment of self is direct, and as is evident throughout the book, the doctrinal severity of a Calvinist heritage mixes with Romanticism without skipping a beat.

Impressive in its range, *The Master's Wife* documents an age; it fascinates with the details of pioneer life while narrating, at the same time, a personal story of a son appreciative of the rural experience to which he felt indebted for his later success; it charts the politics of the time; it champions the values of culture and declares a value system for integrating self and society. For any reader interested in the transition from a pioneering to a viably developed society, *The Master's Wife* remains one of the most thoughtful and readable documents in Canadian literature.

North-South Passages

Rabindranath Maharaj
Homer in Flight. Goose Lane $18.95

Cyril Dabydeen
Black Jesus and Other Stories. TSAR $13.95

Reviewed by John Clement Ball

Homer in Flight belongs to that burgeoning sub-species of post-colonial fiction, the "immigrant novel." Pioneered by West Indian Londoners in the 1950s and 1960s, this genre is now as likely to make its home in Toronto as in *the* metropolis of London. Rabindranath Maharaj, who hails from Trinidad and now lives in Ajax, has previously explored migrant landscapes in a fine collection of short stories, *The Interloper* (1995). *Homer in Flight*, his first novel, shows he has learned well from such forebears as Sam Selvon, Austin Clarke, Dionne Brand, Neil Bissoondath, and especially V.S. Naipaul; while its picaresque narrative serves up a smorgasbord of familiar tribulations and occasional minor triumphs, its mix of satire and pathos is distinctive.

The protagonist, Homer Santokie, is an eccentric 32-year-old filing clerk glad to "escape" from the "prison" of a disorderly and corrupt island society to what he perceives as the ordered and enabling space of Canada. But though he begins from the premise that "Everything that was missing or deformed in Trinidad was gloriously present here," his quixotic (and very un-Homeric) odyssey through suburbia is marked with enough defeats and frustrations to remove most of the rose-tinting from his vision. In bursts of inchoate energy alternating with long periods of lassitude, he lurches from one unsatisfactory experience to another: inept job hunts, unsuitable employment in industry, soul-destroying apartments, a feminist literature course, a compromised marriage, infuriating in-laws. Too obtuse and gormless ever to really understand his new world, he does amend his preconceptions enough to realize that his best chance of comprehending Canadian "Others" is to identify them with character types from the island. He thus makes his own confused way to the familiar insights that "difference" is never absolute, that migrant homelands are always plural, and that places and people must be imagined to be known.

As in his stories, Maharaj resists pat polemics and oppositions; when his migrants run aground, it is as often by their narrow-mindedness and poor judgement as by the exclusions of an unwelcoming society. Homer encounters a broad spectrum of Caribbean-Canadian immigrants; they are as likely to be lampooned for outlandish postures as made the vehicles of earnest social critiques. Indeed, one measure of *Homer*'s contemporaneity—beyond references to Somalia, lap dancing, and mad cow disease—and of its departure from early immigrant sagas, is in the society it portrays; in its odd blend of high seriousness and empathy together with the detachment of caricature and satire, it pluralizes the "immigrant condition" so often constructed as a monolith. Yes, Maharaj suggests, there are the oppressed and excluded and undervalued; others, however, have been here long enough not only to "get ahead" but to exemplify all that is worst about North American society: crass consumerism, vacuous trendiness, "political correctness," the insecure obsession with security, and complacent self-absorption. Canada is effectively critiqued through distortions manifested by its most successful (read "assimilated") immigrants.

In fact, *Homer in Flight* owes as much to Naipaul's early Trinidadian comedies as to novels of immigrant struggle. Stylistically, the novel echoes Naipaul's use of lively colloquial dialogue, "humour" characters, and farcical set-pieces, although it lacks his genius for plotting and pacing. Homer shares traits and experiences with the protagonists of both *The Mystic Masseur* and *A*

House for Mr Biswas: like Ganesh, he succeeds despite laziness and intellectual mediocrity, and his hilarious (but ineffectual) rebellion against his wife's imperious family is very Biswasian. In Homer's Ontario, as in Naipaul's West Indies, the establishment to be circumvented—the "enemy" to be vanquished—is as likely to be found in one's own group as among "others."

The novel's pathos emerges most pointedly in its portrayals of the sad routines and little lunacies that the circumscribed lives of suburbia can engender—in people of any skin colour, however outwardly "successful." And while the tragicomic mix occasionally jars, Maharaj is skilled at inspiring sympathy for a protagonist whose blindnesses and mistakes he enjoys sending up. *Homer in Flight* is an artful, unpredictable, and entertaining addition to the literatures of both Canada and the Caribbean.

Cyril Dabydeen's *Black Jesus* contains twelve stories, seven of which were published in his earlier (now out-of-print) collections as far back as 1980; each reissued story has undergone major stylistic revisions, while keeping the essence intact. As a "selected and new" volume, then, it offers a good introduction to the fiction of Dabydeen, a prolific Guyanese-Canadian best known as a poet. For the student of writing craft it represents a chance to study an author's mature reworking of earlier stories, although the paucity of new work may disappoint some readers.

The selection here has a shape, though the stories are not formally linked. It begins with six stories of childhood, family, and community set in pre- and post-independence Guyana; the last six stories are set in sixties-to-nineties North America—five in Ontario, one in New York—among adult emigrés, with frequent excursions back south. Dabydeen writes with a choppy economy that serves his oblique, quirky stories well overall, if sometimes at the expense of clarity. He has a penchant for expansive, epiphanic endings which can seem forced or unearned, especially given his tendency to create first-person narrators who are stingy with personal details. Here, for instance, is the final sentence of "All for Love," a story whose narrator has been so preoccupied with others that he has revealed next to nothing about himself:

> Thinking about a plane journey; in a place far away, with real noise, haunting cries of a strange forest, cacophony: more than I would ever hear in Ottawa...or anywhere else for that matter because of my own changes: an inner being only. Even as it soars into the atmosphere, it goes clunk.

Dabydeen handles his occasional political themes well, especially in the fine "Los Toros." His attempt at a love story, "Homecoming," is marred by stilted dialogue and weak character development; his most experimental story, "Calabogie," attempts a hypnotic, slow-motion effect but soon becomes precious and tedious. Dabydeen's favourite narrative interest, however, is the inexplicable eccentric, the charismatic visionary tinged with madness who usually (as in "Birth," "The Pugilist," and "The Outsider") remains as puzzlingly exotic at the end of the story as at the beginning. When plot and style achieve the density and narrative voice the personality to make sense of such characters, as in "Black Jesus" and the superb "Drive Me Till I Sweat," Dabydeen strikes a resonant chord.

Ethnic At Large

Igor Maver
Ethnic Literature and Culture in the USA, Canada, and Australia. Peter Lang US$57.95

Danielle Schaub, Janice Kulyk Keefer, and Richard E. Sherwin
Precarious Present/ Promising Future?: Ethnicity and Identities in Canadian Literature. Magnes n.p.

Reviewed by Tseen-Ling Khoo

Studies focusing on cultural politics and national identity with regard to pluralism

or multiculturalism have characterised much of 1990s literary criticism. The two books under review follow this trend and are quite ambitious in terms of scope. With the published format of compiled essays/papers, however, these questions remain broadly but unevenly discussed. This is not to say that the resulting publications are not worthy of study or further examination, but that more specifically conceived and focused projects would have proven more constructive for researchers in the areas concerned.

Ethnic Literature and Culture in the USA, Canada, and Australia is a collection of papers from a symposium held by the Slovene Association for American Studies in 1994. The resulting book is divided into three sections: "European Emigrant Experience in the Multi-Ethnic USA," "Canadian Multiculturalism and Literature," and "Ethnic Australia." Naturally, the bulk of the publication is aimed toward delineating Slovene migrant perspectives, and most of these are sited in the USA. A new addition to the normal 'collection of papers' format is the concluding chapter, which is a summary of the publication in Slovene.

Maver's introduction roams over the disparate sections, focusing on the commonalities of global "orientation towards multiculturality and multi-ethnicity." A point which could have borne more discussion is the separation/complicity of 'migrant-ness' and 'ethnicity' as the essays in the book hop between these terms and moments of 'arrival.' A clear sign of the book trying to do too much is the slimness of the sections on Canada and Australia, and the offerings within each of these. Maver's comments about the form of multiculturalism found in Australia is adequate but, of necessity, quite generalised. He leaves us with the fact that the *Penguin New Literary History of Australia* did not include separate sections on 'migrant' or 'multicultural' writers but "adopted the method of 'pervasion' [the ethnic presence at all levels of society]." While I agree partially with this strategy, the word immediately conjured up two terms often associated with multicultural literary criticism in Australia and elsewhere: evasion and perversion. Evasion evokes the ongoing denial (or dismissal) of 'literari-ness' in 'multicultural' material through concentration on sociological and historical aspects. Perversion might refer to the stereotypical response to migrant writing as 'bad' or distorted forms of proper English literature. While Maver's project does succeed in some ways with bringing forward the neglected areas of study about ethnic writers, he rests upon the idealised notion of migrants as "precious . . . mediators and cultural ambassadors." Such an inscription of cultural 'value' and authenticity to ethnic writers and their literature elides, to a certain degree, the fraught and ongoing discussions about treating multicultural literature as voices of 'Native informants.'

Many of the articles are historically inclined, with a good range of literary genres addressed. For example, within the USA section, Helga Glusic examines the poetry of Milena Soukal and Janez Stanonik working through the "Bibliographies of Slovene Emigrant Press prior to 1945," and material about juvenile literature and travelogues. In such a specific book (and conference), Adi Wimmer's piece about the trauma of Austrian Jewish exile sits somewhat oddly, for all its emotive force.

Wimmer's piece details the harsh treatment of Austrian Jews during World War II and the contemporary refusal by the nation and its people to acknowledge the harm done or feel they need to offer recompense. He points to the 1986 Waldheim scandal as a clear example of the "grossly deficient 'culture of memory' in Austria"—a process of denying an unsavoury past that Rey Chow, in "Women of the Holocene," has

aptly labelled "Waldheimer's Disease." Wimmer goes on to argue that the suspension between two nations/cultures, which many critics have configured as an 'enabling' subject position for creative work, can also function as an "obstacle" to it. Most of the reasons for this, he continues, can be found in the enforced nature of exile compared with the (arguably 'voluntary') process of immigration.

In the Canadian section of the collection, Janice Kulyk Keefer offers a critically engaged, necessarily generalised, assessment of Canadian multiculturalism which partially addresses the issues surrounding racialisation and the category of 'whiteness.' She also attempts to salvage Josef Skvorecky's role as a valuable commentator on multicultural literature in Canada, contending that he contributes crucial critical friction to discussions about ethnic or multicultural work. The twist on the argument for including Skvorecky (because his right-wing attitudes pose a useful challenge to the left-wing sentiments expressed by some scholars in multicultural criticism) is refreshing but Keefer's reasons for doing so remain slightly unclear. Skvorecky's comments, quoted by Keefer, are hardly original thoughts in the field of multicultural literature, particularly the 'politics versus aesthetics' arguments. I was left wanting to know more about the specific ways in which Keefer envisaged Skvorecky's polemical statements furthering multicultural literary criticism in Canada.

Maver's *Ethnic Literature and Culture* collection should prove very useful for those who are involved in research regarding the Slovene experience or 'diaspora,' particularly as many of the essays provide detailed historical grounding for their subject matter.

Precarious Present/ Promising Future?: Ethnicity and Identities in Canadian Literature is a more focused collection, one by "feminist scholars from Canada and Israel" discussing identity and ethnicity in the Canadian national context. Contributions included comparative studies like Bina Toledo Freiwald's "The Subject and the Nation: Canadian and Israeli Women's Autobiographical Writing," to resistance in black Canadian feminist work (Susan Rudy), and French Canadian avant-garde feminist perspectives (Dina Haruvi).

On the topic of "Ethnic Writing in Canada," E. D. Blodgett writes about Joy Kogawa's canonical novel, *Obasan*, and its use of language as exemplifying "the ethnic situation in English Canadian writing." He traces the creation and maintenance of identity for Naomi through language strategies in the novel, introducing the metaphor of borders and bordering (for identity) in the latter part of the article. Blodgett lays out the direction for ethnic literature in a somewhat didactic way, encouraging ethnic writers to walk the middle path. He states that "[e]thnic writing is perforce a writing of mediation" and that it is not "sufficient" to indulge either in "pure polemic [or] solipsism." The questions that I would pose in response are: Who is judging what is "sufficient"? Should critics manoeuvre (as Blodgett has done) between close readings of one text and statements regarding the (singular) future of ethnic literature in Canada? The feminist perspective promised by the volume seems to be absent from this particular piece. This is particularly disappointing as, among numerous other examples, Naomi's reluctant role as 'mediator' in the family compared to Stephen's self-preserving escape from it would be fruitful to examine from a gendered perspective.

Jeanne Perreault's essay, "'We All Need That Bridge': Feminism/Antiracism in Some Canadian Women's Writing," provides examples of how Canadian women writers in English are undertaking the task of melding the politics of feminist solidarity with heightened awareness, and engagement with, the processes of racialisation. The meeting of feminism and anti-racism

has historically caused many splits and theoretical divergences among critics, often with commentators falling back on binary notions of prioritisation of discriminations. Perreault manages to avoid this dilemma. Among other authors and texts, she discusses a special edition of *Fireweed* on Jewish women, Lee Maracle's work including her poetry and novels, and pieces by Jeannette Armstrong. The strength of this section rests on the comparison between the strategies with which the women choose to overcome and erode racist attitudes and structures.

Precarious Present certainly deserves attention for the number of challenging articles and the ambitious breadth of critical terrain which it traverses. It is especially challenging for suggesting ways of bringing together feminism, race issues, and ethnic identity.

Call for Change

Patricia Monture-Angus
Thunder in My Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks.
Fernwood $19.95

Reviewed by Dee Horne

Many post-colonial theorists have challenged colonialism and racism while at the same time acknowledging that they hold privileged positions in the academy. Paradoxically, many continue to perpetuate the colonial discourse they seek to challenge by speaking for those who have been colonized instead of creating spaces and opportunities where colonized writers can speak for themselves. *Thunder in My Soul* creates a space where, as the subtitle states, *A Mohawk Woman Speaks*. Monture-Angus' task has been an on-going process of negotiating the contradictions of different cultures. Positioning herself as a Mohawk, a woman, a mother, a lawyer and an academic, she contests the notion of a single, fixed identity and rejects simplistic binary categories. Further, she points to the ways in which gender and race are inextricably intertwined. Although she is primarily writing "a prayer for my people and for all First Nations," she shares her experiences with all readers. Her book documents her own process of de-colonization, while also suggesting avenues for mainstream society to learn from diverse First Nations. In her challenge to the colonial and racist structures underlying Canada's legal, judicial and educational institutions, Monture-Angus provides a compelling call for change.

In this collection of essays, many of which have been previously published in periodicals and anthologies, Monture-Angus rejects Canadian law as a viable mean of reform. While delineating some of the differences between settler and First Nations cultures, she repeatedly reminds readers that First Nations are not homogenous, but are diverse nations. She outlines how settler society emphasizes rights, individualism, equality (based on an underlying assumption of sameness), fragmentation and hierarchy. In contrast, she argues that First Nations validate responsibilities (both collective and individual), values of respect, caring, harmony and balance and a consensus decision-making process. In reviewing the legal and educational institutions in Canada, she critiques hierarchical structures and advocates a holistic approach, one that affirms mind, heart and spirit and validates traditional wisdom and experiential knowledge. Education is the means for change, but education must itself change so that it becomes "meaningful." It must be relevant and create spaces in which diverse cultures can respect each other's differences and share their knowledge.

While the theme of the book encompasses issues of oppression and injustice against which Monture-Angus has struggled, the structure affirms the oral traditions that have informed her. There are four sections: "Four is an important number in the Indian world. There are four seasons and

four directions. Four is the number that ends a cycle." The first section, "Flint Woman Speaks," is, like oral stories, cyclical. The four articles in "Flint Woman Speaks" illustrate, as Monture-Angus tells us, "a cycle [that] has now been completed." In the first article, Ka-nin-geh-heh-gah-e-sa-nonh-yah-gah (which roughly translates in English as "the way Flint Women do things"), Monture-Angus relates several stories about her experiences of racism when she was a law student. In the second article, "Reflecting on Flint Woman," Monture-Angus writes from her position as a law professor who is "speaking back to my student reflecting on what I have learned." The third article, "Self-Portrait: Flint Woman," articulates her experiences as a Mohawk woman and relates her search for her identity and process of healing while the fourth article, "Flint Woman: Surviving the Contradictions in Academia," describes her study of law and her own process of de-colonization.

Whenever writers document their own process of negotiating contradictions, it is almost inevitable that their work will reflect, even contain, contradictions. To wit, Monture-Angus argues that First Nations are not homogenous, but then delineates First Nations values and beliefs. While she is aware of this contradiction, she invokes it as a form of strategic essentialism. She argues that although it is "presumptuous" to speak in terms of "we," she does so because "what must be built requires the collective vision and action of First Nations." Elsewhere, she contrasts the adversarial settler legal system to First Nations' laws that are based on the "principles of relations and consensus." She challenges the idea that conflict is both natural and universal. She states that "Harmony is the center of our relations with the universe and all other beings"; however, she later remarks on the "tension and disagreement at the fundamental level of construction of legal relations." Earlier she cites Audre Lorde's warning that "You cannot take apart the master's house with the master's tools." This position initially appears to be consistent with Monture-Angus' rejection of Canadian law as a solution and her perception that it is rather a part of the problem. However, in her later chapters in which she discusses constitutional reforms and legal, judicial and educational institutions, she describes how First Nations have worked within these institutions. Further, she relates how she initially became a lawyer because she wanted to change the injustices from within, "change the experience of law school." At that time, she believed that change could "be accomplished by being on the inside of a powerful institution." That her writing contains these and other contradictions does not negate the validity or importance of her argument; instead, they are a testimony to the honesty of her voice and her willingness to share the ways in which her own thoughts on the subject have changed over time.

She invites readers to witness not only the contradictions that she has had to negotiate, but also the contradictions that each of us faces when we change our perceptions and thinking in the on-going process of learning. In choosing not to erase these contradictions but to voice them, Monture-Angus resists simplistic analysis based on binary oppositions and offers First Nations and non-Native readers one Mohawk woman's experience of negotiating the contradictions. She sees learning as a process of exchange. Monture-Angus writes that "it is in the middle, the place between two cultures, where any bridges of understanding will be constructed"; however, she suggests that it is time that settlers listen to, and learn from, First Nations.

Stylish Violence

Kim Moritsugu
Looks Perfect. Goose Lane $16.95

Anne Montagnes
Jade Slash Laverna. Anansi $24.95

Reviewed by Maria Noelle Ng

In a 1996 *New Yorker* article, Francine Du Plessix Gray writes in her analysis of Dior's revolutionary New Look, "I was filled with ambivalent emotions of recollected pleasure and stern reproach. It was not so much the archaic coquetry of the dress I was questioning as, rather, the collective past self of my generation. . . ." It might seem an act of wilful pedantry to start a review of one book with a quote from another writer, but Du Plessix Gray's elegant prose serves a purpose here. She proves that one can write seriously about a topic commonly dismissed as frivolous: fashion.

One can easily understand why fashion should be both suspect and, at the same time, a siren-like subject to writers. It combines art, artifice and the artificial—it involves enormous talent, it engages endlessly with surface representations, and it is obviously 'constructed' as both a channel of self-expression as well as a market commodity. Therefore, I began reading Kim Moritsugu's *Looks Perfect* with expectation. Unfortunately, in spite of the promise of an intriguing premise—Canadian Eurasian fashion editor wielding Bay Street clout in the murderously competitive world of fashion—the book disappoints.

Rosemary MacKinnon, as the back cover of *Looks Perfect* tells us, is "funny, sexy," and "the man of her dreams, a publishing magnate, falls under her spell." Even *Harper's Bazaar* eschews such clichés. But the novel, which revolves around Rosemary's steamy affair with the "publishing magnate" who, in predictable form, is married, and her subsequent hesitant, but fruitful relationship with a gourmet caterer, excels in clichés. In between sheets and hotel rooms, the reader is fed perfunctory doses of the fashion scenes in Paris, New York and Toronto, as well as the office-to-office combat inside a publishing house. The novel is problematic on all fronts.

As a romance, the plot of *Looks Perfect* offers no surprises. Brian Turnbull, whose name evokes the establishment-shirtmakers, Asser and Turnbull, is handsome, powerful and libidinous. Max Appelbaum, the other man, is "short and slight and [wears] glasses," and his initial sexual performance with Rosemary is less than impressive. But true love, or rather, less glamorous love, prevails, a gender-reversed version of the plain-girl-with-the-golden-heart storyline. As a novel which examines the myths of representation, *Looks Perfect* promises but does not deliver. Rosemary complains about being stereotyped because of her Eurasian appearance. But she stereotypes consistently in her personal life and works in an industry which consumes and spawns stereotypes. It is a case of the fisherman complaining about the stink of his mussels. The only subversive gesture in the novel is a fashion show Rosemary co-ordinates using the theme of exoticizing racial types. Of course, much as it sounds as if this were a particularly 'cool,' idea even this 'revolutionary gesture' is rather *vieux jeu*, really: the fashion industry has never been shy about admitting that it loves both to exoticize and to subvert norms such as ethnic groups, racial categories, and gender divisions.

If glamour and fashion attract book-buyers, then sex and murder can guarantee even better sales. *Jade Slash Laverna* by Anne Montagnes is a suitably eerie psychological thriller which takes place one Canada Day weekend. The conceit of the novel is that one of the characters, Polly, has a kind of second sight and acts as a *fin-de-siècle* Greek chorus of one voice, hinting at disasters and mayhem. Instead of locating Polly in the main action, which takes place in a remote farm outside of Toronto,

Montagnes places her in a Buddhist temple in British Columbia. The desired effect of this bifurcated locality is not clear to this reviewer. Yes, we have a nice sense of the East and the West, although since Polly stays in the temple, it could just as well have been in Yellowknife for all its 'local colour'. What does come through, in an appropriately disturbing way, is the parallel contrast of the outward serenity of the places (farm, temple) and the inner chaos of the people's minds.

Polly's uncle, Paddy, lives in acres of untended woodland with his nurse attendant, Mike, a young man with a history of childhood abuse and psychiatric treatments. Into this seeming idyll crashes (literally) Zeeb, the son of Polly's dead lover. The lesbian angle, like the British Columbian location, is never developed. Again, the reader might want to draw a parallel between Zeeb's same-sex family and Mike's deeply dysfunctional, but conventional family of an alcoholic father and an ineffectual mother. But despite these tantalizingly unrealized details, Montagnes has a firm grip on her characters and plot, the mainstays of any good thriller, psychological or otherwise. Take, for instance, the reader's first meeting with Mike: "His hand was like a cat, the way they'll curl their pads and claws around your finger if you offer it to them, holding the end of your finger in an embrace, pulsing their claws, as if they were contemplating you as a mouse." This predatory urge combined with an outward harmlessness is exactly what Mike's character possesses. Zeeb, although himself a Ph.D. candidate and ostensibly a smarter and healthier person, proves to be no match for Mike's untutored cunning and becomes ensnared in the tangled web of lust, violence and eventual murder, all engineered by Mike.

The threatening and impending storm of male violence is omnipresent in *Jade Slash Laverna*. The female characters, including the eponymous Jade, cannot resist this onslaught. It is this brooding and ever-oppressive threat that makes the novel successfully menacing. Unfortunately, it is also this attention to male psychology that makes the female characters either shadowy or lifeless, and the book offers no consolation for their unhappy lives.

Geography Lessons

W.H. New

Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing. U of Toronto P $45.00/$17.95

Reviewed by Leslie Monkman

Twenty-five years after the publication of *Articulating West*, his first collection of essays on Canadian literature in English, W.H. New returns to core issues of land and language, nation and region, in *Land Sliding*. The thirteen discrete essays of the earlier book (all but two published in previous versions) were yoked together by an all-purpose volume sub-title, *Essays on Purpose and Form in Modern Canadian Literature*, and by five intratextual titles revealing New's long-standing proclivity for the participial: "Developing a Language of Myth," "Problems of Ordering Reality," "Ending the Liberal Pageant," "Developing the Textures of Language," and "Voices for the Soundless Fugue." *Land Sliding* maintains this emphasis on process and change, but its four long essays are linked sequentially, and only one section of a single chapter has been previously published. The achievement of *Articulating West* lies in New's detailed engagement with individual twentieth-century novels and poems; *Land Sliding* expands the scope of such readings to stretch from Jacques Cartier to Beatrice Culleton and integrates these into broad arguments concerning "the sliding connections among social structures, language and land in Canada."

New's 1989 book, *A History of Canadian Literature*, in the Macmillan History of

Literature series, anticipates the prodigious range of the reading evident throughout *Land Sliding*. The latter, however, is selective rather than encyclopedic. Freed of the chronology and constraints of a series history, New can engage more fully with several of the large questions underlying the Macmillan volume. Now his method is contrapuntal in "a series of dialogues both explicit and implicit" between chapters, between main texts and footnotes and between the written text and almost fifty plates ranging from canonical Canadian paintings to concrete poems and newspaper cartoons offering visual correlatives to his arguments.

A largely unspoken dialogue underlying *Land Sliding* is with a national critical tradition that both precedes and follows Northrop Frye's epigrammatic assertion of the importance of the question "where is here" to Canadian literary study. *Articulating West* directly references Frye's question on its opening page, but in *Land Sliding*, New displays little interest in lengthy engagement with the critical tradition associated with Frye and dissected by Frank Davey and others in the intervening decades. Instead, he simply notes the distortions produced when concepts such as "garrison mentality" are used as totalizing national metaphors. New remains attentive and generous in his acknowledgment of the work of other Canadian critics, but the perspective of *Land Sliding* is linked less to cultural nationalism than to sociocultural and socioeconomic questions arising from postcolonial theory. Thus, V.S. Naipaul, Judith Wright, A.N. Ebeogu, Seamus Heaney, Wilson Harris and others serve as reference points, insistently extending New's arguments outside both Canadian and Anglo-American literary traditions. *Land Sliding* focuses then on how literature in English in Canada uses "a land discourse" in addressing questions of language and power. To begin, "Landing" examines how the European equation of Canada and the wilderness produced a discourse of contact and territoriality both ignorant of and ignoring the land discourses of the people already there. Analyzing the linking of land, power codes and codes of representation, New brings both subtly developed arguments and fresh analysis of sometimes surprising texts to the core question of the book and of much post-colonial criticism. "Land-Office" shifts from the territorial construction of the land as "there" to an analysis of the language of land ownership—property, possession and power. Again, the argument details how the structures relating language and land articulate received hierarchies of power rooted in European epistemologies of race, religion, gender and class. The third chapter, "Landed," addresses issues of Canadian literary regionalism more acutely than any of *Land Sliding*'s predecessors. Moving from the land as "mine" to the land as "home," New unpacks the assumptions and implications of attempts to map Canada as home from fixed Laurentian or mosaic paradigms. Instead, he emphasizes regional identifications with land as claims to significance and power while insisting on the sliding complexities of all constructed centres and margins. If "Landed" focuses on resistance to the maps of others through an insistence on reading the land in one's own way, New's final chapter balances the emphasis on home in landscape by exploring its correlatives in the idea of home in language. Linking analyses of how language can work metatextually and of the sliding tensions between received and vernacular words and cadences, New both argues for and demonstrates a criticism sensitive to both poetry and power.

In reviewing *Articulating West* for *Canadian Literature*, Germaine Warkentin noted that "though New writes more often about fiction, his critical method seems primarily shaped by his experience of

poetry," and *Land Sliding* reveals New's most explicit acknowledgment of this tendency. The summary of the preceding paragraph fails to convey the book's success in achieving his stated intentions in this regard: "Each of the following chapters deliberately *plays* with the 'language of land' in its title, creating metaphor in order in part to discuss metaphor, but also to emphasize the play—the manner, the fitful movement—of perception." New's 1996 book of poetry, *Science Lessons*, plays with the organizing power of both scientific nomenclature and the sonnet form, but the poems' subject always knows that "science/lessons tell him only half a story." Similarly, *Land Sliding* avoids the reductiveness of so many preceding attempts to address its core questions by remembering the sliding play of poetry.

New's invitation to the reader to engage in this play begins with both the title and the cover painting of *Land Sliding*. The book's first four paragraphs use, as a starting point, a painting reproduced on the cover of Graeme Turner's *National Fictions*, a 1993 study of Australian literary and cinematic narrative sharing various affinities with *Land Sliding*. New's book, in turn, uses Barbara Klunder's 1991 oil on wood entitled "Laura Secord's Udderly Patriotic Cow." The painting depicts a bulky, elongated Holstein whose hide, one realizes on a second look, replicates a black map of Canada at risk of sliding off its white ground. Painted by Klunder in the conventions of "folk art" in an attempt to reclaim "the history of her great, great, great grandmother from the chocolate factories," the painting serves New as an early cue both to the temporal provisionality of our cultural representations and to the celebratory play at work in the metaphoric landscapes of Canadian literary and visual artists.

And Other Stories

Griffin Ondaatje, ed.
The Monkey King and Other Stories. Harper Perennial $18.00

Yasmin Ladha
Lion's Granddaughter and Other Stories. NeWest $10.95

Shauna Singh Baldwin
English Lessons and Other Stories. Goose Lane $16.95

Reviewed by Vijay Mishra

These three collections all carry the same half-title: "and other stories." The point is that there are always other stories, stories beyond the title pieces, stories not bound by the covers of books. This is particularly true of the first book, *The Monkey King and Other Stories*, which is basically a collection of stories adapted from the massive epic and mythic traditions of South Asia. In this collection other stories also become a kind of "othered" stories, stories retold by people who are linked to the original stories only through memory. The editor Griffin Ondaatje asked a number of people in Canada (and one or two outside of Canada) with Lankan or Indian roots to retell tales that are either traditional folktales or part of canonical texts (epics, *kathas, jatakas* and so on). The retelling results in some wonderful versions, many radically rewritten and recontextualized to take into account modern anxieties (like Judith Thompson's "Mouthful of Pearls"). Other stories are fine-tuned at the hands of some of Canada's best contemporary writers: Michael Ondaatje, Shyam Selvadurai and M. G. Vassanji. Michael Ondaatje retells two tales from the Pali and Jataka legends: "The Vulture" and "Angulimala." Both these tales are well-known in the Buddhist-Hindu tradition and I remember my father telling me these when I was young. But what a surprise to hear them afresh through Michael Ondaatje's spirited, and sometimes comic, retelling. In "The Vulture" the story-teller's

keen eye gives the old narrative a few extra touches, gently adding an anecdote here, a description there so that as the vultures steal clothes and drop them in the merchant's shop, we read, "Mrs G—lost several sarees left to dry on the bushes of her front lawn" and "The famous actress M—R had her blouse removed as she lay sunning herself on her porch." And since the contraption with which the vultures were caught was so secret that the narrator cannot describe them (as it fell under the "Official Secrets Act of Banares") he can only give us a highly complex diagram. The more straightforward moral tale "Angulimala" gets a wonderful didactic ending:

> The fletcher trims the arrow shaft.
> Water carriers guide a river through gardens
> and through places of drought.
> The carpenter shapes wood.
> The wise one tames the self.

The Hindu/Buddhist karmic cycle produces a great story which is told by M. S. Vassanji ("The Cycle of Revenge"). But the interest here is in the narrative as much as in the way in which yarns are interwoven in the moral itself. And so the Wise Man concludes with the words: "The next time remind me and I shall narrate the story of the lust of the hunter and his gun." And the next narrative too would be linked to the previous ones as the same characters get reborn as a consequence of their karma. Not all tales are as tightly focussed as these, many more are inconclusive (and they are meant to be—"The Camel who cried in the Sun" is one such story). Many others meander through a number of high points to arrive at the central message—the title story ("The Monkey King"), for instance. And then there is "Mouthful of Pearls" a variation on an early story but this time set in Toronto. Judith Thompson's version completely recasts the story and presents it as the paradox of desire, referring as this version does to all those wonderful epic heroines who were always desired by impossible men only to find that, in the end, they were physically and spiritually "dismembered." There are many more stories in this collection well worth reading. They are all written with a feel for the art of story telling and unlike many collections that really have no more than just exotic value, here is a collection that allows readers to relive what it must have been like for an earlier generation to hear stories from grandmothers who also added the anecdotal, the contemporary reference, either for dramatic effect or to keep the attention of hyperactive grandchildren.

Yasmin Ladha's collection is an interlinked series of stories (same characters, voices cropping up in most of them) about memory and dispossession. Its unusual feature is, however, a high degree of (post) modernist consciousness of the fictive/"frictive" nature of writing and, not unnaturally with this kind of writing, a continuous engagement with the reader. In a highly original creative mood, she calls her (implied) reader "readerji" a common reader endowed with some special guru-like authority through the Hindi/Sanskrit honorific "ji": "'Sir Reader' might I interest you with my diasporic wares." Obviously there are many thank-yous here, notably to Rushdie who figures in the polemical discourses but there is also something rather unusual and original about Yasmin Ladha's work. It would be too easy to bracket her originality with what may be called the female diasporic sublime, the special voice of a woman resisting the highly patriarchal discourses of the diaspora, a point not lost when, as in the case of Yasmin Ladha's East African Indian diaspora, people move to liberal democratic states such as Canada. In aesthetic terms Yasmin Ladha writes with a high level of originality and force, weaving narratives through memorial constructions that capture both a lost place but also the underlying sexual and political tensions of an Indian

community in East Africa in the post-independence period. There is little here that is celebratory of the "post-colonial" struggle (as an oppositional moment); and a lot more nostalgia for an old order marked by a very vibrant and multicultural way of life. The figure of the "lion's granddaughter" (Shil/Chiku/Aisha) stalks many of these stories and, in slightly different avatars, emerges as a powerful individual in the other stories. Yet these are not to be seen as ethnic tapestries, multicultural writing self-consciously addressing a rising literary/cultural field. Here Yasmin Ladha's address to her readerji is put in unequivocal terms:

> *Readerji,* is this binary inevitable? One is the colonizer, the other, the colonized. Then whoa, whoa *Readerji.* Now, please pick up speed and move! *Chapa chapa, tout-suite* (clap clap), *fatafat,* out of my text because I shy/sly from any confinement/circle/missionary position. Friction/fiction between mates facilitates ousting of hierarchical positions. I don't want to be the sturdy alphabet to set a novice at ease in Other literature—a vaccination prior to his/her flight into the Third World. But sometimes this has to be done, then I can't help it ....

The search for freedom for the "Sita-woman" confined within a circle drawn by Rama's half-brother Lakshman is not just a demand for female empowerment but also one for freedom to define writing beyond the confines of the circle. The point, as made in the last sentence of the passage quoted above, is that it is for the writer to decide, strategically, where and when and how to define her work as "ethnic" or "other" or even "mainstream."

Less overtly political and more realist in their organization, Shauna Singh Baldwin's stories continue the strong trend in Indian diasporic writing towards the construction of female voices. Where Yasmin Ladha's narratives are the product of what may be called a twice-displaced diaspora, first in East Africa and then in Canada (and a twice-displaced diaspora I would argue may be read as a diaspora with its own distinctive qualities), Shauna Singh Baldwin's stories are about initial displacement from India to North America. Her stories are largely about closed Indian communities, whether in North America or in India. Her richest stories are, however, like "Nothing Must Spoil the Visit," "English Lessons" and "Devika," those where two narratives and experience collide. In "Nothing Must Spoil the Visit" Arvind's Canadian wife Janet visits India and is faced with the figure of the long-suffering, unhappy Chaya, once engaged to Arvind, but now married to Arvind's younger brother Kamal. What emerges in this very tightly composed narrative (and Shauna Singh Baldwin's stories are all very gripping with a cinematic quality about them) is a reading of culture and of women that, at first glance, leaves no room for understanding between two people from very diverse cultural backgrounds. From Janet's point of view Chaya is incapable of self-hood since she has no freedom of action; from Chaya's point of view Janet has failed precisely because of her sense of freedom and capacity for independent judgement which, as Chaya mistakenly thinks, has also meant that she has failed in her duty to give Arvind a child. Shauna Singh Baldwin develops these stories much in the manner of Satyajit Ray's neo-realist films as she touches on questions of the mail-order bride, marriages of convenience to get citizenship, unhappy, lonely women on the verge of nervous breakdown in Toronto apartments, to create powerful images of communities of the "hyphen," diasporas grappling with worlds that, finally, do collide, sometimes with tragic consequences. Often diasporic lives are lived within the confines of communities that recreate an India in North America, where men, in particular, simply fail to acknowledge the "labour" of women and the very different

socio-economic and familial structures that affect their lives. In "The Cat Who Cried" Prem has no qualms in simply directing his wife's boss to deposit her wages into his account although his wife desperately needs to free herself from the suffocating shackles of her husband's world and its values.

At one level both Yasmin Ladha's and Shauna Singh Baldwin's stories are versions of ethnological narratives that give many readers a glimpse into the life of the Indian diaspora in North America. It is a diaspora that clearly has two rather different forms. The first, as I have said, already has a diasporic past and engages with India as a nation whose general idiom it shares; the second connects with India as a source of familial (and marital) continuity. There is clearly, in the books reviewed here, an emergent writing of great sensitivity and skill that belongs, generically, to a growing body of Indian/South Asian diasporic work that continues to enrich Canadian writing.

Récits de voyages

Gabriel Sagard
Le Grand voyage du pays des hurons. Leméac n.p.

Dominique Deffain
Un Voyageur français en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle. Niemeyer n.p.

Compte rendu de Maurice Lemire

Les écrits de Nouvelle-France font de plus en plus l'objet d'études universitaires. La Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde, qui a déjà publié un Jacques Cartier, un Lahontan et un Charlevoix, s'apprête à publier Sagard, Diereville et quelques autres. Réal Ouellet et Jack Warwick ont pour leur part publié dans la collection «Bibliothèque québécoise» une édition critique du *Grand voyage du pays des hurons* de Gabriel Sagard. Dans une substantielle introduction, ils reconstituent les circonstances dans lesquelles ce texte a été écrit. Sagard multiplie les noms de lieux et de personnes pour bien montrer qu'il a oeuvré au sein des populations autochtones et que les jésuites n'ont pas seuls droit au mérite de l'apostolat missionnaire, écrit pour faire valoir les mérites de son ordre. Aménagé en ce sens, le texte révèle comment le religieux est amené à mettre son rôle en valeur et à devenir en quelque sorte le héros de son récit.

Ce texte s'adresse au grand public, même si l'apparat critique ne laisse en rien à désirer. Aussi Réal Ouellet a-t-il pris soin de le rendre accessible au plus grand nombre de lecteurs en corrigeant certaines phrases trop longues, embarrassées ou incorrectes, en modernisant l'orthographe et en revisant la ponctuation. Il a ainsi réussi à rendre la lecture facile et à mettre en relief le style souvent naïf mais toujours captivant de Sagard. En signalant en notes les nombreux *loca paralla*, il attire l'attention sur la façon dont le relateur enrichit son récit par ses nombreuses lectures. L'édition que prépare Jack Warwick pour la Bibliothèque du Nouveau Monde différera de celle-ci en ce qu'elle donnera le texte original tel que les manuscrits permettent de l'établir.

Pour sa part, Dominique Deffain publie à Tübingen une étude sur les relations du père Paul Le Jeune sous le titre *Un Voyageur français en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle.* Des 157 pages qu'elle contient, cette étude en consacre le tiers à la biographie du missionnaire, à sa bibliographie et aux Relations des jésuites en général et à la situation en France à l'époque des Relations. Ce survol d'éléments déjà connus des spécialistes n'apporte rien de nouveau, mais il aurait pu fournir un fil conducteur à l'analyse. Le mysticisme qui alimentait alors une certaine spiritualité française aurait pu expliquer l'attitude qu'adopte Le Jeune dans ses relations. Mais par la suite, l'auteure ne tient plus compte des prémisses qu'elles a invoquées. On dirait que soucieuse de correction politique, elle se garde d'évoquer tout élément conflictuel.

Pour l'analyse du texte, madame Deffain procède par thèmes, thème de la colonisation, thème du pays, thème de l'indien, thème de la femme et thème des missions. Très tôt le lecteur s'aperçoit que le mot «thème» est employé dans un sens qui prête à quiproquo. Généralement en littérature, le mot évoque un sujet récurrent à la façon d'un leitmotiv autour duquel s'organise le texte. Par exemple sous le thème de la femme, on s'attendrait à trouver tout ce qui concerne la femme dans la civilisation indienne, son éducation, sa place dans la famille, son travail et surtout ses relations avec l'homme . . . mais sous ce titre l'auteure traite de la participation de quelques Françaises à l'oeuvre des missions, comme la duchesse d'Aiguillon, Madame de La Peltrie, Marie de l'Incarnation. . . . Mes réserves ne se limitent pas à l'emploi fautif du mot thème, car la plupart du temps l'auteure se contente de résumer les textes plutôt que de les analyser. Si elle nous renseigne très bien sur ce qu'écrit Le Jeune sur tel ou tel sujet, elle le fait sans vraiment se préoccuper de savoir comment il le dit. Elle renvoie cette question à la fin dans un court chapitre intitulé «la composition et le style», comme s'il s'agissait seulement d'un ornement du discours. Madame Deffain oublie que les jésuites, au contraire des récollets, étaient des hommes très instruits qui connaissaient bien les ressources de la rhétorique et qui savaient s'en servir à bon escient. Comment leurs stratégies d'écriture atteignaient-elles leur cible? Voilà ce que nous aurions voulu savoir. Cette étude s'impose donc plutôt comme vulgarisation des écrits de la Nouvelle-France que comme contribution à la recherche.

Compelling Spells

Richard Wagamese
The Quality of Light. Doubleday Canada $18.95

Gregory Scofield
Love Medicine and One Song. Polestar $16.95

Reviewed by Lally Grauer

Set in the small farming town of Mildmay in Bruce County, Ontario, *The Quality of Light* begins in 1965 when the protagonist, Joshua, is a boy of ten. The town, true to its name, reflects little of the tensions of that decade: instead, Wagamese establishes an idyllic pastoral setting, describing the land with an intensity reminiscent of Frederick Philip Grove in *Fruits of the Earth.* Joshua is an Ojibway adopted by Protestant Christian parents, but while one might expect such a situation to produce conflict, the protagonist is nurtured by his family, especially his father. "It was my father who brought me the spirit of the land," the narrator says. "He'd sink his furrowed fingers deep into it, roll its grit and promise around his palms, smell it . . . like he wanted it to seep through into his heart. It did—and it seeped into mine, too." Conflict and difference do enter into Joshua's closely knit community in the person of John Gebhardt, who eventually becomes Joshua's closest companion and, after a childhood ritual, "blood brother." The novel follows the progress of the two men into adulthood: Joshua becomes a Christian minister, John a radical activist. In the climax of the novel, the two are brought together when John, taking hostages, occupies a government building, and Joshua is called upon to negotiate.

With these two characters, Wagamese turns a number of tables. It is the Ojibway who finds lifelong security and stability in his loving Euro-Canadian, Christian family. The Euro-Canadian, alienated from his alcoholic father and a stranger in the community, adopts the identity of an aboriginal

warrior in order to survive. Wagamese unsettles stereotypes and politically correct assumptions: that Native peoples, not Euro-Canadians, have a special bond with the land; that Euro-Canadians have nothing but pain to offer Native peoples; that Native peoples, given their history of struggle against racism and oppression, will lead the way in exposing liberal blindness. He also attempts to separate culture and identity from the idea of race or "skin." At first I was concerned that Wagamese might be promoting a Christian quietism and introducing other stereotypes, opposing the wise, rooted Joshua to the shrill activist Johnny. As the novel progresses, however, the chosen paths of both men are explored with empathy and respect, and some of the most interesting writing emerges in the subtle interplay of insecurities and strengths in the interior monologues of the radical activist character.

The distinctiveness the two characters have to offer, however, becomes muffled by their equivalent unironized virtue. With Promise Keepers on the march, it is not hard to read this work as a novel about the need for caring and bonding between good men. Relationships between men—father and son, brother and brother—are at its heart and women are marginalized as bland supporters of good men, or, like Johnny's mother, mistaken supporters of unworthy men. Wagamese's attempts to impart successive lessons from the relationship between Joshua and Johnny and to make both characters seek and embrace the other can create oversimplifications in character and plot and too much speechifying. Nevertheless, the novel is often wise and moving. When Joshua experiences racism for the first time once he leaves the haven of Mildmay and goes to high school in another town, Wagamese communicates its shocking brutality without dehumanizing the racists. The work could have used more careful proofreading and editing: the tendency to sermonize becomes more pronounced as the novel progresses and the metaphor of the light which informs its title grows dim with overextension.

Sharply contrasting the brotherly love of Wagamese's novel is the eroticism of Gregory Scofield's *Love Medicine and One Song*. His introduction recounts a story about the power of love medicine: a woman works strong medicine on a young man she admires. He becomes enslaved in a passion that lasts long after she loses interest and leaves, even after her death. In the four parts of this work, Scofield's poetry communicates the intensity of desire, transforming the body into an eroticized natural world:

> watersnake, he is
> swamp frog croaking my chest
> hopping from nipple to nipple

The landscape of muskeg and swamp is joyful and alive with the vigorous physicality and spirit of spider, mouse, mountain lion and "spring bear/ample and lean" with his "berry tongue quick,/sweet from feasting."

Scofield's pared, incantatory poetry obsessively returns to the lover's body. It is not always clear who is speaking and who is being addressed, though I assume the voice we hear most of the time is that of the poet addressing a male lover. Despite the vitality of single poems, the reiterative imagery and the repeated return to the sites of ear, armpit and groin without much further context contributes to a uniformity which can become wearying. I am reinvigorated by poems, such as "Drive By," which offer traces of a specific relationship: the abandoned "little house" of the absent lover, and parents who "return to cut" the grass "once in a blue//blue moon." Witnessing an obsession is not as compelling as being obsessed.

Scofield can be compelling, however, in expressing the intensity of unrequited yearning, especially in the section entitled "Twelve Moons and the Dream." The title

brings to mind Marie Annharte Baker's witty, punning moon cycle in *Being On the Moon*; Scofield's work, however, inscribes a calendar of the senses and emotions of the lover as the desire of the beloved waxes and wanes. In "*Mikisiwi-pisim*" or "February, The Eagle Moon" the abandoned lover starts to return to life:

> All this year
> My skin was useless,
> my bones, a mere formality
> till yesterday
> the first eagle graced the sky,
> *e-papamihacik* [he flew]
> and circled with such permission
> I let loose the mice
> who'd come to nest in my mouth.

The final poem, "*Peyak-Nikamowin*" or "One Song" evokes the enthralled lover in the story at the beginning of the volume. It returns to the legend not only in its emotions but also in its traditional form of song, creating ceremony and showing the power of words to enact or bring into being:

> At the break of dawn
> the spirits I call
> to the west, the south,
> the north, the east
> I am looking
> like them I am looking
> calling to my love.
> ...
> In this dream
> he is across the river
> standing upon the bank
> just over there
> my sweetheart.

Captive though Scofield may be in his "one song," he also has the power to cast a spell of his own.

The Voices Voice Comprises: Incorporation, First-Person Narration and Gender Perfomance in Douglas Glover's "Red"

Claire Wilkshire

Criticism of Canadian short fiction has paid little attention to voice. Voice-centred reading strategies are valuable because of the kinds of issues they bring to light, issues which are often neglected by other kinds of reading. Examining the voices of Douglas Glover's "Red" reveals the importance of voice, demonstrates how an awareness of voice affects critical reading, and illustrates a variety of means by which voice may be identified and incorporated into readers' responses.

Reading strategies which privilege voice reveal aspects of fiction which might otherwise remain obscure: the ways in which direct and indirect speech function both in characterization and in constructing the oppositions which create narrative tension; the complexity of the relations among figures (for example, the author, implied author, narrator, and characters) and the points at which they overlap or separate; and the broad range of languages which combine to form that strange and variegated thing which is called narrative voice.

"Red" is one of eight stories brought together in Glover's second collection, *Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatoon*. Three of these stories, including "Red," are narrated in the first person by a female protagonist. One of the interesting features of "Red" is the way in which Flo's narration incorporates a wide range of her own modes of expression and includes as well the voices of a variety of characters. While "Red" may be described as a "first-person" narration, the phrase "first person" is neither singular nor irreducible—it elides the differences among the voices it comprises. The narrator, Flo, incorporates a multiplicity of voices into her story; her invocation of Red's voice in particular raises issues of speech and gender identity.

"Red" blends genres in the same way that Flo blends voices. Elements of romance, parody, comedy, drama and satire all figure in the story, whose principal focus remains the relationship between Flo, the narrator, and her husband, Red. The narrative opens in the present tense; repeated shifts, from present to past, fill in the background. Flo married Jack Titus, alcoholic, liar, and banjo-picking philanderer, during or soon after college; they had three children and a twenty-year relationship before she left him. The children are perennially miserable. Sylvie, the oldest at twenty-eight, has attached herself to Leo, "a pill-popping, glue-sniffing loser"; Franky has failed her bar admission examinations three times; Pierre is a depressed waiter. When she met Red, Flo was contemplating a melodramatic suicide at a Holiday Inn in Kansas City, but a week later the two were married and ten years later, when the story opens, they are living more or less happily ever after in New Mexico.

Although Flo narrates "Red" in the first person, the words of others constitute a substantial portion of her story. "Red" includes direct speech from Flo herself, Red, Sylvie, the three children as a group, Jack and Jack's mother; in addition, the story reports or refers to speech by all of these characters and more (Flo's former employer, Jack's former doctor). Flo, the potter, moulds and casts the language of others into a text which is, finally, her story.

Flo's narration comprises a variety of levels of language; her diction and allusion range from the formal to the colloquial. On the first page of the story she says she was educated at Smith, one of the most prestigious women's colleges in the United States. At times her language reflects her level of education. Consider, for example, the statement, "Jack just looked at me as if I were a loon," in which the subjunctive "were" replaces the more common conversational "was," or the syntax and vocabulary of Flo's reference to a bartender, "a man with whom I am sure he [Jack] has been holding intimate colloquy." At times the style is more informal and idiomatic, but in general the grammar, syntax and vocabulary belong to the realm of literary language.

Two of the many language systems at work in "Red" are those of art and geography. Flo's frame of reference is that of the artist; in a description of Red, she notes "a Hawaiian shirt out of a Douanier-Rousseau [*sic*] jungle," She also mentions Kachina dolls, Penitente chapels, Pueblo sacred dances, a storage pot "in the Mimbres style"; the specificity of the descriptions testifies to the visual artist's concern with style. The narration also draws on the language of geography, both directly, through its frequent naming of places (New Mexico, Santa Fe, the Pecos River), and indirectly, through epithets suggestive of place ("the adobe arch," "a tripod of piñon logs").

In addition to its varied languages, the narrative offers evidence of shifts from what one might call a spoken voice to a written voice. This is perhaps a problematic distinction: the term "written voice" appears to be an oxymoron. But some utterances clearly sound as if they are spoken, while others give the distinct impression that they have been written. Characteristic features of a spoken voice may include colloquial language, a conversational tone, the use of the first person and the present tense, and informal syntax. The written voice more often employs the past tense and is more likely to include, for example, the subjunctive or the pluperfect. It may be distinguished by such markers as more formal syntax and diction, a more precise and concise, less leisurely style. Flo recounts Red's encounter with Patrice as follows: "They had run into each other in Upper Volta one year while he was building the sluice gates on a power dam for the government; Patrice was backpacking, studying African primitives." This sentence is relatively long, dense with information, carefully balanced with a semi-colon to separate Red's activities from Patrice's. It is a concise way of conveying information, a considered, written sentence, quite different from such others as "Jack's mother never gave me any help," or "I cried all the time he was telling me the story." These last two sentences could be spoken as easily as they could be written. The shift from the written voice to the conversational voice implies a shift in the persona of the narrator, an alternation between the writing narrator and the 'talking' character.

The following passage exemplifies the diversity of the voices which contribute to Flo's narration:

> For his part, Red admitted it wasn't quite true what he had said about all the drinking and whoring. Until a year and a half before we met, he had been married to a Mexican woman called Patrice, an abstract expressionist painter in the style of Ruffino Tamayo, who had died of a

> stroke. They had run into each other in Upper Volta one year while he was building the sluice gates on a power dam for the government; Patrice was backpacking, studying African primitives. When she failed to conceive, she "went Catholic" instead of going to see a doctor, according to Red. She even got him to go to Mass, praying for a child that never came. "She was a difficult woman," he said, shaking his head. "But I can't forget her. Take me, and you'll just have to put up with her like a ghost in the house." I cried all the time he was telling me the story. I had never met a man so romantic. Sometimes I think I had just never met a man.
>
> Jack was just the opposite. Jack lied every time he opened his mouth. He lied when he said "good morning" or "how are you?" It wasn't that he was trying to be cruel; he would always explain his prevarication by saying he only wanted to make me happy. I didn't know until the second year of our marriage that he was an alcoholic. I didn't know until he went into the hospital with acute alcohol poisoning and the doctor told me himself. "But Jack doesn't drink," I said, all innocence and wounded pride. "Lady, when your husband came in here, he had more bourbon than blood in his veins."

This is Flo telling her story, but the passage includes direct quotations from Red which counter the image of power and invulnerability he has projected thus far in the story. In Sylvie's unsympathetic terms, Red is an "over-sexed, macho, crypto-fascist pig," He initiates the relationship with Flo; he builds large structures and makes lots of money; he provides for Flo's children and pays for their education. He is strong physically as well as figuratively: when Pierre accidentally shoots Red on a hunting expedition, Pierre faints and it is the wounded Red who carries him back to the truck. However, although Flo's children regard Red as unassailable, he is maimed, physically by skin cancer and emotionally by the grief associated with his first marriage. Red says that Patrice "went Catholic"; "she was a difficult woman . . . but I can't forget her." His determination to keep alive the memory of his late wife appeals to Flo because it reveals the kind of respect she was never accorded in her marriage to Jack. Twice in this passage, Red's speech is presented inside quotation marks: the first citation refers to Patrice's Catholicism, the second to her lingering presence in his life. These two direct quotations emphasize, respectively, Red and Patrice's failure to conceive a child and his bereavement. By alluding first to a lack of life and then explicitly to death, they suggest Red's ultimate impotence in the face of mortality.

Indirect references to Red's speech also contribute to characterization. The passage cited above begins: "For his part, Red admitted it wasn't quite true what he had said about all the drinking and whoring." When Red first meets Flo, he plays the role of swaggering stud; as they become better acquainted, his roles become increasingly varied. His initial announcement, "I . . . drink and whore all the time," appears in direct speech, whereas this 'admission' occurs in indirect speech. Typographically, direct speech is accentuated and localized in a way that indirect discourse is not; indirect discourse also tends to diffuse the impact of an utterance because it often requires more words. The indirection of Red's admission softens the contrast between the earlier and the later utterance, and this effect is reinforced by the clause, "it wasn't *quite* true." The second statement gives the impression not of contradicting but merely of qualifying the first; the identity Red projects in the second instance thus seems not entirely consistent (rather than in direct conflict) with the first.

Direct quotations from Jack demonstrate the capacity for double-voicedness of even the most banal utterance. "He lied," Flo claims, "when he said 'good morning' or

'how are you.'" It is difficult to imagine "good morning" as a lie, especially since it is usually considered a greeting rather than an assertion. Jack's ability to lie "every time he opened his mouth" underscores the importance of investigating the languages that are invoked by an utterance: "How are you?" may be a familiar question (so familiar that it often ceases to function as a question) belonging to what Bakhtin calls "common language" (301-2), but here it also belongs to Jack's language, that is, the language of duplicity.

Flo's conversation with the doctor, which appears in direct speech, shows her naivete in the early stages of her marriage with Jack, her apparent inability to understand the major cause of the unhappiness in her marriage. The dialogue characterizes a Flo who is far different from the one who narrates the story. The quotation marks which enclose the brief, deluded assertion "But Jack doesn't drink," separate the voice of the trusting Flo ("all innocence") from that of Flo the narrator, who has learned about deception and misplaced loyalty. This explicit quotation fragments the identity of the focal character, highlighting a split between Flo-as-she-is and Flo-as-she-was.

Fragmented and contradictory identities recur in "Red." Just as Red the unassailable turns out to have his own fragilities, so Flo the narrator contrasts her current experienced self with her former inexperienced self. Even within the Flo of the story's present tense, a variety of identities continue to compete. The Flo who is married to Red recognizes the infantile egocentrism of her adult children, but the Flo who is a mother responds immediately to Sylvie's voice ("thin and weary . . . like a knife in my ribs," and, against her better judgement, out of maternal guilt and empathy, allows herself to be manipulated into a meeting with Jack. She does this "in a moment of weakness"; in another moment, a different Flo would act differently. Thus, the name "Flo" designates a variety of Flos, the term "character" a variety of characters. Flo quotes the speech of others both directly and indirectly; the citations highlight the often conflicting traits which create a fictional identity.

Voice, then, is a key factor in the creation of character; to put it another way, speech participates in the production of fictional identities, including gendered and sexual identities. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) is an extended discussion of the production of sexual identities in which Butler argues that gender is not assigned but performed, that an individual creates a gender by enacting it.

Butler explains the production of identity as follows:

> [A]cts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. . . . [A]cts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (136)

"Acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires," Butler writes, "create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core." That is, the assortment of verbal and bodily acts of an individual appear to be controlled from within by a force called gender. When the idea of that force is removed, what remains, according to Butler, is a series of unconnected acts, each of which might be allied with one gender or the other, or with a particular facet of one gender. Red performs a variety of gender identities through his speech and his actions.

Red is a rich Texan whose bravado reveals itself through his speech and actions from the outset. He and Flo meet because he

approaches her to ask, without preamble: "You wanna hold my cucumber, honey?" He drips sweat and drops cigar ash on her stomach, sweat and cigars being classic metonyms for a certain kind of masculinity. Red is characterized by the directness of his speech at their first meeting—in both senses of "direct": his words are in quotation marks and his manner of speaking is colloquial ("you wanna"), patronizing ("honey") and blunt. His opening line to Flo epitomizes the macho swagger that constitutes one of his gender identities.

Red's dominant masculine presence reveals itself through how much he says as well as what he says. A conversational pattern emerges almost immediately whereby Red speaks, Flo giggles; Red speaks, Flo laughs; Red speaks, Flo cries. Red's speech dominates at the first meeting not only because of the amount of space his words take up but because they are set apart from the rest of the narrative in inverted commas, and because Flo's own response to him is speechlessness: Flo is still the narrator, but in this section she is saying little to the reader and nothing to Red (at least not in direct speech). The stereotypical polarity between the man who speaks and the woman who remains silent is not maintained consistently, though; indeed the story parodies such a binary opposition by establishing it in the meeting scene and then undercutting it as the story progresses. After the scene by the pool, Flo and Red quickly reverse their conversational positions: in Red's room, Flo "talked for eight hours straight, then fell over asleep on his bed." Red's words at the pool, in direct speech, take up a certain amount of story space, whereas the eight hours of Flo's narrative are passed over in a phrase. Although Red might not always have a lot to say, the fact that his speech is often reported directly makes it appear to take up more room; as a consequence, Red, the big man, the big talker, performs a kind of masculine identity of presence.

If Red's speech and the manner in which it is reported reveal aspects of his gender identity, so does the absence of his speech, which Flo notes on a number of occasions. Red's own silence is emphasized in a number of contexts with implications that may differ but remain consistently positive. There is the man-of-few-words motif: "Red was proud, but he never said a word" (46). There is silence implying decision and action (with the implication that speech opposes action by delaying it): "Red has never said 'what if' in his life." There is silent pain: "And now he says nothing . . . Red cannot speak of things that are close to his heart." And there is the refusal to speak in a way that is critical or judgemental, as when Flo's children try to set her up with her ex-husband: "Red's been good about this get-together with Jack. He hasn't said a word." This last type of silence does not necessarily come naturally; it is the result of an effort of will which does not always work: "Sometimes, when Sylvie has been especially hard on me, Red cannot restrain himself." It remains always a quality, though, in Flo's eyes, and one which she shares with Red: "I never say anything, nor does Red"; "Red never said he loved me, nor I him."

Red's final words counteract the role of hero he has performed throughout the story. When Red meets Flo, he rescues her from the death she has planned for herself at the Holiday Inn. He saves her children to the extent that he offers them a home and financial support. But in the story's final paragraphs, Red is at his most vulnerable: having just had skin cancers removed from his face by a dermatologist, he meets Flo in the bar where she has been talking to her ex-husband Jack, in the reunion orchestrated by her children. Presumably, Red has been reminded of the precariousness of both his life and his marriage. By the time he enters the bar, Flo has for her part been

reminded of everything she loathes about Jack; she dumps him and slips in beside Red:

> I am nudging Red's elbow, saying softly, "Buy me a drink, sweetheart." Then he turns to me and gives me a shock. A drop of blood has seeped through the gauze on his nose, tiny pinheads of sweat are running together over his brow, and there are tears sliding down his cheeks.
>
> I take his hand and give it a squeeze.
>
> "I love you, Flo," he says. "If you leave me, I'll blow my brains out."

Flo responds by affirming her love for Red. In a neat reversal of the initial poolside encounter, this episode has Flo playing the seducer (her opening line is less explicit than Red's "Wanna hold my cucumber, honey?", but it is a more conventional variation on the same theme; her "sweetheart" echoes Red's "honey" even to its placement in the sentence). And here it is Flo the hero who rescues Red from the threat of death by loneliness, who rescues him with her words (which are also, in a sense, his words), and who closes the narrative with her declaration.

At first glance, Douglas Glover's "Red" might appear to be a univocal story: one narrator tells the reader the story of her life. To pay attention to voice is to expose the oppositional characteristics which create character, the tensions and contradictions between utterances, to uncover the multiple voices at work within a narrative voice.

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Inventing 1997

W.H. New

The literary publications of 1997 suggest it was a year of invention—not just a year of the imagination working, but also one in which the idea of invention itself came under examination, and in which the power of inventiveness to construct the way in which we see reality came to be applied to personal and political circumstances alike.

It is, of course, conventional to expect narrative to "invent," whatever the genre, so the fact that Djanet Sears' striking play *Harlem Duet* (Shillingford) should invent Othello's first wife, a black woman named Billie, and use this concept to dramatize the continuing power of bias (with echoes of *Wide Sargasso Sea* at work here, too), seems entirely reasonable. So does the way so much of the year's fiction tells of tensions between observed and imagined worlds.

That said, there remain ways of subjectively differentiating among the several score of books that I looked at; the subjectivity means that I, too, am likely at least in some measure to have been "inventing" as I read, crankily perhaps finding one book observant but not imaginative enough, another one imaginative but not observant enough, always seeking that jolt of connection that the craft of words sometimes enacts. Consider some of the books of stories that appeared in 1997. Robyn Sarah's *Promise of Shelter* (Porcupine's Quill) tells a number of first-person narratives about small domestic details; this is a world where lost keys (as in real life they do) prove upsetting—but these traumas of the minutiae never entirely engage the reader. The impulse to urge the characters to get a life, rather than to empathize with them, is maybe compounded if one places the book next to Nick Craine's *Hard Core Logo* (Anansi), a graphic-novel adaptation of Michael Turner's novel and Bruce McDonald's film. Unlike Sarah, Craine/Turner fasten on sex, drugs, rock bands, bars, and the fundamental sameness of the Prairies and New York City. Empathizing with these characters is no easier—like Sarah's they, too, are so preoccupied with themselves that they cannot find value in connection. But that is the point, here. The band's attempts to come together in a reunion fail; reuniting cannot return the past. This "reality" has more grit in it than a number of other versions, of course, but is it any more representative? For a new generation of writers, that's not the right question. Better to ask What does it Signify—and answer something like "attitude": a combination of moral outrage and furious despair at conventional society's dismissal of their generation and of the possibility that achievement can be at once creative and counter-culture.

Stories by Sandra Birdsell (*The Two-Headed Calf*, McClelland & Stewart), David Manicom (*Ice in Dark Water*, Véhicule), and Marilyn Bowering (*Visible Worlds*, HarperCollins) are more conventional but also uneven. Birdsell's solid use of frag-

ments of observed detail enlightens her narratives, but some ("The Man from Mars," "Rooms for Rent") have more energy than others. Bowering's tale of the conflict between the dark man (Albrecht) who is never preferred to his fair-haired, musical, Nazi brother Gerhard is strong on telling, weaker on dramatization of character. Manicom is earnest—but there is a quality to this prose that says Writer at imaginative work: watch for future books, here.

Brian Moore's *The Magician's Wife* (Knopf), an ostensibly moral tale set in 19th-century Algeria, suggest that the greatest illusion we live with might be history—a premise other works take up in other ways: as in David Helwig's eloquent fragment of autobiography, for example (*The Child of Someone*, Oberon), or in Clark Blaise's evocative *If I Were Me* (Porcupine's Quill), a sequence of sketches in which a psychologist named Gerald Zander is, in his 50th year, "assaulted by faces" at night: in one he sees his double, in another he becomes involved in his mother's Alzheimer's and meditates on language growing and dying inside the brain—the shifts of setting (Gdansk, New York, Gujarat, Tokyo) tell of entering new countries, of being abroad (a working metaphor for the wandering mind). Margaret Gibson's *Opium Dreams* (M&S) stylishly also probes the way a family deals with Alzheimer's: Where is my room, it asks. What are the elements of a half-life? How much life can a camera catch?

Other books seek to reclaim a particular past, whether Basil Johnston (with Jonas George) telling Ojibway stories in *The Star-Man* (ROM), or Antanas Sileika anecdotally reenacting the East European immigrant experience of Toronto in the 1950s (*Buying on Time*, Porcupine's Quill), or Austin Clarke constructing a defensive dialogue about memory, in which two aging Barbadian men fence with each other's motives (*The Origin of Waves*, M&S). Nino Ricci earnestly recovers an Italian past in *Where She Has Gone* (M&S); Joel Yanofsky takes account of life in anglophone Montreal (*Jacob's Ladder*, Porcupine's Quill); Yann Martel's fictional first-person narrative tells of an identity that dissolves—abroad, across borders—into cross-gender identifications (*Self*, Knopf); David Carpenter's local *Banjo Lessons* (Coteau) more familiarly tells about fishing, finding language and poetry, and (without analyzing, as Martel does, what maturity means in contemporary society) growing up. Cary Fagan's *Sleeping Weather* (Porcupine's Quill) is a quiet story about a man who has found satisfaction in suburbia, but whose jail past threatens to catch up and overtake his happiness. Curtis Gillespie, in the gritty stories of *The Progress of an Object in Motion* (Coteau), turns the world of metal chairs, motel rooms, occasional sex, parole, and golf into a suprisingly compelling confrontation with reality. Carmen Rodriguez, in the free-associating prose of *And a body to remember with* (Arsenal Pulp) seeks to articulate connections between BC and Chile. Shree Ghatage, in a first work, *Awake when all the world is asleep* (Anansi), produces a solid series of linked stories about a young woman who is drawn to Canada by love and profession, but who is imaginatively pressured by Indian convention, especially one asserting that heaven and earth (east and west) cannot mix. Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (Press Gang), improves after a slow start, as a daughter attempts to find the lesbian couple who have been expelled from the community. Ven Begamudré's *Laterna Magika* (Oolichan) shows a more skilled writer at work, one who makes more creative use of ellipsis and metaphor in portraying life in India and Europe; here, "vision" is important—but the fact of "looking" makes the reader, like the characters, accessory to

action: in this instance both to corruption and to caring.

In Erika Ritter's romp, *The Hidden Life of Humans* (Key Porter), a dog's perspective and a woman's perspective are counterpointed; the dog's eye is livelier and more perceptive. More serious works by other established writers—Elizabeth Hay's *Small Change* (Porcupine's Quill), Carole Corbeil's *In the Wings* (Stoddart), for example—unhappily labour under the weight of metaphor or intensity. In several works for children, however, fantasy combines with gritty reality, such as Kevin Major's *Gaffer* (Doubleday), where—over a period ranging from 1497 to 2027—fish and the sea provide resistance to social norms; and in Paul Quarrington's imaginatively moodier *The Boy on the back of the turtle* (Dougles & McIntyre), an old tale about loss is turned into a contemporary quest, in the Galapagos, for significance. Nick Bantock's narrator, too, seeks significance through a parabolic (visual and verbal) rediscovery of the past; *The Forgetting Room* (HarperCollins)—this book aimed at a sophisticated adult reader—takes him into the past when he inherits his grandfather's studio in Spain; what he has to learn is that he must come to terms with having inherited the grandfather's capacity to be an artist as well, and must cut away "killing interferences" in order to grow into his talent. In some sense this need to come to terms with reality informs Timothy Findley's sensitive, if perhaps overextended, stories in *Dust to Dust* (HarperCollins) also; they tell of death and dying—of loss—and of the mixups that so often attend desire. So with Eric McCormack's allegory about the necessity of Love and Trust, *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (Viking), the title drawn from John Knox's attack upon one kind (or 'regimen') of Authoritarian Rule; a psychological tale about the mind's Miltonic capacity to make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven (a point it makes while asserting that heaven can be found in a suburb of Toronto), it is energetically written, though McCormack's enormous skill at speculative short fiction is here overcome at novel length by a continuing desire to explain.

The three novels to dominate critical attention during 1997 were, however, undoubtedly Carol Shields' *Larry's Party* (Knopf), Jane Urquhart's *The Underpainter* (M&S), and Mordecai Richler's *Barney's Version* (M&S). The last of these is brilliant: a comic, sad, eloquent novel in which shifts in tone magnificently carry the reader between outrage and sympathy. The other two, unhappily, for all that I would like to like them, are ambitious failures, ideas still in want of the text that's equal to them. Neither Urquhart nor Shields manages well with the central figure (male, in each case) on which the novel depends. Urquhart's artist—ostensibly the man who is overlooked because the Group of Seven command attention—paints the landscapes of his life on canvas, then overpaints them with abstracts/abstractions; and Shields's gormless (and therefore ostensibly "average" man) Larry makes mazes, especially garden mazes, as his only really creative activity in a life disturbed by the women in it. Both these texts come more to life when they characterize the women. But *The Underpainter* proceeds relentlessly, from picture to picture, long after the reader has got the point; and *Larry's Party* needed to know as much about vegetation as Larry ostensibly would know, if it was to prove convincing ("hedgerows" aren't as characteristic of the north of England as this text would have us believe), and might have hinted at *why* Larry is so enthused by mazes. Instead, it is more taken up by its own maze-making. But if the text *is* a deliberate labyrinth (and "threads" are alluded to in plenty—though the old slang for "clothes" seems altogether too clever), then maybe there's a minotaur we're expected to

appreciate at the centre of the book. The only one around, however, appears to be Larry's male anatomy, and maybe the contemporary tension between preoccupation and inconsequentiality is what Shields wants to expose. Alas, here the narrative's circularity, its discovery that its end is its beginning, that Penelope isn't what you might have been led to expect, and that hurtful behaviour is as good as it gets, seems less trenchant than banal. Richler's Barney, by contrast, is a brilliantly corrosive character, magnificently imagined onto the page; most readers, likely, will find him hateful, politically incorrect, nasty, crusty, and crude—and also, if they bother to think a little, also funny, insightful, caring, vulnerable, and sufficiently human to attract quite a remarkable number of long-standing friends. The whole narrative reads as Barney's defence against what he declares to be a false accusation of murder—along the way being generous with his own opinions about men, women, Quebec, politics, art, money, and success. The achievement of the book is that the reader, like the characters he recounts into existence (a succession of friends, wives, children), will waver in whether or not to believe him, and will discover over the course of the book that that is the basis of empathy. Richler controls tone remarkably in this book; the sprightly idiosyncrasies, the narrative pacing, the understanding that informs the shift of perspective from generation to generation—this is a novel to savour and reread.

Reprints and anthologies perhaps say more about the taste of a time than do many another publication. To judge from 1997 publications, Taste wants *grand guignol* more than it used to. The reprint of the selected stories of Sheldon Currie (*The Story So Far...*, Breton Books) brings back the story of the nun who arrives naked at a party, and the story of the woman who marries the wrong identical twin, and the original of the film "Margaret's Museum." With that and with the 1997 film *The Hanging Garden*, I think there's a genre for which the term Nova Scotia Gothic needs to be invented. (It might be too specific, however. Holley Rubinsky's *At First I Hope for Rescue* [Knopf] says that madness and incest are the stuff of BC lives as well, or at least the stuff of mid-life crises; the vernacular is handled well, but the characters' New Age voices are not distinguished enough to finally sustain interest.) Perhaps a related desire underscores some of the continuing interest in L.M. Montgomery's world; be that as it may, one could have wished for sharper illustrations in *The Annotated Anne of Green Gables* (Oxford), though the editors provide lots of information on allusions and geography.

And there were other reprints and collections: *The Complete Writings of Emily Carr* (Douglas & McIntyre), which at last brings the sketch books and journals together with the longer works, with an introduction by Doris Shadbolt; *The Austin Clarke Reader*, ed. Barry Callaghan (Exile), with essays and interviews assembled along with the stories, and especially valuable for Dionne Brand's comments in her insightful foreword: comments on Clarke's refusal of the standard How-I-Became-A-Canadian narrative and on the need to participate in the narrative of community; Pauline Johnson's *Legends of Vancouver*, with an introduction by Robin Lawrence, aimed at a wide readership, with photographs; two canonical texts—S.J. Duncan's *The Imperialist* and Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (in Tecumseh's critical edition series, with excerpts from commentary), the first with valuable notes by Tom Tausky; and three volumes of poetry: Patrick Lane's fine *Selected Poems 1977-1997* (Harbour), which provides a ready opportunity to read the excellent "Winter" poems in context, A.M. Klein's *Selected Poems*, ed. by Zailig Pollock (UTP), and P.K. Page's *The Hidden Room:*

Collected Poems, in two remarkable volumes from Porcupine's Quill.

Anthologies of note include several collections—and to some degree, therefore, "constructions"—of versions of person and place. *Gatherings VIII*, ed. Joyce Joe and Susan Beaver (Theytus), draws attention to contemporary First Nations comedy; Issue no. 22 of the journal *West Coast Line* assembles new work by Kwame Dawes, Damian Lopes, Claire Harris, George Elliott Clarke and others as "North: New African Canadian Writing"; Clarke himself, in *Eyeing the North Star* (M&S), samples 21 contemporary writers for a commentary on "Directions in African-Canadian Literature" (in which Caribbean-African writing is included); Raymond Beauchemin and Denise Roig, in *Future Tense* (Véhicule), gather some important literary and political statements along with some uneven stories in a book of "New English Fiction from Quebec." This impulse to collect in order to chart—or invent?—the "new" has perhaps always been the impulse of anthologies, but it's been given an extra energy in recent years by the sheer impossibility of keeping up with all publications, making the "sampler," however it may be slanted and however much it cannot substitute for the experience of reading widely, for many readers a welcome guide to contemporary writing. Hence, while Maggie Helwig's *Coming Attractions 97* (Oberon) samples three writers only (Elyse Gasco, Dennis Bock, and Nadine McInnis, all of whom write ably but do not yet declare their independence), Douglas Glover's *Best Canadian Stories 97* (Oberon) samples works from a wide range of of artistic talents, from Mark Anthony Jarman and Cynthia Flood to Alice Munro and John Metcalf, yet maintains a kind of thematic continuity by finding stories about recollecting, rearranging, and disarranging the past, often traumatically. Denise Chong's Penguin *Anthology of Writing by Canadian Women* (Viking) gathers stories from Gallant on, but the collection feels more politically safe than verbally adventurous. Arlen Perly Rae's *Everybody's Favourite* (Viking) asks a number of writers to talk about books that changed their lives, and while the collection as a whole leaves one unsatisfied, there are none the less some surprising choices: Munro talking about *Emily of New Moon*, Pat Lane about *Swiss Family Robinson* and *The Golden Bough*, Pierre Berton about *Treasure Island*, and Tomson Highway about *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Connie Rooke's *Writing Home* (M&S) is a more sustained collection, with Atwood, Chong, Heighton, Findley, Mistry, Vanderhaeghe, and others all writing personal essays—Mistry's allegory of Ontario being particularly devastating. The Nebula-Award prizewinner Robert Sawyer and his wife Carolyn Clink edited the latest collection of Canadian speculative fiction, *Tesseracts*^{6} (H.B. Fenn), with works by C.J. Dorsey, Elisabeth Vonarburg, and others. Leonard E. Doucette goes back to reread the past, translating and editing six plays from 19th-century Quebec in the latest volume in the *Drama of Our Past* series (UTP); the excellent editing of these six (out of 175 extant texts) ought to rekindle interest in historical drama and comic melodrama: the texts here include works by Quesnel, Petitclair, and Fréchette. In some ways, of all the anthologies I looked at this year, the one that appealed to me most was George Blondin's collection, from various sources, of stories from the Dene, called *Yamoria the Lawmaker* (NeWest), such as the one in which Yamoria is tricked into marrying a beaver, and what he then does; Yamoria is the Great Medicine Man who brought to the Dene the laws of their culture, and perhaps more than anything else this book reaffirms the wisdom of the past in a more uncertain age. There are eight laws, profoundly difficult in their amazing simplicity: share, help, love,

respect, sleep, work, teach, and be happy.

As might be anticipated, the critical writings of 1997 are not unrelated to the impulses behind anthologies; both enterprises wish to teach, and the subjects criticism takes up are often footnotes to the same cultural desires as impel the design of collections—a concern for the singularity of a special point of view. The personal essays of Steven Heighton, for example, *The Admen Move on Lhasa* (Anansi), declare social commitments; I am a great admirer of Heighton's work, but these essays don't feel as tightly shaped as his stories and poems do. Beside them stand other sets of meditations, including B.W. Powe's *A Canada of Light* (Somerville), on the kinds of disparity that separate politicians and corporate bodies from the people, and David Solway's *Random Walks* (McGill-Queen's), "essays in elective criticism," the punning subtitle scarcely disguising the degree to which a range of learned references (on poetry, Shakespeare, criticism, Sontag, Joyce, Mouré, Layton, and the sexuality of reading) critiques the kinds of trendiness this poet abhors. Tom Henighan's *Ideas of North* (Raincoast) is a self-selected guide to the "best" books, films, music, etc., in Canada—and it is an interesting grab-bag of a read—though to suggest that the "best" theatre in Vancouver can ignore Studio 58, for example, is not to cast the eye far enough into the local culture. One might anticipate that reference books would escape the shade of personality, but always there are limits of coverage. These can be guided by conventional critical paradigms (CWTW fiction 11 and CWTW poetry 12 are two of the best in ECW's ongoing series, but their bibliographic subjects—Clarke, Kogawa, Mistry, Skvorecky, Cooley, Dewdney, McCaffery, Wah, and Wayman—prove how ill-equipped standard categories are for classifying contemporary writing; I note parenthetically, too, that one judges such books subjectively, and though I admire any bibliographer's fortitude and achievement, I note that the Mistry entry misses at least my own article). Limits of coverage can also be directed by book size (Alan Rayburn's *Oxford Dictionary of Canadian Place Names* is a basic guide; Reference Press's *Who's Who in Canadian Literature 1997-1998* is valuable for the persons listed—mostly anglophone—but uneven in its contemporary sampling) or burdened by a previous (and Toronto-centric) conception of literary history (as in the second edition of the Oxford *Companion*). Brian Fawcett's *The Disbeliever's Dictionary* (Somerville) is more bracing, if read in short doses, for it openly claims its subjectivity; loosely based on *The Devil's Dictionary*, it tempers wit with political asperity (and sometimes with what feels like personal vendetta); "Yugoslavia" is defined as "the direction in which Canada appears to be heading," "The Young" are characterized as a group "being heavily propagandized by the right . . . most of whom are too frightened and angry about their financial futures to be young," and the "Writer's Union of Canada" is dismissed for wannabe aspirations and lack of imagination. More engaging over all, if tonally less acid, is John Ralston Saul's *Reflections of a Siamese Twin* (Viking), which argues that mythology and reality are in conflict in contemporary Canada, that neo-conservativism and martyrdom are easy myths to adopt but neither of them very productive, and that no nation worth respect thinks of itself as static; perhaps I like it because I've been saying the same things for years—but it's refreshing to find someone else getting past the clichés of conquest, solitudes, and the absurd notion that we spend our time in quest of identity.

Some critical writing consciously addressed literature through cultural categories, as in Norman Ravvin's well-written *A House of*

Words (UTP), an account of Jewish writing in North America, especially interesting on its account of the past as home. Reinhold Kramer looks at *Scatology and Civility in the English Canadian Novel* (UTP), arguing that notions of filth and bodily function are always defined in relation to notions of the ideal, and that scatology is used to critique or support systems of value, whether economic, political, or aesthetic. More interesting in some ways is a group of four texts published by Guernica, which together illuminate some of the complexities of minority-culture claims: Marino Tuzi's *The Power of Allegiance*, which examines the problem of "representing" culture in Italian-Canadian fiction, Pasquale Verdicchio's *Devils in Paradise*, which looks at "post-Emigrant culture," Giovanna Del Negro's *Looking Through My Mother's Eyes*, an account of nine women's life stories, and Antonio D'Alfonso's *In Italics*, a 1996 book that defends ethnicity against the forces of amalgamation and uniformity. The first two of these books are especially fine; as a group, the books establish a tacit dialogue; the last book, impassioned and heartfelt, seems to me none the less to mistake a belief in "Canadian" culture with a demand for "uniformity"—not so, suggesting that the book might also find it constructive to be more actively in dialogue with John Ralston Saul.

Ajay Heble and his co-editors reclaim the past in another way, assembling in one of the most useful of recent anthologies of critical essays, *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism* (Broadview), 24 articles on genre, ideology, theory, race, hyphenation, space, institutions, and other subjects: here is the book that a lot of students could use as a route to reach beyond nationalist criticism into critical alternatives. Sheila and David Latham have also edited a collection of criticism, this one a volume on W.O. Mitchell; called *Magic Lies* (UTP), it could stand a better index, but it's a working companion to the 50th anniversary reissue of *Who Has Seen the Wind* (M&S), in its original form, restoring the text that had been cut from the 1947 edition. Margaret Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (Macfarlane, Walter & Ross) also appeared in a new form, or at least in a general-release reprint of the limited-release version of the book that was elegantly and profusely illustrated by Charles Pachter in 1980. Collections of letters function less to recreate the past, I think, than to reclaim past lives for the present, though often the present motive seems mixed. Peter Neary's *White Tie and Decorations* (UTP) is a collection of a frighteningly conservative correspondence involving Sir John and Lady Hope Simpson in Newfoundland in the 1930s; it might well put readers off writing another letter in their lives. John Lennox and Ruth Panofsky's edition of the correspondence between Margaret Laurence and Adele Wiseman (UTP), however, details an exchange that reveals the difficult ordinariness of compassion, family, and friendship.

Numerous biographies also sought to illuminate personality, reading person through the lenses of invention as well as those of observation and analysis. Laurence herself was the subject of James King's biography (Knopf), Roderick Haig-Brown the subject of his daughter Valerie's personal memoir (*Deep Currents*, Orca), Sinclair Ross the subject of Keath Fraser's tribute (ECW); such cultural figures as Lucien Bouchard, Isabel Mackenzie King, Alexander Mackenzie, and the Loyalists also attracted attention, respectively by Laurence Martin (Viking), Charlotte Gray (Viking), Barry Gough (M&S), and Christopher Moore (M&S) and Norman Knowles (UTP). Yet to judge from these and other recent examples of biographical writing, Canadians seem less preoccupied with the quest for identity than with the quest for peccadilloes. Laurence turns here into the Suicidal Alcoholic, Ross into the Genital Fetishist, Bouchard into the Guilty

Son of a Tyrannical Mother, and Mackenzie (much more tamely) into a man driven by its uncertainties as much as his aspirations. *That* at least sounds convincing. What I like most about the Loyalist books (Moore's *The Loyalists* and Knowles' *Inventing the Loyalists*) was the difference between their readings. Moore, looking at settlement as well as exile following the Revolution, examines illuminatingly the ramifications of the treaty with the Iroquois in 1779, the border negotiations, and the speculation in land that then, as now, turned property into power. Though also refusing the myths born of official memorializing, Knowles takes a different tack, looking at the diversity of the Loyalists and at the phenomenon of the "creation of usable pasts." Oddly, however, the book drearily insists on its own "facts" even as it demonstrates how the idea of "tradition" is at least some of the time less a shared and ongoing cultural choice than a cliché of social control. A kind of accidental footnote to both these books is unexpectedly supplied by Andrew Scott's personal account of Utopian communities in B.C., *The Promise of Paradise* (Whitecap); Scott visits, to the degree he can, Metlakatla, Hagensborg, Cape Scott, Sointula, Doukhobour sites, Brother XII's island, and the Alternative Communities born mostly in the 1970s—then records his impressions. Not only does he recount their histories (primarily a history of morality, survival, and access to land), he also critiques what happens when a community demands, as the price of acceptance, the surrender of free will. Inventiveness sometimes enfranchises; the power of wielding it also sometimes enslaves.

Intercultural contact often serves as the site of such competition for power, and 1997 books that touch on this subject in quite different ways include Freeman Patterson's photographic encounter with *The Last Wilderness* (Key Porter); Barbara Hager's *Honour Song*, a series of tributes to Native leaders in various fields (Raincoast); and Martha Black's *Bella Bella* (Douglas & McIntyre), an examination of the riches of Heiltsuk culture, of the impact of Richard Large's mission work and 19th-century attitudes to art and otherness, and of the character of museum-collecting between 1880 and 1920, with special reference to the ROM.

Some of the more arresting poetry of the year also dealt with issues of ethnicity and race, including Kenneth Radu's "poetry/ of resurrection," revisiting the past in *Romanian Suite* (Brick). Most striking was Dionne Brand's *Land to Light On* (M&S), which opens: "If I am peaceful in this discomfort, is not peace,/ is getting used to harm"—a devastating revelation of pain which draws on and is not constrained by Nation Language, speaking through memory in order to try to empty racism (in the world of snow, the white hell) of its power to hurt.

Other poetry, of course—several dozen volumes of it—addressed the familiar themes of passion, the pleasures and distress of childhood, sight, mortality, painting, nature, spirit, faith, person, and language and sensuality, and I single out here a few of the books that, for me, stirred more than a passing response. Douglas Lochhead's lovely *Breakfast at Mel's* (Goose Lane) testifies to the power of sustained affection, in place, celebrating "the sound of the kiss of silence, or, somehow, on the very edge of it." Linda Roger's *Heaven Cake* (Sono Nis) affirms "Anyone who listens hard enough can see." George Bowering's *Blonds on Bikes* (Talon) discourses also on the sound of seeing, tempering his accustomed, celebratory wit (the baseball metaphor recurs) with something unaccustomed, ripples of mortality. Anne Szumigalski, in her important collection of new and selected poems, *On Glassy Wings* (Coteau), examines "spirit" and seeks its source, often in the surreal at the edge of

the eye. Carmine Starmino's *The New World* (Véhicule) also thinks evocatively about faith, though perhaps it attaches too private a sense of meaning to the words the poems use to summon memory onto the page. David Day's *The Visions and Revelations of St. Louis the Métis* (Thistledown) surprised me by its tenderness; Day persuasively distinguishes between the "intentional" (but bad) poems that Louis Riel wrote from the unintentional (but moving) poems that emerge incidentally from his prose—and he produces here Riel's "found poetry." Méira Cook's *Towards a Catalogue of Falling* (Brick) rewards rereading, as do poems by Mick Burrs, Tim Bowling, Patrick Friesen (asking what is real and, given that, what justifies faith, trust, love?), Barbara Nickel, and William Robertson. Al Purdy's *To Paris never again* (Harbour) eloquently laments the loss of Bukowski, Acorn, and others; muses on painting and writing, the world that was and (shape-shifter that it is) the world that survives; celebrates the wilderness and home; and makes the most amazing discovery of all: that the self matters. Ross Leckie's meditations, especially those that look intently at nature, such as the title poem in *The Authority of Roses* (Brick), also awaken in the reader a fresh appreciation of sight, of understanding the consequences of observation. The exact sense of language that Leckie demonstrates, however, differs radically from the sense of language that is expressed by, say, bill bissett or Clint Burnham, whose poetry is more akin to the prose of Michael Turner. Bissett, asking in *lovingwithoutbeingvulnrabul* (Talon) "what are the root causes of heterosexuality," neatly satirizes the presumptuousness of those who think "norms" are universal, static, and punitive by right; Burnham, in *Be Labour Reading* (ECW), refuses the conventions of sentence "order" and "standard" sequence, seeking instead the word-working that might more accurately convey the realities of contemporary life: heroin, date rape, street life, ugliness, and loss. Yet for all these writers, the language of poetry (like the world of wilderness, whether street experience or treed mountainside, power position or awareness of time) is a territory of translation.

And invention as translation—a closing category—reveals itself primarily in the dozen or so francophone works that found anglophone form in 1997. Among these are the new and selected poems of Anne Hébert, *Day has no equal but the night* (Anansi), glowing from the page in Lola Lemire Tostevin's English words; and Hébert's fable about an outlander who arrives in a community, changes it, and leaves silence behind him, *Aurélien, Clara, Mademoiselle, and the English Lieutenant* (Anansi). Sheila Fischman, the translator, also rendered anglophone versions of André Major's *A Provisional Life* (Oberon) and Marie-Claire Blais's *These Festive Nights* (Anansi), both of them set in the Caribbean. In Major's book, a man leaves Dominica to rediscover the ambiguities of life in rural Quebec; in Blais's (a translation of the prize-winning *Soifs*), a single, long, stream-of-desire text thirsts for an end to disparity, disease, racism, and the loss of creativity. Phyllis Aranoff's translation of *The Wanderer* (Alter Ego) experiments with yet another form, using collage to tell a semi-autobiographical narrative about a French Jewish immigrant trying to work out how to fit into a new society. The Acadian writer France Daigle, in Robert Majzels's translation of *1953* (Anansi), asks in what way we are shaped by our time; engagingly, the novel in consequence probes the events of a year of birth—1953, for example, when Churchill, Baby M, Stalin, and Roland Barthes were stellar figures—asking what they might mean for a writer born in mid-century. Monique Proulx's stories in *Aurora Montrealis* (Dougls & McIntyre), translated by Matt Cohen, also investigate the politics of place,

the stories are told with a forceful and perhaps deliberate political naivete; the last story, for example, "White" (the fresh blank page, with echoes, presumably, of Michèle Lalonde's "Speak White" ringing in the reader's ears), tells of a woman who is angry at the death/departure of the landlord, "Mr. Murphy," who has only ever been able to manage a few words of the "losers' language." Montreal, the city in this collection, represents the survivor, and the survival of an allegorical Ideal Future; and Proulx is undoubtedly a sharp, stylish, impassioned, effective writer. But like a lot of other recent books this one needs to have a more serious conversation with John Ralston Saul—whoever holds on to a martyr complex, it's neither a very observant nor a very healthy mindset to tuck into, in the long run more like comfort food than a meal, with much the same results. Proulx at least is contentious; other works just seem a trifle overwrought: in Carol David's *Impala* (Guernica), a woman tries to remember why she murdered somebody, and so, fleetingly, does the reader; Suzanne Jacob's *Maude* (Guernica) wanders through an ambiguous relationship, with the reader increasingly reluctantly in tow; it's refreshing to get to Jacques Savoie's *Blue Circus* (Cormorant), another book translated by Sheila Fischman: this one is funny. Which leaves Dany Laferière's *Down Among the Dead Men* (Douglas & McIntyre), to finish this survey. It is his best work so far I think, and tells, in David Homel's rendering, of a man who revisits Haiti. Asked why he writes of a lush dream country, the man answers that a real country is one that you don't need to dream. The politics of such a statement works to several different conclusions, and the Haitian proverbs that punctuate the narrative do much to express its vernacular punch. "As long as your head's not cut off, you can still hope to wear a hat," says one. "Don't insult the crocodile," says another, "until you've finished crossing the river."

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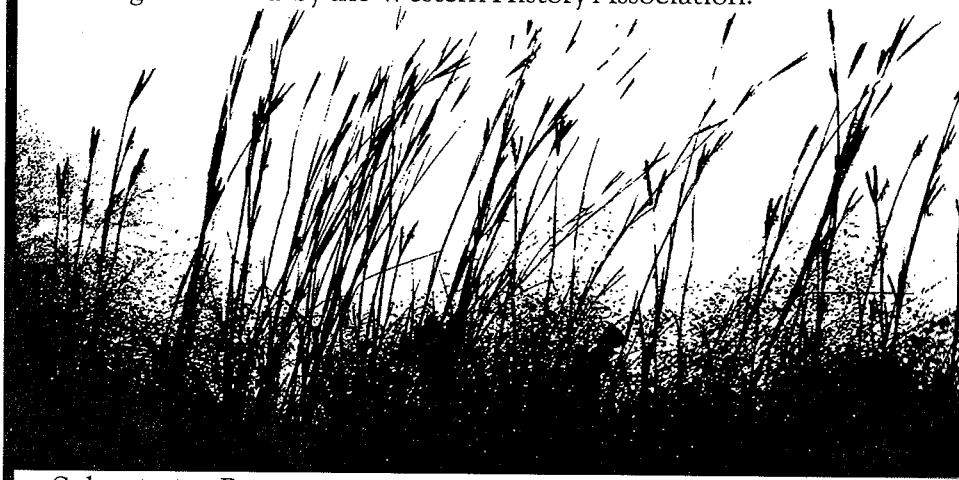

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Laurie **Ricou** and Iain **Higgins** teach at the University of British Columbia, Linda **Rogers** and Robert **Kroetsch** live in Victoria, Deborah **Schnitzer** teaches at the University of Winnipeg, Susan **Glickman** and Margaret **Avison** live in Toronto.

Reviews

Sherill **Grace**, Stefan **Haag**, Maria **Ng**, and Anne **Scott** teach at the University of British Columbia, John Clement **Ball** and Norman **Ravvin** at the University of New Brunswick, Allan **Brown** at Malaspina College, Lally **Grauer** at Okanagan University College, Dee **Horne** at the University of Northern British Columbia, Tseen-Ling **Khoo** at the University of Queensland, Maurice **Lemire** at the Université Laval, Brent **MacLaine** at the University of Prince Edward Island, Vijay **Mishra** at Murdoch University in Western Australia, Andréa **Cole** and Leslie **Monkman** at Queen's University, Thomas **O'Grady** at the University Massachusetts–Boston, Ronald **Rompkey** at Memorial University, Germaine **Warkentin** at the University of Toronto, and Don **Fisher** at Grant MacEwan College. Leslie **Harlin** lives in McLean, Va., and Maureen **Milburn** on Saltspring Island, B.C.

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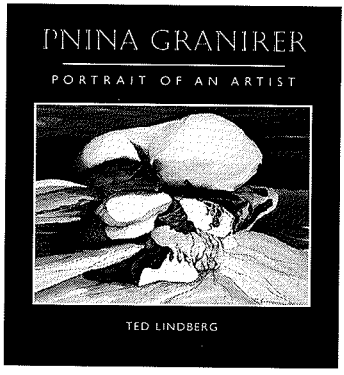

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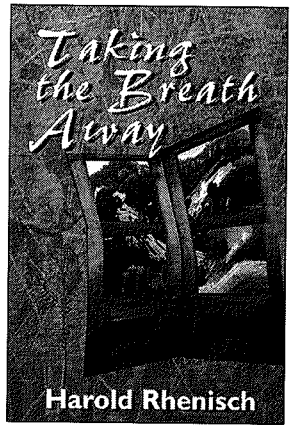

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