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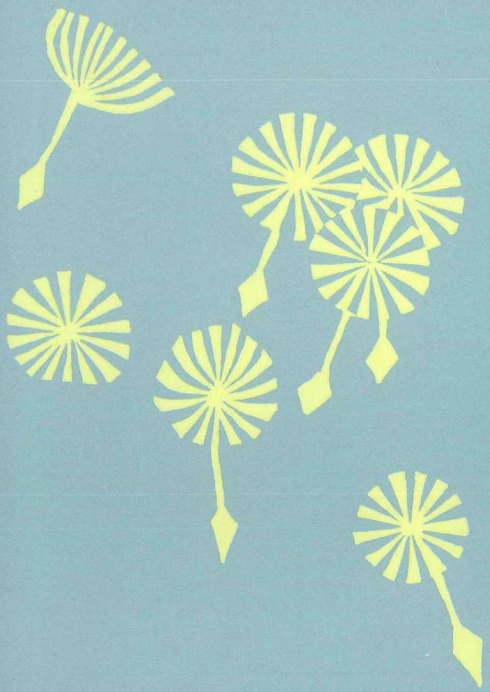

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TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780
FAX: (604) 822-5504
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Editorial

"How Do You Go Back To Where You've Never Been?"

Eva-Marie Kröller

Political changes in Central Europe and the former Soviet Union over the past decade or so have spawned a spate of travel-books that, even more so than the genre generally does, fall between the disciplinary cracks. Personal memoir, collective biography, political analysis, social and cultural history, and travelogue all at once, Janice Kulyk Keefer's *Honey and Ashes: A Story of Family* (1998), Modris Eksteins' *Walking Since Daybreak: A Story of Eastern Europe, World War II and the Heart of Our Century* (1999), and Irene Karafilly's *Ashes and Miracles: A Polish Journey* (1998) pose a challenge to the classificatory skills of librarians and booksellers alike, as did Eva Hoffmann's *Exit into History: A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe* (1993) and Myrna Kostash's *Bloodlines: A Journey into Eastern Europe* (1993). Cataloguing data for Keefer's book for instance suggest five different categories, under autobiography, family history, social life and custom of Toronto, and life of twentieth-century English Canadian authors, while *Walking Since Daybreak* allows for shelving under World War II, with particular emphasis on refugees; twentieth-century Eastern European history; the history of Latvia between 1940 and 1991, and the history of the Eksteins family. Although, in these two books at least, "description and travel" is not even one of the suggested categories, all are also travelogues of a special kind, describing journeys back to an immigrant's country of origin or that of his or her ancestors, often decades after the last of such personal visits has been possible for anyone in the family. In their far-reaching impact, these journeys amount to nothing less than a radical re-definition of personal and collective identities that, among other adjustments, may well require a revision of Canadian literary history to go along with it.

Just how seriously all of these writers have taken their journeys is reflected in the remarkable absence of the kind of disclaimers that (as I have discussed

elsewhere) tend to preface travelogues whose authors have also gone to political trouble spots, found themselves in situations with complexities beyond their grasp, but proceeded to write about the place anyway. Thus Susan Sontag proclaims at the beginning of *Trip to Hanoi* (1968) that "[b]eing neither a journalist nor a political activist (though a veteran signer of petitions and anti-war demonstrator) . . . I doubted that my account of such a trip could add anything new to the war," while Doug Fetherling introduces *Year of the Horse: Journey Through Russia and China* (1991) with a rather flippant "I'm not a political analyst or economist but merely a gadfly." Sontag seeks to address her shortcomings by citing an impressive list of reports and books she has read to prepare herself for her trip and by engaging in such painstaking self-analysis that relatively little space is left to record her impressions of Vietnam. Fetherling, undeterred, passes judgement on the countries he visits, although the issues involved are frequently "too complicated . . . to go into here."

By contrast, Keefer and Eksteins, together with the other authors mentioned earlier, have such strong personal stakes in their journeys that they pay equally scrupulous attention to historical research, to the mythic and actual realities of the places visited, and to their own response, however traumatic, to these encounters. In other words, the cataloguing data in *Honey and Ashes* and *Walking Since Daybreak* are not categorization run riot, but accurately reflect the multiple concerns of these books. Translating all of these perspectives into a narrative must have proven a considerable undertaking if it was both to reflect the complexity of the issues involved and to address a wide audience. After all, "coherence" seems a contradiction in terms in a context where, as Eksteins writes, "history has become at most histories, accounts that point less to the order of things than to their disorder." On the other hand, perspectival relativism would have sabotaged the all-important project of collective recovery and the educational mandate that comes with it.

Authors have tackled the difficulty posed by their subject matter in a variety of ways. Hoffman's *Exit into History* and Karafilly's *Ashes and Miracles* adopt the most straightforward approach by employing throughout the chronological sequence suggested by a travel journal, its format providing a minimal temporal and spatial structure for a multitude of observations. However, the composition of tables of contents and individual chapters in Kostash, Keefer and Eksteins is a study in how to establish and undermine simultaneously even such skeletal outlines. Each chapter in

Bloodlines, for example, is prefaced with a chronology summarizing historical events, a factual scaffolding complemented by extensive bibliographical notes. In addition, each chapter receives two headings, one provided by time and place in the manner of a journal entry, the other thematic. While the journal format suggests progression, the chronology is in fact scrambled at times, when the narrative moves from 1988 and back again, or skips from "Kiev 1988" to "Kiev 1964." Some of the thematic headings create synchronicities ("Toronto, Aug. 21, 1968" and "Prague 1968"), others suggest a suspension of time ("Still Life"), or formulate questions about the viability of the entire enterprise ("How Do You Go Back to Where You've Never Been?"). Eksteins' chapter headings suggest the sweep of a foundational epic, with appropriate close-ups on individual characters ("The Girl with the Flaxen Hair," "A Man, a Cart, a Country," "Baltic Battles," "Displaced," "Bear Slayer Street," "Odyssey"), but each chapter is subdivided into numerous individual sections. Chapter One, which has seventeen of these sections, in turn provides biographical sketches of the author's great-grandmother in nineteenth-century Latvia, an impression of the author as he "sit[s] and write[s]," in 1990s Toronto, a juxtaposition of the Latvian situation in 1945 and 1998, a history of Latvia and the Baltics, reflections on the disintegration of Eastern European Communism, a scene from Frankfurt airport as the author boards a plane for Riga forty-nine years after his family last left Latvia, and several reprises of most of these items. The reader picks her way through the shoals of a narrative that mimics the devastation described in it and that in the process pulverizes the meaningful progression implied in the table of contents. Less radically disruptive than Kostash's and Eksteins' versions, Keefer's outline still suggests one thing while the book delivers another. A balanced four-part division ("The Old Place," "Departures, Arrivals: Staromischyna-Toronto," "Journeying Out," "Journeying In") bracketed by Prologue and Epilogue in fact translates into three uneven sections, the first and the longest providing a history of Keefer's family in the Ukraine and in Toronto, the second discussing historical background, and the third recording Keefer's trip to Staromischyna, her ancestral village.

Throughout, the books negotiate slippages between memoir and historical narrative, between one version of history and another. Maps, photographs, concordances, family trees, and indexes complicate rather than clarify the issues and relationships involved, as each additional documentation declares itself incomplete, provisional or manipulated. Thus, the family tree in *Honey and Ashes* bears the note that "[f]or the sake of simplicity, not all

marriages and children have been included . . . Some birth and death dates are approximate," and the captions in the maps require a lengthy gloss to account for place-names changed as a result of border-shifts between Poland, Germany, and the Ukraine. A family portrait of father and mother flanking their two daughters is found to be a composite, joining an absent father to his family in the Ukraine. Passages across these numerous "cracks" are perilous undertakings. Eksteins, recording the fate of Displaced Persons in World War II, describes his family's thwarted efforts to second-guess the elusive requirements for transit documents that are to help them cross equally unpredictable borders (Eksteins' notes provide an ironic historical counterpoint to his family's Kafkaesque dilemmas, by citing Allied dismissals of, and racist distinctions among, Displaced Persons. These documents belatedly "explain" the Eksteins' nightmarish wanderings across borders and back again).

In these accounts of border-crossings emotion is carefully, sometimes strenuously, kept at bay to prevent the narrative from sliding into nostalgia. Confronted with her family's idyllic village, Kostash resorts to a mannered analogy with photography ("Dzhurvic, birth-place of my mother's mother, is tidy and colorful. I walk around it and take pictures. An abandoned blue cottage, overwhelmed by its ancient thatched roof and sinking somnolently into a yard gone wild with grasses and yellow daisies. Click. The field behind Katrusia's house—the celebrated fecund private plot of Soviet agriculture—scrupulously clean of weeds and bordered by fruit trees. Click. A neighbour, stout, baggy-bosomed and kerchiefed, knee-deep in red and yellow tulips. Click.") Not as bucolic as Dzhurvic, the ancestral village in *Honey and Ashes* proves to be a disenchanting place in which to "take photograph after photograph of nothing." The increasingly elaborate and awkward metaphorical language of the book both reveals and deflects from the narrator's emotional turmoil: "And as I fall," she muses, preparing to leave Staromyschina, "I'll be thinking not of how far or fast I'm flying downwards, but of how I'll never be able to regain that clifftop, the lush, flower-shot grass through which I walked to the very edge of falling." Eksteins' version of these nervously self-conscious renditions of personal response is to be taciturn and dry, sometimes to the extreme.

Their discomfort with anything that could be perceived a self-indulgence equips these authors to address larger issues in ways that set them apart from the solipsistic mind-games that make some so-called historiographic metafiction so insufferably insubstantial and irresponsible. While earlier Canadian writing describing immigrant lives tended to dwell on truncated

existences with little first-hand depiction of the communities left behind, Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* and its sequels have marked a significant change. In expanding their spatial and temporal scopes, Kostash, Keefer and Eksteins tackle the stereotypes associated with certain ethnic groups, with Displaced Persons and migrants. They do so not only by providing additional documentation about the victimization of such groups by whatever officialdom or mainstream society they confront (although there is plenty of such documentation), but also by exposing prejudices imported from the "old country." Kostash's *The Doomed Bridegroom: A Memoir* (1998), among other things a sequel or companion volume to *Bloodliness*, critically investigates the depiction of Ukrainians as "Blockhead" and "Slut" (or "*Revolutionary* Slut") in Canadian Mennonite fiction. All three authors bravely confront anti-semitic activities in their countries of origin, providing important complementary perspectives to Karafilly's and Hoffman's wrenching insider accounts. "It was," Eksteins describes the aftermath of the 1989 events, "as if we had returned suddenly, through time warp, to the moral and historical dilemmas of 1945, dilemmas that the Cold War had frozen in place."

In trying to distinguish "western" travel-writing from "non-western," critics have sometimes drawn a sharp line between the former as "privileged" and the latter as "enforced" activity. Inderpal Grewal, for instance, in her superb *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire and the Cultures of Travel* (1996), claims that "migration, immigration, deportation, indenture and slavery" are mobilities exempt from "Eurocentric, imperialist formation," while the "trope of exile ... reinscribe[s] European hegemonic aesthetic forms." Grewal's observation (made in a text which, incidentally, insists on the crucial importance of cultural *specificity* in all post-colonial argument) may apply to certain comparative contexts, but its usefulness in describing Eksteins', Keefer's and Kostash's books is limited. Keefer has been taken to task for generalizing the immigrant experience and thus taking it away from those for whom it has been the defining factor. Her critics may remain unconvinced by her assertion, at the beginning of *Honey and Ashes*, that "though there are tremendous differences among immigrants—differences of culture and history, language and looks, that compound the difficulty of making new lives in strange countries—I believe there's a continuum of experience and, most of all, imagination that can bring us all, however momentarily, together," and dismiss it as humanist rhetoric. I doubt whether such a dismissal would be quite so easy *after* reading her book.

A. Mary Murphy

untitled

I have written poems for Leonard Cohen
but he has never written back
so I place this last resort letter
to address him one more hopeful time
Dear Leonard I have an important idea
let's pretend that you're George Barker
and I'm Elizabeth Smart
okay you're not a violent man
and I admit I'm not twenty-three
but I've fallen in love with your poems
and they've fallen in love with me
I have no money for your airfare
you're not a poor man anyway
I wait here wearing only my heart
when you get here please don't look away

Kenneth McRobbie

New Demnotics at the U

for Laci

At the reformed U of Bu
literature's out;
most popular Ainglish
(vocab and grammar in)

—big laugh, bigger bust this lunchtime's
BBC/TV
"William Morris: Artist as
Passionate Socialist"
(Will's out where
Phillip's in).

Hence all the coughing, blue smoke
walk-outs clustering round
a notice board—"after years of
Kommuniszt neglect"—
the past's high-tech comeback:
glossy postered
medieval studies at the new
private
Central Europe U.

—To a visiting Fulbright joking Marxist
Minnesotan's
". . . EP would've stuck it to yer, re Degree
in Usura. . . ."
"Th-that's why we don' need your literature
no more:
even kommuniszts were right—so negative about
good t'ings you h'ave.
You no realize—fuck!—I not even know how blow, till
American book."

Méira Cook

At the Membrane of Language and Silence

Metaphor and Memory in *Fugitive Pieces*

> The essence of the metaphor is quiddity. In order for each component to work successfully simultaneously, each must work in its own context, otherwise we perceive the metaphor as artificial, as "falsely poetic."
>
> —Anne Michaels, "Cleopatra's Love."

Theodor Adorno's famous dictum that to "write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (*Prisms* 34) is not merely an indictment against lyric poetry as a genre but against all literature, a stern warning to all writing that in the wake of the Holocaust it must find new ways to represent the elisions and failures of grief when it is used as a system of discourse.[1] The problem of writing *after* is also the problem of how to represent the impossible event faithfully while avoiding a betrayal both of history and of the victim. As a genre that tries to accommodate the impossible nature of representation, the testimony[2] is composed of fragmentation and memory, in which the attempt at narrative is overwhelmed by events that refuse to settle into coherence, understanding, or knowledge.

Insofar as it rejects just such an exhaustive account of history and trauma, presenting itself instead in fragmented form, Anne Michaels' novel, *Fugitive Pieces*, defines itself as a "narrative of catastrophe and slow accumulation" (48) and a reworking of history as the "gradual instant" of cataclysm (77). Jakob Beer's first-generation testimony and later Ben's second-generation account of witnessing present themselves in writing that is lyrical, highly poetic and densely metaphoric. In her arrangement of memory and history as necessarily fragmented and in her use of the poetic voice to articulate the vicissitudes of lived experience, Michaels' novel is, in many ways, a response to

Adorno's implicit challenge: if it is no longer possible to write after Auschwitz is the only alternative to remain silent?

Other writers have cautioned against this last expedient. The poet Paul Celan, himself a Holocaust survivor, warns, in the preface to his *Selected Poems*, that silence may provide yet another fetish to waylay the reader (45).[3] Holocaust literature is populated by increasingly reluctant narrators who know that it is impossible to narrate what happened and so are compelled to tell and retell what was witnessed; at the same time, however, they are haunted by the conviction that they have betrayed memory by doing so. Jakob Beer, who narrates the first three quarters of Michaels' novel is no exception:

> And even if an act could be forgiven, no one could bear the responsibility of forgiveness on behalf of the dead. No act of violence is ever resolved. When the one who can forgive can no longer speak, there is only silence. (160-61)

Jakob's response to the hopelessness of silence on the part of the dead is to take up the impossible but necessary task of narrating the event. In doing so he provides an aesthetic link between the fugitive pieces of the past and the promise of a coherent future. In the last quarter of the novel, Jakob's biographer, Ben, takes up his story and its resolution as a kind of deferred inheritance since Ben's own father has been stubbornly reticent on the subject of his survival experiences and denies his son the gift of "forgiveness on behalf of the dead."

Jakob's narrative memoir endeavors to create the means of articulating a historical experience that annihilates the very possibility of articulation, an address that, in many ways, Ben's response ironically fails to engage. Constructed as a narrative that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, or writing, that cannot even be adequately transmitted from writer to reader, Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* is a sustained exploration of memory, represented through imagery and metaphor, on the understanding that such writing is constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence.

The epigraph to *Fugitive Pieces* begins by announcing the fragility of memory symbolized by the loss and burial of "countless manuscripts—diaries, memoirs, eye witness accounts" which were mislaid or destroyed during the Second World War:

> Some of these narratives were deliberately hidden—buried in back gardens, tucked into walls and under floors—by those who did not live to retrieve them.
>
> Other stories are concealed in memory, neither written nor spoken; others lost, and sometimes recovered, by circumstances alone.

An extended metaphor of memory is constructed in the opening lines as that which, like "these narratives," is essentially hidden, buried, and must be painstakingly retrieved by the memoirist or the reader.

When Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, compares the history of the Jews to the structure of a trauma, he describes trauma as the successive movement from an event to its repression and eventual return. This classic pattern of memory and its discontents is established early in Michaels' narrative when Jakob Beer remembers the primal trauma of his young life: the moment when German soldiers burst into his home, killing his father and mother and disposing of his sister Bella in an undisclosed—because unknown—manner. The young boy who is the unwilling witness of this event closes his eyes but memory enters through sounds:

> . . . the door breaking open, the spit of buttons. My mother, my father. But worse than those sounds was that I couldn't remember hearing Bella at all. Filled with her silence, I had no choice but to imagine her face. (10)

The boy who is himself hidden like a concealed manuscript behind the wallpaper of the cupboard witnesses an event that is unrepresentable, an event that, in the words of Dori Laub, "precludes its registration" (*Testimony* 91).

This is the beginning of Jakob Beer's existence as a traumatized subject, one who carries an impossible history and who will, in the course of the narrative, become a symptom of the history he cannot entirely possess. Jakob's inability to witness the violent event as it occurs is characteristic of the traumatized subject whose "collapse of witnessing" ("Truth and Testimony" 65) is the inevitable outcome of the coherent self being split and dissociated at the moment of impact.

The child who witnesses, albeit imperfectly, the effacement of his sister's memory, the silence that surrounds the forgetfulness in which her absence has been articulated, finds himself compelled to imagine her face in an alien medium—the medium of sound. Throughout this early narrative, silence—the silence in which the narrator "couldn't remember hearing Bella at all" (10)—is linked with amnesia while sound is both feared and welcomed as a way back into memory. "I did not witness the most important events of my life," Jakob says of his younger self, "my deepest story must be told by a blind man, a prisoner of sound" (17). The child who is alternately buried behind the wall or under the ground for much of the early narrative exists *via* his auditory faculty, one ear obsessively pressed against "the vibrating membrane . . . the thin wall between the living and the dead" (31). Aware

that sound can never be erased or entirely destroyed ("If sound waves carry on to infinity, where are their screams now?" 54), the young Jakob Beer imagines his sister's face as an ever changing variety of sound patterns that record her familiar breath, the sound of her singing or piano-playing, the register of her incantation and invective.[4]

If the literature of remembrance is, as Shoshana Felman maintains, an "alignment between witnesses" (14), what might this alignment mean and of whom might these witnesses be composed? In *The Interpretation of Dreams,* for example, Freud suggests that at least two subjects are required to witness the unconscious; the therapist, and the patient whose testimony resonates within the interpretive discourse of the physician. Testimony is characteristically structured as a writing that seeks out a responsive listener, an empathetic "you" who hears and understands the impossible narrative testimony of the estranged "I."[5] In the case of *Fugitive Pieces,* Jakob's project of address is complicated by his awareness that both victim and perpetrator, together with self-proclaimed witness, make up the haunting trinity of the testimony.

Jakob, who has learned the value of witnessing from his mentor, Athos—"Write to save yourself," Athos tells him, "and someday you'll write because you've been saved" (165)—writes his memoir for any number of conceivable reasons: to memorialize those who are in danger of being forgotten, to catch and record the "gradual instant" of historical time, and to remain present to the impossible task of representing what is essentially inconceivable and therefore unrepresentable. Perhaps most compulsively, however, he writes in order to achieve subject-hood, in order to know who he once was and who he now is through the self-knowledge that is afforded in the process of all autobiographical narratives but nowhere so intensely as in the testimony.[6]

In turn, Ben is the storyteller of the second generation, the one who takes up Jakob's narrative precisely because of the potential for healing he discerns in the act of storytelling.[7] When he first meets Jakob he is struck by the other man's ability to listen "redemptively," to make him feel "clear" and "clean," as if talk can "heal" the silences of evasion and prohibition that he experiences in his own home (208). Possessed by the same anxiety of witnessing that Jakob feels, the sense of exaggerated responsibility engendered by the conviction of the witness that his perception is necessary to the well-being of the world, Ben articulates the belief that "somehow my watching

causes it to happen" (280). As the child of survivors too traumatized to construct a story from the fugitive pieces that make up their experience of the Holocaust, Ben is accustomed to the "damp silence of not hearing and not speaking" (204).[8]

Both Jakob and Ben are aware of the paradox that, once narrated, the horror or obscenity is no longer either horrifying or obscene: instead it is essentially narratable, representable. The literal event or trauma resists "cure" to the extent that it remains literal. In this sense Michaels' project in *Fugitive Pieces* might be perceived as an attempt to metaphorize history, memory, and narrative precisely in order to challenge the literal, to articulate catastrophe in language that is poetic and densely allusive. Yet, Michaels' lush, poetic discourse jars uneasily with the horrors she is narrating and so contributes to our discomfort as readers, at the same time that it provides a way of thinking about metaphor and metonymy as figurative devices that alternatively reveal and conceal the materiality of the event.[9]

In a text so obsessed with language—translation and its slippages, puns and crossword puzzle clues, word play, palindromes and revealing parapraxis—the poetic narrative often falters upon misconstruals and evasions. When Jakob relates how the Jews of Zakynthos "vanished" in the wake of Nazi invasion he does so in language that masks the violence of their fate with a disturbingly inaccurate simile:

> After burying the books and dishes, the silverware and photos, the Jews of Zakynthos ghetto vanish. They slip into the hills, where they wait like coral; half flesh, half stone. (40)

The beauty and fragility of the image—the fugitive Jews compared to coral wrenched as it is from its element and hidden in the hills—provides a highly romanticized icon of what actually happened to these people. Far from remaining caught in an Ovidian state of metamorphosis, the Jews of Zakynthos were dispersed, systematically hunted, and summarily slaughtered, and in metaphorizing their fate Michaels unwittingly conceals the decidedly unpoetic nature of genocide.

This issue raises the larger question of the function of the lyric voice in the narrative as a whole. When brutality, love-making, and the pragmatism of daily living are all described in Michaels' habitual mode of high lyricism, a prevailing flatness results. Many of the love scenes, for example, fail to move the reader because the elegiac tone in which they are described has already been used to effect in scenes of violence and horror:

> Instead of the dead inhaling my breath with their closeness, I am deafened by the buzzing drone of Michaela's body, the power lines of blood, blue threads under her skin. Cables of tendons; the forests of bone in her wrists and feet. (180-81)

This passage seems over-written, a consequence, perhaps, of words being at once not enough and too much to contain representation adequately. When such metaphorically (over)lush language is used to express the romantic subplot, no contrast between form and content is possible and this failure results in a sentimental discourse. In contrast, however, the reader is able to sustain belief in a poetic narrative that clashes disturbingly with the horror described. Perhaps the point is that when metaphoric language is used indiscriminately to represent both eyewitness account and romantic experience, the reader fails to distinguish between the relative importance assigned to each.

The quoted extract brings up a further problem: perhaps the most disappointing aspect of this otherwise complex and magnificently realized attempt to render the Holocaust representable is Michaels' consistent tendency to idealize the women her male characters love. Michaela is described as having a mind like a "palace" (176), her face has the goodness of Beatrice de Luna and she is credited with the "devotion of a hundred Kievan women" (178). Admittedly this is the description provided by her poetic husband, Jakob; however almost all the women in this novel are described in elegiac and highly romanticized language. Irena Salman is a "small, an impeccable package," who, in the space of a few lines, is compared to both a tea cup and a child (209). Ben's wife, Naomi, gives herself "natural as breathing" (233), she collects lullabies and is described as "blunt and sweet" (248), she opens like a flower (230), and appears to be almost as passive since she is constructed as the archetypal waiting, nurturing woman who cooks Russian food to accompany Ben's textual voyages across the steppes:

> While I travelled across Russia in leg-irons, Naomi carefully placed ivory potatoes, cooked until they crumbled at the touch of a fork, into chilled vermilion borscht. While I fell to my knees with hunger in the snow at Tobol'sh, downstairs Naomi sliced thick slabs of stone-heavy bread. (212)

The exaggerated discourse of the male quest is off-set by Naomi, who, like Ben's mother, appears to be the unappreciated support of her husband's life-long anguish. At one point Ben compares his parents' experience of the war and contends that what his father underwent was "that much less bearable" (223), a conclusion that makes sense only if we consider that women

are allowed to experience very little in this text compared to their male counterparts. And, like Ben's mother, who is described in a final image as standing behind his father and stroking his hair (294), Naomi is the eternal consoler to whom Ben returns after his encounter with the demonic Petra.

At times Michaels' text is so preoccupied with the figurative function of language that it seems impossible for characters to obtain factual information to direct questions. "Athos, how big is the actual heart?" Jakob asks (113), the adjective signaling that it is empirical information he requires. Yet Athos answers, predictably, in lyric vein, "imagine the size and heaviness of a handful of earth" (113), and although his reply offers the child a concrete means of comparison, his death—which is reported in the next paragraph and which, it is implied, resulted from heart disease—merely changes Jakob's question into the occasion for further metaphoric transformation: "His arteries silted up like an old river. The heart is a fistful of earth. *The heart is a lake . . .*" (117; Michaels' emphasis).

Michaels' insistence that the boundaries between reality and the metaphors she constructs to articulate this reality are invisible at best and non-existent at worst occasionally reaches near-absurd proportions. The section narrated by Ben and entitled "Phosphorus" opens with a discourse on lightning as a climatic condition from the eighteenth century onwards and culminates in the appearance of Petra, the woman who appears to him "as everything [he has] ever lost" (274). The movement from lightning as a real event to lightning as a metaphor presaging the moment when Ben falls in love as if, it is implied, he has been struck by lightning, feels contrived. Of course it doesn't help matters that Petra, in turn, transforms from conventional elegiac woman to ferocious fury who rampages through the house "like lightning" pillaging every room and inflicting damage with the destructiveness of the winds that rage outside (282).

At other times, however, Michaels' use of metaphor as a device of memory is unparalleled. In attempting to make sense of the unrepresentable horror of Auschwitz—a name that comes to represent both the actual death camp and, in our post-Holocaust world, a threshold space of anguished critical inquiry—Michaels represents memory as contamination, a fleshly laying on of hands from the dead to the living and back again. In a scene in which Jakob describes the prisoners of the SS who were forced to dig up the mass graves of the dead, he notes how the dead entered the living "through their pores and were carried through their bloodstreams to their brains and

hearts." Memory is a parasite, a disease that is transmitted through the blood "into another generation" (52). In this sense, the status of the individual, whether s/he be witness, survivor, or reader, is always in question since the subject who writes (and who reads, who speaks and who listens) writes for a multitude of the dispossessed and the silenced, and this overdetermined subjectivity, whether doubled or divided, necessarily breaks down the barriers of the discrete subject.

Yet, in another instance of the conflation between the discourse of the testimony and the discourse of romance, Michaels later generalizes this notion of "skin memory" in her development of the romantic subplot. The grave-diggers who assimilate the cultural and individual memories of the corpses they disinter are no different in kind to Jakob at the moment that he falls in love and confesses himself another kind of memory bearer:

> I cross over the boundary of skin into Michaela's memories, into her childhood. On the dock when she is ten, the tips of her braids wet as paint brushes. Her cool brown back under a worn flannel shirt, washed so many times it's as soft as the skin of earlobes. The smell of the cedar dock baking in the sun. (185)

A comparison of this excerpt with the earlier passage, both of which have been motivated by memory that is transported *via* skin, is grotesque and ironically it is this later passage that suffers in comparison. By insisting that both memories have been transmitted by identical acts of passionate empathy, the rotten flesh and blood-soaked hair the grave-diggers discover is implicated in Michaela's lover's "knowledge" of her wet braids and cool brown skin. Although the smell of cedar rather than decay haunts the later passage, Jakob's memories, it is implied, are already infected. As a witness he is isolated by his blood-knowledge and everything he touches after is similarly contaminated.

It is possible, of course, that in employing the same trope of knowledge *via* skin in two extremely different passages—one that celebrates the lover's "instinctive" knowledge of his beloved and the other that records the cultural imprinting of the dead upon the living—Michaels is guilty of sentimentality in a novel that fastidiously avoids this emotion in the context of the Holocaust. In suggesting this possibility my inclination to privilege one form of "skin knowledge" above another is apparent but is motivated by Michaels' disappointingly clichéd construction of love transmitted through bodily memory.

Given her preoccupation with the poetry of love and catastrophe, it is significant that references to lack of metaphor in Michaels' text signal a time of increasingly entropic impulses. As Jakob asserts, "the German language

annihilated metaphor, turning humans into objects [as] physicists turned matter into energy" (143). Interestingly, even when lamenting the demise of figurative language, Jakob is not immune to metaphor.[10] At the same time he makes clear that the prevailing and unquestioned assumption of this narrative is inverted, and that the transition from "language to fact" (143), from denotation to detonation is but a small and insignificant (goose)step.

Yet, in *Fugitive Pieces* it is not only narrative that may be defined as "traumatic," but language itself that undergoes trauma in the form of excessive imagery. One such trope is memory, which in Michaels' text operates as a broken trajectory, an intangible but metaphorically disseminated figure that, while it cannot be grasped in what Jean-François Lyotard would call "the presenting present," nevertheless refers back to this moment of presence by implication (59). Lyotard's view that it is always either too soon or too late to grasp presentation (65), has particular resonance in the context of the traumatic event in general and in Michaels' post-traumatic narrative in particular. In *Fugitive Pieces*, the young Jakob Beer experiences his past as essentially violent—at one point he writes of memories being "yanked" through his scalp (13). At the same time, he habitually experiences the past encrypted within the present:[11]

> I watched Athos reading at his desk in the evenings, and saw my mother sewing at the table, my father looking through the daily papers, Bella studying her music. Any given moment—no matter how casual, how ordinary—is poised, full of gaping life. (19)

Michaels' concern with the given moment, with time as an ambiguous marker of the traumatic event, is figured in chapter titles such as "Vertical Time" and "The Gradual Instant," and in the fraught events that comprise Jakob Beer's memoir each moment opens into memory overlaid by remembrance.[12]

The post-Holocaust world, the world that has permitted the horror of Auschwitz and has gone on, despite Adorno's caution, to "write poetry" in its wake, inevitably raises the spectre of remembrance lest we forget that forgetfulness is a guarantor of nothing so much as an immediate and vengeful return of the repressed. In this world, there is little so unbearable, so immediately punishable, as amnesia—a predicament that is neatly demonstrated in Athos' story of his father's failure to remember his family's origins and the consequent decimation of that family.

In this anecdote Jakob repeats the story Athos tells about his own father's lapse in memory, his "sin of neglecting the Roussos origins," and his belief

that he is being punished for this omission by the deaths of his son and wife (26). In order to administer the corrective of memory to this narrative of family trauma, Athos' father returns to Zakynthos, the village where he was born, paves the town square and builds a public fountain to honour his son's memory. The idea of a return to origins is perpetuated throughout the novel: Jakob returns with Athos to Zakynthos like Athos' father before him; he also returns, in writing and memory, to the ghetto in which he grew up and later, towards the end of his narrative, to Idhra, the island where he first lived with Athos. At the end of the novel, Benjamin, Jakob's fictional son and the self-proclaimed heir to his story, undertakes this same journey to Idhra in the spirit of statue building that Athos' father first introduced and for much the same reasons—an oedipal dread that the sin of forgetting will lead to obliteration, the loss of his family through the neglect of their origins. The male characters in Michaels' novel compulsively return to the place of origins but their returns are never sufficient because in the journey something is always lost to translation, forgotten, erased, misrecognized or elided. What is this narrative aporia, this lapse of memory, this textual stammer that resists meaning?

In the case of Athos' father it is the town of Odessa where he lived for many years in ignorance of his family's origins in Zakynthos. But Odessa, for Jakob Beer, is not merely the wealthy merchant capital that it is for Roussos' maternal relations. For Jakob, Odessa is a touchstone of memory, the place to which he travels throughout his narrative by different routes. Not only is Odessa near the village where his father was born—thus providing the reader with a reworking of the theme of patrolinearity and genesis, this time transcribed in the minor key—but Odessa is also the place where, as Jakob reveals, "thirty thousand Jews were . . . doused with gasoline and burned alive" (26).

The flaming Jews of Odessa are repressed in Athos' father's account of the city in much the same way that the drowned Jews of Corfu are repressed in the history of the Roussos family shipping industry, which specialized in transporting valuable red dyes to Austria (of course, the symbolism of blood freight is never far behind such statements). What Athos learns from his father in this case, and what he later passes on to Jakob, is that "every river is a tongue of commerce, finding first geological then economic weakness and persuading itself into continents" (26). His father's interest in rivers as the medium for commercial trafficking, like Athos' absorption in

the geographical stratification of rivers, fails to take account of the Jews of Corfu who, shortly after, are rounded up and forced into a boat that sets sail for the open sea where we later learn that all have been deliberately drowned. In the first case the Jews of Odessa are burned, in the second the Jews of Corfu are drowned, and in both cases the apparent willingness with which a particular narrative is related conceals the corpses that seem to crowd at the margins of Michaels' novel. I am accusing Athos and his father neither of deliberate insensitivity nor of unconscious repression but instead I am attempting—in the context of a narrative wholly committed to the exigencies of memory—to point to the subtlety with which memory is inevitably elided even by the most articulate and reliable of witnesses.

In her introduction to the volume of essays entitled *Trauma: Explorations in Memory,* Cathy Caruth asks how readers in the late twentieth century can have access to historical experience, more specifically, to "a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access" (6). Michaels responds to this historical "crisis" with what appears to be a parallel inquiry: how to articulate the trauma of history in language that is itself in crisis, language that is neither transparent nor opaque—since one would "see through" reality, the other obscure it—how to force language to signify on the extreme edge of signification in order to tell a story that is irreconcilable with words because unbearable. The predominant strategy employed by Michaels in her attempt to represent the obscene is the extended and highly intricate use of metaphor: the metaphor in this case positioned at the membrane of language and silence, memory and forgetfulness.

A particularly effective example of this metaphoric knot occurs in Ben's account of his provincial childhood in Southern Ontario as the son of Holocaust survivors. Although his parents are resolutely silent on the subject of their experiences, their silence is neither reassuring nor convincing, and much of Ben's childhood appears to consist of alternating attempts to persuade his mother to reveal the untellable story and to distract her from her past through childish deflections. One such deflection is his obsession with "twisters" and the "random precision of their malevolence" (224), which, like the vicissitudes of memory, it is implied, can strike at any time and with similarly dire consequences. Towards the end of his account Ben includes a revealing paragraph within which metaphors intertwine and collide:

> Sometimes I read to my mother while she made dinner. I read to her about the effects of a Texan tornado, gathering up personal possessions until in the desert

> it had collected mounds of apples, onions, jewellery, eyeglasses, clothing—"the camp." Enough smashed glass to cover seventeen football fields—"Kristallnacht." I read to her about lightning—"the sign of the Ess Ess, Ben, on their collars." (224-225)

In this extract, the chaotic effect of the tornado with its ability to distribute possessions and lives to the winds, is explicitly compared to the similarly disruptive effect of the armies of the Third Reich as they traversed the countryside gathering the dispossessed in camps and scattering the residue of their lives. Yet the effect of the tornado Ben reads about and which he relates to his mother is not merely a distant "bookish" event mediated by the act of reading and story-telling. On the contrary, a similar sense of chaos prevailed in his own childhood when the Humber river overflowed its banks and flooded the town in which he lived with his parents, sending its inhabitants scrambling for safety and effectively scattering their homes and possessions over the countryside in a re-enactment, first, of the Texan tornado, and second, of the successive acts of genocide that took place during the Holocaust. Indeed, Ben's section, "The Drowned City," opens with a description of the Humber river and its flood in 1954, evidence of which, he points out, can still be seen in present-day Ontario in the form of rotted books and photos, buried tables and dishes, and fragments of crockery that have settled in the river's sediment (202).

The effect of these fragments, the accumulated detritus of flood and tornado that spreads in the wake of Ben's narrative, is to privilege what remains of a city, a settlement, a home, after an act of violence has occurred that effectively destroys the community. What remains, Ben's narrative implies, is memory, memory fragmented by the effects of an "event"—to use Maurice Blanchot's term—but memory, nevertheless, in the form of revenants that are essentially indestructible as long as there is someone left to unearth the fragments, count the dead or, in Ben's case, someone to read (and write) the story. To return then to the domestic scene between Ben (the child of survivors and therefore the bearer of an unbearable burden of silence) and his mother (who is capable only of telling a necessarily incomplete narrative), it is significant that their transaction recapitulates the gaps and silences of partial narratives.

While Ben's account of the destructive tornado appeals to narrative closure, his mother's interjections in the form of direct speech are a coded account of the Holocaust she has witnessed generalized to encompass all

acts of nature, all frequencies of violence. Thus, when Ben reads to her "about lightning," her reply refers explicitly to the double lightning bolts of the SS insignia. Yet her reply gestures even beyond this direct association of imagery: "'the sign of the Ess Ess, Ben, on their collars'" (225). His mother's reference to the SS is rendered on the page as "Ess Ess," words that in Yiddish may be translated literally as "Eat Eat," a misreading that unerringly refers back to Ben's father's exhortation that his son eat a rotten apple because to refuse food is an obscenity that cannot be borne in the wake of a past governed by hunger and privation. "Eat it . . . Eat it!" his father demands, ultimately forcing his son to swallow the rotten apple (218).

A complex system of textual slippage and narrative recall is at work, then, in the connection Ben's mother makes between the lightning bolt insignia of the SS and the sign of hunger contained in the exhortation to "Eat Eat." As Ben explains shortly after in his recollection of the trauma he suffers during this force-feeding, images are themselves signs of signs in the context of a system where nothing is what it appears to be, where all is correspondence, approximation: "Images brand you, burn the surrounding skin, leave their black mark" (218). We are returned, once again, *via* memory and metaphor, to the image of lightning, the flash of insight or inspiration that proves the world imaginary.[13]

The compulsive metaphorization of the world that Jakob, and later Ben, indulge in is, in many ways, a function of the narrative of trauma in which events are referential only to the extent that they are not fully perceived as they occur. In its attempt to transmit what Caruth calls "a truth bound up with its crisis as truth" (8), the traumatic narrative presents itself as an event in excess of our frame of reference, an impossible witnessing since the speaking subject is required to testify to a truth that necessarily escapes him/her insofar as it is a partial truth that is at once engendered and dispersed by the act of telling. The metaphor both conceals meaning and transforms it within the selfsame mechanism of comparison, a device that is so ubiquitous in *Fugitive Pieces* that it functions structurally. The traumatic event is related implicitly, since to narrate the event explicitly would be unbearable, would, in effect, replicate the catastrophe it seeks to domesticate through language.

In this densely poetic text metaphors proliferate but nowhere so compulsively as in figures of remembrance. Memory is seldom spoken of directly as a physiological function or an intellectual-emotional modality. Instead it is

ornately imagined as an act of human evolution, as when the "bog-boy" with whom the narrative opens surfaces into the streets of Biskupin, itself repeatedly described as a "drowned city" (5). Alternatively, memory is figured as an archeological moment, as when the same city, Biskupin, is "carefully excavated" for almost a decade (6). Jakob Beer, in his incarnation as the bog-boy of Biskupin, is rapidly compared to the Tollund Man, a form of primal life, a lost soul, a reborn child lucky enough to "emerge again in someone's arms" (5), a perfectly restored corpse, an adventurer, an explorer, and finally, "the boy in the story, who digs a hole so deep he emerges on the other side of the world" (6).

These metaphors of death and rebirth, of excavation and evolution, are implicit corollaries to remembrance figured as successive acts of burial and retrieval. Yet it does not do justice to the text to confine the metaphors by which memory is constructed to these tropes. Memory is also an act of gestation, the moment when one body inhabits another either literally, as when Athos plucks the seven-year-old refugee, Jakob Beer, from out of his trousers (14), or figuratively, as when Jakob acknowledges his debt to Bella: "We were Russian dolls," he recalls, describing how his sister inhabits his body as memory as he has himself lived inside the "body" of Athos during their flight from Biskupin.

Memory, in these pages, is essentially an embodied gesture, images that rise in the narrator "like bruises" (19), that alternately cause him to "peel from the ground like paper ungluing at its edges" or to sink into the forest floor "like a seal into wax" (8). Memory is the phantom limb of history, like the mother who feels the weight of her child in her arms even as she sees her daughter's body on the sidewalk (138), but it is also the return of the ghostly dead to the bodies they have discarded in a series of successive hauntings that bridge the distance between figure and figment, between narrator and reader.

Even such intricate constructions of the figurative potential for remembrance fail to exhaust the metaphoric resonances of this text in which memory is both photographic imprint, a "ghostly double exposure" (18), and anamnesis, the taste of wine the narrator longs to cleanse from his mouth (22). Memory is the promise of literacy as in the Hebrew alphabet Athos coaxes Jakob to memorize (21), yet it is also amnesiac as in the English letters, "an alphabet without memory," that Jakob gradually acquires (101). And, as Jakob learns, remembrance may be accreted in all things: in deposits

of limestone, "that crushed reef of memory, that living stone" (32), in fleeting shadows (213), upon the map of history where "perhaps the waterstain is memory" (137), and in a pantheistic vision of nature's unerring ability to remember:

> Trees, for example, carry the memory of rainfall. In their rings we read ancient weather—storms, sunlight, and temperatures, the growing seasons of centuries. A forest shares a history, which each tree remembers even after it has been felled. (211)

Michaels' fascination with the metaphoric potential of memory—or metaphor as mnemonic device—bespeaks a preoccupation with textual depth that is pervasive in *Fugitive Pieces*. Like memory, the metaphor gestures toward the unseen, the invisible, to what is not available upon the surface of the text or within a superficial reading but which may be discerned upon careful excavation. Michaels' highly poetic, densely figurative text requires us to read laterally as one would a lyric poem, in order to appreciate the array of images and allusions that proliferate. This "depth" reading, this insistence on a truth that is behind or beneath the image rather than the more conventional method of reading for plot or narrative is symptomatic of a text occupying the hybrid status of "poetic" novel. More to the point, the notion of depth as both metaphoric and literal marker is replicated in the text's overwhelming insistence on acts of burial, drowning, excavation, and restoration.

The epigraph recalling those narratives of memory that have been "buried in back gardens, tucked into walls and under floors" gives way to the opening chapter entitled "The Drowned City," an account of the city of Biskupin, retrieved by the archeologists who have excavated her Stone and Iron Age relics. Of course, this city anticipates the second "Drowned City" of Ben's account when the Humber river overflowed its banks and flooded the Southern Ontario town of Weston, implying that successive disappearances and retrievals are to be the lot of survivors even in this new country.

The bog-boy / Tollund Man who emerges in the opening pages as Jakob Beer the adult narrator is swiftly buried again behind the wallpaper in the cupboard from which precarious but suggestive position he witnesses the deaths of his parents and (fails to witness) the disappearance of his sister. From this point onwards, Jakob is buried and retrieved so often that in narrative terms he resembles a textual shuttle that appears at frequent intervals only to disappear with equal dispatch.[14]

Even the title of his first book of poetry, *Groundwork*, testifies to his obsession with the processes by which the earth may be turned over and examined for what it conceals, whether these remnants be bodies or metaphors, artifacts or images; and the reason for writing his present posthumous memoir arises from a similar preoccupation with what lies *beneath* the patina of circumstance. He describes himself, for example, sitting in late afternoon dimness as "a story eat[s] its way to the surface" (144). The story is buried in this figure, but gradually reveals itself in the process of story-telling. Later this idea will be expanded with Ben's interest in biography as a process of retrieval and excavation, an archeological discipline that somehow yields up the subject of its inquiry—in this case the poet and translator, Jakob Beer—as whole, discrete, and perfectly preserved.

The story of the frequently resurrected Jakob Beer is set in the context of far greater burials. Throughout Europe during this time, Michaels' narrator tells us, letters and photographs, treasured artifacts from Synagogue and home, books, and ghetto diaries are being buried (39). In turn, these objects and narratives buried in landscape are merely the precursors to an even more sinister sequence of burials and one that will lead inevitably to the mass graves of Europe. Those who escaped, we are told, did so by anticipating the graves, by burying themselves alive in baking stoves, sewers, garbage bins, in crawlspaces, crates, and closets. These examples of how history mirrors individual trauma are effective insofar as they characterize historical narrative as yet another cupboard door or spread of wallpaper behind which the young boy conceals himself, one ear pressed to the surface.

Besides being author of the present memoir Jakob is also, as mentioned, author of the volume of poems entitled *Groundwork*, the dedication to which reads:

> My love for my family has grown for years in decay-fed soil, an unwashed root pulled suddenly from the ground. Bulbous as a beet, a huge eye under a lid of earth. Scoop out the eye, blind the earth. (206)

While recapitulating his preoccupation with what is buried and later retrieved, Jakob's dedication provides an extended and strangely mixed metaphor for the process by which the writer can confront and articulate his past. Familial love is the root (the comparison is generative of ancestry, of nourishment, and of language in the sense of etymology) retrieved from burial while memory is characterized as a layering of "decay-fed soil," a phrase that hints at the regenerative qualities of love that can grow and be fertilized even by decay.

The process by which the succulent root may be uncovered is the "groundwork" of the title and writing is characterized as a process of unearthing that at once reveals what is nourishing at the same time that it transforms the edible root into a terrifying visual organ, "a huge eye under a lid of earth." The power of writing to uncover and transform is further intensified by the final directive to "scoop" out the eye and so "blind" the earth, a phrase that emphasizes the potential violence of the writing process figured as an exercise in memory retrieval and a corresponding and contradictory wish, presumably on the part of the writer, to "blind" himself, that is, to render himself amnesiac, unmemoried, to live a life unhampered by the pain of consciousness.[15]

The mature storyteller and poet, the writer who begins his writing life with a series of short story fragments on the theme of hiding (148, 157), spends much of his childhood trying in vain to disappear (18), to camouflage himself against woodgrain of floor or layers of earth (48), and ends by "dedicating" his writing to the vicissitudes and painful exigencies of memory. Since, for Jakob, writing begins as a posture assumed at the moment of trauma—the moment of the burst door and the ripped hinges—writing is always already pervaded by loss. He compares himself to a touch-typist who holds his hands above the keys "slightly in the wrong place," or a poet writing every letter "askew" so that loss will "wreck the language, become the language" (111). This characteristic and repetitious stance of the child cowering behind the door provides the reader with the recognizable figure of the onlooker, the voyeur, the witness.

If *Fugitive Pieces* is, among other things, an extended meditation on the uses of metaphor and an experimental inquiry on the extent to which figurative language may trouble the borders between poetry and prose, what, finally, is the effect of this highly metaphoric discourse? In a narrative in which "everything" has been "retrieved from impossibility" (205), in a world in which identity pre-exists the individual in the form of racial categories, in the context of a society where one letter is enough to sentence the subject (like the letter "J" denoting Jew, which when stamped on a passport wields "the power of life or death" 207), language is potent only insofar as it escapes the boundaries of received meaning.

Michaels' compulsion to interpret, translate, construct tropes and connect meanings, in short, her determination to force the apparently meaningless world of the Holocaust to signify in the course of these first- and

second-generation acts of witnessing is one possible answer to the monologic authoritarianism of the camps where no questioning of meaning was allowed. The problem of witnessing, of how to present the unrepresentable in writing is, in many ways, a problem of translation.[16] Michaels' solution is to speak in a "foreign" language, to bring to the prose of the traumatic narrative the unruly compulsions of poetry, and in so doing to restore to language what Adorno once mourned as necessarily lost forever.

NOTES

I would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Izaak Walton Killam Foundation.

1 In *Language and Silence*, George Steiner interprets Adorno's statement in the light of a pedagogical imperative: to read or to teach texts as if they were immune to recent history, he writes, constitutes a "subtle but corrosive illiteracy" (ix). For Steiner as for Adorno, the Holocaust gave the lie to culture as a humanizing force: "We come after. We know now that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning" (ix).

Michaels takes up this argument by repeatedly mentioning German composers in her text: Mahler, Beethoven, Bach, Brahms and Schuman are cited as examples of dedicated musicians and, it is implied, of civilized Germans. Critic D.M.R. Bentley points out that Jakob Beer is himself named for the nineteenth-century German composer Giacomo Meyerbeer (7).

At the same time, neither Steiner, nor indeed Adorno, and certainly not Michaels is advocating a denial of art as a means of expression or consolation. As Adorno writes in *Negative Dialectics*, "It is now virtually in art alone that suffering can still find its own voice, consolation, without immediately being betrayed by it" (312).

2 Eli Wiesel has named the testimony as the chosen form of the twentieth century. In reply to the implicit question, what is the most ethical way of articulating or representing the information given to us by the Holocaust, Wiesel intuits a new genre: "If the Greeks invented tragedy, the Romans the epistle, and the Renaissance the sonnet, our generation invented a new literature, that of the testimony" (9).

3 In his "Bremen Address" Celan is even more explicit about the ways in which language was corrupted during and after the Holocaust: "Within reach, close and not lost, there remained, in the midst of the losses, this one thing: language . . . But it had to pass through its own answerlessness, pass through a frightful falling mute" (quoted in Felstiner 23).

4 Jakob's sister's name is the pulse that impels the narrative, replacing, in the final pages of his memoir, image with sound, with the sound, as we have already learnt, that outlasts matter. "I grasped the two syllables closest to me, and replaced my heartbeat with your name" declares Jakob in the final words of his memoir (195), shortly—it is implied by the epigraph—before he is killed in a car accident, so that it is, finally, the pulse of the name that stands in the place of forgetting, of the erased face. This allegory of memory clumsily working itself out through sound in the absence of image, awkwardly recalling itself in an

alien medium, is appropriate to a discussion of traumatic narrative insofar as *Fugitive Pieces* presents itself as a novel that fumbles and stammers towards an impossible articulation.

Of course this last statement is challenged by the highly crafted language of the novel. The impossibility of representation continues to hover uneasily between the imperative to narrate the event in language that does justice to horror and the impossibility of narration when confronted by the full implications of this horror. At the same time, sound continues to be a privileged site in the years to come, not only of memory but of the ability to articulate memory. When the older Jakob Beer falls in love with Michaela he praises her responsiveness in words that transform her into an organ of receptivity: "She has heard everything—her heart an ear, her skin an ear" (182), and later his wish for his unborn child is that he or she may "never be deaf to love" (195). In addition, the idea of sound as a medium of insight is worked out in the many references to poets and poetry in the text, to musicians like Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, as well as to the inordinate number of characters—Bella, Alex, Athos, Maurice's son, Ben's father—who play musical instruments.

5 Martin Buber in *The I and the Thou* is dismayed precisely by this apparent dis-alignment in the receptive model of witnessing in which, to use his pronouns, there is no longer an other to whom one can say "thou." This negates the hope of being heard or answered, or as Laub points out, even of being recognized as a subject ("Truth and Testimony" 66).

6 Felman suggests that the value to be assigned to witnessing as a textual event is that of the signature by means of which the outrages of erasure and annihilation may be reversed. As a "signed" text, Jakob's memoir is the means by which he can write himself back to his proper name from the anonymity of the opening pages when he was merely the bog-boy.

Such an enterprise, however, demands a state of constant vigilance. The impossible event is witnessed at the immediate "coordination of time and place" (162), precisely because a subject is present to testify. Jakob's last words attempt to articulate this precarious intersection of accident and intention:

> The world goes on because someone's awake somewhere. If, by accident, a moment were to occur when everyone was asleep, the world would disappear. (194)

The Cartesian formulation of perception, wherein the world exists only within the subject's gaze as informed by his/her consciousness, resonates in this account of a people in imminent danger of extinction and who, it is implied, could be extinguished again were the gaze to waver. Michaels' narrative anxiety with regard to the burdens and responsibilities of storytelling as witnessing practice is foregrounded in the many characters she creates who are required to take on this role: Bella, Athos, and even Michaela, are compulsive storytellers while Naomi, who tells stories "like a courtier" (239), acts as a kind of domesticated Scheherezade to Ben.

7 The parallel between Jakob and Ben is one of the most obvious but by no means the only correspondence in the novel. Michaels' narrative is pervaded by similarities between characters that are, at times, overwhelming and confusing to the reader. Like Michaela, Ben is an exceptionally gifted child; like Jakob, Ben is a lonely only child who cannot form close relationships until he meets a beautiful and empathetic woman who "heals" him. Like Athos in his guise as archeologist and excavator of the town of Biskupin, Ben "scavenges" the banks of the Humber river collecting objects that have been buried in the spring floods (253). The similarities between Athos' library and study on the island of Zakynthos (28) and Jakob's study on Idhra (264) are emphatic and hardly accidental. It is

difficult to know what to make of these correspondences except to view them in the light of annotated similes by means of which characters are linked by a series of linguistic contrivances.

8 Like Jakob, Ben is a writer, a storyteller who undertakes the task of the second-generation witness which is to continue to force language to testify to atrocity from within the woundedness that transforms the incomprehensible, unrepresentable event into narrative. In this sense, survival is not necessarily the survival of an individual or even of a race but the survival of narrative, of story formed within the encounter between the survivor as writer and the listener as reader.

9 Roman Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy is useful here. The metaphor testifies to the capacity of two words to replace one another in a relationship of positional and semantic similarity. Metonymic tropes, on the other hand, combine and contrast positional similarity with semantic contiguity. In *Fugitive Pieces* Michaels uses both devices to evoke the unrepresentable nature of the obscene experience which is seldom written directly but rather replaced by metaphoric and metonymic signifiers.

10 This is certainly not an isolated case. Jakob frequently asserts his inability to metaphorize the world at the precise moment that his images blossom forth, so to speak, with the energy and renewed vigour of denial:

> It's no metaphor to feel the influence of the dead in the world, just as it's no metaphor to hear the radiocarbon chronometer, the Geiger counter amplifying the faint breathing of rock, fifty thousand years old. (Like the faint thump from behind the womb wall.) (53)

11 I use the word "encrypted" to express my sense of this first-generation testimony in which the past exists within the present in a spatially indefinite and temporally indifferent melancholia. In this threshold place between remembrance and forgetting, memories converge and collide, since Michaels is not only attempting a history of one man's life but, more complexly, a history of the earth, of the mineral deposits of time.

Elizabeth Bellamy describes this "crypt-ic" melancholy as occupying "the obscure threshold between memory and forgetting" (22). Bellamy goes on to explain the genealogy of this word—encrypted—as originating in a psychoanalytic study by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok in their book *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonomy*. For Abraham and Torok, the crypt is a reconfiguration of the Freudian unconscious as a tomb or vault inhabited by the subject's phantoms, whether these be family secrets, repressions, or revenants of a post-traumatic collective unconscious. Jacques Derrida's essay "Fors" is an extended meditation on Abraham and Torok's cryptonomy.

12 A particularly fine example of this technique occurs fairly early in the narrative when Athos and Jakob arrive in Athens to be welcomed by Daphne and Kostas. For a period of some ten pages (62-73) the direct speech of the friends is interspersed with Jakob's early memories of his family as if the congenial talk of the adults who are at last in a place of comparative safety is enough to lure the young child into the security that will allow his memories to unfold.

13 At the same time, the image of lightning that recurs in these pages anticipates the section entitled "Phosphorus" (273-86) when Ben recounts his encounter with Petra figured as a discourse of lightning in which lightning as a real event transforms into lightning as a metaphor for the moment of love and the effects of love gone awry in the form of an avenging woman.

14 Jakob begins by concealing himself from the Germans by digging his own grave, planting himself in the ground "like a turnip" (8), a burial in earth that is closely followed by a

similar burial in water when he walks out into the river until only his mouth and nose can be seen above the surface (11). Later, he emerges like a golem, the mythical creature of clay whose "birth" is precipitated by burial and retrieval. As a golem with "peat-clogged ears" (122) Jakob is rescued by Athos who has himself been excavating the buried city of Biskupin and who conceals the boy inside his coat where he is effectively "buried" until their arrival in Greece. Later, on the island of Zakynthos, where Jakob will one day bury Athos' ashes, the young boy hides from the possibility of unwelcome visitors in a sea chest, and each time he climbs out, he tells us, "less of me emerged" (31).

Still later, when Jakob and Athos have made their way to the "new world" and take up residence in Toronto, Jakob is fascinated by what he calls a "city of ravines" (89), a city that he persists in regarding as "sunken" and underground, where the wayfarer can disappear "beneath the streets, look[ing] up to the floating neighbourhoods" (89). He describes himself and Athos as "diving birds" plunging through many millions of years "into the dark deciduous silence of the ravines" (98). While the two walk through the ravines every Sunday, Jakob tries to "bury images" of loss and grief by "covering them over" with Greek and English words (93). The landscape they traverse during these walks conceals other landscapes so that the wilderness behind a neighbourhood billboard gives way to "the humid amphitheatre of a Mesozoic swamp," and the city's "sunken rooms of green sunlight" may be glimpsed from beneath a parking lot (98).

15 In addition, Annick Hillger points out that the passage evokes ideas of decay and contamination in relation to the passing of time. Hillger finds Kabbalistic resonances in the image of "a huge eye under a lid of earth," comparing this figure to the Lurianic myth of creation where the birth of self emanates from the earth conceived metaphorically as the ground of being (37).

16 I am reminded of another Holocaust narrative that engages with the act of translation as a means of "understanding" the experience of the camps. In a chapter entitled "The Canto of Ulysses" in Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz,* Levi presents us with the incongruous spectacle of two hungry prisoners discussing Dante's *Divine Comedy,* the one prisoner attempting to translate from the Italian for the other prisoner's benefit. In this way Levi presents us with a metaphor for the problem of speaking or writing about Auschwitz: in order to represent what is unrepresentable one is required to use a foreign language, in this case the "civilized" language of Dante. Levi's compulsion to interpret, translate, construct allegories and connect meanings, in other words to *force* the world to signify, is perhaps his answer to the authoritarian discourse of the camps where no questioning of meaning was allowed. I am indebted for this last insight to Dr. Susanna Egan of the University of British Columbia.

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Carla Drysdale

Beyond the Wall

(after an exhibition of Attila Richard Lukacs' work)

The artist glorified the skinhead's balls—
Dominated canvas, paint and brush
To lay down eye sparkle, tongue glaze, wolf call
Of the painted, painter's and my own lust.
The young corpse peeled open above the hip
Sprouts a thicket of wires from a gay discotheque
"Oi! Skinhead glory!" tattooed on his neck,
Sweep of eyelash, limp cock, full lip.
Daddy pays big to lick a toilet clean,
To have his cranberry nipples clamped by steel
And give death the finger, fist and fuck machine
To harness beauty and caress the bruise. Feel
The ego teetering on the outer rim,
The body a carnival of faces, ecstatic and grim.

A. Mary Murphy

Journeys Across My Body

By the middle of September your hand reaches me and begins to compose the record of its journeys across my body. That willing landscape for such an extravegant traveller. Tracing every ridge and fold like a blind man reading braille, you etch the shape of me into your fingertips. I am your fingerprints now, leave traces on everything you touch. Restless for this scenery, you slip your hand into the document of your careful exploration, play my map across the shadows of your eyes. Memories are not good enough. They fill your heart with a wanderlust they cannot satisfy. What you want is the taste of this country in your mouth, the smell of it in your nose, to be silent in it and listen to its breezes sigh as they brush against your face. Haunted by the wildness of this discovery, you have no peace wherever you are.

Lucas Tromly

Sabotaging Utopia

Politics and the Artist in A.M. Klein's *The Bells of Sobor Spasitula*

The short story "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" seems to have been the last creative work that A.M. Klein finished before his fall into the seventeen-year period of mental illness, isolation, and silence that lasted until his death.[1] Completed in 1955, this text is perhaps Klein's bleakest articulation of the despair which led him to abandon his art. "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" recounts the fate of Terpetoff, a brilliant composer who is persecuted in the early years of the Soviet revolution. The story's central concern is the complex relationship between the artist and his community, an issue that preoccupied Klein throughout his career. By the early 1950s, Klein's previously idealistic view of the artist as one who has the power to transform "his fragmented and alienated society into . . . a genuine, unified community"(Pollock, *The Story* 4) had darkened considerably. The pessimism of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is a reflection of Klein's understanding of his own situation as both an artist and a Jew. The story indirectly engages the debate among world Jewry concerning the validity of the Diaspora following the formation of the state of Israel. Klein perceived the dismissal of the Diaspora endorsed by some Zionists as an attack on himself and his artistic project, and his depiction of Russia's revolutionary regime is a tacit critique of anti-Diaspora ideology. By suggesting a parallel between Marxist and Zionist revolutions, "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" betrays Klein's distress over the doctrinaire politics of self-styled utopias.

In "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," as in much of Klein's late fiction, the tension between the individual (who is often an artist) and his socio-political

context is manifested in the ominous presence of Russian Marxism.[2] Part of the reason for Klein's interest in Russia is his engagement with contemporary politics. As M.W. Steinberg writes, "Klein's dislike for the totalitarian aspects of Soviet communism and his fear of the regimentation of mind and body involved in the attempt to establish a monolithic society . . . found renewed expression in the post-war era not only in editorials but in his fiction as well" (*Stories* xvi-xvii). Klein's portrait of Russia, however, is a largely subjective landscape, more tropological than topographical. In part a reaction to Stalin's regime, the Russian stories also betray Klein's ambivalence towards his own immediate and extended Jewish community. It is through the setting of Russia that Klein expresses his concern about politics in the state of Israel. "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" explores Klein's alienation from Israel by drawing a subtle analogy between the Soviet regime's enforced uniformity and the intolerance of artistic freedom that he perceived in some aspects of Zionism, particularly in anti-Diaspora ideology. While never directly equating Stalinist Russia and the state of Israel, in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" Klein displaces his misgivings about the newly created state of Israel onto the unequivocally threatening setting of Russia.

In the late 1940s, Jews around the globe were re-evaluating the meaning of the Diaspora in a world where a Jewish homeland was a reality, and the horrors of the Holocaust led many to dismiss the possibility of leading an authentic and safe Jewish life in any country but Israel. With the creation of Israel, some Zionists saw the potential for a solidarity which they felt the Diaspora undermined. The movement that argued that the existence of Israel negated the validity of Diaspora life caused Klein pain at the deepest level of his being. Although he spent most of his life as an active Zionist, he was at heart a Diaspora Jew who "feared and opposed the narrow, Diaspora-negating chauvinism that he . . . saw developing in Israel" (Caplan 177). Klein's reaction against Zionists who dismissed the ongoing importance of the Diaspora was intensified by the way in which anti-Diaspora ideology exacerbated the growing sense of alienation which he felt from his community. Like Spinoza in "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," Klein was often frustrated with those he characterized as "the paunchy sons of Abraham" (*CP* 208), who valued orthodoxy and conformity over creativity and intellectual innovation. For Klein, the move to sacrifice the diversity of the Diaspora for the unity of the state of Israel may have been an extreme example of the pressure that he felt to fit into a community that did not understand him.

The implicit commentary on Israel in Klein's Russian fiction is illuminated by his responses to anti-Diaspora ideology in his journalism. He published two major articles about the negation of the Diaspora: "The Dangers of Success" (March 1949) and "In Praise of the Diaspora: An Undelivered Memorial Address" (January-February 1953).[3] Although it has received less attention than "In Praise of the Diaspora," "The Dangers of Success" is in some ways a more revealing response to anti-Diaspora ideology, particularly in its emphasis on the political repression of artistic freedom. At times, the article's diction is surprisingly harsh. Klein laments that opposition to the Diaspora "seeks to achieve with a theoretical dictum what all the tyrants of all the ages failed to achieve with fire and sword, namely, the nullification of Diaspora Jewry" (*BS* 333). Linked with the violent imagery of "fire and sword," the comparison of negationist Zionists to "tyrants" hints that the "nullification of Diaspora Jewry" will resemble a party purge.[4] In "The Dangers of Success" Klein condemns the exclusionary dogma which he sees in the anti-Diaspora ideology that would achieve cultural oneness through force instead of harmony. In Klein's view, the urge for ideological uniformity ultimately causes fragmentation, and thus the anti-Diaspora movement fosters "an unreasoned . . . purely doctrinaire discord" among world Jewry (*BS* 333). Pollock argues that much of Klein's work seeks to unite society through shared tradition, creating "a vision of the One in the Many" (*The Story* 3). Instead of Klein's ideal of a metaphysical unity which rises out of diversity (the One *in* the Many), the enemies of the Diaspora are divisive in their efforts for political totalization (the One *or* the Many).

Klein reacts against the demand for ideological uniformity as an artist as well as a Diaspora Jew, for the negation of the Diaspora entails the negation of his vision of the poet. His view of the heroic poet as a marginal or absent figure who nevertheless works for unity is consonant with his own situation as a Diaspora Jew fighting for Israel while in Montreal.[5] In "The Dangers of Success," Klein feels that opponents of the Diaspora have betrayed him as a poet by using the Zionist convictions in his earlier work against him. He realizes that his status as a poet and a public figure invests his writing with an authority that can be appropriated. He admits that

> 'the negators' [of the Diaspora] can adduce many texts—including some from my own writings—to prove how superior *aretz* ['the land,' or Israel] is to *chutz l'aretz* ['outside the land,' or the Diaspora]—but such texts are essential to the culture of a people in exile. It is through such texts that it lives until the day of reintegration. But once reintegrated—such texts are but literature. (BS 334)

With his insistence that the creation of the state of Israel frees readers to approach his writing as "but literature," Klein attempts to reappropriate his work from those who interpret art ideologically. He suggests that art, even if created with a political goal in mind, can transcend its immediate political context. Unfortunately, Klein may have harboured doubts about the compatibility of artistic nuance and political commitment stronger than those expressed in "The Dangers of Success," for in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," the trope of the betrayed artist whose work is turned against him is played out in full.

"The Dangers of Success" is particularly relevant to "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" in the way it draws upon analogies to other countries to clarify its position. Klein uses the Irish situation as a template for his own: "There are many parallels to be drawn between the Hebrew Renascence and the Irish one; but one parallel must be carefully avoided; the Yishuv [Jews who settled in Israel before the establishment of the state] must not become *Sinn Fein*—'ourselves alone' is not a proper slogan for those who cherish a concern for *'klalYisroel'* [the whole community of the Jewry]" (*BS* 334). This sentiment appears again in *The Second Scroll*, where Klein writes that fiercely nationalistic Israeli poets "invariably referred to themselves as *Anachnu* (Us)—unhappy reminiscence of *nous autres, nos otros, sinn fein*—xenophobic antonym to *Haim* (Them). Not Israelis did they style themselves, but Canaanites—more aboriginal than the aborigines! And again and again they slipped into their secondary theme—*shlilath hagaluth*—the negation of the Diaspora" (79).

This argument does more than simply indicate similarities between different types of nationalism. Klein's analysis through analogy indicates his need to find another community onto which he can displace observations about his own, a strategy many have seen in *The Rocking Chair*. Something prevented Klein from articulating his frustrations with negationist Zionism in his short fiction—perhaps a knowledge that his comments could be appropriated by anti-Semites and used against the young country. Klein needed a new setting. In a letter to *Poetry* magazine dated 22 July 1946, he describes the similarities between the Jewish and French-Canadian communities, and writes, "[I] am only travelling incognito, disguised as a Frenchman" (quoted in Pollock, *The Story* 179). In "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" we see Klein similarly disguised, bearing a passport "in cyrillic print" (*Stories* 275).

Although it takes place in the years immediately preceding and following the Russian revolution of 1917, "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is decidedly

Stalinesque in its atmosphere. It is narrated by Arkady Mikailovich, a Russian in Paris who emigrated after the revolution. He tells the story of his friend Terpetoff, a composer who is persecuted as an enemy of the revolutionary regime because of his non-partisan art. Terpetoff's problems begin when, after the revolution, one of his compositions, which was originally called "Opus No. 13," is retitled "Overture Proletarian" by an acquaintance, and is performed publicly. It is enthusiastically reviewed by Krasnovitch, an old and mysterious acquaintance of Arkady Mikailovich and Terpetoff, who praises "Overture Proletarian" as a masterpiece of Marxist dialectics. Krasnovitch soon learns that the piece was written without any political intent, and reports Terpetoff to the Commissar of Culture, who pressures Terpetoff to compose music that is overtly political. After being blackmailed with information about his trysts in the countryside with a peasant woman named Evdokia, Terpetoff agrees to the Commissar's demands. All of Moscow is shocked when Terpetoff climbs the belltower of the church of Sobor Spasitula ("Cathedral of the Saviour")and sounds the bell with a hammer. Authorities are notified, and Terpetoff is shot dead. In a motif reminiscent of, and perhaps derived from, Orwell's *1984*, the incident is erased from official record.[6]

In order to read the commentary on negationist Zionism implicit in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," we must examine the way in which Terpetoff functions as a conflation of the persecuted artist and the negated Diaspora Jew. The translation of Terpetoff's name certainly captures Klein's feelings of artistic and political malaise during the mid-1950s: "Terpetoff" seems to be derived from the Russian word "терпеть" (v.impf. 'terpet' [Garfield 354]), which translates as "to suffer" or "to endure." Through Terpetoff, Klein attempts to find a solution to the conflict between artistic freedom and repressive party solidarity described in "The Dangers of Success." Of crucial importance is the fact that Terpetoff is political without being partisan. His support for the revolution affirms Klein's ideal of a political stance not dictated by ideology: Terpetoff "had arrived at [his revolutionary sympathies] . . . not through some doctrinaire syllogism, but emotionally, through his experience, his personality" (291). This is also a good description of Klein's own Zionism.

The parallel between Terpetoff's ideal of Diaspora Jewry with Klein's is strengthened when we examine the similarity of Terpetoff's aesthetic stance with that suggested in "The Dangers of Success." Although he is friendly

with the peasants outside Moscow and is sympathetic to the revolution, Terpetoff's politics do not determine the nature of his art; he believes that art is "a thing apart, *au dessus de la bataille* [Fr. 'outside or beyond the battle']" (279). Terpetoff embodies Klein's insistence that artistic meaning not be contained in a single political context. Klein's experience with the ideological appropriation of words described in "The Dangers of Success" may have led to Terpetoff's wariness of commentary; the composer charges that "No more should the listening to music be made a basis for annotation . . . One doesn't look at a great painting to deduce the moral of an anecdote" (281). For Terpetoff, interpretive commentary is ultimately divisive, and only abstract art is truly inclusive. Indeed, abstract music unites its audience through a morality that transcends political divisions; Terpetoff claims that "To listen to music . . . is to perform a rite of communion (281). While Terpetoff supports the revolution, it is through his art that he hopes to make his real contribution by uniting a community of listeners.

Terpetoff also takes on Diasporic connotations when contextualized in the larger body of Klein's work. Pollock notes that "whenever [Klein] wants to evoke a sense of continuity and tradition . . . [he uses] the motif of a young child being escorted by a loving and protective male adult, generally an uncle or father or teacher" (1994 46). Terpetoff is such an escort. He is not related to Arkady Mikailovich (although at one point he is likened to "a tolerant older brother"[292]), but he is a distinctly avuncular presence. In the only sustained study of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," Margaret Broad observes that Terpetoff resembles *The Second Scroll*'s Uncle Melech, pointing out that in both "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" and *The Second Scroll* "the narrator is fifteen years the junior of the artist" (116). However, a better parallel is to be found in "In Praise of the Diaspora." In this essay, Klein personifies the Diaspora as his newly deceased Uncle Galuth (Heb. 'exile'), a benign figure who represents the resilience, achievement, and diversity of Diaspora Jewry. In Uncle Galuth Klein celebrates the traversing of both geographic and interpretive latitudes—he is "*the* philosopher peripatetic" (BS 470). Uncle Galuth embodies the link between the Diaspora and artistic freedom suggested by Morris Grossman: "[exile] has meant possibility, challenge, venturesomeness . . . Alienation, whether from self or from tribal brethren, contributes to intellectual liberation and psychological emancipation" (76). When read against "In Praise of the Diaspora," Terpetoff's execution seems to be a dramatization of the death of Uncle Galuth and the creativity that he signifies.

The story of the misunderstood artist is one that Klein told repeatedly over his career. Indeed, in some senses "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" conforms to a pattern of characterization present in texts such as "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens," "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," and *The Second Scroll* through its central configuration of personae: the artist, the demagogue, and the speaker. Obviously, the artist figure is Terpetoff, who occupies a centrality similar to that of Uncle Melech, the artist in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," and Spinoza ("Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens"). By triangulating Terpetoff with the characters of Krasnovitch and Arkady Mikailovich, we can see how "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" suggests an upsetting connection between the artist's enemies and allies. Klein's demagogue is the embodiment of the forces hostile to the poet. Pollock notes that much of Klein's work involves the conflict between the "real poet [who] acknowledges the fact of his isolation . . . [and] retreats within himself as part of a process of self discovery" and the demagogue, "who . . . [takes] the place of the true poet, exploiting, in a spirit of destruction rather than creation, society's yearning for wholeness" (*The Story* 4), [7] and uses as examples Shabbathai Zvi ("Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens") and Camillien Houde ("Political Meeting"). The character who would seem to occupy this role is Krasnovitch, the literary critic who imposes his commentary on Terpetoff's music and betrays him to the revolutionary authorities. Krasnovitch is introduced immediately after Terpetoff, and Arkady Mikailovich himself identifies them as opposites: "Unlike Krasnovitch, our literary editor from whose sanctum only categorical imperatives issued, Terpetoff was to us, *les jeunes*, tolerant and indulgent" (278). Even Krasnovitch's name distinguishes him from Terpetoff. It is based on the Russian word "красный" (adj.'krasnyi'[Garfield 322]), and translates as "son of redness." As the narrative continues we see that in his veins runs pure ideology.

If we accept that texts such as "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," "Out of the Pulver and the Polished Lens" and "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" protest the way society misunderstands creative thinkers, then Klein's narrative strategy seems somewhat paradoxical, for these artists rarely tell their own stories. Klein seldom lets his artists speak directly in the first-person voice. Usually the experience of the artist is filtered through a separate narrator, often a friend or a sympathetic persona. In this sense, Arkady Mikailovich performs a similar function to that of Uncle Melech's nephew, the speaker of *The Second Scroll.* Broad notes that the narrative strategies of the two texts

corresponds, and that by telling Terpetoff's story, Arkady Mikailovich, like Melech's nephew, acts as an agent to "probe the state of art and the plight of other artists in other times and places" (115). However, we shall see that the relationship between Terpetoff and Arkady Mikailovich is a subtle but important problematic. Although she interprets the bond between narrator and artist as a harmonious one, Broad admits that the narrative voice knows the poet "from the outside looking in" (115). Indeed, Arkady Mikailovich's understanding of Terpetoff is far from perfect and depicts a deterioration rather than a continuation of the connection between Melech and his nephew.

"The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" gives us strong hints that despite the genuine sadness that he feels over the death of his friend, Arkady Mikailovich's perspective on Terpetoff is questionable. Arkady Mikailovich's insensitivity to Terpetoff's aesthetic leads him to behave in a similar fashion to those who are eventually responsible for his demise. When one remembers Klein's fear of artistic appropriation as discussed in "The Dangers of Success," the ostensibly friendly character of Arkady Mikailovich seems uncomfortably similar to Krasnovitch. The roles of Arkady Mikailovich and Krasnovitch are collapsed through their reaction to Terpetoff's work. Their feelings about Terpetoff may be very different, but neither Arkady Mikailovich nor Krasnovitch can resist the impulse to impose a narrative on Terpetoff's music.

Though Arkady Mikailovich is familiar with his friend's aesthetic of abstraction, he instinctively glosses "Opus No. 13": "[Terpetoff] was fated always to have the critics verbalize his music—even I, whom he tried to persuade to the beauty of pure sound, never quite disembarrassed myself of the habit of translating, as he called it, harmony into grammar" (281). Such comments underscore the differences between Arkady Mikailovich and Terpetoff and thus make the reader seriously question Arkady Mikailovich's objectivity as a narrator. However loyal, he cannot resist seeing a narrative in a work meant to be abstract:

> Though Terpetoff had designated his work by a mere number (again his predilection for the abstract), the melodies of which it was composed were so identifiable, so pregnant with association, that their sequence alone did in fact seem to tell a story,—so much so that Strynenko [a friend of Terpetoff's] ventured, amidst the non-committal silence of the composer, to suggest a more descriptive title. He would call it . . . *Prelude to the Dormition of the Little Mother.* It was, I thought as I followed the performance, a most apt title. (287)

Arkady Mikailovich's commentary, and the re-titling of "Opus No. 13," recalls the appropriation of art described in "The Dangers of Success." Indeed,

Terpetoff's "non-committal silence" following Arkady Mikailovich's gloss bespeaks more anguish than any of his friends know. [8]

The religious nature of the commentary on "Opus No. 13" that Arkady Mikailovich expounds is less important than the fact that he must create a commentary at all. Klein uses Arkady Mikailovich's musical appreciation to ironize the relationship between the two men. Arkady Mikailovich claims that though it defies Terpetoff's aesthetic, his commentary on "Opus No. 13" is a valid musical interpretation that "opened for[him] yet another window onto [Terpetoff's] temperament" (289). Arkady Mikailovich deludes himself; his impulse to gloss suggests a lack of real communication with Terpetoff. It is ironic that, when he condemns the revolution as "the mammoth mob . . . stampeding over everything that's delicate and different!" (291), Arkady Mikailovich may be inadvertently describing his own interpretive process. Indeed, Klein's use of narrative voice seems to prophesy his own fate. Because the narrative springs solely from Arkady Mikailovich's ironized point of view, Klein denies his readers any clear understanding of Terpetoff's opinion of those around him. Already the artist is receding before his fictional and actual audiences.

In addition to the similarity of their commentaries, the names "Arkady Mikailovich" and "Krasnovitch" suggest that the two characters are not so different. Broad points out that Arkady Mikailovich's name is built around Klein's first two initials (116). However, she fails to mention that the figure of Krasnovitch also represents part of Klein; he complements Arkady Mikailovich by bearing the first initial of Klein's last name. Although the detail is not important to the plot, Klein identifies Krasnovitch as a poet who even publishes reviews under "K." That he is also Klein seems of little doubt. By giving the characters who misgloss Terpetoff's work his own initials, Klein seems to be hinting at a tension within himself. A reader would expect Terpetoff, the idealized artist, to be directly identified with Klein, and the fact that Klein inscribes himself into a faulty narrator and worse, a treacherous Marxist, hints at an profound authorial self-division. Klein's presence in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is a microcosm of revolutionary Russia—both are "torn by inner cramps" (294).

Because Arkady Mikailovich is a member of the bourgeoisie and Krasnovitch a revolutionary, the multiple readings of "Overture Proletarian" makes us realize that misglossing is not confined to any one ideology. However, while Arkady Mikailovich's reading alienates Terpetoff, Krasnovitch is

an agent for a political ideology that actively threatens the freedom of artists. The ideological demands that Krasnovitch and the revolutionary regime make of art are too exacting to be resolved dialectically, and Terpetoff's artistic project is negated by the forces of political upheaval. Like Klein himself, Terpetoff is caught in the collision between art and political solidarity.

The pessimistic view of the artist's role in society suggested by the totalizing commentaries on Terpetoff's work is made even more grim by the catalyst of history. "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is Klein's bleakest statement about art's vulnerability to the forces of history. In "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," the "golem of history" succumbs to the "Russian Epilepsy" (294) of violence and chaos. Arkady Mikailovich laments "Woe to him who stepped into the radii of those robot flailing limbs! . . . From October to the following March, the body of my country, torn by inner cramps, the clonic spasms of intraparty conflict, turned and twisted and rolled in its convulsions" (294). In addition to their obvious significance as signs of neurological disfunction, epileptic seizures are a motif Klein uses to express the chaos which prevents the continuity of tradition and defies the orderly unfolding of history. In "The Spinning Wheel," Klein uses the spinning wheel as a symbol of unifying tradition, and contrasts it with the "epileptic loom and mad factory" (*CP* 660) which imitate the action of the wheel in a parody made grotesque by the drive for commercial profit. Even more chilling is "The Bible Manuscripts," in which false scribes' "fingers' epilepsy" (*LER* 136) miscopy the Torah. By mistranscribing, they consecrate a faulty tradition and pass it on into history. The miscopied scrolls are not a reliable basis for beliefs and morals, and an investigation of their validity reveals the tenuous bond between Scripture and the divine revelations which they allegedly record and explain. The possibility that Scripture is without divine authority causes every aspect of existence to convulse; it "sends earthquakes under the world's foundations. The dynasties tremble. The question distils poison in the brain—the moralists shake in a chill, the philosophers go mad" (*LER* 143).

The Revolution reveals the vulnerability of idealism to history. The noble ideals of class equality quickly give way to "the raucous stertor of tyranny" (295). In the wake of revolution, rituals symbolizing order are corrupted into parodies: "the porter at our door presided one day over a meeting of his soviet, at my father's board-table, using his whiskbroom for gavel" (295). The depiction of the revolution echoes Klein's reaction to the certain aspects of the state of Israel, as he criticizes the institutionalization of a belief which he still holds

dear. For Arkady Mikailovich, there is a great schism between his idealized homeland and its political manifestation. Russia has become for him "metaphysical, a blurred concept ... something out of time and out of geography" (275). The Revolutionary government that forces him to flee affects the way he remembers his homeland: Russia's "so welcome sky is still presided over by a moon of a bloated Tartar cast, a Malenkov of a moon, cold, unsmiling, inhospitable"(276).[9] Malenkov's mention indicates Arkady Mikailovich's despair about the future of his homeland; Tom Marshall notes that Klein often uses the moon as "an indicator of his mood and the focus of his poetic universe" (*Multiple* 26). A "Malenkov of a moon" is therefore particularly upsetting because the "focus of [Klein's] poetic universe" is a bureaucrat who negates poetry.

The revolution is an artistic crisis as well as a political one; it also undoes some of Klein's most consolatory themes, suggesting a loss of faith in the power of art. As the political situation in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" gets worse and worse, the text becomes ironically self-referential.[10] For example, in the aftermath of the revolution, the escort motif breaks down. Terpetoff refuses to accompany Arkady Mikailovich when he flees Russia, leaving his young friend with a sense of abandonment. Terpetoff ceases to be a nurturing presence; Arkady Mikailovich confesses that he "felt older than [Terpetoff], and indeed. . . never again felt younger than him" (295). If read back into Klein's earlier work, Arkady Mikailovich's disenchantment with Terpetoff indicates Klein's growing doubt about the possibility of finding strength and identity through tradition.

When he returns to Moscow two years after having fled with his family, Arkady Mikailovich begins to search for Terpetoff. His quest echoes *The Second Scroll's* vain pursuit of Uncle Melech. At first, Terpetoff is nowhere to be found: "They knew nobody by that name. I wandered the streets" (297). However, the two searches yield very different results. Leon Edel complained to Klein of his tantalized frustration with the ever-elusive Melech. He "told Klein that he had made [him] . . . eager to meet Melech . . . and [he] felt frustrated. [Melech] is a fabulous character unseen" ("Marginal" 23). It is Melech's absence that allows him to take on a mythic significance which his human presence could only diminish.[11] The degradation of a potentially legendary persona is precisely what happens in Terpetoff's case. He is not allowed to become a hero; when Arkady Mikailovich contacts Terpetoff, his former mentor is a drunkard who earns his living playing music at weddings. Unlike Melech, Terpetoff is human, all too human.

Arkady Mikailovich ultimately finds Terpetoff by spotting a poster advertising a performance of a Terpetoff composition called "Overture Proletarian" by "The People's Orchestra" (297). He immediately wonders if Terpetoff has aligned himself with the ideology of the revolution, evoking scenes in *The Second Scroll* where Melech shocks his family by adopting and rejecting various ideologies. But Melech has a different type of agency; while he is free to experiment, Terpetoff is persecuted and powerless. Terpetoff is less able to choose his politics than politics are able to choose him. In "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," it is the poets seeking fame who voluntarily become affiliated with politics ("[who] join party and wear pins, now have a message / an ear, and the convention-hall's regard" [*CP* 637]). Now, however, dogma is an imperative, not a choice. The artist is lucky if allowed to remain landscape.

Terpetoff's composition draws unwanted attention from Krasnovitch, who immediately turns the composer in when the facts behind "Opus No. 13/ Overture Proletarian" emerge. Krasnovitch's superiors are creatures of dogma, and they are the true demagogues of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula." However, a comparison with earlier demagogues reveals the extent to which Klein's view of society has darkened. Often in his career Klein has suggested parallels between the poet and the demagogue; Pollock notes that in "Political Meeting," Klein "is interested in exploring the strength of [the demagogic Orator's, in this case Camillien Houde's,] appeal, and, through exploring it, he discovers that he himself is not immune to it, whatever he may think of the Orator's ultimate aims" ("Sunflower Seeds" 48). However, in the political landscape of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," the artist and the demagogue are polarized. Houde's success may have depended on his oratorical skills of persuasion and a sense of identification with his audience, but the power of the post-revolutionary demagogue is maintained through brute force. Demagoguery does not depend on individual charisma—it has been institutionalized.

"The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" contains two demagogues in addition to Krasnovitch: the Commissar of Culture and the Commissar of Religious Property. That neither is given a personality or distinguishing characteristics could be used as proof of Klein's inability to create convincing fictional characters. However, I believe that through the Commissars, Klein is commenting on the nature of a totalitarian bureaucracy which erases individuality while increasing, for a small elite, power over others. The conflation of power and anonymity is a defining feature of totalitarian regimes. Arendt claims that "[n]othing is more characteristic of the totalitarian movements

. . . and of the quality of fame of their leaders . . . than the startling swiftness with which they are forgotten and the startling ease with which they can be replaced" (305). The Commissars of Culture and of Religious Property are virtually interchangeable, and they even share an idiosyncratic, and telling, oddity of speech. The Commissar of Culture taunts Terpetoff about his relationship with Evdokia, a peasant woman, and demands "Ate her nice big *de-li-cate* cucumbers, didn't you?" (306, italics mine).[12] Similarly, the Commissar of Religious Property cries "*Scan-dal-ous*! . . . he's alerting a counter-revolution!" (307, italics mine). Both men rend, or, to use Kleinian terms, dis-member language and the community it creates.

When interrogating Terpetoff (a meeting at which Krasnovitch sits and gloats), the Commissar of Culture defines the function of the revolutionary artist: "To explain, using your own experience as object lesson, what are the rules which govern the creation of proletarian art"(305).[13] At this Terpetoff bristles with an indignation similar to that expressed in "The Dangers of Success":

> Is this, then, your idea of cultural freedom? . . . Do you think it compatible with civilized notions concerning the dignity of art that the composer should be compelled to recant his staff-notation . . . simply because a politician wants to listen to music politically? You are trying to reduce us to less than persons! (305)

In Terpetoff's confrontation with the Commissars, Klein vents all of his frustration with those who demand that party ideology be reflected in art. The idea that Terpetoff's abstract music could be politically subversive seems grotesque because he works to create a community of listeners that transcends political divisions. But the Commissars are unaware of art's capacity to create a meaningful, positive solidarity, and see Terpetoff's art only in terms of political utility. Just as the bells of Moscow's churches are "melted down for cannon" (296), the beauty of Terpetoff's music is redeployed as ideological weaponry.

An important result of Terpetoff's resistance to doctrine is his tolerance of political difference. Klein uses this aspect of Terpetoff's personality to make an implicit critique of the intolerance he sees in negationist Zionism. Though their politics differ, Terpetoff and Arkady Mikailovich can remain friends. Early in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," Terpetoff good-naturedly teases him for his bourgeois sensibilities. When Terpetoff jokingly says to Arkady Mikailovich—whose first name may be an ironic echo of the idyllic pastoral world of Arcadia—that "You are sabotaging utopia!" (292), he

acknowledges political difference with a spirit of humour. However, Terpetoff himself is subjected to a similar accusation that draws in sharp relief the incompatibility of artistic tolerance and ideological totalization. Although the revolution succeeds, and although Terpetoff unofficially supports it, the revolutionary regime persecutes him, making demands for loyalty much like those Klein felt were being made by Israel. Krasnovitch angrily asks "What good was it to command the loyalty of the workers and the farmers when, in the more influential domains of action, the objectives of the Government were either passively frustrated or intentionally sabotaged by the intellectuals?" (304). Klein felt his insistence on artistic autonomy, and the support of the Diaspora that such freedom allowed, made him a saboteur in the eyes of negationist Zionists. But ideological conformity was a sacrifice that he was unwilling to make, even for a cause in which he believed as much as Israel.

The negation of the Diaspora exacerbated Klein's growing anxiety over the tenuous position of the artist. Indeed, anti-Diaspora ideology seems to have reinforced the feelings of paranoia that signalled the beginnings of Klein's mental illness, heightening his fears that a Zionist utopia could come to resemble the totalitarian regime masquerading as a communist utopia.[14] Earlier in the narrative, when reminiscing about Russia's churches, Arkady Mikailovich feels a rush of belonging which he expresses using images of flowers. He floridly says,

> O forty times forty churches of Moscow, burgeoning with turrets and belfries—stamens of ghostly pollen!—germinant with your cones of divine balsam, fructuous with domes! O cupolas in quincunx, silvered, gilded, gala with green of the apple-leaf, red of the cherry, the hyacinth's blue—you are still my horizon! You are still my hope, ovoids of resurrection, bright-hued and Easter, rainbow of a second covenant! (277)

Pollock observes that "imagery of flowers, especially in bunches, occurs whenever Klein perceives the vision of the One in the Many with the greatest intensity" ("Sunflower Seeds" 52). Arkady Mikailovich's words seem to bear this observation out. However, later in "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" the images that make up Arkady Mikailovich's reverie are ironically subverted. Arkady Mikailovich's desire for an absolute feeling of belonging is, by the end of the story, shown to be an instinct which gives rise to dangerous movements. Accordingly, Terpetoff uses images that qualify Arkady Mikailovich's vision of unity. Terpetoff expresses the importance of tolerance and diversity by asking Arkady Mikailovich to "Imagine how unbearable life would be if everything about us was always good, always beautiful! Imagine

if one woke every morning to the odour of the rose, breakfasted and dined on its petals, went clothed in the fragrance of its leaves . . . imagine—what a stink life would be!" (283-84). When infused with exclusive nationalism, the scent of the rose can become the "body-odour of race" (*CP* 658).

Terpetoff's last "composition" is a heroic yet futile protest against the new revolutionary regime. When he climbs to the top of Sobor Spasitula, his actions resemble those of the poet in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," who "walk[s] upon roofs and window-sills and def[ies] / the gape of gravity" (*CP* 638). However, Terpetoff's ascension does not symbolize artistic ambition. Instead, Terpetoff is chased there by societal hostility. He is a unifying, albeit anonymous, force:

> all eyes turned toward the domes of the Cathedral of the Saviour. But from the circular boulevards which run like the rings of some great and ancient oak about Moscow's central core . . . only the swinging outline of the bell was to be descried. It was about the church itself that the true ovation to Terpetoff's last concert was given. (307)

Terpetoff's "true ovation," of course, is gunfire. By likening "circular boulevards" to "the rings of some great . . . oak," Klein echoes the last stanza of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," which turns a "zero" into a "rich garland" (*CP* 639). D.M.R. Bentley states that this garland is a "perfect circle . . . a sign of psychic order and spiritual stability" (39). In "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula," Klein mocks his previous work, emptying out this "garland" or "halo" into a void. Furthermore, the violence which takes place at Sobor Spasitula implies that the "ancient oak" that is Moscow is rotting at the centre.

The story's climax is a moment of artistic crisis, where Terpetoff's aesthetic is simultaneously fulfilled and negated. On one level, sounding the bell is simply a rebellious way to get attention. In another sense, it *is* a musical composition which absolutely resists glossing. Arkady Mikailovich insists that "Terpetoff was composing an *opus*, not a mere exercise in tintinnabulation" (307). However, Terpetoff's "composition" is both the epitome of abstract art and its parody. Rather than being a force for order, Terpetoff's work rings "wildly, furiously, in random peals" (307). Klein seems to suggest that while it is possible to create a purely abstract piece of music, such art is, to most, indistinguishable from mere noise. Furthermore, the community of listeners that Terpetoff's composition creates enjoys only a momentary feeling of unity, which is based on curiosity, not harmony.

As with Uncle Galuth's, there is nothing generative about Terpetoff's

murder; it suggests termination rather than closure. Broad tries to find consolatory results in Terpetoff's death, and claims that it is proof that "[the artist's] personal survival is not important; what matters is the survival of cultural freedom, and this may require the sacrifice of the artist" (127). Her optimistic interpretation leads her to emphasize the Messianic overtones of Terpetoff's fall. It is true that he falls from the "Cathedral of the Saviour," and that he is described as a "living ikon" (307), but Terpetoff's fall is anything but redemptive. While Melech's death may have been a meaningful sacrifice, Terpetoff's is only a cruel parody of it. His fall dislodges a stone which strikes the Commissar of Religious Property, causing a scar "the shape and size of aminim" (308), and Broad claims that this injury "stands for the removal from office of at least one man who would suppress freedom" (129). However, the text does not indicate that the scar is a particularly grave wound. Furthermore, the indistinguishability of the two Commissars suggests that the Commissar of Religious Property can easily be replaced. Broad neglects to emphasize that Sobor Spasitula is razed to make room for the stronghold of the demagogue, "some bureaucrat erection" (278), which punningly recalls the "teated domes and . . . phalloi of minarets" of the evil city of Casablanca (*SS* 69). Most importantly, Terpetoff is "willfully unremembered" (308) by the community he has tried to unite through his art. Arkady Mikailovich explicitly states that "thousands heard [the ringing of the bells] with me, but one will search in vain, in the files of contemporary newspapers, or in the records of Marxist history, for a report of Terpetoff's fatal demonstration" (307-08). Terpetoff's exclusion from official history recalls Klein's anguish at Israel's dismissal of the legacy of the Diaspora as detailed in "In Praise of the Diaspora:" "we despise [the Diaspora], we abhor its memory, we would raze it from recollection, . . . bury it in the desert places of the mind, there where no thought ever passes" (*BS* 465). For Klein, the forces which persecute Terpetoff resemble those responsible for the negation of the Diaspora. Thus, for one awful moment, we see the shadow of Uncle Galuth falling alongside Terpetoff.[15]

The crime of "sabotaging utopia" with which Terpetoff is charged has rich personal implications for Klein as both a Diaspora Jew and an artist. In so far as "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is an implicit protest against the utopian vision of negationist Zionism, the charge of "sabotaging utopia" can be made against Klein as easily as Terpetoff. Of course, Klein suggests that the real crime of "sabotaging utopia" is perpetrated by the imposition of dogma by political authorities, a betrayal of the promise of the Soviet and

the Zionist states. But the phrase also applies to Klein's retroactive subversion of his earlier, idealistic vision of the artist in society. An act of sabotage did take place in the mid-1950's, for the pressure that Klein felt to produce ideological art sabotaged his faith in his community to appreciate any meaningful contribution his art could make.

The conclusion of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" is particularly grim when we realize that Terpetoff's final fall has been rehearsed as a fortunate fall in earlier texts. Just as the poet in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" "zoom[s] to zenith"(*CP* 636) before plunging to "the bottom of the sea" (*CP* 639), Terpetoff rises to the top of Sobor Spasitula before falling to earth. Even more resonant is Joseph's treatment by his brothers in "The Bible's Archetypical Poet," in which Klein laments "As if they were reading an indictment, [Joseph's brothers] in hatred proclaimed him dreamer. They flung him into a pit—he who in his mind had elevated himself to the highest of the sun and the moon now lay lower than the level of the earth"(*LER* 145). However, Terpetoff's fall imposes an ironic commentary on the paradoxes of these earlier texts. Joseph is raised from the pit, and he goes on to use his artistic vision to secure a position of power and respect. And, while the artist in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" does not surface, he is still alive and vital, "shin[ing] / like phosphorus. At the bottom of the sea" (*CP* 639). Terpetoff's death, however, is not a generative sacrifice but a humiliating political execution. The poet in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" may someday rise, but Terpetoff cannot. And, as we know from sad hindsight, the creator of both these artists would not rise again.

NOTES

1 I am grateful to Professor Tracy Ware for his support and assistance in the preparation of this article, as well as Professors Zailig Pollock and Elizabeth Popham for the generosity with which they shared their unpublished work.

2 For other relevant examples of Marxism in the late work, see characters such as Settano in *The Second Scroll* and Djz, a Marxist literary theorist, in "And the Mome Raths Outgrabe," as well as the short story "Letter from Afar," which concerns a victim of a Stalinist purge. Some of Klein's work involving Russia has not yet been published. See *That Walks Like a Man* (National Archives MS3802-4441), a novel about Igor Gouzenko's defection, and "The Icepick" (National Archives MS4689-4772), an unfinished play about Trotsky's assassination. In their correspondence Klein heatedly berates Leo Kennedy for naively accepting Soviet propaganda about politics and race relations (see Klein's letter dated March 15, 1940).

3 Despite the four year gap between their dates of publication, the texts are roughly

contemporaneous: in her forthcoming introduction to *The Second Scroll*, Popham notes that "In Praise of the Diaspora" existed as a lecture for years before being printed.

4 Steinberg argues that the intensity of the articles "The Dangers of Success" and "In Praise of the Diaspora" is incommensurate with the relatively small minority who were calling for the negation of the Diaspora. He suggests that "the force of [Klein's] attack against a relatively insignificant group . . . might suggest that it was in part also an attempted subconscious justification for his own unwillingness or unreadiness to live in Israel" (*BS* xv). I am not sure that the anti-Diaspora movement was as insignificant as Steinberg suggests (it is hard to define the situation as Klein would have been exposed to it), but I do agree that Klein's statements are motivated by more than the external situation would seem to warrant.

5 At the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies/Association for Canadian and Quebec Literatures session "25 Years Later: The Legacy of A.M. Klein," Elizabeth Popham pointed out that in "The Bible's Archetypical Poet," Joseph, like Klein himself, is both a poet figure and a Diaspora Jew working in exile to help his people.

6 Anne Goddard of the National Archives kindly informs me that Klein owned a copy of the 1949 edition of *1984*.

7 Klein goes so far as to say that Terpetoff "had neither the temper of steel, nor its hunger" (279). "Steel" is the English translation of "Stalin," a fact which Klein was aware of by 1939, when he played with it in his article "Stalin: The Man of Flexible Steel" (*BS* 49-50).

8 Klein's anxiety over the link between interpretive commentary and ideological totalization also figures prominently in the short story "And the Mome Raths Outgrabe," the tale of a literary conference that features multiple glossings of Carroll's "Jabberwocky." It is significant that in this story the final gloss is provided by a Marxist and resembles Krasnovitch's commentary on "Opus No. 13/OvertureProletarian."

9 Georgy Maximilianovich Malenkov (1902-1988) was the Soviet Premier from 6 March 1953 to 8 February 1955. It is highly possible that he held this office while Klein was writing "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula."

10 Pollock's brief but trenchant discussion of "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" (*The Story* 261-62) supports his point that in Klein's last phase he "turns against [his ideal vision of the poet and society], subjecting it to a series of profoundly skeptical revisions . . ." (253).

11 Patricia Merivale classifies *The Second Scroll* as an "elegiac romance" in that "the 'hero' . . . is largely a projection into mythic dimensions of the needs and obsessions of the narrator . . . . The story is not so much the hero's as the narrator's : how he shared the hero's life, survived his death, and is now providing an elegiac memorial for him, in order that he, the narrator, may finally free himself from the burden of his obsession . . . and renew his own existence on better terms" (140). However, when Terpetoff dies, he is less heroic than Uncle Melech, and his death leaves Arkady Mikailovich feeling incomplete.

12 It is difficult to understand why the knowledge of Terpetoff's trysts with Evdokia empower the Commissars, for Arkady Mikailovich implies that his multiple romances are common knowledge. I believe that Klein is addressing the vulnerability of the artist by (perhaps, clumsily) subverting a trope that runs through much of his work: the idyllic garden (his companion, after all, is 'Eve-dokia'). Rozmovits notes that Abraham Segal ("Diary of Abraham Segal, Poet"), Spinoza, the poet in "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape," and Melech all have Edenic gardens to which they can escape (28). Terpetoff's situation is much bleaker; even a pastoral setting of safety can be used against him. This may also be a comment on the negation of the Diaspora, where travel away from a central location justifies persecution.

13 Klein also discusses the corruption of artistic integrity by Marxist dogma in articles such as "Proletarian Poetry" (LER 161-62) and "Sha! Sha! Shostakovitch"(LER 181-82). The latter is particularly relevant to "The Bells of Sobor Spasitula" in its discussion of Shostakovitch and Prokofieff, two composers persecuted by Stalin's regime. In this essay Klein states that the enjoyment of music "need never be marred by . . . [the] composer's political convictions" (181) and sarcastically asks "how does one tell bourgeois music from communist music? . . . Is F-flat revolutionary and G-sharp counter-revolutionary?" (181).

14 Caplan notes that "During the onset of his mental illness, Klein's frustrations as a writer . . . and his feelings of neglect . . . evolved into a morbid belief that all true artists are persecuted by those nearest them" (*Like One* 193).

15 See Wilson: ". . . for one awful moment [we] see the shadow of Uncle Melech rising up behind the Camillien Houde who is his parody" (94).

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Laisha Rosnau

Apple Wars

skin no longer taut
and glossy, nor red.
dimpled, pock-marked,
worm-tunnelled,

picked from mower-shy grass
—blades would tear through
fruit throwing sour
shrapnel at the innocent—

and thrown to the cows,
over the fence, some speared
in their passing, crucified
on barbed wire

or hoarded in cardboard boxes
hauled to opposite ends
of the nearest field.

a neighbourhood of children
divided—three on one side,
three on the other.

the apples would fly!
spun with the right flick
of the wrist, twist
with the force of air

and once in a while,
one would hit, leaving
a dull green bruise,
flesh on flesh,

a snap and the sour stain
of juice stinging the arm,
the smell of apples
until the first bath.

matt robinson

grain

wasps. someone from another unit
thought them wasps—the shells. buzzing

overhead—flying scythes
in grain. ingrained. in

the black watch, they don't learn the word
retreat. it's nowhere to be found

on the training fields of mcgill,
in the folds of a kilt. 305 of 320.

i imagine dali.
stalks of some indeterminate grain, stretching into
fingers digging their graves.
the shells—leaving guns,
and by their speed and ferocity,
sprouting wings and stingers:
transforming into wasps just before the
boys based in montreal.

three hundred dead led by a third-string jr. officer
bullied by

(a grammar school headcase, a man at war
with his wife and the ghost of his

mother),
a general.

soldiers, pieces of soldiers—at rest, at peace again.
fertilizer for the indeterminate

grains of verrières ridge, normandy,
the summer of '44.

Shuli Barzilai

Who Is He?
The Missing Persons Behind the Pronoun in Atwood's *Surfacing*

One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—
One need not be a House—
The Brain has Corridors—surpassing
Material Place—. . . .

Emily Dickinson

Surfacing opens with a woman looking out a car window and saying to herself: "I can't believe I'm on this road again. . . ." In contrast to traditional literary rituals of quest and exploration, this protagonist is not engaged in "lighting out" alone.[1] Because she does not own a car and cannot drive herself, she is sitting in the back seat with the packsacks and Joe. Moreover, she returns with her lover and a married couple, David and Anna, to known territory: her childhood home near a northern town[2] on the border between Ontario and Quebec. Margaret Atwood's voyager has set out unwillingly—and only in order to go back.

Through hints and partial allegations, she discloses the reason for her reluctant return:

> The future is in the North, that was a political slogan once; when my father heard it *he* said there was nothing in the North but the past and not much of that either. Wherever *he* is now, dead or alive and nobody knows which, *he's* no longer making epigrams. (9; emphasis added)

The identity of "he" is unequivocal here. The daughter identifies him in the clause preceding his pronominal replacements and so the phrase "my father" is, literally, antecedent. Her father disappeared from his isolated island cabin several weeks earlier. Hence he is wanted. Nonetheless, the words "dead or alive," which resonate with the call to hunt out fugitive

criminals, are incongruous in relation to her reclusive and law-abiding father. (I shall return to crimes and/of fathers later.) The call to search for him—"'Your father is gone, nobody cant find him'"—comes from without and sets her on the road north toward her past (24).

Unlike in the statements just quoted, sometimes the person behind the pronoun remains unnamed. Nobody expressly comes forward to fill in the vacant nominal spot. That is, whereas most masculine pronouns in the text conform to standard grammatical usage and replace an individual mentioned in a nearby clause, some appear without any specification. The context usually indicates that the referent of "he" is not the former generic representative "man"; rather, the pronoun apparently points to the protagonist's father. In such instances, the problem does not seem to concern the lapse in referential specificity or, briefly, "who is he?" The repeated absence of specification itself is puzzling—and, then, the question of "why only he?" For only male antecedents are missing in *Surfacing*.

In addressing these questions which, as will be seen, are crucial to the disturbance of memory that structures the narrative, I propose to draw on several Freudian and Lacanian formulations about the interconnections between mental functioning and linguistic processes. The main theoretical basis for this analysis is, however, one of Jacques Lacan's best-known dictums: the premise of an unconscious structured like a language (see, for example, "Agency of the Letter" 147 and *Four Fundamental Concepts* 20). My methodological claim is that to unravel the protagonist's relation to the past and her aptitude for defensive revision requires a close examination of her selective omission of antecedents. More specifically, masculine pronouns that appear alone do not lack a referent but, on the contrary, have one too many. The narrating subject of *Surfacing* has acquired the habit of splitting masculinities in the process of defense against the pressures of a "forgotten" or banished past that threatens continually to invade the present. Certain pronouns thus function as symbolic expressions (or symptoms) of a duality of consciousness. Suspended from the unidentified *he*, *his*, or *him*, what Lacan calls the "censored chapter" of a personal history manifests itself ("Function and Field of Speech" 50). My questions have therefore to do with both that particular protagonist's stake in those particular pronouns and the general implications of her verbal stratagems for the encounter with traumatic experience.

But before proceeding further in this direction, I want to examine some

alternative approaches to the cryptic appearances of "he" in Atwood's novel. From a narratological perspective, the referential blanks or gaps could be read as a stylistic effect of an intra-homodiegetic narrator.[3] Because *he* appears to be known to the *I* who narrates, there is no need for frequent specification. Statistically speaking, whereas the ratio used by most writers is 48 pronouns for every 100 nouns, Robert Cluett has found in a syntactic analysis of *Surfacing* that the ratio is an unusual 66 pronouns for every 100 nouns. Furthermore, from the opening assertion ("I can't believe I'm on this road again"), the act of telling frequently coincides with the actual sequence of events. Simple present and continuous tenses combine with elided referents to produce an effect of immediate reportage. However, this functional explanation does not account for a striking rhetorical feature: the gender restriction of the narrator's nominal gaps. In her story, as already noted, only male antecedents are missing.

Turning from narratological to thematic considerations, these omissions might be regarded as correlative to the motif of the father's absence.[4] "He" alone evokes the space into which the object of the daughter's quest has vanished. Ellipses may also symbolize a relational discontinuity: namely, the literal and other distances separating this daughter who left home for the city from her father who stayed on the island and close to nature. The lack of explicit reference implies that the word "father" has become somehow difficult for her.

Yet these explanations for the silences surrounding the father prove to be only partially satisfactory. *Surfacing's* detective plot, revolving around the disappearance of the father, gradually yields to a psychological plot, revolving around the struggle with, and eventual triumph over, trauma and denial. To solve the mystery of the specific missing person ("Who is he?")—and also to address the overall psychological conundrum posed by the narrator's practice of selective omission ("Why only he?")—requires distinguishing three types of psychical division.

First, the narratorial position shifts between two temporally distinct states of consciousness: the one belonging to the now of the action sees things, more or less, as they are; the other belonging to the past is troubled and deluded. "'Do you have a twin? . . . some of your lines are double'," Anna remarks while reading the protagonist's palm (8).[5]
Second, the text gradually discloses a split between "he" who is unnamed yet

accessible to consciousness, "my father," and "he" who is unnameable. *Third*, the unnameable one is also divided between a married lover and an unborn child. He, without antecedent, might evoke any of the following absentees: father, lover, child.

These complications invite the reader to engage in a pursuit comparable to the search that motivates the journey narrative: *where*, the daughter asks—and *who*, the reader asks—is he? The antecedent inferred on first reading correlates with the avowed but unnamed subject of the elliptical pronouns (the father); however, on second reading the antecedent may be linked to a disavowed and unnameable subject (the lover or the child). In other words, the first-time round only one referent is evident to the reader when "he" alone appears. But for each unattached pronominal substitute, two points of reference need to be taken into account. One is present to the protagonist's consciousness and immediately apparent to the reader, whereas the other is denied or hidden from view until the protagonist fully retrieves the fragments of her past and the reader returns to the text for a second time.

To advance, then, another psychoanalytic presupposition that informs this discussion: the "free-floating" or assumptive masculine pronouns in *Surfacing* are the product of an elaborate mental condensation. As used here, the category of "condensation" entails a mechanistic sense that has a certain resemblance to the photographer's method for producing composite pictures. "[B]y projecting two images on to a single plate," Freud writes, "certain features common to both are emphasized, while those which fail to fit in with one another cancel one another out and are indistinct in the picture" (*Interpretation of Dreams* 4: 293). A structural analogy may thus be drawn between the assumptive pronouns of *Surfacing* and the double or multiple images forming one photoplate.[6] In terms of the road unwillingly taken, they represent points of intersection where someone or something in the present meets with someone or something previously encountered. In particular, temporality is canceled out so that individuals inhabiting the zones of then and now might be convened. Anger and fear take over as more than one antecedent comes forward to stand at the textual intersection called "he."

The Father. While still travelling northward, Atwood's voyager suddenly arrives at an impasse: "The road ought to be here," she complains, "but instead . . . the way is blocked" (12).[7] She finds herself literally obstructed,

neither able to move forward nor yet ready to go back. The blocked road elicits a dense reactive monologue, ostensibly in excess of her actual situation. This monologue is paradigmatic of the nominal gaps and other rhetorical evasions that she devises in defending against the invasion of memory:

> Nothing is the same, I don't know the way any more. I slide my tongue around the ice cream, trying to concentrate on it, they put seaweed in it now, but I'm starting to shake, why is the road different, *he* shouldn't have allowed them to do it, I want to turn around and go back to the city and never find out what happened to *him*. I'll start crying, that would be horrible, none of them [her companions] would know what to do and neither would I. I bite down into the cone and I can't feel anything for a minute but the knife-hard pain up the side of my face. Anaesthesia, that's one technique: if it hurts invent a different pain. I'm all right. (12-13; emphasis added)

Nowhere in this passage or in its vicinity does the referent of "he" appear; the reader (unlike the narrator), however, need not go far to find "him." The daughter set out to look for her father without any road maps or charts because, in spite of her nine-year absence from home, she was confident the way would be the same (12). But the road has changed beyond recognition. The closer she comes to the places she used to inhabit, the less familiar the travelled area becomes. She now calls it paradoxically, bitterly, "my home ground, foreign territory" (11). The first stage of her quest may be glossed by the concluding verses of Atwood's "Journey to the Interior": "it is easier for me to lose my way / forever here, than in other landscapes" (*Circle Game* 71).[8]

Several features of her monologue nevertheless unsettle any straightforward equation of "he" with her father. She seems to consider him, for instance, responsible for road conditions: "why is the road different, he shouldn't have allowed them to do it." Her father is a botanist by profession and not a road engineer. He cannot be held literally accountable for the incursion of a new route. The daughter, on the way to her childhood home, seems to be toppling back into a belief in parental omnipotence. Her all-powerful father could have prevented any changes but evidently failed to do so. That is why she cannot find her way. Soon he will be very sorry, however. She intends to turn back and never find him.

What this daughter clearly wants is to be relieved of responsibility. Blame is shifted onto the father for circumstances entirely beyond his ordinance. Furthermore, confronted by his riddling and uncharacteristic disappearance, she would defer knowledge of its most probable cause: his death. The two strategies of self-relief or defense adopted here are displacement and

denial. Her patterned reactions throughout the greater part of her journey constitute a warding off, a turning away from reality. Already fully in place at the outset, these defenses govern the narrator's relations toward the truths (about her father, about her self) she is called upon to seek.

Nonetheless, despite frequent evasions and distortions, some recognition of reality persists on her part. Shortly after the misdirected accusation of her father, the daughter thus punishes herself: "I bite down into the cone and I can't feel anything . . . but the knife-hard pain up the side of my face." The phrase "knife-hard pain" is unusual not only for its sudden intimation of aggression directed against herself. Throughout most of her journey, she rarely has recourse to metaphors or non-literal images; even the comparisons she occasionally makes tend to be literal. Added to the infrequency of figurative language, other means of verbal coloring and variation are also greatly reduced in her narrative. Cluett's comparison with the syntactic profiles of five works of contemporary fiction shows that "in no other book than *Surfacing* has the range of resources been so drastically inhibited." In fact, *Surfacing* has "the lowest total of modifiers of *any* text of *any* genre . . . sampled from the last 300 years" (80). These findings suggest, in Cluett's view, that the novel's "surface structures" correspond to the narrator's retreat from civilization during her climactic schizophrenic episode: "The linguistic retrenchment that marks the book's syntax constitutes a similar retreat from ornate 'civilized' values" (87).

But the phenomenon of "linguistic retrenchment" characterizes the book from its opening pages. The narrator's signifying systems are thoroughly inhibited and her verbal resources curtailed long before her psychotic break leads her to cut off all contact with civilization. Like her home ground, language, too, has become foreign territory to her. The avoidance of figurative elaboration is part of a more general stylistic (and, as I shall argue, symptomatic) economy. Her reluctance or inability to communicate is rivaled only by her lover, the inarticulate Joe with whom she agreed to live as she would buy "a goldfish or a potted cactus plant": "he doesn't talk much, that's an advantage" (42). Whatever impedes her discourse is already present in the highly charged passage about the blocked road where male antecedents make their first non-appearance.

Within such an overall rhetorical austerity, the metaphoric turn of "knife-hard pain" might well seem extravagant. Syntactically and chronologically, however, the "knife-hard pain" points in different directions: in the one instance, the phrase is indeed figurative; in the other, all too literal.

When read in anaphoric reference to the sensation of biting into an ice-cold cone, a sensation mentioned in the preceding clause, "knife-hard" is a metaphor. But it is also closely allied to the next sentence: "Anaesthesia, that's one technique: if it hurts invent a different pain." In cataphoric reference to anaesthesia, "knife-hard" alters its figurative aspect and introduces the notion of a surgical intervention. It not only designates the protagonist's immediate sensation of pain but also points forward to her recovery of an unwanted memory. So the present slip, as it were, from literal to figurative register corresponds to a bungled action that took place in the past. Analogously, the reference to "the side of my face" indicates an anatomical displacement. For what the speaker is also talking about, without apparently knowing it, is her abortion.

In light of later revelations, I would now propose that the assumptive pronouns in *Surfacing* all require a double attribution. The missing antecedent is never simply the protagonist's father. Whenever "he" appears alone, she is engaged in the telling of two stories: the present search for her father has become intertwined with her affair with a married man. The abortion she underwent at his insistence—or, as she (re)calls it following the return of her repressed ones, "my deflated lap" (144)—led her to leave her lover. The interpolation of a third tale further complicates this two-tiered narrative. Refusing or unable to recognize what actually was, the teller appoints a substitute story, spins out a variation on the reality of an unacceptable memory. The illicit relationship becomes a marriage; the end of the affair, a divorce; and the aborted fetus, a child who remained in her so-called husband's custody. In effect, then, the term "repression" does not adequately denote the protagonist's defensive reaction to her past. The traumatic chapter of her history has undergone extensive *re*narrativization.

To clarify this process of revision, it is helpful to recapitulate the distinction developed in Freud's late essay, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," between different types of reaction to trauma: namely, repression (*Verdrängung*) and disavowal (*Verleugnung*). The first defense involves repressing the demands of an instinct or *internal* reality, whereas the second is directed toward a denial of *external* reality. In repression, the traumatic experience or perception is dismissed entirely from conscious thought; in diavowal, it remains present to consciousness but in disguise. When the mechanism of disavowal goes into effect, the individual contends with acute psychical conflict by means of two responses: on the one hand, the unsatisfying reality is rejected; on the other, that same reality is recognized and

transformed. Disavowal may therefore be deemed a successful type of defense, a way of having it both ways. Such double dealing, however, is paid for in full. As Freud observes, "this success is achieved at the price of a rift in the ego which never heals but which increases as time goes on" ("Splitting of the Ego" 275-76). Disavowal represents the more dangerous of the psyche's attempts to cancel out trauma and dislodge the past. In contrast to the repression that typifies neurosis, disavowal marks the beginning of the reality loss found in psychosis.

Returning now to the psychical rift in *Surfacing*: on the temporal level, disavowal takes the form of engendering a retrospective dimension to the narrative that has no empirical reality and exists solely in a pre- or almost psychotic mind; on the rhetorical level, disavowal manifests itself in word-splitting, in speech that issues from a kind of forked tongue. But even this description does not go far enough. For Atwood's unreliable narratorial agent deceives not only the reader but also herself.[9] She is lying and truth-telling simultaneously. The reality of her past experience may be glimpsed at times through the pseudo-past she invents to cover it up. One of the textual strategies enabling this *tour de force* is the pronoun without nominal precedent.

Thus the apparition of "he" in the ostensible protest about her father and the different road signals the presence of another paternal figure. Unappended to an explicit referent, the pronoun marks the place of a gap or opening through which spirits return. Enter ghost, as the stage directions might say.[10] The subject of the daughter's accusation is not just the man who fathered her but also, and probably more so, the lover who unchilded her. These figures have complexly merged in the variant stories she tells about (and to) herself. Finding her lost father in the lake leads her to break through the skein of false memories and arrive at the acknowledgment of that other father: "*He said I should do it*, he made me do it, he talked about it as though it was legal, simple, like getting a wart removed. . . . he expected gratitude because he arranged it for me" (144-45; emphasis added).[11] On rereading, then, both "it" and "he," in her accusatory "*he* shouldn't have allowed *it*," bear a double signification. In addition to an actual road, "it" also stands in for the surgical procedure that terminated her pregnancy. Her bodily territory, albeit with her adult consent, was transgressed and scarred by the inroads of a knife. Like the split referentiality of "he," the mention of "it" signposts the present moment while pointing to the past.

These defensive arrangements are entrenched in the narrator's everyday

speech and thought. Accordingly, when she mentions "the way I did it, so suddenly, and then running off and leaving my husband and child" (29), her doing "it" patently refers to an invented past: I was married, as it were. And yet her vague phrasing also admits the memory of a real event: I had an abortion, as it happened. The "knife-hard pain" and "it" turn out to be, as does "he" alone, verbal traces of the trauma that precipitated her twinning. That is, like the legible skin of her open palms ("some of your lines are double" [8]), the marks of her division are embedded in her speech. Both skin and speech function as a symptomatic site of injury.

The Child. Further difficulties arise in assessing the daughter's diatribe against the father who failed her. The missing antecedents of "I want to turn around and . . . never find out what happened to *him*" are not the same as those of "*he* shouldn't have allowed them to do it." Although the obvious referent is her father, another subject emerges on second reading. This "him" also alludes to her aborted fetus whose final resting place is—like her father's—unknown. If I follow this chain of associative connections correctly, the narrator acknowledges here, once again without knowing what she does, the other who is lost to her. Child-haunted and grieving, she resembles the woman-survivor in Atwood's poem "After the Flood, We," who hears "the first stumbling / footsteps of the almost-born / coming (slowly) behind us" (*Circle Game* 19). But an undisguised account of the "almost-born" of *Surfacing* is assembled only late in the long journey home.

The referential dualities initially mobilized in the exemplary passage about the blocked road, as well as in the wish not to know "what happened to *him*," are reintroduced and expanded in later passages. During the daughter's first days on the island where her father lived before his disappearance, she finds some unintelligible (to her) drawings among his papers. She quickly decides that he is insane and hiding somewhere nearby. The alacrity with which she attributes insanity to him suggests another displacement: "I am not crazy; he is," as in: "I am not responsible; he is." Fear of an uncontrollable and dangerous presence takes over:

> [T]he island wasn't safe, we were trapped on it. They didn't realize it but I did, I was responsible for them. The sense of watching eyes, *his* presence lurking just behind the green leafscreen, ready to pounce or take flight, *he* wasn't predictable, I was trying to think of ways to keep them out of danger. . . .

Similarly, a short while later:

> I wanted to get them off the island, to protect them from *him*, to protect *him* from them, save all of them from knowledge. (77, 83; emphasis added)

Though elided here and in adjacent passages, the antecedent "my father" again seems to be self-evident. The protagonist feels responsible for protecting the people she brought to the island and, given her recent conjecture about his insanity, this concern seems reasonable. Oddly enough, however, she hopes for redemption from knowledge rather than ignorance. She would defend her companions from learning about her father's madness, her father from their realization of his condition. The implausibility of her concern undermines its overt meaning. Furthermore, with the mention of "watching eyes" and someone "ready to pounce," an irrational and anxious note signals the interpolation of her other story.

Here, too, pronominal surrogation veils the figures from her actual past. Lurking behind "him" is her aborted fetus, and behind "them," the persecutors who took him away. Roles have undergone a strange reversal, however; the protagonist now perceives the endangered one as highly dangerous. She seems to have switched positions in what Atwood designates the "victor/victim games" (*Survival* 39).[12] This reversal immediately raises several questions: why indeed should "they" require *her* protection? why the need to "keep them out of danger"? or to "save all of them from knowledge"? Behind "them," I suggest, is *she*. The protagonist conceals herself from herself among the collective pronouns. She later acknowledges her complicity in these very terms: "[I]t was hiding in me . . . and instead of granting it sanctuary I let them catch it. I could have said no but I didn't; that made me one of them too" (*Surfacing* 145). Another motive for her need to "save all of them" now becomes apparent. Knowledge threatens to perforate the fortification (disavowal) behind which she has installed herself. Hence she wants protection from the memory of "him" and "it." Salvation through ignorance is precisely what she seeks for herself.

However, a recurrent sense of surveillance, of "watching eyes . . . behind the green leafscreen," provides one indication that such defensive structures are uneasily maintained. In frequent correlation with her feeling of being looked at, frogs or frog-like creatures increasingly plague her sojourn on the island. There are the real ones constantly underfoot: "Frogs hop everywhere out of my way" (37). But there are also the imagined ones, some waiting and some never-to-be born.

To this second type belongs the protagonist's striking explanation of how she could experience her brother's accidental drowning before her own birth:

"I can remember it as clearly as if I saw it, and perhaps I did see it: I believe that an unborn baby has its eyes open and can look out through the walls of the mother's stomach, like a frog in a jar" (32). The "un-" of "unborn" denotes: not yet born (waiting-to-be), but also: deprived of being born (never-to-be). An emblem of nurturance and life (baby *with* a bottle) may signify the very opposite of life (baby *in* a bottle). Familial ambiguities hop out and surround the protagonist. The "unborn baby" bears a close resemblance to the father who is also "dead or alive." In other words, paralleling the mystery of her father's absence in the present is another equivocal existence that is the afterbirth of her duplicitous retrospection.

So even an apparently straightforward self-reference (*I* = baby) resonates with the disavowed memory of her abortion. The image of a walled-in baby, with its anomalous similitude to "a frog in a jar," disguises and yet also recognizes that other missing member of her (potential) family. In analogous circumstances, Atwood's Susanna Moodie, without equivocation, evokes the memory of her dead children: "unborn babies / fester like wounds in the body" (42). In *Surfacing*, fetal loss feels like a pain up the side of one's face, looks like a frog suspended in a state of stringent liquefaction. Death may thus be undone for a time. The loss, which is the actual object of comparison, has dropped out of direct view; and, in contrast to Moodie's bleakly accurate remembrance, the connective "like" seeks after substitutive objects.

Moreover, so elaborate have the narrator's defensive configurations become that the bottled frog also resonates with the false memory of her brother's drowning. The ground for this substitution is an inversion: death by water represents a reversal of birth. Under the aegis of disavowal, the brother functions in the manner of the vanished father, providing the narrator with another surrogate for the traumatic reality of her unborn baby. Her brother who, in fact, "almost drowned once" but was saved by their mother has replaced the one who, as it turns out, "drowned in air" because she, unlike her mother, was not a savior (131, 143). "The Canadian author's two favourite 'natural' methods for dispatching his victims are drowning and freezing," Atwood remarks in her (partly ironically entitled) *Survival*, "drowning being preferred by poets—probably because it can be used as a metaphor for a descent into the unconscious" (55).[13] Wry authorial observations notwithstanding, the climactic moment of revelation in *Surfacing* constitutes a complex literalization of the metaphor of watery descent and retrieval of what has been submerged: the daughter finds the drowned body of her

father; the amnesiac narrator surfaces from the lakewaters of her past; and, quite suddenly, the associations confounding the living and the dead cease.

As if a composite picture had re-separated into two photoplates, previously superimposed images of brother-baby move apart and acquire a discrete existence. "It formed again"—the narrator now closely tracks what she visualizes—"in my head: at first I thought it was my drowned brother, hair floating around the face . . . but it couldn't be him, he had not drowned after all." The fatality concealed behind the fetal-frog imagery comes into her full epiphanic view: "[I]t was in a bottle curled up, staring out at me like a cat pickled; it had huge jelly eyes and fins instead of hands . . . it had drowned in air" (143). She is seen but also unambiguously sees, and the real tenor of her surrealist simile ("a cat pickled") is finally understood.

The Lover. Shortly before finding her father's body in the lake, the daughter goes out in search of prehistoric rock paintings whose location she adduces from the same drawings read at first as proof of his madness. The paintings do not turn up at the place seemingly indicated by his mapped instructions:

> Either I hadn't remembered the map properly or what he'd written on the map was wrong. I'd reasoned it out, unravelled the clues in his puzzle the way he taught us and they'd led nowhere. I felt as though he'd lied to me. . . . He hadn't followed the rules, he'd cheated, I wanted to confront him, demand an explanation. (127)

As in the episode of the different road, she cannot find her way and holds someone else accountable. The referent of this complaint appears unambiguous. The way to the rock paintings eludes her, as if he—again, her father—had deliberately misguided her steps. Here too, however, "he" means in more ways than one. The unnameable liar ("he'd cheated") also refers to her married lover. Disorientation and betrayal, the sense of being "led nowhere," activates that other scene. Earlier she describes how her "husband" had manipulated her through deceptive language, just as her father presumably falsified the signs she tries now to follow: "He said he loved me, the magic word, it was supposed to make everything light up, I'll never trust that word again" (47).

Distrust of words—"love conquers all, conquerors love all, mirages raised by words" (164)—links expressly to the failures of the father. The representative of the symbolic order, of language and law, which (as constructed by the dominant social system) is a patriarchal agency, has shown her its dark and annihilating aspect. The narrator retaliates by repudiating the rhetorical-cultural conventions over which he presides: "[W]ord games, the win-

ning and losing games are finished" (191). Even while going forward in search of her actual father, she turns away from the symbolic paternal order. At the cost of censuring herself, a radical constriction of her verbal range ensues. Long before her psychotic episode, the remarkable pronominality and stylistic austerity of her narration coincide with a state of disconnection reaching back to the paternal function.[14]

Refusing patronymic markers of identity, she remains unnamed throughout her journey. "I no longer have a name. I tried for all those years to be civilized but I'm not and I'm through pretending," she explains in the extraordinary lucidity of her madness (168). There is no proper designate, no "sirname" she would call her own. Non-naming belongs, then, to a rhetorical constellation that signals her rupture with the Name-of-the-Father (*nom/non-du-père*).[15] She repudiates the rules and interdictions previously accepted and, however hesitatingly, obeyed: Thou shalt not be a mother to this child; and also: Thou shalt not be an artist. "I do posters, covers, a little advertising and magazine work." The protagonist who is a commercial illustrator recalls the vocational recommendation received from her former lover: "[H]e said I should study something I'd be able to use because there have never been any important woman artists" (52).

However, what happens when a speaking subject expels or rejects the symbolic father is, according to Lacanian theory, largely destructive: "It is the lack of the Name-of-the-Father in that place which, by the hole that it opens up in the signified, sets off the cascade of reshapings of the signifier from which the increasing disaster of the imaginary proceeds" (Lacan, "On a Question" 217). For Lacan, the foreclosure (repudiation) of the Name-of-the-Father is commensurate with psychosis. Julia Kristeva describes some clinical symptoms of such foreclosure in the section of *Powers of Horror* entitled "Why Does Language Appear to Be 'Alien'?": "A consequence of that disconnection, involving the very function of language in its psychic economy, is that verbalization, as he [the patient] says, is alien to him." Among the special effects accompanying this alienation is a severe restriction or loss of figurative language. Kristeva elaborates:

> Only seldom is metaphor included in his speech; when it is, more than with anyone else, it is a literal one. . . . "I displace, therefore you must associate and condense for me," says such an analysand . . . . He is asking to be saved like Moses, to be born like Christ. He is asking for a rebirth that . . . will result from a speech that is recovered, rediscovered as belonging to him. Lacan had perceived this: the metaphor retraces within the unconscious the path of paternal myth. (50)

These comments clarify not only an aspect of the narrator-reader relationship in *Surfacing* ("I displace . . . you associate and condense for me") but also a correlation between the protagonist's point of departure *qua* return ("I can't believe I'm on this road again") and her rejection of the metaphoric field. As previously noted, the language she uses is almost invariably lean and literal. The textures of her narration and its patterns of linguistic avoidance suggest a kind of verbal anorexia. Recovery is predicated on a rebirth into language, a resurfacing into the world of words.

The crucial question is: *whose* language and speech will it be? For from the first stages of her journey, the narrating subject of *Surfacing* refuses the prevailing symbolic codes—just as during her self-recuperative madness she rejects the canned and processed foods—put into her mouth. "My throat constricts, as it learned to do when I discovered people could say words that would go into my ears meaning nothing" (11).[16] The struggle for sovereignty over the sign evidently began, and reached an uneasy resolution, sometime before the present return to her past. Her father's disappearance now compels her to reencounter that signifying relationship, to reengage what Kristeva calls, after Lacan, the path of paternal myth (50).

Consequently, some metaphors slip through the narrator's garrison or seemingly impervious wall of literality. Her floating pronouns sustain the figurative function that she would (but cannot) exclude entirely from her experiential registers. The double-valanced images projected upon "he" are traces of metaphor, that is to say, of condensation in her narrative.

Metaphor and Metonymy. The coordinated terms "metaphor" and "condensation" designate the same type of mental functioning. Freud's comparison of condensation in the dream-work to the production of composite photographs implies an homologous relationship between thought images and figural representations. Just as condensation may be likened to the making of multiple images into one, so metaphor also resembles the photographer's methods of reconfiguration. In all of these processes, separate entities overlap and form a new unity. "*Verdichtung*, or 'condensation'," Lacan succinctly writes, "is the structure of the superimposition of the signifiers, which metaphor takes as its field" ("Agency of the Letter" 160).[17]

To describe in more specific terms the aberrations of memory in *Surfacing*, another psychical operation needs to be taken into account. According to Freud, the precondition for condensation is the presence of "associative

paths" that link disparate elements in the psyche (*Interpretation of Dreams* 4: 284). The contiguous features existing among these elements pave the way for and activate "the double triggered mechanism of metaphor." Contiguity, of course, also describes the structure of metonymy: the "*word-to-word* connexion" as distinct from the "[*o*]*ne word for another*" formula of metaphor (Lacan, "Agency of the Letter" 166, 156-57). Metonymy and metaphor, or the mechanisms of displacement and condensation, or what Lacan calls the "two 'sides' of the effect of the signifier" necessarily operate in conjunction. Formulated in terms of a visual vehicle, the language of the unconscious is structured like a necklace. Every ring in the signifying chain has one or more verbal pendants suspended from it; the syntagmatic axis of language continually intersects with the paradigmatic; or, in Lacan's words: "There is in effect no signifying chain that does not have, as if attached to the punctuation of each of its units, a whole articulation of relevant contexts suspended 'vertically'. . . from that point" (160, 154).

In *Surfacing*, multiple associations (metonymies) facilitate the protagonist's condensed pairings (metaphors) of father-lover and father-child. Her father stands in for her lover because formerly her lover stood in for her father. Even before disavowal set in, this daughter was not adept at separating the functions of father and lover. When she finally acknowledges her abortion, the memory of her illicit attachment also emerges: "For him I could have been anyone but for me he was unique, the first, that's where I learned. I worshipped him, non-child-bride, idolater, I kept the scraps of his handwriting like saints' relics." She apparently met and learned to "worship" him, an older man with a family, at the art school where he was her drawing teacher; and, as she recounts the fragments of her childhood, her father taught her as well: "Geometry, the first thing I learned was how to draw flowers with compasses" (148, 104). Thus the one she calls "first" was, in fact, her second teacher, and what appeared to be "unique," a repetition. The daughter was once again too late: the would-be-bride of one wedded to an (m)other. After surfacing, she recalls a different signatory relic: "[H]e showed me snapshots of his wife and children, his reasons . . . he said I should be mature" (149). Unmarriageability may well have enhanced her lover's appeal. It provided an assurance that she would remain, after all, her real daddy's girl.

Whereas transgressive desire or eros constitutes the associative linkage of father-lover, disappearance and death are the ties that bind father-child.

"My father has simply disappeared then, vanished into nothing," she says. Likewise, in evoking her aborted fetus, "it was traveling through the sewers by the time I woke . . . I stretched my hand up to it and it vanished" (24, 143). To vanish derives from the Latin *evanescere*, to dissipate like vapor: both father and child suddenly slipped out of sight, without due rituals of mourning to mark their final passage. The association of watery death, unmarked grave, and inadequate mourning prepares for their metaphoric convergence. Symptomatically, in response to Anna's puzzled "What was he *doing* up here?" the narrator initially fails to understand and, only belatedly, realizes that the subject of this question is the ostensible object of her quest—her missing father: "All at once I'm furious with him for vanishing like this, unresolved, leaving me with no answers . . . . If he was going to die he should have done it visibly . . . so they could mark him with a stone" (58). Yet it is unlikely (as she cannot help but know) that "he" chose to vanish. Anger is a subterfuge for fear. Her father's disappearance evokes the spectre of an earlier unresolved relationship. Another ghost not laid to rest might return to demand restitution from the living.

The notion of death conjoins with water, vanishing, and varied forms of separation on other tell-tale occasions. For instance, during a wilderness excursion intended to entertain her city friends, she goes into the woods to dig a toilet hole. The hole suddenly revives a recollection of what used to bother her most about living in cities: "white zero-mouthed toilets." The narrator proceeds to compile a list of associated urban monsters: "Flush toilets and vacuum cleaners, they roared and made things vanish, at that time I was afraid there was a machine that could make people vanish like that too, go nowhere, like a camera that could steal not only your soul but your body also" (117-18).[18] That flush toilets appear first on her list of bad machines may be read as a result of too many severed relationships, of an incapacity to hold onto people or emotional incontinence. Toilets blend expulsion and disappearance with water. However, whether she is recollecting a childhood fear from the period when her family alternated between living in town and country, or whether the fear of machines that "made things vanish" is a development associated with her adult dislocations, remains unclear. Her vague reference to "that time" is a corollary of the splitting that obscures her remembrance of the past.

Estrangement from the past may be further correlated with a mortification of feeling or, as the narrator describes it, "something essential missing . . .

atrophy of the heart" (137). She finds herself reduced—"I was nothing but a head, or no, something minor like a severed thumb; numb"—because her heart has somehow vanished. Calling attention to this severed state are other startling self-descriptions: "I'd allowed myself to be cut in two. Woman sawn apart in a wooden crate . . . smiling, a trick done with mirrors . . . ; only with me there had been an accident and I came apart" (108). To be safe from "knife-hard" knowledge, from the affect accompanying her experiences of separation and loss, she seems to have bottled herself up: "At some point my neck must have closed over . . . shutting me into my head; since then everything had been glancing off me, it was like being in a vase . . . . Bottles distort for the observer too." Yet how long can a woman within a bell jar last? Can a woman without a heart live? Hence the anxiety about her own possible fate: "It was no longer his death [whose?] but my own that concerned me" (105-106, 107). The antecedent of "his" is symptomatically elided.

Ideas of amputation or scenes of bodily fragmentation do not only feature in the protagonist's inner world. They also mark her anchoring points outside herself. Of the one-handed woman known simply as "Madame"—"none of the women had names then"—during her childhood, she recalls: "I wanted to know how the hand had come off (perhaps she had taken it off herself) and where it was now, and especially whether my own hand could ever come off like that" (27). In the parenthetical speculation, which amplifies a seemingly fantastic operation, she implicates the woman in the loss of her own hand. Madame-of-the-missing-hand may be read as an analogue for the mutilation and deprivation to which the protagonist conceded by failing to resist the lover-teacher who both arranged for her abortion and negated her artistic vocation. Of the end of her relationship with this imaginary husband, she says: "A divorce is like an amputation, you survive but there's less of you" (42). Amputation also describes her relationship to the son she supposedly bore and gave up to his father's custody. Of this imaginary son, she says: "[I]t was taken away from me, exported, deported. A section of my own life, sliced off from me . . . my own flesh cancelled" (48). Resorting to passive verbal constructions, she typically defers guilt and absolves herself of collaboration. The frequency of syntactic passivation in the text corresponds to her denial of agency and choice.

"*Who is responsible?*" Issues of moral responsibility, according to Atwood, are a particularly pervasive theme in the Canadian literary tradition (*Survival*

222). Whether this theme characterizes the whole of Canadian literature or not, the protagonist's inability to find the right road at the outset of *Surfacing* does coincide with a state of errant being. Her life has turned into a series of indirections, daily lies, acts of evasion, and distorted memories. Moreover, throughout the greater part of her journey, she conspicuously wishes to be relieved of responsibility. In sum, she instantiates what her author identifies as "the great Canadian victim complex":

> If you define yourself as innocent then nothing is ever your fault—it is always somebody else doing it to you, and until you stop defining yourself as a victim that will always be true. . . . And that is not only the Canadian stance towards the world, but the usual female one. Look what a mess I am and it's all their fault. (Gibson 22)

The validity of Atwood's attribution here—that is, the claim that such a stance describes the Canadian and (or) female sensibility in particular—may be called into question. However, the shift in *Surfacing*'s pronominal paradigms of defense indeed occurs only when the protagonist changes her testimony from "he made me do it" to "I could have said no but I didn't" (145). The transition from victim to agent is concurrent with her acknowledgment of the substitutions through which she revised the trauma of her elective but unwanted abortion. "I couldn't accept it . . . I needed a different version. I pieced it together the best way I could, flattening it, scrapbook, collage, pasting over the wrong parts" (143-44). *Après coup*: she reconstructed the past in ways intended to contain it that, on the contrary, only served to increase its devastating effect on her relations to the present and the future.

After all protective layerings have been scraped away, the narrator (and the reader) arrives at this furthest verge of her voyage: "This above all, to refuse to be a victim . . . . I have to recant, give up the old belief that I am powerless and because of it nothing I can do will ever hurt anyone" (191). These opening words of the last chapter invite a recasting of the novel's very first masculine pronoun without referent. "*He* shouldn't have allowed it" may now also be read as saying "*I* shouldn't have allowed it." She who once stood in illusory safety behind the overtly accused "he" and the other accused "he" comes forward. The narrating *I* is no longer self-obscured by the leafscreens of false memories, or by the belief—and wishful thought—that complicity may be endlessly deferred along the lines of patriarchal responsibility. "It wasn't a child" is her achieved and precise recognition: "I didn't allow it" (143). The reluctant return ends with her poised at that

point where her real journey might begin.

NOTES

1 The complexity of *Surfacing* is suggested by the variety of critical attempts to define its genre. For example: Berryman finds the "chief intervening literary forms" to be those of comedy as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and romance literature as in *The Tempest* (52); Christ classifies the novel as a "spiritual quest" in which the "self's journey is in relation to cosmic power or powers" (317); Brydon suggests that *Surfacing* is a subversive rewriting of "classical fictions of cultural encounter" (388); Garebian focuses on the ghost story aspect and compares the novel (mainly unfavorably) with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1-9); Pratt emphasizes the novel's archetypal patterns of rebirth and transformation (157-61); and Rigney argues that *Surfacing* is primarily a psychological novel, tracing a development from mental breakdown to breakthrough: "If the protagonist is 'dead' at the beginning of the novel, she must somehow be reborn, not in the religious sense, but psychologically"(*Margaret Atwood* 52).

For an overview of scholarship on *Surfacing* until 1984, see Carrington 30-38. See also McCombs and Palmer for a comprehensive, well-indexed bibliography on Atwood's writings and criticism until 1991. For more recent scholarship, see the spring/summer issues of the *Newsletter of the Margaret Atwood Society*, published biannually, which includes an annotated bibliography of the preceding year's publications.

2 In response to an interviewer's comment on "the pull of the North" in Canadian literature, Atwood provides a cultural-historical context that is also relevant for the northward progress in *Surfacing*: "[T]he North is to Canada as the Outback is to Australia, and as the sea was to Melville, and as . . . Africa is, shall we say, to *Heart of Darkness*. It's the place where you go to find something out. It's the place of the unconscious. It's the place of the journey or the quest. In nineteenth-century poetry such as Tennyson's, it's the ocean voyage, or the quest for the Holy Grail . . . . [It's] the thing you go into to have the spiritual experience, or the contact with a deeper reality in Nature. And it's a place of ordeal, and vision" (Atwood, "Where Were You" 98).

3 Intradiegetic narrators are not omniscient, superior, or "above" the story; unlike extradiegetic narrators, they belong to or inhabit the fictional world. The narrator of *Surfacing* also participates as a character in the story, and therefore is homodiegetic rather than heterodiegetic. For helpful discussions of these distinctions, see Genette 255-56 and Rimmon-Kenan 94-96.

4 Missing female antecedents receive close consideration from a mythic perspective in Grace's "In Search of Demeter." For a discussion of negated maternal agency and its relation to the castration motif in *Surfacing* from different psychoanalytic perspectives, see my "Atwood's Female Quest-Romance."

5 Rubenstein presents a Jungian interpretation of the implications of Anna's question for the narrator: "The journey towards wholeness involves a Jungian rejoining of the radically severed halves of the narrator's self" (389). As Carrington (58) and Rubenstein (399) observe, Atwood describes paranoid schizophrenia or the split-personality phenomenon as the "national mental illness" of Canada (see Atwood, Afterword 62).

6 Photography and cameras are pertinent in several ways to *Surfacing*. In terms of reader-response, Atwood's "This Is a Photograph of Me" from her second collection of poems, *The Circle Game*, concludes with what may be read as parenthetical instructions on how to read her novel: "(The photograph was taken / the day after I drowned. / I am in the lake, in the centre / of the picture, just under the surface. / It is difficult to say where /

precisely,. . . / but if you look long enough, / eventually / you will be able to see me.)" More broadly applying these verses, VanSpanckeren contends that "the poem's subject is poetry's complex mediations between reader, text, and 'reality'" (78). See also note 18.

7 On the open American frontier and its closed Canadian counterpart, Sullivan suggestively writes: "The operative myth of American literature is the frontier and its correlative, the open road, but in Canadian literature the frontier is all around us—we are encircled" (107).

8 In a systematic survey of Atwood's themes, Brown cites the tourist-protagonist as "outsider, the traveller into foreign lands" among the more prominent motifs in her writings (6).

9 Even after the protagonist acknowledges the actual events, some readers adhere to the pseudo-past and even reorganize the plot in order to maintain the existence of a marriage and child. For example: "She has an affair with an older art teacher which ends in the disaster of an abortion which he arranged for her. She then marries a man whom she regards as perfect. He represents the norm; loves her, wants marriage and wants children. She does not want a child and, when she has one, denies that it is hers and walks out on the marriage" (Sweetapple 52). Before discussing the novel in an undergraduate seminar, I therefore asked the students to submit written answers to the question: how many children did the protagonist have? Of the 17 answers received, only 5 gave an accurate account. It seems to me that hasty reading alone cannot explain the inability of these different readers to readjust their interpretation. The difficulty in accepting the protagonist's belated but explicit elucidation of her past may indicate the strength of the mechanism of disavowal activated in the novel. Readers who are caught up in a process that reduplicates this disavowal cannot easily stop the transferential repetition.

10 Atwood herself describes *Surfacing* as a "ghost story": "[F]or me, the interesting thing in that book is the ghost in it" (see Gibson 20, 29). Campbell notes an analogy with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "*Surfacing* has several ghosts . . . both father and mother of the narrator-protagonist. Hamlet, by comparison, may have had it easy, with only his father/ghost to worry about" (18). My analysis would augment Campbell's account by adding the protagonist's lover and unrealized child to the ghost lists of *Surfacing*.

11 To avoid misunderstanding the authorial position, it is important to bear in mind Atwood's statement that she would be "most upset if [her] book were to be construed as an anti-abortion tract" (quoted in Christ 328). See also Christ on the abortion issue in *Surfacing*: "From what is specifically said in the novel, we can only say that it condemns an abortion not willed by the mother . . . . The novel may be construed to allow for abortion when the woman feels it is necessary to protect her sense of her life;" and, therefore, the ethical position adopted "does not necessarily conflict with the feminist position on a woman's right to choose abortion" (328-29).

12 Mandel is among the first critics to observe that the views expressed in *Survival* often read "like a gloss on *Surfacing*" (59). Woodcock specifies the diverse types of victims found in both *Survival* and *Surfacing*, including "animals, Indians, sham pioneers, children, artists, women, and French Canadians, and Canada itself as the victim of colonialism" (101).

13 On Atwood's recourse to drowning as a central metaphor in numerous poems, see Rubenstein (esp. 392-93). See also Brown's description of the patterns of descent in Atwood's fiction as "a submerging, whether symbolic or actual, in search of vision that may permit a . . . restored or renewed individual" (18).

14 Hulley similarly argues that the daughter's quest "annihilates the symbolic father and the

boundaries his presence reconstructs." Nevertheless, Hulley finds *Surfacing* seriously flawed by the "linguistic conventionality" of its author who fails to transform the language she is compelled to use: "[T]here is no way out of the dilemma of speaking the oppressor's tongue" (74-75, 77). Yet the "way out," I suggest, may also be from within. Even while Atwood remains inside the symbolic order (or enclosure), her stylistic choices in *Surfacing* often subvert its regime.

15 Hunter provides a persuasive analysis of the aphasia of Bertha Pappenheim ("Anna O.") based on an analogous rupture with the symbolic: "Pappenheim's linguistic discord and conversion symptoms . . . can be seen as a regression from the cultural order represented by her father as an orthodox patriarch . . . . She regressed from the symbolic order of articulate German to the semiotic level of the body and the unintelligibility of foreign tongues" (100).

16 Lecker links the outbreak of anorexia in Atwood's *The Edible Woman* with the protagonist's repudiation of "a culture which tends to exploit women and treat them as edible objects" (180). On the correlations of eating disorders, body phobias, and verbal expression in Atwood's fiction, see Rainwater.

17 In Lacan's reinterpretation of the Freudian insight, the workings of condensation in the unconscious constitute a linguistic phenomenon: "The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain" ("Agency of the Letter" 157).

18 A camera delays the discovery of the drowned father: "[H]e had a camera around his neck . . . the weight kept him down or he would've been found sooner" (*Surfacing* 157). For a detailed study of the significance of cameras, photographs, and pictures in Atwood's writing, see Wilson, "Camera Images"; see also Rigney, *Madness and Sexual Politics* 54-55.

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Joanne Merriam

When he used mother as a swear word you should have known

You grow tired
of telling him to knock,
of the gifts he made
from shrapnel, torn
bedding.
His apologies
grow slick with use.

I hear
you scraped his body
from yours with razors.

To escape you would
chew your own voice off?

Rochelle Mass

I only know it happened

Sometimes every detail stays. The shoulder, hip, the inside
of my thigh. Stays so clear as though you've mapped
the route. I feel the progress, how you go on and on, clear as
black and white, clearer because it flushed, sweated with
long breath and short gasps. But sometimes

like today I only know it happened. Light splashed.
I was flattened like Syrian bread, persistent, upturned.
Dissolved into myself. A jagged path this time, it began,
stopped. I stretched, fell back, tightened.
Planted into myself.

You placed me in time, took me out of it,
took time over. Colours moved beyond me.
Something rose—dropped
cracked, splintered.
I lie skinless, languish

cling. Emerge.
I only know that it happened
know it as a sky blackens
for winter rain
and tulips reach out of the garden.

Graham Huggan & Winfried Siemerling

U.S./Canadian Writers' Perspectives On The Multiculturalism Debate

A Round-Table Discussion at Harvard University

Panel Contributions by Clark Blaise, Nicole Brossard, George Elliott Clarke, Paul Yee; Response by Geeta Patel

Graham Huggan

In 1993, a special issue of *Time* magazine entitled "The New Face of America: How Immigrants Are Shaping the World's First Multicultural Society" (141.21 [Fall 1993]) celebrated the United States as the world's foremost multicultural nation. Canadian(ist) hackles were duly raised, but it wasn't until June 1997 that the plan that Winfried Siemerling and I had both discussed at length eventually came to fruition. The plan, in brief, was to invite creative writers from both sides of the border to discuss similarities and differences in the so-called "multiculturalism debates." Multiculturalism, of course, has been a favourite—some might say even clichéd—topic in North American academic discourse for the past several years. We thought something might be added by providing a forum for creative writers, most of them Canadian but several living, or with experience of living, in the United States; many of them dividing their time between their writing and academic duties; all of them with hands-on knowledge of the North American culture industries that increasingly support yet still might be seen, paradoxically, as disfavouring writers from ethnic minority backgrounds. These writers, we felt sure, would draw on a wealth of practical experience, as well as commenting on "multiculturalism" as a wide discursive field. They would tease out contradictions in contemporary multicultural policies, locating both the blind spots in (liberal) pluralist agendas

and the reciprocal hardness of hearing that often seems to affect both U.S. and Canadian sides of the debates. The broader questions we had both considered would no doubt be given an airing: *Whose* multiculturalism, and for which reasons? In whose interests is the term now being used, and how has it been used historically? Is multiculturalism, as Charles Taylor has argued, a "politics of recognition," an institutionalized celebration of cultural diversity and difference? Or should it be seen more critically as a form of commodified eclecticism, or as a smokescreen that hides and protects the values of the dominant culture? Is multiculturalism dependent on the racialization of ethnic difference? To what extent is multiculturalism a sanctioned form of intercultural tolerance, to what degree an opportunity for the fetishistic marketing of cultural Otherness? And what does the term really mean, if anything, to creative writers? To writers who are conscious, maybe, of their *national* affiliation, but also of their regional—or *trans*national—ethnic-group allegiance? These were the general questions, then, we hoped to put on the table; in addition, we asked our panelists to consider more specific issues: the sense they might have, for example, of their own cultural affiliation; their own perception of the multiculturalism debates from either side (or both sides) of the US/Canadian border; the relevance of such debates to the writing—not least, their own writing—process; and the way perceptions of multiculturalism affect who *reads* particular writers, affect who *writes* for particular readers, affect what *reception* writers get.

The responses, transcribed as follows, more than matched our expectations.[1] At once analytical and inventive, the writers succeeded, not in "solving" problems but, as Clark Blaise suggested at the beginning of his talk, in posing more interesting ones. We would like to thank them all for their spirited participation. Whatever doubts—and there were many—that arose out of our round-table discussions, the Harvard symposium proved to be a stimulating (multi)cultural event.[2]

Winfried Siemerling

North American Multiculturalisms / Introduction

The multiculturalisms in Canada and the United States have very different genealogies; and inside the Canadian nation-state, the situation is again different in Quebec. Multiculturalism has been linked to questions of nationhood directly but in quite opposite ways in Canada and the United States.

In both cases, not only the identity of the nation, but also its survival often appear to be at stake. According to United States conservative and even sometimes not-so-conservative opinion, multiculturalism threatens to destroy the nation. Canadian multiculturalism, by contrast, is supposed to save the nation (or at least the nation-state), and this by liberal and conservative consensus. A conservative government was in power when multiculturalism became law in 1988.

To a certain degree, Canadian multiculturalism extends a policy of biculturalism and bilingualism that was officially initiated to accommodate French difference; others have seen it as an attempt to silence Quebec nationalism. For thorny questions of similar dimensions, of course, Canada relies on Royal Commissions. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the sixties promoted not only formal recognition of French and English, but also of the contribution of other ethnic groups and what the Commission called their "collective will to exist" (7). While bilingualism and biculturalism thus helped to open the door for multiculturalism as administrative policy, support for multicultural agendas was sometimes also motivated by resistance to bicultural and francophone claims. Some commentators have seen the inauguration of Canadian multiculturalism as a partially successful attempt, for example, to appease the resistance to bilingualism and special status for Quebec that was heard from the Prairie provinces, regions with significant proportions of Northern and Eastern European settlers (Davey). Other assessments have critiqued the policy for potentially reinforcing essentialized identities (Kamboureli "Of Black Angels"; "Technology") and thus cultural segregation, which runs counter to its goal of increased intergroup contact (stated for instance in sections 3[1]g and 5[1]c of Bill C-93, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act). In literary studies, postcolonial criticism in particular has suspected multicultural discourses of camouflaging asymmetrical power relationships of cultural difference (Bennett, Gunew), and the policy has been accused not only of diverting attention from problems of class, but also of conflating issues of ethnicity in general with those of visible minorities and race (Bannerji, Philip). It has been observed that, at least during the 1970s and even part of the 1980s, Canadian multiculturalism was largely white (Davey). In the Royal Commission documents of the 60s, for instance the word "race" referred to English and French descent. Only subsequently did questions of race (in a non-linguistic sense) and of gender begin to have an impact on discourses

of multiculturalism. In a sense, then, there are several different strands of multiculturalism besides official multiculturalism, and they meet in various constellations. Yet while different regional and cultural locations have motivated a considerable variety of responses, it is nonetheless clear that linguistic difference has played a substantial role in the inception of Canadian multiculturalism, and it has continued to do so in its later development.[3]

In the United States, despite the conspicuous presence of Spanish and of other languages, the question of linguistic difference has received surprisingly little attention in this context; linguistic difference appears for instance rarely as an issue in the 1994 Blackwell multiculturalism reader (Goldberg). Werner Sollors, one of the directors of the innovative LOWINUS project on non-English literatures "in what is Now the United States," rightly claims: "Language is the blind spot in the debates about multiculturalism in the United States" (Sollors "Multilingual Turn"). Prior to such very recent developments, one of the most visible discussions of linguistic difference has taken place in the area of the vernacular in black culture, highlighted for instance in the parallels and differences between the positions of Houston Baker and Henry Louis Gates. But the generally low profile of questions of language in the United States multiculturalism debate points to a different political genealogy in a country where the issue of race, rather than of linguistic difference, set the stage for multiculturalism. In the partial melting of the melting pot, neo-ethnic identifications here were modelled on the more radical positions that developed out of the civil rights movement since the 1950s in terms of race and later often in alliance with feminisms (Fisher 242, Showalter).

While there seem to be now many convergences between the multiculturalism discussions in Canada and the United States, political connotations in both countries thus differ to some extent because of different historical contexts in which multiculturalism emerged. In the United States, multiculturalism has had a relatively recent history. As opposed to terms like "cultural pluralism," which has been traced to Horace Kallen in 1924 (Sollors "Critique"), or the somewhat more recently circulated term "ethnicity," discourses of and about "multiculturalism" arrived in American debates only about a decade ago and in contexts often linked to university education, if one thinks of the 1988 Stanford curriculum debate and a number of anti-multicultural books around that time. Although related questions were negotiated in the early phases of the canon debates from the late 1970s on (Jan Gorak points to Fiedler and Baker 1979), there are, it appears, no references

to multiculturalism in United States newspapers before 1989; they increase rapidly and steadily from then on until 1994, and reach a plateau or even begin to level off thereafter (Glazer 7). The term multiculturalism thus arrives late in the United States if compared with Canada; it has from the beginning more activist if usually monolingual agendas; and it appears from the beginning often as the bogeyman in conservative political opinion.

As Francesco Loriggio has observed, in Canada the combination of adjectives like "resistant" or "insurgent" with the word "multiculturalism" is much less likely than it is in the United States (Loriggio 191-92). With multiculturalism a Canadian administrative policy since 1971 and a law since 1988, intellectuals in Canada—as in Australia, as Sneja Gunew points out—sit on government advisory boards, which leaves them sometimes in ambivalent positions (Gunew 16). A version of multiculturalism is authorized in Canada as official reason by the nation-state, while it is also sometimes criticized as segregationist social technology that maintains static separations; as Smaro Kamboureli says:

> Thou shalt be ethnic, our legislators say; thou shalt honour thy mother tongue; thou shalt celebrate thy difference in folk festivals; and thou shalt receive monies to write about thy difference (providing thou art a member of an ethnic organization that sponsors thy application). And we have responded to that call, ethnics and non-ethnics alike; we have responded by discovering that difference is sexy. ("Of Black Angels" 146)

In Quebec, of course, multiculturalism is often not seen as "insurgent" at all, but rather equated with Canadian federal policy in opposition to Quebec sovereignty. Nonetheless, Hubert Aquin wrote as early as 1962 of an internally poly-ethnic French-Canadian culture (Aquin); and instead of discussing multiculturalism, some writers and critics such as Pierre Nepveu or Sherry Simon now offer transcultural or translational views of Québécois literature in order to account for a French-language-based but polyethnic internal Québécois diversity.

The Canadian Model in the United States: Role Model or Warning?

American and Canadian cultures sometimes have been seen as alternatives or as complementary myths—for instance by Northrop Frye or in Sacvan Bercovitch's account of his border-crossing experience in *The Rites of Assent* (Frye, Bercovitch 1-28). Other border-crossers have diagnosed a time lag in the cultural emergence of Canada when compared with the United States (for example, Peter Dale Scott). For some observers, however, Canada

seems almost ahead: for them, it is a postmodern nation without a heavy ideology of identity (Kroetsch) or, precisely, an officially multicultural nation since the seventies.

Canadian multiculturalism seems to be perceived in the United States—if it is noted at all—either as role model or as warning. For the likes of Arthur Schlesinger, Canada stands for the dangers of a weak national identity that can lead to a country's break-up (Schlesinger 11). For Brook Thomas in a 1997 MELUS paper, on the other hand, Canada's multiculturalism would demonstrate that the model is feasible, and thus can accommodate both the nation and other cultural concerns. But to use a supposedly given "Canadian multiculturalism" as a cipher of feasibility in the United States seems to evade the question of what kind of multiculturalism one would want. Canada has actually several multiculturalisms, official and unofficial ones, with possibly more to come. And the question of linguistic difference, which is still important in many current editions of the Canadian model, will probably not play the same role soon in the United States.

What are the relationships between this business of national culture (which still seems to frame many discussions of multiculturalism) and affiliations of gender, race, and ethnicity, affiliations that cut across the nation, even the postcolonial nation, and often across national languages like French or English? And what kind of a role do any of these affiliations play not just for literature as an institution but in the process of writing itself? Some writers and critics of course claim that political affiliation and literature do not mix at all. But let us turn to our panelists for more specific answers, and in particular for more comments that are specifically concerned with the situation of writing. Some of the aspects we suggested to the panelists for potential consideration concerned their specific cultural affiliations as writers; their perception of the multiculturalism debates in Canada and/or the United States; the relevance of these questions to the writing process; the issues of dual or multiple audience and of cross-cultural encounter in the text; and, finally, the question of reception in this context.

Clark Blaise

In general terms, I agree with Winfried's first statement that multiculturalism in the two countries derives from very different sources—linguistic and ethnic differences in Canada and racial differences in the United States—and

I would also suggest that multiculturalism is part of a process of obfuscation and disguise. I'll try to make that clear; but remember, writers don't ever solve problems, they only pose more interesting problems, or else they offer metaphors—and that's what I'm going to do right now. Simon Schama, the ex-Harvard historian and art critic, once said in *Landscape and Memory*, "unstable identities are history's prey." That's the invocation I've taken for this autobiographical story, because I think "unstable identities" are "preying" at the moment on Canada.

It's 1950, I'm ten, staying with my parents in my maternal grandparents' two-room finished attic in Winnipeg. In my room, the ceiling slants and a waisthigh door opens to a crawl space where thirty years of magazines have been neatly bundled. Reader's Digest *from the beginning, when it had a different name,* Maclean's, Saturday Evening Post, National Geographic, Colliers, Look, Punch. *Everything in the house is neatly filed. Everything in Canada seems worth filing, my family knows everyone, is related to everything, three generations have attended the University, ever since it was founded. My great-grandfather was the chief carpenter of the Houses of Parliament. The word first naturally attaches itself to my mother's family. The Canadian dollar is mightiest currency in the world outside of the British pound, but just go down to Grand Forks and see what the Yanks will give you.*

We may have been living on charity, my parents unemployed and fleeing failure in the States, we may be sneaking down a narrow staircase to use the bathroom, my father reduced to smoking Players, *not his beloved Herbert Tarytons, next to a cracked-open window in the Manitoba winter, but I do not doubt that my mother's large, extended family in Winnipeg, rule; my uncle is television's storyteller-weatherman, he heads the Wheat Pool and Ducks Unlimited, his dozens of self-illustrated books about the Assiniboine Valley are the models for my own drawing. My aunt heads the University of Manitoba's Board of Regents, the Red Cross, and the Liberal Party. Federal and provincial leaders are in and out of their house, just three doors down Wolseley Drive from us. There is no maple leaf flag yet, no constitution, we rule by, and take our bearings from, parliamentary consensus, not by litigious squabbling. We are British North Americans, the repository of culture, civility and peaceableness.*

In my fifth grade class, the names are peculiarly Manitoban: my closest friend is Cam Shephard (you could stock two hockey teams with boys named Campbell, or Lorne or Brian or Hart with last names starting with "Mac," or

with Sutherlands and Frasers), there's Hart Devany, Big Wayne Van Horne, and Marv Thorlaksson. There are vowel slurs starting and ending in "K" with j's and y's and w's scattered for effect: the teacher never calls on them, they never volunteer, we pity and fear them, they'll take their revenge on the ice, the Ukrainians. We're not in the North End, there are no Jews. There are the smart, beautiful girls, Valery Kenny, whose aunt is the Australian nurse Sister Kenny, she of the hot blankets for polio treatment. Frytha Magnusdottir, the Sigurdjonsson girls. Whenever I mention their names, my mother, grandmother, cousins or aunts will say, "Icelandic girls are very smart and very pretty. But they age quickly. At forty you wouldn't recognize them." At ten, I wasn't thinking thirty years into the future.

Marv Thorlaksson and I are walking home for lunch—an hour and a half break in the day, no lunch rooms in Canadian schools back then, the social implications of such a policy clear to me only years later—and we hear piped music and amplified voices from inside a crowd of fur-hatted, fur-coated women. Passionate oratory, we push closer. There's no election that I know of (and I'm close enough to the levers of power in Manitoba to at least know when one is coming). "Icelanders," sniffs Marv. And he's right, of course, it's an Icelandic election being run on Canadian soil, since there are more eligible Icelandic voters in Manitoba than in Reykjavik, and they're allowed to vote till their Icelandic genes are deemed diluted. (I don't know if similar situations ever applied in the United States. Were the large Italian or Scandinavian or German populations courted and permitted to vote in their Old Country elections?)

My grandparents' house is run by my grandmother, just learning, at seventy or so, to sneak a cigarette and a nip of apricot brandy when her husband is napping. She bakes the bread and pies. My unmarried youngest aunt, nearly thirty years my mother's junior, raises parakeets, does the heavy work. My grandfather, one of Canada's grand old men, a pioneer in many fields, is still alive, still strong and vigorous, still a tyrant, and utterly disconnected to any reality. If he catches me, or my father alone in his house, he'll shout, "Sneaks, burglars!" and attempt to thrash us. Now, what is wrong with the portrait? In this scene of almost blissful Canadian tranquility, what is the one jarring note?

The out-of-place element is my French-speaking, Quebec-born father. He belongs less than five miles away in a city called St. Boniface, the largest French centre on the prairies on the other side of the Red River from Winnipeg where the street signs are French, the mayor is French, the schools are Catholic and French. There he can drink and smoke, tell stories, and flirt. It would be wrong

to think of St. Boniface as just a quaint appendage to the much-larger Winnipeg; it is an extrusion of the other Canada, the one that writes its language on cereal boxes, makes its appearance on the postage stamps and currency, who votes faithfully Liberal and is rewarded with alternating Prime Ministers, but otherwise keeps a measured distance from the prosperous and confident goings-on of plaid-wearing, shortcake-eating, bee-raising, wheat-cultivating, United-Church-going Winnipeg.

Cut now to a scene one or two years earlier, in Lake County, Florida, part of the "Cracker Belt" of north-central Florida, sheriff-ruled, segregated, impoverished, fish-thick, moss-dense, parasite-infested, mucky, gatory, pious and ignorant. This is the county, in 1994, that would pass a Christian Coalition-mandated guideline of "superiority of American culture" for its schools to follow. My parents have brought me here. It's a Canadian thing, especially a French-Canadian thing, to get to Florida. Good things happen if you escape the punishing cold, the darkness of the Quebec soul for which the winter is but a convenient symbol. But we've fallen short of paradise by about two hundred miles, there's still an annoying little winter here, there's no ocean, only forest and lake, sand and swamp, and the worm-infested, belly-protruding, rib-counting poverty that my father had known in his childhood, but that my mother had never even imagined on this continent. I am seven, then eight, then nine: Florida and its bundle of prejudices are all I know of a home state, all I know of a serviceable accent. Neither of my parents can be understood by the locals.

We are barely above the lowest level of white trash, although my mother is a college graduate and European-trained artist. This is a curious immigration indeed; perhaps no one has ever traced this precise path. We live in a shack on stilts above a semi-permanent swamp, like the moss-pickers who are my only friends. Their names are Dowdy, Davis, Scoffield, Standridge, Stewart. They are the southeastern branch of Appalachian and midwestern tenant farmer stock, those red-cheeked, razor-scraped, washed-denim-blue-eyed Okies, Steinbeck's Joads, Raymond Carver's woodworking Arkansas father who went to the lumber mills of Oregon. They hunt, fish, drink, sleep, abuse one another, fornicate; they speak a dialect out of the seventeenth century where all verbs are strong, the subjunctive makes frequent but unpredictable appearances and pronouns are inflected. Their mortality rates are as high as any other undeveloped, tropical community's.

My mother and I are in the nearest town, Leesburg. This is where I go to school from the shack eight miles away where the bus picks me up. To my

teacher who is my mother's friend, I am something of a phenomenon. I wear shoes. I can read, write, draw and compute. The class of seven- and eight-year-olds contains some fifteen- and eighteen-year-olds, many with the small heads and soupbowl haircuts, the obesity and rolling gaits, the half-buttoned dresses, the toilet habits, the self-exposure, the violence and corrosive ignorance of the Southern Gothic. One morning my mother and I are in Leesburg, at a diner. I look out the window in sudden terror. My mother whirls around. I'm terrified, crying.

There in front of us, not ten feet from the window, a white women in a broad straw hat is surrounded by Negro men, looking relaxed and talking to them. My mother often does the same, in her straightforward Canadian way, but not to men on the street, only to the old women whom she offers to guide across the street, or to go into stores for, in case there's something they want to buy or to see, since they are not permitted to enter. But she never looks as relaxed as this lady doing it. And why am I crying? Obviously I am a southern boy, I am a Cracker despite my mother's deep encoding; I don't want to see the men suddenly killed for their indiscretion, or the woman run out of town. I am crying because I've seen something I know to be terrifying, the same way children cry on their first airplane ride. Something, literally, obscene is happening. Something here is against the grain of nature, I've ingested the codes of Jim Crow, and although I do not think I would ever employ them offensively, that is, joining in schoolboy chants, using the dread language, I also know them to be landmines, step on one and you are automatically dead.

"It's alright, darling," she says, "I think she's a colored woman too." I learned a new word that morning, "albino" pronounced in the British way, to cover the sheer anomaly of it all, a white black woman, I never forgot it. A contradiction in the universe, an exception to the rules of survival and safe conduct had opened up.

Two memories of stable, pre-modern identities, naive and twisted, innocent and dark. My memories of Canada are Ozzie and Harriet-American, bright and uncomplicated. My memories of America belong in the Third World, murky with racial violence, poverty, rigid, almost ossified social classes. One life that has not yet run its active course can still remember how it was.

It may seem strange to say so, at a time when the United States is the world's unchallenged superpower, whose icons of culture, marketing and political management have been adopted world-wide as models of

enlightenment and prosperity, and when Canada, long established as one of the world's most progressive and civilized countries, indeed, whose principal city has recently been named the world's most habitable city, but it bears emphasis: both countries have failed in their fundamental philosophical missions.

And it is that failure which today inflects their immigration and so-called multicultural policies. In fact, immigration is a secondary issue in both countries, but because it is secondary, and relatively uninvested by powerful domestic blocks, it is a safe target for disaffected citizens and demagogic leaders. It attracts more hostile attention to itself than the underlying failures which remain untreated, and barely attended.

By its very nature, the immigrant pool is an exploitable resource. Immigrants have no vote, they are admitted on the basis of the country's need, they arrive and survive on the host country's sufferance. The immigrant, in traditional American mythology, arrived as larva, was given a few hard years of benign neglect to transform himself, and emerged (or at least his children did) as red, white and blue butterflies.

The failures of the two countries could hardly be more striking to outside as well as native observers. Canada has never solved its French-English duality, America its black-white inequality. These realities stand in open condemnation of each country's prime mission: in the case of Canada, to extend the civilization of parliamentary (not individual-based) democracy; for the United States, to create a land of equal opportunity for all. For those reasons, until recently, Canada has been comparatively race-blind, America largely linguistically deaf. For that reason, Jackie Robinson in 1946 was the toast of Montreal; no one raised the race issue. Isaiah Thomas even today, as the first black pro basketball owner, says Canadian journalists ask him about the economic picture of the Toronto Raptor franchise; Americans about being the first black man in a white position. MaliVai Washington, when he won some tennis championships a year ago, was hounded with "Arthur Ashe's shadow" questions, when the nature of his game was Ashe's precise opposite (and his relatively untutored response was considered somehow insulting to Ashe's memory); similarly, of course, Tiger Woods is carrying the "Black Golfer" burden, and his relative indifference to questions of race is perceived as arrogance.

These are some salient images that I wanted to put on the table to reinforce in general terms what Winfried said earlier about the origins of multi-

culturalism in the two countries, and to show how very different they are, and how recalcitrant they're likely to be, because we're not facing the fundamental questions.

Nicole Brossard

I would like to begin my talk by opening five little windows.

First window
I think of the poet Bernard Heidsieck performing a long poem called *Vaduz.* For half an hour, he recites the names of peoples, nations, and tribes from the past and the present. By the end of his reading, you feel very small. No matter where you come from you know for sure that it all amounts to an overwhelming insight: "I come and go; we come and go."

Second window
In his book, *Jihad vs. McWorld,* Benjamin R. Barber tells the story of a young couple from Sarajevo called Romeo and Juliet by the international press. He was Croat, she was Bosnian. They were killed by a Serb sniper. Barber shows the irony of people getting killed and killing each other in the name of culture and territory when all of them are wearing multinational running shoes and a multinational pair of jeans, symbols of a new economic world slashing into millions of lives like the future.

Third window
Last week I saw a wonderful play written by a Russian author. I read a book of poems by a Greek lesbian. I read the novel of a gay, sado-masochist Japanese, and read the diary of a physically challenged Mexican artist. Should I say I had a multicultural week with Maxim Gorky, Sappho, Mishima, Frida Kahlo? This week I am going to read Maryse Condé, Dionne Brand, Chrystos, Assia Djebar, and Anne-Marie Alonzo.

Fourth window
This is an excerpt from a long poem I wrote after The Fourth Feminist Book Fair, which took place in Barcelona in 1990. On the last evening of the Fair, four hundred women coming from different countries gathered to celebrate with food, music and wine in the beautiful Labyrinth Park. As it had happened previously in huge conferences on feminism, I had been trying to understand why women seem to spend more time and energy defending the

male politics of their respective countries than to defend their own rights. From *La Nuit verte du Parc Labyrinthe*[4]

(the ability to bypass the word country

We are all born young between a woman's legs. We are also born young in a country where the males sow women with repetition and tradition. Each one of us loves a country and knows that every war is hateful.

the country that enters into us through the senses, music and colours, is a country that is shared like the memory of fruit, seasons, heat, rain and storm winds. The country that enters into us through history and its violence is a country that divides us in memory of the pride of the conquerors and the pain of the conquered. The country that enters into us through the mouths of men of law is a country that denies our rights. The country that enters into us through the face of God and his heroes is a country that brings us to our knees. The country that enters into us through the language and tongue of a lover is a country that unites us. The country that enters into us through the beauty of trees, the fragrance of flowers and the shared night is a country that transforms us. The country that enters into us through male politics is a country that divides us. The country that enters into us like dreaming into life is a country that invents itself.

is there then a single country that is not an affair of vestiges and nostalgia? Sometimes, I wonder. My love, speak to me in the tongue of the unsubjected. The full hour that leaves us without country prolongs our lesbian lives.)

Fifth window

This last window is a question: "How many cultural differences are there between your mother and yourself? She loves you and you love her, but how many different layers of values are there between her and you?"

* * *

That being said, the first comment I would like to make is how much I was surprised to be invited to participate in this panel. I have never thought of myself as belonging to one of the numerous ethnic communities living in Canada. I am a Québécoise as others are Canadian or American. I feel

trapped in the two hundred and thirty years of mourning after the Conquest, which turned into an historical process that slowly but surely will erase those who once called themselves "Canadiens," then "Canadiens-français," and now "Québécois." Quebec culture is now very much alive and quite creative. But, in a way, we are still living on the high of the wonderful turbulence and exciting challenge of the 1970s. It is difficult for me to relate to multiculturalism because I cannot help seeing multiculturalism as a tactic invented by Pierre Elliott Trudeau when he was Prime Minister of Canada in order to avoid dealing with Quebec difference and the legitimacy of the project of a sovereign Quebec—not to mention also how useful it was for re-election purposes in order to obtain the ethnic vote.

Naturally, I know there is more to multiculturalism than what I have already said. Multiculturalism is a reality. It is a reality of diversity that can be a source of tension and conflict, as well as of creativity and discovery. But it is also about values and "comforts." It is about comforts in the sense that it is always easier for everyone to get into a familiar environment. It is always more difficult to be creative in an unfamiliar environment. It also has to do with values, but I will come back to that aspect later on. It seems to me that multiculturalism has developed more around fighting racism and discrimination than around the advancement of specific ethnic traditions. It also seems to me that it was strategically used by racial minorities as a means to be included in the cultural and political life of the country, to be listened to and respected, as well as to develop their communities.

The fact that multiculturalism had an impact on the reception of my work never crossed my mind. But now I realize it might. I never thought I could be called a "Daughter of the British Empire" or a "Postcolonial Subject," but historically, I am. In Quebec, in fact, the debate on colonization and its effects took place in the 1960s. This debate drove intellectuals and part of the population to the conclusion that in order to conquer economic, linguistic, and cultural autonomy—in other words, to de-colonize ourselves—the creation of an independent Quebec was the most appropriate solution. Albert Memmi's *Portrait du colonisé* and Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* have had an enormous influence on Quebec intellectuals, particularly for the understanding of what it means to be colonized through language, which is to say what it means to interiorize, to make your own, values and prejudices which are degrading the group you belong to. As Dionne Brand has discussed, such writers as Aimé Césaire and Léopold

Sédar Senghor were sources of inspiration for many nationalist poets in Quebec, not to mention Gaston Miron, who in order to illustrate how forced bilingualism could make you schizophrenic, was always asking when leaving Montreal: "Which direction do I take? Do I take the bridge or *le pont*?"

One of the topics suggested for this panel addressed the questions of a multiple audience and of other forms of cross-cultural encounters in the text. In my writing, it is not so much a matter of addressing an audience, but a matter of addressing questions which are vital to me. I would say that from 1965 to 1975 my audience was mainly composed of poets and postmodern writers. Then with books like *Lovhers, Picture Theory*, and *The Aerial Letter*, came an audience of women and lesbians. The postmodern audience remains, yet both audiences are discontented. Women say, "Why does it have to be so hard to read?" while men say, "Do you really have to be so radical in your feminist thoughts?" Did I ever have a Québécois audience, in the sense that my books would reflect a Québécois way of life, mentality or soul, in the way in which, for example, novels by Michel Tremblay or Yves Beauchemin reveal a Québécois mentality? No, I never did have such an audience because I do not see myself as a witness of reality; I see myself as an explorer in language. Most of my novels are located outside Quebec, in New York, the Arizona Desert, Paris, and in my last novel, *Baroque at Dawn*, the narrator and characters keep moving from Buenos Aires, London to Montreal. In fact, the only place that is important to me is Montreal because part of Montreal has been, in a certain way, exotic to me, not exotic because of ethnic groups, but exotic because of my own people speaking another language, speaking with *toé pis moé*, speaking differently. I grew up in the west part of Montreal, which was mainly an English neighbourhood, while the east part was a French neighbourhood. My mother would tell me that the east part, where my own people were living, was a dangerous part of the city, that it was full of bandits, and of people who did not know how to speak or were not well educated and so on. This is what it means to be colonized, to be talking against your own people and to be taking the values of the other. In fact, my mother used to tell me that I really should get an English husband because anglophones were clean, hard workers, and had good salaries. Part of Montreal in a way was an exotic place for me, as it is in the novels of Michel Tremblay. Montreal has always been at the heart of my novels, especially in a novel like *French Kiss*, in which the

characters cross the whole city from East to West. Maybe I am a writer of the elsewhere, fascinated by the unknown, looking for surprise. I think "literature is the fruit of a displacement in belonging, into a form of belonging that invents its own horizon. I am always displacing myself in terms of my *appartenance*."[5] There is a young American woman filmmaker who has made a CD-ROM[6] based on my novel *Mauve Desert*. In the novel there is a strong lesbian character, illiterate but full of knowledge of life. She has made that character an African American dyke. Of course I was surprised when I saw the character, but that was perfectly legitimate because nowhere in the text was it said that the character was white. It is interesting to notice that at the time of the shooting of the film the director's companion was an African American woman, so indeed private life matters in the political life and often nourishes cultural statements we make and the social aspect of what we invent.

That being said, I am indeed familiar with the question of identity/ otherness. I know what it means to be discriminated against; I know what it means to speak the language of the other when the other is the dominant, and I know at the same time how much I enjoy learning another language. I also know how it feels to be in a different position. As a woman; I belong to a majority which is treated as a minority. As a writer; I belong to a minority which is attributed authority. As a lesbian; I belong to a minority who will always remain a minority. As a feminist, unfortunately, I also belong to a minority. As a Québécoise, I belong to a minority within Canada; in an independent Quebec I would be part of a majority. As a white woman, I hold a privileged position. I remember one day the Martinican poet Edouard Glissant told me: "You first think of yourself as a woman, but in Africa, you would first be noticed as being white, then as a female." In other words, I know how it feels to be invisible, pointed at, colonized. I know anger and revolt. I also know the sense of euphoria and celebration that comes along with togetherness and solidarity. I also know how it feels to belong to a dominant group, how easy it is to fall into the "not-me" syndrome, as well as the patterns of justification/ explanation, comprehension/ empathy, or the expedient "fuck you" answer.

But what about the writer in me? Would I not rather be marginal, peripheral, instead of belonging to the dualistic minority/majority? Of course, this is where I like to stand and explore language. I navigate from one marginality to another. I always value life as a reality and a virtuality. I feel a need for

and I enjoy making space in language for my differences. I think that once you are aware of the inferiorization of your gender or of the group you belong to, you need to find the words that will make you even more marginal, but this time in full control of your marginalities. Without a double marginality, there is nothing to tell that will make the *difference.* The difference is interesting when it takes you out of the dualistic trap. Can I say that having experienced many positionalities makes me value multiculturalism? I do not know, but I understand that to be confronted with many roads and with otherness stimulates thinking in modes of comparison and representation. It allows me to detect the mechanism that governs thoughts as they take position amid images, words, knowledges and faces, giving me the impression that we are never done with beauty, which is the repeated intuition we have of the complexity of a species designed as a virtual humanity. Let us say that I am still questioning myself. Multiculturalism produces relations of tension, some creative, some destructive, where we say identity is at stake. Or should we be talking about power, or simply say it is about surviving racism, discrimination and the dualistic bind of invisibility versus overexposure? On a long term basis I do not believe multiculturalism can be successful as a governmental policy. It is not by reinforcing differences that you create a positive environment for cohabitation. Even when there is no difference between people, there is always someone to invent a fictive difference so that it will become useful to increase someone's power. Multiculturalism is a reality. Policies have been made to accommodate different cultures, but I do not think that it will be enough without what we call, and especially what Edouard Glissant calls, *le métissage culturel,* or cultural *métissage,* which means interpenetration, fluidity, new configuration of identity, and continuous movement. We think of ethnicities as culture, but already we live in subcultures; for example, the culture of sports, cyberculture, gay and lesbian culture, Star Trek culture, Jet Set culture, lawyers' culture, militia culture, street culture, religious culture, Barbie's culture, and media culture. All these cultures have codes, languages, styles, a type of self-service culture that seems to be the future. And we have to bear in mind that ethnicity in all these subcultures serves as a means for a lot of people, and represents a "big market."

I will conclude with a last question. Can cultural *métissage* be successful if it means mixing macho, gynophobic, misogynistic and sexist cultures? Can there be a true cultural *métissage* without a signifying presence of women in

every ethnic community? Can there be something new without the insertion of feminine subjectivity and creativity in the current affair of belonging and integrity?

George Elliott Clarke

I'm going to begin with a few comments on Canadian multiculturalism. Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau inaugurated the Canadian policy of multiculturalism in his first—and last—parliamentary statement on the subject on October 8th, 1971. The date is interesting because it's the year after the beginning of the *Crise d'octobre*, which involved the traumatic invocation of the War Measures Act. Trudeau inaugurated the policy with these words: "For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly. National unity, if it is to mean anything in a deep and personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity. Out of this can grow respect for . . . others, and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence." If Mao Zedong was right to argue that politics is war by other means, it may be tempting to read Trudeau's statement as yet another reaction to the *Crise d'octobre*—to Quebec nationalism—by insisting that no ethnic group should take precedence over any other; and by establishing national unity, not on nationalism *per se* but rather on the liberal promotion of individual identity . . . understood to some extent within its cultural context.

Of course, this policy was, and is, awash in contradictions. Canada may not have official cultures, but for a long time—and this remains true today—writers and artists from so-called "ethnic communities" have often had to rely on Department of Multiculturalism, and now Heritage Canada, grants while watching Anglo-Saxon and French-Canadian derived writers and artists receive the lion's share of Canada Council funding, on the grounds that they are considered to be "real" or "serious" writers and artists, while we coloured folks in Third World/allophone and First Nations groups are merely folklorists, contributors to local colour, residents of "ghettos" of one sort or another. Moreover, Trudeau's statement erased the truth that majority cultures in francophone and anglophone Canada have taken, and still take, precedence over other groups—economically, politically and socially.

Finally, Trudeau's interests in shoring up individual identity by supporting cultural expression reveals an intriguing contradiction, for a pure liberalism ought not to recognize "cultures" at all. Indeed, a policy of multiculturalism necessarily works to "officialize" formerly unofficial cultures.

I think this history is important, for while multiculturalism can and must be critiqued from a multitude of perspectives, it may in the end be a progressive policy. Not because of politicians, not because of the state, but because of what people have done with it. In his essay "The Tapestry Vision of Canadian Multiculturalism," political scientist Seymour Wilson catalogues a whole host of objections to the policy; you've heard some of them already, but I'll give you his list. For example, some have viewed multiculturalism as a cynical election ploy of the Liberals, the governing party at the time; as a policy reinforcing the concept of symbolic ethnicity which provides an appearance of democratic pluralism, but is, in reality, a racist policy of assimilation at best, exclusion at worst; as a set of programs lending legitimacy to the accumulation-function of the State, thus befuddling the more fundamental issues of class in Canadian society; as an English Canadian conspiracy to dilute the Quebec question; and, as one commentator put it, as a masochistic celebration of "Canadian nothingness."

Evidence of all of the above can be found in the federal government's enactment of the policy, but what counts ultimately is what "other" groups, "other" artists and writers, "other" cultures from South Asian- to Italo-Canadian, from African Canadian to Chinese Canadian, have made of it. Indeed, Canadian writing has become polyethnic, as polyethnic as the society itself. And one reason for this has been—despite all attempts to control or dismantle popular groups—the presence of government funds: that's to say, our tax dollars have been partly returned to us to fund the establishment of journals and presses, to publish and circulate books, to give writers time to write, and so on. I'll never forget, for instance, that in 1980, less than a week after the first Quebec Referendum on Sovereignty Association, a group of Black writers and artists from across the country met at McGill University to talk about our aesthetics, our missions, our ideas; to fight and struggle and laugh and party; to construct bridges between . . . our own intra-group ethnicities. The bureaucrats from the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism may have had other goals in mind when they decided to grant the funds that allowed this first Black writers' conference to occur. Perhaps they intended to promote assimilation, to assimilate us; perhaps

they wanted to win our votes for the Liberal Party, to promote federalism to Black francophones; perhaps they intended to achieve all of the above, with a paternalistic smile. But the fact remains that we were able to meet, and it helped some of us to conceive of ourselves, perhaps for the first time, as artists.

Trudeau's 1971 statement was not his government's last word on the subject of multiculturalism. In 1981, as the Canada Act, the nation's amended constitution, was being established, Section 27, a constitutional recognition of multiculturalism, was entrenched. Section 27 demands that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." As Seymour Wilson observes once again, charter recognition had a dramatic effect in galvanizing not only the real minorities but also the Aboriginal peoples. As a matter of fact, Section 27 was only entrenched as a result of popular struggle, of popular demand for the recognition of the multicultural nature of the country in legal terms as well. Of course, as has been pointed out, Canada has always been multicultural, although in its history it has performed quite poorly, and quite violently, in its treatment of people from minority communities. For instance, if you look at death penalty records, as I did last summer, you'll discover that whereas in the United States it's mainly African-Americans who have been executed, in Canada, up until the abolition of the death penalty in 1976, it was southern Europeans by and large, Italians, Greeks and also eastern Europeans, who were hanged by the government of Canada. French Canadians were also popular candidates for hanging. For my own group, African Canadians, the tendency was that you'd be executed if you were American or if you came from the United States. If you were Canadian, then it was less likely that you'd be executed; so one can see in the application of the death penalty the operation of racism and exclusivity in the country.

To continue to speak on a personal basis, I am a seventh-generation Canadian of African origin, but also Micmac Native heritage, from Nova Scotia. Also somewhere along the line there is some English—I'm not sure exactly how it happened, but I can't really do anything about it now! But in any event this is the universe in which I've grown up and in which I've come to be a writer. Because Nova Scotia is heavily influenced by its British heritage, I grew up pledging allegiance to the Union Jack at first; the Canadian flag came along shortly after I began my school years. Also at the time I was listening to lots of African-American music, because music was one way for my little community in Nova Scotia—which only consists of thirty thou-

sand people, descended from Loyalists and refugees who came to Canada in 1783 and 1815—to maintain our pride and our connection to our Black roots. Another way was by establishing churches; in fact, they established an Association of Baptist Churches across Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century, some forty years before the National Baptist Convention was established in the United States. This was a reflection, I think, of some sense of roots; and that church experience was extremely important to me as a child, as were the influences that came from a larger society, particularly from the Black community in the United States. I tend to weave all of these various strands of influence into my writing, which reflects the fact that my community has absorbed and is composed of various international influences. I should mention as well that my heritage includes a Caribbean background on my paternal side, and that this has also been an influence on me and on my work.

To conclude, I would say that multiculturalism in Canada may have been promulgated as a means of trying to gloss over issues of race, language and class; but I think that writers and artists in Canada have been able to take advantage of the policy, and to continue to promote it as a means of getting their works out to the public as well as a means of establishing their cultural presences within the country.

Paul Yee

What I want to do with these remarks is to answer two of the questions sent out at the start of this project. By way of caveats, I'd like to say that I am not an academic nor do I teach in a university setting.

The first question was: "How important is a specific cultural affiliation for me as a writer? How would I describe my main cultural affiliation?" Cultural affiliation is very important for me because the subjects I write about as well as my reasons for writing are firmly rooted in the historical experiences of a Canadian cultural group. I am a Chinese Canadian. The key word is Chinese. Chinese in Canada means racial minority, visibly distinct, means even as I speak and write fluent English, as soon as you see me, you know I'm not from England or France. I am a writer because although my cultural group has lived, worked and died in Canada for over a hundred years, it does not have a natural or recognized place in that country's history or literature. This is a situation shared by many other cultural groups in Canada today. I have written both formal (that is, rigidly

footnoted) histories as well as fiction about the Chinese in Canada. I do this writing because as I "give voice" to a people who have lived a unique experience in Canada without leaving books or insights about themselves behind, I also "give voice" to myself. And this strikes at the core of why I write.

When I was growing up, I was painfully shy. I never asked questions in class. At university, I dreaded seminar discussions. Of course, you might argue that silence and shyness are derived from family upbringing, that it's not a direct result of being Chinese Canadian. But look at my family—it's Chinese Canadian! Its behaviors were shaped by political, economic, and social forces that deliberately set out to disempower Chinese people. As a result, our patterns of behavior were those of a colonized community.

In my family, my Aunt had direct memories of several thousand white men rampaging through Chinatown, smashing windows, hoping to drive all the Chinese out of Vancouver. The rules of survival that were passed on to me were: "don't rock the boat," "don't go out on a limb," and "know your place"—and that place was at the margins. In my family, poverty was very real; you worry about putting food on the table and having a roof over your head before you think of going to the movies or pursuing "artistic endeavors." The concept of the "starving artist" didn't exist in our colonized community. As a child, I never imagined I could be a writer. Even though the era during which I grew up—the 1960s—was relatively enlightened, my family was trapped in an earlier, darker period of racism and poverty that couldn't be easily thrown off. Who I am as a writer and a human being is quite intimately inter-twined with my cultural group's past.

The second question was: "What is your perception of the multiculturalism debates?" To answer this question, I thought about what I had been hearing and reading. There are several broad issues that critics raise in their charges against multiculturalism. Let me quickly run through them before presenting my comments.

One broad issue has to do with education. The critics say there's an over-emphasis on racism, too much dwelling on the negative side of history. I wonder if there can ever be an "over-emphasis" on racism in a society of increasing diversity where the record has been bleak in this regard. Then, critics say immigrants aren't learning an official language. That's hardly true: parents want their children to learn English and most do. For adults, however, it's hard to learn a new language at an older age. Besides, when they face the choice between going to classes to learn English or going to

work to support their family, they inevitably choose the latter. Otherwise they get labeled as welfare bums. Critics also say immigrants aren't learning enough Canadian history. But what about Canadians in general? Survey after survey has shown the average Canadian knows excruciatingly little about Canadian history. As a matter of fact, history is marginalized throughout North American society today.

A second broad charge is that multiculturalism is weakening the foundations of Western civilization. The evidence: changes in education curricula driven in part by protests against the Eurocentric nature of "the canon," against the "appropriation" of multi-racial voices by white writers, and against the "mis-interpretations" of homeland cultures by mainstream museums. This charge is exaggerated. Personally I believe the Western classics are strong enough to withstand the canon critics. Didn't writer Jane Austen enjoy a banner year at movie theaters recently with renditions of her novels? Isn't "the canon" just being enlarged? And isn't such an expansion inevitable given the increasing diversity in North America?

A third broad issue relates to greater divisions being created in Canadian society. The examples we hear of concern religious groups (Jewish, Muslim, Evangelical) wanting public funding for religious schools, or issues of special treatment for minority groups (turbans for the Mounties, wearing kirpans in schools, religious holidays for workers, wearing hijabs at school). These groups don't feel they're getting equal treatment. It's easy to talk about equality when everybody is the same. But with the increasing diversity in North America, it's not so easy. Who should make the changes? Should newcomers go by the rule, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do"? Does that call for conversion? Hardly, since the Canadian Constitution says that there should be no discrimination on the basis of religion. Immigrants don't come to this country to challenge the rules, they come to follow them. When they see privileges accorded to Christianity while the rules call for no discrimination on the basis of religion, they're asking, "Do you really mean what you say about equal treatment?" Nobody has said that achieving equality would be painless or easy, but we seem to expect it to be.

For me, the most hurtful issue is the charge that multiculturalism retards Canada's social and/or cultural development because groups put their own backgrounds and interests ahead of the public good. As someone who has done a fair amount of volunteer work at the community level, I've always felt that Canada is the sum of all its parts, so if you help people at the grass-

roots improve themselves, if you help them become self-sufficient and confident, then the entire country benefits.

I'd like to finish my comments with a number of observations. In general, multiculturalism is being scapegoated for the growing pains of an increasingly diverse society. Instead of blaming multiculturalism, we should start by realizing that it isn't easy for a growing diversity of peoples to live side by side in peace. It takes patience, compromise, sharing of power, re-thinking of standard assumptions, even love—which reminds me of a great quote: "you can legislate against discrimination, but you can't legislate love". Secondly, the discussion around multiculturalism has become extremely polarized. If you speak in favor of multiculturalism, it's assumed you buy into and have to defend everything associated with it: anti-racism, affirmative action, exclusive conferences, employment equity, etc. I personally resent this, because each element needs to be judged on its own merits. Thirdly, given the many real barriers that exist in our society, for instance, towards people with disabilities, women in the corporate or political world, gay and lesbian people, people who are unattractive or overweight or short or who don't speak perfect English, I'd say any general measure encouraging respect for diversity is a good start. Finally, it seems to me that in all areas of state social policy, whether it's social assistance, regional development, old age pension, workers compensation, there have always been unintended consequences. Somehow I feel that multiculturalism is being held to a higher standard, that no "down-sides" are allowed. Partly, I think this is because anyone can have an opinion on this issue without doing much homework; it's not like having to figure out how the actuarial tables for the pension system or how the workers' compensation system works. Most importantly, we might ask: do the benefits of multiculturalism outweigh the costs? The politicians think yes and I agree with them.

Geeta Patel (response)

Whither Language? Where Race?—Multiculturalism in the United States

Multiculturalism in the United States has been haunted by the schisms produced between race and language, or more properly, has been haunted by the way in which debates on racialization have reinforced an English-only model of literary output in the United States. This roundtable, bringing together writers from Canada and the United States, writers who traverse the boundaries between those two countries, can become a productive site

for discussing the ways in which this kind of schism in United States multiculturalism might be breached.

Graham Huggan's opening questions, and specifically the one—Whose multiculturalism?—frame responses offered by the writers we have heard. Under the aegis of discussing multiculturalism, each writer gifts readers and listeners with particular invocations of terms that gained prominence in the nineteenth century, and that were so memorably intertwined by Matthew Arnold: culture/ language/ race/ nation. In the Canadian context, multiculturalism becomes a state policy that seems ventured by a centre to offset demands by Quebec nationalists for a linguistically and culturally differentiated nation state. But the four writers offer resistances to knowledge produced under the aegis of state-funded productions of nationalist cultures. They turn the term multiculturalism on its head, asking for it to be deployed in various ways, and pointing to its deployment in unexpected forms. It is questioned in these pieces as a way of speaking interpolations or interpellations of a subject into racist discourses (either in conformity with or despite home-training); it is deployed as a way of turning something funded by a state into a mandate to explore subversive identifications; as a way of turning to multilingual reading practices that are unexpectedly hybrid; as a way of proposing national identities in coalitions that are always fraught, never realized and always sought.

Some of these same demands are made by organic intellectuals in the United States like Henry Giroux, who turns the term multiculturalism against itself. Giroux radicalizes it in the service of a renewed democratic call in a post-Fordist, global economy as the left is beset by right-wing attacks against radical educational imperatives. I would like for a moment to capture the linguistic pluralism and its links to ethnicity (and race) posed more often by Canadian renditions of multiculturalism and turn it to the service of an analysis and proposal located in the United States that take up on Giroux's call. For this I would like to turn to the critique of monolingualism suggested in Werner Sollors' edited collection *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity and the Languages of American Literature.*

What the essays in Sollors' collection suggest is that American literature has been produced as such (as American literature) in forms that obscure, elide and finally efface its complex linguistic heritages. This despite collections of literature from the United States (notably one compiled during the first world war, *The Cambridge History of American Literature*), which had sixty pages on non-English writing; detailed accounts of aboriginal,

German, French and Yiddish literatures; and which assumed that its readers would be comfortably proficient in at least three languages (Sollors, *Multilingual America* 5-6). The insistent monolingualism of strands of both mono- and multiculturalism seems to have interwoven antecedents all of which provide a different historical genesis of what constitutes American literature, the American nation, and the "proper" American citizen. Barrett Wendell's 1900 history volunteers language (but not race), a language emerging from the stern Christian proprieties of early Elizabethan Boston Brahmin transcendentalism (beware of Babel), leavened by Shakespeare, whose aesthetics provide a culturally independent American renaissance. Other literatures for him are the "rest of the story." Charles F. Richardson's 1886 history, which Wendell draws from, focuses on racialization, notably the racialization of whiteness: Irish, French and Germans merging into Anglo-Saxonism under the latter's potent influence and the leverage of new conditions. Other literatures are at best an ineffectual hindrance, and at worst, a hindrance to an intellectual sympathy with English ideas. Richardson's hard-edged survival of the fittest is softened into Wendell's inevitable seduction of men of taste by the superiority of a necessary aesthetic. In 1946, Robert Spiller advocates the idea of racial mixture as the focus of his history. But his amalgam, and the origins of American literary history, are constituted of melded, transformed European cultures, spoken in a melting pot tongue that supposedly does not blend with racial affiliations.[7]

All of these histories, whether or not they rely on the polemic of racial superiority to produce a perfect Americanism, implicitly fold their arguments into narratives based on a racialized linguistic hegemony. In the process, whiteness, and its literary embodiment as the arbiter of national belonging, become something articulated through "proper" forms of American-English. Ethnicity drops away, and with it, other languages. Race is articulated in English, and ethnicity (spoken in other languages) is disarticulated from race. As languages other than English fall aside, so do histories and literary products scripted in them. One language and a concomitant culture, in the form of cultural artifacts like literature, here arbitrate the proprieties of national belonging. And at the same time it is clear, in these various histories, that the disarticulation of race from ethnicity and language, and the deracination of Anglo-Saxon English, permit certain seamless, seemingly natural affiliations. These are the affiliations between a proper language, a national "culture," and a certain rendition of whiteness (often scanned through class).

In recent couplings of language, ethnicity and race, language continues to be coiled into ethnicity, and separated from race. And ghostly combinations of race and language and ethnicity still haunt us and are familiar to us, even when they are not seen as such. Race and language are blended in racist epithets, lingering over from the nineteenth century, used on those who speak another language: primitive, degenerate, irrational, marked by illiteracy, intellectually challenged. Race and language are also blended when raced bodies who speak a different English are, by virtue of their raced speaking, excluded from the realm occupied by a civilized citizenry.

The divisions between race and language assume national proportions when each is apportioned to a different country; for instance multicultural politics in the United States works through discourses of race, as against multicultural politics in Canada which is detoured more often through language. Affiliations through language, then, seem to offer a new politics of belonging for the United States, one not tainted by the racist violences inherent in both left- and right-wing polemics around race. But to sever the history of given, and necessary, connections between language and race in the United States is not to account for the ways these connections will reappear unwittingly as the obscene underside of power. And to sever such a history is to confine the production of knowledge about racialization to knowledge scripted in English. To sever such a history will leave United States with a poorer sense of the "multi" in multicultural: of mixing, of mingling, of pushing and pressing in languages that range from Urdu, through Hungarian and Spanish, to Tewa.

What this roundtable offers us are moments in which to linger on the push of *métissage*, on the persuasions of translation, and on the press of struggle and coalition bequested in life story and luxuriously strong politics. This roundtable confers on us a chance to ask again—"Whose multiculturalisms? What do they offer as origin, as history, as politics?" Placing Canada in radical conversation with the United States pries open what seems all too natural to forms of citizenship—alliances among the right language(s), right culture(s) and right race(s). The current languages of multiculturalism in the United States, focusing as they do on pedagogy and proper citizenry, might well learn across such conversations, and across the production of knowledges, in languages other than English, and in incarnations of unfamiliar English.

NOTES

1 What follows is a slightly edited transcript of the available symposium proceedings. The writers themselves we consider well-known enough not to need further introduction here. All are widely published and have won national, and/or international, literary prizes.

2 Thanks go out also to all those who helped at the symposium or helped make it possible. These include Werner Sollors, also a respondent during the event (whose contribution unfortunately was not taped due to a technical error, and could not be made available here); our team of student helpers at both Sherbrooke and Harvard, without whom the symposium could not have taken place; Harvard University, for its generous support both as a venue and a sponsor; and our other sponsors, the Graduate Programmes in Comparative Canadian Literature and the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines at the University of Sherbrooke, and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs/ Ministère des Affairs Etrangères et du Commerce International du Canada. Special thanks to Rajini Srikanth, an inspirational co-organizer, and to Natasha Dagenais, Peggy Devaux, and Martin Cyr Hicks, who laboured long hours to transcribe unruly tapes.

3 It is impossible to provide a full survey of relevant materials here; for critical discussions, good starting points are Berry and Laponce, with excellent entries by Padolsky and by Simon/Leahy; a special issue of *Mosaic*, 29:3 (September 1996), entitled "Idols of Otherness: The Rhetoric and Reality of Multiculturalism," which includes review essays that survey important publications in both Canada and the United States; the situation in Canada and Québec has been explored in Winfried Siemerling's edited collection *Writing Ethnicity* and in Christl Verduyn's edited *Literary Pluralities*. In terms of literary texts, over thirty anthologies have been dedicated to specific groups in Canada since the 1970s, while others combine writers from different backgrounds; widely used anthologies include those by George Elliott Clarke, Hutcheon and Richmond, Kamboureli, King, Moses and Goldie; among important reference works are Helly and Vassal and the bibliographies by Miska and under the general editorship of Batts.

4 Excerpt from Nicole Brossard, *La Nuit verte du Parc Labyrinthe / Green Night of Labyrinth Park / La Noche verde del Parque Laberinto* (trilingual edition), trans. Lou Nelson and Marina Fe (Laval, Québec: Ed. Trois, 1992).

5 Excerpt from Nicole Brossard, *Elle serait la première phrase de mon prochain roman / She Would Be the First Sentence of My Next Novel* (bilingual edition), trans. Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1998).

6 See *Mauve Desert*, a CD-ROM translation by Adriene Jenik, based upon the novel *Le Désert mauve* by Nicole Brossard. ajenik@ucsd.edu, 1997.

7 My information about these histories has been gleaned from Alide Cagidemetrio's extraordinarily informative article "'The Rest of the Story'; or, Multilingual American Literature," which is one of the pieces in Sollors' edited collection.

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Jamie Dopp

Thumbing It

for Misao, who worried about it

Try it and I'll try to make room for you.
I'll pull over, sweep the junk off
the other seat, turn over a peace sign
and pop the lock. I'll ask where you're headed
and when you say *there,* I'll say *great, so am I*
—even if, strictly speaking, this isn't true.

I know how it is. That lifetime at the side
of the road, the clamp-jawed cars,
trying to assume the right posture
(part orphan, part don't-fuck-with-me),
licking your thumb now and then
for good luck or no reason or just to feel

the shucked air. And if someone stops
—well, then you worry about the crazies.
You glance in the open door (whiff of—what?
sound of—what?) and remember the one
who passed transports over the double line,
who rolled joints with two hands

at ninety miles an hour while steering
with his knee. You live in dread
of the lesser and greater dangers,
the droners, the ones who wall you in
with *me, me, me,* or the ones waiting
to write on your body with a knife.

Try it and I will not be one of those.
Try it and I'll try to see at least one thing
through your eyes. I'll offer you a seat,
make a little small talk (*nice not
to travel alone, eh*?) then leave you
to yourself. After a while

I'll get tired (it's a long way, after all)
and ask if you want to drive. If you do,
we'll trade seats. I'll offer a tip or two
(it's still my car, it's got my personality
—or is that an illusion?) then curl up
and close my eyes. Now you have the wheel,

you make your own sense of the solid
and broken lines. You drive on until
there is, inevitably, a fork—will you go
this way or that? Maybe you steal
a glance back at me, try to read
the intention on my face, but by then

I'm just the question mark
dreaming in the seat beside you.

Tom Wayman

Eighth Day

When the moment where matter was
not yet matter
—nor force, force, light, light, time, time—
released like a burst of smoke a spiral
that began to form
the primal hollowness, a twisting helix
that curved to join its tail and
spin each possible dimension,
this exploding sphere
configured all. And eventually we stood
on our natal rock
to utter: *Let there be.*

> God's face is the face
> of the people about you.
> No one sees that Face and lives.

But because you see that Face
one morning we shall set aside what we carry,
what we count, steer, nurture.
When you touch again
paint, iron rods, seeds,
planks, keyboards, cloth, the skin of another person
each will be altered.
How strange the worn wood, stained aluminum, plastic grip
will appear in those minutes
they lie abandoned.
Generations have waited to grasp these
another way
or to let them rust, dissolve. Millions of arms
reach with your arms

toward the object on table or soil or frame.
Galaxies of hands
hover above a canister.
History has no corners, only arrives
by means of a list of tasks, like bread,
despite the sharp snap of flags, of microphones.
Yet rising under every anthem
are words that insist on perpetual dawn.

> The face of God is the face
> of the women and men around you.
> No one sees that Face and lives.

But we see that Face and live.
The pores of our fingers when poised above the nouns
whose heft makes us human
absorb each potential duty and direction.
The instant we restart the wheel,
laughter and moans, a hiss,
and a well-greased silence resound.
Evening begins to descend, a knee
bends the wrong way as a woman stumbles on a wooden floor
after a ball, a child for the first time
opens a cupboard drawer, prayers roar skyward,
honey is scooped from a ceramic bowl.
The rotation creates the path
that in turn creates the wheel.
We have travelled far to this
pause
before we assume the world.

> God's face
> is that of the people about us.
> No one sees that Face and lives.

> The face of God is the face
> of the men and women around me.
> I can only see that Face
> and live.

Klaus P. Stich

The Grail Is a *Rum Thing*
Robertson Davies' Cornish Trilogy

The word "rum" occurs so frequently in the Cornish novels that it calls attention to itself. Its dictionary meanings include "intoxicating drink," "odd" and "strange," with the latter two being said to derive from "Rom" (or "Rum"), a short form of "Romany," and denoting a Gypsy or something relating to Gypsies (*Webster's*). All these meanings appear to contribute to Davies' notion of the Grail which is mentioned a dozen times in *What's Bred in the Bone* (1985), only three times in *The Lyre of Orpheus* (1988) and not at all in *The Rebel Angels* (1981). Its allusive overall presence among the novels' Arthurian connections, however, is strong enough for the Grail to become one of the bigger "tricky bits" (Sifton 24) of the sort Davies likes to put into his fiction. Its gleam of myth and religion serves him constructively rather than reductively to explore the complexities and uncertainties of the process of individuation. Even when Davies refers explicitly to the Grail, as in the adolescent Francis Cornish's knowledge of its common association with the Eucharistic chalice, the direction changes quickly to Francis' infatuation with the Grail in the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, in the poetry of Tennyson and in his own imagination (*Bred* 191, 195); in other words, Francis' Grail promises to be quite different from its sources. In *The Lyre of Orpheus* meanwhile, the traditional notion of the Grail as a vessel is readily available in the form of "the Platter of Plenty, . . . a large silver epergne that stood in the middle of the round table" (5) in Maria and Arthur Cornish's apartment.[1] This platter points to the Grail-related motifs of magnanimity and marriage which complement

each other as contentious answers to the question of the Grail's significance not only in *The Lyre of Orpheus* but also in the two earlier novels.

In *The Rebel Angels*, notions of the Grail all lead to Maria Magdalena Theotoky. Her name and her effect on the other characters give her the aura of the Grail as a personified symbol whose purpose includes a reorientation of logocentric, masculine thinking toward a compensatory consciousness that can be called feminine (E. Jung and von Franz [hereafter J&F] 204, 205). Maria is aiming for "nothing less than Wisdom," following Paracelsus' maxim that "*the striving for wisdom is the second paradise of the world*" (*Rebel* 38, 39; Davies' emphasis). At least, that is what she says in her personal account of her current life as a student, appropriately entitled "Second Paradise"; its segments furnish half of the novel and alternate with the segments of Simon Darcourt's complementary personal narrative entitled "The New Aubrey" after John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*. Darcourt, Maria's professor of New Testament Greek, is infatuated with her. Maria, however, expects to "have the second paradise, and the first as well" (39), with her supervisor Clement Hollier. As a "paleo-psychologist" (15), he is a historian of people's minds in medieval times when, in Maria's words, "their thinking was a muddle of religion and folk-belief and rags of misunderstood classical learning" (29). Implicitly, her comment also refers to the medieval making of the Grail legends out of a living muddle of pre-Christian and Christian sources. A likely source for a tentative linking of Hollier to the Grail myth is Emma Jung's *The Grail Legend*, a psychological study completed by the Jungian scholar Marie-Louise von Franz. In it Davies, who had read von Franz's books (Grant 497), would have come across a reference to the Order of the Templars as a source for the Grail Knights in Wolfram's *Parzival* (J&F 17, 385); and one of the names Davies initially considered for Hollier was Templar (Grant 532). Similar to a Templar, Hollier seems to favor celibacy and rationalizes his sexual fling with Maria as "a sort of daemonic seizure" (96). Regardless of his defensive self-justification, her effect on him, as on Darcourt, may well be considered somewhat otherworldly through her latent affiliation with the Grail mystery, especially her own sense of "feminine fury" when she is "being treated mockingly as the weaker vessel" (25).

Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz, in their equation of the world of the Grail with the "maternal domain of the unconscious" (113), put the notion of a "life-giving or life-maintaining" vessel at the core of the Grail

myth (114). Maria's names relate her at least nominally to that notion, if one connects both vessel and life with the figure of Jesus Christ. Indeed, other characters tend to comment on the meaning of her unusual family name of Theotoky—"the bringer of God" (6), "the divine motherhood of Mary" (191), "the Motherhood of God" (236). Although her father was Polish, the seemingly Polish suffix "-ky" in her name is really the suffix "-y" after the "k" in "tokos" (Greek for childbirth); that is to say, the name Theotok*y* addresses the "business of God's birth" more than the motherhood of Mary. Maria's second name, Magdalena, adds zest to that business through the allusion to Mary Magdalene, the saintly sinner of the New Testament, whose mystical role in the Gnostic Gospels links her to "the healing Goddess of Wisdom" or Sophia as symbolized by the Grail (Matthews 218-19). Darcourt, an Anglican priest steeped in Gnosticism and apocrypha, is evidently aware of this mystical connection in his infatuation with Maria as his "Sophia": "What a label to hang on [her other names]. Sophia: the feminine personification of Wisdom; . . . God's female counterpart whom the Christians and the Jews have agreed to hush up, to the great disadvantage of women for so many hundreds of years" (279). No less important here is the fact that Maria's middle name evokes the Magdalene's legendary role as the "living Grail" who, after Jesus' crucifixion, allegedly settled and gave birth to his child near Marseilles at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (Matthews 197, 218; Baigent 313).[2] That village, moreover, has also long been sacred to Gypsies for its shrine of their patron saint, Sara le Kali or Black Sara, who, in her alleged role as the Magdalene's servant, becomes part of the "living Grail" tradition (Fraser 312, Matthews 218). In other words, given Davies' interest in Gypsies (Grant 533), Maria's being the daughter of a Gypsy mother is one of the "rum things" accounting for her connection to the Grail.

Maria's marriage to Arthur Cornish consolidates that connection. His last name points to his family's paternal home in Cornwall, where Arthurian legend has its most popular sites. Cornish, however, also implies "hornish," as if pointing to the Cornish males' problems with cuckoldry (Köster 251). Arthur's wealth, of course, compensates for the sexual jest by turning him, as an aspiring patron of the arts, into an appropriate horn of plenty or cornucopia, a symbol complementing the platter of plenty in the Celtic version of the Grail (see Loomis, *Development* 60, 63). Thus, Arthur Cornish's ties to the Grail myth are so conspicuous that they overdetermine Maria's Grail affiliation, allowing Davies to accentuate the principle of enantiodromia:[3]

Maria is occasionally tipsy and bawdy; she has "a calm, transfixing face, of the kind one sees in an icon," yet also a nose that could well "be a hook in middle age," and her naturally black hair has "the real raven's-wing colour, with blue lights in it" (17); moreover, she admits that the spirit of the Maenads is not dead in her (76). These earthy as well as enchanting aspects of the eye- and mind's eye-catching figure of Maria indicate that her association with the Grail is hardly simplistic; although everyone calls her Maria, her name is Maria Magdalena.

Her own sense of self owes much to the influence of John Parlabane, a disreputable philosopher. From Darcourt's perspective, Parlabane's clothed appearance is "shabby and sinister"; without clothes, he resembles "Satan in a drawing by Blake" (251). To Maria, he is, similar to Darcourt and Hollier, another "Rebel Angel"; he taught her what she had merely gleaned from Paracelsus: "'Be not another if thou canst be thyself'" (320). This aphorism captures the importance of the individuation process which, with regard to the Grail, underlies Wolfram von Eschenbach's notion of it as a symbol of wholeness in conjunction with marriage (J&F 399); it also provides an appropriate link between Maria's growing self-awareness and her marriage. In addition, her reference to her teachers as rebel angels seems to touch implicitly and humorously on Wolfram's ideas that non-partisan angels once guarded the Grail on earth and that it was not a vessel but a precious stone, his famous "*lapsit exillis*."[4]

The meaning of Wolfram's concocted Latin phrase, has resulted in "thousands of guesses" (Lefevere 247, n.18), of which *lapis exilis*, the stone of alchemists and philosophers, is the one that acknowledges Wolfram's familiarity with alchemy (J&F 148-152; C. G. Jung 180, n.125).[5] Davies played with alchemical concepts during the planning stage of *The Rebel Angels* (Grant 530-37) and kept the motif of the stone. Darcourt mischievously speaks of the *lapis exilis* with regard to his colleague Ozias Froats' investigation of faeces (*Rebel* 250), while the *lapis* in the form of Maria's diamond ring is there for all to see. Although valuable at first glance, it is made to look trifling (*exilis*) when Parlabane compliments Maria as being the source of the stone's "splendour" (*Rebel* 74). In a paradoxical way, his flattery reinforces her awareness of the importance of being herself and helps explain why she thinks highly of the chaotic Parlabane. Much more pertinent for Maria, though, is Wolfram's association of the Grail stone with "paradise fulfilled, both root and branch" (*Parzival* 59-60; cf. J&F 148) and the fact that this

stone "allowed itself to be carried" by Repanse de Schoye (*Parzival* 60; see J&F 71), Queen of Monsalvaesche, the Grail castle, which can be found neither through keen searching nor busy researching but only by being worthy of the Grail (*Parzival 64;* see J&F 70-73). Repanse de Schoye (or Joie) means Dispenser of Joy, "an ancient title" with sexual connotations (Walker 352). Figuratively speaking, this name suits Maria Magdalena in her relationships with Parlabane, Darcourt, Hollier, and of course Arthur Cornish.

The name of Monsalvaesche also has latent sexual connotations: as Mount of Salvation or Mount of Joy, intimating *Mons Veneris* or, in Wolfram's German-language context, *Venusberg.*[6] Given the affiliations of both Venus and Mary with the Grail (J&F 121), Maria's names and her comparison to a Canova Venus all come into play here. Unlike A.E. Waite, for instance, whose exhaustive Grail study speaks of Wolfram's work as "contaminated" by sexual symbolism (533), Davies belittles neither the physical nor the spiritual aspects of the feminine in his attention to the Grail. Eros is clearly at work in *The Rebel Angels,* while the Realm of the Mothers figures prominently in *What's Bred in the Bone.*

Maria's Grail-related qualities seem to reach their fulfillment in her marriage, were it not for her purchase-price, a Gypsy tradition, paid in the form of a necklace of Krugerrands. Davies seems to dwell on the pure gold of these large coins because, alchemically speaking, gold is interchangeable with the *lapis* (C. G. Jung 374). There is something bombastic about the necklace, something that calls into question Maria's "splendour" and sense of self, especially so on the occasion of her wedding. It is Darcourt who notices "not a falsity, but a somewhat un-Marialike quality" in her attitude toward Arthur (314); he senses again a dark side of her that is perhaps suggestive of Kundry, the enchanted Grail servant in Wagner's *Parsifal* who is under the spell of the wizard Klingsor. It is reasonable to think of Kundry because Maria perceives Hollier as "a sort of wizard" who reminds her of Merlin and Klingsor and their incapacity to love (309), and because she will soon have cause to question Arthur's capacity to do so. While the name of Klingsor tacitly introduces Wagner's opera and his literary source, Wolfram's *Parzival,* the reference to Merlin is not the first direct allusion to Arthurian legend, if one derives Darcourt's name from *D'Arthur's court.* The court of Arthur Cornish and Darcourt's at times Merlin-like presence there as a mentor provide continuity in *What's Bred in the Bone* and *The Lyre of Orpheus.* The focus in *What's Bred in the Bone* shifts to Arthur's

uncle Francis who, particularly under the influence of Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, is looking for his Grail in the kingdom of art.

Tennyson felt reluctant to write about the Grail: "It would be too much like playing with sacred things" (Hallam Tennyson I: 456-57). Yet his artistic conscience overruled his moral reservations. "The Holy Grail" came to be, he says, "one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the Reality of the Unseen" (quoted in Ricks 1661). His vision of the Grail thereby also became his defense of the poet's truth against possible charges of heresy or fraud. The question of fraud is closely linked to Francis Cornish's rise as an artist and restorer of pictures; so is the possibility of self-deception in his search for his personal myth through painting "the world of his imagination, dominated by the Grail Legend" (*Bred* 194). His knowledge of the Grail is shaped by Tennyson, his vision of it by Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Morris (194-95).[7]

Francis' personal history becomes available through a quasi-biography recorded by the Lesser Zadkiel, the Angel of Biography, and supposedly being played back by him for the Daimon Maimas, Francis' guardian spirit. Davies' nominal detachment from Francis' story has parallels in "The Holy Grail" where Tennyson has Percivale record, as it were, the adventures of his quest; his sole audience is Ambrosius, a long-time monk, who, similar to Maimas, interjects the occasional comment. Because of Francis' fascination with Tennyson's Grail, Davies'conspicuous silence about Percivale encourages a closer look for latent connections between this Arthurian knight and Francis.

As if drawn by "wandering fires" like the ones King Arthur accused his knights of following (for example, "Holy Grail" line 887), Francis enters the Grail world through books, followed by a month-long visit to his paternal home and relatives in Cornwall. In the enigmatic "sea-light" that seemed to pervade "the whole peninsula of Cornwall," he sensed the unseen world of King Arthur (*Bred* 212). The way the light "puzzled and dominated him" connects it to the Grail which, only a few pages before, had "dominated" (194, 195) his mind's eye and which now asked to be seen in "a world-light" that "seemed to defy shadows, and cast itself on every side of every object" (212). This scenario is reminiscent of Tennyson's many unusual images of light by the sea that conceal more than reveal the Grail, so that Percivale only saw it veiled "in white samite or a luminous cloud" (line 513). Francis wakes up from the spell of seeing himself as the "Grail Knight" (*Bred* 318)

only after his marriage in Cornwall to his cousin Ismay Glasson.

Ismay's name is a possible Celtic variant of Esmée or Love personified (Withycombe 165).[8] Since her last name is Cornish for glass-man (Hanks 213), one may consider her a woman of glass and obviously lacking Maria Theotoky's diamond-like qualities. She has no romantic interest in Francis' myth-guided and misplaced anima projections and is not the soul-mate whom Francis tried to find in "the real Cornwall of his imagination" (230). Being pregnant, she marries him for his money and respectability; yet the child, as Francis learns, is not his. While Ismay has, in a sense, cuckolded him, the underlying problem is his readiness to, as it were, cuckold himself by perceiving individual lives, including his own, too naively through mirrors of myth and established art. His prosaic Cornish relatives understandably regard "his enthusiasm for King Arthur as a form of American madness," something to be expected from a Canadian member of the family whom they jokingly dub "the Last of the Mohicans" (215).

Ironically, the reference to Cooper's novel conjures up a playful link to Francis' childhood in Blairlogie, a small town at the edge of Ontario woods that had led to timber wealth for a select few like Francis' grandfather James Ignatius McRory. Davies does not, however, get side-tracked into the literal forests. Of all the characters in the Cornish novels, only Darcourt actually walks in the woods (*Lyre* 297); Davies prefers to wander into the figurative woods of myth and the arts, where Francis' childhood in the isolation of Blairlogie is somewhat analogous to young Parzival's growing up in a forest, protected from the world of knights. As an eventual knight errant, Parzival/Percivale may well be seen as a medieval variant of the North American *coureur de bois.* As a modern-day Percivale seeking the Grail of spiritual and psychic wholeness, Francis is a *coureur de bois* in the psychological sense Davies singles out in a 1977 lecture: "The Canadian is the *coureur de bois* who must understand—understand, not tame—the savage land . . . of rocks and forests [as] . . . a metaphor for that equally savage land of the spirit . . . . The Canadian voyage, I truly believe, is this perilous voyage into the dark interior. . . . It is a voyage in which many are lost forever, and some wander in circles, but it is the voyage of our time" (*One Half* 285). Percivale's is a nightmarish quest through "phantasmagoric landscape" where "everything substantial is reduced to nothing by the perceiving imagination" (Peltason 474, 478). Francis' journey through artscape toward the "inner vision" of his "personal myth" (*Bred* 272), though not nightmarish,

is certainly perilous both during his enchantment with Ismay and after his impulsive rejection of the spell of Arthurian idylls: "Bugger King Arthur—and Tristan and Iseult and the Holy sodding Grail and all that Celtic pack. I made a proper jackass of myself about that stuff" (374).

He makes this confession to Ruth Nibsmith at Schloss Düsterstein in Bavaria, where she is the governess of Princess Amalie and he a restorer of old paintings under the supervision of Tancred Saraceni, an expert at both restoring and faking old masters. Düsterstein is under the control of a woman, the Gräfin von Ingelheim, with the help of Prince Max, a wine exporter. While the name *Düsterstein* ("Dark-Rock") carries connotations of melancholy and gloominess appropriate to the 1930s setting, the castle is a beacon of light in the growing darkness of male-engendered totalitarian order. Its importance as a Grail castle for Francis may be seen in its challenge to totalitarianism without and to aesthetic withdrawal within. Here he paints his autobiographical masterpiece which, after the war, becomes famous as *The Marriage at Cana*, the work of an unknown Renaissance genius whom Saraceni publicly names "The Alchemical Master" (478). Privately, he tells Francis, "You have made up your soul in that picture . . . and I do not joke when I call you The Alchemical Master" (479). The ambiguity of "made up" underlines the irony of Francis' accomplishment: the painting proves his expertise as a faker; yet, at the same time, the authenticity of Francis' soul vision seems assured in his reply, "I don't know anything about alchemy, and there are things in that picture I don't pretend to explain. I just painted what demanded to be painted" (479). Analogous to Percivale and Parzival giving their horses free rein during their quests for the Grail, Francis is letting his instinct or inner vision rather than his will guide him on his psychological journey of individuation toward his Grail; and he has, according to Ruth Nibsmith, "spiritual guts, and lots of intuition" to lead him "deep into the underworld, the dream world, what Goethe called the realm of the Mothers" (369, 370).

Similar to Kundry and Repanse de Schoye's influence on Parzival at the Grail Castle, Ruth Nibsmith's influence on Francis at Düsterstein comes at a crucial stage of self-discovery: it coincides with his first independent "restoration" of a non-existent old portrait of what is said to be Drollig Hansel, the Augsburg Fuggers' dwarf jester. Like its sequel, *The Marriage at Cana*, this painting is no fake but an interpretation in Renaissance style of François Xavier Bouchard, the dwarf tailor of Blairlogie, who had hanged himself

when he could no longer bear the town's baiting him for being different. *The Marriage at Cana* includes a variant of this dwarf as well as a veiled portrayal of Francis' severely misshapen and psychologically dwarfed older brother, who had been kept hidden in the attic of the McRory mansion.

These dwarfish figures surface at Düsterstein in conjunction with Francis' creative independence and success; in the context of the individuation process, they represent his coming to terms with the Jungian archetype of the shadow or the *düster* side of his psyche. The common human tendency to avoid unsettling encounters with the shadow is reflected fittingly here in Emerson's aphorism that "Man is the dwarf of himself" ("Nature" 53), and in Davies' complementary concept of "psychological dwarfism" (*One Half* 185). The extent of Francis' symbolic littleness, despite his introspective accomplishments inside the castle, is still evident in his naivety about the purpose of his mission for the world outside. As an observer for the British secret service, he is to count the "freight and cattle cars" that go by the castle on a railway branch line to a nearby "concentration camp" (339); and, as an assistant to Saraceni, he is to transform minor old paintings from the vast Düsterstein collection into German masterpieces to be smuggled out of the country and then sold to the Nazi government intent on repatriating national treasures. He fails to ask why he should count train cars; and, when catching on to the fraud scheme, he merely questions the risk of this, in his words, "quixotic anti-Hitler thing" (387). Knowledge of the financial reward quickly calms his worries. It is Ruth who reproaches him for his love of money, his insensitivity to "the grasp of . . . the most efficient tyranny in history" (375) and, tacitly, for his failure to ask: Whom does Francis' work at Düsterstein serve? This question, I suggest, is reminiscent of the famous one Parzival fails to raise: Whom does the Grail serve?

Initially at least, Francis' implicit answer is a largely selfish one: his work so far has meant a personal renaissance. After the war, however, his fear of being mistaken for an art faker puts an end to his old-master-style endeavors. With his expertise and inherited wealth, he now becomes a buyer and hoarder of Canadian and European works of art. His obsessive collecting stems in part, I suggest, from feelings of guilt for having found a sense of his personal Grail at, of all places, Düsterstein. Seeing his private achievement become dwarfed by his delayed consciousness of the immensity of the patriarchal wasteland under the Hitler tyranny, he has, it seems, turned his hoarding into an ambitious form of self-defense with which to guide his

adaptation to on-going demands of his shadow and renewed "entanglements engendered by the anima [archetype]" (J&F 155). Francis ends up as a miserly eccentric, spending his final years in a suite of three apartments, "a whole floor of the building . . . he owned" (*Rebel* 19), crammed full with his jungle of a collection in which he could be said to be hiding and which paradoxically both enlarges and dwarfs him as an individual.

His semi-seclusion is comparable to that of Percivale, whose withdrawal into a monastery ended a quest that had begun once his sister's ecstatic vision of the Grail had given him "the chance to retreat into a phantasmal dream world" and thus to overcome his sense of failure as a knightly law-and-order man (Ryals 158). Similarly, Francis' Grail quest advanced significantly under the influence of Ruth, whose role as a woman wise in matters of archetypal psychology and astrology touches on Percivale's sister's impact as a nun; yet, Francis remained skeptical of her wisdom: "'Ruth, you can talk more unmitigated rubbish than anybody I have ever known!'" (376). Of course, it was her "rubbish" that intensified his inner vision which led to his triptych of *The Marriage at Cana*, his new vision of the Grail, so-to-speak. While, at the beginning of his quest, Francis had deliberately shunned "anything that associated the [Grail] legend with the pre-Christian world" (194), he was now receptive to the legend's anima-driven, feminine and matriarchal subtexts.

The central panel of *The Marriage at Cana* depicts a "couple who had been married" and a "smiling woman who . . . must surely be the Mother of Jesus, for she wore a halo—the only halo to be seen in the whole composition; she was offering the bridal pair a splendid cup from which a radiance mounted above the brim" (470). Francis seems to have transmuted the influence of Ruth, his real-life Grail bearer, into what appears to be the figure of the Virgin Mary as both Grail bearer and Grail. Davies, however, does not use the name Mary in the textual references that bring out in convincing detail the painting's interpretation of the Cana wedding in the Gospel of John (2: 1-11); and the phrasing of "*must surely* be the Mother of Jesus" seems to discourage a simplistic correspondence. Saraceni's identification of the haloed figure as both "the Holy Mother" and "Mother Nature" (476) points to the possibility of unorthodox Christian and un-Christian subtexts.[9] His implicit conflation of the spiritual with the physical would link the cup bearer more naturally to the figure of Mary Magdalene than to the mother of Jesus. Moreover, similar to Wolfram, Francis has the symbolic cup of the mystical marriage administered by a woman rather than a man;

he has, as it were, rescued the Magdalene from "the powerful undertow of misogyny in Christianity" (Warner 225).While the bride in the biblical Cana story has occasionally been seen as Mary Magdalene (Scheper 125), the Gospel of John mentions only the presence of Jesus with his disciples and his mother (2: 1-2). The Gnostic Gospels, however, portray Mary Magdalene not only as Jesus' closest disciple but also as his lover (Warner 229). Francis' seeming allusion to Mary Magdalene rather than the Virgin Mary would connect his hermetic approach to the Cana wedding to the myth of the Magdalene as the living Grail and thereby also strengthen Maria Magdalena Theotoky's symbolic role as such in the Cornish novels.

While Maria's actual presence is of course only marginal In *What's Bred in the Bone*, Francis' painting his masterpiece appears to have its own Gypsy influences in Saraceni, Ruth Nibsmith and the "click-clacks" (344) of trains going to a concentration camp. Saraceni's "restoring" of Renaissance pictures parallels Maria's mother's "restoring" of violins, while his psychic insight into paintings complements her Tarot readings; above all, his name is suggestive of the Renaissance use of *Saracens* as a name for Gypsies (Fraser 95, 107). Ruth's last name is a play on her writing about astrology which provides a link to the common view of female Gypsies as diviners; in addition, the intricate nature of her work as a "nibsmith" complements the traditional skills of Gypsies, including Maria's uncle, as coppersmiths (Fraser 276). As for the trains, Francis did not appear to know at the time about their sinister purpose; but Davies, through Maria, has drawn direct attention to the fact that "the Gypsies too were victims of the Nazi madness" (*Rebel* 147).

Thus it is deeply ironic that *The Marriage at Cana* is said to have become part of Hermann Göring's "personal collection" (*Bred* 468). Like Francis, Göring seems to have had an excellent eye for masterpieces and a compulsion to hoard them (*Bred* 468), yet his collecting is indicative of possessiveness rather than individuation. Nevertheless, art connects both men to fraud. For Göring, fraud was governed by traditionally patriarchal motives of conquest and acquisition, whereas Francis encountered fraud through the archetypal figure of Fraude in Bronzino's *Allegory of Love*, "a figure from the deep world of the Mothers" (523). Fraude made him test himself against deception and self-deception in his artful quest for the Grail, the maternal realm (see J&F 113), and caused him to will his collection to the National Gallery of Canada. That is to say, he completed his quest in the role of a magnanimous guardian of the kingdom of art.

It was at the moment of his physical death that Francis entered "the Realm of the Mothers": "How lucky he was, at the last, to taste this transporting wine!" (523) This very last thought of his followed his recollection of "Thou hast kept the best wine till the last" (523), the inscription on *The Marriage at Cana*, now modified from the original "*Thou hast kept the good wine until now*" (474; Davies' emphasis). Francis' laughter at this point highlights the extravagant mirth in the situational emphasis on symbolic intoxication, as if thereby putting the "transporting wine" of his experience of death under the Dionysian motto of *in vino veritas*. Indeed, that motto's ambiguities connect this scene to his life-long exploration of the "transporting wine" of the creative process, and especially so in the faked Renaissance paintings that were shipped from Düsterstein, hidden in hogsheads of wine. This "quixotic anti-Hitler thing," as Francis called it at the time, gradually changed Francis' life into the "rum thing" which has Darcourt perplexed in *The Lyre of Orpheus*.

The provocative conclusion to Francis' Grail quest provides a spirited transition to the fermented and distilled liquids which flow so freely in the final Cornish novel that they become, especially through the presence of E. T. A. Hoffmann or ETAH, a significant aspect of Davies' Grail as a "rum thing." Hoffmann's work had been a major influence on Davies (Grant 589), and Hoffmann's fondness for the bottle had not gone unnoticed: he wrote his best stories, says Davies, when "more than half-drunk" ("A Classic at Christmas" 11).

One such story, "Arthur's Hall," provides a probable connection to the Cornish novels. It is the story of *Traugott* ("Trust-God"), a young merchant at the *Artushof* ("Arthur's Court or Hall"), the commercial exchange of the erstwhile German port of Danzig. The Hall is decorated with Arthurian motifs, both pagan and Christian; hence its name. Hence also Traugott's decision to leave his job and to heed his calling as a painter in search of his anima through the Grail-like attraction of art. The worlds of art, money, and King Arthur are comparably interconnected in the lives of Francis Cornish and his nephew Arthur who has established the Cornish Foundation to promote "the arts and humane scholarship" (3-4) and to entrust himself with the role of "a patron on a grand scale, for the fun and adventure" (8), a King Arthur of arts and letters. His personal adventure is already well under way through his marriage to Maria and his friendships

with Darcourt, Hollier, and the Welsh actor Geraint Powell, the directors of the Foundation, who hold their meetings at Arthur and Maria's "Round Table" with its "Platter of Plenty."

The loudness of the Arthurian context turns their first meeting into an unpleasant "joke" for Maria, as if she resented her implicit affinity with Queen Guinevere and her role as keeper of Darcourt and Hollier's wedding present, the Platter of Plenty filled with "dried fruits and nuts and sweets" (5). While the directors all enjoy their drinks, only Maria and Arthur help themselves from the epergne: she takes two nuts, he a chocolate which he can't swallow because he is coming down with mumps. In other words, that first meeting, from the liquor, nuts, chocolate, and mumps to the decision to support the completion and production of an opera called "Arthur of Britain, or the Magnanimous Cuckold," allows Davies to explore humorous and earthy possibilities of the Grail mystery. For these aspects of the Grail, Davies may well have drawn again on the work of E. Jung and von Franz who mention not only Dionysus' connection to the myth but also socio-historical precedents in Renaissance Germany when revelry was one of the meanings of the Grail (106, 120-21).

Given the all-encompassing adaptability of its earth- and life-affirming symbolism, the Grail, as Davies has it, demands true magnanimity. Etymologically, magnanimity derives from combining *magnus* and *animus*; and such a notion of magnanimity as high-spiritedness usually governs the Cornish Round Table in action. Yet, as an allusion to the Grail quest, the term also readily combines both *magnus* with *animus* and *magna* with *anima* into a state that is high- spirited and broad-minded as well as large-souled, suggesting the alchemical notion of the *chymical* wedding of the animus and anima predispositions and Davies' test of such a conjunction in the marriage of Maria Magdalena Theotoky and Arthur Cornish. Unlike Tennyson's Arthur who early on declared the vision of the Grail "[a] sign to maim the Order which I made" ("Holy Grail" l. 295) and a profound test of his magnanimity, Davies' Arthur has, in his genteel desire to be a patron of the arts, unwittingly become attracted to its gleam which has him open the door to the psychic underworld of his life farther than the Platter of Plenty of his marriage and his Foundation may comfortably accommodate. His marriage vows, his Foundation's resolutions and his as yet untested magnanimity find themselves challenged by the lyre of Orpheus.

The motif of the lyre brings to mind a second poem from Tennyson's

Idylls, "The Last Tournament," in which Dagonet, King Arthur's fool, compares Tristram to Orpheus and blames the King's demise in part on the knight's harp music (ll. 321-46). Tristram's Orphic as much as Dionysian praise (and practice) of "Free love—free field—we love but while we may" (l. 281) mocks the King's ideals of order. With regard to Arthur Cornish, such mockery alludes to his public dilemma of underwriting an opera about King Arthur as a cuckold as well as his private dilemma as a possibly impotent husband and cuckold. His marital crisis deserves further consideration in light of King Arthur's betrayal by Sir Pelleas disguised as the Red Knight:

> "The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat!—
> Lo! art thou not that eunuch-hearted King
> Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—
> The woman-worshipper? . . . ."
> ("The Last Tournament" ll. 443-46)

The figure of the Red Knight usually "fulfills the role of a dangerous shadow element" (J&F 56-57). Here, he also addresses dangerous anima projections in the form of worship of woman and, by extension, of the Muses. In other words, the implicit presence of Tennyson's Red Knight and Tristram in Davies' novel amplifies the risky effects of the mythic lyre after it has cast its spell over the Cornish Round Table through Hoffmann's saying: "The lyre of Orpheus opens the door to the underworld"(37).

Hoffmann's original term for the archetypal reality of the "underworld" is "Orcus" (Review 234). Davies' translation of the Roman concept clearly affirms the notion of the depth of the psychic unconscious that is part of Hoffmann's reference to the lyre of Orpheus. "Music," Hoffmann adds, "unlocks for man an unknown realm, a world which has nothing in common with the external world of the senses that surround him, a world where he may completely abandon the exact expression of thought and devote himself to the inarticulate" which, in turn, opens into "the realm of the infinite" (Review 234-35). From an archetypal perspective, it is reasonable to say that Hoffmann's concern here is with psychic wholeness or, put symbolically, the Grail. Love of music, however, did not show Hoffmann the way in solitude; it did so in conjunction with his intemperate fondness of women and wine. Thus, ironically, the lyre of Orpheus would cut short his life's work, *opera sua*, which evidently inspired Davies to make up Hoffmann's reflections from the underworld in the novel's "*ETAH IN LIMBO*" interludes. The lyre's ambiguous potential, moreover, enchants the members of

the Cornish Foundation themselves: by supporting a conclusion to Hoffmann's *opera*, as it were, they themselves become attracted to the lyre's underlying spell of "Wine, Women, Song."

Powell, who has theatrical affinities for both the Red Knight and Tristram and whose name alludes to Pwyll, the Welsh god of the underworld, plays Orpheus' lyre well, especially in its metaphoric sense of flattery (see Erasmus 100). He is, according to Darcourt, a "bamboozl[ing]" talker capable of "soaring at need into a form of rhapsodic, bardic chant" (136) and always ready to accommodate his listeners' illusions and delusions. His verbal music opens the door to the underworld of wish fulfillment and results in burlesque pursuits of the Grail, from the Foundation's Platter of Plenty to the final opera performance, freeing the questers from received visions of Arthurian legend and forcing them to be open-eared to the lyre of Orpheus in order to discipline their ideas of the Grail. Powell causes Maria, for instance, to transmute his fermenting Round Table musings about the Grail as "a union of two opposite but complementary sensibilities" into "the wine in the gold" (139), her apparent adaptation of Hollier's reference to an alleged Welsh drinking toast, "*Gwin o eur*—Wine from the gold!" (130), which, by the sound of it, allows for a sly allusion to Guinevere and thus to Maria. While accommodating the Round Table's operatic adventure and the cuckoldry of Arthur, this elixir-like wine also points back to Francis Cornish's *The Marriage at Cana* and forward to Darcourt's need of something like a water-into-wine event to further his biographical quest for Francis Cornish.

Outright alcoholic revelry comes to test the Cornish Foundation's resilience after Gunilla Dahl-Soot arrives from Sweden to supervise the Foundation's first beneficiary, whose doctoral project is to complete the musical score of Hoffmann's, at best, very fragmentary opera. Dahl-Soot's consumption of any and all alcoholic drink earns her the respect of her Canadian peers and of Hoffmann himself in his comments from Limbo, "*She knows the lyre of Orpheus when she hears it and does not fear to follow where it may lead*" (151; Davies' italics). Her threshold of in/temperance is as wickedly high as her tolerance of Philistinism is low. "I take a serious attitude toward life," she maintains; "I am not a self-deceiver" (127). By then calling herself "a great joker"(130), she becomes for Arthur "a disturber" of his Foundation; and while Maria hopes for her to be "a good disturber," Powell senses a soulmate: "'we shall get on like a house on fire'" (150). Her alcoholic stamina, wit and provocativeness combined with her Mercurial presence and

her perception of herself and the Round Table members as "'alchemists'" (148) allow Davies, as a literary alchemist, to stir up the motif of alcohol as a "rum" way of associating the Grail with individuation, the lyre of Orpheus, and Dionysian adventures in the imaginal world of the soul.[10]

Since Orphic music is likely to unsettle an individual's and society's ideas of order, forms of *ignis-aqua*, in conjunction with the Cornish Round Table's capacity to sponsor creative intemperance and *élan vital*, make it difficult for Davies to control the wandering fires of the imagination without dousing them. The raised levels of imagination and consciousness at the Round Table do not, for instance, change Maria Magdalena's moderate consumption of alcohol. They lead, however, to her readiness for sexual adventure resulting in pregnancy, during which she has the occasional glass of what she calls "milk with a good slug of rum in it" (344), a sort of ardent *Liebfrauenmilch* worthy of her name and symbolic role as Grail-bearer.

The immediate task of controlling the fires fanned by Dahl-Soot, Powell, and Maria belongs to Darcourt. For his role as advisor and occasional server of wine at a Round Table function, he is well qualified as an Anglican priest with a touch of Merlin about him. Yet his pleasure in and frequent need for a glass or two of whisky point to his own anxiety in connection with his task of creating the opera's libretto from nineteenth-century sources and with his on-going inquiry into the years still missing in his life of Francis Cornish. Leafing through an issue of *Vogue* in a wine-inspired, voyeuristic mood, he is captivated by an Old Master drawing of a girl's head for a brand of make-up that promises to bring out "the Old Master quality in you" (60). Darcourt recognizes the drawing as possibly one of Francis Cornish's. The owner of the cosmetics line turns out to be Princess Amalie, who is living with Prince Max, now a wine importer, in New York City. "The wine was very good" (188) when the couple opened to him in their apartment their private door to Francis' Old-Master period, as if in honor of *The Marriage at Cana* hanging there. The painting itself provides Darcourt with something like a *tableau-vivant* of clues for "a respectable, respectful biography" (194) to complement Francis' self-portrait in the Cana painting.

Darcourt's renewed authorial self-confidence consolidates during his Yuletide vacation at a Muskoka resort, a likely allusion to "*esplumeor*," Merlin's forest refuge in the conclusion to Robert de Boron's version of the Percivale legend (J&F 382). "It was [on his walks] in the forest that [Darcourt] fared farthest in his astonishing recognition of what he was and

how he must live" (297). Although *esplumeor,* like Wolfram's *lapsit exillis,* appears to have no clear lexical meaning, one of its etymological possibilities suggests a writer (J&F 382). This would be a fitting reference to Darcourt since he returns from his vacation in the woods, his exploration of his inner world, "with a stronger sense of who he was" (*Lyre* 301) and a firmer orientation of his always "lively but controlled imagination" (107) toward his tasks as a biographer and librettist. On another level, the fact that *esplumeor* is said to be near Percivale's home in the woods reinforces the interconnectedness of Darcourt's personal quest and the Grail quest of Francis Cornish. E. Jung and von Franz mention that not only is Merlin "behind" Percivale but, through their achievement of wholeness, each is also representative of the alchemical Mercurius (371, 109, 368). It is especially the latter's neglected feminine side that asserts itself, as it were, in both Francis' artistic alchemy and his biographer's consciousness of mythic reality: Francis connects the Grail myth to the feminine subtext of the Cana story and the "Realm of the Mothers"; Darcourt connects the foundation of Arthur and Maria's Round Table to the archetypal feminine which allows for the lyre of Orpheus to be heard.

Given Davies' attention to Orpheus, one may well wonder about Eurydice's presence in the Grail world of the Cornish novels. In her ancient function as "the underworld Goddess who received the soul of Orpheus" (Walker 287) rather than her conventional role as Orpheus' wife, Eurydice would be part of Francis Cornish's notion of "the Realm of the Mothers." In a burlesque way, she also touches Arthur Cornish through his mother-in-law, Madame Lautario; her dwelling in the basement of his apartment tower and her affiliation, by name and profession, with stringed instruments speak for themselves. Behind Eurydice is the power of the Triple Goddess or Great Mother whose many mythic versions include the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene (Walker 746, 603-05, 614). For Davies' familiarity with the Triple Goddess, one had best heed Samuel Marchbanks, his irreverent mouth-piece, whose extravagant self-perception as "the Wandering Celt" began and ended with his belief in her (*Papers* 536-37). It is thus reasonable to accept the latent presence of Eurydice in Davies' comic "farcing out"[11] of the Grail as one more "rum thing" and "tricky bit" on his fictional Platter of Plenty, the Cornish trilogy.

In these novels, Davies has engagingly re-harvested the power of the Grail myth by hearing, very much unlike T. S. Eliot,[12] thunder *with* rain in the

Idylls of the King and by heeding the well-tempered spirit of Hoffmann's Orphic and Dionysian lyre in conjunction with notions of the realm of the Great Mother. Davies' literary tokology, as it were, reflects "the merry heart" (Gibson x) of a novelist exploring matters of the heart, the spirit and the soul in *rum* ways.[13]

NOTES

1 For the Grail as a platter of plenty, see Loomis, *Grail* 58.

2 For Davies' interest in information about Mary Magdalen's allegedly bearing Jesus Christ's child in France, see *The Merry Heart* 358. Thus, although he does not say so explicitly, he may have known about *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (1982) by M. Baigent, R. Leigh and H.Lincoln, who have tried to document Jesus Christ's bloodline in France; Lincoln's early versions of their story appeared in the 1970s as part of *Chronicle*, a BBC documentary series (*Holy Blood* 24-25).

3 Davies defines *enantiodromia* as "the tendency of things to run into their opposites if they are exaggerated" (*One Half* 240; see also C. G. Jung 83, 86).

4 I do not know if Davies read *Parzival*; yet, as mentioned above, he knows the work of von Franz and E. Jung who discuss at length Wolfram's conception of the Grail.

5 Davies read with great interest the 1968 ed. of C. G. Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (Grant 531). His spirited use of the *lapis* motif harks back to that small piece of ordinary granite with extraordinary consequences in *Fifth Business* (1970).

6 For the legendary *Venusberg*'s association with love, chivalry and magic, see, for example, Wagner's Grail-related opera *Tannhäuser*.

7 Another important contributing factor seems to have been Davies' admiration for the Grail Hall of Schloss Neuschwanstein, the idyll of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, which Davies visited when planning *What's Bred in the Bone* (Grant 562). In his infatuation with the chivalric age and Wagner's operas, Ludwig had not only the castle's Grail Hall but also its Singers' Hall and other areas richly painted with scenes from Wolfram's *Parzival* (Bertram 101, 138). Neuschwanstein, moreover, is also reminiscent of Tennyson's poem "The Palace of Art," which dramatizes the notion that introspective devotion to elixirs of beauty comes at the expense of love (see introductory poem to "The Palace of Art"). Neither Ludwig's Grail enthusiasm and his love-locked-out relationship with his mother nor "The Palace of Art" is mentioned in the novel, yet they, too, appear to be among Davies' "tricky bits."

8 Davies reviewed the 1961 ed. of the *Dictionary* in the *Peterborough Examiner*.

9 Pictures and statues of Mary interested Davies; especially those that included images of the moon (Grant 476-77). For Mary's link to the moon goddess see Warner 255-69.

10 For links between Dionysus and Orpheus, see Burkert 286-29; for links between Orpheus and the Grail legend, E. Jung and v. Franz 106.

11 Musing about "the essentials of Christianity" in conjunction with marriage, Darcourt says that for "people of strongly intellectual bent these essentials need extensive *farcing out*—I use the word as cooks do, to mean the extending and amplifying of a dish with other, complementary elements—if they are to prove enough" (*Rebel* 314; emphasis added). The implicit ambiguity of "farcing out" makes it a useful phrase to describe both

Davies' attitude toward the essentials of the Grail and his humorous bent which ranges from the farcical to the sophisticated in the Cornish novels, turning them at times into something like literary comic opera.

12 I have in mind both Section V. of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and his calling Tennyson "the saddest of all English poets among the Great in Limbo" ("In Memoriam" 246); the latter is also a likely source for Davies' use of Limbo.

13 For Davies' approach to religion and psychology, see his *The Merry Heart* 126 and Grant 649.

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Working the North

Jamie Bastedo
Reaching North: A Celebration of the Sub-Arctic. Red Deer $16.95

Pete Sarsfield
Running with the Caribou. Turnstone $16.95

Joanne Tompkins
Teaching in a Cold Windy Place. U of Toronto P $50.00/$16.95

Reviewed by Sherrill Grace

Many recent publications about arctic experiences, such as Rudy Wiebe's *Playing Dead*, John Moss's *Enduring Dreams*, Victoria Jason's *Kabloona in the Yellow Kayak*, and James Houston's *Confessions of an Igloo Dweller*, are first-person narratives by individuals who went North on personal journeys in search of a challenge, an adventure, or private discoveries. These books are primarily autobiographical: whatever they may tell us about the North and indigenous peoples, they focus on the journeying/writing self; their narrative mode is meditative, philosophical, often deeply spiritual, and the central purpose is the writers' discovery (or proving) of him/herself. This is not the case with the books under review here. Bastedo, Sarsfield, and Tompkins went North to work and to live. Inevitably, their perspectives are significantly different from those who go North seeking adventure, though adventure is a major component in their experiences.

Jamie Bastedo, who lives in Yellowknife, is a well-known CBC broadcaster, host of the CBC radio's northern nature programs, a naturalist, environmental consultant, and writer on natural history and resource management. Pete Sarsfield is a medical doctor based in Kenora, northern Ontario, who practices general medicine as a community health physican across the Northwest Territories and eastern Arctic. Joanne Tompkins is a teacher who spent many years in Baffin Island communities before taking a position as school principal in one especially remote hamlet, where she spent four years bringing change to the practice of education in an Inuit community.

Reaching North is a collection of essays on aspects of northern ecology and on living and working in subarctic Canada, mostly in the vicinity of Yellowknife. Each essay began as a radio script for Bastedo's nature series for CBC North, but each was further developed into a major study of its subject. The topics range from pursuit of the Northern Lights to coping with bugs, from the mysteries of snow to the ecology of fire, and from the winter life of beaver to the hazards of snowmobiles. Each essay is packed with historical, cultural, and natural information and all are presented in a fluent, popular style that reminds me of Lyn Hancock. Although nothing here is of what I would call classic essay calibre—the quality of writing one gets from Seton, Leacock, Woodcock, or MacLennan—there is much to learn about and enjoy, and each reader will have her favorites.

The essays I found most interesting were those on snow and fire. In "Snow Saga,"

Bastedo describes the research and passion of William Pruitt, a glaciologist whose special interest is in the animals that live and thrive under the snow during long northern winters. In the process of his field work, Pruitt learned the many Inuit terms for snow and, with the language, the subtle differences among types of snow. *Pukak*, for example, is a layer of warm, loose snow that provides a thermally stable environment for many small mammals which, like the *pukak*, are essential to boreal ecology. I guess I should have known this, though I did not know the term, but I did not; I quite simply had not bothered to wonder how voles, shrews, and mice survive under the snow during the harsh winters. And yet, without these little critters, an entire ecosystem would falter. To see life from the point of view of a tundra vole, says Bastedo, read Pruitt's *Wild Harmony: The Cycle of Life in the Northern Forest*, and I, for one, will. "Footprint of Fire" is equally fascinating and informative, not least for Bastedo's perspective on First Nations' use of fire in forest management long before settler societies and remote central governments acquired vested interests in forestry. Fire, he reminds us, has always had an important and natural role to play in the wild.

My reaction to *Running with the Caribou* is more mixed. Parts of the book are truly eye-opening, but too much of it, at least for my liking, is spent on pseudo-philosophizing. Sarsfield has constructed his book (it is not a sustained narrative) from brief, dated entries that resemble diary entries composed as miniature self-contained prose essays. The dating, however, is haphazard; we are jerked from Cambridge Bay in 1983 to Grand Lake, Labrador in 1976, and interspersed with these vignettes on arctic medical visits are sojourns in Winnipeg, Vancouver, and even Hong Kong. Where Sarsfield is at his best is in his descriptions of rescue missions or emergency medical flights. In these we see what it can be like to provide medical services to remote, isolated communities, where services are few, weather can ground your plane, and the medical staff must attempt to diagnose and treat an impossible array of diseases, accidents, and life problems.

To Sarsfield's credit, he gives highest praise and full due to the remarkable nurses who carry out 90% of the health care in these arctic communities. His descriptions of their endurance, skill, and courage remind me of Betty Lee's *Lutiapik* (1975), the astonishing story of Dorothy Knight's years as a public health nurse in Lake Harbour. Living in the comfort of southern cities, where every imaginable service and specialist is available, it is almost impossible to imagine what the delivery of basic health means in an arctic setting. To find out, read the entry called "Necessary Evils" in which Sarsfield describes emergency flights into Gjoa Haven to airlift a man with serious head injuries to Yellowknife, then into Cambridge Bay in thick ice fog to see to an overdose patient. It's team work—pilots, ground crews, nurses, doctors—and it's dangerous.

Teaching in the Arctic may be less dangerous than delivering medical care by float plane, but it is no less challenging. As Joanne Tompkins points out in *Teaching in a Cold and Windy Place*, the challenges go to the very core of what we—white, urban, southern Canadians, that is—understand by the term education. Among the questions facing Tompkins were how to bring change to her small community, how to retain staff, how to train Inuit teachers, and above all how to make *education* meaningful in the Inuit context. Absolutely key to this larger endeavour was the incorporation of Inuktituk into the life of the school and into the curriculum. But achieving her goals only began there because both she and the southern-trained Qallunaaq (white) teachers could only change a dysfunctional school setting by changing themselves. What she and the others had to

learn was patience, patience with a completely different life-style and set of values and traditions. Hand in hand with learning patience went acknowledging "the universality of racism in our society" and working to overcome the conscious and unconscious racist beliefs permeating the educational system.

Despite the important contribution this book makes to educational theory and practice, Tompkins was, I think, aiming to do more. At the outset she speaks at length about the importance of story and the lessons of biography and she returns to this rhetoric of narrative at the end. Unfortunately, however, she completely loses sight of narrative through most of her account, which takes on the form of dissertation (albeit written in the first person), complete with citations and endnotes. I was disappointed by this book because it was not, finally, a story. And many opportunities for story are simply lost in the perceived need to wrap the text in the apparatus of scholarship. I want to know more about Manniq, the Inuk who was training to become a teacher but killed herself in Iqaluit. I want to know more about the individual children, the Catholic priest, and life on the land as Joanne experienced it. Above all, I want to know more about Joanne. The beginnings of *her* story lie in the anecdote she gives us about rocks and the Inuk elder who told the class that rocks are alive. Here is Tompkins' *donné* for a story that will, to stay with Henry James's dictum for a moment, *show* us what we need to see rather than preach at us about what we don't know.

Although I cannot say that I found any great writing in these three books, I did find much of value and interest. All three writers *know* the Norths about which they write; all three are intrepid, generous human beings, which, in itself, gives much food for thought. But what I find especially refreshing about these three volumes is their direct approach to everyday realities, realities that disclose enthralling mysteries—of snow, fire, ice fog, and living rocks. These are not books about northern heroes, explorers, mad men, and ghosts; they are about northern Canada and its people as seen by southern Canadians who live and work in the North and have come to love and understand it. The map of this country changed on 1 April 1999 to include a new northern territory, and if we are to understand this new territory and its place within the larger country it will be by reading books by people like Bastedo, Sarsfield, and Tompkins.

Imprints of Other People's Histories

Sandra Birdsell
The Two-Headed Calf. McClelland & Stewart $19.99

Ann Ireland
The Instructor. Doubleday $18.95

Reviewed by Suzanne James

"But how was it possible not to be imprinted by other people's histories, their secret fears and desires?" challenges the narrator of Sandra Birdsell's title short story, "The Two-Headed Calf." Having struggled both to encompass and to liberate herself from her mother's enigmatic past, the history of her even more elusive aunt, Lucille, and the legacy of her immigrant grandparents, Sylvia reluctantly concludes, "Whether we accommodated this inheritance or pushed against it as my mother had, the result was the same. I was my mother's daughter." Like the haunting image of the two-headed calf in a freak show remembered from childhood, she feels prompted "to do two things at once, flee and stay. Sleep and eat. Laugh and cry." While her grandfather showers her with a tolerant love he was unable to express to his own daughter, urg-

ing her to "just be you," her mother, so rebellious in her own youth, ironically warns Sylvia: "Just don't do it."

Familial relationships, in all their ironic multiplicity and inevitable duplicity, provide a unifying thread within the otherwise diverse collection of stories included in *The Two-Headed Calf.* Through frequent shifts in perspective, Birdsell explores the gaps in conversation and perception—the misconceptions, misappropriations and unspoken fears and needs of individuals. For example, "A Necessary Treason" shifts between the perspectives of an aging mother and her middle-aged daughter, providing not only glimpses of alternative "takes" on the same conversation and events, but also a rich and complex portrait of a relationship in transition. In "The Man From Mars" the childhood narrator struggles to establish herself in the small Manitoba town to which her parents have mysteriously transplanted her from Mexico, but more crucially, to come to terms with her father and the powerfully disturbing undercurrent of his sexuality. "Disappearances" returns to the theme of family history/ies, but with a reversal: here the aging grandparents struggle to come to terms with the behaviour of their granddaughter who is on trial for the unimaginable deed of beating an elderly couple to death.

The highly compact stories in this collection are frequently disturbing as well as richly suggestive. A fish pulled out of a culvert in the opening scene of "The Ballad of the Sargent Brothers" proves to be "opaque, flesh coloured and strangely shiny . . . one of the Morrison twins." The missing fingers of a woman's lover (ironically, also the husband of a friend) provide an eerily evocative motif in "Phantom Limbs." A politically inspired home invasion leaves the narrator of "Rooms for Rent" howling, "I don't know what it means. I don't know what anything means any more. I just don't know what it means."

As in Birdsell's previous works (two novels and two short story collections), images of water, floods and drowning provide a subtext to many of the pieces in this collection. These are complemented by a series of musical motifs and images, from the subtle background of calypso music in "The Two-Headed Calf" and Yo-Yo Ma's cello playing in "The Midnight Hour" to more overt musical motifs in "The Ballad of the Sargent Brothers" and "I Used to Play Bass in a Band."

The broad range of narrative voice and subject matter in this collection provides the most significant departure from Birdsell's previous works, and it is a pleasure to watch her diversify, skillfully exploiting a range of perspectives while continuing to locate most of her stories in the Manitoba world that she has so evocatively recreated in the past. I only wish that she had given more scope to her rich and dense title story, allowing it to develop into the novel it cries out to be.

While Birdsell's characters struggle with familial ghosts, the protagonist of Ann Ireland's second novel, *The Instructor,* attempts to liberate herself from the "imprints" of her former instructor, lover and artistic muse who has suddenly resurfaced after an absence of six years. As in her earlier work, *A Certain Mr Takahashi* (winner of the 1985 Seal First Novel Award), Ireland delves into the mind and experiences of a woman in her mid-twenties (Simone is the successful "fresh young director" of a Summer Arts festival), as she attempts to come to terms with a pivotal earlier experience. In both of her novels the dominant moment of personal history to be revisited involves an influential older man, though in *The Instructor* this male muse (a musician in the former work, now an artist) is both more effectively, and more disturbingly, developed.

The progress of the love affair between the nineteen-year-old Simone and Otto, her forty-five-year-old art instructor, is eminently predictable: he revels in her adoration and professes to teach her, while discouraging

any real innovation or independence on her part; when she ceases to be fresh and new and makes what he perceives to be emotional demands, he becomes restless and impatient; he refuses to commit himself emotionally, begins to be unfaithful to her, and finally sends her away. Yet Ireland does not allow the narrative to slip into bland sentimentalism or easy indignation. Part accusation, part nostalgic indulgence, part farewell and part exorcism, the first person address to Otto which comprises most of the novel skillfully explores the inequities and subtle shifts of power between student and teacher, mentor and disciple, passionate young woman and middle-aged lover. From the perspective of six years of separation, Simone critically replays their relationship, alternately allowing herself to be caught up in relived moments of passion "when everything was expectation and desire," and dispassionately observing Otto (then and now) as he manipulates, and performs for, her and others.

The motif of acting and directing permeates the novel, effectively developing an ironic perspective as the narrator tries on roles, casting and re-casting herself, Otto, and her father, who lurks in the background as her first instructor. In some of the most interesting sequences in the text Simone imaginatively becomes Otto, adopting his phallocentric perspective. In this scene she pictures a reunion with his wife:

> In the not-quite-dream I press my fingers effortlessly through the window, as if it were a soapy membrane, and whisk my hand into that gaping neckline to that heart-stopping, silky skin. I know exactly where to linger. Her look is at first startled and she stops her work, and in the not-quite-dream I feel my groin swell and tug against the jeans zipper. Your jeans.

The Instructor is compact and tightly written, and Ireland's touch is surer here than in her first novel, although she takes fewer formal risks. One hopes that her next work may combine the stylistic maturity she has now achieved with the formal manipulation of point of view which made *A Certain Mr Takahashi* such a striking first novel.

Refining the Isms

Rey Chow
Ethics After Idealism: Theory-Culture-Ethnicity-Reading. Indiana UP US$14.95

Keith Ansell Pearson, Benita Parry and Judith Squires, eds.
Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History. St. Martin's P US$19.95

Reviewed by Maria Noëlle Ng

Ethics After Idealism by Rey Chow is an extremely timely book. The "Idealism" in the title refers not only to Raymond Williams's definition of idealism, in *Keywords*, as the philosophical belief in the primacy of ideas and as "a way of thinking in which some higher or better state is projected," but also to the tendency in Cultural Studies "to idealize—to relate to alterity through mythification; to imagine 'the other,' no matter how prosaic or impoverished, as essentially different, good, kind, enveloped in a halo. . . ." These are wonderful fighting words, and Chow does not disappoint in her latest attack on woolly thinking and sloppy scholarship in the age of multiculturalism. The main strategy is not to make a clean break with idealism in Cultural Studies, but to "*follow* idealism's alluring traces . . . with a reading practice that is always tactical, that seeks to uncover the theoretical part of even the most specific 'cultural' study. . . ." Chow associates this risk-taking reading practice (which might very well earn the critic the sobriquet of a conservative, or the accusation of being politically incorrect) with "ethics," and to read ethically is "to supplement idealism doggedly with non-benevolent readings. . . ."

Chow supports her argument with ten loosely linked chapters, dealing with topics

such as the affinities and divergences between Gayatri Spivak and Slavoj Žižek, and the intercultural and sexual exchanges in David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*. Structurally, the ten chapters develop from the general to the specific. The first essay defines the term "Cultural Studies" and traces its "genealogical affinities" to critical theory while situating it within the contemporary context of multiculturalism. The last essay discusses the works of Hong Kong poet Leung Ping-kwan against the background of a city on the cusp of post-coloniality. Since Chow has an intimate knowledge of Chinese culture and is one of the few western cultural theorists who writes about works produced in the Chinese language, her essays on Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly*, on Zhang Yimou's *To Live*, and on Wayne Wang's film adaptation of Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* are excellent examples of comparative criticism of western and Asian culture.

These three consecutive chapters form the middle section of *Ethics After Idealism* and act as a bridge between the earlier chapters on narratives of multiculturalism, fascism, Marxism, and identity politics, and the concluding chapters on Hong Kong. The three films, the novel, and the play contribute towards what Chow calls the "discursive obsession" with ethnicity. Although Chow does not discredit criticism of Orientalism, she believes that to continue repeating the messages so clearly laid out in Said's *Orientalism* is tantamount to flogging a dead horse. Instead, Chow exhorts cultural critics to examine specificities, to question beyond the "polemical framework of 'antiorientalism'." Her theoretical engagement with three oft-discussed "ethnic" films clearly illustrates her position.

Rey Chow's writing is always stimulating, because she does not accept facile or trendy modes of criticism. By their refusal to be blindly benevolent, Chow's readings also challenge our own concepts of what familiar terms such as multiculturalism, pluralism, and relativism mean. Her attitude is perhaps most agonistic in the chapter "The Fascist Longings in Our Midst," her trenchant criticism of naive political correctness in the academic system.

In *Ethics After Idealism*, Chow acknowledges that Said's "conceptual model of Orientalism-critique" is the kind of "critical intervention with which one cannot not come to terms." This appraisal of Said's role in literary and cultural studies is further confirmed by *Cultural Readings of Imperialism: Edward Said and the Gravity of History*, a collection of essays which attempts to "expand and elucidate" his ideas. Although the essays were written by critics interested in various aspects of literary studies, political studies and philosophy, the "single strand running through the volume . . . is the recall of Said's attention to the historically variable, complex and distinct processes at play in imperial and colonial articulations."

One after-effect of Said's Orientalism-critique is the formulation of the hybrid-subject. The notion of hybridity comes under criticism in a somewhat programmatic essay by Masao Miyoshi, who outlines the strategies academics can adopt to resist control by the TNCs (that is, transnational corporations). Multiculturalism, according to Miyoshi "a tradeable commodity," has not made us more aware of the sociopolitical situations in the world, but instead has legitimized an erasure of boundaries which enables "ex-colonials" to remain both "inside and outside" by "insist[ing] on the privilege of 'hybridity' as their birthright." Although Miyoshi's condemnation of the so-called "ex-colonials" is too sweeping, his injunction that scholars should remain "scrupulously intellectual" and work towards exposing "globalism for its exclusivism" is worth heeding.

Robert Young echoes Miyoshi's criticism of hybridity, by uncovering the historical implication of the word and by reminding the reader that "this emphasis on hybridity

repeats the very way in which English culture itself was discussed according to the racialist paradigms of the nineteenth century." Among the writers Young examines are Victorian cornerstones such as Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill. Ultimately, Young sees that more attention needs to be centred on the socio-economic conditions of the minority groups, while reverting "to the racial terminology of hybridity" serves only to differentiate the minority groups from others in society.

Both Laura Chrisman's essay on H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and Benita Parry's essay on Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* follow Said's model of differentiated readings of "imperialism" and "colonialism." These two essays also benefit from what Chrisman calls the relegitimization of the "critical study of fiction and literariness" through Said's *Culture and Imperialism*. Other essays, such as Moira Ferguson's on Anna Maria Falconbridge, are less theoretically engaged with Said's writing. As usual in a volume of essays by writers with disparate interests and agenda, *Cultural Readings of Imperialism* has its shortcomings in spite of the richness of the collection. Some essays, such as Miyoshi's, are very compressed, to the point of simplification. The styles of writing are also uneven. And perhaps in their haste to produce the book, the editors have overlooked a rather glaring error: there is no chapter 11 in the volume, although the table of contents promises one.

First Novels

Méira Cook
The Blood Girls. NeWest $16.95

Joan Skogan
Moving Water. Beach Holme Publishing $16.95

Reviewed by Beverley Curran

Poet Méira Cook's first novel, *The Blood Girls*, is an unsettling account of the appropriation of bodies, lives, and private stories. A week before Easter, Donna Desjardins, a young girl in the small Manitoba town of Annex, begins to bleed from her left palm and then her right—then from her feet, diaphragm, and the crown of her head. The town and the child become the focus of national media attention, and Winnipeg journalist, Daniel Halpern, is sent to get the story on the stigmata. Halpern interviews Donna's mother, the Catholic priest, and town's doctor, collecting transcripts, making notes, and recalling stories, but finds no answers. Frustrated by the insolubility of the somatic mystery, he abandons the search, leaving his materials with the sceptical Molly Rhutabaga, in whose hands another story takes root.

Molly writes a tactile memoir, a story to recover the mental and physical ease that has been lost in the process of aging. In Molly's story, Halpern's papers reside alongside her cautious relationship with the journalist who boards with her during his investigation, and her long but uneasy alliance with Regina Arnott, a resident who everyone agrees requires "discreet supervision." Molly also shows a proprietary interest in her tenant, the town physician, who is the daughter of her former lover. Like a parasitic root "with a thirst for other people's business," she gazes from her window at her "gentle neighbour" Virginie Waters, and longs to annex that woman's private writing, her journal: "I can see that my only entrance into her writing may well be through my own. That imagination rather than knowledge will have to suffice in this instance." Like a desperate stigmatic willing her wounds, Molly's writing lays claim to a bond with the daughter of the man she loved.

The Blood Girls traces a story of loose ends, questions, and contradictions that leaves the reader uncomfortable. The novel insists throughout on the roots of memory and story, but for all the reading of Proust and writing of memoir, the diverse fragments of collected stories that Molly imagines

into her own shed little light on either the past or the local mystery. As a sceptical reader, she resists the dissolution of the miraculous in the daily, while as a writer, she is confident in the credibility of fiction.

Moving Water, Joan Skogan's first novel, drifts from coastal British Columbia to European seas and back again, recounting stories and sealore gathered in the restless searching of Rose Bachmann. Returning to the north coast of BC after 14 years of wandering, Rose lies down in the sturdy imprint of a petroglyph to recall the ebb and flow of her life, letting vague memories, precise etymologies, and artistic intention lap against each other. With bitterness, she remembers her rigid Vancouver home and the incessant prodding of her mother to organize her life, to make plans. Rose escapes the tension of family in a fishing boat, relieved by the silence of her lover and the stories of the sea. Yet the lack of intimacy she abhors in her parents is played out in the script of her marriage covenant that demands her husband, Richard, play the role she has in mind for him; when he improvises, Rose leaves, an abrupt departure characteristic of most of her personal engagements.

Rose's musings span her life on the ships and on land: her work on foreign ships as a fisheries official, trips into the prairies and to Newfoundland, and then Europe and the Middle East, where she always looks for manifestations of her namesake. The ceaseless change of tides and time is honoured over organization in the telling of this restless tale of a woman's life, but in the ebb and flow of Rose's story there is the suggestion of a malcontent who is convinced that distant pastures are always greener. Searching for herself, she stubbornly refuses to recognize affinities to her family, especially to her mother. Instead, she latches on to other stories and other cultures, the coastal Tsimshian or the seafaring Slav, imagining them closer to the Rose she seeks. Meaningless journeys grow out of each other, and seas are traded as easily as lovers. If the moving water of collocations, lists, recipes, and borrowed stories is extensive, it is also shallow. Instead of diving deeper into the pool of memory to find a version of herself she can live with, Rose's ruminations on the rock provoke a new artistic project as another way to keep moving and stay distracted. Some things never change.

The Need for New Perspectives

Dara Culhane
The Pleasure of the Crown: Anthropology, Law and First Nations. Talonbooks $24.95

F. Laurie Barron
Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF. UBC P $24.95

Reviewed by Neal McLeod

Both Barron's and Culhane's books address the relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. Culhane discusses the Delgamuukw' case through perspectives offered by law and anthropology, relying heavily on postmodern perspectives. Barron discusses the developments in the political relationships between Aboriginal people and mainstream Canadian society.

Culhane's approach stresses her own subjectivity and interpretative location. She talks of her acquisition of Indian status through marriage in 1975 because she wants "to put all my cards on the table." She also appeals to a civic responsibility to "criticize the law" as a citizen of a democratic state. Barron, however, approaches the subject from a detached, "objective" perspective. The narratives of *Walking in Indian Moccasins* are gleaned primarily from archival sources. While one might discern an underlying sympathy for the Douglas government, all sides are given attention and space within the book. The geographical area of Culhane's book, British Columbia,

has historically been very hostile to the existence to aboriginal rights, whereas Saskatchewan because of population demographics and the events of 1885, has been more willing to listen to the demands of Indian people.

One of the central problems of Culhane's book is its excessive use of rhetoric, postmodern and otherwise. While claiming that her book is not "dialogue with texts" but a "dispute with texts," she borders on *ad hominem* against Chief Justice McEachern and expert witness for the crown Dr. Sheila Robinson: "Robinson had never held an academic position, nor has she published her expert opinion reports so that they can be scrutinized by either her colleagues or the public . . . Sheila Robinson has lived her entire life, received her education, and practiced her career among and within the cultural group to which she and her employers belong." While it is important to examine the interpretative location of an individual, Culhane could have been more subtle. Her excessive attacks, on those with whom she does not agree and on the British legal system, take away from her project, which is ambitious and thoughtful.

Despite its probing and exploratory character, *The Pleasure of the Crown* at times lacks coherence and could have been more erudite in its analysis of the Delgamuukw' trial. Culhane addresses "the philosophical premises" of the Crown's case, and throughout the book she attacks the illusion of "objectivity" that the court upheld. Culhane points to the contingency of a legal system which professes to be an "expression of universal reason." Her book is essentially an exercise in hermeneutics as she tries to bring together different interpretative horizons. While she claims that "there are many truths that depend on the speaker's perspectives and interests," she never does squarely address the epistemological puzzles of her enterprise. For instance, how is understanding possible across cultures? Are the world views of Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people diametrically opposed to those of the mainstream society, and, if so, how can the sharing of lived political space be possible? Culhane needlessly repeats her critiques of the courts' dismissal of oral history as found in the *adaawak* and *kungax* (both Indigenous vehicles for collective memory), yet ironically she herself offers but a brief and dislocated description of these vehicles of Indigenous consciousness.

In some ways, the scope of *The Pleasure of the Crown* is greater than *Walking in Indian Moccasins*. The former is rich with philosophical perspective and grounded in a postmodern-hermeneutical methodology, making it interpretative as well as descriptive. The latter tends to be a very readable account; however, many of the large philosophical questions raised by the interaction between Aboriginal people and Canadian governmental structures are not addressed. While Barron does not address the foundational questions of Douglas's policies, or examine the historical roots of Indian political activism, his book is successful and effective within its limited scope.

The strength of the detached narrative style of *Walking in Indian Moccasins* is also its limitation. On the whole, the book gives the reader the necessary historical background to the interactions between aboriginal leaders such as John B. Tootoosis and the New Democratic government of Tommy Douglas. In the opening section of the book, Barron situates his analysis within the historical context of World War II and the post-war era. A central theme unifying Barron's analysis is that the policies of Douglas had more in common with the New Deal than the termination policy in the United States. Barron argues that the government of Douglas was committed to achieving social justice, and was genuinely interested in the concerns of Aboriginal people. In his assessment of this political relationship, Barron examines the liquor

and vote questions, as well as the seminal formation of the Union of Saskatchewan Indians in 1946 in Saskatoon.

His conclusion on the policies of the Douglas government arises from his meticulous work with archival materials. However, despite his note that is that "informants provided a richness unavailable in archival sources," the voice of Aboriginal people and oral history is marginal. The story of the interaction between the Douglas government and the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan is told from the perspective of the dominant society. Indeed, there is a subtle assumption throughout the book that historical agency comes from the dominant society and not from aboriginal people: "A central premise of CCF policy was the need to organize the Indians of the province into a single association through which Indian grievances and concerns could be voiced." Undoubtedly, it was important that there was one organization to facilitate the creation of a coherent policy regarding aboriginal people. While Barron is careful not to exaggerate the role of white people in the political movements, his failure to discuss the residential school system and his brief mention of the history of Indian political struggle point to the limitations of his analysis.

Both books make important contributions to the analysis of the place of Aboriginal people within a Canadian framework and undoubtedly will aid other scholars who are examining Aboriginal political realities in Canada. However, both books suffer from a lack of aboriginal perspective. While Culhane purports throughout her book to be in a superior interpretative position than others, she, like MacEachern and Robinson, fails to penetrate First Nations perspectives and world views. While decrying MacEachern and Robinson's dismissal of oral history in the Delgamuukw' case, the reality is that Culhane places little importance on the *adaawak* and *kungax* in her analysis. Thus, while criticizing the ethnocentricism of others, her account remains on the perimeter of Aboriginal world views and dwells instead in the world of the British legal system and of contemporary European postmodern thought. Her discussions of the Gitksan and Wet'sutwet'en politico-religious systems are very brief, especially given the length of the book. While she offers succinct assumptions of some of the philosophical critiques of the Crown's case, she remains within the confines of European thought, and indeed one could say that her excessive use of postmodern rhetoric throughout the book might merely be a new guise for colonialism and domination, but in friendlier clothes.

Both books address central issues which aboriginal people face today. However, as I read the books I was conscious of an absence of aboriginal voices and perspectives. While both scholars make insightful remarks, and create scholarship upon which others can build, there are noticeable holes in their narratives. As I read Barron's book, I did not hear the stories my father told me of the political struggles of my great-grandfather Abel McLeod who was a chief of the James Smith reserve and who went with John B. Tootoosis in 1932 to argue for Indian rights, motivated by the problem of the residential schools, and by a belief in the sacredness of the Treaties, against the backdrop of political resistance since 1885. I heard John B. Tootoosis speak; I heard his passion and was raised on the stories of his achievements. I did not hear that passion in Barron's book. Nor did I encounter in Culhane's analysis an aboriginal perspective on politics, or on the importance of clans and feasts. Both books are helpful, and offer much to think about. I have been enriched by reading both of them. However, I think that there is still much need to discuss the narratives of contemporary aboriginal people and to hear perspectives from the inside of aboriginal cultures, writ-

ten by aboriginal people whose lives are guided by the stories emerging from our lived realities. By putting such accounts side by side with Culhane's and Barron's, all will be enriched and benefit if they have an open mind.

Écrits franco-ontariens

Patrice Desbiens
L'homme invisible/The Invisible Man suivi de Les cascadeurs de l'amour. Prise de Parole $12.95

Patrice Desbiens
La fissure de la fiction. Prise de Parole $10.95

Christine Dumitriu van Saanen
Poèmes pour l'univers. Plaines $12.95

Reviewed by Elizabeth Lasserre

Patrice Desbiens est l'un des poètes qui a le plus oeuvré à l'affirmation d'une littérature franco-ontarienne lors de la résurgence du sentiment communautaire des années 70-80 en Ontario français. La réédition de deux de ses recueils, *L'homme invisible/The Invisible Man* (1981) et *Les cascadeurs de l'amour* (1987), offre une vue synoptique de cette poésie à la fois grinçante et drôle, rassemblant dans ses prises à partie et contradictions les éléments de la question identitaire franco-ontarienne, telle qu'elle émerge au cours de cette décennie. Le livre-emblème de Desbiens et de sa communauté culturelle reste sans conteste *L'homme invisible/The Invisible Man* qui a gardé toute sa force presque vingt ans après sa première parution. Récit polyphonique où l'anglais et le français se répondent, il met en scène l'aliénation qu'entraîne la double appartenance linguistique: l'être divisé est toujours trop français ou pas assez et n'appartient véritablement à aucune catégorie identitaire claire. De ce fait, il reste condamné à l'invisibilité et à l'errance. Cette vision pessimiste de la situation culturelle en Ontario français est tempérée par une écriture lapidaire, un humour surprenant et des situations souvent aussi cocasses que tragiques.

Le choix de faire suivre *L'homme invisible/The Invisible Man* par *Les cascadeurs de l'amour* peut s'expliquer par une similarité de forme (il s'agit dans les deux cas de récits poétiques continus) et par une continuité thématique. Car si *Les cascadeurs de l'amour* s'attache essentiellement à brosser le tableau d'un couple en échec, la question identitaire reste présente du fait que le personnage féminin est d'origine anglaise alors que l'homme est francophone: l'impossibilité de la relation amoureuse prend donc une dimension communautaire.

Le recueil vaut d'être lu, ne serait-ce que pour sa valeur d'oeuvre-jalon dans l'histoire de la littérature franco-ontarienne. D'ailleurs, il semblerait que la réédition de ces deux textes ait précisément pour but de présenter Desbiens dont la poésie connaît un renouveau d'intérêt ces dernières années. Ce n'est pas un hasard, par exemple, si une bio-bibliographie du poète vient clore le livre, offrant pour la première fois un aperçu de son parcours littéraire.

Le deuxième ouvrage de Desbiens, *La fissure de la fiction*, m'a interpellée parce qu'il aborde la thématique de l'écriture à propos de laquelle le poète s'est toujours montré réticent, tant dans ses recueils que dans ses entrevues.

Comme dans ses oeuvres précédentes, nous entrons dans un univers dominé par le sentiment d'impuissance, mais contrairement aux autres recueils, la difficulté est d'ordre littéraire. Tout le poème va porter sur la lutte entre deux genres, la poésie et le roman, qui représentent en réalité deux conceptions de la littérature: car pour Desbiens, la poésie, forme minoritaire, est également la forme des minorités. En conséquence, écrire un roman apparaît aussi intolérable que destructeur et la tentative s'achèvera sur un échec (le roman est jeté par la fenêtre) suivi d'une explosion cataclysmique mais salutaire qui ramène le

poète à sa réalité profonde. La "fissure de la fiction," cette faille grandissante qui s'ouvre dans l'immeuble du poète et qui finira par tout engouffrer—maison, voisins, livres—ne lui laissera que l'essentiel, la poésie.

Desbiens reste donc très proche des préoccupations qui ont informé sa poésie depuis ses débuts et cela peut décevoir certains lecteurs. Il arrive aussi que le choix d'images et de situations soit tiré de ses oeuvres précédentes, créant au début l'impression d'une certaine facilité stylistique. Mais le recueil prend forme et force à la lecture et la dimension plus réflexive qui imprègne ce travail marque malgré tout une évolution et une maturation certaines de la poésie de Desbiens.

On ne peut trouver d'approches poétiques plus contrastées que celles de Patrice Desbiens et de Christine Dumitriu van Saanen. Franco-ontarienne également, Dumitriu van Saanen ne s'est jamais penchée sur des questions identitaires ou culturelles. La dizaine de recueils qu'elle a publiés à ce jour témoignent au contraire d'une inspiration d'ordre universel et d'un regard à la fois scientifique et sensuel sur la beauté mystérieuse de notre monde. Les *Poèmes pour l'univers* (1993), par exemple, ouvrent une fenêtre sur la cosmologie moderne et évoquent tout aussi bien la question du temps zéro de l'univers que celle des singularités, du rayonnement fossile, des trous noirs ou du décalage vers le rouge des galaxies. Si ces thèmes peuvent sembler inconciliables avec la poésie, je ne peux que renvoyer le lecteur au recueil dont la grande finesse d'écriture et la sensibilité très raffinée qu'elle exprime ne manqueront pas de séduire.

Le recueil comporte deux parties: "L'univers est . . ." et "Nous devenons. . . ." Si toutes les deux ouvrent sur un questionnement métaphysique, elles le font par différentes voies. La première évoque plutôt les merveilles du fonctionnement de l'univers tel qu'il apparaît; la deuxième ramène le propos à la dimension humaine et, de ce fait, le passage du temps et les transformations qu'il entraîne deviennent des considérations dominantes. De plus, un changement net de forme poétique sépare les deux parties: "L'univers est . . ." se décline en vers libres alors que "Nous devenons . . ." se présente sous une forme versifiée très classique (sonnets, ballades, etc.).

Mais, parallèlement, nous avons aussi affaire à une poésie de facture moderne, sémantiquement très dense et dont la lecture se doit d'être attentive et mesurée. Le vocabulaire scientifique, en particulier, présente parfois une telle spécialisation qu'il court le risque de renvoyer le lecteur à son ignorance plutôt que de suggérer l'univers dans son infini. Les illustrations accompagnant les poèmes renforcent l'aspect "scientifique" de l'ensemble puisqu'elles ont été produites à l'aide d'un programme informatique et, je dois l'avouer, je n'ai pas été très sensible à leur effet. En conclusion, si *Poèmes pour l'univers* révèle une poésie à l'abord difficile et au propos abstrait, le lecteur en ressort cependant "béni par le reflet de ces lointains voyages," pour reprendre les mots de Dumitriu van Saanen dans son poème *Solitude.*

Recent Canadian Children's Books: The Sublime and the Ridiculous

Eugenie Fernandes
Baby Dreams. Stoddart $16.95

Margiret Ruurs and Barbara Spurll
Emma and the Coyote. Stoddart $18.95

Allen Morgan and Michael Martchenko
Matthew and the Midnight Hospital. Stoddart $7.99

Maxine Trottier and Paul Morin
Flags. Stoddart $19.95

William New and Vivian Bevis
Vanilla Gorilla. Ronsdale $12.95

Janice MacDonald and Pamela Breeze Currie
The Ghouls' Night Out. Ronsdale n.p.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Hodgson

"Sublime" and "ridiculous" of course have distinctive values in the lexicon of children's books, and this sample covers the whole definitional range. In this gathering of picture books, poetry, and chapter books by Canadian authors (and mostly Canadian illustrators), the interplay of fear and delight is admirably integrated both in those texts which are explicitly Canadian and in those with less localized forms of childhood life. A similar diversity appears in L.M. Montgomery with her loving depictions of the Maritimes and Robert Munsch with his generalized stories of childhood, so this new crop of books for younger readers is in good company.

First the picture-books, all published by Stoddart (in the series "Stoddart Kids"). *Baby Dreams* is clearly aimed at the youngest audience, a meditation on the dream-life of babies, with swirling illustrations of babies, mothers, and animals dancing and playing. The text lingers somewhere between prose and verse: "A lullaby of moonlight/ sailing on the sea/ rocks you to sleep, /Good night, Baby." Sentence-fragments, ellipses, and present participles contribute to the air of reverie, though I suspect most parents reading the book would find this style irritating. And here of course is one of the difficulties of writing books for very young children: one really must have a poet's sense of language (as in Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*) to give apparently simple texts enough complexity to keep parents from wanting to hurl (things) when the book is requested again—and again—and again. *Baby Dreams'* illustrations of that ubiquitous convention of children's literature, the anthropomorphic animal, also emphasize the sweet over the real or the comical. This strategy tends to collapse into the bizarre (a yellow rainbow paved with mother's mouths), but the comforting circles which unify the text and images may have more resonance for babies than the average adult can detect.

Other Stoddart picture-books blend animals and fantasy with more success, partly through artful combinations of the fantastical, the fearful, and the comic. *Emma and the Coyote*, by Margaret Ruurs with illustrations by Barbara Spurll, is the second *Emma* story. Emma is a chicken of distinctive character, a beguiling mix of bravado, activism, ingenuity, and cowardice, who here does battle with a persistent coyote. The narrative of Emma's adventures has great story-telling rhythm, punctuated by Emma's "tok-tok-TOK" and her refusal to fly at the sight of danger. Spurll's comically expressive, cartoon-like illustrations add energy and character to the chicken, and the anthropomorphic qualities of Emma's world are charmingly frank.

Likewise, *Matthew and the Midnight Hospital* uses humour to address childhood anxieties. In this installment in the lively series written by Allen Morgan and illustrated by Michael Martchenko (Munsch's chief illustrator), Matthew encounters his fears of injury and death . . . and doctors . . . in a wild midnight dream-ride to the hospital with a wounded squirrel. This

Matthew tale has a slightly bigger role for the mother, which in some ways takes away from Matthew's ownership of his fantasy life; the various lunatic characters from the other stories also have a somewhat less explicit presence. But the comic craziness of Matthew's therapeutic dreams is just as delightful here as in the other stories, and the imaginative misuse of medical implements in the midnight hospital (particularly in Martchenko's illustrations) is a gift to every child who's had to be there.

The last in this group of picture-books from Stoddart is of a different order. *Flags*, by Maxine Trottier, illustrated by Paul Morin, tells the story of a young girl visiting Vancouver during World War II. Her Japanese-Canadian neighbour and friend, Mr. Hiroshi, is forced to leave his house and his beloved garden full of irises, the "flags" of the title, and the narrator experiences first-hand both his loss and her own. The spare, subtle text is delicately and attentively constructed, and its expressive quietness ("their faces [were] stiff with sadness") is entirely fitting for the characters it strives to honour. Morin's luminous illustrations convey the same reflective, simple mood as the text. This is a thoughtful treatment of the difficult subject of racism and injustice; like other of Trottier's stories, *Flags* takes a small strand of a bigger issue and frames it through a child's eyes with poignant beauty. Even the subtle ironies of the title reflect Trottier's capacity to mediate between adult and childlike versions of meaning. This is certainly the best of the Stoddart books and the one most explicitly Canadian in its themes and sense of place.

From Ronsdale Press, William New's *Vanilla Gorilla* is, like *Flags*, very deliberately Canadian, as one might expect from New, a well-known scholar of Canadian literature. New's first children's book is a collection of verses, many of which he wrote for his own children, which locate themselves squarely on the Canadian map without pomposity and with a great deal of appropriate silliness:

> My narwhal is a nincompoop
> He's nosy and he nags
> He wears a neon necklace
> And he punctures paper bags
> He tries to swim to Pangnirtung
> Every New Year's Day
> But ends up down in Newfoundland
> Instead of Baffin Bay.

With their lively rhythms and energetic play language, many poems are reminiscent of the best comic children's verse, from Silverstein to Nash. The mix of metrical patterns, from haikus to the high-rolling dactyls of "Mackerel, Mockery, Pickerel, Pike," makes this a nice introduction to prosodic diversity as well. The poems have a perceptive sense of children's interests, with subjects like being caught out in your underwear, the hazards of parental ignorance, and the pleasures of travelling in your imagination. Vivian Bevis's comic watercolours capture the antic disposition of many of the poems, while their softness also suits the quieter and more meditative works ("where linnets once sang long"). My own focus group, aged 2 and 4, found this a highly satisfactory collection, and several poems have already been committed to memory. There are few higher compliments.

The second Ronsdale offering, Janice MacDonald's short chapter-book *The Ghouls' Night Out*, is equally well-crafted, a story about three ghouls who have their own cultural conflict with Halloween. The unexpected inversions (Annalise the witch who needs her ugly-sleep; Ernie the ghost who when distracted bumps into walls instead of going through them . . .) give the story real flair. The ghouls' struggles to adapt to another culture also creatively reinvent childhood's many encounters with alienation. And when Annalise, Ernie and Milton decide to "get involved," the jingoistic side of civic politics takes a few hits as

well: a story energized by its own playful subversiveness.

As good children's reading should do, many of these Canadian works include both the ridiculous and the sublime—to suit children's fascination with both. These texts cover a wide range of issues and experiences, and many don't feel the need to be explicitly "Canadian" in imagery or content, which is of course all the better. But it is certainly true that *Flags* and *Vanilla Gorilla*, which do speak to the diverse historical and cultural experiences of Canadians, have a specificity which can only enrich a child's capacity to contain multitudes.

"An Alien Soil"

Cecil Foster
Slammin' Tar. Random House $29.95

Austin Clarke
The Origin of Waves. McClelland and Stewart $19.99

Reviewed by Dorothy F. Lane

These two new novels by Caribbean-Canadian writers reflect the spatial and temporal dislocations that result from emigration. Focusing primarily on Caribbean men and their stories, they explore the unique spirit of specific places, presenting the reader with vivid images of a Canadian landscape glimpsed through the eyes of the emigrant. Both, while creating distinct voices—making specific narrative choices—are rich in their creation of characters and their language. In the end, both novels conclude by retracing connections with the past and among various experiences.

Born in Barbados in 1954, Cecil Foster came to Canada in the late 1970s. He has published longer works of fiction and non-fiction, including a sociological study, *Distorted Mirror: Canada's Racist Face* (1991), and novels such as *No Man in the House* (1991) and *Sleep On, Beloved* (1995). His study of Caribbean and African immigrants titled *A Place Called Heaven: Notes from the Black Immigrant Diaspora* (1996) won the Gordon Montador Award for Best Canadian Non-fiction on Social Issues. Both his fiction and non-fiction, then, often focus on experiences of emigration. In *Slammin' Tar*, Foster explores the lives of Caribbean migrant workers on a tobacco farm near Toronto. Through these stories, he suggests the problems of dislocation; the men are technically natives of the Caribbean, but they spend ten months of each year working on the farm. When they return "home" they are not accepted by their families or friends; in many cases, their wives have found other partners for emotional support. They are also not accepted as Canadians. Foster's novel suggests the limited choices available to these workers: "slam tar" and escape illegally; wait for immigration papers; or accept the situation.

While the main character in the novel is ostensibly Johnny Franklin, the 42-year-old veteran of migrant farm work, the focus shifts to the collective of faces and voices that are vivid throughout the work: Tommy, who becomes gravely ill; Albert, who awaits his papers; Preacher Man and Smokie; and even the rookie, Winston, who becomes romantically involved with the farmer's daughter. Foster's narrative choices allow him to relate these many experiences: his interweaving of the narrative with Bajan folklore, and especially his choice of "Brer Anansi" as narrator. The narrator's voice, in fact, comes through as vividly as those of the men on the farm. There is no illusion of objectivity in this narrative; the storyteller's personality is explicit, fascinating, and often comical. While he is initially interested primarily in telling the story he has been assigned, he soon becomes drawn to the "invisible luggage" that each man carries in his head: their hopes, fears, frustrations, and dreams. He admits his jealousy when Winston

brings along his own storyteller, and identifies himself as "a chauvinistic type of guy" when he learns that the other storyteller is female. He also feels threatened by Johnny's interest in the journal kept by his grandfather, a migrant worker on the Panama Canal in 1902. As Johnny reads passages from this journal to Tommy, the storyteller winces, complaining that "badly written diaries can sidetrack a weak and insecure leader." At one point, he even shifts his attention from the migrant workers to George Stewart, the owner of the farm; he is also not above treading on the other storyteller's territory.

In the end, connections between previous Caribbean migrations—to Panama, Cuba, England, the United States, and Africa—and this one become quite significant. It is Tommy who repeatedly comments on the similarities between Johnny's grandfather's experiences and their own. Moreover, the storyteller's previous connection with Marcus Garvey, the "Prophet" of the Pan-African movement, suggests that a story's ending can never be known. This storyteller was "demoted" for falsely reporting on Garvey's exile to Jamaica, but he returns to tell the stories of these unsung prophets on the tobacco farm.

The figure of the web that interweaves lives through places and generations re-emerges in Austin Clarke's *The Origin of Waves*. Clarke left Barbados for Canada about a generation earlier than Foster; after studying at Toronto's Trinity College, he taught at several universities in both Canada and the United States. Again, his works are fictional and non-fictional, including his autobiography, *Growing Up Stupid Under the Union Jack* (1980), and novels such as *Survivors of the Crossing* (1964) and *Amongst Thistles and Thorns* (1965). Most of his writings focus on Caribbean emigrants in Canada; *The Origin of Waves* begins at Christmas in Toronto, although the first chapter actually flashes back to the Caribbean, where Tim (the narrator) and John grew up. In the second chapter, the dislocation becomes tangible, with the sun and sand of the opening replaced by the snow of Toronto. The two, now-elderly men accidentally meet in a snowstorm and decide to get together for drinks at a local bar. The remainder of the novel relates the dialogue, along with Tim's reflections on the conversation. Both ostensibly share memories and stories about how they have spent the past forty years; both, however, also skirt around important issues such as why Tim has quit his job, who the mysterious Chinese woman was, why Tim now spends his time killing ants, and why John is visiting Toronto. John seeks to engage Tim in self-analysis regarding his sexuality, but Tim repeatedly eludes his efforts. We also learn much about their friendship and assumed roles: for example, John was an excellent swimmer while Tim could not swim; John was head chorister; in their informal reading competitions, John always seemed to win. That apparent superiority is played out in the current meeting, with John playing therapist to Tim. It is not until the end of the novel that we glimpse John's own vulnerability, and it appears that Tim can gain a new perspective on his friend through that very spatial dislocation that ruptured their childhood friendship.

While Clarke chooses a single first-person narrator for his novel, his focus on the conversation of the two men helps to build an intriguing and ambiguous narrative. There are countless repetitions and contradictions, and the voices of the two men vividly communicate their personalities: John's obscenities and appropriation of a southern American accent; Tim's avoidance; and the banter that often results. The narrative is also remarkably poetic, creating repeated images that become evocative of place and character. For instance, the black cobbler on which John accidentally steps as a boy is vividly depicted as "black against the rich pink of his heel." The recurring image of

Tim's uncle who drowned is also interwoven with the landscape of Toronto.

As in *Slammin' Tar*, the winter setting of *The Origin of Waves* heightens the contrast between Caribbean and Canadian spaces; in Foster's novel, that image of the sun of the Caribbean as enemy, and yet of the snow as an alien and alienating feature of the landscape, comes through intensely. The men see "an alien soil in so many ways, with this beastly weather topping the list." However, both also present Canada as a location from which to gain a perspective on their Caribbean lives; John, for instance, tells Tim as a boy: "The meaning of a' island . . . is that you have to swim-out from it, seeing as how it is surrounded by water . . . [And] then you would know the measurements of the place." Both novels present readers with a unique perspective on Canada and its often-unknown or forgotten stories; they also, however, explore how leaving a place helps one "measure" it. Finally, both resound with a profound sense of sadness and loss; the redemption lies in their upholding of male friendship and creative humour.

La Vie Bohème

George Galt
Scribes and Scoundrels. ECW $18.95

Carole Corbeil
In the Wings. Stoddart $29.95

Reviewed by Julie Beddoes

These novels are set in Toronto in the neighbourhood of fringe bohemia; one is populated by journalists, magazine writers and editors and the other by theatre people. Neither makes the city's streetscape integral to the literary structure of the book in the way that Aritha Van Herk so brilliantly uses the geography of Calgary in *Restlessness*; street names here are both part of the *effet du réel* and clues to the real-life identities behind the *romans à clef.*

Scribes and Scoundrels satirizes magazine publishing. Readers familiar with that business (as I am) or who pay more attention than is healthy to the scraps of gossip in book and media columns will get a few smirks from recognizing the originals for some of the characters, but its critique is too shallow for it to offer much to readers not already fascinated by its topic. Literature MA candidates looking forward to a career in the media might learn a little from the book, though it doesn't suggest just how difficult it is to make a living in that field. Its main character works for a magazine that sounds a lot like *Saturday Night.* None of the five magazines I have worked for (all but one nationally distributed) was as well staffed and had as much spare cash as this imaginary one. (The bullying control-freak publisher is a familiar figure, one sometimes found on the left as well as the right.) Few magazine editors have as much time as our hero to spend on each feature but are usually working on several at once. In fact, the whole business is scruffier and more desperate than we see here. Those who hate the central Canadian media might like the book for targeting it/them but be disappointed that its darts are so blunt. Real satire originates in strong moral or ethical convictions, even if these are only implied by the flight paths of its missiles. It's comforting that *Scribes and Scoundrels* tells us that the neoconservatives who now control a lot of the media are boorish, ugly and badly dressed, but describing buffoonery doesn't constitute an analysis of the immorality of either their politics or the ways they exercise their power. In any case, the hero's opposition to the neocons seems to be based as much on sexual jealousy as on political conviction, and he manages to arrange a pretty cushy deal for himself at the end. A tale that finds resolution in individual retreat rather than collective action simply reinforces the neocon agenda.

George Galt's book begs to be compared with George Gissing's *New Grub Street,* which looked at the lives of editors and writers in Victorian England. Gissing, however, was able to use the tragedies and corruptions of his characters to comment on the values of the society around them. Galt's hero seems to be unaware of the serious issues he might have raised. The great satire of the Canadian media is still to be written; it will be more painful reading than *Scribes and Scoundrels.* The novel is badly served by its cover. The front illustration is superb and I congratulate the art director who found it; the picture and the hyperbolic blurbs on the back, however, unfairly raise expectations. The blurbs also confirm TROC's suspicions about Toronto media types when all four turn out to be written by the buddies thanked in the author's Acknowledgements.

One of those friends is Carole Corbeil. Her novel *In the Wings* plugs into high literary culture by rewriting Hamlet and taking its epigraph from Emily Dickinson. It might as well (like its prototype and Corbeil's earlier novel *Voice-Over*) have settled for Phillip Larkin: "They fuck you up, your mum and dad." Most of its actors are involved in a production of *Hamlet,* and all have dreadful problems with lovers, parents and step-parents. In spite of this acknowledgement of its literary intertext, the novel does not consistently locate itself among the post-realist experimental work of the seventies and eighties (some published by Stoddart when it called itself General Publishing). Its characters are self-absorbed, but its narration is not self-reflexive. Realism nowadays is, like the sonnet form, a generic choice, not the only way to do things, and its conventions implicitly promise a certain kind of satisfaction. While *In the Wings* observes the conventions by being set in a real time and place—Toronto in the early nineties—it fails to fulfil other clauses in the realist contract. For example, its opening and closing pages appear to be the thoughts of the unborn daughter of two of the characters suggesting that the story's narrative present is some time in the future though nothing else in the text raises the post-realist issues of stories as unwritten, unreliable histories. Nor does it offer the intellectual and verbal excitements of the novels which best challenge realist conventions.

The most sympathetic character, the actress who plays Gertrude, has recently lost both a baby and a parent; her lover, who plays Hamlet, is chronically unfaithful, a manic depressive and finally, we presume, a suicide. She triumphs on stage at the end, and she is pregnant, a literary device that usually points to a better future. But she has suffered three bereavements and nothing in the story, certainly not its Epilogue from beyond, suggests that this new family is to be a happy one. And what does it mean when she gets flowers with the message "*Amor vincit omnia*" from a former lover who sounds like pretty bad news? Is this tragedy or comedy? The only other character for whom things might be improving at the end is a pathetic, dishonest and self-serving critic. In this context, his tentative reunion with estranged wife and son can hardly be a sign of joys to come. His presence, however, puts those who would review the book harshly in a difficult position: one does not want to be unfair like him. Honesty, then, compels me to say that this is a book with some engaging characters which fails to satisfy, not because of its pessimism, but because it offers glimpses of the page-turner it might have been if it had taken a side in the realist/post-realist debate. For example, it has the makings of an ingeniously worked-out, well-paced, multi-layered plot structure, marred by what look like abandoned themes. One of them might be a connection between the hints of corruption in Gertrude's ex-lover, a former Minister of Culture in

the Ontario NDP government, and the half page of anguish over budget cuts given to the theatre director. As well, parent-child relationships are obviously the main issue, but too often sketchily accounted for in flashbacks while presumably less important incidents are developed into big scenes.

The writing is uneven, sometimes unnecessarily detailed, sometimes elliptical, sometimes banal, sometimes feverishly dramatic. Realism promises that we will understand the motivations of its characters which, of course, dictates a certain conformity to conventional views. Here, the details that construct character are too often irritating clichés (contradictory too—"And after that there was emptiness, and a broken feeling"), sometimes incomprehensible ("All he could think of as he followed her, watching her legs in black shiny tights, was Armagnac, Armagnac"), the sort of stuff that can work in the theatre if it flies by quickly enough but which is jarring on the page. Which raises the issue of narrative voice. Who is interrupting our suspension of disbelief with comments like, "Two men facing each other on wicker chairs with floral cushions is not a pretty sight" and what does it mean? Can it be the child, unborn at the end of the story but possibly the author of the discourse? Is this a post-realist questioning of the authenticity of voice or a failure to sew in the loose ends? It may be unfair to complain about such puzzles in a novel whose main source is *Hamlet*, but the play never offers us the realist contract; we accept its mysteries in the context of its mysteries. *In the Wings* is inconsistently mysterious. It swerves into realism without irony or questioning of conventions. Its often precious prose style reduces convention to cliché. It is an early draft of a much better novel.

In the Physical World

Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, ed.
The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology. U of Georgia P $20.00

Valerie Haig-Brown
Deep Currents: Roderick and Ann Haig-Brown. Orca $32.95

Reviewed by Susie O'Brien

Giving voice to what is probably a widely shared frustration with the *aporias* of contemporary theory, Lawrence Buell has asked the question: "must literature always lead us away from the physical world, never back to it?" The spirit of that question inspires the growing field of ecocriticism, which is exemplified in the essays collected in *The Ecocriticism Reader.* Expressing what the editors suggest is a growing sense of discomfort with an academic climate that often seems to be hermetically sealed against the natural world, the collection seeks specifically to address the failure of literary criticism to respond "in any significant way," as Glen Love puts it, "to . . . our place within the natural world and our need to live heedfully within it, at peril of our very survival."

In its attempt to engage with these issues—to get back to the physical world—ecocriticism is not inspired by a rejection of the insights of literary theory: on the contrary, most of the essays in this collection are informed by the recognition that, as human culture is born out of nature, nature is inescapably a product of human culture. The struggle to make sense of the implications of that recognition—for nature and for culture—is an underlying theme of the collection, reflected in its section titles: "Ecotheory: Reflections on Nature and Culture"; "Ecological Considerations of Fiction and Drama"; and "Critical Studies of Environmental Literature." Within these sections (followed by a list of recommended texts, periodicals and pro-

fessional organizations) is a broad selection of ecocritical essays dating from the early seventies, long before the term "ecocriticism" was invented, to the mid-nineties. The collection includes such influential works as Lynn White Jr.'s 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" and a selection from Joseph Meeker's, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972)—perhaps the first major study of connections between literature and the environment—along with the writing of new scholars such as Michael Branch and Scott Slovic, whose work in ASLE (the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment) has helped to cultivate what was until recently, in Glotfelty's words, a collection of "single voice[s] howling in the wilderness" into an increasingly recognized field.

One of the strengths of the field, and of the collection, lies in its eclecticism, reflected in the interdisciplinarity of its contributors, who include scholars of literature, environmental studies, American studies, and history, as well as creative writers such as Ursula K. Le Guin and Leslie Marmon Silko. For a field that is founded on a particular vision of diversity, however, ecocriticism—at least as it is represented here—remains curiously monocultural. While the rugged wilderness preserve of the solitary male adventurer has been disturbed in interesting and productive ways by ecofeminists and Native writers such as Annette Kolodny and Paula Gunn Allen (both included in the collection), other racial and cultural minorities, working-class writers, gays and lesbians, have yet to find places in the territory of ecocriticism. While the introduction makes passing acknowledgment of these absences, the essays on the whole ignore the political boundaries by which the categories of "nature" and "environment" are not just defined, but also divided.

Perhaps the most obvious boundary describing the *The Ecocriticism Reader* is the United States border. The American location from and about which most of the essays are written is elided on occasion through an apparently seamless translation from local to global constructions of environment. Read with an awareness of these national(ist) limitations, *The Ecocriticism Reader* offers a useful introduction for scholars who seek to explore the relationship between nature(s) and culture(s) on either side of the 49th parallel.

Nature and culture—this time with a Canadian inflection—are inextricably tangled in *Deep Currents*, and in the lives of its subjects, Roderick and Ann Haig-Brown. Like a stone cast into a river, Roderick Haig-Brown's life radiated outward in a series of circles, from Campbell River, where he lived with his family and served as magistrate from 1942 to 1975, to the forests and streams of British Columbia whose protection he tirelessly advocated, to the many readers throughout North America and Europe who enjoyed his books on salmon and fishing, natural and Canadian political history. Though less well-known, Ann Haig-Brown's accomplishments as an educator and activist are equally reflective of a life inspired by a productive mix of duty and passion.

Composed largely of diaries and of family letters, *Deep Currents* offers a glimpse into the private side of this couple's very public lives. That it does not offer much more than a glimpse—a source of occasional frustration, as the reader ploughs through lists of speaking engagements, and correspondence with publishers—is perhaps symptomatic less of the author's failure to penetrate the surface of her parents' lives to their private depths as to her faithfulness to the sense in which, for both of them, private and public commitments were very much interconnected. Roddy's determination to serve in the Second World War, in spite of his evident distress at leaving his young family, as well as his later acceptance of the ever-growing burden of public

responsibilities which effectively curtailed his writing careers suggests that those commitments could not be balanced without some conflict.

That conflict is touched on only briefly, however, in a text whose tone is consistently—occasionally annoyingly—upbeat. The prevalence of such statements as "the hunting was a great success as always" is perhaps inevitable, given *Deep Currents*' reliance on letters to family—documents which cannot bear the burden of truthfulness that Haig-Brown places on them by interlacing them with her biographical account. That account is also clearly biased; however, unlike many recent biographies by children of famous parents, *Deep Currents* is not a thinly veiled psychopathology of the author with her parents cast in supporting (or unsupporting) roles: on the contrary, Valerie Haig-Brown subordinates the daughterly impulse to "write back" to one's parents to the archivist's commitment to preserve the past. In this way *Deep Currents* embodies, as it pays tribute to, the ecological value of a selfless love for the physical world.

Postcolonial Dialectics

Michael Gorra
After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie. U of Chicago P US$14.95

Asha Varadharajan
Exotic Parodies: Subjectivity in Adorno, Said, and Spivak. U of Minnesota P US$44.95/$17.95

Reviewed by Neil ten Kortenaar

Michael Gorra and Asha Varadharajan both address the postcolonial field as a whole by juxtaposing three authors: two postcolonial writers from distant corners of the world and a European who helps us to read them. Gorra assumes that because Paul Scott, V.S. Naipaul, and Salman Rushdie write fiction in English and write it well and because all have written about India, they constitute three points in a single field. Gorra's inspiration here is clearly Sara Suleri's *The Rhetoric of English India*, which also stresses the continuities between English writing about India and Indo-Anglian writing (and accords Naipaul a position therein). Asha Varadharajan uses Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said to represent postcolonial theory and argues that their insights and their failures are best appreciated when viewed through the lens of Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics.

Gorra writes that the great English novel of imperialism could only have been written "after empire," and that that title belongs to Scott's *Raj Quartet*. Scott's rivals for the title, Kipling and Forster, however opposed their moral judgements of empire, both assumed that empire was outside and above history. Only in the postcolonial moment, when it is no longer necessary to defend or attack, can Scott write about the corruption of racism that characterized empire—the imperialists claimed to be bringing order to the uncivilized, but at the same time refused to admit that Indians could ever be like them—and about the moral dilemmas occasioned by liberal ideology: because the English had an empire they had a duty to govern it well; because they had an empire they had a duty to get rid of it. In particular, Scott is the first English writer fully to understand that identity is constructed and not a racial essence. Naipaul writes about the contradictions that afflict societies after the retreat of empire and the impossibility of escaping the terms by which the colonizer has defined the colonized. Naipaul's great subject is the inevitable pain caused by the postcolonial nostalgia for an irretrievable (and non-existent) time of wholeness and by the desire for a whole and autonomous self forever deferred. Salman Rushdie shows us a way forward out of Naipaul's impasse by making of duality and contradiction a virtue: he celebrates the something new that can arise through postmodern hybridity.

Gorra is aware of the shortcomings of the dialectic he lays out: Naipaul fills all too neatly the negative role of antithesis, and Rushdie's synthesis is too easy. Gorra is careful to stress that there are ways in which Naipaul reaches beyond Rushdie, especially when it comes to emotional range. Historical metafiction such as Rushdie's maintains a tyrannical relation to its own characters and a great distance from them. Gorra's reading of postcolonial literature is sound and enabling. I do think that he does not give enough attention to Naipaul's own self-definition as first and foremost a writer. Naipaul sees writing as promoting a particular consciousness, as much of mortality and cyclical repetition as of rationality and history. The contrast with Rushdie who patterns his style on orality, who loves to play with anachronism, and who draws attention to the constructedness of texts could not be greater. For Naipaul writing is a way of being in the world; for Rushdie, writing is a way of dissolving inherited worlds and imagining new ones.

Gorra draws attention to the aesthetic qualities of both writers, but his analysis of Rushdie's gushing, non-periodic sentences is more complete than his analysis of Naipaul's periods. Rushdie's style, through repetition, wordplay, and the literalization of metaphor, draws attention to its own construction and invites analysis. For all their much-vaunted rationality and precision, Naipaul's sentences involve a deep, unstable irony, something of which there is very little in Rushdie. Rushdie's writing is filled with fantasy, energy, and celebration, but not mystery. The best thing in Gorra is his description of the painful, unresolvable irony in *A Bend in the River*, which is "half case-study of hysteria and half objective statement of the way of the world," in which it is necessary but impossible to distinguish absolutely between Salim, Naipaul, and ourselves. To see around Salim the narrator in that novel, as we struggle to do, is still to see with Salim and to feel his despair.

Asha Varadharajan wants to restore the revolutionary potential of postcolonial studies. What stands in the way of the revolution she desires is the influence of poststructuralism: the deconstruction of the patriarchal and imperialist subject has made it impossible to recover the object of oppression. The dissolution of the Cartesian subject in indeterminacy and *différance* brings the feminine and ethnic other no closer to the subjectivity they have never been allowed. To counter the baleful influence of poststucturalism, Varadharajan looks to Adorno. She claims that her choice of Adorno is a surprising one because the pessimistic cultural mandarin never paid any attention to questions of empire, but Varadharajan is being disingenuous here: Fredric Jameson has already claimed for Adorno the status of the dominant figure of the last decade of the twentieth century.

Postcolonial criticism has difficulty thinking its way out of the split between colonizer and colonized. Either the colonizer has shaped the entire world, including the colonized, and there is no outside from which to mount resistance, or the colonized remains at some level outside the world of the colonizer and is therefore unknowable. This impossible choice is what limits the revolutionary potential of Edward Said's Orientalism, which leaves no outside space for the colonized to occupy, and of Gayatri Spivak's notion that the subaltern cannot speak, which derives from poststructuralist notions of the flux of difference which cannot be seized or named or fixed. Varadharajan finds a way out of the impossible binary (and out of the quietism it implies) in Adorno's dialectical shuttling between the concept and the real, between totality and the particular, between self and other. Modernity, also called Enlightenment, or "the brutal trajectory of reason in the service of power," unifies all in the subject. Postmodernity

dissolves all into heterogeneous particularity. Rather than allow the self to subsume the other or the particular to escape all knowledge, Adorno stresses the mutual relationship between the two halves of the dialectic. The real cannot be perceived except through the concept which inevitably betrays it, but the resistance of the real is registered by the concept and allows us to hold the two in tension. Oppression is never complete; the colonized is not without resources for resistance.

The Cartesian subject may have been an illusion, but the power wielded by that subject was real and so was the pain suffered by all those othered by patriarchy and colonialism. Adorno's dialectic recognizes that there is a reality larger than the meaning invested in it by human subjects. Truth is not a matter of intersubjectivity, as poststructuralism would have it, but involves a relation between subjectivity and the world. The world may not be finally known, but it is not unknowable. Some notion of subjectivity, both individual and collective, needs to be retained if theory is to do more than meditate on its own limits (what Varadharajan accuses Spivak of doing) and to envision a future different from the present.

If this sounds abstract, it is. Varadharajan writes a kind of meta-criticism, which deploys the names of critics as metonyms for networks of ideas. Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, Althusser, and Fanon all make appearances. While we may understand how Adorno helps us read Spivak, the reader is left wondering how we should narrate the resistance to imperialism. Of this there are only hints. Instead of seeing, as Spivak does, the Rani of Sirmur as an example of the subaltern who remains irretrievable and unknowable in spite of her inscription in the historical archive, Varadharajan urges us to see in the female regent of a British client-state who threatened to commit sati an example of "resistance to epistemic violence." However, this reading itself remains unrealized.

Varadharajan, who claims the authority of a "native informant," raises valuable issues about the subjectivity of the colonized, but does not pay enough attention to issues of identity, which she declares must be relational and strategic but which she also takes for granted. Varadharajan's explicit concern in recovering the subjectivity of the female or ethnic other is with the "redemption" of the nation. Said is notoriously critical of nationalism, and Spivak has written that India is but a creation of imperialist discourse. Varadharajan is prepared to admit that India awoke to self-consciousness in the face of a common enemy, but for that very reason she reaffirms the possibility of a resistance based on the nation. In her "desire for national allegiance," she leaves Adorno behind and borrows from Ranajit Guha to argue that the nation need not belong to the elite and need not be complicitous with imperialism, but may be the vehicle of peasant resistance to imperialism. However, the argument that the colonized is best represented by the nation-state requires a much fuller and more historicized discussion of the range of identities open to the colonized than Varadharajan gives us. Adorno cannot help her here.

Muddy Histories

Michael Helm
The Projectionist. Douglas & McIntyre $18.95

Ven Begamudré
Laterna Magika. Oolichan $16.95

Reviewed by Ajay Heble

There is a moment in Michael Helm's extraordinary debut novel, *The Projectionist,* where the narrator, Toss Raymond, tells us that he will soon "dispense with any explanation that doesn't

make a picture." Says Toss: "We'll call it the lesson of mud." Toss is a high school history teacher of failing reputation in the drought-stricken Saskatchewan grain town of Mayford, and his "lesson," I think, offers a resonant point of entry into the complex workings of Helm's text. While mud, indeed, might seem an odd way of describing or accounting for the pedagogy of an educator allegedly trafficking in the realm of facts and evidence, it is in Toss's case rather an apt metaphor. For Toss, it seems, is less inclined to work with certainties and interpretive precision than he is—well, yes—to muddle about, to engage (both in class and out) in smart-alecky speculations and sharp-witted, but often genuinely profound, philosophical peregrinations, just as Helm too bespatters his own fictional canvas with images of various kinds of provocation.

As if Toss's smart-alecky retorts aren't enough to make him unpopular in his community—and, perhaps initially, unpopular with Helm's readers—the fact that he befriends a victim of the town's wrath and continually refuses to kowtow to the established order further reinforces our sense of his unlikeability. That Toss is as bright as he is razor sharp we know, yet what's remarkable is the warmth and tenderness that emerge when he speaks about those close to him, especially his aunt and his long-dead mother. Also genuinely remarkable is the maturity, sophistication, wit, and critical intelligence that is everywhere apparent in the writing of this novel—no small feat, this, especially for a first work of fiction.

Consider, for instance, Toss's recollection of a series of incidents that occurred when he was four years old. After describing how his father beat up an eight-year-old neighbour and his mother drove her car into the river and through the ice, Toss offers the following assessment: "I have come to think there is nothing to be recovered from my mother's death. It's one of those large events that we are best not to find precise terms for. It's both a secret and a mystery, and those are terms enough." Here too, it appears, we confront something akin to what Toss calls the lesson of mud: the compelling power of mystery, the impossibility of representational precision. Elsewhere, Toss tells us that "though we may work with accuracies, we can't pretend to live by them. Regret gets in the way. And loss." And, later: "Despite appearances, none of us inhabits an inevitable world." Again, Toss's insight here seems aptly to describe the fictional world of this novel, a world awash with complex agonies and distorted visions, dark imaginings and mysterious pasts that cannot be recuperated. Indeed, Toss's philosophical insights, for all their sharp-wittedness, are always thought-provoking and often touching. If we begin the novel a little unsure about how we feel about Toss, then after a completed reading we are, I think, apt to change our mind about him. *The Projectionist* is an astonishing novel. It is both a meticulously crafted tale of an intimate personal journey and an absorbing meditation on lost personal and communal histories, on home and belonging.

Questions of belonging also figure prominently in the stories collected in Ven Begamudré's collection *Laterna Magika*. Begamudré is a gifted and award-winning South Asian Canadian writer whose previous fictions have garnered much well-deserved praise. Many of these new pieces are peopled with characters who, somewhat like Toss, don't quite fit in the settings in which they find themselves: tourists, immigrants, characters struggling to negotiate the muddy histories of old-world custom and tradition in New-World cultural settings, and, in the engaging closing story, characters who find themselves showing up in the dreams of other characters. While the stories range in style, scope, and subject matter, it seems to me that Begamudré is at his best when he probes the complex relations among language, culture, place, and

identity. In the title story, for instance, the narrator describes how his father, Jiři, left Czechoslovakia for Australia, only to discover various forms of intolerance. When his father is overheard speaking Czech to a fellow labourer, he is reprimanded: "You're not in Wogland now. You can bloody well speak the King's English"—this is a sentiment that will again be voiced by other characters in different stories and settings. Even the kindly old lady who teaches the narrator's father English manifests resentment towards his ambition to fit in: when he tells her that he doesn't want to dig ditches all his life, that he wants, in fact, to be a teacher, she turns on him: "Surely you realize we didn't take you in to teach our children." These experiences are contrasted with the hope that Canada represents for Jiři.

In Canada too, however, as many of the other pieces in the collection tellingly reveal, characters face complex struggles in their attempts to achieve cultural adjustment and belonging. Indeed, Begamudré excels at exploring the racial and cultural conflicts that occur in familiar situations: the classroom, the family, and so on. While the themes and issues are often those we've seen highlighted in other multicultural Canadian fictions, what distinguishes these stories is Begamudré's sophisticated and highly-nuanced handling of these issues. "Word Games," for example, is at once a particularly powerful and compelling account of a young boy's growing recognition of the limits of language, and a tale about the painfully exclusionary logic of nationalist discourse in Canada. When, at one point, the story's narrator, a naturalized Canadian subject, stands for the Canadian national anthem, his high school English teacher snaps at him: "Canada's flag is red and white, colours decreed by George the Fifth. There's no blue for the Frogs or yellow for the Jews and Chinamen." He continues: "sit down . . . and until you see brown and yellow or black and blue on this country's flag, you stay down."

Less interesting to my mind are the stories that offer speculative accounts of future worlds. "Out of Sync," for example, tells of the interactions between humans and beings from another species. Its use of the future seems to be in keeping with some other Canadian texts published this year, where science fiction and postcolonial theory seem to merge: Ronald Wright's *A Scientific Romance* and Zainab Amadahy's *The Moons of Palmares* are the two novels that come to mind. While the trend towards future-oriented fictions with a postcolonial bent is itself perhaps worthy of note, I'm not entirely swayed here by Begamudré's efforts at the genre. More convincing, accomplished, and enduring are those stories, like "Word Games," "Laterna Magika," and "A Palimpsest," where the author's obvious storytelling gifts are so suggestively allowed to shine.

Joey's Case

Wayne Johnston

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams. Knopf Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Lawrence Mathews

The publication of this novel is the single most important event in the history of Newfoundland literature. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is narrated by Wayne Johnston's version of Joseph Smallwood, the politician who led Newfoundland into the Canadian confederation. It's a true baggy monster, whose irrelevant warts I'm going to ignore in what follows. Instead, I'll try to give some sense of the scope and daring of Johnston's project. To establish a mainland Canadian equivalent, let's try an Einsteinian thought-experiment. Suppose Margaret Laurence had written a novel narrated by John Diefenbaker, Margaret Atwood had done the same for Lester Pearson, and Michel Tremblay had written a play about

Pierre Trudeau. Combine the three and multiply the cultural significance by ten. That will give some idea of the importance that this work will have for the collective imagination of Newfoundland. For Newfoundland is culturally homogeneous enough that its best writer might consider composing something that is roughly equivalent to, well . . . an epic.

Joey Smallwood as epic hero may seem a bit of a stretch, but Johnston imagines a version of Smallwood that fits nicely with his ironically-narrowed notion of the genre. As epics go, *Colony* is deliberately low-budget in terms of the values it espouses: not lofty notions of honour and duty but rather the ability to survive and assert oneself in a world characterized by meanness of spirit at every level. Perhaps the signature epic virtue here is the knack of smiling sardonically at oneself and at the rotten hand that fate has dealt. (Imagine a Beckett novel which explores issues of class, economics, and politics.)

It's apparently not quite needless to say that Johnston's Smallwood is not an attempt to recreate the "real" Smallwood—not quite needless given Rex Murphy's gormless complaint in a *Globe and Mail* review that Johnston has deviated from the historical record and that, in any event, Smallwood was "larger-than-life" and should therefore be off-limits for properly respectful novelists. Or consider Sandra Gwyn's comment in *Maclean's* that Johnston's "Joey . . . is far too self-observant" to have been an effective politician. It's as if a contemporary Greek reviewer of Homer were to have pointed out that the "real" Achilles had no documented medical problems with his heel.

To be clear, then: Johnston uses (and embellishes) Smallwood's life experiences to create a figure who credibly incarnates, as far as one person can, the psyche of an entire nation. This aim justifies such deviations from historical fact as Smallwood's presence at the sealing disaster of 1916, his journey along the south coast to organize fishermen in the thirties, and (most obviously) his lifelong powerful bond with a journalist named Sheilagh Fielding—who seems designed to embody equally authentic qualities of Newfoundland society that even a fictionally enhanced Smallwood could not represent. Thus Smallwood is working-class, Fielding (Smallwood uses only the surname) a doctor's daughter. Smallwood is prissily abstemious; Fielding becomes an alcoholic. Most important, Fielding is mercilessly ironic while Smallwood struggles earnestly to create a persona that resists debunking. (But—and here Smallwood's mind resonates with Fielding's—he's always aware of the artificial nature of his endeavour.)

One of the highlights of the novel is a series of brief interpolated chapters under the rubric of "Fielding's Condensed *History of Newfoundland*," in which Johnston revisits various episodes from the island's past, deploying his wit to provide an historical context—Newfoundlanders having for centuries been cheated, exploited, or at best ignored by those who have power over them—that helps make sense of Smallwood's Newfoundland: "It is because of its belief in the settlers' right to self-determination that England is slow to respond to the invasion of Newfoundland by France in 1696." Aficionados of Johnston's work will recognize a characteristic touch here, and in Smallwood's own voice they will detect traces of Bobby's father from *The Story of Bobby O'Malley* and Uncle Reg from *The Divine Ryans*.

But it is what Sandra Gwyn calls the "self-observant" dimension of Smallwood's character that gives the book an intellectual texture that constitutes its major strength. It's one thing for Johnston to describe (brilliantly) the poverty of Smallwood's youth; it's another—a quantum leap in terms of artistic challenge—for Smallwood himself to be depicted as having to live with this sort of insight: ". . . the worst part of

poverty is that you believe you can no more shed it than you can your personality or character, that you see your condition as a self-defining trait that, no matter how much money you come into, you can never divest yourself of or, worst of all, hide from other people." After such knowledge, what authentic achievement is available? Interest in Smallwood's character is generated by his self-aware struggle to accomplish this impossibility, a goal which remains constant as he evolves from naive socialist to cynical lackey of a mainstream politician to the charismatic leader who transformed the political identity of his nation. But victory seems hollow to him. As he wields power, conscious of committing blunder after blunder, his deeply rooted paranoia prevents him from acting differently from the tyrants who have for so long shaped Newfoundland's history: ". . . I trusted no one, believing that the quality, the first chance they got, would try to edge me out and put one of their own in my place. " Johnston's Smallwood is, in the end, a study in failure—failure to overcome the stacked deck of personal and collective deprivation, even as his political career, unexpectedly, blossoms.

Fielding is the one character whose presence hints at the potential for Smallwood to transcend his self-absorption. But it never happens, though at one point she literally saves his life, in an episode that has strong symbolic resonance. She too fails to fulfil her early promise; she struggles with alcoholism, is crippled by tuberculosis, seems consumed by loneliness. Yet she remains for Smallwood a believable touchstone of personal integrity, someone who neither sells out nor gives up.

This discussion has, necessarily, slighted other important aspects of *Colony*. There is, for example, a galaxy of strong and interesting secondary characters. (My own favourite is Reeves, the snottily superior Brit schoolmaster whose ilk will be familiar to all readers of this review: "Not just Newfoundland, but the New World in general was a cultureless outback, he believed.") There is an impressively evoked sense of time and place in settings as disparate as New York City and the wilderness of central Newfoundland. But Smallwood's voice, always alert to the ironies of his existence, best manifests *Colony's* strengths. In a typical passage, he finds himself in 1932 promoting his own career by trying to stop a mob from attacking the legislature: "I had often envisaged a scene like this . . . 'the people' storming the Colonial Building like the Bolsheviks storming the Winter Palace. I had not imagined a revolution led by businessmen, or that I would be fighting to preserve the status quo." The ironies implicit in this sort of situation lie at the heart of Johnston's vision. Smallwood can articulate such truths to himself and then, as if single-mindedly, continue to plod in a direction that passes for forward.

Johnston has written a wised-up epic for a community that can celebrate itself sincerely with a tight, pained smile but not hymns of praise—which, to Smallwood as much as to Fielding, would be irresistible targets for mockery. For that star-crossed couple, in the end, "Forty years of love were consummated with one hug." In the world of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, that's the only kind of love story that makes sense. That it *does* make sense is a sign of Wayne Johnston's success: to create an imaginary Rock with real people clinging to it.

A Well-Managed Narrative

Rachel Manley
Drumblair: Memories of a Jamaican Childhood.
Vintage Canada $17. 95

Reviewed by Anthony Boxill

Drumblair: Memories of a Jamaican Childhood, winner of a Canadian Governor General's award for non-fiction, is a very Jamaican book. That it is so Jamaican

indicates the remarkable ability of Canada and of Canadian Literature to absorb writers and their work from what would at first seem to be disparate countries and cultures. The literary landscape of Canada has certainly been made richer and more varied by the work of writers, to name only a few, such as Austin Clarke, Dionne Brand, Cecil Foster, and Neil Bissoondath from the West Indies, and of Rohinton Mistry, Shyam Selvadurai, and M. G. Vassanji from Asia and Africa. To this list must be added the name of Rachel Manley, who now lives in Toronto.

The Manley surname is central to the political and cultural history of modern Jamaica. Rachel's grandfather, Norman Manley, a leader in Jamaica's struggle for adult suffrage and responsible government, was eventually elected the island's first Chief Minister, a title changed to Premier during the brief life of the West Indian Federation. On his defeat by his cousin Alexander Bustamante in a general election, he became the Leader of the Opposition in independent Jamaica's first Parliament. Rachel's grandmother, Edna Manley, was for many years Jamaica's outstanding artist, and her works of sculpture continue to this day to celebrate the island's history and culture. Their son Michael, the father of Rachel, became Prime Minister of Jamaica, though not in the period covered by this memoir.

Drumblair, Rachel's memoir, commences in 1949 when at the age of two and a half she arrives in Jamaica to live with her grandparents, and ends on the 2nd of September 1969 when her grandfather, Norman, dies. That she was raised by her grandparents—she was not to see her mother in England for many years, and even after her father returned home she did not live with him—connects her with the experiences of countless Jamaican children known in Canada as "barrel children," a phrase used to suggest their material if tenuous connection with their parents overseas. Though not from a poor family, Rachel shares something of the sense of upheaval of these children.

Drumblair focusses on Jamaica's first family at a crucial period in this island's history. One might therefore expect the narrative to be essentially political. This, however, is not the case. Instead we get a personal and intimate account of a family as a whole trying to cope with problems and issues which are not only of personal significance but often also of national importance. The account of the family is given in the first person by someone who, although a mature woman at the time of writing, manages to combine the objective perspective made possible by the distance of time with the more subjective and impulsive account of the small child who lives through the incidents. The portrait of Rachel that emerges is of a bright, sensitive, selfwilled, sometimes troubled child trying to come to terms with a world that is often confusing but always beguiling and fascinating. The naive accounts of political meetings at the house attended by prominent politicians from Jamaica and the other West Indian territories, meetings memorable to her because she can partake of the refreshments prepared for the important visitors, are eventually replaced by disturbed accounts of her experiences at university where fellow students, who see themselves as revolutionaries, make her embarrassed that she is not black and that her name is Manley. They belittle her grandfather's considerable political achievements as colonialist and even Uncle Tomish. She finds herself torn between her desire to identify with this fashionable group on campus and her urge to be loyal to her grandfather. The depiction of her grandfather and his family in this memoir leaves no room for doubt about where her loyalty should lie, but the anguish of the young Rachel is real just the same.

But *Drumblair* is no *bildungsroman*. The character of the narrator is important not

just for itself, but for the intimate perspective it provides on the lives of Norman and Edna Manley, and, to a lesser extent, that of Michael Manley. Also important are the sketches of numerous minor characters, the most engaging of whom are the servants—Edith, Zethilda, Batiste —vivid in her memory because of their closeness to the domestic life of the family. They provide glimpses into the attitudes and thoughts of the Jamaican folk, suggesting the personality of the electorate in which Norman and Michael Manley worked.

Rachel Manley does not hesitate to use the device of the omniscient narrator which permits her to enter the minds and emotions of her characters, though she is not writing a novel. She uses this method most often with Edna Manley, whose artistic temperament she strives to convey. For instance, she attributes the following sentiments to Edna: " No, we will not give them our food and we will not give them our leader, Mardi [Rachel's name for her grandmother] echoed in the recess of her mind."

Neither a novel nor pure autobiography or biography, the narrative is instead a memoir, a composite of these genres, and Rachel Manley uses Drumblair, the family home of the Manleys, as the setting where these various styles intersect and connect. *Drumblair* is like a quilt in which the pieces—the narrator, her father, her grandparents, the family retainers, and even the dog Wog—come together to form an intricate, elaborate, and colourful pattern. Each piece fits into its appropriate place, and no piece is expendable.

In accomplishing this effect, Rachel Manley proves herself an expert "manager of narrative," to borrow a term V. S. Naipaul uses to describe his function as a writer. The family's departure from Drumblair, the description of the razing of the house, and the account of Norman Manley's death become metaphors for the passing of an era in Jamaican history. Similarly metaphorical for the emerging Jamaica is the somewhat confused and unsure condition of the narrator at the end. These effects are all achieved in a lucid, perceptive, and sensitive language, the rhythms of which can do much to convey the essence of Jamaica to readers in Canada and elsewhere.

Reviewing the Reviewer

Philip Marchand

Ripostes: Reflections on Canadian Literature. The Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Reviewed by George L. Parker

There's always the risk that newspaper articles may not successfully survive the transition into book form because last season's literary topics now look *passé.* Philip Marchand, the book columnist for the Toronto *Star,* takes this chance by revising his pieces, removing their dates, and adding previously unpublished essays. He titles his collection *Ripostes,* with its suggestions of hasty replies, clever rebuttals, and—like the cover illustration featuring the dark, anonymous face of the swordsman—return thrusts in fencing. When he skewers the literary animal for closer scrutiny, some of the targets will squirm.

Readers will be tempted to look for a strategy behind Marchand's stringent observations on a volatile decade in Canadian literature. For one thing, he uses individual books to illuminate the broader preoccupations of the Canadian imagination. The novels of Terry Griggs and Barbara Gowdy suggest a comparison between the Catholic and Protestant presentation of angels. Similarly, he observes that Douglas Glover and Rudy Wiebe sensitively handle pre-literate First Nations communities because they are comfortable in the "electronic collage of post-literate culture." Second, he often links motifs in Canadian and foreign literatures. He sug-

gests that the relative absence of demonic father-figures in North American writers compared with the English and Europeans can be explained by the different historical traditions and social environment of the new world. He attributes the prevalence of the occult in Robin Skelton and Gwendolen MacEwan, and in the recent work of Findley and Atwood, to the influence of Jung, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Third, he may focus on a characteristic that can evolve into a flaw. Thus he sees Margaret Laurence's role as "moral conscience" as a sign of her limited mental horizons and her readers' acceptance of that role as a lack of maturity in Canadian culture. He expresses strong reservations about Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, and cites examples of its empty metaphors and its clichéd moral messages. It is, he claims, the "book most frequently begun but never finished by readers since Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*."

The weaknesses of some essays in this collection arise from their origins as short columns whose lengths are determined by space considerations rather than by the nature of the subject. The major pieces in particular suffer from this kind of brevity: the two final essays, on the male and female archetypes in Findley and Atwood, offer important insights, but each one trails off without a thorough development. I would have preferred far more discussion of the political jockeying among contemporary cultural critics in "Literature and Politics: Five Reviews."

In his own diagnosis of the literary landscape, Marchand has complained for years about the damage caused by the CanLit industry. Identifying the national literary vices of Americans (they flaunt their egos), the British (their Oxbridge glibness), and Canadians (their liberty to bore), he says

> professors of Canadian literature, book reviewers, members of the writing and publishing 'community,' all bear serious responsibility for frequently sending Canadian readers a subliminal message: You may not enjoy this prose but you should read it because it's good for you. It is a message, unfortunately, which writers as well as readers have picked up, and which partly explains the careers of such novelists as David Helwig and Rudy Wiebe.

His pages are full of these epigrammatic flippancies, and he pulls no punches in targeting those he holds responsible for encouraging and tolerating mediocrity, literary theorists who can't write English, culture bureaucrats who dispense grants, and organizations who dish out too many literary prizes. Even The Writers' Union is reprimanded for creating dissension among its members over issues of political correctness, race, and appropriation of voice. Occasionally he is disheartened by the feeling that "Canadian literature is beginning to flower in an age overwhelmingly unfavourable to great art."

Marchand quotes with approval Whitman's statement that a great literature needs a great audience. He would include in that equation critics like Northrop Frye and George Woodcock, and in "Confessions of a Book Columnist" he lays out the principles that underlie his strategies. He steers a course between the Canadian tendencies either to denigrate success or boost anything labelled "Canadian literature." He brings international literary standards to bear on Canadian books through a familiarity with European and British literature. Thus "no one who has read these classics at all widely can read, say, Margaret Laurence or Margaret Atwood or Robertson Davies, and not recognize that they are, when all is said, minor writers. By 'minor' I do not mean bad, or mediocre, or negligible." He must not be afraid to make value judgements if his reflections are to delight and stimulate his readers.

The majority of commentators on Canadian literature are academics, who for the most part prescribe what's hot, and

what's not, to a very limited audience. Sadly, we have too few men—or persons—of letters who discuss our literature with the common reader from another vantage point. Happily, Marchand brings enthusiasm and commitment to his role as such a critic.

Home Free?

Shani Mootoo
Cereus Blooms at Night. Press Gang $18.95

Constance Rooke
Writing Home: A PEN Canada Anthology. McClelland & Stewart $19.99

Reviewed by Joanne Saul

In an age of globalism, transnationalism, and mass migration, definitions of home have become more and more complex, particularly for those who cannot choose their homeland or for those whose homelands have been colonized. In "The Road Home: Meditation on a Theme," Russell Brown suggested that English-Canadian writing has been preoccupied with home—but more as a state of mind than as a physical place. Recent histories of colonization and displacement have meant that writing "home" is not always innocent and idyllic, but often a practice fraught with ambivalence and conflict, yet in a settler colony like Canada, notions of home and homelessness become central in debates over self-definition.

Home in Shani Mootoo's first novel, *Cereus Blooms at Night* (nominated for the Giller Prize), is a fictional island in the Caribbean called Lantanacamara. In this novel, Mootoo explores the intense sense of homelessness that accompanies a history of colonial dispossession and exile. The main characters in the book are descendants of Indian indentured workers who convert to Christianity with the "encouragement" of Christian missionaries from the aptly-named metropolis, the Northern Shivering Wetlands. Although the movement to and from the colonial "centre" recurs throughout much of the novel, the multiple levels of the story unfold in a small town ironically called Paradise.

The primary narrator of the novel, Tyler, a nurse at the Paradise Alms House, tells us his purpose in setting down events is to try to reach Asha Ramchandin, last heard of in Canada. As the novel progresses, the story of Mala, Asha's sister, slowly and luxuriously unfolds. Mootoo uses a self-conscious narrator, Tyler, in order to remind the reader of the pitfalls of omniscience, and of the difficulties of "fashioning a single garment out of myriad parts." However, the narrative tends to shift rather unconvincingly, so that it is not always clear from where Tyler gathers his "myriad parts."

Nevertheless, Mootoo maintains interest in the storyline through the characterization of Mala, as she grows from a happy, carefree child to an abused and withdrawn adolescent, then to a young woman in love, before finally becoming an archetypal "madwoman," alone and feared by the entire community. An outcast, Mala is a kind of earth mother, at one with the insects, birds and flowers in her garden. And it is her communion with nature that forms a symbolic ideal in the novel. Abandoning her childhood home, the scene of years of abuse at the hands of her father, Mala retreats to a world of fluid and natural identity, a world where she can speak the language of all its creatures. At the centre of Mala's garden, and of the text, is the Cereus of the title, which is symbolically linked to the main character throughout the novel. Although plain and simple and often overlooked, it blooms into a gorgeous, sensual, intensely aromatic flower, though only for a short time. Even the design of the book, with Mootoo's own cover illustration and the imprints of snails and moths and ants and beetles that sprinkle its pages, captures Mootoo's creation of a lush and sensuous and potentially liberating world.

This kind of un- or pre-domesticated world allows for a fluidity in sexuality and gender roles. With help from Mala, who, he realizes, is "not one to manacle nature," Tyler comes to embrace his femininity, so that by the end of the novel he presents himself like "a peacock in heat." Otoh, although born Ambrosia (and female), grows up male. Otoh's mother tells him, "You grow up here and you don't realize almost everybody in this place wish they could be somebody or something else? That is the story of life here in Lantanacamara." Mootoo's rendering of life in Lantanacamara explores how, for some of the characters, home can be a place of intense exile, which demands new formulations of identity, family and community.

Although this kind of interrogation of the notion of home is largely absent from PEN Canada's anthology *Writing Home*, a few of the pieces do raise questions about sovereignty issues, attacks on arts funding, downsizing, and soon Rohinton Mistry, for example, tells a fable in which a golf-obsessed leader literally hacks away at the bodies of his citizens. "The government has declared war on its people," says Timothy Findley, and Janice Kulyk Keefer is terrified of the homelessness imposed by irresponsible government.

Still, there are absences in this collection. Rooke does acknowledge in her introduction the lack of Franco-Quebec voices and the presence of only one Native voice (Louise Bernice Halfe). However, given that the idea of home invokes its opposite, it would seem important to have more voices that challenge the idea of a Canadian home. In many of the pieces, the "idea of north" with its ideal of the cottage or cabin as refuge remains a strong presence, both real and imagined. The presence of new immigrant voices in this collection might have served to shift the landscape of home away from an idealised northern environment to the urban centres. Some of Dionne Brand's writing on diaspora and homelessness, for example, would have made an appropriate addition to a collection like this.

Despite these absences, the collection does offer a range of perspectives on writing home. Some are more descriptive than others—these tend to focus on actual, physical places. Trevor Ferguson leads us on a tour of his home, Hudson, Quebec, while Marion Botsford Fraser describes her particular corner of downtown Toronto. Rosemary Sullivan's essay "The Trail that Led to Me" suggests that home is in the blood. Home as family is evoked by Judith Thompson, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Esta Spalding. Connections are made between home and death in a few of the contributions, nowhere more poignantly than in Linda Spalding's "Providence. And Independence," in which she movingly and lovingly describes her relationship with her brother and the profound sense of loss at his death. The terror of an abusive home comes through in Leon Rooke's description of his neighbour's childhood home ruled over by a drunken, violent father.

The proceeds of *Writing Home* will go to support the important work of PEN Canada. This, in itself, is one reason to buy the book. Another is Constance Rooke's impeccable editing. Yet another is the fact that all of the contributions are previously unpublished and donated by their authors for this important cause. But, perhaps the most compelling reason is the way a collection like this, in spite of its absences, continues to explore the idea of "home" in a number of its guises and manifestations.

Meetings of East and West

Bart Moore-Gilbert, ed.
Writing India 1757-1990: The Literature of British India. Manchester UP $34.95

Harish Trivedi
Colonial Transactions: English Literature and India. Manchester UP $34.95

Teresa Hubel
Whose India? The Independence Struggle in British and Indian Fiction and History. Duke UP n.p.

Reviewed by Don Randall

These three new works strive, predominantly through the study of literary texts, to sort out the cultural ramifications of British imperialism in India. What most immediately engages me about *Writing India 1757-1990: The Literature of British India* (the best of the three, in my view) is the tension between title and subtitle: concerning the last forty-two years of the title's proposed temporal range, what is the status of this "British India" to which the subtitle ascribes a particular "literature"? Certainly, seven of the nine articles position themselves squarely within a British India sphere, examining Anglo-Indian writing, both well and little known, on a variety of topics—Black Hole infamies, thug tales, and harem fascinations, among others. Even Danny Colwell's article on Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* isn't unduly strained by the title tension I have indicated. Scott, after all, applies himself to the later decades of the Raj, and Colwell to the "dissolution" of imperial identity, or more precisely, to the breaking down, in Scott's work, of that identity's sustaining binary oppositions—English/Indian, masculine/feminine, intellectual/emotional, among others. However, the final article in the collection, by Tim Parnell, focuses on Rushdie's novels and uses them as the basis for a more general evaluation of postcolonial writing's contemporary possibilities. Happily, Parnell does think that to read Rushdie is, at least in part, to read Rushdie's ambivalent and unsettling *participation* in the discursive formations of British India.

Bart Moore-Gilbert, in his excellent introduction to the volume, clearly outlines its critical project, making a case for the extended life ascribed to "the literature of British India": the collection, as a whole, aims to elucidate "the complex relation of continuity as well as conflict between colonial and postcolonial constructions of India". As Moore-Gilbert makes clear, the book responds and contributes to contemporary developments in colonial discourse analysis. But rather than gnawing at the too broad, too vague category of discourse-in-general, the articles all seek, in different ways, to discover what is distinct about *literary* discourse. Manifesting a sure and subtle grasp of recent postcolonial theory, notably that of Homi Bhabha, Moore-Gilbert articulates a cogent critique and revaluation of Saidian thinking. Literary discourse of India, he argues, evidences "a greater variation and struggle *within* imperial discourse than Said allows." The chapters that make his case particularly well are Kate Teltscher's lead text on Black Hole (of Calcutta) mythmaking, his own chapter on Kipling and Bhabha, Alison Sainsbury's contribution on the Anglo-Indian domestic novel, and Parnell's previously mentioned discussion of Rushdie. Although informative, Nigel Leask's chapter on Anglo-Indian poetry is not nearly so intellectually impressive as the work in his recent *British Romantic Writers and the East.* Christopher Lane's piece on Forster is, oddly, an alternative version of a text already published in his own 1995 monograph *The Ruling Passion.* Unfortunately, Lane's analysis of Forster reads more compellingly in that context, though the prose in the *Writing India* chapter is often clearer, more precise.

Harish Trivedi professes, right from the start, his critical commitment to "transaction," for him a "quintessentially English

word" connoting among other things "an interactive, dialogic, two-way process . . . involving complex negotiation and exchange." The first two of his book's three parts are devoted to the study of "reception" (of English literature in India) and "representation" (of India in English literature). "Reception" begins with Shakespeare and ends with T. S. Eliot. "Representation" begins with Byron, whose musings on the East are made to contrast, in a quite illuminating way, with those of Southey and Moore. Eliot and Tagore, both subjects for part one, are discussed again in part two, along with the lesser known but noteworthy Edward Thompson and finally Forster. With respect to critical models familiar to Western academic readers, Trivedi is most concerned with responding to Said and contesting his notion of the elaborate and irresistible power of Orientalist discourse. Salutarily, Trivedi finds that English literature did not make its way into Indian culture like a hot knife through butter; and that India, in English letters, is submitted at times to a quite multifaceted treatment and not merely to the strategic simplifications and stereotypes of a discourse of domination.

As regards style and critical orientation, the book is something of a curiosity for a Western academic reader. As the author anticipates, this work (which first appeared in India in 1993 then acquired an English publisher in 1995) seems "at odds with the hegemonic academic discourse of the metropolis." Its critical perspective is confidently humanist. Poststructuralism, when nodded to, is invariably ironized. The importance of feminist critique and gender studies goes unacknowledged. (Not one woman writer, I should note, is examined in this work.) "Post-colonialism" appears in circumspect quotations, as do various critical terms associated with this burgeoning field of academic endeavor. Trivedi's prose style, however, is more interestingly, and perhaps more productively, at odds with contemporary norms of Western critical practice: it is unflaggingly, often impiously, witty, and offers on occasion some quite rarified critical-reading thrills, such as the characterization of T. S. Eliot as "a latter-day fag-end Orientalist." But the most intriguing and impressive aspect of the style is the writer's apparently willful forging of a hybrid critical prose (already liminally evident in "fag-end Orientalist"), which effectively figures forth the cross-cultural *transaction* Trivedi wants to stress. Trivedi puts forward a considerable stock of Indian vocabulary, insisting on the conceptual specificities and nuances that must not be lost. Yet at the same time he favors a fair number of excessively English figures of speech. While discussing, for example, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, who translated Fitzgerald's (in)famous *Rubaiyat* into Hindi and composed, virtually at the same time, his own Omar-Khayyamesque verse sequence, Trivedi writes, "That translation Bachchan had called *Umar Khayyam ki Madhushala* as distinct from the plain *Madhushala* he had produced off his own bat." This figure of the productive bat (which recalls that Indians take to cricket as avidly as Britons take to polo) brings an appropriate stylistic touch to Trivedi's scholarship.

I should note, however, that the book's third and final part, "Reorientation: A post-colonial agenda," does not take the argument where academic readers in Britain and North America would likely want and expect it to go—that is, to a thoughtful revaluation of literary studies (prominently represented by "English") as a core formation of the contemporary humanities. The new British and Anglo-American readers of this book very probably will have some (worried or avid) awareness of the rise of "cultural studies," a scholarly formation that tends not only to reorient the reading and teaching of literature but also to ask whether the contemporary

humanities should continue to privilege the study of literary artifacts. Unlike Moore-Gilbert's collection, which makes a case for the specific value of literary studies, Trivedi's book seems to assume, too easily, that the value of literary study is beyond question or challenge. Although he is clearly aware of the Macaulayan legacy (that is, the elaboration of English literary education as a method of colonial domination), Trivedi trusts himself to literary studies, merely proposing a diversification of literatures as the solution for the problems inhering in the old model of English studies in India. He thus fails to acknowledge adequately that some abiding notions about what literature is and does, about why and how we should study it, were initially forged during the colonial English-in-India experiment.

Hubel's *Whose India?* examines political and imaginative constructions of India in British and Indian writings from the later nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Certainly, the book deserves at the outset a few appreciative nods. It strives to read literary texts in relation to historically specific, socio-political situations and, more crucially perhaps, sets out to challenge "the separate canons" that isolate Indian writing in English from modern British literature. This work also commits itself seriously to a feminist critical perspective, repeatedly teasing out the implications of gender politics for literary scholarship and offering extensive address to critical and creative works by women, both British and Indian.

The book suffers, however, from the questionable choice of "ownership" as its ordering concept, calling it the stake for which various writers and writings supposedly play. One must wonder how Hubel's will to complex, multifaceted, critical evaluation is served by her statement that "Rudyard Kipling and Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, stake their claim to the ownership of India by the very act of writing about it," and her immediately subsequent, grounding assertion "that writing can possess . . . the power to establish ownership." Hubel's analysis, considered in its entirety, manifests her awareness that the working out of a writerly relationship with India invariably will entail position-taking with respect to various issues—representation and identification, personal and public histories, the often interlinked politics of gender, class, and race. The book does deliver, I think, a more varied and interesting assembly of perspectives than its ownership-oriented introduction announces. Even so, the analysis of Kipling and Forster is not as engaging or incisive as other recent treatments of these authors, such as those that appear in *Writing India.* Hubel does provide, on the other hand, a good deal of information and some useful criticism on less amply documented participants in the debates that shape modern India's socio-political development—among others, Mary Frances Billington, Jenny Fuller, Pandita Ramabai, Swarnakumari Devi, and B. R. Ambedkar.

Designing History

Richard Plant and Ann Saddlemyer
Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s. U of Toronto P $24.95

Aviva Ravel
Canadian Mosaic II. Simon & Pierre $22.99

Reviewed by Kym Bird

Later Stages is a scholarly reconstruction of theatrical activity in Ontario that was ten years in the making and the long-anticipated companion to *Early Stages.* In what functions as a postscript to the work, Heather McCallum's "Resources for Theatre History" states, "there is a very great need for well-researched, published accounts of Canadian theatre history to satisfy and stimulate further the growing interest in this aspect of our cultural life."

The monumental contribution made by this text and the copious notes which accompany it go a long way toward doing just that. Like its predecessor, it is the first detailed overview of theatre in its period and although, as its editors admit, much remains to be done in the way of integrating into this narrative the theatre of non-English, immigrant communities—the tendency to write an all-white, all-male history is perhaps most obvious in Alexander Leggatt's chapter on "Plays and Playwrights" where women and minority contributions to the stage are relegated to a few final paragaraphs—*Later Stages* lays very significant groundwork.

In an age that is dominated by theories and theorizing, one is left with the impression that the authors of *Later Stages* would like to be regarded as pure empiricists and storytellers, eschewing interested critical approaches that result from such theories, and in their place offering facts—dates, times, places, and practioners—of theatre activity. As Richard Plant and Ann Saddlemyer see it, the pattern which draws these essays together is the image of a wheel, representing "continuity and change, constancy and fluidity" in the reconstruction of theatrical history which has finally come to embrace a past if not forgotten, at least displaced.

The story implicit in this text is of an art form dependent on European models that becomes genuinely indigenous. Robert Scott's opening chapter on "Professional Performers and Companies" traces the heyday and decline of British and American touring shows as they give way to a national, patriotic theatre during the Great War, the appropriation of live theatrical space by movies, and the demise of resident stock companies. David Gardener follows some of the same theatrical trails, but his generic focus on "variety" goes much beyond the traditional boundaries of theatrical history to include neglected and popular theatrical forms: circus, medicine and minstrel shows, vaudeville, cabaret, and pageants, many of which were performed and produced by Canadians. Ross Stuart suggests that the domestic summer theatres of the Muskokas and the Straw Hat Players were quashed by the British-inspired Shakespeare and Shaw festivals, only to be revitalized in the 60s and 70s with the founding of many non-profit theatres including the all-Canadian Blyth Festival. In partnership with wife Ann, Stuart's overview of university theatre describes an English tradition of campus theatricals transformed by the likes of Vincent Massey, Dora Mavor Moore, Robert Gill, Robertson Davies, and Herman Voaden, whose interest in homegrown plays came to define early and mid-century theatre. Martha Mann and Rex Southgate begin their chapter on "amateur theatre" with the abundance of early-century groups that used the stage to raise money. The 1920s saw the development of the Little Theatre movement, the Worker's Theatre, and its successor the Theatre of Action; the greatest stimulus to an indigenous amateur theatre of course was the Dominion Drama Festival. In Eric Binnie's discussion of theatrical design, European scenery gave way to Canadian representations such as those done for Hart House by the Group of Seven and, later, the locally inspired stage compositions of Stratford, Shaw, St. Lawrence and National Arts Centre artists, which attracted international attention. Even in the arena of theatrical criticism, Anthony Stephenson describes a discourse that was largely in the hands of transplanted Brits and Americans, prior to the rise of dedicated periodicals in the 1960s and 1970s.

If the nascent transition from colonial to post-colonial theatre implicit in this narrative omits the cultural contributions of the multicultural minority and the tensions between this minority and the dominant

"Anglo" majority, it is these histories, in various provinces, that are represented in Aviva Ravel's second collection of six contemporary plays *Canadian Mosaic II.* Appropriately, the volume opens with a play about one of Canada's most pressing colonial struggles, that between the French and the English. Marie-Lynn Hammond's *Beautiful Deeds / De Beaux Gestes* is a wonderfully musical piece whose oscillation between the monologues of two grandmothers reveals less their cultural differences than their similarities of gender, generation and geography. The optimism of Hammond's piece is offset by several other plays that express the underside of tensions between the "Anglo" and the "other": various forms of racism, cultural confusion, betrayal, illegitimacy, displacement, and economic deprivation. Mary Chan's *Mom, Dad, I'm Living With a White Girl* stages the complex of issues that adhere to the second-generation Canadian. An alternative world constructed out of western stereotypes of the Chinese as a "yellow peril" who plot to take over the planet reverses the real-world racism of Mark's traditional Chinese parents who cannot accept the influences of "white culture" or his "white" girl friend (a designation that masks her Dutch roots). Aviva Ravel's own *Gently Down the Stream* is a theatrical two-hander in which a pair of old Jewish men on a park bench recount the story of their immigration and poverty as they sit powerless to aid the dead man shot before them. The absurdity of the situation makes a severe comment indeed on a society whose lack of human compassion has alienated the men and immobilized them with fear. Ray Towle's realist play *The Golden Door* represents a family under siege during the Japanese internment. The confiscation of their property, the gestapo-style raid on their house, and subsequent deportation stages the brutal institutionalization of a long-standing anti-Japanese sentiment in Canada. Through the first-generation son we experience the tangle of emotions suffered by Canadians betrayed by their state and turned into "enemy aliens."

Like the Sun by Veralyn Warkentin and Dirk Mclean's *The House on Hermitage Road* remind us that significant aspects of Canada's past reside elsewhere. The first of these, a frame play, sees a young girl writing a school project on the Irish famine and presenting it to her grandmother, who in turn tells the anecdotal tales that corroborate the project and transport us into that desperate time when her own grandmother left Ireland, her husband and girls, to save her dying son. Mclean's radio play uses a narrator to situate the drama of his cleft childhood in 1960s Port of Spain when his mother departs to begin a more auspicious life abroad. The situations which initiate immigration are entirely different, but both plays depict the pain of separation, divided families, lost opportunities, sickness, anxiety, loneliness and death that have characterized so many, similar partings and have become the yoke of the great displacement that characterizes our multifarious pasts.

More Animal Stories

Linda Spalding
The Follow. Key Porter Books $29.95

Ralph H. Lutts
The Wild Animal Story. Temple University Press US$34.95

Reviewed by Rebecca Raglon

That humans always indulge in some form of story-telling when reflecting on their varied relationships with the rest of creation is a conclusion is hard to escape in a reading of either Linda Spalding's *The Follow* or Ralph Lutts' *The Wild Animal Story.* Further, it is a conclusion one may arrive at whether animals are being engaged at a scientific, literary, personal, or political level. The only sure thing revealed

about the variety of stories we construct about animals is that, as they are drawn inevitably into the complexities of the human society, it is almost always detrimental to their well-being.

Linda Spalding's *The Follow* contains a variety of encounters with snakes, orangutans, and people, though the author's chief intention seems to be to discredit Biruté Galdikas, a well-known Canadian primatologist. A "follow" is the term used to describe the activity of the enthusiastic "watchers"—both professional and amateur—who over the past twenty-eight years have tracked the habits and life cycles of orangutans in Borneo. By far the most famous of the orangutan watchers is Galdikas, an anthropologist who began her study of orangutans in 1971. Galdikas, like Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, was a protégée of Louis Leakey, and, like the other two women, helped develop a new kind of primate research, which emphasizes observation of wild animals in their native habitat. Spalding, an editor of the literary magazine *Brick* and author of two previous books, uses the idea of a "follow" to structure her third book. This follow, however, takes her from Toronto, to Los Angeles, to the rainforest of Borneo, and the subject of Spalding's follow is not an orangutan, but Galdikas herself.

While on first appearance this approach would seem to be a clever organizing device, it quickly becomes apparent that Galdikas is not willing to allow herself to be the subject of Spalding's follow. This refusal presents the reader with a moment of delicious irony, but does little to help resolve the question: why is Spalding so interested in Galdikas that she would make her the object of a long, expensive, and ultimately frustrating journey? Spalding's claim that "Biruté and I are both children of the magical sixties" is a tenuous link at best, but this is about all she has to offer by way of explanation.

Galdikas does meet briefly with Spalding, but then lets the association drop. Spalding, however, remains committed to structuring her book with Galdikas at its centre, and presses on, trying to find out more about Galdikas, her research, her treatment of captured orangutans and her relationships with Indonesian authorities. This persistence to get at the "true story" strongly suggests that something is amiss with Galdikas' research in Kalimantan (a province of Borneo), and that some sort of "cover up" is taking place. According to Spalding, Galdikas' treatment of captured orangutans and her attempts to return them to the wild is endangering rather than helping the remaining wild population. Finally, Spalding makes no secret of the fact that she finds Galdikas' manner imperious and her "star" status less than inspiring. (When Spalding finally catches sight of her in Borneo, Galdikas is bossy and irritable, with a boom box aboard her boat, and a Hollywood Personality sitting next to her.) Does she really have the good of the orangutans at heart, Spalding seems to be asking? Are the stories Galdikas has told all these years about "returning" captured orangutans to the wild nothing more than fabrications to keep money coming in to her organization and her professional life going? Is she mistreating her staff? These are indeed disturbing questions and, although it is distressing, it is not necessarily surprising to learn that conflicts exist between various organizations and factions which are striving to "save" wild orangutans. The fact is, however, that although Spalding hints broadly at misdeeds in this book, there is little in the way of hard evidence, and in the end it is the author's irritation with Galdikas' lack of cooperation that remains foremost in the reader's mind.

More rewarding are Spalding's musing about her own experiences in Borneo, the development of her relationship with a young Dayak woman, and descriptions of her encounters with captured orangutans.

And whatever the politics of the "orangutan wars," the most important story of what threatens the wild orangutans of Borneo comes at the end of Spalding's book, when she has lunch in Toronto with a woman who runs a mining exploration company. On the wall of this woman's office is a wonderful map. It is a satellite view of the orangutans' home in Kalimantan (which means "river of precious stones") that shows every fold and trench along the river. The mining executive enthuses—"It's a miracle what we can see from space. Technology has revolutionized the mining industry." Spalding instantly thinks of how useful such a wonderful map would be to her friends working with the orangutans in the National Park, and asks if she could get a copy, and how much one would cost.

The mining executive is embarrassed. The map cost two hundred thousand dollars. Such riches would be a dream for any conservation society, whatever their politics. This kind of disparity between money available to industry and that available to conservation efforts is the most important story Spalding has to tell in this book.

In *The Wild Animal Story,* Ralph Lutts has edited an excellent collection which should appeal to anyone interested in nature writing, particularly Canadian variations of the genre. In his introductory essay Lutts notes that the late nineteenth century witnessed the development of a new and very popular kind of animal story. Unlike older variations which include myth, fables and hunting tales, this variation employs realistic observations of animals. Combining scientifically accurate observations of animals with emotionally charged fictional stories authors such as Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton sought to free their readers from a world of "shop-worn utilities" and inculcate them with a greater sympathy for wild animals. Such stories were extremely popular in both the United States and Canada and were an important component in early nature study efforts (efforts that were forerunners of modern environmental education.) Chief among their accomplishments, as Lutts points out, is that animals are presented as thinking, feeling subjects, living for their own ends, rather than simply existing to serve human ends. That this attitude needs to be the basis of any successful conservation effort is also a point Lutts makes clear.

In addition to Lutts' very thorough introduction and excellent notes, the collection also includes a number of original animal stories by Roberts, Seton, Jack London, John Muir and Rachel Carson. A second section is devoted to the Nature Faker controversy which erupted around the whole idea of the animal story in the early twentieth century. This section includes essays by John Burroughs (who initiated the debate when he accused authors such as William Long and Seton of "faking" their stories of animals), as well as rebuttals by Roberts and Seton. This is an interesting literary debate and offers a historical perspective on questions still circulating today around the veracity of many kinds of natural history writing. (The charges that Farley Mowat was "faking" certain events in *Never Cry Wolf* is a case in point.) Lutts himself, in a concluding article, suggests that the Nature/Faker controversy sprang from the conflicting goals of the nature study movement, active at the beginning of the century. Some educators felt that nature study should improve the observational skills of their students and should be both scientific and useful. A dissenting group of educators felt that nature study should build on children's enjoyment of nature and emphasize aesthetic and inspirational values. The lack of consensus on what nature study should accomplish resulted in the eventual disintegration of the movement, but the debate clearly retains its relevance in contemporary environmental education.

Finally, a number of interpretations of the animal story are gathered in the third section of the book. These include Margaret Atwood's essay on animal victims and the scholarly work of Robert MacDonald, Tomas Dunlap, and Ronald Limbaugh, as well as Lutts' final essay which updates the animal story with a look at nature in the media.

Re Marriage

Carol Shields

Happenstance: Two Novels in One About a Marriage in Transition. Random House n.p.

Reviewed by Donna Coates

In a recent interview, Carol Shields confessed that she was "furious" when she came out of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* because "absolutely no one in that film had a job. People's work lives are written out of novels, too." Shields never writes people's work lives out of her fiction, though; in *Happenstance* (1980) and *A Fairly Conventional Woman* (1982), re-issued as the two-volume set *Happenstance: Two Novels in One About a Marriage in Transition* (1991, 1994, 1997), work is a (pre)-occupation, one which she has continued to explore in *The Stone Diaries* (1993) and *Larry's Party* (1997). The clever packaging of *Happenstance,* apparently Shields' idea—the novels open from opposite sides, each upside down to the other—reflects her belief that the cultural conditioning imposed upon women and men in the 1950s which encouraged them to value work differently was detrimental to both.

At the outset of "The Husband's Story," Jack Bowman thinks, correctly, that his life is going well: he has a solid marriage and a good job as an historian at the Great Lakes Institute in Chicago. But when his wife of twenty years goes to a convention in Philadelphia, leaving him in charge of the couple's two children for five days, it starts to fall apart: the housekeeping degenerates; he quarrels with his son; his next-door neighbour tries to kill himself; and his best friend's marriage collapses. But worst is when Jack learns that an ex-lover is publishing a book on the topic he's been half-heartedly researching for years, thereby exposing his biggest problem—complacency. In the 1950s, when jobs for men with master's degrees could be had for the asking (those were the days!), he landed this one straight out of graduate school, but the job has placed too few demands on him: if he doesn't publish, he won't perish. (Obviously, what Jack needs is a probationary, tenure-track appointment.)

Jack is ill-equipped to deal with his problems because he's been coasting, oblivious to the fact that the hiring practices and values of the workplace are changing. The institute has hired a male secretary; highly skilled and educated women have entered the workforce; and PhDs are nipping at his heels. (It also looks as if his adolescent daughter, who can fix anything, is headed for a non-traditional career as a mechanic or engineer.) Jack is further impoverished because, unlike his wife who delights in sisterhood, he has been socialized to hide his feelings and thus can't bring himself to "share his pain" with his only male friend.

Meanwhile, in "The Wife's Story," Brenda is experiencing an exhilarating series of "firsts" at the crafts convention. She gets drunk, attends a lecture by a feminist who argues that traditional quilting patterns are comprised of orgasmic and phallic symbols (Shields' dig at theorists?), receives honourable mention for her "Second Coming" quilt, and nearly succumbs to an affair with a sensitive (naturally) Canadian. At forty, Brenda's life couldn't be better, but she's paid her dues for, like Jack, she is a product of time and circumstance. In the fifties, she was encouraged to make marriage her "career," which she did with a vengeance. But by the late 1970s, realizing that marriage and motherhood have "detained her

too long in girlhood" and that history is passing her by, she falls out of love with Jack and into a deep depression. She toys with the idea of returning to work but finds typing, the only skill she possesses, boring.

By happenstance, Brenda takes up quilting, an occupation which rescues her from domestic entrapment and brings her economic reward and a modicum of prestige; she makes art, not craft. While nineties feminists may be disappointed that Brenda works at home and hasn't yet achieved financial independence, Shields, we recall, published her first novel at forty, and likely wrote it at home. It's also important to stress that Shields is not writing about working-class women (although Brenda's and Jack's origins are working-class), or suggesting that women's brains turn to mush if they don't earn money outside the home: one of Brenda's most insightful friends does volunteer work. For Shields, then, any activity which releases women from domesticity and brings them pleasure is "work."

The endings of these novels "converge" in the middle, just as Brenda and Jack "converge" at the Chicago airport. (Shields is seemingly fascinated by arrivals and departures.) Brenda's absence has made Jack's heart grow fonder, and at the end of his story, he's reaching out, gratefully, to her. But at the end of her story, Brenda is thinking in the future tense, calmly going over in her mind the familiar routines which she knows will follow. Just before sleep comes, however, Brenda shifts into the present tense and "drifts away on her own." She's reclaimed her life (her "Second Coming?"), formerly defined by Jack, by motherhood, by marriage. Her marriage is still "working," but only because she is, too.

Poetry of Faith and Loss

Margo Swiss
Crossword: A Woman's Narrative. St. Thomas Poetry Series n.p.

John Reibetanz
Near Finisterre. St. Thomas Poetry Series n.p.

Caroline Heath
Why Couldn't You See Blue? Coteau $9.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

The collections by Margo Swiss and John Reibetanz are two of the first publications in the St. Thomas Poetry Series, the fruits of readings which have been held annually in this Toronto Anglican church since 1988. According to their introductions, these poets "share a perspective on human life that emphasizes its metaphysical and philosophical dimension. Their poems witness to the religious meaning of experience." The slim volumes are nicely crafted by Coach House Printing with original cover wood-engravings by Nancy Ruth Jackson.

Crossword: A Woman's Narrative is Margo Swiss's first book. Its title indicates the intersection of theology—the crucified Word made Flesh—and female embodiment in her poetry. The epigraphs from Augustine's *Confessions* signal the theme of the transcendence of suffering and death by the "immortal and eternal" Word. Swiss (a Renaissance scholar) links a woman's experience of birth (womb) and death (tomb) with the paradox of resurrection/rebirth in allusive complexities reminiscent of the metaphysical poets.

Most of her allusions are scriptural and (as in the title poem) resonate with typological, allegorical, and tropological meanings:

> Let me go back to the tree.
> I was there years before I knew who I was.
> The tree gave me my first name;
> it called me Eve.
> I loved the tree and suffered the penalty.
> I wandered for aeons
> wondering what the world would make of me.

Later I was married to an aging man
and renamed holy by my own son.
And it all began with the tree.

Along with Eve, Mary, and Mary Magdalene, she also invokes the mythological figures of Eurydice, Cassandra, and Hecuba to universalize female suffering and spirituality. Most poignantly, these women frame the poet's own loss of a son in "After You Died":

Your presence and absence
were my sense of the same thing.
Green myself, I lost them both
as the months passed,
slowly died down like the summer wind,
turned brown like the grass
from a lovely greenness.

Swiss's intellectual poetry is at times cryptic but richly-textured with Donne-like wordplay ("Wheels") and metaphysical conceits ("Systole and Diastole"). And it achieves the emotional impact of personal faith in precise imagery and profound paradox:

Wine sipped from a vessel
revives
which when uplifted draws,
best when empty,
most full when dry:
thus drunk, my Lord, am I.

The volume ends joyfully with love poems for her husband and son, completed by two more for the Incarnate Word who "speaks so true" through her.

John Reibetanz published three poetry volumes before *Near Finisterre.* Also a professor of Renaissance literature, he quotes Shakespeare, Milton, Vaughan, and Dante in this intricate and accomplished text. His first two poems establish the complex connections between theology and the world. "The Sign Bearers" ironically contrasts a wooden angel who "keeps a stiff upper lip" and holds a banner, "O ALL YE WORKS OF THE LORD BLESS YE THE LORD," with a pathetic derelict who "sees more than the angel" and proclaims "HIT BY HARD LUCK AND CAN'T FIND WORK. PLEASE HELP ME." As if in answer to this spiritual incongruity, "Fine Things" links divine love to both creative power and human love.

The second of the five sections in this volume consists of twelve short poems which trace the seasonal cycle in months. Several of them elaborate one metaphor drawn from nature into religious significance: "March Earth" is "like the death of Lazarus"; a patch of green moss "will convert,/at the stroke of resurrection,/ the whole field to its complexion." The third section of the book is a five-part poem, "Prisoners of Conscience," a poetic reenactment of the contemporary stained glass window in Salisbury Cathedral which juxtaposes "the sacrifices of twentieth-century men and women who have suffered torture and death for their convictions" with "the sacrifice of a first-century prisoner of conscience, Jesus of Nazareth": "Because they gave the world/ For nothing we can hold,/ Theirs is the beauty of the moon." The fourth section collects four long poems that demonstrate Reibetanz's ability to highlight the holy in the daily. "The Ark" images a drowned church as a complex symbol of the *felix culpa.* In "One Frame" the glimpse of a father and child evokes a Dantean parallel to "the thread of all things." "Praise at Lindisfarne" portrays the sacred illuminations of the monastic scribe in riotous bird imagery.

The final section, which gives its title to the volume, represents a three-part religious pilgrimage to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, allegorized by the legendary symbols of scallop shell, sea, and stone boat. It ends with the persona "you" (including the reader in the poet's spiritual paradoxes), having "climbed the narrow stairway's flights of stone,/ free and at home in pilgrim's homelessness."

Why Couldn't You See Blue? is, in some ways, an odd book: a posthumous collection

of poetry of a woman who was known as an editor, not a poet, and a memorial tribute for someone whom everyone admired, but no one seems really to have liked. Caroline Heath was the co-founder and chief editor of *Grain*, the literary periodical that established and fostered a generation of important Saskatchewan writers, and the founder of Fifth House Publishers. As the five commemorative essays and two poems in the Introduction and Part II of this volume testify, Heath was an astute, passionately committed, and tremendously influential critic, editor, and mentor for prairie writers in the 1970s. In an analysis of Heath's non-theoretical but language-sensitive editorial practice, Elizabeth Philips eulogizes her as " "a catalyst essential to our culture." Nevertheless, Heath—an "autocrat" with "unshakable confidence in her own judgement"—was apparently equally famous for her "brutally frank," "scathing and even scornful" rejection letters: "she sometimes treated people as if they were submissions."

This volume, edited by the well-known Saskatchewan poet (and co-founder of *Grain*) Anne Szumigalski, is a selection of the poems that Heath suddenly started writing in the two years before her death at forty-eight. It is questionable (and in fact not even the editor asserts it strongly) whether these poems would have met Heath's own high editorial standards. Too many of them seem to justify "A Scolding," which appears with (one hopes) unintentional irony as the first poem in Part I:

> everything I think or feel lately demands
> to be written down
> no, I tell it, you don't deserve to be recorded
> but sometimes I relent, like a lenient mom,
> and write a poem.
> When it appears in print
> it has shrunk to unbelievable insignificance
> and like a child I am
> duly chastened.

There is no defined order to the forty-eight poems (ranging from two lines to three pages each) that Szumigalski has arranged, although they begin in childhood and end with allusions to her pain and death. In between are poems about lost loves and the prairie landscape. Much of the poetry is rather uninspired in concept and prosaic in expression. There are, however, some precise observations, trenchant aphorisms, and poignant emotions, although these tend to be good lines or stanzas in otherwise indifferent poems. Understandably, few of the poems are joyful, but several are moving and courageous. One of the best appears, oddly, outside the collection, at the very front of the volume opposite a photo of the poet. "The Swallow" that reappears after she thought them all destroyed by her housebuilding becomes a poignant symbol and hopeful icon for the woman dying of breast cancer:

> I could not write of my new home it seems
> until this swallow appeared
> as she darts at my window
> I want her to penetrate
> to pierce my right breast
> or my left not to veer away but to bore
> her hole again
> to make her home this time
> in me.

Word Jazz 1

Kevin McNeilly

Mark Miller's *Such Melodious Racket* (Mercury, $19.95) bills itself, rightly, as "the lost history of jazz in Canada, 1914-1949." His style aspires to transparency in workmanlike, well-crafted prose. Except for a preface where he outlines his research methods, which he characterizes as "music historiography as a form of archaeology," Miller assiduously avoids intruding into his material, maintaining a posture of scholarly objectivity: a professional writing degree zero. Like most polished jazz criticism, his work subordinates expression to (pardon the pun) instrumentality; he prefers, as many music writers have stated, to let the music and the musicians speak for themselves as far as possible, and limits his commentary accordingly. He presents names, dates, styles, and events, establishes chronologies of influence and development, clarifies certain important historical connections and relationships but, on the whole, refrains from explication or analysis; Miller's "archaeology" could best be understood as an orchestration of musical and historical fact.

His method makes sense, given the project. His aim is salvage and recovery, bringing into the historical record an array of personages and happenings which might otherwise have disappeared from the national cultural canon. Miller's unearthing of what has been "lost" offers his readers a provisional map of the complex interchange between frameworks of culture and nationality that delimit what he calls "the country's self-image." If informed readers were asked to name, say, ten Canadian jazz musicians—historical or contemporary—most would probably have some difficulty getting beyond Oscar Peterson (whose narrative actually frames *Such Melodious Racket*). This deficit seems somewhat reasonable, since jazz emerges in the early twentieth century primarily from Black American culture. But Miller's text, as he puts it, necessarily "draws the 49th parallel through the history of jazz." It is not the early history of jazz which has been "lost" to Canadian audiences, but the music as a whole, a tendency which is probably symptomatic of a pervasive culture cringe. How do we recognize Moe Koffman, Diana Krall, Renee Rosnes, Kenny Wheeler, Sonny Greenwich, Fraser MacPherson, Paul Plimley, Karen Young, Oliver Jones, François Bourassa, John Stetch, Ron McConnell, Phil Nimmons, Jane Bunnett, and so many other musicians who are currently producing varieties of "jazz"? In essay collections such as *Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives*, 1982, and *Boogie, Pete and the Senator*, 1987, Miller has attempted to resuscitate national interest in improvised music and to celebrate Canadian improvisors. That project extends itself in *Such Melodious Racket*, searching out its historical ground: we gain access to—sometimes only glimpses of—the lives and music of George Paris, the Original Winnipeg Jazz Babies, Shirley Oliver, Millard Thomas, the

Canadian Ambassadors, "Canada's King of Swing" Bert Niosi, Ollie Wagner's Knights of Harlem, Ray Norris, and many others.

After extensively combing archives and attics, and compiling over fifty original interviews from 1980 to 1997, Miller lovingly collates traces, glyphs, spectres, and ephemera—ranging from newspaper clippings to record labels, playbills to photographs, reproduced throughout the book—but creates much more than a catalogue of compelling obscurities for *aficionados*; using jazz subculture as an index, he effectively charts the production, consumption, regulation and dissemination of Canadian popular culture in the first half of the century. The "swing versus sweet" controversy of the 'thirties, for example, or the emergence of bebop in the 'forties, describes a crucial tension between artistic expression and popular demand that speaks to the effect of consumer pressure on the evolution of aesthetic forms. The intermittent residency of Jelly Roll Morton in Vancouver from 1917 to 1919 offers an occasion to examine the interchange between American and Canadian cultural frameworks—including everything from union regulation and liquor laws to urban geography and racial tensions.

Race forms the key subtext in Miller's book, and his own cultural nationalism is implicitly bound up in an examination of race-relations and the climate of "tolerance" that existed in the first half of the century. I say implicitly because Miller is characteristically restrained, only broaching the issue outright in his introduction, where he notes that because "the black population of Canada has been proportionally even smaller [than that of the U. S.], . . . the relationship between blacks and whites has been far less a defining issue in Canadian history," although it has, he asserts, "been an issue nonetheless." The crux of this assertion is what Miller might mean by "defining," and he doesn't really say. (To do so would entail theorizing his historiography, and arguing for how Canadian history might be defined and canonized. And, despite his desire to recover what has been "lost" and to canonize the marginal, he never explicitly lays claim to an interpretative paradigm, but insists only, briefly, on his objectivity.) But if we flip to the back pages, we see immediately that the entries on "race relations" and "racism" are the most copious in the book's index. Miller and those he interviews mention race frequently, as you might expect; jazz is arguably what many have called "black classical music," and its history in America parallels, and comments upon, the knotty history of race relations there. But *Such Melodious Racket* presents no substantial analysis of racial tensions or of the structures of "tolerance" and cultural segregation in Canada. Instead, the book attempts simply and directly to narrate what went on. Miller's chapters tend to mirror the dynamic of racial exclusion, as he shifts back and forth between descriptions of black and white bands. It isn't until the final chapter, where Miller notes a controversy in Montreal in 1947 over Oscar Peterson's appearance with the Johnny Holmes Orchestra, a white swing band, that the issue of integration is made explicit; when Miller presents a brief backward glance noting the occasional transgressions of the racial divide (251-2), we are afforded a little more examination of the dynamics of appropriation and hybridity that has informed jazz, although the interactions between socio-economic, institutional and aesthetic elements in such moments are only hinted at.

Such Melodious Racket remains recalcitrantly expository, but even in exposition there are figments of a cultural politics that is deeply conservative, both as an agenda of conservation and as a posture of disinterestedness. The book wants simply to gather source-material, and if it refuses the analytic edge of a historical materialism, it nonetheless still aspires to shape its matter

into meaningful narrative by using the 1949 Carnegie Hall debut of Oscar Peterson as a framing device. Peterson, planted in the audience at one of Norman Granz's "Jazz at the Philharmonic" extravaganzas, represents the emergence of "a Canadian presence in jazz" for American audiences. Peterson's show-stopping performance has become a jazz fable: "The story," Miller writes at the conclusion of his book, "has been told many times over." Indeed, the September 1999 issue of *Down Beat* featured Peterson on the cover, and included a page by Granz re-telling the tale. Miller's own cultural nationalism is clear; Peterson represents a talent that, as Granz said in his introduction for the pianist at Carnegie Hall that night, could only have come from "up in Canada," to be jolted from what a Peterson biographer has called an "unremarkable" background to a remarkable career in the music with a single performance. Miller wants to re-align the terms of his evaluation here, to assert that even in Canada remarkable things were happening in jazz; original styles and groups, even if they have gone unnoticed by American promoters, producers, and talent-scouts such as Granz, had valuable roles to play in the making of that music. Missing is a clear sense of why, fifty years after that debut, the terms remain relatively unchanged, and the nature of that "Canadian presence" is still so ambiguous. Why is Peterson's nationality—and the embedded racial, aesthetic and socio-economic codes that shape his image as a Canadian performer—at issue, especially as a nexus of collective pride? What produces Peterson as historically emblematic? While Miller's book digs thoroughly into some of the historical factors that might help respond to this difficult question, he does very little to assess the discourses and practices that conditioned, and continue to condition, the often fraught fabrication of a national culture.

M. NourbeSe Philip addresses the politics of gender, race and state in her recent collection of essays, *The Genealogy of Resistance* (Mercury, $18.95), with considerable verve. Despite a consistency of perspective and, I think, voice, these fourteen texts present a remarkable stylistic range, moving from fusions of the discursive and the poetic, through journal, drama, and materialist historiography, toward narrative, in what Philip calls her "demotic" mode. She aspires to be, as she says, "polyvocal and many-tongued," reflecting the multiplicitous and fractured language of the African diaspora; she characterizes her approach to poetry and to these essays as "word jazz, perhaps—where different themes are working with and against each other." Except for a quotation from Miles Davis, this is the only explicit reference to jazz in the book—her favoured musical form is the calypso—but it clarifies Philip's interactive poetic, especially in the context of the other work I am examining. The textures of her language embody and enact the internal divergences and pluralities of a transgressive multiculturalism.

Working to resist oppression and exclusion on the level of language, which Philip I think understands as the primal scene of cognition—"the grooves of thinking laid down by racism run deep"—she reworks a set of tropes that has been almost overarticulated in literary theory focusing on race: the vernacular (Baker), the interstitial (Bhabha), the multiple (Deleuze and Guattari, Glissant), the schizophrenic (Deleuze and Guattari, DuBois), the duplicitous (Gates). Despite a few contextual references in her writing to Julia Kristeva (which is actually a reference to Mikhail Bakhtin, an odd quotation) and to C. L. R. James, Philip's criticism is poorly served by its critical backgrounds. She prefers the appearance of poetic originality, introducing terms and coinages such as kinopoeia—a significant convergence of the compositional and the performative—

and demotic—not a particularly new idea, since it appears to be roughly synonymous with what Édouard Glissant calls "*créolité*" or Derek Walcott "mongrelization" or Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "signifyin(g)." It isn't that Philip is obliged to defer to critical authorities. (Notably, all but one of the examples I have cited so far are men, although I ought to have at least gestured toward Hélène Cixous or Dionne Brand.) But her arguments could be honed considerably and given greater impact if they were articulated against some of this work, as critical and poetic resistance. Glissant in particular would have offered Philip a provocative paradigm through and against which to assert her subversions of "standard" English. (She cites Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse* once, but there is a much more substantial crossover with Philip's work that she needs to assess.)

Philip is not particularly careful about her engagement with poetic authority, either; she frequently cites T. S. Eliot's translation of St.-John Perse's *Anabasis*, but beyond the dreamy claim that Perse, or Eliot-Perse, "taught me how to write of my love for the Caribbean," does nothing to unpack the dynamics of exile and appropriation, race and nationality that underpin that poem. By contrast, St.-John Perse permeates Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1990, translated in 1997, perhaps too late for Philip to use) as both model and antagonist, nomad and dissembler. But whether Philip were to refer to Glissant's discussion or not, she ought at least to have examined her own assumptions much more thoroughly, especially given the coupling of the poetic and political in her work. Why, despite her project of resistance to linguistic hegemony, does she admire canonical figures such as St.-John Perse so unabashedly? There are other instances of critical positions not being thoroughly interrogated. The debate over language that emerges between the work of Edward Braithwaite and Derek Walcott reduces to a dichotomy, which does no justice to its complexity; artists such as Miles Davis are cited as models, without any attention to the serious problematic of gender in their work. Philip needs to take more critical care in such contexts, especially given the volatile and polysemous interconnections among language, race, gender and nationality that tend to be winnowed by Philip into polemic.

That said, I believe Philip's apparently intuitive sense (given the paucity of scholarship here) of the poetics of the intermediate is both powerful and persuasive. Locating herself interstitially "in the unwritten," as an "intermediate person," she attempts in each of these texts to articulate her sense of the demotic, a language "that is and is not English"; as a woman of the African diaspora, burdened with the terrible legacy of the Middle Passage, Philip is forced to discover a viable means of speaking a language from which, in which, she is consistently and systematically estranged. She calls, parodying Sir Thomas Elyot's call to "augment our Englyshe tonge," for a new language in what Nicole Brossard might name an "eccentric" relation to standardized semantics and syntax, a language necessarily fabricated to allow an undercurrent of free speech amid the strictures of slavery:

> In the vortex of New World slavery, the African forged new and different words, developed strategies to impress her experience on the language. The formal standard language was subverted, turned upside down, inside out, and even sometimes erased. Nouns became strangers to verbs and vice versa; tonal accentuation took the place of several words at a time; rhythms held sway. Many of these "techniques" are rooted in African languages; their collective impact on the English language would result in the latter being, at times, unrecognizable as English. Patois. Dialect.

Those "strategies" frankly exceed the tactical subversions suggested, for example, by

Michel de Certeau, who uses diasporic writing in *The Practice of Everyday Life* as an example of how to create a space for oneself within unshakeable schematics and institutional gridworks of power; for de Certeau, the poetic exists interstitially, in the imaginative use and consumption of preformatted, mass-produced and socially regulated goods, services or discourses (all three of which amount largely to the same thing). For Philip, the demotic does more than slyly ironize the standardized discourse; it works forcefully to alter, from within, the structures of governance and oppression that characterize capital-E English; the poetic actually changes the rules, forcing both writers and readers to confront the structural and historical frameworks of exclusion and silencing that operate within the larger language.

Poetry, for Philip, is much more than errant play; it exacts an essential challenge, as estrangement, as resistance:

> The challenge facing the poet who is at all sensitive to language and to the issues that language generates is to use the language in such a way that the historical realities are not erased or obliterated, so that English is revealed as the tainted language it truly is. Only in so doing will English be redeemed. As a poet from the English-speaking Caribbean, one can never be less than self-conscious when working in the English language.

That self-consciousness involves becoming, I think, what Julia Kristeva calls strangers to ourselves, recognizing through poetry how English, in its post-colonial formations, has become a foreign language to all of its speakers—although this is a situation which Philip, as what might be called (adapting her own descriptions of her work) a late African writer, knows only to well as a matter of racial and gender displacements. Poetry becomes a formal negotiation between word and world, text and context, *poeisis* and politics. Philip seeks, she asserts, a "reintrojection of the context back into the poem," a mediation, in the hybrid stylizations of Creole or demotic, between supposedly universal standards of meaning and the "tainted" subversions of dialect: "The excitement for me as a writer comes in the confrontation between the formal and the demotic within the text itself." Such a poetry must be truly exciting, as its shifting registers mark out a complex formal, rhythmic, and cultural struggle, a confrontation running parallel, I think, to what Miles Davis once called "controlled freedom," the crafted surge and release of self-expression, of deliberate and liberated voice, against an abstract, collective structure of limits.

I am not confident, however, that NourbeSe Philip's poetry or her prose manages finally to enact this struggle. She seems to prefer to thematize the challenge, writing *about* it, rather than to perform it verbally or rhythmically. Despite her insistence on kinopoeia, the performative throughout these essays remains decidedly separate from her poems themselves, as she openly states: "always in performance is the completion of poetry." While she repeatedly describes the subversion of lyric egocentricity and "authority" through polyvocality, she is only able to realize that multiplicity off the page, in reading aloud with others, and never in the poems themselves: "It took me fully a year of readings to understand how completely I had subverted the individual lyric voice." For example, a poem she includes in her essay on silence as demonstration really only uses a few rather cute typographical ploys—line breaks, leaded gaps—to produce a simplistic allegory for silencing, rather than explore the complex rhythmic tensions between what she has been describing as a demotic and a calculated English:

> silence is
> silence is
> silence is
> the sound, the very sound between the
> words

in the interstices of time divided by the
word
between
outer and inner
space /silence
is
the boundary (85)

Nothing here really activates those interstices, those gaps. I never feel the impact of the performative, the kinopoetic, on or in the poem itself. We get, instead, a fairly rudimentary word-picture—which is disappointing, I think, because Philip's poetic in theory is so powerfully affecting.

I am also concerned by what increasingly comes to seem in this volume like poetic egotism, self-indulgence. Philip cites herself repeatedly, almost obsessively, gesturing both in footnotes and in the texts themselves to other work by her—poetry and prose—in the book and elsewhere. Her readers are often reminded, in every essay, of the titles of her other books and their sometimes controversial reception, of the award she won for *She Tries Her Tongue*, and so on. Her essays offer as much self-promotion as analysis. (And I am not sure why she reprints, *in toto*, the letter to James Baldwin that appeared in her previous volume, *Frontiers*. Certainly it's thematically relevant, but a reference would have sufficed.) Even when describing the vicious, unspoken racism she encounters at an American writers' colony, she reports that one of her main antagonists tells her that he hears she's "quite a good writer," which, however ill-willed an admission, still backhandedly grants her work pride of place. And that pride, according to Philip herself, is exactly the authoritarian posture she associates with the lyric tradition of canonical English literature, a tradition she works explicitly to undermine: "And so I mess with the lyric—subverting my own authority—what authority? Speaking over my own voice, interrupting and disrupting it, refusing to allow the voice, the solo voice, pride of place, centre page, centre stage." I can't really believe, at this point in her collection, that Philip achieves that necessary interruption. Her initial use of autobiography, and the mapping of the filiations and lines of influence which produce her as a writer, is convincing and fresh, a labour of loving recuperation that offers a compelling resistance to marginalization and silence; but when that writerly self-consciousness turns into self-indulgence, Philip loses me. Her arguments for a diasporic "I-mage" and "I-land" become not so much cases for the recovery of a late African subjectivity as they are outright assertions of her own subject position as exemplary.

Philip is at her best in this collection when she relinquishes this egocentric tendency. "Dragon Come Down, Dove Gorn Up" is nothing short of a brilliant analysis of public response, both hers and others', to the replacement weather-vane atop the parliament buildings in Port of Spain. Shifting modes from autobiography to demotic anecdote, from epistolary debate to scholarly analysis, Philip sustains a marvelous materialist historiography which effectively describes the complex linkage between politics and poetry (represented in this instance by the recordings and performances of the calypsonian Sugar Aloes). Aiming to outline a "poetics of silence and the unvoiced," she interrogates the means by which the solitary writer engages with, speaks both to and for, "the people," and she produces a detailed, careful negotiation with the quandary of "the spoken dumbness of the New World African in the Caribbean," ultimately suggesting how the kinopoetic can be realized as a deliberate practice of the "intermediate." I can only admire Philip's drive "to risk everything for a life with poetry," and I think that her efforts to merge the lived and the poetic in an ethos of performance are compelling. I wish that in her own writing she might find the means to put that risk into practice.

Field Notes

Laurie Ricou

Robert Kroetsch in *Badlands* proposed that they might be the basis and determining form of a novel, and went on to recognize, retroactively, that all his poetry might be mere (yet quintessential?) "Field Notes." I have argued in the classroom, following the suggestions of many others, that nature writing must be defined by the presence of field notes as intertext, and by some gesture toward "getting the science right." Field notes record research and exploration away from classroom, laboratory and desk. They purport to record detail and data not as assembled from books, but as found in direct observation. They speak of the "firsthand."

The renewed interest—in literary study and across disciplines—in place, geography, environment and ecology emerges in continued waves of new books. Wayne Grady's *Toronto the Wild* (MacFarlane Walter and Ross, $26.95) carries the subtitle "Field Notes of an Urban Naturalist." Proposing that the city is a natural landscape, Grady might be countering the familiar lament that, although most Canadians (and Canadian writers and critics) live in cities, their concept of nature and landscape is only rural, wild, and necessarily remote from cities. Grady organizes his notes in the nature essay's most obvious way, in an order he describes as "vaguely seasonal." His subjects include raccoons and termites and urban coyotes. "Sea-Gulls in the City" contains a typical modicum of first-hand observation, but the preponderance of Grady's observation is bookish, and the notes seem more often taken in library than amongst the 50,000 fing-billed gulls on Leslie Street Spit. Which approach, to be sure, makes the essays more interesting because they incorporate history (the "plume wars" of the late 1800s, necessary to gather wings and feathers to adorn women's hats), sports legend (Dave Winfield killing a gull with a baseball during a Blue Jays' game 4 August 1983), and literature (Ethel Wilson's story "Sea-Gulls in the City," whose title Grady borrows, which hears the "disturbing, . . . unnamed desire" in the cry of the gulls). Grady's prose is perhaps more often weak-kneed than wheeling, and he takes some desperate lunges at humour. But in his illustrations of the "almost instantaneously adaptive," he writes an illuminating parable of evolution as contemporary process.

Louise H. Westling, in *The Green Breast of the New World: Landscape, Gender, and American Fiction* (U of Georgia P, n.p.), is much more interested in cognitive science (as a way of understanding the "older patterns of thinking about the physical world", and the "repression" and "control" embedded in brain function) than in botany or zoology. Indeed any honouring of the field note she might see—to cite her summary of Emerson's *Nature*—as "fear of the feminine, with a corresponding need to ensure the subjective distance from it that defines male control." Throughout the study, Westling finds,

even to a degree in Cather and Welty, and prominently in Hemingway and Faulkner (but excepting the absence of gendered landscape in Louise Erdrich), a strong "imperialist nostalgia," "a sentimental masculine gaze at a feminized landscape and its creatures that mask[s] the conquest and destruction of the 'wild' continent." This vigorous and responsible postcolonial reading will be of great interest to students of gender and landscape in Canadian writing.

David Adams Richards' *Lines on the Water: A Fisherman's Life on the Miramichi* (Doubleday, $29.95) with its frontispiece map of "Mother Miramichi," its overwhelmingly "boys" world, and its apparently unselfconscious writing of such lines as "The rod is another extension of imagination," is another proto-Thoreauvian expression of the sentimental masculine gaze. And certainly Richards concentrates on dream: embracing nostalgia, and holding his breath, he writes the pursuit of "fabled fish." Appropriately, the book has an apparently breathless form: extremely short paragraphs, the great majority of them just one or two sentences. Not quite field notes, exactly, since the notes remember tying, and catching, and returning, and much of the attendant truncated dialogue and silences. They concentrate on the "poetic act" and eccentricities of fly-fishing, not on close observation of salmon or trout. Yet the notes suggest a diary. In its dimension as autobiography, and occasionally as literary comment (Norman Maclean, of course, is there, and Lowry, along with some incidental mentions of Richards' own fiction and a passing connection to his *Hockey Dreams*), the book might interest enthusiasts of Richards' fiction even if they are allergic to salmon. Alert to environmental concerns, Richards does argue with himself, in the one section of sustained reflection in this book, about the ethics of conquest and destruction which are and are not part of the masculine story.

Jamie Bendickson, in *Idleness, Water, and a Canoe: Reflections on Paddling for Pleasure* (U of Toronto P, $55/$17.95), does not mention Richards, although the book makes note of the canoe's significance in a good many Canadian writers: Atwood, D.C. Scott, Grey Owl, and Robert Bringhurst and Bill Reid. But Bendickson, a professor of Law at the University of Ottawa, is not writing a literary or semiotic study so much as a vaguely historical, continuously amiable paddle along the canoe and kayaking routes whose shape can still be detected in the national brain structure. Travelling by canoe or kayak, one might observe and take notes and photographs such as are assembled in *Western Journeys: Discovering the Secrets of the Land* (Rainforest, $29.95 paper) by Daniel Wood and Beverly Sinclair. The fascination of this is elaborately designed photo-album is greatly extended by the field-note format: reflections by the author/photographers on the images, bits of quotation (from Annie Dillard to Thomas Huxley) everywhere, marginal notations, and 'windows' to collect oddities and insights into the natural processes that shape and are shaping BC, Alberta and the Yukon. One page, for example, is filled with italicized fragments of writing about colours: the electrical pink of moss campion flowers, the jasmine needles of mountain larch in September.

A book of a radically different hue is *Ecoforestry: The Art and Science of Sustainable Forest Use*, edited by Alan Rike Drengson and Duncan MacDonald Taylor (New Society Publishers, $29.95 paper). Nonetheless, the editors structure their appeal, and their advocacy, somewhat in the manner of collected "notes." Of course, field notes, in the conventional sense, lie behind many of the more "scientific" pieces included here, on fungi or the ecological function of snags. But the editors keep each piece, often reprinted excerpts, to a few pages each, and supplement this deliberately

unacademic approach—the book is intended to influence loggers, forest company managers, and a wide public —with photos, marginal notes, sidebars, and bold highlights.

In a more overt approach to popularizing academic work, Susan G. Davis's *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience* (U of California P, n.p.) finds a bright and breezy package for its study of Sea World's (San Diego) bright and breezy packaging of "nature." The book has a poster-like jacket in neon colours; the text, notebook-style, is divided into 2- or 3-page sections, each with a catchy header. Although Davis touches on the various narratives of nature which Sea World embraces, and shows occasional sensitivity to its use of language to market its product, she has little to say about her own language. I found this book engaging and thorough in most respects, but an author who so confidently repeats the tag "in fact," to present her view of what "really" is being shown at Sea World, might also have stepped back and asked about the construction of her own text and her own agendas.

Like many academics, perched atop a pile of stolid promotable sentences, I fantasize about some day doing some real writing, a novel perhaps about growing up in a prairie small city, a subtle in-between genre that I don't think anyone's got right yet. It might fold together some poetic field notes, and rest somewhere between essay and story, memoir and confession. In any case, my impossible dream would try to imitate the writing David Carpenter does in *Courting Saskatchewan* (Greystone, $14.95 paper): unpretentious, self-deprecating, very funny. Carpenter, like Wayne Grady, writes himself into a sense of home through that ancient structure of four seasons: trying to rewrite his youth on retreat at St. Peter's Abbey, near Muenster (summer); examining the ethics of the goose hunt (fall)—Jeannie's recipe for small s Saskatoonberry pie (winter); fly-fishing for brook trout on The Lake That Cannot Be Named (spring).

I suspect Carpenter's field notes are mostly mental, affectionately recollected here in self-doubting tranquillity. David Robertson recollects by writing into other writers' journeys. His *Real Matter* (U of Utah P, US$15.95 paper) is categorized by the publisher as Nature/Memoir, but it merits special mention for its determination to invent a different, environmentally engaged, literary criticism (hence joining a rapidly growing list of titles) whose evaluation, and appreciation, and interpretation and scholarly excavation are hybridized with journal notes and photo essay. In this case, Robertson keeps to a particular reciprocalness: California writers' accounts of wilderness trails (for example, those of Mary Austin, Gary Snyder, Jack Kerouac, and, stretching the region, Moses and the Israelites) and his own experiences, shared with various friends, hiking in these writers' footsteps.

One crucial aspect of the ethic of hiking would be the desire "to be near animals until they showed you something that you didn't imagine or you hadn't seen or heard." This aspiration is at the heart of the knowing and dreaming in Gary Lopez' *Lessons from the Wolverine* (Key Porter Books, $17.95). Reprinted from his *Field Notes* (1994), Lessons is handsomely bound in a field-note format, and illustrated with 13 watercolours by Tom Pohrt which at once evoke and resist the gentle illustrations of child books. The book provides a nice example of a Canadian publisher's sensing the Canadian literary value of a story set outside the boundary, in Alaska.

The pleasure in reading *The Diary of James Schuyler* (ed. Nathan Kernan, Black Sparrow P, $21.00) lies, not surprisingly, in the poetry—in the field notes for his poetry. Poetic turns, quite unprepared for, startle the banal diarying, as when, describing an early morning excursion to the deli

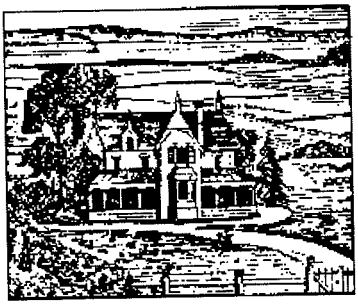
for a Times and a banana, Schuyler recalls "three young things go by and one of them passes close to me and turns up his face to say, 'Good morning,' in a voice like gardenia petals." It's a moment likely to worry and delight you all day: why gardenia? how can a voice/sound be like a petal? and are the faces in this crowd mere apparitions? Much of the diary, in the nature of the thing, exudes tedium of the "dinner last night at Raymond's" sort, or "I needed a bicycle lock," which in unselected form even the scrupulous and informative footnotes cannot quite animate. But most entries try out a metaphor, a discrimination of description, a bit of irregular syntax that sounds like gardenia petals. The sole entry for 27 December 1970 strains to rewrite a worn metaphor: "clear as a glass bell with just one small white candy left in it that tastes of anise," (I 02) or tries the music of a poem:

> Birds
> in a cage of
> silence mounted on the
> rollers of a waterfall.

And each time it extends the interest of a poetry as much "concerned," he explained in an interview, "with looking at things and trying to transcribe them as painting is." This aspiration for the descriptive is now unfashionable, perhaps, but in his writing across from one form of perception to another, Schuyler surely touches both transcription and apparition.

Schuyler makes prose-poetry out of looking at things; John Tallmadge tells a story of learning to teach through and in nature. His *Meeting the Tree of Life: A Teacher's Path* (U of Utah P, US$18.45) is a memoir and essay of his journey from graduate school to tenure denial (he now teaches literature and environmental studies at the Union Institute Graduate School in Cincinnati), from teaching medieval romance to teaching nature writing, from being a performer and a director in the classroom to being a guide within, and a citizen of the learning community. Tailmadge is a graceful writer, not grand but simple: his story is a delight to read. Canada plays at once a large and small role in the book—his wilderness journeys, by canoe, with his classes, are often north to Quetico and the Boundary Waters, to the country of jack pines, the tree whose ecology gives this book its lyrical shape and environmental conviction. "It is a part of wisdom," Tallmadge insists in his introduction, and in every carefully considered sentence, "to consider [the] ecological aspect of our identity, so that we can become better teachers and storytellers and stewards of the earth."

A delightful example of academic genre blur must also interest students of nature in Canada and Canadian literature. Written by historian Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Harvard UP, n.p.) is both a cultural history of animals, and a rhetorical history of the Linnaen system of nomenclature, and the multiple "vernacular systems" which compete with it, and have always and everywhere influenced it. Ritvo's field figments will marvellously entertain students of language and lovers of words.



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Méira **Cook** is a Killam post-doctoral fellow in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia. She is researching discourses of witnessing and testimony.

Graham **Huggan** teaches postcolonial studies at the University of Munich, Germany. His latest book is *Marketing the Margins: The Postcolonial Exotic* (forthcoming), and he is currently working on interdisciplinarity in the postcolonial field.

Kevin **McNeilly** teaches Cultural Studies in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia. He has published essays on Canadian poetry, critical theory and jazz, and is currently at work on a study of Robert Bringhurst.

Laurie **Ricou** teaches literary regionalism and nature writing at the University of British Columbia. He has just completed a book manuscript, provisionally titled "The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading Northwest Writing."

Winfried **Siemerling** is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Université de Sherbrooke, Québec. His most recent book is *Cultural Difference and the Literary Text: Pluralism and the Limits of Authenticity in North American* (with Katrin Schwenk, 1996).

Klaus P. **Stich** teaches American and Canadian literature at the University of Ottawa. His recent and forthcoming publications include essays on Hawthorne, Cather and Munro.

Lucas **Tromly** is a Ph.D candidate at the University of Toronto. He has been the research assistant for the A.M. Klein Publication Committee.

Poems

A. Mary **Murphy** lives in Calgary, Kenneth **McRobbie** in Port Coquitlam, B.C. Jamie **Dopp** in Victoria, Laisha **Rosnau** in Vancouver, Tom **Wayman** in Winlaw, Carla **Drysdale** in New York, Rochelle **Mass** in Israel,. Joanne **Merriam** in Dartmouth, matt **robinson** in Fredericton.

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Sherrill **Grace**, Elizabeth **Hodgson**, and Elizabeth **Lasserre** all teach/study at the University of British Columbia. Lawrence **Mathews** teaches at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Anthony **Boxill** teaches at the University of New Brunswick, Susie **O'Brien** at McMaster University, Donna **Coates** at the University of Calgary, Rebecca **Raglon** at Simon Fraser University. Joanne **Saul**, and Neil **ten Kortenaar** teach/study at the University of Toronto. Kym **Bird** teaches at York University, Beverley **Curran** at Aichi Shukutoku College, Nagoya, Japan, Ajay **Heble** at the University of Guelph, Neal **McLeod** and Dorothy F. **Lane** at the University of Regina, Barbara **Pell** at Trinity Western University. Don **Randall** and George L. **Parker** teach/study at Queen's University. Suzanne **James** teaches at the International School of Tanganyika, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Maria Noëlle **Ng** teaches at the University of Alberta. Julie **Beddoes** lives in Toronto, Ontario.