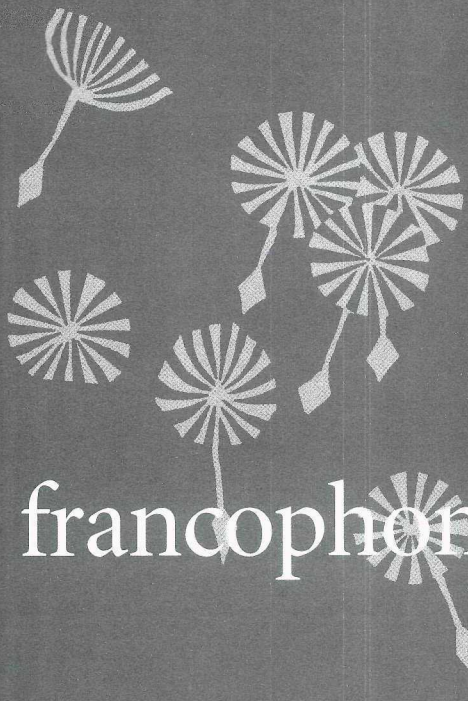
Canadian Literature

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review Winter 2002 $17

175



francophone/anglophone

Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 175, Winter 2002
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Editor: Eva-Marie Kröller
Associate Editors: Susan Fisher (General), Kevin McNeilly, Glenn Deer (Reviews)
Iain Higgins (Poetry), Alain-Michel Rocheleau (Francophone Writing)

Editorial

Articles

Articles *continued*

Poems

Books in Review

Forthcoming book reviews are available at the *Canadian Literature* web site: http://www.canlit.ca

Authors Reviewed

Reviewers

Last Pages

Visit the *Canadian Literature* website for news, forthcoming reviews, submission guidelines, subscription information, archives, and other features:
http://www.canlit.ca

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of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada, and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers.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

Articles of approximately 6500 words (including Notes and Works Cited), double-spaced, in 12-point font size, should be submitted in triplicate, with the author's name deleted from 2 copies, and addressed to The Editor, *Canadian Literature*, The University of British Columbia, Buchanan E158, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V6T 1Z1. Submissions should include a brief biographical note (approximately 100 words) and a self-addressed return envelope, either with Canadian stamps or accompanied by International Postal Reply Coupons. Submissions without SASE cannot be returned.

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

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

Les manuscrits, d'une longueur approximative de 6500 mots, doivent être soumis en trois exemplaires (dont deux anonymisés), adressés à l'Éditeur de *Canadian Literature*, The University of British Columbia, Buchanan E158, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, C.-B., Canada V6T 1Z1, et accompagnés d'une note biographique (100 mots) et d'une enveloppe de retour pré-adressée et pré-affranchie (timbrée ou munie de coupons-réponse internationaux), sans quoi ils ne pourront être retournés à leurs auteurs.

Les articles soumis doivent répondre aux exigences de forme bibliographique définies par la MLA. Tous les textes acceptés pour publication devront être fournis sur disquette.

Publications Mail registration number 08647
GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by the University of British Columbia and SSHRCC. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

Canadian Literature is indexed in *Canadian Periodical Index, Canadian Magazine Index, American Humanities Index,* and the *MLA International Bibliography,* among numerous others. The journal is indexed and abstracted by EBSCO, PROQUEST and ABES. Full text of articles and reviews from 1997 is available by PROQUEST. The journal is available in microfilm from University Microfilm International.

For subscriptions, back issues (as available), and annual and cumulative indexes, write: Managing Editor, *Canadian Literature,* The University of British Columbia, Buchanan E158, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1

TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780
FAX: (604) 822-5504
E-MAIL: Can.Lit@ubc.ca
http://www.canlit.ca

SUBSCRIPTION: $45 INDIVIDUAL; $60 INSTITUTIONAL; PLUS GST IN CANADA; PLUS $20 POSTAGE OUTSIDE CANADA

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
Donna.Chin@ubc.ca
Designer: George Vaitkunas
Layout: Faye Taylor
Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

Editorial

Langues officielles et littératures à l'avenant

Réjean Beaudoin et *André Lamontagne*

Des liens à la fois lâches et serrés, faits de bon voisinage et d'anonymat urbain, rapports tissés tantôt par la cordialité, tantôt par l'indifférence. Le doigt s'est glissé entre l'arbre et l'écorce. Quel dénominateur commun se cache sous tant d'ambiguïtés? Les relations mouvantes des deux langues officielles du pays semblent être celles qui unissent les couples mal assortis: on vit sous le même toit, mais on fait chambre à part. Les deux littératures fondatrices sont à l'avenant: plus elles se rapprochent, plus elles sont acculées à leurs anciennes barrières. Aberrante si l'on veut, la cohabitation ne marie que des différences résistantes. Et comment pourrait-il en être autrement?

La scène se passe au centre-ville de Vancouver. Dans un restaurant, des collègues sont attablés en attendant la bière. La conversation se déroule en français. Le garçon arrive. Il s'excuse de ne pouvoir faire son service dans la langue de Molière en s'efforçant d'employer très audiblement plusieurs mots de cette langue qu'il a apprise sans la maîtriser couramment; il explique la situation avec une parfaite courtoisie. Personne ne songe à s'en offusquer et l'histoire prendrait fin d'elle-même si l'un des commensaux ne se sentait tenu d'ajouter: "C'est qu'on n'entend pas beaucoup parler des langues étrangères dans ce quartier." L'intention manifeste de la phrase est d'approuver les excuses du garçon pour recouvrir toute trace de malaise.

Un silence s'ensuivit qui marquait l'agacement des locuteurs francophones autour de la table. Personne toutefois n'osa répliquer que le français

n'est pas une langue étrangère aux yeux de la Loi canadienne sur les langues officielles. Il était trop évident que la remarque avait été faite sans malice. Son auteur est un éminent spécialiste qui enseigne le français à UBC. Un érudit peut donc passer tant d'années à maîtriser les moindres subtilités d'une langue difficile et y arriver si bien qu'aucune oreille francophone ne puisse repérer dans son expression le fait qu'il parle une langue seconde, mais en même temps, cet homme éprouve toujours profondément sa propre aptitude d'apprentissage linguistique comme la greffe d'une sorte de corps étranger. Que faut-il penser de ce fait?

La chose n'est sans doute ni insensée ni inexplicable. La façon dont chacun intériorise le langage humain suffit peut-être à comprendre qu'on ne puisse considérer qu'une seule langue comme étant parfaitement naturelle et entièrement intégrée aux réflexes de sa personnalité. Un individu est capable d'apprendre plusieurs langues, on le sait, mais le symbolisme politique du multilinguisme ne rejoindra jamais cette zone psychologique d'un cerveau qui reste attaché à ses premières fonctions unilingues. Les langues font-elles bon ménage dans la pensée d'un polyglotte? La reconnaissance sociale des langues officielles dans un État bilingue ou multilingue constitue un phénomène d'un tout autre ordre. Le préposé unilingue au service des tables s'est montré plus sensible à cet égard que l'universitaire bilingue et chevronné.

Cette anecdote de restaurant n'est pas ancienne. Qu'on nous permette d'en raconter une qui est arrivée il y a déjà plusieurs années. Elle circula autour de la table un peu plus tard au cours de la même soirée. Aucun rapport avec l'histoire précédente. C'était peu après 1970. Au terme d'un colloque tenu à Vancouver, des professeurs rentrent à l'hôtel en taxi et discutent en français. Le chauffeur, qui appartient à une minorité visible, demande, intrigué: "Quelle langue parlez-vous donc?" Le ton sent la frustration de ne pas pouvoir prendre part au débat.

Qu'il ne soit pas capable de suivre la conversation n'a scandalisé personne, mais ne pas savoir reconnaître le son du français et confondre cette langue officielle avec le bruit étranger des cacophonies babéliennes, c'est trop. Le conteur de l'anecdote était québécois et ne cachait pas son emportement. Quelle ne fut pas sa surprise de s'entendre alors chaleureusement seconder dans son indignation par le défenseur du garçon, celui-là même qui, à peine une heure plus tôt, avait parlé du français comme d'une langue étrangère! Ne dirait-on pas que cette fran-

cophilie se rapproche davantage du chauffeur de taxi que du garçon de table? Mais ne concluons pas trop tôt. Après tout, il faut bien des colloques et beaucoup de beaux parleurs pour faire un pays, bilingue ou pas.

Il ne s'agit pas tant de la capacité de parler une autre langue que du poids politique propre à toute langue qui se parle. Apprendre le vocabulaire et les contraintes grammaticales d'un nouveau code linguistique n'est pas le seul défi; s'approprier les diverses stratégies qu'une langue invente pour traduire la réalité d'une façon qui lui est exclusive, voilà qui est plus difficile et c'est en cela que chaque langue est unique. C'est ainsi que toute langue exerce une souveraineté absolue dans l'organisation de ses universaux et par l'expression de son propre rapport à la réalité. Des comparatistes comme Clément Moisan et Philip Stratford ont démontré comment les littératures canadienne et québécoise rendent compte d'une réalité canadienne qui ne se laisse pas confondre dans tous ses aspects. Si chaque langue tend à se constituer en un système autosuffisant, par définition, comment deux langues ou plus peuvent-elles partager l'égal statut de leur officialité? Qu'est-ce que cela signifie en pratique? Peuvent-elles partager rien de plus que leur légalité, ce qui revient à dire que l'une y perd en fait ce qui faisait, au départ, sa première dimension politique, celle qui lui est intrinsèque?

C'est là que langue et littérature sont très profondément liées. On tend généralement à admettre aujourd'hui que ce rapport est périmé et qu'on peut acquérir une culture lettrée sans passer par l'apprentissage des langues étrangères. Le débat bat son plein et nous ne prétendons pas y entrer au seuil de cette livraison, mais est-il bien sûr qu'on puisse jamais connaître une culture littéraire sans connaître la langue dans laquelle elle s'exprime?

Après les langues officielles du Canada et leurs rapports changeants, abordons les rapports qui existent peut-être entre les littératures qui les symbolisent au plus haut point. En premier lieu, pourquoi ne pas les appeler nos littératures officielles? Qu'est-il advenu du projet d'un érudit tel que Henry James Morgan et de l'entreprise d'unification canadienne mise en œuvre dans sa *Bibliotheca Canadensis: or, A Manual of Canadian Literature* (1867)? Le rêve de nationalisation s'est changé en polysystème, et ses interfaces sont mobiles comme ses contours. Le tout attend encore sa forme intelligible sous le travail analytique des spécialistes. Il est certain que les littératures canadienne et québécoise n'ont pas atteint le plein développement de la mutualité de leurs rapports institutionnels; quant au

marché du livre canadien, les rapports entre les deux littératures y sont quasi inexistants. En clair, le fossé est profond entre les lecteurs de profession et les simples lecteurs qui achètent eux-mêmes leurs livres ou qui les empruntent à la bibliothèque publique. Les chercheurs, les critiques littéraires et les enseignants des deux langues se rapprochent en échangeant leurs outils de référence et en partageant les mêmes intérêts. De plus en plus, il en résulte le sentiment de participer à une même institution littéraire canadienne. C'est une construction en partie imposée d'en haut par des appareils contrôlés à Ottawa: le CRSH, le Conseil des Arts du Canada et le Programme d'Aide à l'édition savante; tout cela pèse très lourd sur le système universitaire, recherche et enseignement. Par ailleurs, on constate la même chose à travers les colloques, les dîners-conférences, les revues, les Actes et les collectifs de recherche, mais tout cela est peut-être moins imposé que voulu. Les éditeurs prennent part à la ronde quand on leur offre des subventions pour défrayer les coûts de traduction. Ces agents sont-ils concertés ou passivement livrés aux pressions politiques d'origine fédérale? La question reste: existe-t-il un marché identifiable de lecteurs bilingues? N'est-ce pas plutôt une petite élite choyée par les fonds publics? Posez la question au garçon de table, pas au bibliothécaire de service.

Susciter l'apparition d'un marché de lecteurs bilingues, c'est le travail à long terme du système d'enseignement. A l'heure où les programmes d'immersion ont perdu la cote, l'avenir n'est pas rose. L'université pourrait quand même faire sa part en renforçant ses départements de français, mais c'est plutôt le contraire qu'on observe: les chiffres ne jouent pas en faveur de l'enseignement des langues. Comment? De plus en plus de spécialistes du français préfèrent enseigner la théorie littéraire en anglais pour remplir leurs classes. On se fait bien voir des administrateurs en vulgarisant la culture française et en rassurant la clientèle qui ne demande qu'à se faire dire qu'il n'est pas nécessaire de savoir parler ou lire le français pour avoir le plaisir de discuter Foucault ou Lacan. André Brochu l'a écrit crûment: "L'être, on le sait [. . .] parle anglais." Comme Claude Hagège l'a bien observé, les langues sont en guerre. La cohabitation obligée ne mène qu'à l'effritement de la langue minoritaire ou à sa créolisation. Et si on créolisait aussi les esprits? Ne dites surtout pas aux étudiants que toute pensée s'incarne d'abord dans la langue qui l'exprime.

Une dernière anecdote qui en dit long. Il y a quelques années, un professeur volait entre Ottawa et Vancouver sur les ailes de la défunte compa-

gnie Canadian. Il feuilletait le magazine gracieusement offert aux voyageurs par ce transporteur. Le professeur tombe sur un article intéressant qui donne le palmarès des dix auteurs canadiens les plus lus. Rien de bien étonnant: Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, Mordecai Richler, etc. Aucun écrivain québécois n'apparaît à cette liste—pas même Gabrielle Roy, pourtant née au Manitoba, traduite en anglais et lue d'un océan à l'autre—et le lecteur comprend que littérature canadienne veut dire ici: de langue anglaise. Mais lorsqu'il entame la lecture de la version française du même article à la page suivante, il en croit à peine ses propres yeux: la traduction est littérale. Le lecteur francophone, qui se trouve être professeur de littérature québécoise, se voit ainsi offrir un résumé en français de *sa* littérature, sans un seul nom d'auteur québécois. L'éditeur de cette publication et ses collaborateurs, dans leur immense candeur, seraient probablement fort étonnés d'apprendre que traduire sans se soucier de la mise en contexte aboutit à effacer toute une littérature. Le bilinguisme sans adaptation culturelle, sans rapport contextuel, ne sert pas toujours ses objectifs avoués. Depuis la fusion de Canadian et d'Air Canada, rappelons, pour mémoire, que ce magazine a péri, corps et biens. Il est consolant de penser que la revue *Canadian Literature* lui aura survécu.

WORKS CITED

Brochu, André. *La Grande Langue. Éloge de l'anglais.* Montréal: XYZ, 1993.
Hagège, Claude. *Halte à la mort des langues.* Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000.

Editorial

Official Languages and Their Literatures

Réjean Beaudoin and *André Lamontagne*

The changing relations between the two official languages of Canada are like those of an ill-matched couple who live under the same roof but sleep in different beds. Our two founding literatures have a similar relationship: the more they share, the more constrained they are by old boundaries. It may seem illogical, but the fact remains that the cohabitation of Canada's two official languages has simply resulted in a union of resistant differences. How could it be otherwise?

The scene: a restaurant in downtown Vancouver. We are sitting at a table, waiting for our order of beer. The conversation is in French. Our waiter arrives. He apologizes for not being able to serve us in French, struggling to do so in a few words of this language that he has studied but not mastered. He explains the situation very courteously. No one takes offence, and the whole matter would end there if one of our group did not feel obliged to add: "One doesn't hear too many foreign languages in this part of the city." His remark is obviously intended to acknowledge the waiter's apologies and to put him at ease.

Some people around the table bit their mother tongue. No one dared reply that French is not a foreign language, according to Canada's Official Languages Act. It was evident that the remark had been made without malice. The speaker was an eminent scholar, a professor with an international reputation. Here he was, a man who had spent many years of his life mastering the subtleties of French (and with such skill that no francophone

would be able to detect the fact that he was not a native speaker), and yet he still felt very profoundly that his acquisition of French was a kind of graft from a foreign body. What should one make of this?

It is not so irrational or inexplicable. The way in which each one of us internalizes our language perhaps accounts for why only one language seems completely natural and entirely suited to the reflexes of one's personality. An individual is capable of learning several languages, of course, but the political symbolism of multilingualism doesn't quite match up with the psychological truth of a mind that remains attached to its first unilingual experiences. How do languages cohabit in the mind of a polyglot? The status of official languages in a bilingual or multilingual state constitutes a phenomenon of quite a different order. The unilingual waiter seemed more aware of this than the distinguished bilingual scholar.

Our experience in the restaurant was quite recent. As we sat around the table that night, we remembered a similar experience from some thirty years before. It was in the early 1970s. At the end of a conference in Vancouver, the delegates were going back to their hotel in a taxi; they were chatting amongst themselves in French. The driver (a member of a visible minority) was intrigued, and asked, "So what language are you speaking?" He was obviously frustrated at not being able to take part. That he wasn't able to follow the conversation didn't shock anyone, but not to be able to recognize the sound of French, and to confuse this official language with the foreign noise of some cacophonous Babel—that was too much. The person who recollected this incident was Québécois and did not hide his anger. Imagine his surprise, then, to hear himself warmly supported in his anger by the very person who had defended the waiter, and who, scarcely an hour before, had spoken of French as a foreign language. Would one not say that this kind of francophilia was in fact closer to the taxi driver's attitude than to that of the waiter? But we will not come to any conclusions too quickly. After all, it takes many conferences and many fine talkers to make a country, bilingual or otherwise.

It's not so much a matter of the ability to speak another language as it is of the political valence appropriate to each language that is spoken. Learning the vocabulary and the grammatical constraints of a new linguistic code is not the only challenge; internalizing the various strategies that a language invents to translate reality in its own distinct fashion—that is what is really difficult and yet it's in that respect that each language is

unique. It follows that every language exercises a kind of absolute sovereignty over the organization of its universe and in the expression of its own relationship to reality. Comparatists like Clément Moisan and Philip Stratford have shown how anglophone literature and Québécois literature render a Canadian reality that is not the same in every respect. If each language tends to make itself into a self-sustaining system, then by definition how could two languages share equal official status? What would this mean in practice? Can they share anything more than their legal status, which amounts to saying that one of them loses what was, in the beginning, its genuine political significance?

This is precisely where language and literature are profoundly connected. Today, there is a general tendency to believe that this link is outdated, and that one can acquire another literary culture without having to go through the process of learning a foreign language. This is a complex debate and we don't intend to get involved in it here, except to question whether one can ever know a literature without knowing the language in which it is written.

If we have two official languages in Canada, what then about the relations between the literatures that represent their highest expression? Why not call them our official literatures? What became of the work of a scholar like Henry James Morgan and the project of Canadian unification set in motion with his *Bibliotheca Canadensis: or, A Manual of Canadian Literature?* The nationalist dream has turned into a complex polysystem of unstable intersections and surfaces that still awaits the analytical work of specialists to render it into an intelligible whole. It is certain that there is still work to do in building institutional links between anglophone literature and Québécois literature; as for the Canadian book market, well, the links between the two literatures are almost non-existent. Clearly, there is a profound gap between the professional readers of Canadian literature and the average readers who buy their own books in bookstores or borrow them from the public library. The researchers, literary critics, and teachers in the two languages communicate with each other, exchanging research tools and sharing the same interests. More and more there is the feeling that we all participate in the same Canadian literary institutions. This is a development in part imposed by the mechanisms controlled by Ottawa: SSHRC, the Canada Council, and the Aid to Scholarly Publishing Programme. All these have a significant impact on the system of university

research and teaching. Moreover, one can observe the same phenomenon in colloquia, conference banquets, journals, and joint research projects, but all this is perhaps less imposed than chosen. The publishers also play their role when they are offered grants to subsidize the costs of translation. Are all these players consciously or passively responsive to pressure from federal sources? In any case, the question remains: is there an identifiable market of bilingual readers? Or is there just a tiny elite catered to by public money? Ask the waiter, not your librarian.

To create a market of bilingual readers will be a long-term task for our education system. At a time when immersion programs have lost ground, the future does not look too rosy. The universities could do their part by strengthening French programs, but it is instead the opposite that one observes: the numbers are not in favour of language teaching. Why? More and more French specialists prefer to teach literary theory in English in order to fill their classes. Academic administrators have been known to reassure potential students by telling them what they want to hear: that it isn't necessary to know how to read or speak French in order to have the pleasure of discussing Foucault or Lacan. André Brochu puts it bluntly in his *La Grande Langue: Éloge de l'anglais:* "The Being, as everyone knows . . . speaks English." As Claude Hagège has rightly observed in *Halte à la mort des langues*, languages are at war. Enforced cohabitation leads only to the erosion of the minority language or to its creolization. And if one also creolizes minds and spirits? But no, we must not tell students that every idea is first embodied in the language in which it is expressed.

A final anecdote. A few years ago, a professor was flying from Ottawa to Vancouver on the now-defunct Canadian Airlines. He was leafing through the airline's complimentary magazine and came across an article celebrating Canada's Top Ten "must-read" authors. Nothing too surprising: Margaret Atwood, Robertson Davies, Mordecai Richler, and so on. Not a single Québécois writer appeared on the list—not even Gabrielle Roy, even though she was born in Manitoba and has been translated into English and read from one end of the country to the other. And so the professor realized what Canadian literature meant in this context: literature written in English. But when he started reading the French version of the same article on the following page, he could hardly believe his eyes: the translation was literal. The francophone reader, who in this case happened to be a professor of Québécois literature, found himself being offered a summary in

French of his literature, without the name of a single Québécois author. The editor of the publication and his staff, in their innocence, would probably have been very surprised to learn that, in translating this article without paying attention to cultural context, they had managed to wipe out an entire literature. Bilingualism without cultural adaptation or context never achieves its announced objectives. Since the merger of Air Canada and Canadian, we notice that this magazine has sunk without a trace. It is consoling to know that *Canadian Literature* will outlive it.

WORKS CITED

Brochu, André. *La Grande Langue. Éloge de l'anglais.* Montréal: XYZ, 1993.
Hagège, Claude. *Halte à la mort des langues.* Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000.

Brad Buchanan

Psychosomaton

My first thought bled like
reckoning—hemorrhaged, starved,
then suffocated, so I kicked against
the goad of childhood, watched the
sickened photographs of me develop.
I sensed my tendons being
nibbled, grew in horror, felt so stupid
that words like "muscle" and "vein"
seemed fragile. I choked on the jugular
detail, swallowing nauseous
nutritious spittle. I fidgeted till
my tailbone rattled down rock
slides in steep playgrounds, recovered, tasted
sores. A bruise burgeoned, queasy
with curiosity, heightened by
change's own blood-vertigo.
Hobbled by foreign Achilles's fortune
I joined this man's army, sprang
to attention. Disease was
sex's malediction on forgetful
cures; envenomed enema-
talk hardened a heterosexual
then found me driven by proud
hypochondria's sudden fruition
to dream diagnoses, through
which I seemed human.

Lyle Neff

Powerpoint Presentation

What speckled disaster I tossed down my gold
throat last night, fluidly commending freaks
to anomalous lives, though I don't know shit:

a mean little apocalypse I'll be,
slapping cab hoods to turn out penniless neat
transvestites, cashless wigs in a black night:

but there's a lecture about labour I'll never
get over. What foamed empty glasses right
here loom, while I speak in my old man's voice:

show me a daytime deadline, I will meet it.
Unrock fields, shovel shit, run the defenses;
this life, you work, no call-in-sick pretence.

Réjean Beaudoin et André Lamontagne

Un demi-siècle de réception critique de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais: 1939-1989

Cet article propose un bilan de nos recherches sur le sujet et en énonce les résultats partiels, compte tenu du fait que le corpus que nous avons réuni couvre une période beaucoup plus longue, qui va de 1867 à 1989.[1] Les objectifs de notre projet entendaient dégager et évaluer les écarts ainsi que les convergences entre deux lectures de la littérature québécoise, que nous posions comme différentes par hypothèse: d'une part, celle que fait l'institution littéraire anglo-canadienne, et d'autre part, celle qui se fait en français au Québec. Nous supposions, au départ, que l'expérience esthétique de la collectivité anglophone est susceptible de concrétiser un autre sens des œuvres écrites au Québec, telles qu'elles sont reçues par la critique littéraire québécoise, et nous avons voulu saisir cette différence en scrutant la production critique des lecteurs canadiens-anglais.

Nous nous sommes ainsi donnés pour tâche de dépouiller l'ensemble des textes critiques parus depuis le début de la Confédération jusqu'en 1989, pourvu que ces textes soient des études dites savantes: monographies, chapitres de livres, ouvrages collectifs, manuels d'histoire littéraire, préfaces d'anthologies ou d'œuvres québécoises traduites en anglais, guides spécialisés (par exemple, le *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*), articles et comptes rendus publiés dans les revues consacrées aux activités littéraires. Telles sont les composantes essentielles du corpus de quelque deux mille huit cents entrées sur lequel reposent nos analyses.

Nous avons eu l'occasion d'expliquer, en d'autres lieux, notre choix d'exclure le discours journalistique et les pages culturelles des magazines à

grand tirage. Pour cette raison, nous ne nous étendrons pas sur les problèmes d'ordre méthodologique. Le lecteur désireux d'en savoir davantage sur nos critères de sélection et les règles de leur application dans la construction du corpus trouvera l'exposé, dans deux articles récents (Beaudoin, "Réception"; Hayward, Lamontagne),[2] des paramètres que nous avons retenus, ainsi que des fondements théoriques qui informent notre recherche. Les concepts d'horizon d'attente, de polysystème et de communauté interprétative, tels que définis par les travaux de Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, Itamar Even-Zohar et Stanley Fish sont au cœur de notre enquête.

Pour ouvrir davantage notre étude au champ des déterminations sociologiques, nous avons aussi eu recours au concept d'institution littéraire élaboré par Jacques Dubois à la suite des travaux de Pierre Bourdieu sur le marché des biens symboliques. Les instances de consécration, les appareils de diffusion et de légitimation, les idéologies dominantes entrent dans les visées de notre analyse, en un mot, toute la question de la norme instituante. L'appréciation des faits d'institution est nécessaire à l'évaluation du discours critique en ce qu'il reconduit des valeurs canoniques manifestes sous forme d'omissions, de renforcements et d'un éventail de choix discursifs. Cette approche permet également de tenir compte des effets en retour sur la critique québécoise. Enfin, l'impact des mouvements sociaux (féminisme, nationalisme, multiculturalisme) fait évidemment partie de l'évaluation de la lecture critique représentée dans notre corpus. Le partage des allégeances institutionnelles, tout comme la reconnaissance des frontières identitaires, connaît en pratique de nombreux cas-limites qui appellent des décisions d'ordre opérationnel. Il est bon de rappeler que le corpus que nous étudions n'est pas sans poser des questions quant à ses limites géographiques et linguistiques. Dans ce pays fictivement bilingue, il y a de plus en plus de gens qui le sont réellement et qui publient indifféremment dans les deux langues, quelle que soit la province où ils sont nés ou dans laquelle ils résident. Quel statut doit-on conférer, pour prendre cet exemple, à l'ouvrage de Janet Paterson sur le postmodernisme québécois paru chez un éditeur francophone? Que dire de Patricia Smart, qui a signé aux Presses de l'Université de Montréal le premier ouvrage sur Hubert Aquin, et qui, de surcroît, a été en partie formée à l'Université Laval?

En ce qui concerne les limites chronologiques de notre inventaire, rappelons que la date de 1867 correspond évidemment à la fondation de la Confédération canadienne, et que la même année voit paraître le premier

ouvrage de référence en anglais qui inclut des auteurs canadiens-français: il s'agit de la savante compilation intitulée *Bibliotheca Canadensis: or, A Manual of Canadian Literature* (1867) de Henry James Morgan. Il ne fait aucun doute que cette publication érudite s'efforce de marquer la corrélation entre une identité canadienne en voie d'émergence et la volonté, voire la nécessité de réserver un accueil critique et institutionnel à la littérature canadienne de langue française, soit celle d'un des deux peuples fondateurs du nouveau régime constitutionnel inauguré en 1867. L'année de la publication de cet ouvrage ne saurait être une coïncidence. Quant à la date de clôture de 1989, elle s'arrête avant la dernière décennie du XX^{e} siècle, c'est-à-dire au moment où nous avons conçu et élaboré le projet, il y a une dizaine d'années. Pratiquement, ce sont les délais d'indexation et de repérage bibliographique qui nous ont dicté le millésime terminal.

A l'intérieur de ces deux limites chronologiques, notre périodisation adopte quatre subdivisions déterminées par l'histoire des grandes transformations socio-politiques. Le corpus se trouve ainsi découpé en quatre périodes: I (1867-1899); II (1900-1938); III (1939-1964); IV (1965-1989). Dans le cadre du présent article, nous livrons certains résultats de l'analyse des deux dernières tranches. Nous sommes loin de pouvoir tracer un tableau complet et détaillé de la réception qui fait l'objet de notre étude. Nous voulons tout au plus signaler et comprendre les écarts les plus visibles dans les stratégies d'évaluation critique par rapport à l'institution littéraire québécoise: surreprésentation de certains auteurs (Carrier) au Canada anglais, sous-représentation d'autres (Ducharme), et quasi silence sur un écrivain au statut par ailleurs consacré au Québec (Vadeboncoeur); différences notables de stratégies de lecture dans l'appréciation des œuvres de Jacques Poulin et d'Hubert Aquin. Dans ces deux derniers cas, il y a divergence de lecture, mais tandis que l'importance d'Aquin se trouve confirmée, la sanction appréciative pèse sévèrement sur certains romans de Poulin.

Nous pouvons cependant observer d'emblée que la littérature québécoise a été l'objet d'une réception critique attentive et suivie au Canada anglais depuis la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, plus particulièrement au cours de la Révolution tranquille et d'une façon extensive depuis 1967, année du centenaire de la Confédération. Le demi-siècle qui va de 1939 à 1989 recoupe une phase cruciale, non seulement dans la production littéraire du Québec, mais surtout dans la nouvelle définition identitaire (urbaine, laïque, souverainiste, anti-bourgeoise) qui se profile à travers sa littérature; enfin l'autonomisation croissante du champ littéraire québécois s'impose sans

ambiguïté au cours de cette période. C'est pendant ce demi-siècle que s'affirme peu à peu l'existence de la littérature québécoise. Une telle conjoncture n'a pas échappé à l'acuité des lecteurs canadiens, au Québec comme dans les autres provinces, qui n'ont pas manqué de dire ce qu'une telle démonstration collective pouvait susciter d'intérêt, mais aussi d'inquiétude pour l'unité nationale, entendue comme la conscience d'une entité tant politique que culturelle et morale s'étendant "d'un océan à l'autre." Ce paradoxe caractérise notamment la phase de légitimation institutionnelle de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais, phase dont le commencement remonte à la fin des années cinquante. La distribution statistique[3] de notre corpus révèle en effet qu'après avoir connu une croissance relativement stable entre 1939 et 1959, la production de textes critiques sur la littérature québécoise monte en flèche dans les années soixante avec une augmentation de près de 400% (figure 1).

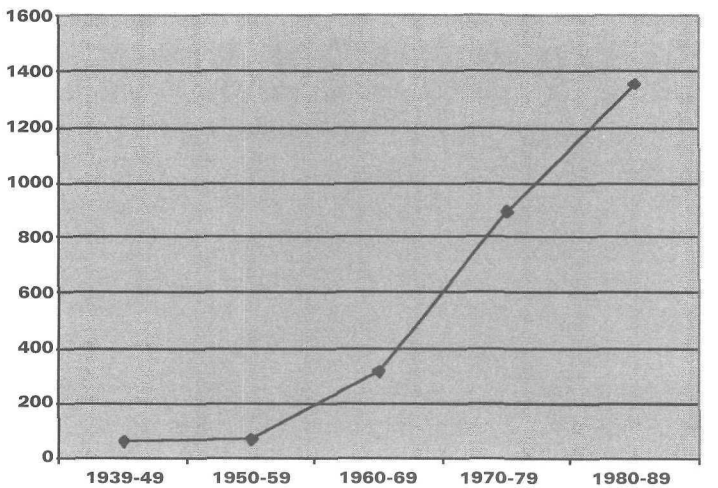


Fig. 1. Production des textes critiques sur la littérature québécoise

En même temps que les écrivains québécois exprimaient hautement leur différence irréductible, sur un fond de scène apocalyptique—séparatisme virulent, revendications constitutionnelles des gouvernements québécois de toute couleur politique, lutte armée et terrorisme du F.L.Q.—il semble que la critique littéraire anglophone ait choisi globalement de défendre l'identité canadienne par un rapatriement de la littérature québécoise dans l'unité d'une seule littérature canadienne. L'ironie du sort, c'est que l'élite politique canadienne faisait au même moment le pari opposé, exacerbant toutes les

velléités autonomistes du Québec et épuisant peu à peu tout espoir d'une réforme des institutions fédérales qui soit compatible avec un projet de société distincte au sein de l'État centralisateur. Pendant que les "littéraires" canadiens-anglais lisaient tout ce qui s'écrivait en français au Québec, les politiciens d'Ottawa faisaient la sourde oreille en s'écriant: "What does Quebec want?" Et c'est à force de feindre de ne pas comprendre qu'un grand rassembleur d'idées de la trempe de Pierre Elliott Trudeau devait réussir un autre rapatriement unilatéral, mais aux effets diamétralement opposés: ce que l'institution littéraire canadienne tendait alors à unir, la constitution de 1982 semble l'avoir séparé sans retour. En somme, la littérature canadienne, unique et incluant la différence québécoise, s'écarte presque autant du Canada des politiques fédérales que la moitié des Québécois qui ont choisi d'y renoncer.

Aussi parlera-t-on volontiers au Canada de la littérature révolutionnaire du Québec, après 1960, en même temps qu'on étudiera ses œuvres dans une perspective souvent pancanadienne, soucieuse de présenter la turbulence rhétorique des écrivains de la Belle Province comme partie prenante d'une nouvelle vitalité de la littérature canadienne. Cette stratégie a connu ses grands représentants, et même quelques voix dissidentes, dans la foulée du développement des littératures canadiennes comparées (see Beaudoin, "Axes"). Tout en contribuant fortement au processus de légitimation de la littérature québécoise—non plus comme un phénomène en voie d'émergence, mais comme un fait parvenu à la pleine maturité artistique—l'institution littéraire anglo-canadienne a tenté de transposer le caractère "national" des œuvres québécoises dans un contexte tout autre que l'expression d'une culture de dissidence dans l'ensemble canadien. Cette préoccupation partait d'ailleurs d'un souci d'intégration et de rapprochement, main tendue au partenaire québécois dans la consolidation d'une grande culture nationale accueillante. Ceci explique peut-être des écarts de lecture plus ou moins spectaculaires, selon que les œuvres sont appréciées à partir de l'institution montréalaise ou qu'elles sont lues hors-Québec.

Depuis les quarante dernières années, les échanges entre les deux communautés linguistiques se sont multipliés sous diverses formes (colloques, sociétés savantes, collaboration entre universités sur le plan de la recherche), dont certaines dépendent du pouvoir fédéral (CRSH, Fédération des études humaines et des sciences sociales du Canada, Conseil des Arts). La critique féministe a créé, surtout à partir de 1970, des espaces communs aux femmes francophones et anglophones: des revues comme *Tessera* et *Room of One's Own*, des ouvrages collectifs comme *In the*

Feminine: Women and Words (1983) et *Gynocritics/La Gynocritique* (1987). Si la dépendance à l'égard de la traduction que l'on observait durant la première moitié du XX[e] siècle s'est théoriquement estompée en raison de la formation linguistique des chercheurs anglophones, un très grand volume de textes critiques porte encore sur des œuvres en traduction. Une revue comme *Quill and Quire*, qui a beaucoup contribué à la diffusion de la littérature québécoise en traduction, recrutait souvent des collaborateurs qui, en d'autres lieux de publication, travaillaient sur les œuvres en français. Ces transactions institutionnelles compliquent assurément notre tâche. Il faut se demander dans quelle mesure cette intersection entre les institutions littéraires québécoise et anglo-canadienne remet en cause leur autonomie, voire notre vision dualiste du Canada. En dépit de toutes ces nuances et zones grises, nous persistons à croire qu'il existe une "communauté interprétative" anglo-canadienne et qu'elle est suffisamment homogène pour être objectivement circonscrite à partir de la lecture qu'elle propose de la littérature québécoise.

Un exemple des plus significatifs à cet égard présente une polarisation marquée. Parmi les essayistes de sa génération, Pierre Vadeboncoeur[4] est sans contredit l'un des plus connus au Québec. On trouverait peu à débattre là-dessus, même chez ceux qui se défendent de toute affinité avec les thèses soutenues par l'auteur de *Trois essais sur l'insignifiance* (1983). Or, nous n'avons recensé que deux entrées à son sujet au Canada anglais; la disproportion ne peut être plus flagrante. Il est vrai que le métier d'essayiste, dans le sens le plus pur du terme, comporte sa part d'ingratitude et que l'œuvre de Vadeboncoeur—treize livres publiés au cours de la période couverte par notre étude—n'a fait l'objet d'aucune traduction en anglais. L'omission mériterait, à elle seule, quelque explication,[5] mais voyons plutôt en quoi consistent les deux textes critiques en question: l'un se réduit à la mention isolée et allusive d'*Un amour libre* (1963) dans une compilation consacrée aux romanciers québécois des dernières années (Shek 26); l'autre est un compte rendu en bonne et due forme de *L'Absence, essai à la deuxième personne* (1985) (Malden). En fait, ce compte rendu de quelques pages renferme tout le discours critique que nous avons trouvé sur Pierre Vadeboncoeur.

L'auteur du compte rendu, Peter Malden, se montre conscient de la lacune qu'il s'applique à combler, puisqu'il prend la peine de résumer à larges traits la pensée et la carrière de l'essayiste dont il cite les ouvrages importants et traduit même quelques extraits judicieusement choisis. Le destinataire est en quelque sorte initié à l'ensemble de l'œuvre, dont il n'est

pas sensé ignorer l'existence, en même temps qu'il peut lire un commentaire exact et appréciatif du livre recensé.

Si l'on considère que *L'Absence* constitue le onzième livre de Vadeboncoeur, et que presque tous les titres parus sous sa signature jusqu'alors—à l'exception de *L'Absence* et d'*Un amour libre*—laissent peu de doute sur son engagement nationaliste, on s'étonnera moins de la préférence sélective des titres recensés. Les deux lecteurs rarissimes ont certes le mérite de signaler les écrits de Pierre Vadeboncoeur, mais leur choix parmi ceux-ci leur permet de ne pas trop troubler le silence général fait sur l'œuvre. Il serait candide de ne pas remarquer que leurs commentaires portent sur deux livres qui ont en commun le fait d'être exempts de toute prise de position politique, au sens usuel du mot; l'amour et l'art sont au premier plan de la réflexion proposée dans les deux ouvrages retenus. Le caractère unitaire de la littérature canadienne peut s'accommoder d'un Vadeboncoeur esthète ou métaphysicien, méditant sur le secret de l'âme amoureuse épanchée dans l'expression plastique ou épistolaire, mais il serait sans doute plus délicat de présenter l'auteur de *L'Autorité du peuple* (1965) ou de *La Dernière Heure et la première* (1970). Cela dit, le texte de Peter Malden est un modèle de concision et d'exactitude dans l'art du compte rendu. Il n'est pas question de lui reprocher quelque intention cachée dans l'appréciation qu'il fait de l'écrivain, appréciation très positive, soulignons-le, dont la probité autant que la compétence ne font aucun doute. Nous ne critiquons pas le critique. Nous relevons seulement le fait que cet unique commentaire d'une œuvre considérable, loin d'entamer l'occultation qui la soustrait à la connaissance du public canadien, reconnaît implicitement l'ignorance générale en tâchant d'y remédier.

Au premier chef, il faut évidemment invoquer la Révolution tranquille pour comprendre l'essor du discours critique anglophone sur les écrivains québécois: d'une part, en ce que ce mouvement d'émancipation interpelle le Canada anglais et, d'autre part, en ce que l'explosion littéraire qui se produit attire l'attention des critiques anglophones. Mais il y a plus. L'analyse détaillée des entrées pour la décennie 60-69 (figure 2) met en lumière un phénomène souvent négligé dans les études littéraires, soit l'importance du centenaire de la Confédération. En effet, alors qu'on dénombre environ une quinzaine de monographies et articles savants en 1966, la réception de la littérature québécoise connaîtra une augmentation fulgurante l'année suivante avec plus de 163 textes. Elle retombera l'année suivante à moins d'une trentaine de contributions critiques.

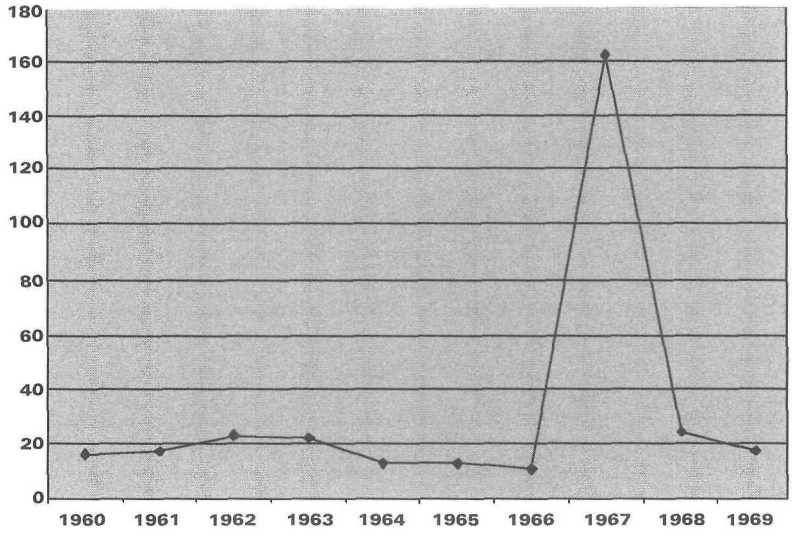


Fig. 2. L'analyse détaillée des années soixante

Ces chiffres ne laissent pas d'étonner. Ils témoignent de l'importance considérable du commémoratif dans notre société, de lieux de mémoire qui cristallisent les débats du présent. Ils traduisent aussi, par un effet de miroir qui rappelle 1867, les liens indissociables entre littérature et pays, réception de la littérature québécoise et unité nationale. Il est difficile de savoir à coup sûr si une telle démarche critique a pu être consciente ou concertée. Certes, si on garde à l'esprit le décalage entre la parution d'une œuvre et sa réception, ce pic que l'on observe n'est sans doute pas sans rapport avec la moisson des années 1965 et 1966 (Aquin, Blais, Ducharme, etc.). Mais comme l'a bien montré Eva-Marie Kröller dans un article consacré à l'Exposition universelle de 1967, l'année du Centenaire se voulait pour le Canada une vitrine devant laquelle, croyait-on naïvement, les visiteurs s'arrêteraient pour admirer son ouverture aux minorités.

Notre interprétation ne doit pas pour autant laisser croire à un intérêt éphémère pour la littérature québécoise. Les années 1970 marqueront une progression constante de la réception critique au Canada anglais, avec un taux de croissance de près de 300% par rapport aux années soixante. La consolidation du nationalisme continue d'appeler une réponse critique. Il y a également une corrélation à établir avec la mise en place des politiques de bilinguisme et de traduction, ainsi que l'augmentation sensible du nombre d'étudiants de français au Canada anglais. La problématique du joual et du

"vrai français" intéresse alors beaucoup les anglophones. Dans les années 80, c'est la perspective féministe qui prédominera et multipliera les ponts entre les deux institutions littéraires. Avec plus de 1533 entrées et une augmentation de 48%, cette décennie peut se définir comme une phase de stabilisation, si l'on tient compte de l'accroissement du nombre de titres parus chaque année au Québec.

Analysons maintenant quelques exemples qui permettront de juger d'éventuels écarts de lecture ou de différences sur le plan de l'horizon d'attente. Le premier cas—emblématique de notre recherche en quelque sorte—concerne la place de Roch Carrier dans le canon anglo-canadien de la littérature québécoise. Tout professeur de littérature québécoise œuvrant au Canada anglais connaît "The Hockey Sweater"[6] et plusieurs s'étonnent de l'importance "démesurée" accordée à cet auteur en regard de son statut au Québec. Ainsi, Pierre Hébert affirmait dans *Œuvres et critiques*: "Roch Carrier est probablement—on pourrait dire 'certainement' si les données étaient disponibles—l'auteur le plus lu au Canada anglais (alors que, curieusement, pas une seule des revues littéraires québécoises 'majeures' ne lui a consacré un numéro)" (102). Nos données—qui portent, précisons-le, sur la réception critique et non sur la seule lecture—placent Roch Carrier en sixième place du panthéon anglo-canadien des auteurs québécois et confirment la prémisse selon laquelle Carrier dispose, au Canada anglais, d'un capital symbolique supérieur à celui qu'on lui accorde au Québec, toutes proportions gardées. L'excellente analyse de Pierre Hébert démontre que l'œuvre de Carrier véhicule plusieurs des éléments qui rencontrent l'horizon d'attente du lectorat anglo-canadien face à la réalité québécoise: prédominance des valeurs traditionnelles comme la langue et la religion, population exubérante et ignorante, etc. Comme le souligne Hébert, plusieurs Canadiens anglais auront enfin l'impression de comprendre le Québec avec *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* alors que la représentation fictive est celle d'une tout autre époque.

Si l'on regarde de près le canon de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais (figure 3), on constate que les trois auteurs les plus étudiés sont des femmes: Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert et Marie-Claire Blais. Nonobstant le nombre élevé d'études d'obédience féministe dans les années 80, l'analyse en diachronie révèle un intérêt continu pour ces œuvres. La popularité de Michel Tremblay, d'Hubert Aquin, de Nicole Brossard et d'Antonine Maillet n'étonnera personne. La forte représentation de Saint-Denys Garneau et de Jacques Ferron, par contre, peut surprendre quand on sait que leurs œuvres

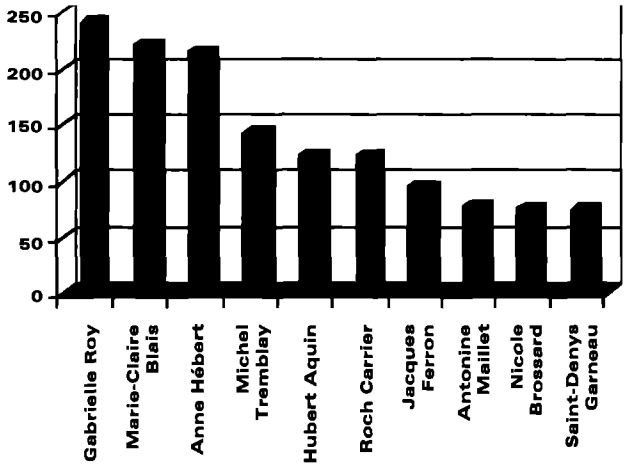


Fig. 3. Les auteurs québécois les plus étudiés au Canada anglais

ne comptent pas parmi les plus aisément accessibles ni les plus traduisibles. S'explique-t-elle par le rôle particulier joué par certains agents (comme Collin et Scott dans le cas de Saint-Denys Garneau) ou certaines amitiés (comme celle entre Ray Ellenwood et Jacques Ferron)? Ces aspects contingents ne sont pas à négliger, comme le démontrent les travaux du groupe de recherche *La vie littéraire au Québec.* Quoi qu'il en soit, quand on considère les noms qui composent ce groupe de tête et le peloton qui suit (Jacques Godbout, Yves Thériault, Gérard Bessette, Louis Hémon, Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, et André Langevin), on peut se demander si les écarts ne se sont pas amenuisés au cours des cinquante dernières années, s'il n'y a pas eu rapprochement entre les réceptions anglo-canadienne et franco-québécoise.

Les cas de sous-représentation s'avèrent plus significatifs. Par exemple, on compte sur les doigts de la main les articles consacrés à Francine Noël et à Régine Robin avant 1989, ce qui conduit à s'interroger sur le faible intérêt soulevé par ces écrivains à la vision du monde cosmopolite. Peut-on poser l'hypothèse que les mutations identitaires du Québec ne correspondent pas à l'horizon d'attente du lectorat anglo-canadien, du moins dans les années 80? Que penser de la représentation relativement mince du Régime français et du XIX^{e} siècle dans la critique postérieure à 1960? Doit-on supposer que les universitaires anglo-canadiens ne partagent pas l'urgence qui presse leurs homologues francophones de consolider la littérature québécoise et d'accroître son corpus?

Un cas particulier nous servira encore à illustrer la complexité des pro-

blèmes à résoudre. L'œuvre de Réjean Ducharme, romancier, dramaturge et scénariste, représente l'une des toutes premières valeurs littéraires québécoises depuis trente-cinq ans. Dans notre enquête, sa place s'établit au dix-septième rang, avec une soixantaine d'entrées, ce qui n'est pas rien, certes, mais cette mesure reste très au-dessous de son importance reconnue par l'institution littéraire québécoise, sinon par le rayonnement international de son œuvre. Voici un cas où le total des entrées peut induire en erreur. Si l'on examine la nature des soixante occurrences qui figurent dans notre corpus, on découvre que, de ce nombre, beaucoup de textes ne vont pas au-delà d'une mention furtive de son nom parmi les auteurs vedettes de sa génération, aux côtés de Blais, Aquin, Beaulieu ou Carrier, ces derniers recueillant une part ordinairement plus large d'analyse. Dans un article de fond qui fait le point sur la production littéraire québécoise, six ans après l'arrivée au pouvoir du Parti Québécois en 1976, Patricia Smart nomme une seule fois Réjean Ducharme dans un texte qui scrute les œuvres de plusieurs écrivains de sa génération: "Marie-Claire Blais' *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*, Aquin's *Prochain épisode* and the novels of Réjean Ducharme are examples of this formal explosion in the novel" (Smart, "Culture" 7). Le traitement nous paraît représentatif de celui qui est réservé à ce romancier par beaucoup de lecteurs canadiens-anglais.

Au bout du compte, on rencontre peu de leçons critiques des livres de Ducharme, et encore moins d'appréciations qui leur soient essentiellement favorables. Marc Côté exécute sommairement sa pièce, *Ha! Ha!*, dans un compte rendu dévastateur. L'auteur de *L'Avalée des avalés* (1965) n'est pas un inconnu au Canada anglais, mais sa fortune littéraire y paraît aléatoire et diversement appréciée. On reconnaît généralement l'audace de son travail formel sur la langue et la qualité de son écriture singulière, mais on trouve parfois ses intrigues inexistantes ou immotivées, gratuites, voire complaisantes dans l'expression acide d'un désespoir sans issue. Ses personnages sont jugés fantaisistes et sa prose déroutante. Le défaut d'organisation et de logique narrative dans la construction fictive agace visiblement les lecteurs anglophones dont la tradition lettrée offre peu d'exemples analogues. Doit-on parler à ce sujet d'une rupture d'horizon d'attente? Il est certain que Ducharme passe malaisément la frontière de la langue.

Des quatre premiers romans de Ducharme, Ben Shek n'estime convaincant que *Le Nez qui voque* (1967), qui situe plus clairement la localisation spatio-temporelle (montréalaise) de l'aliénation du couple de jeunes héros, Mille Milles et Chateaugué.[7] Pour Leonard W. Sugden, qui fait le point sur

ce qu'il nomme le roman révolutionnaire au Québec, *L'Hiver de force* (1972) témoigne, dans certaines pages, de l'activisme politique qui sévit là-bas: "The direct expression of political partisanship." C'est la seule fois que le nom de Ducharme est mentionné dans cet article d'une dizaine de pages qui tient à souligner la conjoncture de l'élection du Parti Québécois, le 15 novembre 1976, avec une série de romans qui va de *Pour la patrie* (1895) de Jules-Paul Tardivel à *L'Enfirouapé* (1974) d'Yves Beauchemin! L'ironie féroce de Ducharme à l'endroit des configurations idéologiques n'a pas été relevée. Camille R. La Bossière, par contre, ne semble pas négliger l'auteur des *Enfantômes*, dont il signe un compte rendu perspicace; il fait aussi un commentaire intéressant sur plusieurs romans de Ducharme dans un article qui s'efforce surtout de nuancer et d'expliquer le fameux lieu commun de la Grande Noirceur dans l'évaluation de la littérature québécoise des années soixante. Ronald Sutherland insiste, quant à lui, sur le rôle que joue le fond janséniste de l'enseignement religieux québécois dans la lourde culpabilité qui empoisonne l'enfance de tant de héros romanesques de la Révolution tranquille. Sutherland consacre son article à la comparaison de *Who Has Seen the Wind* (1947) de W. O. Mitchell avec *L'Avalée des avalés* de Réjean Ducharme, deux œuvres entre lesquelles il voit de frappantes analogies thématiques et formelles, tout en reconnaissant la qualité de l'écriture du romancier québécois, mais non sans réserve: "Actually, it is Ducharme's obvious fascination with sounds and words which in turn fascinates the reader. Since his whole book is a monologue—spoken language—he provides himself with the maximum opportunity to exploit linguistic possibilities. But such opportunity is not without pitfalls" (9).

Outre la détermination du canon dans ses aspects quantitatifs, l'un des aspects les plus prégnants de la comparaison entre les réceptions anglo-canadienne et québécoise réside, bien entendu, dans le discours critique sur les œuvres. La sanction appréciative ou dépréciative peut ainsi varier d'une institution à l'autre, comme en témoigne éloquemment l'œuvre de Jacques Poulin. La production romanesque de cet écrivain, saluée au Québec comme l'une des plus importantes des vingt-cinq dernières années, a connu une réception beaucoup plus mitigée au Canada anglais.

Entre 1973 et 1989, nous avons recensé plus de 24 articles ou comptes rendus consacrés à Jacques Poulin. À trois exceptions près, tous ces textes critiques font suite—il est crucial de le signaler—à la traduction de ses œuvres en anglais: *The Jimmy Trilogy* (1979), *Spring Tides* (1986) et *Volkswagen Blues* (1988). Parus en français respectivement en 1967, 1969 et 1970, les trois pre-

miers romans de Poulin (*Mon cheval pour un royaume, Jimmy* et *Le Coeur de la baleine bleue*) ont donc été présentés au Canada anglais sous forme de trilogie, choix éditorial insufflant ainsi un surcroît d'unité à des œuvres qui jusque-là maintenaient des liens plus ou moins serrés sur les plans de la thématique et des personnages.

Dans son évaluation de la trilogie, la critique anglo-canadienne se veut plutôt positive, bien que chacun des trois romans suscite des réserves. Ainsi, Keith Garebian décrit Jacques Poulin comme un écrivain subtil, mais souligne les difficultés de lecture que pose son imaginaire ("reading it is sometimes like trying to find shapes in mist" [34]) et déplore la minceur de l'intrigue de *Jimmy*. Pour sa part, Patricia Merivale souligne l'inventivité des jeux de langage de Poulin—qu'elle juge supérieur à Victor-Lévy Beaulieu—mais reproche au *Coeur de la baleine bleue* de sombrer dans le sentimentalisme (129).[8] De la même façon, Kathy Mezei est très élogieuse à propos de *Jimmy* ("This well-crafted, lyrical story is one of the best I've read from Quebec in a long time" [519]), mais relève certaines difficultés techniques dans l'ensemble de la trilogie.

Par ailleurs, certains des comptes rendus que nous avons dépouillés se polarisent autour de jugements difficiles à concilier. Pour Wayne Grady, "*The Jimmy Trilogy* is a clear indication that Jacques Poulin is a fine Quebec writer of whom English readers now can sit up and take notice" (14). Après avoir vanté le style de l'auteur et la force de *Jimmy*, Grady termine son compte rendu par une conclusion dythirambique: "In short, Jacques Poulin emerges from Quebec in much the same way that Mikhail Bulgakov [. . .] once emerged from the Soviet Union" (15). A l'autre extrémité du spectre, Linda Leith se livre à une charge contre la trilogie dans *Canadian Forum*, allant jusqu'à dire qu'il s'agit là d'un gaspillage des fonds destinés à l'édition. Elle affirme qu'il n'y a pas suffisamment de matière dans *Mon cheval pour un royaume, Jimmy* ou *Le Coeur de la baleine bleue* pour en faire des récits valables. Leith condamne les problèmes structurels et stylistiques de ces romans, leur manque de clarté et de réalisme ainsi que leur ton monocorde.

Outre sa dimension évaluative, la spécificité de la réception anglo-canadienne se donne à lire dans ses stratégies argumentatives et les perspectives critiques déployées. Dans le cas de la *Jimmy Trilogy*, ce qui frappe d'emblée, ce sont les comparaisons que les critiques établissent entre Poulin et des écrivains d'origines diverses. Ainsi, Kathy Mezei affirme que "The vivid description of the streets and landmarks of Quebec City assumes the

mythic quality of Joyce's Dublin" (518) et rapproche le ton adopté par le narrateur de *Mon cheval pour un royaume* de celui qu'on associe à des grands noms de la littérature européenne comme Kafka et Camus. Gillian Davies, dans un compte rendu paru dans *The Fiddlehead*, propose une comparaison avec des écrivains québécois et français: "In his seriousness of conception and fantasy of execution, Poulin recalls Carrier, Réjean Ducharme, even the Boris Vian of *L'Ecume des Jours*" (129). Dans une veine similaire, Patricia Merivale situe la trilogie dans le contexte littéraire québécois pour ensuite mettre à jour des filiations américaines et européennes: "*My Horse for a Kingdom* reads like a deliberate answer to Hubert Aquin's *Prochain épisode*" (128), écrit-elle, tandis que le héros de *Jimmy* "seems a gentle re-working of that most violently psychotic of creative brats, the heroine of *L'Avalée des avalés*, by Réjean Ducharme" (128). Merivale ajoute à propos de *Jimmy*: "Jimmy of course does not know that he shares the sensitivities of Salinger's Holden Caulfield, expressed in an at times Queneauvian idiom, and is creating for himself a world of magic realism like Boris Vian's" (129). L'influence de Salinger est également relevée par Linda Leith et par Wayne Grady.

L'effet produit par ce réseau de comparaisons est multiple: universalisation de l'œuvre, recentrement québécois et inscription de ce roman dans la nord-américanité, triple héritage que ne renierait certes pas Poulin, lui qui place ces ambiguïtés identitaires au centre de son univers thématique. S'il s'avère aléatoire de définir un vecteur dominant, nous pouvons toutefois affirmer que tous les critiques placent Poulin au cœur de la modernité du XX^{e} siècle et qu'une majorité d'entre eux établissent des comparaisons avec des écrivains non-québécois. Curieusement, la critique ne fait ici référence à aucune œuvre canadienne-anglaise et ne semble pas intéressée à "canadianiser" Poulin, reproche qui sera parfois fait à la critique aquinienne par des commentateurs québécois. En parallèle avec la question des filiations littéraires, plusieurs critiques font état de la dimension intertextuelle de la trilogie poulinienne. Ainsi, Gillian Davies et Wayne Grady soulignent tous deux les renvois à la littérature québécoise et à Ernest Hemingway dans *Le Coeur de la baleine bleue*.

Quant aux thèmes soulignés ou explorés dans les comptes rendus, on observe une certaine unanimité au sein de la critique de même qu'une concordance avec le contenu de la trilogie. La notion de "gentleness" (douceur) dans les comportements humains, la réflexion sur l'écriture, la sublimation du quotidien dans l'imaginaire, la problématique identitaire, tels sont les

éléments systématiquement mentionnés. Quelques écarts significatifs au sein du corpus attirent toutefois notre attention. Selon Wayne Grady, la dérive imaginée par Jimmy sur les glaces du Saint-Laurent anticipe la montée du séparatisme. Linda Leith aborde cette question politique au sujet de *My Horse for a Kingdom*, mais d'une façon négative, voyant là une façon pour Poulin de combler un vide au niveau de l'histoire. Sans vouloir parler de dépolitisation de l'œuvre de Poulin, on constate cependant le peu de commentaires que suscite la dimension politico-révolutionnaire de *Mon cheval pour un royaume.*

Un autre élément d'importance dans la réception anglo-canadienne de la trilogie est la problématique institutionnelle, soulevée par quelques critiques. Ainsi, Wayne Grady souligne le double rôle joué par Sheila Fischman dans la reconnaissance de l'œuvre de Poulin:

> In 1973 Sheila Fischman wrote in the *Supplement to the Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature* that Jacques Poulin (1937-) was "a very important, unjustly neglected young writer." Now she herself has helped to correct that imbalance by translating Poulin's first three novels [. . .] and presenting them in a single volume as a trilogy. And she would seem to have proven her point (14).

Kathy Mezei met également en lumière la fonction de cet important agent institutionnel qu'est S. Fischman: "Although Poulin is not one of Quebec's best known writers, Sheila Fischman's perseverance has opened up a new and intriguing fictional world for English readers" (518). Linda Leith, quant à elle, désire attirer l'attention sur le réseautage qui a cours dans l'institution en affirmant que la trilogie est précédée d'une "glowing little introduction by Poulin's friend Roch Carrier" (34).

Le prochain roman de Poulin à être traduit, *Spring Tides* (1986), connaît une meilleure réception que la trilogie sur le plan des jugements évaluatifs, mais assez similaire quant aux stratégies argumentatives. L'accueil est en général positif, mais parfois ponctué de réserves, la prose minimaliste de Poulin n'étant pas toujours reçue de la même façon. Pour John Urquhart, "The book's simple story, spare prose, and gentle humour disguise a myriad of deeper ideas" (130). D'autres, comme Rachel Rafelman, y voient une faiblesse, qui s'expliquerait par la nature politique du roman: "Like a great deal of fiction with a political subtext, the writing here is spare, the characterizations precious and vague, and the structure little more than a barely filled-in plot outline" (46). D. O. Spettigue, dans *Queen's Quarterly*, met en évidence les qualités stylistiques de l'oeuvre.[9] Barbara Leckie reconnaît également la valeur de ce style en apparence simple et parle du texte de

Poulin comme d'un "exceptional novel" (195). David Homel, pour sa part, relève plusieurs défauts dans *Les Grandes marées*: "*Spring Tides* is a book that is soft in the middle. The parable of the island refuge is not handled in a particularly original way, and the childlike, wistful sentiments are unsatisfying for those who read novels in order to plunge into a strange, new universe" (88). Il ajoute que la traduction du roman en révèle les limites, notamment l'humour autocentré. Enfin, Theresia Quigley estime, au contraire, que "Poulin's book is delightful and thought-provoking" (103).

Tout comme pour la trilogie, la réception de *Spring Tides* donne lieu à une série de comparaisons qui ont pour effet d'universaliser l'imaginaire poulinien. Ainsi, D.O. Spettigue situe le roman dans la lignée de la satire utopique chère aux Britanniques tels Defoe et Swift. Theresia Quigley suggère une autre piste de lecture, tout aussi intéressante, soit les *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* de Lewis Carroll. De son côté, David Homel propose une comparaison avec l'écrivain américain Richard Brautigan: "The same simple prose, wistful tone, and childlike sentiments are all there" (87). Le lectorat de ces comptes rendus se voit donc donner des références familières qui enrichissent l'œuvre de Poulin par ces renvois aux littératures américaine et britannique. Seule Barbara Leckie propose une comparaison avec la culture québécoise—qui porte d'ailleurs sur un film et non sur une œuvre littéraire—en évoquant *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* de Denys Arcand.

Les thèmes dégagés par les comptes rendus se recoupent: critique du patriarcat, du monde des affaires et de l'industrialisation, satire sociale, quête du bonheur dans un monde d'artifices, langage, américanité et mythes chrétiens. Un aspect intéressant de cette réception est la lecture politique qui se fait entendre dans une minorité de recensions. Selon Leckie, le personnage du traducteur prend une dimension métaphorique: "Teddy's occupation foregrounds the dilemma of French Canada [. . .] he is isolated, he has difficulty communicating with others (at the outset Teddy is labelled as 'socio-affective'), he is passive and reluctant to defend his rights, and he is repeatedly referred to as marginal" (196). Rachel Rafelman fait une lecture semblable du roman: "This slight allegorical novel by the author of *The Jimmy Trilogy* (House of Anansi) is a literary caveat to Quebec concerning the perils of isolationism" (46). Si rien n'est moins sûr que Poulin ait voulu lancer un tel avertissement aux Québécois, le propos de Rafelman illustre bien comment les communautés linguistiques peuvent interpréter différemment les œuvres littéraires.

Volkswagen Blues, pourtant célébré au Québec comme l'un des romans les plus importants des années 80, connaîtra une réception difficile au Canada anglais, tant sur le plan quantitatif que sur le plan évaluatif. La popularité croissante de Poulin et la diffusion plus massive de ses œuvres en traduction auraient pu paver la voie à une réception des plus favorables au Canada anglais, mais il n'en fut rien. Seule une poignée de comptes rendus accueillirent *Volkswagen Blues* et la majorité furent négatifs. Dans *Books in Canada*, Terry Goldie déplore la superficialité du roman, tant dans son style, ses emprunts intertextuels et son aspect cartographique. Le style dénudé de Poulin ne trouve pas ici preneur, et l'esthétique de la surface et de la trace est sévèrement critiquée: "It seems as though Poulin thinks cartography can replace cultural geography—as if a Texaco road map describes the United States" (29). Le critique se moque du style hemingwayesque du roman avant de conclure: "There is certainly room for a similar book about the Quebecois finding the soul of America and his own American roots. This isn't it." (29). Exprimant une position similaire, Mark Anthony Jarman déplore l'aspect narcissique de l'intertextualité déployée dans le roman. Mais ce qui déplaît particulièrement au critique est le minimalisme et la lenteur du style: "Wandering through *Volkswagen Blues* is like watching paint dry. [. . .] The narration seems damaged, childlike" (187). A l'opposé, Brent Ledger reconnaît—comme d'ailleurs la majorité des critiques québécois—une valeur à l'artifice du roman: "The reader's pleasure comes from being pulled into a story that's really an intellectual confection—flagrantly and deliciously artificial" (26). Contrairement aux deux critiques précédents, Ledger apprécie la virtuosité stylistique de Poulin et même le rythme du texte.

Sur le plan des comparaisons avec d'autres écrivains, la prédominance va bien sûr du côté des États-Unis, respectant ainsi la dynamique intertextuelle du roman. Chez Mark Anthony Jarman, la comparaison avec la littérature beat et Jack Kerouac prend une tournure défavorable: "This road book needs Neal Cassidy to power it through the curves" (188). Terry Goldie reconnaît les liens intertextuels qui unissent *Volkswagen Blues* et *On the Road* et la volonté de Poulin d'inscrire son roman dans l'espace nord-américain. Il laisse cependant entendre que la réciproque n'est pas vraie en faisant allusion à la récupération francophone de Kerouac: "an author lately reborn as a Franco-American" (29). Goldie propose ensuite une comparaison inédite avec le *Don Quichotte* de Cervantès, qui vise à universaliser l'imaginaire poulinien plutôt qu'à le "nord-américaniser." Seul Brent Ledger artic-

ule une comparaison avec la littérature américaine favorable à Poulin, ce dernier sachant éviter les dénouements apocalyptiques. Ledger suggère ensuite un parallèle des plus pertinents entre *Volkswagen Blues* et l'univers des westerns et du cinéma américain: "The ending reminded me of Jane Fonda and Robert Redford in *The Electric Horseman*. The rest of the book can be read as an inspired parody of buddy films like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, with their unresolved sexual tensions" (26).

La constellation thématique de *Volkswagen Blues* est bien circonscrite dans les différents comptes rendus, encore que l'opposition entre le nomadisme et le sédentarisme, essentielle pour comprendre la distribution géographique des francophones en Amérique et la relation duelle entre Jack et son frère Théo, ne soit pas relevée. Contrairement aux romans précédents de Poulin, *Volkswagen Blues* ne donne lieu à aucune interprétation politique dans le corpus critique anglo-canadien. Fait intéressant, les deux critiques négatives soulèvent des problèmes de traduction ou d'usage de l'anglais dans le texte français. Peut-être est-ce là une des raisons qui justifient le reproche d'artificialité. Un autre motif d'agacement que partagent Goldie et Jarman tient au paratexte de l'édition anglaise, qui décrit le roman de Poulin comme "one of best novels of the 1980s," ce que rejettent les deux critiques. A l'évidence, l'arrogance publicitaire irrite, encore que ce jugement corresponde à l'opinion consensuelle de la critique québécoise. Comment dès lors peut-on expliquer cet écart évaluatif entre les deux institutions?

Tout donne à croire que pour un lecteur anglo-saxon, la représentation des Etats-Unis que propose Poulin paraît superficielle ou naïve, tant du point de vue des références extratextuelles que dans la perspective d'un lecteur familier avec les grands noms de la littérature américaine. Dans cette optique, le roman de Poulin, malgré son jeu intertextuel explicite, peut sembler dépourvu d'originalité en regard des œuvres de Salinger, Brautigan, Kerouac ou Hemingway. Mais l'on pourrait inverser la problématique pour tenter de comprendre la réception défavorable de *Volkswagen Blues* et, au-delà, les difficultés de lecture que pose Jacques Poulin au Canada anglais depuis les années soixante-dix. Serait-ce qu'une fraction de la critique anglo-canadienne résiste à l'américanisation de la littérature québécoise? Serait-ce plutôt que l'univers de Poulin ne correspond pas aux attentes des lecteurs anglophones de la littérature québécoise? La réponse se trouve peut-être dans cette constatation de Theresia Quigley à la lecture des *Grandes Marées*: "It is interesting to note that Poulin does not concern him-

self with the usual preoccupations of Quebec writers. Neither the Land nor the Church play[s] an important role in this novel and political questions are of no great significance" (103).

La réception critique de l'œuvre d'Hubert Aquin au Canada anglais, par son abondance et sa diversité, nous permet de saisir les écarts de lecture sous un autre angle, celui du discours interprétatif/théorique. Dès la parution de *Prochain épisode*, la production aquinienne a suscité l'intérêt de l'Autre, tant pour ses qualités littéraires que pour sa problématique nationaliste. Il existe cependant des différences d'interprétation entre les deux institutions, différences que nous avons commentées ailleurs et que nous ne ferons qu'évoquer ici (cf. Annette Hayward et André Lamontagne). Certaines ont provoqué un débat métacritique virulent, notamment lorsque Chantal de Grandpré a dénoncé "les stratégies mises en œuvre pour faire de Hubert Aquin un écrivain *canadien*." Anthony Purdy s'est étonné de ce grief d'occultation du politique fait aux critiques anglo-canadiens, soulignant au contraire que "ces critiques sont le plus souvent fascinés par le nationalisme de cette œuvre [. . . et que] si les lecteurs canadiens s'intéressent aux romans d'Aquin, c'est qu'ils sont fortement interpellés par ces textes" (280-81). Tout en donnant raison à Purdy, l'examen de la réception d'Aquin au Canada montre qu'un clivage s'est fait jour dans les années 70 et qu'il se maintient aujourd'hui. Du côté francophone, à l'exception de l'ouvrage de Gilles de La Fontaine, la majorité des études se réclament de champs éloignés d'une réalité sociale immédiate: la psychanalyse (Jacques Cardinal, Anne Elaine Cliche et Robert Richard); l'esthétique (René Lapierre); la thématique (Françoise Iqbal); la perspective du sacré (Pierre-Yves Mocquais); et la poétique de l'intertextualité (André Lamontagne). Du côté anglophone, le référent extra-textuel a toujours été au centre des études aquiniennes: depuis l'ouvrage de Patricia Smart sur la dialectique de l'art et du pays jusqu'à l'étude contextualiste de Marilyn Randall en passant par l'essai de Anthony Wall sur la référence. Ces deux dernières monographies illustreraient comment la réception anglo-canadienne, malgré son renouveau méthodologique et les préoccupations théoriques qu'elle peut partager avec la critique québécoise—par exemple, la question de l'intertextualité—maintient un ancrage socio-politique.

Ce constat ne se veut aucunement évaluatif. Il reconnaît plutôt la richesse de la critique aquinienne et ses différents apports. Il témoigne cependant de deux tendances identifiables qu'il reste à expliquer. Pour reprendre nos paramètres théoriques, il semble que la concrétisation du sens des textes

d'Aquin réalisée par le lecteur anglophone—et pas seulement le lecteur critique—ne puisse faire l'économie du contexte politique parce que le Canada ne peut se sentir autrement que visé directement et comme sommé de répondre à une œuvre québécoise dont la portée nationaliste ne saurait être ignorée.

Et qu'en est-il des attentes de ce lecteur face à la littérature québécoise dans son ensemble? Peut-on supposer qu'elles sont demeurées assez stables au cours des quarante ou cinquante dernières années? La norme anglo-canadienne de la littérature québécoise, avec tout ce que cela comprend de références objectivables (religion, langue, pays, revendications politiques, etc.), ne se modifie pas au même rythme que la connaissance ou la compréhension du Québec. Quant au critique, il dispose certes d'un point de vue différent de celui des simples lecteurs, plus informé, mais son expérience de la vie quotidienne, son imaginaire, ses premières références littéraires le placent dans la même communauté interprétative que ces derniers, dans des conditions d'actualisation du texte qui se distinguent de celles du lecteur québécois. Nonobstant une expérience partagée des genres littéraires (comme le roman), dans la majorité des cas, les lectures faites dans le cadre de l'adolescence et du premier cycle universitaire assurent aux anglophones et aux francophones une formation littéraire et critique/théorique issue de traditions distinctes. Au-delà des études doctorales des chercheurs anglophones en milieu québécois ainsi que des contacts croissants et fructueux entre universitaires, rapports qui favorisent un espace interprétatif commun aux deux groupes linguistiques, nous croyons donc qu'une expérience esthétique et un horizon d'attente différents se manifestent dans la réception anglo-canadienne de la littérature québécoise. Seul le dépouillement achevé du corpus et la suite de l'analyse métacritique ici ébauchée pourront cependant confirmer la justesse et la portée de ce qui constituait notre principale hypothèse de travail.

NOTES

1 "La réception critique anglo-canadienne de la littérature québécoise (1867-1989)," projet subventionné par le CRSH; Annette Hayward de l'Université Queen's complétait notre équipe de trois chercheurs assistés d'une quinzaine d'étudiants.

2 On trouvera plus loin dans ces pages certains passages qui empruntent à ce dernier article.

3 Bien entendu, une pondération s'impose puisque dans notre inventaire, un livre équivaut à un article sur le plan statistique.

4 Faut-il rappeler, en passant, que Pierre Vadeboncoeur, né en 1920, fut de la même promotion, au collège Brébeuf, que Pierre Laporte et Pierre Elliott Trudeau; qu'il collabora d'abord à *Cité libre*, avant de s'écarter définitivement du groupe dirigé par ce dernier et qu'il consacra une bonne moitié de ses écrits à promouvoir la cause de l'indépendance politique du Québec?

5 Jane Everett s'est penchée sur la difficulté de traduction que présente la prose résistante de Pierre Vadeboncoeur, après avoir rappelé que ses essais n'ont suscité, hors-Québec, ni traduction ni commentaire critique notable.

6 Rappelons pour mémoire la savoureuse parodie de ce texte parue dans *Liberté*, ("The Handkerchief").

7 "The French-Canadian Novel, 1967-1972: An Overview" (20-21).

8 "The first two-thirds are rendered diffuse by 'gentleness' in both theme and style [. . .] to the point of lapsing into sentimentality."

WORKS CITED

Aquin, Hubert. *Prochain Épisode.* Montréal: Le Cercle du livre de France, 1965.

Beauchemin, Yves. *L'Enfirouapé.* Montréal: La Presse, 1974.

Beaudoin, Réjean. "Axes de comparaison entre deux littératures." *Voix et images* 72 (1999): 480-94.

—. "Réception critique de la littérature québécoise au Canada anglais (1867-1901)." *Études françaises* 32.3 (1996): 61-76.

Blais, Marie-Claire. *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel.* Montréal: les Éditions du Jour, 1965.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Le champ de production des biens symboliques." *L'Année sociologique* (1971): 49-126.

Cardinal, Jacques. *Le roman de l'histoire: politique et transmission du nom dans* Prochain épisode *et* Trou de mémoire *de Hubert Aquin.* Montréal: Editions Balzac, 1993.

Carrier, Roch. "Le chandail de hockey." *Les enfants du bonhomme dans la lune.* Montréal: Stanké, 1979.

—. *La guerre, yes sir!* Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1968.

—. *La guerre, yes sir!* Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Anansi, 1970.

—. *The Hockey Sweater and Other Stories.* Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Anansi, 1979.

Cliche, Anne Elaine. *Le désir du roman: Hubert Aquin, Réjean Ducharme.* Montréal: XYZ, 1992.

Côté, Marc. "Ha! Ha!" *Books in Canada* 16. 2 (March 1987): 25.

Davies, Gillian. "*The Jimmy Trilogy*, Jacques Poulin." *The Fiddlehead* 129 (1981): 128-29.

Dubois, Jacques. *L'Institution de la littérature: introduction à une sociologie.* Paris: Nathan; Bruxelles: Labor, 1978.

Ducharme, Réjean. *Ha! ha!* Montréal: Lacombe, 1982.

—. *L'Avalée des avalés.* Paris: Gallimard, 1966.

—. *Le Nez qui voque.* Paris: Gallimard, 1967.

—. *Les Enfantômes.* Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

—. *L'Hiver de force.* Paris: Gallimard, 1974.

Dybikowski, Ann, Victoria Freeman, Barbara Pulling and Betsy Warland, eds. *In the*

Feminine: Women and Words/Les Femmes et les mots. Conférence/Proceedings 1983. Edmonton: Longspoon, 1985.
Even-Zohar, Itamar. "Polysystem Theory." *Poetics Today* 1.1-2 (1979): 287-310.
Everett, Jane. "Traduire Pierre Vadeboncoeur." *Études littéraires* 29.2 (1996): 19-38.
Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980.
Garebian, Keith. "The Jimmy Trilogy." *Quill and Quire* 46.4 (April 1980): 34.
Godard, Barbara, ed. *Gynocritics/La Gynocritique: Feminist Approaches to Canadian and Quebec Women's Writing/Démarches féministes à l'écriture des Canadiennes et des Québécoises.* Toronto: ECW Press, 1987.
Goldie, Terry. "Transcontinental." *Books in Canada* 17.6 (1988): 29.
Grady, Wayne. "Accent on the soul." *Books in Canada* 9.1 (1980): 14-15.
Grandpré, Chantal de. "La canadianisation de la littérature québécoise: le cas Aquin." *Liberté* 159 (1985): 50-59.
"The Handkerchief." *Liberté* 145 (1983): 24-25.
Hayward, Annette and André Lamontagne. "Le Canada anglais: une invention québécoise?" *Voix et images* 72 (1999): 460-79.
Hébert, Pierre. "Roch Carrier au Canada anglais." *Œuvres et critiques* 14.1 (1989): 101-13.
Homel, David. "Drifting Off." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 36 (1988): 87-89.
Iqbal, Françoise. *Hubert Aquin romancier.* Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1978.
Iser, Wolfgang. *L'acte de lecture: théorie de l'effet esthétique.* Trad. Evelyne Sznycer. Bruxelles: P. Mardaga, 1985.
Jarman, Mark Anthony. "Jacques Poulin, *Volkswagen Blues.*" *Malahat Review* 83 (1988): 187-88.
Jauss, Hans Robert. *Pour une esthétique de la réception.* Paris: Gallimard, 1978.
Kröller, Eva-Marie. "Expo 67: Canada's Camelot?" *Canadian Literature* 152-153 (1997): 36-51.
La Bossière, Camille R. "Of Renaissance and Solitude in Quebec: A Recollection of the Sixties." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 7.1 (1982): 110-14.
La Fontaine, Gilles de. *Hubert Aquin et le Québec.* Montréal: Parti Pris, 1978.
Lamontagne, André. *Les Mots des autres. La poétique intertextuelle des œuvres romanesques de Hubert Aquin.* Sainte-Foy: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992.
Lapierre, René. *L'imaginaire captif.* Montréal: Quinze, 1982.
Leckie, Barbara. "*Spring Tides* by Jacques Poulin." *Rubicon* 8 (1987): 195-97.
Ledger, Brent. "Poulin's witty trek: Québec's search for an American home." *Quill and Quire* 54.6 (1988): 26.
Leith, Linda. "The Walls of Old Quebec." *Canadian Forum* 60.700 (1980): 34-35.
Malden, Peter. "*L'Absence, essai à la deuxième personne,* by Pierre Vadeboncoeur." *Rubicon* 7 (1986): 203-205.
Merivale, Patricia. "Potpourri." *Canadian Literature* 88 (1981): 127-33.
Mezei, Kathy. "*The Jimmy Trilogy.*" *Queen's Quarterly* 87.3 (1980): 518-19.
Mocquais, Pierre-Yves. *Hubert Aquin ou la quête interrompue.* Montréal: Le Cercle du Livre de France, 1985.
Morgan, Henry James. *Bibliotheca Canadensis: or, A Manual of Canadian Literature.* Ottawa: G. E. Desbarats, 1867.

Paterson, Janet M. *Moments postmodernes dans le roman québécois.* Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1990.
Poulin, Jacques. *Jimmy.* Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1969.
—. *Le Coeur de la baleine bleue.* Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1971.
—. *Les Grandes Marées.* Montréal: Leméac, 1978.
—. *Mon cheval pour un royaume.* Montréal: Les Éditions du Jour, 1967.
—. *Spring Tides.* Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Anansi, 1986.
—. *The "Jimmy" Trilogy.* Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: Anansi, 1979.
—. *Volkswagen Blues.* Montréal: Québec-Amérique, 1984.
—. *Volkswagen Blues.* Trans. Sheila Fischman. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988.
Purdy, Anthony. "Lire Aquin. Les enjeux de la critique." *Critique et littérature québécoise.* Ed. Annette Hayward et Agnès Whitfield. Montréal: Tryptique, 1992. 275-87.
Quigley, Theresia. "A Crowded Eden." *The Fiddlehead* 153 (1987): 103.
Rafelman, Rachel. *"Spring Tides." Quill and Quire* 52.10 (1986): 46.
Randall, Marilyn. *Le Contexte littéraire: lecture pragmatique de Hubert Aquin et de Réjean Ducharme.* Longueuil: Le Préambule, 1990.
Richard, Robert. *Le Corps logique de la fiction. Le code romanesque chez Hubert Aquin.* Montréal: L'Hexagone, 1990.
Shek, Ben Z. "The French-Canadian Novel, 1967-1972: An Overview." *Creative Literature in Canada Symposium.* Ed. Grace Buller and Irma McDunough. Ontario: Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1974. 18-26.
—. *French-Canadian and Québécois Novels.* Toronto: Oxford UP, 1991.
Smart, Patricia. "Culture, Revolution and Politics in Quebec." *Canadian Forum* 62.718 (1982): 7-10.
—. *Hubert Aquin, agent double.* Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1973.
Spettigue, D.O. "Recent Canadian Fiction." *Queen's Quarterly* 94.2 (1987): 366-75.
Sugden, Leonard W. "Quebec's Revolutionary Novels." *Canadian Literature* 82 (1979): 133-41.
Sutherland, Ronald. "Children of the changing wind." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 5.4 (1970): 3-11.
Urquhart, John. "Comic Strips." *Canadian Literature* 116 (1988): 129-31.
Vadeboncoeur, Pierre. *La Dernière Heure et la première.* Montréal: L'Hexagone/Parti pris, 1970.
—. *L'Absence, essai à la deuxième personne.* Montréal: Boréal, 1985.
—. *L'Autorité du peuple.* s.l.: Éditions de l'Arc, 1965.
—. *Trois essais sur l'insignifiance.* Paris: Albin Michel, 1983.
—. *Un amour libre.* Montréal: HMH, 1970.
Wall, Anthony John. *Hubert Aquin entre référence et métaphore.* Candiac, Québec: Éditions Balzac, 1991.

Adam Dickinson

Palaeozoic

It's hard to say how skeletons arose.
The first intention, perhaps, the first
certainty migrating to the surface of the skin,
the decision to move to the city, a brick layer.

Shells may have been wastes disposed
on the outside of the body, slow corals
that grew as the uselessness of inside
made its way to use, to irony.

For what advantage? To be able to push back?
The first bones were the first yearning for rock,
already there were the impossible nostalgias,
the mineral homesickness, the heavy heart.

There is a small bump on your collar bone.
I imagine it now to have been the start
of a new decision, the slow radial wish of ribs
beyond me.

Elise Partridge

Algaed Stones: Prayer

To be smoothed,
caressed for years by blessing waves
till cutting edges, rounded, soothe;

to be a sheltering mountain
for skittering crabs,
my foot dappled with barnacles,
a refuge for the wren;

even at a thousand years, still to grow green.

Roxanne Rimstead

Working-Class Intruders: Female Domestics in *Kamouraska* and *Alias Grace*

> In the end, she said, we had the better of them, because we washed their dirty linen and therefore we knew a good deal about them; but they did not wash ours, and knew nothing about us at all. (*Alias Grace* 189)

> She "sits on a cushion and sews a fine seam," cool as a cucumber and with her mouth primmed up like a governess's, and I lean my elbows on the table across from her, cudgelling my brains, and trying in vain to open her up like an oyster. (*Alias Grace* 159)

Traditionally, domestic servants in literature have been fixed as icons and stock characters (for instance, drudges, loafers, fools, messengers, mammies, and accomplices), or under-represented as silenced subjects, background fixtures mute as furniture. As indicated by the title of Bruce Robbins's study, *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below,* domestics appeared on the margins of the text as metonymic presences and necessary absences in Victorian fiction, their dismembered hands standing in for fuller representations of the people. In Canadian literature, however, female domestics have done a great deal of cultural work in fiction, appearing increasingly as protagonists after the turn of the century in English, French, and minority ethnic literature (for example, in Antonine Maillet's *La Sagouine,* Ethel Wilson's *Lilly's Story,* Gabrielle Roy's *La Rivière sans repos,* and Nellie McClung's *Painted Fires*). Literary versions of domestics in Canada have ranged from the "servant's hand" on the margins of the text to the well-known servant/protagonists who dominate the fictional landscape by voicing servitude and classed subjectivities. Servant/protagonists are, nonetheless, too often read as minority ethnics, universal symbols of womanhood, or the people in general, rather than as representations of domestics. Despite the fact that literary servants have been the focus of feminist recovery in critically acclaimed texts like *Kamouraska* and *Alias Grace,* female domestics have failed to appear as a meaningful category of analysis in Canadian women's writing. Aurélie has been read as a minority ethnic

and a female double for the lady of Kamouraska, and Grace Marks has been read as a fluid, "unbounded" postmodern subject (March 80) and a haunted, split personality. Although it is difficult to bring materialist analysis and social history to bear in a direct way on these dreamlike historical novels, I would like to probe the ideology of their representations of domestics by considering the politics of domestic space in their narratives.

In order to suggest oppositional ways of reading female domestics in literature, I wish to explore how they are portrayed as intruders into the bourgeois spaces of home and nation. Often seen transgressing social boundaries, these working-class intruders overstep their place and thus threaten their middle-class employers, privileged women in particular, and social order in general. This analysis of working-class intruders deploys two meanings of intrusion that are opposed ideologically: first, intrusion as moral panic about domestics encroaching upon the private home or bodily space of the upper and middle classes; and second, intrusion as an oppositional reading style that makes female domestics visible as a category of analysis and thus intrudes upon our assumptions about universal womanhood. In the first, more usual, sense, intrusion expresses a moral panic that is reproduced in frequent images of domestics transgressing symbolic or physical borders, which are themselves the product of particular historical moments and attitudes toward domestic space, through actions such as stealing, talking back, spying, eavesdropping, dressing up as a lady, plotting murder, seducing, or simply knowing too much about the class other (as suggested by the dirty laundry in the epigraph). In the second sense, intrusion is possible through a radical reading practice, a disturbance arrived at through oppositional knowledge. Especially in Canadian culture where we so often read subjects as classless even though authors depict them otherwise, we need to make visible the politics of domestic space and how textual representations of those spatial relations reproduce or challenge lived power relations.

Claudette Lacelle describes, in her social history of domestics in nineteenth-century Upper and Lower Canada, the nature of contact between the classes in cities of the time. She notes that "les grandes villes ont été caractérisées par la coexistence de deux populations fort différentes, l'une stable et permanente, l'autre mobile et transitoire" (10). What was unique in domestic work was that it put these two populations into contact on a daily basis. Further, Lacasse notes that this contact took place within a larger context of urban poverty: "Autre constante: les maisons où vécurent ces gens [. . .] ne constituaient qu'une faible minorité des résidences urbaines et elles

comptaient parmi ce qu'il y avait de mieux et de plus confortable dans un siècle où on déplorait la grande pauvreté des villes, de même que leur insalubrité notoire" (10). The mobility of the poor has always been the subject of social hysteria (Kaplan, Rimstead), and that of domestics was no exception, especially since the high turnover rate in domestic staff meant that servants changed their place of employment four or five times a year in this period (Lacelle), resulting in the lack of trained servants and the so-called "servant problem."[1] Anxiety that contamination, crime, sexual deviance, and social deterioration would arrive in the person of the domestic resulted from the close(d) contact into which these two virtually segregated populations were brought by domestic work and the architectural authority of the bourgeois house. Privileged subjects depended for the maintenance of their habitat, their bodies, their cleanliness, and their very class difference on those from the "unwashed" masses, those from whom the rising middle classes sought to distance themselves. The spatial politics is fraught with the paradox of necessary proximity and desired distance. As feminist historians have pointed out, "servants working in the household lived amongst people of a different class, but did not live like them. For it was the work done by servants that allowed their masters to live a life different from their own . . ." (Clio Collective 157). Separate staircases and separate places at mealtime demarcated the "physical and human" barriers between servants and families in nineteenth-century houses and also ensured the invisibility of labour and servants themselves (Clio Collective 157, McClintock 160-76). Separate spaces were more evident in urban homes, for in rural homes, the help—often daughters of neighbouring families—tended to eat with the family, shun uniforms, share sleeping quarters with family members, and regard their work as temporary, not lifelong service (Cohen, Errington, Lacelle, Leslie).

The female domestic worker can be studied as a site of power relations and cultural contact at the nexus of capitalism and partriarchy. Not only does she represent the place where one class of women can afford to own the domestic labour of another class of women; she also represents a shared space among women, the devaluation of all women's domestic labour under patriarchy, including sexual service and reproduction. The authors of *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe* note that domestic work was the main source of waged labour for women until 1940, and that the migration of rural women to the city to secure domestic work had more impact on women's lives than industrialization itself (Anderson and Zinsser 248).

Paradoxically, then, while few of the elite could afford servants, the majority of women working outside the home in the Western world were in service from the nineteenth century until well into the twentieth when factory jobs and others forms of employment opened to them. In terms of space and contact, the essential fact was that servants changed their positions often, most wanting to marry out of the situation altogether, and the elite had to deal with a constant stream of strangers within their doors, strangers with aspirations of mobility.[2]

Of the few existing literary studies on domestics in Western literature, most note that when paternalism was displaced by capitalism and the role of the servant shifted from loyalty to a contractual arrangement, the dramatization of intrusion increased, as manifested in crime writing that featured servants as threats within the household (Harris, Robbins, Trodd).[3] The sexualization of master/servant relations and the icon of the domestic as temptress, the heightened need for privacy in the bourgeois home in the nineteenth century, the social hysteria around contamination by servants and the poor in general as morally and intellectually inferior, the rhetoric of racial purity in national policies to recruit domestics abroad, and the construction of good and bad femininity which helped separate the ladies from the maids—social attitudes like these buttressed the popular icon of the domestic as working-class intruder (Barber, Giles and Arat-Koç, Kaplan, Lacelle, Leslie, McClintock, Schecter).

Among Canadian and Québécois novels that have dramatized the female domestic's life in the nineteenth century, Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska* (1970) and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996) stand out as compelling accounts of the female servant as criminal accomplice, with the former foregrounding the lady and consigning the servant to the margins, and the latter erasing the lady almost completely to feature the female servant/protagonist in interaction with her peers and with gentlemen. Both novels reactivate the residual form of domestics in crime fiction by revisiting the nineteenth century through the vehicle of the sensationalized murder in which domestics are criminal accomplices. As historical novels, however, both reach back from the late twentieth century into the mid-1800s to imagine the stories and subjectivities around actual crimes by Canadian women, whose very notoriety hints at the social panic around women and domestics striking back on rare occasions. The likenesses and differences between the two novels stem less from the fact that one was written in French and the other in English or that their social contexts were Lower Canada or Upper Canada,

than from the way they show symbolic and social space dominated by class and gender, and from the way these texts inscribe class divisions, but then attempt to transcend these divisions through images of universal womanhood.

At the heart of the crimes of passion in these two novels is desire. In *Kamouraska*, the French lady, Elisabeth, desires her English lover, the Doctor, and her freedom from a brutal husband, the Seigneur of Kamouraska. In the lady's shadow, her mixed-blood maid, Aurélie, desires fine clothes and romance with a gentleman. In *Alias Grace*, the Irish-Canadian servant/accomplice, Grace Marks, desires "things" (dresses, bonnets, gloves) and the rise in status and living standard they imply. Her fellow servants, Mary and Nancy, also desire mobility and romance as evidenced in their affairs with gentlemen. Despite different social stations, the ladies and maids in these novels regard their lot/space as women within patriarchy as unfair and inauthentic, resulting in a conscious form of theatrics, which requires the wearing of masks to hide female power, desire, and deceit. In *Kamouraska* the lady wears the mask, while in *Alias Grace* the servant does. We cannot know to what extent the lady and the maid are, as narrators, lying or misrepresenting their part in actual crimes, for in both novels, truth is questioned through plural narrators, the intervention of dreams into reality, and the "mad woman" motif, not to mention the mystical presence of evil.

It is not merely because the servant is marginal to the text as in *Kamouraska* that we can assume she has a hegemonic function in the novel. Nor can it be assumed that when she steps into the spotlight as the protagonist in *Alias Grace* she will have a resistant or militant function.[4] The shadowy messenger/accomplice Aurélie in *Kamouraska* occupies the margins of the lady's text in many of the stock ways that Robbins identifies, but her doubling of the bourgeois protagonist gives her the potential of resistance as a feminist element in the text. Also, her talking back gives her a decidedly resistant class role to play as spokesperson of the people. To date, *Alias Grace* may be the most sustained and detailed portrait of a domestic's life and work in the English Canadian novel, but it is not the most resistant in terms of class politics because its postmodern insistence on indeterminacy and the fluid subject consistently dissolve material relations into abstract space, discourse, and fragments. To make sense of the class subtexts underlying each novel, it is useful to focus on their construction of the lady and the maid in relation to the politics of domestic space and the two meanings of intrusion proposed earlier.

On the Margins of the Mistress's Text: Domestics in *Kamouraska*

Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska*, written in 1970 as a retrospective loosely based on an actual crime in the 1840s, invokes Aurélie as an accomplice in her mistress's plot to murder her husband. When read through feminist reading practices, *Kamouraska* expands and thematizes the marginal servant's role in order to comment skilfully on the parallels between the servant and the mistress, each constructed under patriarchy. When read oppositionally in terms of class and the politics of space, the contrasts between the servant and mistress are highlighted to reveal their respective class roles and habitus (to use Pierre Bourdieu's term for the complex system of tastes and everyday practices that reproduce class identity and lifestyle). Several chapters open with Elisabeth, the lady of the house, sleeping in a servant's bed, while her second husband lies dying in their own. In this role reversal and under the sign of disorder, she comments repeatedly on the smallness of the space allotted the servant girls: "La pièce est petite et ridicule. Une sorte de carton à chapeaux, carré, avec papier à fleurs" (40). In Elisabeth's role as lady, however, she is also concerned with the restrictions placed on her body by the symbolic space allowed a lady in nineteenth-century Sorel, and frequently refers to herself as a playing a role, striking a pose, wearing a mask (tropes of deception often reserved for the domestic servant) rather than occupying the space of her body and her home more authentically. Hébert's novel combines a disturbing psychodrama and historic romance to protest the gender role Elisabeth has been given to play in Lower Canada as a bourgeois lady, wife, and mother of eight children (resulting from eleven births over twenty-two years and two marriages). Although Elisabeth herself resents this role, she enjoys her privileges as lady of the manor and sees her class position as part of her essence, deep beneath the mask of woman's Christian resignation. The text shows that it is the servitude of the female body within the Father's house that binds Elisabeth to her female servants in the margins of this text, for they are all engaged in the domestic production of children for church, family, and state (Aurélie's part as midwife underscores this relationship to her mistress). They are also bound to the maintenance of the manor and the great house as ordered spaces (according to bourgeois taste [Bourdieu], the Father's house [Smart], and the cult of domesticity [McClintock]), even though they compete for men's attention within that space.

The text shows the mistress dependent on, but in competition with, the women who do her domestic work. Elisabeth resolves to hire a plain wet-nurse—"une femme laide, pas trop jeune, qui soit propre et qui ait du lait"

(89)—to combat the wandering eye of her lustful first husband. Her second husband would rather be tended on his sickbed by Florida, the trusted housekeeper, than by Elisabeth, the treacherous lady. Florida holds the keys to the pantry and knows where all the provisions are kept, but Elisabeth panics when she cannot locate a cube of sugar for her sick husband. In the role of trusted, efficient servant, Florida is foil to both the lady and her accomplice/maid, two women who have broken the order of the Father's house by stepping beyond their servile female roles and desiring more. These moments of competition highlight not only the contrast in power between the mistress and the maids, but also their shared spaces within patriarchy. Florida displaces her mistress at the second husband's deathbed because of the power and strength of her hands which symbolize trusted service: "Mme Rolande abandonne son mari aux mains expertes qui l'apaisent et le possèdent" (29).

Invisible hands were needed to manage the many rooms, children, and possessions of the lady in the nineteenth-century manor house. The order in the Father's house is thus maintained by servants as well as the lady herself; a long string of nursemaids, governesses, wetnurses, cooks, cleaners, messengers, and stable boys provide the silent hands that keep the household functioning. Hébert inscribes intricate images of silk, lace, and velvet, frequently sullied by blood and dirt, not only to connote the lady's guilt, but also to show the difficulty of maintaining order and cleanliness, given the elaborate dress and habits of the bourgeoisie. For example, Elisabeth comments on the elegant pantalets, frills, crinolines, and embroidered bibs of her children (14), and on her wedding night, the seduction and disarray of sexual activity go on beneath layers of lace and velvet that enrobe the lady in her public role as one who wears her wealth. (In a significant act of betrayal, her first husband will rummage through Elisabeth's wardrobe to give some of her finery to women far beneath her in status, his country mistresses, who symbolically usurp her role as lady.)

When Elisabeth appears unkempt and dishevelled before her children and the maid after sleepless nights mourning at the deathbed of her second husband (the narrative frame for her tortured memories of the murder of her first husband), the nursemaid flatters her by noting what a picture she makes with her children: "On dirait la reine avec ses petits princes autour d'elle." But the children protest that their mother is not herself at all: "Mais Maman est en robe de chambre! Ses cheveux sont en désordre. Et puis son visage a l'air tout rouge!" (34). The pressure for controlled appearances and

spaces comes from the children themselves as the text constructs the lady as one who must not show the signs of physical labour or duress. Elisabeth, besides being tormented by sleepless nights, guilt, and delusions, has just helped the nursemaid tidy the nursery and dress the children in the absence of Florida, who is tending the sick husband. This further role reversal signals the tenuousness of the division between maids and mistresses and their shared space in the Father's house. When the maid is otherwise occupied, the lady must step in and take up the devalued domestic work that maintains order in the Father's house. Anderson and Zinsser note that for a woman in nineteenth-century England and France, "the first step up in society was to move out of the kitchen and leave the grosser forms of housework to her servants, to switch from labouring herself to supervising others' labour" (131). (They also remind us that the servants' work liberated the lady to bear more children for the patriarchy.) The unkempt appearance of the mistress in *Kamouraska* jars the children's sense of order as indicated by the reference to the family picture: "En un clin d'œil le charme est rompu, la fausse représentation démasquée. Le désordre de la toilette de Mme Rolland jure comme une fausse note. Un si joli tableau d'enfants soignés et tirés à quatre épingles. Agathe semble honteuse de s'être laissée prendre par d'aussi pauvres apparences" (34). Such is the control of the bourgeois habitus on the construction of the lady's body and soul that even her own children police her appearance, while the young maid alone does not at first recognize the class imperatives for order and the difference between the dishevelled woman and the queen, and by extension that between the lady and herself.

Yet, true to the class snobbishness expected in her position, Elisabeth often refers with contempt to the servant women who help her maintain her lady-like cleanliness, control, and leisure. Referring to them as inherently contaminated and contaminating, she disdains their coarseness: "les caresses bourrues des paysannes en bonnets tuyautés" (20); "Une gourde qui sort de sa balourdise" (28); "Ma pauvre Agathe vous n'êtes qu'une bête" (33). As employer, she not only holds herself above this class of women, but orders them about, depends on them, competes with them, reprimands them, manipulates them, and at times even strikes and shakes them. Even her imaginative space is invaded by them. She imagines that three maids in uniform invade her waking dream state, riding in on rays of sunlight to order the room and turn out her drawers looking for evidence against her. With their knowledge and accusations and their power to bring

order to the Father's house, they are rivals. But as the images of maids turn into maiden aunts (symbols of matriarchal domestic order and piety), the class barriers dissolve, and the shared space of female servitude within patriarchy emerges as the ultimately shared place of women (42-50).

The main role of accomplice and accuser in this drama of guilt is played by Aurélie, who appears in a number of stock servant roles in the margins of her mistress's story: for example, messenger, double, voice of the people, maid who talks back, trollop, hands that serve, wisewoman, and minority ethnic (not to mention the stock female role of witch/midwife). Elisabeth envies Aurélie her freedom to run with the boys and then the men, to smoke a pipe, to bear the stigma of a bad reputation, to dabble in midwifery and witchcraft, and to know about boys and her own body. But she is relieved as well as guilty that Aurélie will serve two and a half years of prison time, while she, Elisabeth, the mastermind, will be released after only a few months. Aurélie's relative freedom to be herself, make sexual choices, be midwife rather than mother, and move freely in the forest outside domestic space without the need to protect her reputation is based not only on the class construction of femininity, but also on her marginal position as a mulatto, who is outside of the community anyway by virtue of racial impurity. This limited freedom is tempered, however, by Aurélie's lack of status. Few will believe her truthful testimony at the trial, while the good families and the elite will back Elisabeth's duplicity, protecting her from social sanction by closing ranks around her. However, as Carla Zecher has pointed out in a paper on Aurélie as Elisabeth's double, the maid will eventually be reunited with the community while Elisabeth, as lady, will be left to her private hell in her private space (17).

From the very beginning of the narrative, the mistress and the maid have embarked on a strange alliance based on envy and blame, class distance and desire. Both are caught up with the intrigue of romance when the English doctor enters the scene to form a love triangle. Actually two triangles are formed: one of patriarchal control and romance (Elisabeth, her first husband—the Seigneur of Kamouraska—and the English Doctor); and the other, a triangle of crime and romance into which the maid has intruded (Elisabeth, the Doctor, and Aurélie). The criminal triangle is tenuous as each stands ready to accuse the other. And Elisabeth's perception of Aurélie is one of fear that she has penetrated too deeply and too silently into the privileged space of mistress of the house:

> On ne l'entend jamais venir. Tout à coup elle est là. Comme si elle traversait les

murs. Légère et transparente. La voici qui étend ma robe de bal neuve sur le lit. Tapote le beau velours cerise, avec une sorte de gourmandise, mêlée de crainte. – Mon Dou que cette robe est jolie! Mon âme pour en avoir une comme ça. (133)

Echoing Elisabeth's earlier vow that she would sell her soul for a string of pearls to wear to the governor's ball (64), this phrase once again underscores the shared, gendered space of mistress and maids within patriarchy, the common devalued space of women who need clothes and accessories to define themselves and to win men who will support them. But their difference in rank is clear from Elisabeth's contempt and her belief that Aurélie's desire for things and romance can be easily manipulated: "Il est si facile d'ailleurs d'animer le teint lunaire d'Aurélie. Il suffit de lui parler de velours et de gros de Naples, de passion dévorante et de folles amours" (183).

The mistress of Kamouraska wishes to elicit the ultimate service from the maid: the poisoning of her husband. Willing to call her "soeur," to flatter her, to stroke her hair, and to dress her up as a lady in Elisabeth's own clothes (another transgression of class), the lady opens the door to disorderly intimacy in order to secure Aurélie's hands as extensions of her own in crime. The psychodrama closes around the cross-class event with the image of closed, shared space, suffocating with mere proximity as well as guilt. This is not a utopian moment of union between the classes (Robbins), but a drastic collapsing of space in a nightmare of closure:

Aurélie a pris sur elle le meurtre d'Antoine. Un tel soulagement. Une paix singulière.

Il s'agit d'attendre la neige, patiemment. Apprendre à vivre en soi. Dans un espace restreint, mais parfaitement habitable. Éviter de regarder à plus de deux pas devant soi. George, Aurélie, et moi, nous nous exerçons à ramener les quatre coins cardinaux sur nous. Les réduisant à leur plus simple expression. Moins que les murs d'une chambre. Une sorte de coffret hermétique. Une bouteille fermée. Nous apprenons à respirer le moins profondément possible. (182)

Behind the suffocation resulting from the guilty closure of their conspiracy/triangle is that which results from an unnatural proximity between the classes. It is partly for this reason that Elisabeth cannot breathe within the spatial enclosure (coffin-like) which seals the transgressive nature of their tryst. It is as if, by not maintaining class or patriarchal walls, the lady must watch them close in upon her. She sees Aurélie growing pale and diminished as the day of her departure for Kamouraska and the crime approach (signifying the imposition of a role), but Elisabeth also remarks on the servant/accomplice's transgression of boundaries: "Réconfortée, imbue de son importance, avide et gourmande, au-delà de toute décence, Aurélie Caron

jure de bien remplir sa mission" (183).

Hébert's novel expands as well as contracts the cultural space of domestics by deploying them here and there as the voice of the people. Florida is the voice of the people in Elisabeth's imagination, for it is this trusted servant and rival who acts as accuser in the mistress's waking nightmare. In Elisabeth's mind's eye, she sees Florida descending into the street, crying, "Oyez! Braves gens, oyez! Monsieur se meurt. C'est Madame qui l'assassine. Venez. Venez tous. Nous passerons Madame en jugement" (32). Aurélie also voices the public conscience when she finally talks back to her mistress, refusing to accept Elisabeth's elaborate rationalizations that they are both innocent. The maid reminds her mistress that they are wicked as the plague, and denounces the lady and her doctor lover at the trial. This power to denounce and to testify momentarily overpowers the silence of the dismembered servant's hand and even of the unjustly persecuted accomplice, and Elisabeth is aware of this moral and discursive power: "Suppliciée, pendue, décapitée, la tête séparée de son corps, Aurélie ne se dédira pas. Elle hurlera dans l'éternité" (189). The mistress fears the servants as spies and informers because they know what has been going on behind the walls of her chambers; as working-class intruders, they have seen behind the façade of bourgeois, patriarchal order.

When the black figure of an unknown, once-buried woman is resurrected to haunt the text mystically in the final pages, this unearthing of suppressed female power and desire (Smart 4) speaks for the community of women who have inhabited the text as domestics, maiden aunts, and ladies—all contained and silenced by the father's house. The symbolic corpse speaks of blackness, pagan magic, and primitivism outside of white, Christian civility in the European settler community. The blackness of the corpse recalls Aurélie's understated racial difference as a mulatto. (She is not Métis as sometimes assumed; numerous small clues point to her racial identity as mulatto. For example, she appears white but is said to move with the ease of a black woman [171].) A community of women outside patriarchy and class and racial divides is suggested by the ancient body of a woman whom all fear, a woman capable of unspeakable crimes against the Father's house, witchcraft not excluded. In Elisabeth's dream the invasive servants who melt into the three aunts also suggest a bond among women, not to mention Elisabeth's repeated supplications, "Tu es mon amie, ma seule amie, plus que mon amie, ma soeur, Aurélie . . ." (186). However, Hébert's mystical rendering of a sisterhood, when read beside other images of domestics

and social histories as well, betrays its own idealism. As Elisabeth herself says, the story is ultimately hers alone, for the maid will not be believed and she will be imprisoned for the sins of the mistress. The spectre of female strength and bonding outside patriarchal and class society is presented mainly from the point of view of the bourgeois woman. The exhumed corpse of an ancient woman is there to haunt the mistress who dominates symbolic space and desire in the text. We cannot know if Aurélie and the other domestics would be haunted by such an image because they themselves are fixtures in the mistress's story, appearing as tools of her desires or haunting apparitions of her guilt and insecurity within patriarchy. We know too little of the domestics' inner lives to know what such a symbol would mean to them. The female resurrection in the novel as a whole is a symbol of universal woman that exceeds her oppressed place within patriarchy, but transcends class divisions among women by offering a mystical solution.

Close(d) Contact: The Politics of Fragmentation in *Alias Grace*

The condition for orderly contact is that the servant keep her place, or at least seem to. This place shifts according to political systems (paternalism and capitalism), local cultures (rural, urban, and ethnic), national policies of recruitment, the racial identity of the servant and master,[5] and notions of good and bad femininity applied to both maid and lady. As Trudier Harris notes, the double signification of "keeping one's place," meaning staying in the kitchen and acknowledging inferior status, has pressured domestics into wearing masks of self-repression, inferiority, or happiness to serve. Harris points out that mask-wearing is "as old as slavery" for blacks in the United States and is thus reflected in their fiction by being both celebrated (as trickery and control) or lamented (when loss of self results) (16-17). In Canadian literature, *Lilly's Story* by Ethel Wilson is an archetypal representation of the loss of self that can occur when a domestic, in this case a white woman, wears a mask of propriety and self-denial with such conviction that she loses her spontaneity of speech, laughter, and desire.[6] Other literary domestics, like Rodolphe Girard's Marie Calumet, are not shown wearing the mask of the happy servant, but simply *being* happy to keep their place and serve within a paternalistic system.[7] But Margaret Atwood's Grace Marks comments wryly, "You are paid to smile, and it does well to remember it" (307).

From its title on, *Alias Grace* celebrates mask-wearing as a subversive technique for both the domestic/murderess in the world of the novel and the postmodern subject as one who eludes any definitive identity. Closer

examination of the politics of space and intrusion in the novel, however, reveals that the presumably "unbounded" postmodern subject (March 80) recycles hegemonic representations of domestics, such as the working-class intruder, without contesting the class politics of these icons. Published in 1996, *Alias Grace* dramatizes the inner thoughts of a notorious serving maid/murderess who lived in Upper Canada in the mid 1800s. Marks was imprisoned for thirty years after being convicted of aiding a male-servant to murder their master and the housekeeper/mistress. Critically acclaimed for the way it problematizes historical recovery and comments ironically on its own fragmented reconstruction of the murderess (Lovelady, March, Rogerson,Van Herk), the novel paints an ambiguous portrait of the housemaid. A mammoth, prize-winning book, *Alias Grace* is pieced together like a patchwork, incorporating ballads, etchings, fictionalized dialogues, archival documents from the Kingston penitentiary, fictionalized letters, inner monologues, transcribed confessions, newspaper clippings, excerpts from Susanna Moodie's nineteenth-century descriptions of Grace, epigraphs from romantic literature, and even chapters titled after quilt patterns. Such strategies of collage and intertexuality recycle past accounts, both popular and literary, and they call up social panic at the working-class intruder. It is in calling up in quick succession all these historical constructions of the heroine's identity and in having Grace herself comment on them—"And I wonder how can I be all these different things at once?" (28)—that the postmodern text resists fixing her in yet another recycled version. Nonetheless, the voyeuristic and gothic impetus of the narrative reactivates icons of the working-class intruder with particular vigour.

While newspaper reporters and courtroom observers shudder at the accused appearing in the murder victim's dress to face trial, the postmodern narrative points to multiple motives: pragmatism, vanity, amnesia. Yet no version is as strong as that of Grace as intruder and usurper with a fatal desire for her mistress's fine clothes. The threatening image surfaces again when she testifies to donning Nancy's finer dress for the first time and burning her own. She remembers smelling "scorching meat" and feeling as if she had shed a skin, "like my own dirtied and cast-off skin I was burning" (403). Here, cross-dressing is metaphorically aligned with the serpent, the impostor, and pure evil for gothic effect, an image to be suggested again in the brilliantly duplicitous final scene of the novel, which shows Grace sewing a macabre quilt pattern for her marriage bed.[8] After her release from prison, Grace is married off to a middle-class landowner, the star witness

against her—a contrived ending of class mobility, not based on historical record. The comfortable setting of Grace's new home and the evil looming in the final sewing scene enable Atwood to posit her anew as the working-class intruder, but this time within her own home. Earlier, she had likened quilts to flags of war, and now she sews a quilt for her marriage bed (192).

As she stitches The Tree of Paradise, she reflects on its meaning in terms of her guilt/quilt. She decides to add a border of snakes and red feather-stitching of her own invention around the biblical motif, thus having feminist discourse reframe and problematize biblical discourse on morality and gender. Like the newspapers reporting on her crime, Grace charges, the Bible gave a flawed account because it was written by men (557-58). In post-modern terms, this *mise-en-abîme* of biblical discourse demonstrates the power of parody in the novel itself to reframe polarities such as guilt and innocence (557-58). But the serpent in the garden also suggests intrusion and evil. Including pieces of the dead women's dresses and her own prison uniform in the quilt, Grace utters the last line of the novel like a pact, a prayer, or an incantation among women, "And so we will all be together" (558). Ironically, however, this vow of unity in the context of the tale of split personality, promises more madness; in the context of gothic hauntings, more ghosts; in the context of aliases, more crime. Grace, the intruder, looms so much larger than Grace, the female friend, that the double-edged discourse ultimately reinforces the icon of intrusion.

In addition to deploying the residual icon of the working-class intruder, the novel as patchwork reveals, in its selection and arrangement of fragments, a significant blind spot around the role of bourgeois women in maintaining control over female domestics. Bourgeois women are all but missing from the novel as Grace plays out her duplicity and class tensions among fellow servants and gentlemen of a higher class. In this way, the universal feminism of the novel focuses on the sexual exploitation of female domestics by privileged men as the dark side of class power.

Nonetheless, *Alias Grace* sets up tension between ladies and maids from the opening pages, without actually casting its gaze on ladies as key characters. By skilfully juggling popular literary icons of silk dresses (metonymic for the lady) and rough, red hands (metonymic for the housemaid) it explores Grace's desire to pass as a lady through cross-dressing.[9] When she contemplates her notoriety as a "celebrated murderess," she reflects how that label "rustles, like a taffeta skirt across the floor" (27)—appropriating the class icon to indicate her heightened status. The scene where Grace gazes

at her roughened hands in the court room and wishes they were covered in gloves that were "smooth and white, and would fit without a wrinkle"(25) emblematizes the maid's inappropriate desire to rise above her station and thus intrude upon bourgeois space. To a great degree, Grace is gentrified within the world of the novel. She stifles spontaneous facial expressions, speaks in modulated, flat tones, watches her grammar, keeps her hands folded when not in use and her eyes lowered, and wears dresses buttoned high at the neck. This gives her a refined air, "a composure a duchess might envy" and the appearance of being "self-contained" in the eyes of visiting gentlemen (158). In terms of domestic space, this self-control is an act of complicity; the domestic watches herself from within and polices her own body to bring it under control as rigorously as prison officials survey prisoners. (Atwood exploits the social implications of voyeurism and panopticism without questioning the social implications of her own postmodern gaze at the domestic [Foucault]). Once under control, though, Grace is even more of a threat to bourgeois space because she can pass more easily as a lady, and her composure and improved speech are perceived as sexually attractive to gentlemen, a "trick she has learned no doubt through long service in the house of her social superiors" (158). In addition to demonstrating the instability of class boundaries, cross-dressing signals the postmodern subject's agility as shape-shifter. Yet Grace's desire for transformation is not mere play; it is of gothic proportions for the working-class intruder.

Grace's class identification has gone askew because as maidservant she is brought into contact with finer things and develops a taste for gloves, silk dresses, and bonnets.[10] In the Kinnear household the space of the bourgeoisie has already been violated when Grace appears on the scene, for she notes that Nancy, a former servant and now housekeeper/mistress, is dressed improperly in fine clothes while gardening. The ballad at the beginning of the novel registers the disorder in terms of cross-dressing:

> O Nancy's no well-born lady,
> O Nancy she is no queen,
> And yet she goes in satin and silk,
> The finest ever seen.
>
> O Nancy's no well-born lady,
> Yet she treats me like a slave,
> She works me so hard from dawn to dark,
> She'll work me into my grave. (16)

As a former servant, Nancy will prove overly demanding and yet unable to

summon the respect of servants. She will bully, misuse, and confuse Grace, even striking her, but the major reason for Grace's not keeping her place will be her own desire to ascend and her lack of respect for a mistress who is neither lady or maid, but concubine. When Grace finds that Nancy has been sleeping with the master, she concludes that she has "lost much of the respect [she'd] once felt for Nancy, as being older, and the mistress of the house" (307).

> [. . .] I am sorry to say that after this I answered her back more than was wise, and there were arguments between us which came to raised voices, and on her side to a slap or two; for she had a quick temper and a flat hand. But I so far remembered my place as not to strike her back; and if I'd held my tongue, my ears would have rung less often. So I take some of the blame upon myself. (307)

The viewpoint expressed by Grace is largely conservative, reinscribing the ethos of keeping one's place in terms of good and bad femininity as well as class.[11] The fact that Mary and Nancy are both pregnant with gentlemen's babies when they die, and that Grace may be pregnant with her middle-class husband's baby at the end of the novel ("But then it might just as easily be a tumour. . ." [556]) underlines the degree to which sexual play across class borders infects social order. The female domestic intrudes upon the order of inheritance and class rights by bedding men of a higher class. The feminist novel testifies to the opposite: that gentlemen have historically infringed upon the space of female domestics and then abandoned them. But either way, the sexualization of class tensions is reductive if class tensions among women are obscured.

Grace's opinions on class distance and domestic space confirm rather than challenge class divisions within the bourgeois home. Separate staircases served the interests of the bourgeoisie by confining the traffic in food and chamber pots to the servants' space, leaving the main staircase free of the sight and odour of work and workers. (This erasure of workers is endemic to the social production of space in capitalist society because it naturalizes wealth and privilege, separating the fruits of labour from the process of work [Lefebvre, McClintock]). Grace bemoans the fact the Kinnear home, a country house, is too small to have service stairs. For her, masters and servants "lived too close together, and in one another's pockets, which was not a desirable thing; as you could scarcely cough or laugh in that house without it being heard [. . .]" (308). Her aversion to proximity may be partly due to Kinnear's leering at her while she washes floors, but the novel itself does little to challenge separate spaces for ladies and maids.[12]

Mary Whitney, Grace's friend and fellow servant in a city house, transforms her knowledge of the class Other (acquired through close contact) into shocking invective against them: "the front stairs were there so the family could keep out of our way. They could go traipsing up and down the front stairs in their fancy clothes and trinkets, while the real work of the place went on behind their backs, without them getting all snarled up in it, and interfering, and making a nuisance of themselves" (188). Ironically, however, Mary cannot keep her distance but is impregnated by her employer's son. Still she comments how "feeble" and "ignorant" the rich really are: "[. . .] it was a wonder they could blow their own noses or wipe their backside [. . .]" (188). Drawing on everyday knowledge to deflate the privilege of her employers through hyperbole, invective, and scatology (188-89, 39, 25-26), Mary as the older and more worldly-wise servant represents the voice of the people, an intruder through knowledge. Although she radically redefines segregated space, her discourse is mostly an inversion of class prejudice and a conservative call to maintain class distance, but Grace calls Mary's ideas "democratic" (189).[13] In passages such as the one where Mary instructs Grace that ladies cannot sit on a chair where a gentleman has been because "you silly goose, it's still warm from his bum" (25), the resistant maid is deployed as comic relief and the voice of social disorder. Dying off early in the novel, however, Mary evaporates into a memory, a ghost, an inner voice, and an alias for the murderess/domestic.

When the protagonist splits in two to voice the demure, calculated innocence of Grace beside the brash, cocky wisdom of Mary, this splitting of the domestic's psyche pathologizes class anger and successfully contains it within the drama of spiritual possession, multiple personality, or mask-wearing by the working-class intruder. Nonetheless, through the double-voiced discourse, Atwood allows the servant/protagonist to express bourgeois points of view as well as those of the working class. Grace's voice, more grammatically correct and instinctively refined than Mary's, comes to stand in for the potential lady in the housemaid, while Mary's coarser voice becomes the mad (both insane and angry) inner self, which surfaces most definitively in the scene of neuro-hypnosis. Once more, class tensions are internalized.

The intruder at this point can be seen as class anger itself. Grace, the young impressionable maid, is invaded by Mary's subversive attitude and her ghost: "And then I heard her voice, as clear as anything, right in my ear, saying *Let me in*" (214). The mistress's and master's persons will in turn be

invaded by the Mary in Grace, the murderess in the domestic, just as Dr. Simon Jordan will be forever haunted by the memory of Grace, the seductress. And we as readers are left to wonder if the possession and splitting of Grace is a hoax enacted with the help of Jeremiah, the conjurer, or if she is really innocent of the Mary (class anger) in herself. In this collage of points of view, no single testimony, no history, and no ideology can claim precedence. It is just a story, as one doctor says, and not subject to the "harsh categories of Truth and Falsehood" (456). The whole terrain of class struggle has been shifted from the lived space of the houses, with their segregated staircases and bodies who labour and bodies who rest, to the internal and abstract space of psychological turmoil, discursive play, and elaborate, formal design (of the novel according to the quilt pattern or the gothic thriller).

The construction of Grace as a riveting character relies not on her oppositional knowledge as a domestic or her violent crime as a militant (Harris), but on her dexterity in moving between different identities. The liberty and agency of the subject rely on the novel's transcending class relations and material space by privileging abstract and discursive space. When Grace wishes to escape confinement, she falls into delusions or spins stories for her psychiatrist. In several instances Grace's inner imaginings collapse the confined space of her prison cell or her lonely life in service into wild, red peonies or colourful quilt patterns to suggest that she is somehow empowered through these imaginings (along with hauntings, fainting, lying, alternate identities, and so on). Since Grace as postmodern subject is given idealized discursive power to control and play with multiple versions of her own story, the novel affords her anachronistic powers for a nineteenth-century domestic (most of the novel's 567 pages show Grace speaking to her psychiatrist or preparing what to say). The whole pretext for the novel, the extended narrative of a Scheherazade entertaining the prison psychiatrist with details of her crime as long as she possibly can (456-57), depends on Grace's position as a prisoner, her ability to sit and talk for long hours while sewing, much like a lady, and her improved grammar which comes about, she says, during her imprisonment.

In the mind's eye, the protagonists from Atwood's novel and Hébert's, Grace and Elisabeth, can be placed side by side very easily: the lady and the domestic—both accomplices to murder—sewing, posing, seducing, sinking into delusions, and unfolding their complex, self-conscious interior monologues (*Kamouraska* 125, *Alias Grace* 80-83, 159). Yet *Kamouraska* offers a

more relational account of domestic space, for it shows the direct relationship between the lady's leisure and her power to manage the labour of several servants. *Alias Grace,* with its fragmented micro-history of the servant, eclipses the lady in order to peer more closely at the maid and "open her up like an oyster" as the epigraph says, thus erasing many of the relational aspects of the politics of material space. In both novels, inappropriate dress or inappropriate sleeping arrangements are used to signal the social and domestic disorder that ensues when class segregation breaks down. Both deploy the icon of the female domestic as working-class intruder as a recycled dominant discourse (Williams) in order to draw attention to the drama of crossing class boundaries. As feminist projects of historical recovery, both novels embrace a universalizing feminism that transcends or conceals class rifts between ladies and maids in order to make a statement in the final scene about Woman in respect to patriarchy. Neither protests class boundaries.

Resistant reading practices based on materialist feminism should intrude upon portraits of domestics, first, to make the characters appear as domestics and, second, to interrogate the cultural politics of representational strategies. Merely placing the powerful icon of the working-class intruder beside other possible identities to fragment the subject does not disarm the icon of its power. Nor does making sisters/doubles of the lady and the maid dismantle class difference. Residual uses of hegemonic icons often find new ways of recycling old attitudes (Williams 116-17). We do not intrude to say the works should have been written otherwise, with greater authenticity or historical accuracy, but rather to see more clearly the cultural politics of

NOTES

Much appreciated in the writing of this article were the diligent research of my assistant Natasha Dagenais and the suggestions on literary domestics in Quebec by two colleagues, Christiane Lahaie and Pierre Rajotte. I am also grateful for funding from FCAR.

1 Historians disagree as to the magnitude of the servant shortage, with Marjorie Cohen arguing that only 11% of homes in nineteenth-century Canada employed domestics in the first place (Cohen, Barber). Others note that before the turn of the twentieth century, domestic work was the primary occupation for women outside the home in both Canada and Europe (Prentice et al., Errington, Leslie, Lacelle, Anderson and Zinsser).

2 On the level of the nation, this fear of strangers within our gates has been reflected in aggressive recruitment policies of white domestics to service bourgeois homes, accompanied by restrictive immigration policies when the domestics were increasingly drawn from non-white populations (Giles and Arat-Koç, Schecter).

3 Lacelle notes, however, that domestics seemed no more inclined to crime than the general population in nineteenth-century Upper and Lower Canada, although the harsh

conditions and lack of security entailed in the work provided an ideal motive for crimes of a material nature. "Desertion" was the most frequently reported crime among domestics (65-67). It is interesting to note that domestics who ran away from their masters on arrival in Nouvelle France were branded with the fleur-de-lys for second offences (Guilbert 11)—a practice which imposes, rather strikingly, the nation's claim on the labour power of the poor and the body space of domestics.

4 Many novels where the domestic worker is the protagonist may indeed be quite hegemonic in their depiction of work, gender, or class. This hegemonic trend in poverty narratives by Canadian women exaggerates the role of domestic work in transforming poor women into upwardly mobile subjects (Rimstead 114-17).

5 The Clio Collective explains the situation in nineteenth-century Lower Canada:

> The distance between servants and masters probably increased as more foreigners became domestics. At the beginning of the 19th century, servants were usually of the same nationality as their masters. In 1871, servants from Ireland and Scotland constituted nearly 70 per cent of the live-in servant population in the well-to-do sections of Montreal; in Quebec City, 59 percent were French-Canadian women and 33 percent were Irish. Immigrant women were looked down on. (157)

6 Both the prototype of the upwardly mobile domestic worker and one of the loneliest spaces in Canadian literature, *Lilly's Story* sets up its young female protagonist on a long, laborious quest to negotiate a place of respectability for herself and her child across social barriers in turn-of-the-century Vancouver. By working as a waitress, housewife, and then in a string of jobs as both live-in and live-out housekeeper and chambermaid, Lilly supports her child and fabricates a new, matronly identity for herself, but loses her sense of self in the process (Rimstead 114-15).

7 Inspired by a popular folksong, Rodolphe Girard's short novel *Marie Calumet* depicts an upstanding, matronly domestic employed in the village rectory, who loves to serve but who is humiliated in a scene which satirizes paternalism and the power of the church in the mid-1800's Lower Canada. In a hilariously irreverent moment, Marie stumbles over her admiration for the bishop when it comes to emptying his chamber pot. She reflects on the sacrilege of disposing of his urine like everyone else's—"Un moment, Marie Calumet eut l'idée de l'embouteiller" (62)—and carries the revered liquid to the priest to ask his wise counsel.

8 For a theoretical discussion of cross-dressing and transgression, see Chapter 3 of McClintock's *Imperial Leather.*

9 These are popular icons in both British and Canadian representations of ladies and housemaids. Nellie McClung's *Painted Fires* is about a Finnish domestic worker who begins her emigration and ascent in response to the rustle of a silk dress belonging to a visiting domestic who has emigrated and inspires her to follow suit. Laura Goodman Salverson recalls when she was a housemaid how bourgeois women pulled back the hem of their gowns so as to avoid touching the domestics.

10 One of the paradoxes of service is that maids are trained to do all tasks relating to maintaining the bourgeois household, for example, through better knowledge of housekeeping, meal preparation, quality of care and shopping, etiquette and so on, but they are not meant to adopt these tastes themselves.The management of domestics became a large part of household manuals in the nineteenth century instructing the rising middle class on how to structure the hierarchy within the bourgeois home. Atwood's primary source on domestics, Isabella Beeton's *Book of Household Management*, compared the mistress of a large household to the commander of an army.

11 See Kaplan for a discussion of "good" and "bad" femininity.

12 Atwood does not take on the role of advocacy for domestics. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, she used the Marthas as stock backdrop, mouthpieces of conservative values, working hands, and eavesdroppers, rather than fully developed characters like the other two classes of women, the wives and the handmaids. In *Alias Grace*, the third-person narrator of sections of the novel reinscribes negative images of servants as dull-witted and blank, such as the descriptions of female domestics having "a face like a pine plank," being "slab-faced" and "pudding-faced" (92-3, 69)—epithets that connote genetic inferiority as well as simple-mindedness. These caricatures are a foil to Grace, the shrewd story-teller and intruder.

13 In contrast to Mary, with her invective and folk knowledge, Antonine Maillet's *La Sagouine* challenges at every turn of phrase the notion of domestics keeping their place. She details for us how institutions such as churches, schools, Radio-Canada, and even burial grounds enforce segregated space on the poor, Acadians, French Canadians, and women. The one-character play begins with her scrubbing her way onto the stage and from then on *La Sagouine* harnesses the symbolic power of cleaning to critique nation, class and gender politics (Rimstead 116-17).

WORKS CITED

Atwood, Margaret. *Alias Grace*. Toronto: McClelland, 1996.

___. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Toronto: McClelland, 1985.

Anderson, Bonnie S. and Judith P. Zinsser. *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*. Vol.2. New York: Harper, 1988.

Bals, Myriam. *Les Domestiques étrangères au Canada: Esclaves de l'espoir*. Montreal: l'Harmattan, 1999.

Barber, Marilyn. "The Women Ontario Welcomed: Immigrant Domestics for Ontario Homes, 1870-1930." *The Neglected Majority: Essays in Canadian Women's History*. Vol II. Eds. Allison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff. Toronto: McClelland, 1987. 102-21.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1984. Trans. of *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. 1979.

Brand, Dionne. *Sans Souci and Other Stories*. Stratford, ON: Williams-Wallace, 1988.

Clio Collective. *Quebec Women: A History*. Trans. Roger Gannon and Rosalind Gill. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1989.

Cohen, Marjorie Griffin. *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1988.

Errington, Elizabeth Jane. *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses, and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada 1790-1840*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's, 1995.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Vintage, 1979.

Giles, Wenona and Sedef Arat-Koç, eds. *Maid in the Market: Women's Paid Domestic Labour*. Halifax: Fernwood, 1994.

Girard, Rodolphe. *Marie Calumet*. 1904. Montreal: Fides, 1979.

Guilbert, Lucille et al. *Pauvre ou Vagabond: Le quêteux et la société québécoise*. Laval: Rapports et Mémoires de recherche du Célat 9 (1987).

Harris, Trudier. *From Mammies to Militants: Domestics in Black American Literature*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1982.

Hébert, Ann. *Kamouraska*. Paris: Éditions du seuil, 1970.
Kaplan, Cora. "'Like a Housemaid's Fancies': The Representation of Working-class Women in the Nineteenth Century." *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*. Ed. Susan Sheridan. London: Verso, 1988. 55-75.
Lacelle, Claudette. *Les Domestiques en milieu urbain canadien au XIXe siècle*. Ottawa: Ministre de l'Environnement, 1987.
Leslie, Genevieve. "Domestic Service in Canada, 1880-1920." *Women at Work, Ontario 1850-1930*. Ed. Janice Acton, Penny Goldsmith, and Bonnie Shepherd. Toronto: Canadian Women's Educational Press, 1974. 71-126.
Lovelady, Stephanie. "'I Am Telling This to No One But You': Private Voice, Passing, and the Private Sphere in Maragaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 24.2 (1999): 35-63.
Maillet, Antonine. *La Sagouine*. Ottawa: Leméac, 1971.
March, Cristie. "Crimson Silks and New Potatoes: The Heteroglossic Power of the Object in Atwood's *Alias Grace*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 22.2 (1997): 66-82.
McClintock, Ann. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
McClung, Nellie. *Painted Fires*. Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1925.
McNaughton, Janet. *To Dance at the Palais Royale*. St. John's, Newfoundland: Tuckamore, 1996.
Rimstead, Roxanne. *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001.
Robbins, Bruce. *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986.
Rogerson, Margaret. "Reading the Patchworks in *Alias Grace*." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 33.1 (1998): 5-22.
Roy, Gabrielle. *La Rivière sans repos*. Montreal: Beauchemin, 1970.
Salverson, Laura Goodman. *Confessions of an Immigrant's Daughter*. 1939. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981.
Schecter, Tanya. *Race, Class, Women and the State: The Case of Domestic Labour*. Montreal: Black Rose, 1998.
Scheinberg, Ellen. "Bringing 'Domestics' to Canada: A Study of Immigration Propaganda." *Framing Our Past: Canadian Women's History in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Sharon Anne Cook, Lorna R. McLean, and Kat O'Rourke. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2001. 336-42.
Silvera, Makeda. *Silenced: Talks with Working-Class West Indian Women about Their Lives and Struggles as Domestic Workers in Canada*. Rev. ed. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1989.
Smart, Patricia. *Writing in the Father's House: The Emergence of the Feminine in the Quebec Literary Tradition*. Trans. Patricia Smart. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1991.
Trodd, Anthea. "Household Spies: The Servant and the Plot in Victorian Fiction." *Literature and History* 13 (1987): 175-87.
Tynes, Maxine. "In Service." *Fireweed* 26 (1988): 8-11.
Van Herk, Aritha. Review of *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood. *Canadian Literature* 156 (1998): 110-13.
Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.
Wilson, Ethel. *Lilly's Story*. In *The Equations of Love*. Toronto: MacMillan, 1952. 131-281.
Zecher, Carla. "Elisabeth-*Sainte* and Aurélie-*Sorcière*: The Mistress of *Kamouraska* and Her Double." *Québec Studies* 20 (1995): 11-18.

Catherine Greenwood

Teeth

I

I got my first ring—plastic and paste—from a dentist after he drilled a tiny bicuspid. The taste of mercury's never left me.

Those baby teeth. Tenacious as barnacles, the way they hung on by their skin, not wanting to be traded in for a quarter left under the pillow. The way I hung on to the Tooth Fairy and Santa Claus long after they became implausible. Those first stubborn losses.

II

After the dentist pulled my first permanent molar, the hole healed over and something white started growing through the gum. I was beginning again, cutting a new tooth. But it was only broken root. A fragment of my former self.

That tooth was the first bead moved on the abacus that counts time. The first piece of the puzzle the missing Tooth Fairy is building, a little glow-in-the-dark dinosaur skeleton somewhere on the other side. Problem is, I'll have to relinquish the rest of me before she can put me together again.

At night while she's stockpiling parts I grind my teeth to a paste. Mortar and pestle of my worry, permanence wearing away.

III

They say you lose a tooth for every baby, each child leeching a little more of its mother. I say it's a tooth for every man, all that love let down like milk. I finally figured this out when I had all four wisdom teeth extracted in one sitting.

I know a guy whose eyetooth fell out shortly after his wife left him, says he'd give the other to get her back. He refuses to replace it, forsaking partial or implant, any false bridge to his former smile. That black hole left for everyone to see, aching to be filled.

Me, I prefer to keep my losses hidden, less incisive. Like the half-forgotten hole my molar left. Just an empty space way back in my head.

Hélène Buzelin

Creolizing Narratives across Languages: Selvon and Chamoiseau

I have never thought of myself as an 'exile' [. . .].
I carried my little island with me, and far from assimilating
another culture or manner, I delved deeper into
an understanding of my roots and myself.
(Selvon, *Finding West Indian Identity* 38)

Mon souci dans un premier temps a été de porter l'écrit à réassumer
cet héritage oral tout en utilisant des stratégies de l'écriture.
Il faut que les écrivains récupèrent ce fond cultural oral de façon creative.
(Chamoiseau qtd. in Glaser and Pausch 154)

The cultural and linguistic creolization[1] that resulted from the colonial uprooting of African, European and Asian populations has imprinted itself on the history of the Caribbean. For the last fifty years, English and French Caribbean writers, linguists and philosophers such as Kamau Brathwaite, Wilson Harris, Edouard Glissant and Jean Bernabé, have proposed that this dynamic be approached as a constitutive feature of Caribbean identity, a feature that surfaces in cultural expressions such as written literature. In general terms, literary creolization could be defined as the textual expression of the syncretism and hybridity that is part of Caribbean societies. In a narrow sense, which I will adopt here, it refers to the literary use of Creole Caribbean vernacular languages and traditions.[2] As a textual representation, literary creolization is part of the semiotic framework of each narrative. As such, there are as many forms of creolization as there are books. However, as a literary activity, it is also constrained by underlying rules that have been determined, at least in part, by the school of thought or the literary movement to which the work belongs, and by the wider polysystem[3] that has produced it. In short, it is constructed by the interaction of literary, political and linguistic factors operating within a local/global dialectics.

While a number of studies have explored literary creolization in French

or English Caribbean fiction,[4] few comparative textual analyses have been undertaken so far. Drawing from my doctoral research in translation studies,[5] I offer a contribution to such analyses by contrasting the works of two Caribbean novelists belonging, respectively, to Anglophone and Francophone communities: Sam Selvon (Trinidad) and Patrick Chamoiseau (Martinique). These two writers were among the first to extend the use of Creole to narration and show that, beyond serving as a vehicle for literary realism, Creole and Creolization can be a way of shaping new narrative styles.

In line with Lane-Mercier's framework, this analysis is based on the assumption that creating, interpreting and rephrasing literary dialects and sociolects—such as Creole languages in French/English literature—is a strategic activity which engages literary, cultural, political and linguistic subjectivity. By taking this stance and following recent cross-cultural studies (see Maximin, *Littératures caribéennes comparées*; Torres-Saillant; Balutansky et al.; Lang), this paper analyzes the interaction between the many factors that come into play: What are Selvon's and Chamoiseau's explicit literary projects? How do they realize them? How do they formally creolize their narratives? To what extent is their literary work constrained by local political, literary and linguistic norms? And, conversely, how can their work contribute to changing these norms? Finally, what do these works reveal about the particular challenges of literary creolization in the French- and English-speaking worlds?

This paper will focus on the following texts: Sam Selvon's "London Trilogy" composed of *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *Moses Ascending* (1975) (winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize), and *Moses Migrating* (1983); and three novels by Chamoiseau: *Chronique des sept misères* (1986), *Solibo magnifique* (1988) and *Texaco* (1992) (winner of the Prix Goncourt). I will start from the conclusions of previous studies in which Selvon's and Chamoiseau's fictions were treated separately and will refer to excerpts from the novels in order to illustrate, when necessary, particular points and features.

Different contexts: literary, political and linguistic background

Published in 1956 and 1986 respectively, *The Lonely Londoners* and *Chronique des sept misères* are among the first fully creolized Caribbean novels—by which I mean novels using Creole in narration—to capture an international audience. As such, they are both landmarks because they sig-

nal the arrival and recognition of an esthetics of creolization for a global readership. This is why, despite the thirty-year gap between them, these works can be compared. Indeed, since the sixties, and following Selvon, Anglo-Caribbean writers have explored the expressive potential of vernacular languages and traditions so that the current literary representation of English Creole, although not unproblematic, is by no means as subversive as it was in Selvon's time. The situation is quite different in the French-speaking world where attitudes toward the literary use of Creole are highly controversial and where, with the exception of Haiti, political independence has not yet been attained.[6]

Although political sovereignty is no longer an issue in most of the English-speaking Caribbean, it was a real concern for the writers of Selvon's generation, just as it is a major concern for the current novelists of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Selvon and Chamoiseau emerge from two different societies and historical moments in which, however, identity and literary issues are closely related. Indeed, in both cases, literature has contributed in a very direct way to the construction of collective identities largely defined in opposition to those imposed by the colonial powers. In this framework, critics of both authors' narratives have paid particular attention to the question of literary and linguistic authenticity. The authors have sometimes been acclaimed by their compatriots for contributing to the authentic expression of Creole language and culture, while, at other times, they have been criticized for remaining too conscious of the European public. Yet, they were also often perceived as serving two masters at the same time, as being trapped in a kind of double bind between the need to express their own language and culture (that is, to interpret them in the artistic sense), and their need to communicate them (that is, to interpret them in the heuristic sense) to a non-Caribbean audience (Akai, D'Costa, Confiant). In this particular case, far from being purely metaphorical, the double bind is also a linguistic one.

Indeed, as part of the Caribbean world, Selvon and Chamoiseau both belong to linguistic communities described as polydialectal: in these communities, different languages/speech forms are reserved for specific spheres of communication. They cohabit, so to speak, and tend to influence one another in the long run. Although the total number of languages/speech forms involved in each local context (Trinidad/Martinique) may exceed two, linguists tend to analyze and present the overall situation in binary terms, mainly through the concept of "continuum" in the English

Caribbean, or that of "diglossia" in the French territories. In both cases, a formerly colonial language with high prestige, reserved for formal and written communication, is opposed to the vernacular—English-based for Trinidad and French-based for Martinique—a language with lower sociolinguistic status used for informal and oral communication.[7] It is important to note that although they were published, distributed and read primarily outside of the Caribbean in French- or English-speaking areas respectively, Chamoiseau and Selvon could on no account assume any knowledge of Creole languages on the part of their readership, particularly since they were pioneers in creating a creolized narrative style for an international audience. In other words, they had to produce some kind of adaptation. Hence, the notion that such Caribbean novels might be regarded as translations, or at least as texts relying heavily on translation processes between French and English and their respective Creoles, has been frequently advanced by critics who deal with both the French texts (see Bernabé, *De la négritude*; Jonassaint, DeSouza, Hazaël-Massieux, *Écrire en créole*; Confiant, Jones) and the English ones (see Akai, Bandia, Lowry Weir, Ashcroft et al.).

While the Trinidadian English Creole that inspired Selvon could be defined, with respect to the theory of continuum, as a mesolectal variety (see note 6), the Creole used in Martinique has more basilectal elements which distinguish it from Standard French. To give a few examples, articles are usually placed after the nouns in French Creole, whereas they precede nouns in French, English and Trinidadian English Creole (TEC). Similarly, where Trinidadian Creole uses the English particles "does," "did" and "go" to express time and aspect, French Creole uses the forms "ka," "té" and "ké" that are further away from Standard French. Different constraints and opportunities in terms of literary creolization result from these linguistic differences. Since they draw on a more basilectal Creole, French Caribbean writers such as Chamoiseau also have a wider range to cover and more translation or adaptation to produce if they want to represent Creole for a non-Creole audience than a Trinidadian writer such as Selvon, who started with a more anglicized Creole.

The pre-text

Sam Selvon was born in Trinidad in 1923. He sailed to Great Britain in 1950, and remained in London for twenty-eight years before heading to Calgary where he spent the rest of his life. Despite these moves, Selvon

never considered himself an uprooted writer. Unlike Neil Bissoondath or V.S. Naipaul, he liked to define himself as a Caribbean writer, a writer who had built and nourished his West Indian identity through displacement. Indeed, whether in Port of Spain, London or Calgary, he explored, in writing, the expressive potential of his "little island's" (*Finding West Indian Identity*) oral languages and traditions: Trinidadian English Creole (TEC) and calypso. In *The Lonely Londoners*, a novel in which the experiences of the generation of West Indians who settled in London in the fifties are depicted with humour and compassion, he provides all his emigrant characters and the narrator with an in-group language, which he refers to as a "modified Trinidadian dialect" (Selvon in Nasta, *Critical Perspectives* 67). This language expresses not only the common fate, but also the mood, of these marginalized emigrants, as well as their need for a sense of place. In *Moses Ascending*, he pushes the experiment further, using a wider range of dialects and literary styles, parodying the language of the new generation of Black Britons and their Black Power ideology. Finally, in *Moses Migrating*, he takes up another challenge: that of writing landscape descriptions in dialectal style. Calypso is no doubt the main oral tradition that shaped Selvon's esthetics.[8] It originated in Trinidad and remains a major element of Trinidadian folk culture.[9] According to Donnell et al., it is in this cultural form "that we can finally locate a working-class uneducated voice representing its own perception of cultural and social issues, as opposed to the conscious downward gaze of the intellectual and writer" (125). Just like those of calypso singers—commonly called calypsonians—Selvon's narratives feature mainly working-class characters/narrators, settings and language. The favorite themes of calypso—satirical social, political, racial or sexual commentary—are usually developed through anecdotes that make extensive use of humorous devices such as puns, stereotyping and exaggeration. Although it is not about calypso, *The Lonely Londoners* uses calypso in many ways (see Fabre in Nasta, *Critical Perspectives*; Nasta, *Setting up*; Ramchand; Rohlehr; Warner). The narrative unfolds as a kind of ballad with a rhythm that seems to follow the meanderings of the boys in the capital. The structure is episodic, the tone anecdotal and comical, and the characters are colourful individuals—known only by their nicknames—whose main interests and concerns are similar to those found in calypso (social commentary, political topical issues, sex, economic problems, and so on). Parody and masquerade are omnipresent, particularly in *Moses Ascending* and *Moses Migrating* (see Tiffin, Dickinson, Warner-Lewis), but also in *The Lonely Londoners*, which Thieme describes as a "West Indian Carnival Seminal text" (194).

Patrick Chamoiseau's work, which remains in progress, finds its explicit basis in an essay entitled *Éloge de la créolité*.[10] This manifesto, written in collaboration with the novelist Raphaël Confiant and linguist Jean Bernabé, lays out a Creolist philosophical, literary and political agenda. Its underlying philosophy is to a great extent influenced by Glissant's. In the same vein as Glissant's *Le discours antillais*, the manifesto recommends "annihilation de la fausse universalité, du monolinguisme et de la pureté" (28), and substitution of the concept of "root" by that of "rhizome." As far as literature is concerned, five guidelines are put forward: "l'enracinement dans l'oral" (34), meaning a desire to revive and promote vernacular traditions such as story-telling; "la mise à jour de la mémoire vraie" (37); "la thématique de l'existence" (39); "l'irruption dans la modernité" (42) as a way to transcend indigenist movements ; "le choix de la parole" (43), which refers to the literary use of Creole language. While refusing to "idolize Creole," Bernabé et al. regard this language as "une force expressive" and want the Creole novelist to be completely open to the whole linguistic "spectrum" offered by society. The aim is not necessarily to write in Creole, but to creolize French and to use as many registers and languages as possible in a creative way. Of this esthetic principle, Chamoiseau's novels provide the most successful illustration (Hazaël-Massieux, "À propos").

The five guidelines of the manifesto are all interrelated: while asserting its wish to be turned toward the future and modernity, the *créolité* movement shares an ontological approach to the search for identity with that of *Négritude*, an approach aimed at "la mise à jour de la mémoire vraie" (Bernabé et al. 37) and reaching "l'authenticité créole" (Ludwig 152). According to Confiant and Chamoiseau, this authenticity resides in the speech of the traditional Creole storyteller. Unlike the calypsonian who remains a popular figure—particularly during carnival—this traditional storyteller has begun to disappear in the wake of urbanization; hence, in the view of Bernabé et al., it is the writer's duty to revive this tradition. Though published three years before *Éloge de la créolité*, Chamoiseau's first novel expresses much of the essence of this manifesto. The novel presents itself as the story of the "'grandeurs et décadences' de sept djobeurs[11] de Fort-de-France," the recollection of bits and pieces of a History "en grande partie tronquée." It is an attempt to preserve "des échantillons de paroles perdues" (Phirmis 162). In *Solibo magnifique* and *Texaco*, the author recreates the discursive setting of traditional story-telling, featuring a narrator "qui s'inspire du style du conteur sans jamais l'épouser tout à fait" (Phirmis 163). As such,

the novels constantly revolve around issues of memory and social mutations (the transition from orality to literacy, from rural to urban society). The following excerpt from *Éloge de la créolité* gives an idea of the political issues and questions of identity that inform linguistic considerations:

> Le créole, notre langue première à nous Antillais, Guyanais, Mascarins, est le véhicule originel de notre moi profond, de notre inconscient collectif, de notre génie populaire, elle demeure la rivière de notre créolité alluviale. Avec elle nous rêvons. Avec elle nous résistons et nous acceptions. Elle est nos pleurs, nos cris, nos exaltations. Elle irrigue chacun de nos gestes. Son étiolement n'a pas été une seule ruine linguistique, la seule chute d'une branche, mais le carême total d'un feuillage, l'agenouillement d'une cathédrale. L'absence de considération pour la langue créole n'a pas été un simple silence de bouche mais une amputation culturelle [. . .]. Si bien qu'aujourd'hui, ce serait stérilisation que de ne pas réinvestir cette langue. Son usage est l'une des voies de la plongée en notre créolité. Aucun créateur créole, dans quelque domaine que ce soit, ne se verra jamais accompli sans une connaissance intuitive de la poétique de la langue créole. L'éducation artistique (la rééducation du regard, l'activation de la sensibilité créole) impose comme préalable une acquisition de la langue créole dans sa syntaxe, dans sa grammaire, dans son lexique le mieux basilectal, dans son écriture la plus appropriée (cette dernière fut-elle éloignée des habitudes françaises) dans ses intonations, dans ses rythmes, dans son âme, [. . .] dans sa poétique. (44-45)

In other words, Creole novelists must not only speak Creole, they must master its most basilectal (and traditional) form.

Selvon, on the other hand, did not really seem concerned about asserting the distinctiveness of TEC, and did not claim TEC legitimacy on the grounds of linguistic distinctiveness. In fact, he readily admitted having absolutely no theoretical knowledge of TEC (Selvon in Nasta, *Critical Perspectives* 79). Was the argument of Creole as a distinct language sustainable in his case? A few linguists such as Lise Winer would probably answer in the affirmative. Others would say the opposite, and a few, like Mervyn Morris, would even argue that such an issue may not be particularly relevant. Indeed, there is another way of approaching this question: to account for the difference in the literary use of Creole, one must consider not only the differences in the actual varieties spoken in the authors' society at the time they wrote, but also the speech forms which the authors used as a landmark and with which they identified. In this respect, it is clear that Chamoiseau looks for a past, very basilectal Creole, and works alongside linguists like Bernabé who contributed to its codification. Selvon, on the other hand, who left Trinidad for London in 1950, found his inspiration not only in Trinidadian English Creole, but also in the speech of the Caribbean emigrants who settled in London in the fifties.

Hence, as far as the explicit project is concerned, it is clear that by using

Caribbean oral languages and traditions, both Selvon and Chamoiseau wish to contribute to shaping and expressing a Caribbean identity. However, while the former does it by dealing extensively, though not exclusively, with issues arising from geographic migration, the latter is, above all, preoccupied with ongoing social and cultural mutations taking place within Martinique. In a very simplified way, one could say that with Selvon, identity appears as something that can be transplanted from one place to another (hence built through geographic migrations), while with the Créolité movement, at least for Chamoiseau, it is to be located in a particular space (hence, built through changes in time). This difference in focus appears clearly in the very first lines of their narratives: while *The Lonely Londoners* opens on a "tracking shot" of Moses, a Trinidadian Londoner who "hop on" a bus "to go" and fetch an emigrant "coming out of the boat-train," *Solibo Magnifique* starts with the description of a fixed scene that is localized in a particular place—Fort-de-France—but deliberately diffuse in time.

> One grim winter evening, when it had a kind of unrealness about London, with a fog sleeping restlessly over the city and the lights showing in the blur as if is not London at all but some strange place on another planet, Moses Aloetta hop on a number 46 bus at the corner of Chepstow Road and Westbourne Grove to go to Waterloo to meet a fellar who was coming from Trinidad on the boat-train. (*TLL* 7)

> Au cours d'une soirée de carnaval à Fort-de-France, entre dimanche Gras et mercredi des Cendres, le conteur Solibo Magnifique mourut d'une égorgette de la parole, en s'écriant: Patat' sa !... Son auditoire n'y voyant qu'un appel au vocal crut devoir répondre: Patat' si !... Cette récolte du destin que je vais vous conter eut lieu à une date sans importance puisque ici le temps ne signe aucun calendrier. (*Solibo magnifique* 25)

Selvon's first sentence is saturated with markers suggesting endless movements in space (image of London as "a strange place on another planet," action verbs, names of places, prepositions "from" and "to"). Chamoiseau's contains multiple time references (*soirée, dimanche, mercredi, destin, date, calendrier*).

How does one creolize, and to what extent?

How do Selvon's and Chamoiseau's Creole projects manifest themselves in literary form and practice? The texts need to be studied from both linguistic and narrative points of view. The former underscores questions about the kind of linguistic features (lexical, syntactic, phonological and prosodic) used by the authors while the latter focuses on the places in the narrative in

which these features occur (that is, description, narration of non-discursive events, narration of discursive events—or indirect speech—and dialogue).

Reading Chamoiseau's works, one realizes quickly that creolization starts above all at the lexical level, through the use of Creole words. Lexical creolisms can be divided into three groups: 1) semantic shifts, that is, terms of French form and origin having acquired a different meaning in Creole (for example, *virer*);[12] 2) neologisms built by processes of derivation (for example, *déparler* meaning "talking nonsense"), composition (for example, *son poser-rein*), or conversion (*le manger*); 3) literary neologisms that Chamoiseau has created using similar processes, but which do not necessarily exist beyond the text (for example, *instructionné, haillonné*).[13] While both authors rely on lexical features, they do not do so to quite the same extent, nor in the same way. These three categories are also present in Selvon's texts: one may find English words or expressions with a new meaning (*test* meaning a young "saga boy," *ignorant* meaning "aggressive") and, to a greater extent, neologisms by derivation (*stupidness* in constructions such as "it used to have pigeons like stupidness" [*TLL* 107],[14] conversion (*to dead*), or composition (*old-talk* meaning "to chat with friends") and, mostly in *Moses Ascending*, literary neologisms (for example, *salutatory, integrade, grudgedity, touchous* for "touchy").[15]

Lexical creolisms in Chamoiseau's narrratives are much more frequent and visible than in Selvon. The setting of the novels, Martinique and London respectively, might partly explain this difference. While Chamoiseau's characters are surrounded by the natural and cultural realities of the Caribbean, Selvon's Caribbean characters are also part of the British landscape and face British cultural realities on a daily basis. However, beyond that, it is worth mentioning that, in Selvon's narratives, most words that are probably formally and semantically opaque to the non-Creole reader—for example a *test, liming, to old talk*—are used in relatively explicit contexts and are so recurrent that, by and by, they become familiar. By contrast, Chamoiseau multiplies polysemy and ambiguities. As some commentators have noted (see DeSouza), they may sometimes make reading the text rather difficult for both non-creolophone and creolophone.

As far as syntax is concerned, Hazaël-Massieux (in *A propos*), and Deltel and N'Zengou-Tayo have pointed out a number of processes at work in Chamoiseau's fictions. The most recurrent are the following: article or preposition omission in particular contexts such as Verb/Noun+complement (*trous nez, danser calende*), choice of prepositions according to Creole rather than French usage, use of Creole determiners and nominal construc-

tions, borrowing of Creole serial verbs like *partir-courir,* and substitution of French pronominal verbs by the Creole reflexive *corps* giving rise to constructions like *poser son corps* for *se poser.* As diverse as they may be, these syntactic adaptations all share a common feature: for the non-creolophone reader they can all be interpreted as lexical creolisms, or idiomatic expressions. Indeed, as noted by Hazaël-Massieux, fixed verb or noun phrases involving the elision of the article are very frequent in French.[16] Hence, by analogy, one may also perceive the phrases quoted above as instances of semi-fixed or fixed expressions rather than syntactic borrowings. This observation also applies to the reflexive *corps.* In short, these features that originate in Creole grammar only appear in contexts in which they can be to some extent interpreted by non-Creole readers as lexical idioms, reinforcing the somewhat misleading impression that Chamoiseau's creolization occurs primarily at a lexical level and enters the French text and language without apparently transgressing French grammatical rules. By contrast, Selvon's texts draw heavily on the predication system, morphology and sentence structures peculiar to the speech of Trinidad. They display a number of morphosyntactic features, which appear fully as such for Creole as well as non-Creole readers: *does* is used to express habitual activity rather than for emphasis, *go* and *did* mark future and past tense respectively, modals such as *had is/was* or *must be* are frequent, and the replacement of the impersonal phrase *there was* by *it have* is systematic. Other markers such as the use of nouns, adverbs or adjectives as predicators, or the absence of the possessive marker as well as the third-person verbal morpheme *s,* which are common to other varieties of English-based Creole, are also present, though not systematically so.[17]

With regard to phonology—usually conveyed in written form through graphic devices such as *eye dialect*—we note the most striking difference between the two authors: unlike Selvon, who uses standard (English) spelling throughout his text, Chamoiseau sometimes represents Martinican Creole in the way it was codified by Groupe d'Études et de Recherches en Espace Créolophone (GEREC), that is, in its most basilectal form with a phonetic spelling system. Although they do represent a very limited part of the text, these passages are particularly visible. Sometimes detached from the main body by italics, they are generally translated right after the Creole passage or in an accompanying footnote. The whole technique amounts to a kind of metalinguistic digression, reminding the reader that the text at hand is truly bilingual, that is, composed of two mutually unintelligible languages

with distinct forms and structures. By contrast, in Selvon's novels, there is no diglossic representation or instance of over-translation. Generally speaking, Chamoiseau tends to reduce the number of translated passages (Creole to standard French) in his later works. Indeed, in *Texaco*, the numerous footnotes introduce not so much examples of cultural or linguistic translation as long discursive digressions and asides. Far from fulfilling a didactic function, these footnotes are part of the discursive architecture of this novel, the main body of which is invaded by an increasing number of subtexts. According to Ménager's analysis, in this novel, the linguistic conflict between French and Creole is still present, but it is expressed in a more covert and subtle way.

It is in the area of prosody, the catching of tone, accents and rhythms, that Selvon's and Chamoiseau's styles finally meet. Using similar strategies, both try to suggest many prosodic traits associated with Creole orality. Besides a few standard features such as fixed word-order in interrogations (compensated for with a rising intonation), or the preference of co-ordination over subordination in complex sentences, they both make extensive use of emphatic devices. Repetitions, onomatopoeia, processes of topicalization (for example: "c'est tuer que je ne veux pas le tuer, c'est tuer que je ne veux pas" [*Texaco* 58], "in truth is that what happen to Henry" [*TLL* 10]), insertion of oui/non at the beginning or end of a particular assertion, forms of address and exclamatory phrases from Creole lexicon ("Well, Papa" [*TLL* 61]; "compère," "Doudou," "ti-bonhomme") have a particularly high frequency. It is no surprise that, when commenting on their literary use of the vernacular, both authors constantly focus on their attempt to capture the musicality of the language (Selvon, *Finding West Indian Identity*; Chamoiseau in Glaser and Pausch).

Where does creolization occur in the text?

Is there any relationship between the forms of creolization and the places, that is the narrative segments, in which they occur? In other words, do changes in narrative passages (such as the move from description to narration to indirect discourse) lead to changes in the forms of linguistic creolization?

At first glance, critics do not seem to agree on which parts of Chamoiseau's texts are the most creolized. Hazaël-Massieux (*A propos, Écrire en créole*) points out that narration is more creolized than dialogue whereas, in Jermann's view, it seems to be the other way round. In fact, these apparent contradictions reflect less a divergence of opinion than the

ambiguity surrounding words like "standard" or "creolized" French, as well as the difficulties related to differentiating between the regional, social and situational overtones that vernacular linguistic varieties carry with them. Indeed, syntactic features of Creole, which are sometimes similar to features more generally associated with oral communication (for example, the absence of word-order inversion in interrogative sentences, in the case of French), may readily evoke a colloquial speech style and create, above all, situational overtones. If these syntactic features are particularly numerous, as in the case of Selvon's text, they might be perceived as "deviant," at least outside of a Caribbean context, and may therefore be taken as an indication of the social background of the speaker. For their part, lexical items may appear in a highly formal style characteristic of written language, thereby creating mostly regional overtones without any social or even situational connotations.

Through linguistic devices, Chamoiseau cultivates and even reinforces the difference between the narration of discourse and that of events (see *Solibo* 25, 203; *Texaco* 61; see Hazaël-Massieux, *A propos*). Indeed, *Texaco* features a creolized formal French in which lexical creolisms predominate, while *Solibo* displays more syntactic features which create a more informal style. Using linguistic features as well, Selvon, however, blurs this distinction between narration of discourse and narration of events in *The Lonely Londoners*. In this novel, the narrative voice displays the same morpho-syntactic traits as those appearing in dialogue, and creates both regional and sociolinguistic overtones throughout, except for landscape descriptions that tend to appear in a more lyrical and standard style. By contrast, anecdotes, the depiction of characters, and both discursive and non-discursive events are related in a very colloquial register. Needless to say, dialogues sound "vernacular" in the fullest sense, that is, they display at once the three situational (oral), sociolinguistic (popular) and regional (Caribbean) features.

These observations can be partly explained by differences in narrative structure. Indeed, in Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners*, the narrator constantly appears and behaves as a kind of storyteller, a performer addressing an audience. Most of the time, this narrator acts as if his reader were a listener and as if both of them, narrator and reader, were part of the fictional world described (Maximin, *Littératures caribéennes*). Chamoiseau's narrators also endorse this persona of the storyteller, but not systematically so and definitely not to such an extent. In fact, in Chamoiseau's *Chronique des sept*

misères, the storyteller represents only one side of a multi-faceted narrative structure. In other words, the voice of this storyteller is embedded in a highly complex and tightly structured narrative framework. So, on the whole, although there are some clear modulations as the narrative shifts from description to story-telling, the creolized style of *The Lonely Londoners* is more homogeneous and colloquial than that of *Chronique des sept misères*, not only at the linguistic level (as seen in the previous section), but also at the narrative one.

This conclusion only applies to the first novels, however. In the second and third novels of his London trilogy, Selvon allows his main character, Moses, to tell his own story. This character, who entertained the desire to "write a book what everybody would buy" (*TLL* 125), reappears in *Moses Ascending* as a narrator committed to the project of writing his memoirs. Not quite certain about the tone and style he should/could use, Moses mixes a wide range of language registers, from archaic English to the Rastafarian code, and highbrow (utopian, romantic, Victorian and realistic) literary styles. The whole book is a farce in which not only Moses' aspirations, but the styles themselves—or rather the prestige attached to them—are parodied. To use Warner-Lewis's expression, the result is pure "linguistic extravaganza" (60). This adjective could also describe *Solibo magnifique* where, according to Prat, Chamoiseau mixes the most mundane and the most erudite words, where he combines French with Creole, and multiplies "l'enchaînement baroque de gratuites métaphores filées" (209) using neologisms and snatches of Latin and Spanish. Hence, Selvon and Chamoiseau seem to follow the same path, distancing themselves from realism and moving toward a more parodic, self-consciously sophisticated and, to some extent, postmodern style. However, one major difference remains between their texts: as eclectic as it may seem, Moses' narrative voice remains at once regionally and socially marked, thus retaining two features of vernacular languages. In *Texaco* and *Solibo magnifique*, on the other hand, the narrative voice remains highly literary. To cite Perret, "Solibo parle le plus souvent un français impeccable (sauf dans son dit)" (836). This applies all the more to the "marker of speech," "cham-oiseau." In other words, the Martinican novelist chooses to maintain the distinction between narrative (literary) style and discursive (oral) speech. By contrast, we could say that Moses, the main character, and then the narrator of Selvon's London trilogy, remains a Trinidadian emigrant who has great literary ambitions and a tremendous linguistic appetite and creativity, but who

never quite forgets that he belongs to the working class.

It is within the narration of discursive events—that is, in indirect speech—that Selvon's and Chamoiseau's styles tend to converge. This narrative space is particularly worthy of examination because not only does it involve large sections of the text but, in Chamoiseau's novels at least, it constitutes the only area where the narrator tends to "speak" like his characters. Although they refer to distinct oral traditions, the calypsonian and the traditional storyteller share various characteristics that surface in these novels. These performers, who belong to folk culture, act not only as entertainers, but also as social commentators who contest the established order; they are supposed to "give a voice" to the people and, unlike the "Author," they do not claim to own their statements. As performers, they are both omnipresent[18] and transparent, ever ready to play different roles, to change their voice and embody a new persona. Selvon's and Chamoiseau's novels show how these characteristics can be re-enacted in written form. Selvon writes in such a way that his narrator seems to modulate his voice according to that of the characters described (see Thieme). He takes up their voice without acknowledging it and without inserting any typographic sign. By doing so, he blurs the distinction between direct and indirect speech and, consequently, the distinction between two levels of communication: that of the narrator and that of the actors. Chamoiseau recreates a similar effect by other means. While in *The Lonely Londoners* Selvon stages a unique polymorph narrator whose identity is vague enough to be occasionally mapped on to different characters, Chamoiseau chooses to multiply the number of narrative instances. Among them are the storyteller: Cham-oiseau. Following the storyteller's strategy, Cham-oiseau will learn how to "speak the language of those he speaks about" rather than "the language of those he speaks to" (Perret 835). This split in narrative instances is brought to an extreme in *Texaco*. As Ménager has shown, this novel uses three levels of narration. Although they can be distinguished stylistically and graphically, these three voices are closely intertwined, responding to each other in a "boucle parfaite [qui] cimente l'édifice entrepris: érection de la parole dans la solidification du livre imprimé" (62).

Hence, although they use different strategies, Selvon and Chamoiseau both succeed in bringing a "Creole voice" into narration. From the hybrid indirect discourse of Selvon's unique but polymorph calypsonian-like narrators, to the structural organization of multiple narrators in Chamoiseau's novels, these strategies have the common effect of creating solidarity

between the voices of the narrator and those of the characters, and of abolishing the distance between the narrative and the narrated worlds.[19] In terms of reception, these strategies create narratives that, according to Maximin's *Littératures caribéennes comparées*, could be defined as particularly participative ones. These characteristics are not exclusive to Selvon's and Chamoiseau's novels, but they certainly represent one of the main features of these works.

On linguistic resistance

The above analysis has revealed two quite distinct forms of literary creolization. Selvon creates narrative voices that are more popular because situational and social markers appear in discursive as well as narrative segments of the text. Linguistically speaking, his creolization relies primarily on syntactic features and remains relatively more accessible to non-creolophone readers (see Ashcroft et al., 70). The creolization produced by Chamoiseau, on the other hand, contributes to an esthetics that is at once more sophisticated and formal (the oral and colloquial features of vernacular appearing in discursive segments alone). It is drawn from a much larger linguistic spectrum, which runs the gamut from the most basilectal Creole—with GEREC's spelling—to the most pedantic French.

These differences are amplified in translation. In *L'ascension de Moïse*, the only one of Selvon's novels to have been published in French so far, translator Hélène Devaux-Minie prepares her reader for a literary style that she describes as "guère orthodoxe": "Moses n'est pas allé longtemps à l'école, sa grammaire et son orthographe s'en ressentent. Il écrit comme il parle. Il truffe son récit d'expressions ou de tournures créoles" (in Selvon, *L'ascension* ii). In short, Moses' discourse indicates both his regional and social background: in translation, the second aspect tends to take precedence. In a short afterword, Rose-Myriam Réjouis and Val Vinokurov, who translated *Texaco*, confess their fear of having over-translated, that is, of having clarified too much what was deliberately left opaque and ambiguous in the original, and that might have become twice as ambiguous in translation. Although Jones castigates these translators for having rather under-translated Chamoiseau's text, the fact remains that the translators multiplied all available para-textual artifacts: they added a glossary at the end of the text, produced their own footnotes—differentiated from Chamoiseau's by way of brackets—and even added their own (literal) translations of the passages in French Creole when they felt that Chamoiseau's translation was not "faithful" enough.

As most critics have pointed out (see Perret; Hazaël-Massieux [*Écrire en*

créole]; De Souza; Morel in Haigh), the opacity of Chamoiseau's literary style is deliberate. This poetics of opacity finds its philosophical rationale in refusing the "totalitarisme de la vision cartésienne" (Ludwig 19), and in adopting an attitude that not only refutes the possibility of complete translation, but also the ideal of complete translation: "Pour aucune raison, l'autre ne doit être totalement transparent pour que je le comprenne parfaitement" (Chamoiseau qtd. in Glaser and Pausch 157). Technically speaking, this poetics is enacted through formal devices creating polysemic effects: there are endless chains of metaphors, free associations, puns, double entendres, and so on. In that respect, lexical creolisms become particularly interesting as, beyond their metaphorical potential, they offer an endless source of ambiguities when reinserted into an apparently French text. However, this opacity can also be understood in relation to the first guideline of Bernabé et al.: the desire to revive and renew oral traditions. In *Lettres créoles,* Confiant and Chamoiseau explain how the traditional storyteller developed what they call a *poétique du détour*. Working both within and against the plantation system, he was unable to speak directly; he had to mask his message and create invisible traps in order to organize clandestine resistance. By analogy, Morel interprets Chamoiseau's strategies of creolization as a modern adaptation of this *technique du détour* (in Haigh 158). By locating the fundamentals of his literary practice in traditional *oraliture*, Chamoiseau gives a new political dimension to this aesthetic of opacity: far from serving a creative purpose only, this aesthetic also becomes the expression of a political resistance. Resistance constitutes one of the four functions of the traditional tale (Chamoiseau and Confiant). As mentioned in the second section of this paper, resistance is also one of the *raisons d'être* of the *créolité* movement. The attitude is similar, but the motives and stakes can hardly be compared. Whereas in the past the slave's symbolic and physical death was at stake, in the current context of Chamoiseau's manifesto, a much more metaphorical death is at stake: the death of a cultural heritage and that of Creole language.

While Selvon's London novels tend to emphasize the need to transcend loneliness and the need to initiate a dialogue between emigrants and non-emigrants, between Caribbean and non-Caribbean Londoners, one of the highest stakes of esthetic opacity is a philosophical resistance to complete translation. At a more cultural-specific and pragmatic level, the author wishes to resist assimilation. For the advocates of *créolité,* however, there is yet another aspect to linguistic resistance. Without oversimplifying, one

could sum up the differences in terms of perspective: whereas Selvon seems to start from a vernacular, which he tries to represent in a way that is comprehensible to the non-Trinidadian reader, Chamoiseau prefers to creolize the French language, but in no way does he attempt to "frenchify" Creole. Indeed, "frenchifying" Creole, that is, trying to produce a "mesolectal" representation, would run counter to the linguistic policy of reaffirming the distinctness of (Martinican) Creole. From that point of view, one cannot fail to perceive, in the "ironic pedantry" (Prat 207) of Chamoiseau's narratives and in the predominance of lexical features over syntactic ones, the refusal to take any step that might make the reader forget that Creole and French are not the same language, and associate creolization with some sort of linguistic "corruption" or "bad language."

To grasp the interaction of local (individual) trends and global (institutional and historical) factors that structure the authors' esthetic positions, it is useful to look back to the 1930s, when the first anti-colonial intellectual and literary movements began to emerge in both the English and French Caribbean. At that time, the Jamaican poet and novelist Claude McKay, father of the Harlem Renaissance, was traveling and living in France. There, he wrote *Banjo* and *Road to Harlem*, two novels that were largely composed in a vernacular style inspired by Jamaican Creole and Black American English. Both novels were translated and published in French before they even appeared in English. Research has revealed McKay's influence on his intellectual contemporaries in the French Caribbean. Following Fabre (*Black*) and Mouralis, Robert P. Smith established a close link between the French translation of *Banjo*, read by the Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, among others, and the creation of *Négritude*. In his view, the revolutionary ideals expressed in McKay's novel contributed to the foundation of *Légitime Défense*,"whose manifesto is considered by some to have been the point of departure of the intellectual awakening of the French Antilles" (53). McKay's influence on Césaire was great, but it was mainly ideological and theoretical, never esthetic. Yet, McKay's style, which is "à la source de la grande tradition du roman antillais, [. . .] puise ses formes dans la culture populaire [et . . .] revendique pour le parler du peuple un statut littéraire" (Fabre, "Postface" 329), seemed, at least in theory, in tune with the esthetic independently advocated by Bernabé et al. some fifty years later. In fact, contrary to McKay, Césaire chose a language and a style that were respectively as distant from Creole orality and realism as one could have imagined: a "magnified" French (*supra*) and a surrealistic style. As fragmentary as it may be,

here is how Bernabé et al. account for this surprising choice:

> À Césaire, une instinctive méfiance de la bâtardise dicta souvent d'ailleurs l'usage du français le plus culte, symétrique magnifié d'un créole impossible parce que encore à inventer en sa facture littéraire. Glissant, quant à lui, jamais ne se commit avec l'interlecte-cliché [. . .] [N]otre éloge de la créolité ne sera jamais celui de l'accroupissement désœuvré et infécond à faire autre chose que parasiter le monde. Or, toute une série de productions verbales peuvent aisément, si on n'y prend garde, faire fortune à se comporter en plantes épiphytes, enclines, de surcroît, à détourner le fleuve-langage de son embouchure créole. (49-50)

In other words, Césaire would have found expressive tools in surrealism because, in the thirties, Creole had not yet acquired a distinct status and writing in Creole was still impossible. Particularly in literature, Creole was represented and perceived as a vulgar *français-banane*, an illegitimate, ridiculous and stereotypical interlect—that is intermediate Creole/French variety—that was used to provide a derogatory label. The comments by Bernabé et al. show how French Caribbean writers have had to endure a rather painful heritage: the so-called *français-banane*, more generally referred to as *petit nègre*, still defined in *Le Grand Robert* as "français incorrect et sommaire parlé par les noirs africains dans les anciennes colonies françaises. Syn: *petit français, français tirailleur*.—Par ext. Mauvais français, ou style embarrassé. *S'exprimer en petit nègre*" (tome 6, 724). If the definition indicates the linguistic status associated with the referent—a status equivalent to that conveyed by the expression "broken English"—the semantic extension indicates the wide popularity of signifier and signified. Indeed, *petit-nègre* appears in colonial literature but also extends beyond: as Lavoie's work has revealed, it was sometimes used to recreate Black American English in conservative translations. It was also extensively used in famous comic books (*Tintin au Congo*), and in perennial best-selling children's books like those of La Comtesse de Ségur.[20] With such a background, one can understand why Césaire might have preferred to turn to surrealism rather than to dialectal realism and why the normative status of (Martinican/Guadeloupean) Creole, that is the official recognition of its distinctiveness, is so important to writers such as Bernabé et al. From that point of view, the rules underlying the literary representation of Creole within the *Creolité* movement also become clearer: it is acceptable to creolize, as long as the characters do not sound as if they were speaking some kind of broken French. Of course, English-based Creoles also had their share of stigmatizing representations in colonial literature and discourse. However, in this context, the interaction of formal linguistic factors (the

existence of continuum rather than diglossia) along with a more liberal attitude towards colloquial varieties[21] and language planning, led to something that would have hardly been conceivable in the French areas: the use, by Creole writers, of a mesolectal Creole not only on an internal basis, but as a "public" badge of identity, outside the community.[22] Recent analyses also point toward the increasing presence of mesolectal varieties in the French Caribbean linguistic landscape. However, as Prudent's thesis has shown, these varieties which exist at the performance level do not yet permeate the level of consciousness within the community, let alone outside it.

To sum up, one could say that, in the French Caribbean, the official (linguistic) recognition of Creole was, to some extent, a prerequisite for its literary use, whereas in the English Caribbean, the literary use of Creole that started in the thirties with McKay and continued more successfully in the fifties with Selvon, was a factor that contributed to its official linguistic recognition.[23] The particular histories of Creole discourse and of discourse on Creole—by Creole as well as non-Creole speakers—are an important explanatory factor in understanding the differences between Chamoiseau's and Selvon's literary projects. However, the above quotation from Bernabé et al. also points toward another less structural aspect that might be worth considering: namely, each author's deliberate positioning in his literary polysystem.

Beyond the Caribbean: Defining highbrow cultural representations

Casting a critical eye on the essays by Bernabé et al. and Glissant, one may wonder whether the wish to reject derogatory representations of Creole does not lead the *créolité* movement to reject illegitimate languages themselves. Indeed, Glissant claims that:

> [. . .] il nous faut opacifier le créole par rapport au français ou déstructurer le français par rapport au créole pour pouvoir maîtriser les deux, pour pouvoir sortir du "petit nègre." Il faut donc bien constituer l'originalité du créole par rapport au français et l'originalité du français par rapport au créole (la créolisation n'est en rien un méli-mélo). (40)

Bernabé et al. maintain that an "instinctive fear" of "bâtardise" drove Césaire to use the "purest" kind of French, and that contemporary writers now have to "manage" linguistic space in a "responsible" way.[24]

This movement from rejecting the stigmatizing representation of the object to rejecting the object itself becomes blatant in the way Bernabé et al. and Glissant compare the linguistic situation in the French and English Caribbean, and particularly in their eagerness to point out differences rather

than common features. Hence, for Confiant, it is important to distinguish between "'créole jamaïcain' ou plus généralement 'broken English' caribéen," et "'créole martiniquais' ou plus généralement 'créole à base lexicale française'" since, for him, the former is only "un dialecte plus ou moins éloigné de l'anglais" while the latter "est une langue à part entière" (Raguet-Bouvart 81). Similarly, Glissant seems very confident that "chez les écrivains anglophones, la présence du créole est assez lointaine [. . .] parce que dans ces régions la langue créole a disparu assez tôt et parce qu'il y a très longtemps qu'elles sont anglophones" (89). Taking this "statement" as a postulate, Glissant comes to the rather curious—and dubious—conclusion that there is no such a thing as linguistic "creolization" in the English Caribbean:

> Leur "créole" pervertit de l'intérieur les normes de la langue anglaise, réformant celle-ci. Ce qu'ils vivent de la créolisation c'est ce qui dépasse les langues: la créolisation culturelle, sociale, de mœurs, de comportements, mais ce n'est pas la créolisation linguistique. (89-90)

Hence, in his view, *dub* poetry is only "une déformation agressive, culturelle, militante, volontaire à l'intérieur d'*une* langue et une mise en question de l'unicité normative de cette langue pratiquées par un groupe de personnes qu'on connaît, dont on sait à quel moment elles ont commencé cette pratique et dont on sait peut-être à quel moment elles vont la finir" (42), while creolization should be more diffuse and unpredictable.

It is tempting to see in these objections, as well as in the whole attempt to dissociate real creolization from "bâtardise" or "méli-mélo," and to dissociate "real Creole" from the "British dialect," a normative attitude and somewhat elitist concept of creolization. Like the writing of twenties surrealist authors and of Latin American authors who have become popular in French translation since the sixties, Chamoiseau's opaque, baroque and highly sophisticated style is, from the first to the last novel, in tune with the formal criteria of the contemporary French literary canon. Written in a highly vernacular and not so overtly sophisticated style, *The Lonely Londoners*, at the time of its publication, was a marginal novel in more than one respect. Unlike Chamoiseau's, Selvon's texts, which have also been adapted for radio drama and published in episodes in popular newspapers, have not been immediately accepted by highbrow literary spheres. Not surprisingly, Selvon had to wait until the publication of *Moses Ascending*, a novel written in a more baroque and postmodern style, to gain the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, that is, an official recognition by the

"European" literary elite.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the comparison of Selvon's and Chamoiseau's narratives reveals two original forms of literary creolization. Although both authors creolize their texts in the narrowest possible sense, introducing Creole languages and traditions to a wide audience, their projects and the way they have formalized them show clear and major differences. Closely following the calypsonian's attitude and drawing from the mesolectal Trinidad Creole-English, Selvon's fiction expresses in a rather popular idiom issues that, at his time, were, one assumes, highly topical to any West Indian: postwar emigration to Britain, the social and economic problems faced by emigrants, their disillusionment, and the rise of popular ideological movements, such as Black Power. On the other hand, inspired as much by vernacular Martinican traditions as by Glissant's philosophy of opacity, Chamoiseau produces a much more sophisticated and baroque style which, at first sight, seems to have less similarity with Selvon's than with that favoured by the highbrow Latin American prose writers who have been extensively translated and popularized in France since the sixties.

In this paper, I have tried to show that these differences, resulting from a complex of literary, political and linguistic concerns, could tell us a great deal about the specific history of colonialism in the region. On the one hand, we see the "centralism" of France, the profound and long-lasting stigmatization of French Creole that accentuated the need to codify Creole before appropriating and introducing it in literary experiments; on the other hand, there is the history of emigration to the United Kingdom, the decolonization process in the sixties, the recognition of the West Indies as a literary entity, the decreolization process currently under way. There are many differences and yet, if we look very closely at the texts, we start to note common features. This analysis would suggest that, across languages, similarities tend to arise in small details: the use of particular images or metaphors (for example, *oldtalk / vieux-parler; to cry big water / pleurer gros de l'eau, etc.*), particular prosodic features, the way both writers subtly modify traditional linear narrative schemes, the attitude of their narrators toward characters and readers. These characteristics that all relate to linguistic, stylistic or narrative structures give support to the idea that, beyond these differences and beyond the language itself, there might indeed exist something like a "Caribbean poetics."

NOTES

I would like to thank Judith Lavoie for her reading of and comments on the preliminary versions of this paper, Sandra Miller for her thorough revision of it, and Rohan Anthony Lewis for his extremely insightful suggestions which helped me in clarifying important ideas, forms and concepts. The research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

1 Caribbean creolization could be defended as a two-stage process referring first to the bringing together of African and European peoples, languages and cultures, to the region and, second, to the integration of Asian and Middle Eastern elements into this frame. From the point of view of an Indo-Caribbean writer such as Selvon, creolization would have primarily referred to the second process.

2 Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the native speech or language of a particular country and district [and] the informal colloquial, or distinctive speech of a people or a group" (549), vernacular languages usually show regional, socio-linguistic and situational features. Although these three dimensions are interrelated, they are also partly distinct, as this analysis will show.

3 The "polysystem" refers to "the entire network of correlated systems—literary and extra literary—within society" (see Gentzler 114).

4 See Lowry Weir; Brown; Ashcroft et al.; D'Costa; Maximin (*La parole aux masques*); Akai; and Malena for the English Caribbean. See Hazaël-Massieux (*Écrire en créole*); Deltel; Bernabé (*De la négritude*); Jonassaint; DeSouza; and Haigh for the French Caribbean novels.

5 *Sur le terrain de la traduction: parcours traductologique au cœur d'un roman de Samuel Selvon*, Département de langue et littérature françaises, Université McGill, 2002.

6 Martinique does not yet enjoy the political independence that Trinidad and Tobago, and most English-Caribbean regions, obtained in 1962.

7 The concept of continuum was designed as the representation of two dividing (abstract) extremities—a "basilectal" (deep Creole) and an "acrolectal" (formal West Indian English)—and the possibility of intermediate (mesolectal) varieties. As such, the concept was to describe the existence of code-switching phenomena as well as the difficulty of drawing a clear line between the two languages involved. With time, as education and the hegemony of the English language have asserted themselves, there has been an overall process of decreolization which has led linguists to replace the concept of "Creole continuum" by that of a post-Creole continuum. By contrast, the concept of diglossia was to suggest the existence of a clear separation between the two languages. Without going into detail, it is worth mentioning that over the past forty years, along with the development of Creole linguistics, the sociolinguistic status and forms of both French- and English-based Creoles have changed significantly, making such a dichotomy less accurate.

8 Beyond calypso, Selvon's texts draw on another Trinidadian cultural "institution," that of "liming." Referring to the activity of getting together and passing time with friends, "liming," though not considered an oral *tradition* as such, appears to be a very popular cultural practice which usually involves verbal performances. In Selvon's narratives, characters "lime" a great deal and the actual expression, which has become a national icon of the Trinidadian "laid-back way of life," is used repeatedly.

9 Nowadays, though calypso is still extremely popular, it tends to be overtaken by soca, a blending of American and Latin rhythms, as a vehicle of social commentary in Trinidad.

10 The essay was translated in English in 1993 under the title *In Praise of Creoleness.*

11 Derived from "job" (travail), it refers to "une personne qui fait des petits travaux non déclarés" (Telchid 67).

12 Derived from a nautical vocabulary, the verb *virer* is defined in "standard" metropolitan dictionaries such as *Le Petit Robert* as meaning primarily "to transfer" or "to throw," while its most common meaning in Creole would be "to become" or "to turn."

13 These last two examples are taken from N'Zengou-Tayo (164).

14 In this particular context, the expression means "a lot." Hence it also includes, beyond derivation, a process of semantic shift.

15 Unlike Chamoiseau's, these neologisms are deliberately presented as such and detached from the text by use of italics. Acting as parodic examples of the active search for a literary style conducted by the narrator, they serve comic purposes.

16 Indeed, this is a highly productive process of word formation in French: for example, *ticket-repas, tourne-disque, attrape-nigaud,* and so on.

17 For a more extensive description see Wyke and Mair.

18 *The Lonely Londoners* and *Chronique des sept misères* provide two examples of what Confiant refers to as "récit étoilé," that is, a narrative which does not "unfold itself" but rather starts from a centre and develops in several directions without trying to follow, at least on the surface, a linear logic (qtd. in Ludwig 178).

19 To the recurring use of a polysemic "you" in Selvon's novels (Maximin, *Littératures caribéennes*) corresponds, in Chamoiseau, a "nous" that is equally recurrent and ambiguous (Perret). In both cases, the repetition of these pronouns whose referent is often vague tends to blur the distinction between the various discursive strata that usually compose the novel: that is, the actor-actor, narrator-narratee, fictional writer-fictional reader, empirical writer-empirical reader layers of communication.

20 I thank Judith Lavoie for this last example.

21 Indeed, as Sanders mentions, the attitudinal differences between formal and informal usage are not as sharp in English as they are in French.

22 As a matter of fact, it is no surprise that an expression such as "Black English," which refers to varieties that are now appropriated as part of Black identity constructions, should have absolutely no equivalent in French.

23 Indeed, during the seventies, Sam Selvon was often invited to present his work in British and Trinidadian grammar schools and to give his view on the use of English Creole in education.

24 In the same vein, Confiant has recently suggested the need to differentiate between "natural creolisms" and "literary creolisms" (51), while Pinalie proposes another distinction between "fautifs" and the "non-fautifs" (54) creolisms. On what grounds should such distinctions obtain if not on that of status: illegitimate in the first case (as it refers to creolisms which are banned by school teachers), and accepted by the literary institution,

WORKS CITED

Akai, Joanne. "Creole . . . English: West Indian Writing as Translation." *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 10.1 (1997): 165-96.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.* London: Routledge, 1989.

Balutansky, Kathleen and Marie-Agnès Sourieau, eds. *Caribbean Creolization: Reflections*

on the Cultural Dynamics of Language, Literature and Identity. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 1998.
Bandia, Paul. "Code-switching and Code-mixing in African Creative Writing: Some Insights for Translation Studies." *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 9.1 (1996): 139-54.
Bernabé, Jean. "De la négritude à la créolité: éléments pour une approche comparée." *Études françaises* 28.2/3 (1992-93): 23-38.
Bernabé, Jean, Raphaël Confiant and Patrick Chamoiseau. *Éloge de la créolité*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.
Brathwaite, E. Kamau. *History of the Voice*. Port-of-Spain: New Beacon Books, 1984.
Brown, Lloyd W. "The Calypso Tradition in West Indian Literature." *BAR* 12.1-2 (1971): 127-43.
Chamoiseau, Patrick. *Chronique des sept misères*. Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1986.
—. *Solibo magnifique*. Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1988.
—. *Texaco*. Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1992.
Chamoiseau, Patrick and Raphaël Confiant. *Lettres créoles*. Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1999.
Confiant, Raphaël. "Traduire la littérature en situation de diglossie." *Palimpsestes* 12 (2000): 49-60.
D'Costa, Jean. "Expression and Communication: Literary Challenges to the Caribbean Polydialectal Writers." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 19.1 (1984): 123-41.
Degras, Priska. "Spécificité de l'oralité caraïbe: quels choix de traduction?" *Palimpsestes* 12 (2000): 9-48.
Deltel, Danielle. "La créativité du créole dans le roman de langue française: Patrick Chamoiseau et Axel Gauvin." *Convergences et divergences dans les littératures francophones*. Centre de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur les Textes Modernes. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992. 182-200.
De Souza, Pascale. "Inscription du créole dans les textes francophones: de la citation à la créolisation." *Penser la créolité*. Ed. Maryse Condé and Madeleine Cottenet-Hage. Paris: Karthala, 1995. 173-90.
Dickinson, Swift. "Sam Selvon's 'Harlequin Costume': *Moses Ascending*, Masquerade and the Bacchanal of Self-Creolization." *Journal of the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS)* 21.3 (1996): 69-106.
Donnell, Alison and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds. *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Literature*. London: Routledge, 1996.
Fabre, Michel. *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France, 1840-1980*. Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1991.
—. "From Trinidad to London: Tone and Language in Samuel Selvon's Novels." Ed. Susheila Nasta. *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon*. Boulder: Three Continents P, 1988. 64-76.
—. "Postface." *Banjo*. By Claude McKay. Trans. Michel Fabre. Marseille: André Dimanche, 1999. 317-31.
Gendrey, Carine. "Traduction d'un roman caribéen." *Mofwaz* 5 (2000): 173-82.
Gentzler, Edwin. *Contemporary Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 1993.
Glaser, Marlies and Marion Pausch, eds. *Caribbean Writers Between Orality and Writing / Les auteurs caribéens entre l'oralité et l'écriture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.
Glissant, Édouard. *Introduction à une poétique du divers*. Montréal: PUM, 1995.
Haigh, Sam, ed. *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 1999.

Harris, Wilson. *History, Fable and Myth in the Caribbean and Guyanas.* Georgetown, Guyana: National History and Arts Council and Ministry of Information, 1970.
Hazaël-Massieux, Marie-Christine. "A propos de *Chronique des sept misères*: une littérature en français régional pour les Antilles." *Études Créoles* 11.1 (1988): 118-31.
—. *Écrire en créole: oralité et écriture aux Antilles.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993.
Jermann, Alexandra. "Les traditions créoles dans la littérature contemporaine de la Guadeloupe et de la Martinique." Glaser and Pausch. 93-110.
Jonassaint, Jean. "Des conflits langagiers dans quelques romans haïtiens." *Études françaises* 28.2/3 (1992-3): 39-48.
Jones, Moya. "Chamoiseau and Matura Translators and Translations." *Palimpsestes* 12 (2000): 61-70.
Lane-Mercier, Gillian. "Towards a Rhetorical Practice of Mimesis: Writing/Reading/(Re) Translating Fictional Sociolects." *Recherches sémiotiques / Semiotic Inquiry* 15.3 (1995): 105-22.
Lang, George. *Entwisted Tongue: Comparative Creole Literature.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.
Lavoie, Judith. *La parole noire en traduction française: le cas de* Huckleberry Finn. Thèse de doctorat. Département de langue et littérature françaises. Université McGill, 1998.
Lowry Weir, Ann. "Style Range in New English Literatures." *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures.* Ed. Braj B. Kachru. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1982. 307-22.
Ludwig, Ralph, ed. *Écrire la parole de nuit.* Paris: Folio-Gallimard, 1994.
Mair, Christian. "Naipaul's *Miguel Street* and Selvon's *Lonely Londoners:* Two Approaches to the Use of Caribbean Creole in Fiction." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 24.1 (1990): 138-54.
Malena, Anne. "En anglais, Léonora parle-t-elle encore et à qui?" *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 10.1 (1997): 197-218.
Maximin, Colette. *Littératures caribéennes comparées.* Pointe-à-Pître and Paris: Jasor and Karthala, 1996.
—. *La parole aux masques: littérature, oralité et culture populaire dans la Caraïbe anglophone au XX^{ème} siècle.* Paris: Éditions caribéennes, 1991.
Ménager, Serge. "Topographie, texte et palimpseste: *Texaco* de Patrick Chamoiseau." *French Review* 68.1 (1994): 61-68.
Morel, Lise. "In Praise of Creoleness?" *An Introduction to Caribbean Francophone Writing.* Ed. Sam Haigh. Oxford: Berg, 1999. 149-58.
Morris, Mervyn. *Is English We Speaking, and other essays.* Kingston: I Randle, 1999.
Mouralis, Bernard. *Essai sur le statut, la fonction et la représentation de la littérature négro-africaine d'expression française.* Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1981.
Nasta, Susheila. "Setting Up Home in a City of Words: Sam Selvon's London Novels." *Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon.* Ed. Susheila Nasta and Anna Rutherford. London: Dangarro P, 1995. 78-95.
—, ed. *Critical Perspectives on Sam Selvon.* Boulder: Three Continents P, 1988.
N'Zengou-Tayo, Marie-José and Elizabeth Wilson. "Translators on a Tight Rope: The Challenges of Translating Edwige Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Patrick Chamoiseau's *Texaco.*" *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction,* 3.2 (2000): 75-106.
Perret, Delphine. "La parole du conteur créole: *Solibo magnifique* de Patrick Chamoiseau." *French Review* 67.5 (April 1994): 824-39.

"Petit nègre." *Le Grand Robert de la langue française.* 2000.
Phirmis, Sandrine. "Patrick Chamoiseau: profil d'une œuvre en construction." *Mofwaz* 5 (2000): 161-72.
Pinalie, Pierre. "Lecture et parole dans l'enseignement du créole à des non-créolophones." *Mofwaz* 5 (2000): 47-58.
Prat, Michel. "Patrick Chamoiseau: Un émule de Gadda?" *L'héritage de Caliban.* Ed. Maryse Condé. Paris: Jasor, 1992. 201-12.
Prudent, Lambert-Félix. *Des baragouins à la langue antillaise: analyse historique et sociolinguistique du discours sur le créole.* 1980. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999.
Raguet-Bouvart, Christine, ed. "Débat: comment traduire l'oralité du texte métissé?" *Palimpsestes* 12 (2000): 71-90.
Ramchand, Kenneth. "Song of Innocence, Song of Experience: Samuel Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* as a Literary work." *World Literature Written in English* 21 (1982): 644-54.
Rohlehr, Gordon. "The Folk in Caribbean Literature." *Tapia* 7-8 (1972): 13-14.
Sanders, Carol. "'Pourquoi dit-on des choses et pas d'autres?': Translating Queneau's français parlé in *Zazie dans le métro* et *Le chiendent.*" *Palimpsestes* 10 (1996): 41-48.
Selvon, Samuel. *L'ascension de Moïse.* Trans. Hélène Devaux-Minie. Paris: Éditions Caribéennes, 1987.
—."Finding West Indian Identity in London." *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987): 34-38.
—. *The Lonely Londoners.* 1956. Toronto: TSAR, 1991.
—. *Moses Ascending.* London: Heinemann, 1975.
—. *Moses Migrating.* London: Longman, 1983.
Smith, Robert P. "Rereading *Banjo*: Claude McKay and the French Connection." *College Language Association Journal* 30.1 (September 1986): 46-58.
Telchid, Sylviane. *Dictionnaire du français régional des Antilles.* Paris: Éditions Bonneton, 1997.
Thieme, John. "V. S. Naipaul." *Dictionary of Literary Biography.* Ed. Bernth Lindfords and Reinhard Sander. Detroit: Gale Research International, 1993. 121-143.
Tiffin, Helen. "'Under the kiff-kiff laughter': Stereotype and Subversion in *Moses Ascending* and *Moses Migrating.*" *Tiger's Triumph: Celebrating Sam Selvon.* Ed. Susheila Nasta and Anna Rutherford. London: Dangarro P, 1995. 130-9.
Torres-Saillant, Silvio. *Caribbean Poetics: Toward an Aesthetic of West Indian Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
"Vernacular." *Oxford English Dictionary.* 2nd ed. 1989.
Warner, Keith Q. *The Trinidad Calypso: A Study of Calypso as Oral Literature.* London: Heinemann, 1982.
Warner-Lewis, Maureen. "Samuel Selvon's Linguistic Extravaganza: *Moses Ascending.*" *Caribbean Quarterly* 28.4 (1983): 60-69.
Winer, Lise. *Trinidad and Tobago.* London: John Benjamins, 1993.
Wyke, Clement. *Sam Selvon's Dialectal Style and Fictional Strategy.* Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1991.

Wendy Morton

What Lasts?

"The well preserved remains of a 550-
year-old man are to be cremated . . . . thrown to the wind."
Robert Matas

Not the new moon in your mouth:
not songs
or the geometry of dreams.

In ice:
thorax,
spinal cord,
chest wall,
throat,
pollen from high alpine alder,
knives, sticks,
coats of fur.

What of the frozen heart,
locked in glacial ice?

He lasted, this man in a woven hat;
perhaps a singer on the wind,
holding the blue moon
in his open mouth;
watching the starry geometry
of his frozen dreams.

Rochelle Mass

Looking for the Source

Time-stops, she called what she did. This was doing something important, stopping time. Sheets floated in acids, birthing figures into existence. She remembers the wet pictures, the movement as it roams from below, as it convolutes, evolves.

He blows nervousness into her shoulder when he lifts her dress. Other women fade into other time, other rooms. Air is heavy as he comes toward her. She prepares for his weight, his shape, feels between water and sky. Remembers stones and flowers. For just a second, the dream where she lost her legs.

Then he empties. She, his field of wild rice, tall corn, fat tomatoes. He pummeled her, told her who she was, but sometimes he just takes from her. Sometimes she follows him, memorizes his hand, his eyes. She tries. It's a slow ride into her body.

She remembers planning her death. In water, deep in, never rising, no more sky. But he's taking her to better now. Don't cut me in half, she pleads. It's night. The cold stays round them till they push at it. Cover themselves with each other. She is tired, moves back to her self, can only see what she didn't know about him, the way he shook his hand, how his lip twisted. She waited like a cat under his leg, like slippers. There was a pattern here:
she—fragments, phrases. He—open doors, thrusting her ahead.

I went to a lady healer this morning, he tells her, *to get peace. Here,* he says, placing his hand on his chest, *too much pain, wild pain,* he says waving the flat hand back and forth. *The healer touched my neck, held my shoulder, steadying me. But she was pushing me into weeds, swamps, marshlands. I shook like a weather vane, spun round myself, I left, ran out.*

His coughing woke her, he was rolled over himself on the sofa, she walked round him till her hands were damp, flashing, snapping, rolling the focus. Leaned over to the contours of his cheek, arm, down to his ankle. When she dropped the pages into the acid bath, the shadows blurred, then became exact. Finally, there he was, she had locked him in, closed a fence round his pain, simmered him down. He looked like an iris felled by heat, a heavy boot or an anxious dog. He lay still—the way he wanted the healer to make him, like the iris when it was unaware of being otherwise. Didn't look ambitious, almost looked discarded, left in a dusty place.

She refocused the camera, tried to think him out, get at his totality, moved over him again, frame after frame. He would always be bigger than her, but with the lens she reduced, minimized, so that he could fit her. When the images moved up into the page his face was stained with a splash of light. She hadn't seen it then, would look for the source every time she came back.

Louise Ladouceur

A Firm Balance:
Questions d'équilibre et rapport de force dans les représentations des littératures anglophone et francophone du Canada

L'étude des discours critiques portant sur la relation entre les littératures canadiennes d'expression anglaise et d'expression française révèle une présence importante d'emblèmes et de symboles chargés de représenter cette relation. Exprimant les positions, les présupposés et les aspirations propres à chaque ensemble discursif, ces figures symboliques mettent en scène un rapport de force qu'elles contribuent d'ailleurs à façonner.

Issus d'abord des études en littérature comparée canadienne, ces emblèmes ont exprimé un idéal égalitaire fort louable mais très éloigné de la réalité. Avec l'élaboration d'un discours critique et théorique sur la traduction littéraire canadienne à la fin des années quatre-vingt, les façons de représenter la dynamique des échanges entre les littératures anglophone et francophone mettent en lumière un autre type de relation. Délaissant l'analyse des différences et des ressemblances entre les répertoires, ce discours donne à voir un rapport de force avoué entre littératures majoritaire et minoritaire, un rapport dont les enjeux sont de taille puisqu'il s'agit de donner sa propre voix et sa propre langue à la parole de l'autre.

L'étude qui suit propose d'examiner les symboles et désignations attribués aux littératures anglophone et francophone du Canada par la littérature comparée canadienne en premier lieu et, par la suite, dans le discours portant sur la traduction littéraire en contexte canadien. Issus en grande partie du discours critique anglophone, ces emblèmes sont peu connus des francophones, pour qui ils ne constituent pas une tradition cri-

tique. Par conséquent, cette étude invite un lectorat francophone à prendre connaissance d'une activité emblématique importante au Canada anglais et fort révélatrice des perceptions et des conceptions qui contribuent à définir les littératures écrites dans les deux langues officielles du Canada.

Solitudes en équilibre

Dans "Canada's Two Literatures: A Search for Emblems" (1979) et dans l'ouvrage intitulé *All the Polarities: Studies in Contemporary Canadian Novels in French and in English* (1986), Philip Stratford propose une étude des emblèmes attribués aux littératures anglaise et française du Canada depuis environ un siècle. Dans cet article, qui me servira de point de départ, Stratford cite Pierre-Joseph-Olivier Chauveau, éducateur, homme de lettres et homme politique québécois qui, en 1876, déplorait le manque d'échange entre ce qu'il appelle alors les "deux races" (335). Chauveau compare cet état social à l'escalier du château de Chambord, "construit de manière que deux personnes puissent monter en même temps sans se rencontrer" (335):

> Anglais et français [sic], nous montons comme par une double rampe vers les destinées qui nous sont réservées sur ce continent, sans nous connaître, sans nous rencontrer, ni même nous voir ailleurs que sur le palier de la politique. Socialement et littérairement parlant, nous sommes plus étrangers les uns aux autres de beaucoup que ne le sont les Anglais et les Français d'Europe. (335)

Selon Stratford, cette vision plutôt pessimiste était compensée par l'enthousiasme d'un William Kirby qui, dans son roman *The Chien d'Or: A Legend of Quebec*, publié à Montréal en 1877, exprimait le souhait de voir "the two glorious streams of modern thought and literature united in New France, where they have run side by side to this day—in time to be united in one grand flood stream of Canadian literature" (268).

Au milieu du siècle suivant paraît à Toronto le roman de Hugh MacLennan dont le titre, *Two Solitudes* (1945), deviendra l'emblème consacré de la relation entre les cultures anglaise et française du Canada. L'auteur commente le titre de l'ouvrage en lui faisant porter en épigraphe ces vers de Rainer Maria Rilke: "Love consists in this, / that two solitudes protect, / and touch, and greet each other." Ici, la métaphore évoque le rapport amoureux unissant un couple. Dans sa préface, MacLennan apporte ces précisions sur les désignations employées dans l'ouvrage:

> No single word exists, within Canada itself, to designate with satisfaction to both races a native of the country. When those of the French language use the word Canadien, they nearly always refer to themselves. They know their English-speaking compatriots as Les Anglais. English-speaking citizens act on the same princi-

ple. They call themselves Canadians; those of the French language French-Canadians.

Suivant la logique des désignations attribuées aux deux groupes linguistiques, les oeuvres littéraires écrites dans l'une ou l'autre langue appartiennent à ce qu'on appelle alors les littératures canadienne-anglaise et canadienne-française, désignations qui se sont imposées depuis que la Loi constitutionnelle de 1867 a reconnu la coexistence des deux langues au sein de la fédération canadienne.[1] La figure des "deux solitudes" s'imposera autant en français qu'en anglais et elle donnera lieu à de nombreuses reprises qui vont témoigner de l'évolution du couple en question dans le discours critique littéraire.[2] Ce qu'il faut retenir de la métaphore inaugurée par MacLennan, c'est qu'elle exprime des vœux de rapprochement qui vont devenir un important leitmotiv au sein d'un discours critique occupé à démontrer que "les deux littératures nationales du Canada [. . .] ont suivi une évolution parallèle et qu'elles ont plus de caractères communs qu'on ne le croit habituellement" (Sylvestre et al., v).

Dans cette foulée émerge en 1965 un symbole géographique qui marquera profondément la critique littéraire canadienne-anglaise. Il s'agit de ce que Northrop Frye appelle "a garrison mentality" et qu'il décrit en ces mots: "a garrison is a closely knit and beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable" (830). Selon Frye, c'est une attitude commune aux deux littératures puisque "Canada has two languages and two literatures, and every statement made in a book like this about 'Canadian literature' employs the figure of speech known as synecdoche, putting a part for the whole. Every such statement implies a parallel or contrasting statement about French-Canadian literature" (*Literary History* 823).

A la même époque, du côté francophone, la double spirale de Chauveau a cédé le pas à l'antagonisme spatial dessiné par Jean-Charles Falardeau dans *Notre société et son roman* (1967). Il explique: "La littérature canadienne-anglaise, selon ses critiques, est tendue selon un axe horizontal: la relation homme-milieu ou homme-société. Pour le critique de langue française, l'axe de sa littérature est, à l'inverse, vertical: il est donné par la relation homme-destin ou homme-absolu" (58). Cette représentation antagonique n'est sans doute pas étrangère à l'esprit de la Révolution tranquille, le mouvement d'émancipation qui emporte alors le Québec vers l'affirmation d'une identité culturelle spécifique.

Malgré la divergence des points de vue adoptés par Frye et Falardeau, les dénominations auxquelles ils ont recours pour désigner les littératures

relèvent toujours du principe voulant qu'elles aient en commun d'être canadiennes et se distinguent par la langue. C'est un principe dénominatif que Clément Moisan analyse dans *L'âge de la littérature canadienne* (1969):

> Le Canada comprenant deux langues et deux cultures, l'expression littérature canadienne ne peut jamais recouvrir toute la réalité. Il faut toujours ajouter une épithète et former un adjectif composé: canadienne-anglaise, canadienne-française ou encore, ce qui semble plus juste, dire littérature canadienne d'expression anglaise ou d'expression française. On va même jusqu'à inverser les termes: anglo-canadienne, franco-canadienne. (17)

Déplorant la lourdeur de cette terminologie, Moisan précise que les auteurs ont en général "adopté une solution très simple: selon qu'ils sont Canadiens français ou Canadiens anglais, l'expression littérature canadienne désigne les oeuvres écrites dans leur propre langue" (18). On retrouve ici une attitude analogue à celle décrite auparavant par MacLennan. Dans son étude, qui a comme intention de "démontrer la parenté des deux littératures canadiennes" (*L'âge de la littérature* 13), Moisan leur reconnaît une problématique commune, celle d'être marginale et de devoir "résoudre des problèmes de croissance avant d'atteindre à [leur] pleine maturité" (163). Si, à l'instar de Moisan, les critiques s'astreignent à examiner les fondements et la portée des désignations auxquelles ils ont recours pour nommer les ensembles littéraires anglais et français du Canada, c'est que ces désignations sont devenues le symbole d'enjeux littéraires et politiques importants.

Dans le climat d'effervescence et de changement que connaît le Québec des années soixante, la question identitaire est au centre des préoccupations et on interroge la pertinence d'une désignation qui attribue le même dénominateur à chaque littérature. Représentative de ce mouvement, auquel elle a fortement contribué, la revue *Parti Pris* (1963-1968) publie en 1965 un numéro intitulé "Pour une littérature québécoise," dont Pierre Maheu décrit le sujet en ces termes: "nous pensons que la 'littérature canadienne d'expression française' [. . .] est morte, si jamais elle a été vivante, et que la littérature québécoise est en train de naître" (2). Selon les auteurs, ce déplacement prend des sens divers: pour Laurent Girouard, "[l]a littérature québécoise prend possession du pays, de l'enfance, de la modernité" (11). André Major y fait l'expérience de la liberté devant "un passé qui nous écrase" (16) et à partir duquel il faut découvrir "le sens de notre vérité propre" (17). Dénonçant sa "situation dans ce pays, qui est [s]a réduction au regard de l'altérité anglo-canadienne" (27), Gaston Miron affirme que la "littérature ici [. . .] existera collectivement [. . .] le jour où elle prendra

place parmi les littératures nationales, le jour où elle sera québécoise" (30). De son côté, Paul Chamberland conçoit le "malheur canadien-français" (38) comme "un universel qui consacre notre folklorisation" (38), pendant que Jacques Brault convie la littérature "à aller de l'avant par ses moyens propres et [à] projeter pour tous les hommes cette liberté que nous ne sommes pas encore" (51).[3] Ce déplacement onomastique prend donc racine dans un discours qui affiche ses orientations indépendantistes, ce qui a pour effet d'investir le nouveau qualificatif d'un fort coefficient politique. Cette reconfiguration des désignations attribuées à chaque ensemble littéraire met en évidence leur caractère politique, ce qu'a éloquemment démontré Cynthia Sugars dans l'article qu'elle consacre aux façons dont la critique littéraire canadienne conçoit les deux littératures et aux prises de position politiques que recouvrent les désignations employées.[4]

Dans le contexte de l'époque, le recours au qualificatif "québécois" pour désigner la littérature produite en français au Québec offre l'avantage de représenter cette littérature sous un angle majoritaire, puisque le français est au Québec la langue de la majorité. Par conséquent, on renverse ainsi l'effet d'une dénomination fondée sur la langue au sein d'une fédération bilingue où le français occupe une position minoritaire. Cela a toutefois pour résultat d'exclure les oeuvres issues des communautés francophones canadiennes non québécoises, qui occuperont désormais le champ sémantique désigné par l'appellation "littératures canadiennes-françaises." Les littératures dites "canadiennes-françaises" vont toutefois emboîter le pas et se doter de désignations qui mettent l'accent sur leur particularisme en se qualifiant de franco-terreneuvienne, acadienne, franco-ontarienne, franco-manitobaine, fransaskoise, franco-albertaine, franco-colombienne, franco-ténoise et franco-yukonnaise,[5] constituant ainsi des ensembles littéraires distincts dont le trait commun serait une condition d'exiguïté.[6]

Ces glissements définitoires se sont faits graduellement de telle sorte que la désignation "littérature québécoise," née de la Révolution tranquille et mise de l'avant au cours des années soixante, est maintenant d'usage courant et s'est délestée de la connotation idéologique associée au projet politique qu'elle exprimait il y a trente ans. C'est ce qui incite Pierre Nepveu à en questionner le sens: "[. . .] cette appellation ne recouvre plus rien d'essentiel ou de substantiel, [ce] qui pourrait nous entraîner à parler désormais, avec un certain à-propos, d'une littérature post-québécoise" (14). D'autre part, la littérature écrite en langue anglaise au Canada a continué de se définir comme canadienne-anglaise ou canadienne, selon le

désir des auteurs de distinguer ou non les corpus écrits dans chaque langue.

Si les emblèmes anglais et français s'attachaient auparavant à relever les points communs entre les littératures tout en insistant sur la distance qui les séparait et leur isolement respectif, les événements de 1970 inciteront les critiques anglophones à mettre de l'avant une symbolique du rapprochement pendant qu'on se fera silencieux du côté francophone. Comme le fait remarquer Clément Moisan:

> [a]lors qu'avant cette date on traitait des deux littératures par hasard ou accident et qu'on faisait porter l'attention sur leur existence et surtout sur leur ignorance réciproque, après 1970 on semble vouloir élucider le pourquoi de cette ignorance et rechercher des points de ressemblances ou de dissemblances qui seraient révélateurs de leur situation de littératures marginales. (*Comparaison et raison* 114)

Dans cette veine, s'élabore une réflexion sur le lien entre les littératures qui privilégie d'abord la recherche de thèmes et de mythes fondateurs communs. Après avoir fondé en 1969 la revue de traduction littéraire *Ellipse*, dont le titre est une figure géométrique courbe comprenant deux centres de force égale qui représentent les deux littératures jointes en un objet unique, D.G. Jones publie *Butterfly on Rock: A Study of Themes and Images in Canadian Literature* (1970). Il y soutient que le développement de la littérature canadienne, incluant celle du Québec, va d'une condition d'exil et d'aliénation vers la redécouverte et l'affirmation d'une identité propre. Deux ans plus tard, Margaret Atwood fait paraître *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, une étude dans laquelle "Canada is a collective victim" (36) dont les fictions dans les deux langues officielles ont pour préoccupation centrale la survie de héros en position de victimes. Tel que l'indiquent leurs titres, ces études, à l'instar de celle de Frye, traitent de la littérature francophone en tant qu'élément constituant du grand ensemble littéraire canadien.

Poursuivant la réflexion amorcée dans l'article "Twin Solitudes" (1967) où Ronald Sutherland attribue aux deux littératures "a common national mystique, a common set of conditioning forces, the mysterious apparatus of a single sense of identity" (22), l'ouvrage *The New Hero: Essays in Comparative Quebec/Canadian Literature* (1977) propose un symbole connu sous le nom de "mainstream" et décrit ainsi: "the mainstream of Canadian literature [. . .] is a matter of sphere of consciousness, an author's awareness of and sensitivity to fundamental aspects of both major language groups in Canada and of the inter-relationships between these two groups" (94). Ici,

la métaphore fait écho au vœu exprimé presque cent ans auparavant par Kirby, une aspiration qu'on a dotée déjà de quelques fondements thématiques.

A la fin des années soixante-dix et dans la décennie qui suivra le Référendum de 1980, on s'intéressera davantage à ce qui distingue chaque littérature tout en insistant cependant sur le lien indivisible qui les unit. Le principe emblématique du parallélisme connaît alors son apogée. Dans l'article "Canada's Two Literatures: A Search for Emblems" (1979), Stratford soutient que "[i]n Canada, literatures in French and in English have grown up side by side in roughly parallel fashion as far as their rhythms, types, and conditions of development are concerned" (131). Pour parler de ces littératures, Stratford utilise plusieurs dénominations et, dans le même article, parle des "Quebec and English-Canadian novels" (135) à partir d'un corpus représentant "[t]he English-Canadian novel" et "[t]he French-Canadian novel" (135). On évite donc ici de trancher en faveur de l'une ou l'autre dénomination.

Dans cet article, Stratford conteste la valeur du "mainstream" de Sutherland, de la "vertical-horizontal or separatist theory" de Falardeau et de l'ellipse de Jones en tant que symboles du rapport entre les deux littératures et propose plutôt un emblème emprunté à la génétique: la figure du "double helix which proved to contain the secret of life" (138). Il explique ce choix en mettant l'accent sur deux propriétés importantes des lignes parallèles. En premier lieu, elles ne se rencontrent jamais, si ce n'est dans l'infini: "the two literatures have developed quite independently. There has been next-to-no sharing of experience on critical, cultural or creative levels" (132). Ensuite, les parallèles ne peuvent exister qu'en se définissant l'un par rapport à l'autre: "one parallel fixes and defines the other" (137). Ainsi, conclut Stratford, les parallèles géométriques ou littéraires, bien qu'ils ne se rencontrent jamais, agissent l'un sur l'autre dans un rapport de nécessité symétrique et réciproque.

Jugeant les modèles précédents insensibles à la fragile complexité du rapport entre les deux littératures, E. D. Blodgett propose en 1982 de représenter ce rapport en empruntant le titre d'un recueil de poèmes de Paul Celan, *Sprachgitter*. Il explique ainsi son choix: "A Gitter is a lattice-work fence, a grid of interwoven strands whose common threads relate and distinguish, but do not unify. The grid divides according to language, distinguishes according to culture, history, and ideology" (33). Résolument opposé aux symboles unificateurs, Blodgett insiste sur la nécessité de préserver un plu-

ralisme qui est à la fois source de fragilité et de vitalité pour le Canada. C'est un pluralisme dont, selon lui, ne rendent pas compte les recherches en littérature comparée canadienne, trop souvent restreintes à des études binaires Canada/Québec et mal équipées au niveau méthodologique pour effectuer la comparaison avec d'autres littératures. Blodgett soulève aussi la question fort pertinente de l'idéologie inhérente à toute théorisation:

> What we have been reluctant to assert is not only that literary theory is ideological, but that any literary theory that tries to resolve the problems of nation-states that are at least bilingual in an official sense must be clear about its ideology. A bicultural policy, of course, always implies a central question, namely, whose culture, and this question is always answered by the dominant group. (32)

Dans l'article "Our Two Cultures," publié en 1984, Patricia Smart déplore l'hégémonie des approches thématiques ou sociologiques de la critique comparative canadienne et rejette les emblèmes existants. Elle commente les représentations du rapport entre les deux cultures dans les œuvres de Hubert Aquin, Margaret Atwood et Jacques Godbout en insistant sur l'inégalité des langues officielles canadiennes et la spécificité de chaque tradition littéraire. Inspirée par la vitalité du dialogue et des échanges amorcés à la fin des années soixante-dix entre les écrivaines et les critiques canadiennes francophones et anglophones, Smart suggère alors de concevoir le rapport entre les deux cultures selon un modèle tiré d'un texte de Nicole Brossard, "La femme dos à dos." Elle explique:

> Brossard's striking image of two women standing back to back [. . .] is one of touching but not of fusion, of separate identities respected and shared as both partners look not at each other, but—supporting each other—out to the world. Transposed, it becomes an image of two nations and two projects, an adjacent but not common space, a border shared in which both cultures find strength in difference. (17)

Tout comme le *sprachgitter* de Blodgett, l'emblème retenu par Smart propose d'illustrer le rapport entre les deux systèmes culturels et littéraires à l'aide d'un emprunt linguistique fait à l'allemand dans le premier cas et au français dans le second. Témoignant d'une volonté de prendre l'altérité linguistique en compte et de transgresser les frontières de la langue anglaise, le recours à des termes allemand et français comme matériau emblématique atteste aussi de l'assurance d'une langue dominante qui ne se sent nullement menacée par ces emprunts à des langues étrangères.

S'inpirant de l'emblème de Stratford, qu'elle modifie afin de dé-polariser les deux littératures, Cynthia Sugars suggère un nouvel emblème qu'elle inclut dans le titre de son article "On the Rungs of the Double Helix:

Theorizing the Canadian Literatures" (1993). Elle propose alors de concevoir les littératures non pas comme si chacune d'elle composait un des rubans parallèles de la double hélice mais plutôt comme si elles étaient réparties de façon analogue aux séquences génétiques elles-mêmes le long d'une chaîne: "in contiguous or split intervals depending on where the critic chooses to slice it at any given time" (39).

A Firm Balance

Dans cette abondante activité emblématique pratiquée par les comparatistes canadiens quelques recoupements s'imposent. Ce qui frappe, en premier lieu, c'est la prédilection de la critique anglophone pour ce genre d'exercice. Poursuivant la réflexion de Blodgett, on pourrait voir dans cette pratique une prédisposition du groupe dominant à non seulement témoigner de l'existence d'un rapport entre les cultures, mais aussi à le sonder pour en imposer une lecture que l'emblème est chargé d'illustrer. En second lieu, on peut observer dans plusieurs de ces symboles la récurrence d'un présupposé qui leur sert de prémisse. Explorant ce qu'ont en commun les doubles escaliers en spirale de Chauveau et l'ellipse de Jones, les parallèles de Stratford, le treillis de Blodgett et la femme dos à dos de Smart, Margery Fee constate: "What these images figure is equality and difference at the same time, sometimes with the addition of a kind of abstract interdependence. English and French in Canada are 'equal partners' in these metaphors" (5). On pourrait en dire autant des métaphores voulant que les deux littératures évoluent au rythme d'une "garrison mentality" commune et qu'elles se rejoignent dans un "mainstream" littéraire réunissant "both major language groups." Toujours selon Fee, ce présupposé serait peu représentatif d'une réalité où "anglo-Canada has most of the territory, most of the population, and most of the votes in the House" (5).

Que les symboles fondés sur ce présupposé soient l'expression d'un idéal souhaité n'empêche pas qu'ils aient pour effet d'évacuer une réalité pourtant fondamentale: la relation qu'entretiennent les littératures en question est un rapport de force marqué par l'inégalité des langues officielles du Canada.[7] Concevoir que le rapport entre les littératures canadiennes anglophone et francophone puisse reposer sur l'égalité ne peut être qu'une illusion d'optique inhérente à la position occupée dans l'équation. D'un point de vue anglophone et majoritaire, il est aisé de concevoir l'égalité comme acquise et allant de soi. Fort de la position qu'on occupe, on prône un équilibre illusoire entre deux littératures qui sont loin d'avoir le même

poids en termes de territoire, de nombre et de moyens. On pourrait concevoir cette symétrie forcée comme un état de "firm balance," une sorte d'équilibre imposé dans lequel on maintient les deux littératures. C'est une fausse conception dans laquelle les francophones ne se reconnaissent pas. Confrontés de façon quotidienne et factuelle à une toute autre réalité, ils vont plutôt se dissocier d'un discours où est occultée une asymétrie qui fait pourtant toute la différence. La réelle inégalité du rapport de force entre les littératures française et anglaise du Canada s'affiche toutefois quand on se déplace vers le territoire de la traduction littéraire, autant dans la façon dont on la pratique que dans les discours critiques qu'elle alimente.

L'épreuve de la traduction

Lieu de rencontre et d'interpénétration des littératures qu'elle met en contact, la traduction est façonnée par le rapport qu'entretiennent ces littératures. Plus qu'un regard qu'on pose sur l'autre, le texte traduit propose une substitution de sa langue et de sa voix à celles de l'autre. Cette commutation ne va pas sans aménagements qui agissent en profondeur sur le texte traduit. Puisqu'il est impossible de reproduire exactement le texte original, les moyens linguistiques de chaque langue n'étant pas identiques et interchangeables, on doit faire des choix qui privilégient nécessairement certaines interprétations. Ces choix doivent en outre s'inscrire dans un contexte social, culturel, historique et politique qui donne au texte des valences autres que celles du contexte d'origine, ce qui demande aussi des ajustements. Enfin, la traduction est le produit d'un agent qui fait une lecture subjective d'une œuvre et en propose une interprétation informée par les rapports conscients et inconscients qu'entretient le sujet traduisant avec le texte et le contexte sources. En fin de parcours, le texte traduit porte les marques d'une lutte dont le résultat est la représentation de l'autre par et à travers soi. Il s'agit donc ici d'un rapport de force avoué dans ce qui se présente comme une joute identitaire.

Activité auparavant discrète, la traduction littéraire prend vraiment son envol avec la création du programme de Subvention de traduction du Conseil des arts du Canada en 1972, lequel a pour mission d'encourager le dialogue et l'échange entre les communautés anglophone et francophone du Canada à une époque où leur relation est particulièrement tendue. Le programme est d'ailleurs exclusif: on ne subventionne que les traductions d'œuvres canadiennes d'une langue officielle à l'autre. Selon l'étude menée par Ruth Martin sur l'impact de ce programme de 1972 à 1992, il y avait en

1977, soit cinq ans après sa fondation, presque deux fois plus de livres traduits que dans toute l'histoire de la traduction au Canada (54). Fait à souligner, alors qu'on s'attendrait à ce que la minorité francophone emprunte en plus grand nombre à la majorité anglophone qui, en principe, a plus à offrir, c'est l'opposé qui se produit. Ce phénomène est particulièrement marqué dans le domaine du théâtre puisque 60 des 62 traductions théâtrales recensées par Martin sont des oeuvres francophones traduites en anglais. Cette nette différence dans le nombre d'emprunts s'explique de plusieurs façons.

Avec la canonisation du joual comme langue littéraire québécoise en 1968, le théâtre devient un haut lieu d'affirmation identitaire et se voit chargé de faire résonner sur la place publique une langue qui se distingue par sa spécificité orale. Grâce à cette nouvelle norme linguistique, l'écriture théâtrale franco-québécoise connaît un essor sans précédent. Dans cette foulée va s'ouvrir le marché de la traduction théâtrale puisque les pièces étrangères, qui devaient auparavant passer par la France, sont désormais traduites sur place dans une langue locale populaire. Toutefois, on privilégie alors les prestigieux répertoires britanniques et américains plutôt qu'un répertoire canadien qui suscite peu d'intérêt et qui est encore bien timide. Les pièces traduites ne sont donc pas admissibles au programme de traduction du Conseil des arts.

Si on s'intéresse peu au répertoire du Canada anglais, ce n'est pas uniquement par indifférence ou par méfiance. A cette époque, le théâtre canadien-anglais emprunte massivement aux répertoires britannique et américain qui lui servent de modèles et s'investit peu dans la création. Il faut attendre la mise en place du réseau des "alternative theatres" dans les années soixante-dix pour que commence à se constituer un répertoire canadien-anglais auquel on empruntera volontiers à partir de 1980. Ainsi, il n'y aura pas moins de six pièces canadiennes-anglaises produites en traduction au Québec entre 1980 et 1983, soit l'équivalent de toute la décennie précédente.

Pour ce qui est du programme d'appui à la traduction du Conseil des arts, il semble donc qu'il ait surtout contribué à la traduction du répertoire français en anglais par des traducteurs chargés d'établir des ponts entre les deux cultures. Comme le fait remarquer Kathy Mezei, "[s]ince the 1950s, particularly in the context of the Quiet Revolution, the 1970 October Crisis, and the rise of the Parti québécois, English-Canadian translators have proclaimed a political mission to 'bridge' the two solitudes" ("Translation as Metonymy" 88). Dans la ferveur nationaliste qui accompagne les célébra-

tions du Centenaire de la Confédération au Canada anglais, la métaphore du pont, déjà présente dans le discours portant sur la traduction, est mise à l'honneur et connaîtra une longue carrière. Dans les textes anglophones, la traduction littéraire se voit alors attribuée la mission d'offrir "a possible bridge over the gap of language between English and French Canadian writing" (Dudek et Gnarowski, cités dans Mezei "Translation as Metonymy" 89).

Employée, entre autres, par Louis Dudek et Michael Gnarowski en 1967, par John Glassco en 1970 et par G.V. Downes en 1973 pour présenter la poésie en traduction (Mezei 89), cette figure sera reprise par Philip Stratford en 1983 pour le titre de l'article, "Literary Translation: A Bridge Between Two Solitudes." Par la suite, elle apparaîtra dans l'intitulé bilingue de l'ouvrage de Jean Delisle *Au coeur du trialogue canadien: Bureau des traductions 1934-1984/Bridging the Language Solitudes: Translation Bureau 1934-84*. Il est à noter ici que la métaphore n'est conservée que pour la version anglaise du titre. Alors qu'on invite les anglophones à une cordiale rencontre des solitudes linguistiques, le titre français insiste sur le rôle de la traduction comme tiers agent nécessaire au procès de communication, une communication plutôt singulière du reste puisqu'on doit la désigner par un néologisme. Mezei empruntera à son tour l'image du pont pour l'article intitulé "A Bridge of Sorts: The Translation of Quebec Literature into English" (1985), dans lequel elle conçoit la traduction comme une des rares formes d'interaction entre les écrivains anglophones et francophones, lesquels demeurent le plus souvent isolés dans une indifférence mutuelle. Sherry Simon questionne toutefois la représentativité de cette vision de la traduction comme agent de fraternisation:

> Too closely associated with humanistic ideals of transparence and tolerance, too obviously linked to the political sphere (the final resting place of language issues in Canada), the subject of translation for a long time conjured up pious images of bridges and brotherhood, clearly out of sync with the realities of Canadian cultural politics. ("Rites of Passage" 96)

Il faut dire que la figure du "pont" offert par la traduction, chère aux anglophones, ne suscite pas le même enthousiasme de l'autre côté de la rive, où la traduction est perçue comme un symbole de domination politique et un agent d'assimilation linguistique.

Dans le contexte politique canadien, où les rapports de force sont intimement liés à la dualité linguistique, la traduction et son discours se chargent nécessairement de fortes connotations politiques. Selon Larry Shouldice,

non seulement elles n'échappent pas au politique, elles en sont les outils. Dans l'étude qu'il consacre au programme de Subvention de traduction du Conseil des arts, Shouldice soutient que le succès relatif de la traduction vers l'anglais ne peut s'expliquer uniquement par les arguments habituels voulant que le dynamisme de la littérature québécoise des années soixante et soixante-dix attire l'attention, même à l'étranger, que les Canadiens français sachent lire l'anglais et qu'ils achètent moins de livres que les Canadiens anglais. Il maintient plutôt que "much of English Canada's interest in Quebec literature stems from a political impulse, and that this helps explain the relative proliferation of translations from Quebec. As Hubert Aquin might have expressed it, literary translation in our federal system is a form of cultural appropriation" (80). Shouldice exprime ainsi les motivations politiques auxquelles obéirait la traduction littéraire au Canada à cette époque:

> It is not uncommon, I think, for English Canadians to view translation as a means of fostering national unity; and while this is no doubt true of some French Canadians as well, one senses in the latter a more pronounced impulse to intelligence gathering for strategic defence purposes: "love thy neighbour" on the one hand, and "know thy enemy" on the other. (75)

Il ne faut pas s'étonner, en effet, que la fonction et les enjeux de la traduction littéraire puissent être perçus de façons fort divergentes de part et d'autre. Cette activité qu'on voudrait conviviale du côté anglophone suscite une grande méfiance chez les francophones pour qui elle a incarné, dès le début du régime britannique, la nette supériorité hiérarchique de l'anglais par rapport au français. Selon Ben-Zion Shek,

> les documents-clés de l'histoire du Canada, tels la Proclamation royale de 1763, l'Acte de Québec, l'Acte constitutionnel, le rapport Durham, l'Acte de l'Union, l'Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique, le Statut de Westminster, ainsi que les textes des deux référendums sur la conscription, ont été rédigés d'abord en anglais puis *traduits* en français [. . .]. La traduction à sens unique a reproduit les rapports réels dominants-dominés de la conjoncture militaire, en premier lieu, puis et par conséquent, politique et économique. (111)

Cela fait en sorte que la traduction française d'œuvres littéraires canadiennes-anglaises est ressentie selon Shek "à la fois comme une menace et comme une perte d'efforts dans une entreprise marginale, du point de vue de la lutte pour la survie d'une langue et d'une culture minoritaires" (112). Pour les francophones, la monumentale activité de traduction par laquelle doit passer le bilinguisme canadien ne fait pas que mettre en relief la

diglossie des langues officielles du Canada, elle porte aussi préjudice au français, langue d'arrivée constamment soumise à l'influence de la langue de départ qu'est l'anglais. Selon Sherry Simon, les effets néfastes de la traduction sur la langue française forment un leitmotiv important au Québec où, devenue "[t]opique de la défaillance, rappel de l'obligation dans laquelle le Québec se trouve par rapport à autrui, la traduction est souvent un sujet pénible" (*L'inscription sociale* 31).

C'est dans le climat de grande tension linguistique du début des années soixante-dix que Jacques Brault entreprend de traduire des poètes canadiens-anglais et publie, en 1975, le recueil intitulé *Poèmes des quatre côtés*, dans lequel il expose une conception de la traduction fort inusitée au Québec pour l'époque. En la dégageant de sa responsabilité d'imiter, elle pourrait, selon lui, acquérir une certaine autonomie créatrice dont bénéficierait la langue d'arrivée, "suspendue entre deux certitudes maintenant problématiques, langue qui reconnaît alors sa difficulté d'être. Et sa raison d'être. Une langue qui se refuse à pareille épreuve est d'ores et déjà condamnée" (15). L'argument habituel voulant que la traduction porte préjudice à la langue cible exposée aux influences de la langue source se trouve ici renversé, ce qui a pour effet de réhabiliter une activité souvent jugée douteuse, comme le souligne le traducteur au début de son ouvrage: "Les clefs de la traduction appartiennent aux puissants. S'il n'y a pas de langue mondiale, il y a des langues colonisatrices" (16). Cette vision salutaire du traduire qu'il propose alors, Brault suggère de la nommer: nontraduction (15-34). Ainsi donc, lors même qu'elle désigne une activité constructive, chose rare au Québec, la traduction se voit affublée d'un préfixe de négation et ne peut prendre une valeur positive qu'en niant sa propre action.

Au niveau des procédés privilégiés, l'étude que fait Sherry Simon de la traduction littéraire pratiquée au Canada dans *Le trafic des langues. Traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise* (1994) met en relief l'opposition qui informe les représentations de l'altérité véhiculées de part et d'autre dans les textes en traduction. Selon Simon, les versions anglaises de romans québécois font preuve d'une "surconscience de la différence" et obéissent à une "visée ethnographique" (55) voulant qu'on insiste sur les marques d'appartenance culturelle au contexte source. La même tendance se manifeste dans les versions canadiennes-anglaises de plusieurs pièces de Michel Tremblay, le dramaturge le plus traduit au Canada, où on affiche l'altérité du texte source au moyen de nombreux gallicismes qui ont pour fonction d'accentuer la saveur française du texte traduit. Il suffit de penser

aux nombreuses traductions anglaises de ses pièces qui conservent le titre original français: *Les Belles-Soeurs* (1973), *Bonjour, là, Bonjour* (1975), *Surprise! Surprise!* (1975), *En Pièces Détachées* (1975), *La Duchesse de Langeais* (1976), *Trois Petits Tours* (1977), *Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra* (1981) et *La Maison Suspendue* (1992). Ces gallicismes difficilement compréhensibles pour un auditoire unilingue anglophone proposent une lecture exotique d'un texte et d'un propos que leur incommensurable altérité rendrait intraduisibles.

Pour ce qui est de la traduction française du répertoire canadien-anglais, Simon prend appui sur la recherche menée par Annie Brisset, laquelle expose la "visée identitaire" de la traduction québécoise du répertoire de langue anglaise, surtout américain et britannique, entre 1968 et 1988.[8] Selon Brisset, la traduction était alors chargée de mettre à distance le texte original afin de donner au texte traduit une couleur locale et lui permettre de contribuer à l'élaboration d'un répertoire québécois. Dans cette veine, il faut souligner le grand succès qu'a connu le phénomène de l'adaptation théâtrale au Québec entre 1969 et 1990 dans la traduction du répertoire canadien-anglais. Évacuant les marques d'appartenance au contexte source au profit de références géographiques et culturelles québécoises, ce mode de traduction occultait complètement le texte original canadien-anglais.[9] On peut donc observer un important phénomène de polarisation dans les procédés appliqués à la traduction littéraire selon le sens qu'elle emprunte d'une langue officielle à l'autre.

Avec les nombreux échanges et l'abondante traduction que pratiquent les auteures féministes francophones et anglophones canadiennes à partir de 1983, le discours sur la traduction littéraire esquisse un autre déplacement. Sans offrir d'emblème chargé de représenter les deux littératures, on met de l'avant certaines métaphores qui servent de modèles à une pratique féministe de la traduction littéraire. Dans un article intitulé "Theorizing Feminist Discourse-Translation" (1989), Barbara Godard met au point un néologisme qui conjugue les notions de transformation et de performance dans un processus de "transformance." Insistant sur la visibilité de la traductrice dans un travail de recréation du texte, cette modalité de traduction a pour effet d'inscrire le féminin dans l'ordre symbolique du langage. La traduction est donc présentée ici comme un phénomène de transformation du texte, ce qui a l'immense mérite d'échapper aux clichés voulant que le texte traduit puisse être une reproduction fidèle du texte original. Puis, signalant l'émergence de nouvelles images issues de l'échange de textes en traduction

entre les auteures féministes francophones et anglophones, Kathy Mezei met l'accent sur une figure à caractère érotique empruntée à Nicole Brossard dans un texte où il est question de "[s]a langue dans la bouche de l'autre" et qui porte le titre "French Kiss":

> The use of an English expression containing the adjective "French" to describe a sexual act in a French text is a multi-layered parody in which stereotyped perceptions of sexuality (English puritanism versus French hot-bloodedness) reflect cultural positions. (English wariness of the French difference; French alienation and subordination under the English.) This inversion of French/English also mirrors the sexual inversion of the traditional heterosexual binary male/female romance in Brossard's tale of lesbian love. ("Translation as Metonymy" 94)

La rencontre des langues envisagée ici apparaît donc dans un texte critique anglais qui s'inspire d'un texte de fiction français portant un titre anglais dans lequel figure le mot "français" en anglais. Cette mise-en-abîme témoigne non seulement de l'intrication des positions occupées par chaque littérature mais aussi des aspects ludiques et spéculaires dont l'échange est investi.

Contredisant les emblèmes décidément égalitaires mis de l'avant en littérature comparée, la traduction littéraire canadienne et le discours qu'elle engendre mettent en relief l'inégalité des deux langues officielles du Canada et l'asymétrie des ensembles littéraires qu'elles circonscrivent. Du côté anglophone, le symbole par excellence demeure le pont, par lequel on traverse aisément d'une rive à l'autre. Si l'on tient ainsi à préserver l'accès à l'autre rive, c'est que cet accès ne constitue pas une menace d'invasion. C'est aussi qu'il permet de ramener chez soi des œuvres empruntées à l'autre et chargées de le révéler de façon exacte et identique puisque le pont suppose un passage mais non une transformation. On prétend ainsi représenter l'autre sans agent ni intermédiaire qui pourrait en altérer l'image. A cet effet, le néologisme proposé par Barbara Godard rend compte du travail de la traduction de façon beaucoup plus juste puisque l'opération traduisante repose sur une transformation multiple qui agit sur l'œuvre littéraire dans ses aspects linguistiques, culturels et sociaux selon l'interprétation qu'en fait et qu'en propose la personne qui traduit.

Du côté francophone, on propose de nier une activité perçue comme néfaste en la dotant d'une désignation qui exprime un refus de reproduire l'autre ou de prétendre en offrir une image fidèle. Ici, la traduction se vit comme une épreuve dont l'issue est la mise à distance de l'autre jugé menaçant pour sa survie. Loin d'inviter à une rencontre cordiale par l'en-

tremise du pont, on invite plutôt à brûler les ponts en réfutant l'emprunt initial afin de créer une nouvelle œuvre. La traduction est ainsi dépouillée de son ancrage dans une littérature source pour être mise au service de la création dans une littérature cible.

Parce qu'elle ne fait pas que jeter un regard sur les langues et les cultures, mais les oblige à une interpénétration, la traduction est un lieu d'interaction par excellence où on peut observer les comportements et les stratégies dictées par le rapport de force propre aux langues et aux cultures qu'elle met en contact. En ce sens, la traduction littéraire est un enjeu de taille puisqu'elle est à la fois miroir et instrument d'une relation linguistique et culturelle qu'elle donne à voir en la mettant à l'épreuve.

NOTES

Une première version de cette étude a fait l'objet d'une communication présentée au colloque de l'Association des littératures canadiennes et québécoise, tenu à l'Université d' Ottawa en 1998. Je tiens à remercier Clément Moisan, qui a gracieusement accepté de lire et de commenter ce texte.

1 Auparavant, les francophones étaient qualifiés de "canadiens" alors que les anglophones se définissaient avant tout comme sujets "britanniques."

2 De nombreux titres d'ouvrages, de colloques ou de produits culturels mettent en scène l'illustre emblème, dont l'emploi dessine à lui seul le profil d'une dynamique à l'œuvre dans la représentation du rapport entre les littératures du Canada.

3 Pour une étude des circonstances dans lesquelles s'est imposée cette dénomination, voir Nepveu.

4 Sugars identifie quatre conceptions des ensembles littéraires anglophone et francophones en littérature canadienne comparée: un modèle séparatiste qui conçoit la littérature canadienne et la littérature québécoise comme des entités non reliées; un modèle centraliste qui les englobe sous la désignation littérature canadienne; un modèle bifocal qui allie deux littératures canadiennes d'expression anglaise et d'expression française; et, en fin, un modèle "sovereignty-association" (29) qui situe les deux littératures dans une sorte de "co-operative separatism" (29) au sein d'un contexte multiculturel.

5 Chacun de ces groupes s'est par ailleurs doté d'un drapeau qui apparaît sur les programmes d'événements réunissant les "communautés francophones vivant en situation minoritaire au Canada" (Semaine internationale de la francophonie, Québec, 1999).

6 Sur cette notion, voir l'ouvrage de François Paré intitulé *Les littératures de l'exiguïté* (1992).

7 Selon le portrait statistique des communautés de langues officielles établi par Stacy Churchill d'après le recensement de 1996, la population canadienne comprend une majorité anglophone unilingue estimée à 67,1 p. cent, un groupe bilingue correspondant à 16,3 p. cent et une minorité francophone unilingue évaluée à 15,2 p. cent (1998).

8 Voir Brisset.

9 Voir Ladouceur.

WORKS CITED

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature.* Toronto: Anansi, 1972.

Blodgett, E. D. *Configurations: Essays on the Canadian Literatures.* Downsview: ECW, 1982.

Brault, Jacques. "Notes sur le littéraire et le politique." *Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 43-51.

—. *Poèmes des quatre côtés.* Saint-Lambert: Noroît, 1975.

Brisset, Annie. *Sociocritique de la traduction. Théâtre et altérité au Québec* (1968-1988). Longueuil: Les Éditions du Préambule, 1990.

Chamberland, Paul. "Dire ce que je suis."*Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 33-42.

Chauveau, Pierre-Joseph-Olivier. *L'instruction publique au Canada: précis historique et statistique.* Québec: Augustin Côté, 1876.

Churchill, Stacy. *Nouvelles perspectives canadiennes. Les langues officielles au Canada: transformer le paysage linguistique.* Ottawa: Patrimoine canadien, en collaboration avec le Programme des études canadiennes et le Programme d'appui aux langues officielles, 1998.

Delisle, Jean. *Au coeur du trialogue canadien: Bureau des traductions 1934-1984/Bridging the Language Solitudes: Translation Bureau 1934-1984.* Ottawa: Ministre des approvisionnements et services Canada, 1984.

Falardeau, Jean-Charles. *Notre société et son roman.* Montréal: HMH, 1967.

Fee, Margery. "Imagining Quebec." *Canadian Literature* 148 (1996): 4-9.

Frye, Northrop. "Conclusion." *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English.* Ed. Carl F. Klinck. Vol. 3. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1967. 821-49.

Girouard, Laurent. "Considérations contradictoires." *Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 6-12.

Godard, Barbara. "Theorizing Feminist Discourse-Translation." *Tessera* 6 (1989): 42-53.

Kirby, William. *The Chien d'Or (The Golden Dog): A Legend of Quebec.* Montreal: Lovell, Adam, Wesson & Company, 1877.

Ladouceur, Louise. "Du spéculaire au spectaculaire: le théâtre anglo-canadien traduit au Québec au début des années 90." *Nouveaux regards sur le théâtre québécois.* Halifax/Montréal: Dalhousie French Studies/XYZ, 1997. 185-94.

MacLennan, Hugh. *Two Solitudes.* Toronto: Collins, 1945.

Maheu, Pierre. "Présentation." *Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 2-5.

Major, André. "Ainsi soit-il." *Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 13-17.

Martin, Ruth. "Translated Canadian Literature and Canada Council Translation Grants 1972-1992: The Effect on Authors, Translators and Publishers." *Ellipse* 51 (1994): 54-84.

Mezei, Kathy. "A Bridge of Sorts: The Translation of Quebec Literature into English." *The Yearbook of English Studies: Anglo-American Literary Relations Special Number* 15 (1985): 202-26.

—. "Translation as Metonymy: Bridges and Bilingualism." *Ellipse* 51 (1994): 85-102.

Miron, Gaston. "Un long chemin." *Parti Pris* 2.5 (1965): 25-32.

Moisan, Clément. *L'âge de la littérature canadienne.* Montréal: HMH, 1969.

—. *Comparaison et raison. Essais sur l'histoire et l'institution des littératures canadienne et québécoise.* Montréal, HMH, 1986.

Nepveu, Pierre. *L'Écologie du réel. Mort et naissance de la littérature québécoise contemporaine.* Montréal: Boréal, 1988.

Paré, François. *Les littératures de l'exiguïté.* Hearst, ON Le Nordir, 1992.
Shek, Ben-Zion. "Quelques réflexions sur la 'traduction' dans le contexte socio-culturel canado-québécois." *Ellipse* 21 (1977): 111-16.
Shouldice, Larry. "On The Politics of Literary Translation in Canada." *Translation in Canadian Literature: Symposium 1982.* Ed. Camille La Bossière. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1983. 73-82.
Simon, Sherry. *L'inscription sociale de la traduction au Québec.* Québec: Office de la langue française, 1989.
—. "Rites of Passage: Translation and Its Intents." *Massachusetts Review* 21.1-2 (1990): 96-110.
—. *Le trafic des langues. Traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise.* Montréal: Boréal, 1994.
Stratford, Philip. *All the Polarities: Comparative Studies in Contemporary Canadian Novels in French and English.* Toronto: ECW, 1986.
—. "Canada's Two Literatures: A Search for Emblems." *Revue canadienne de littérature comparée* 6.2 (1979): 131-38.
—. "Literary Translation: A Bridge Between Two Solitudes." *Language and Society* 11 (1983): 8-13.
Smart, Patricia. "Our Two Cultures." *Canadian Forum* 64 (1984): 14-19.
Sugars, Cynthia. "On the Rungs of the Double Helix: Theorizing the Canadian Literatures." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 50 (1993): 19-44.
Sutherland, Ronald. *The New Hero: Essays in Comparative Quebec/Canadian Literature.* Toronto: Macmillan, 1977.
—. "Twin Solitudes." *Canadian Literature* 31 (1967): 5-24.
Sylvestre, Guy, Brandon Conron et Carl F. Klinck. *Écrivains canadiens/Canadian Writers.*

Forthcoming book reviews are available at the *Canadian Literature* web site: http://www.canlit.ca

Francophonie canadienne

Gratien Allaire

La francophonie canadienne. Portraits. AFI-CIDEF / Prise de parole $10.00

Reviewed by Alain-Michel Rocheleau

Il est toujours agréable de lire une étude portant sur la francophonie canadienne, les ouvrages issus de ce domaine de recherche étant, on le sait, fort peu nombreux. Tout en s'appuyant sur des données démographiques et historiques le plus souvent judicieuses, Gratien Allaire a su mettre en évidence les multiples changements qui ont façonné, dans le temps, les communautés de langue française au pays.

Dans un chapitre de portée générale, l'auteur nous dévoile, tout d'abord, certains faits historiques qui ont encadré le développement du Canada, tout en y spécifiant certaines interventions du gouvernement fédéral (incluant la création de la Société Radio-Canada, l'imposition de la Loi sur les langues officielles, l'instauration de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés*) et leurs retombées favorables sur l'épanouissement des francophones d'ici. Puis, dans les pages subséquentes de son ouvrage, il scinde la francophonie canadienne en cinq communautés régionales, provinciales et territoriales, pour ainsi mieux les examiner: celles de l'Acadie des Maritimes (couvrant le Nouveau-Brunswick, la Nouvelle-Écosse et l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard), du Québec, de l'Ontario, de l'Ouest (incluant respectivement le Manitoba, la Saskatchewan et l'Alberta) et du "pourtour" (regroupant dans l'ordre la Colombie-Britannique, le Yukon, les Territoires du Nord-Ouest, le Nunavut et Terre-Neuve), où les citoyens de langue française sont moins nombreux qu'ailleurs.

Dans ces sections de ce livre de 222 pages publié en format de poche, Allaire nous rappelle entre autres, statistiques à l'appui, que la population de langue d'usage et maternelle françaises dans les Maritimes est toujours fortement concentrée au Nouveau-Brunswick, que "le Québec est la province la plus bilingue du pays" et que des trois provinces des Prairies, "c'est la Saskatchewan au centre qui a le plus petit nombre de francophones. L'Alberta a le plus grand nombre de francophones de langue maternelle et le Manitoba a le plus grand nombre de francophones de langue d'usage." À la lumière de plusieurs autres données colligées, le lecteur est en droit de se demander si la francophonie canadienne est toujours aussi vivante d'un océan à l'autre, les communautés francophones tendant très peu à se renouveler, dans plusieurs coins du pays.

Cet ouvrage bien documenté renferme de nombreux tableaux, des extraits de *l'Acte de Québec* (1774), de *l'Acte de l'Amérique du Nord britannique* (1867), de la *Charte canadienne des droits et libertés* (1982) soigneusement choisis, de même que de récents inventaires chiffrés, empruntés à *l'Annuaire du Canada* (1997). On y retrouve également une liste des principales associations francophones et des principaux organismes

communautaires œuvrant tant à l'échelle nationale que dans chacune des provinces (incluant une brève description de celles-ci, leurs adresses postales et électroniques) et, en appendice, un tableau chronologique mettant en relief les principaux événements historiques qui ont marqué l'établissement des communautés francophones du Canada, allant du premier voyage de Jacques Cartier, en 1534, à la création de l'Association des francophones du Nunavut, en 1997. Il aurait été souhaitable, toutefois, que le vécu de ces communautés au plan culturel n'ait pas été omis dans ce livre. Par exemple, quelques paragraphes auraient pu être consacrés aux productions du Cercle Molière (Manitoba), au travail accompli par les centres culturels francophones, par l'Alliance française, ou dans le cadre des festivals provinciaux qui, périodiquement et chacun à leur façon, permettent aux membres des communautés francophones de se réunir et de faire usage de la langue française, dans plusieurs coins du pays.

Theatre/Théâtre

François Archambault. Bobby Theodore, trans.
15 Seconds. Talonbooks n.p.

Michel Marc Bouchard. Linda Gaboriau, trans.
The Coronation Voyage. Talonbooks n.p.

Daniel Danis. Linda Gaboriau, trans.
Song of the Say-Sayer. Talonbooks n.p.

Larry Tremblay. Sheila Fischman, trans.
Talking Bodies. Talonbooks n.p.

Reviewed by Mark Blagrave

With these English translations of the work of four contemporary Québécois playwrights, Talonbooks has added significantly to its existing list of translated plays by Michel Tremblay, Norman Chaurette and Jovette Machessault. The printings follow productions of these same new translations by theatre companies in Edmonton, Calgary, Victoria and Vancouver, affording anglophone readers across the country access to some recent developments in theatre in Quebec.

Given the relative scarcity of English translations of contemporary Québécois drama, the release within a period of two years of the seven plays represented in these volumes substantially increases the number of available scripts, and encourages comparative analysis. Although the sample remains very small, there is a striking common tendency in these works by Bouchard, Danis, Larry Tremblay, and Archambault to explore the potential of importing into their work devices from related and contiguous narrative genres. Danis's *Song of the Say-Sayer* operates in the tradition of storytelling theatre as its characters shift fluidly from first-person narration to reference to themselves in the third person, and from present to past tense. Bouchard's *The Coronation Voyage* introduces a character called The Biographer apparently to help the playwright through some awkward exposition, but then proceeds to use the device more interestingly to explore some of the potential tensions between official published narrative and events as they actually happen. *Talking Bodies*, the collection of Larry Tremblay's work, is a remarkably exhaustive catalogue of the various phases of the dramatic monologue, while Archambault's *15 Seconds* looks beyond the stage to devices of film narrative. This shared self-conscious concern for the means of telling the story, particularly in the work of Tremblay, Danis, and Bouchard, makes these plays especially interesting to a reading audience, at the same time as it no doubt reflects a broader, and to-be-expected, cultural concern in Quebec.

More important, though, for an anglophone audience to recognize and appreciate is that these plays, for all their common interest in the telling of the story, reveal a

range and variety of styles, interests, points of view, and degrees of sophistication that indicate an even greater diversity in the (as yet) untranslated larger body of work from which they have been selected. Archambault's *15 Seconds*—in its best moments breezy, elliptical, and ironic, and, in its worst, preachy and awkwardly issue-driven—reads like many angst-ridden thirty-something plays from across the country, and, like them, operates in a style that is clearly influenced by film and television. *The Coronation Voyage* bears the older hallmarks of the problem play, posing a tough ethical dilemma, and giving its characters a great deal to say on it and on a number of other subjects (apparently the contents of research notes) before its ironic resolution is reached. Its conventional and somewhat static salon style is radically different from the country-gothic magic realism of *Song of the Say-Sayer*, the most experimental and haunting of the plays, in which a foster sister in a coma (she has a brain tumour, but she also glows in the dark) is kept on the back porch by her foster brothers. Even within the single volume of Larry Tremblay's monologues, an equivalent diversity is obvious as he moves from the unsophisticated and literally monologic forms of *A Trick of Fate* and *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi* to the more complicated use of a second onstage-but-silent character indicated in *Anatomy Lesson*, and finally to the serial construction of multiple unseen narratees in *Ogre*.

In making these plays, in all their variety, available to an anglophone readership, the publisher has really braved a double challenge. These are translations in two senses: from stage to page, and from their original language to another. (The exception is Tremblay's *The Dragonfly of Chicoutimi*, which is printed in English as it was originally written by Tremblay.)

Several efforts have been made to restore something of the theatrical dimension to all of the scripts. Information on original productions is included, and the premieres of the translations are mostly documented too, although for Sheila Fischman's translation of Tremblay's *Anatomy Lesson*—apparently the only one of the Fischman translations to have been tested in performance—we have a brief and insufficient allusion, in Jane Moss's preface, to a 1999 Vancouver production. Regrettably missing from the version of Archambault's *15 Seconds* is a translation of "La Petite Histoire de 15 secondes," printed in the Leméac original, which fills in useful information about the process of making the play, which in turn goes some distance toward explaining its style. In the English edition, this quite subtle essay is reduced to the note: "The role of Mathieu was originally created for an actor with cerebral palsy." In prefatory material to *Song of the Say-Sayer*, the reading audience is advised that "we should sense [Naomi's] breath" even though she may not be physically present on the stage, and that the other characters in the play should be understood to produce a sound that "would represent a form of the human voice from before or after language," both of which may be asking quite a lot, but both of which also show a genuine concern for bridging the gap between page and stage. Similarly, Sheila Fischman has included several pages of Tremblay's "working notes" entitled "Leo's Body" to complement her translation of *A Trick of Fate*. These trace the development of this monologue in rehearsals, and although they seem so generic as to be not very useful in understanding the particular work, they do remind us forcefully that it is a performance piece. Most successful from the point of view of replicating the experience of the theatre is Fischman's decision to preserve the layout of Tremblay's scripts, line by line. The same typography that is clearly a means of communication from playwright to actor also obliges the reader to "perform" the text in the sense of making

decisions about enjambment, caesura, emphasis, and pointing.

The challenge of the second kind of translation—from one spoken language to another—is a larger one. In a 1997 letter to his translator Brigitte Landes (reprinted in *The Hidden Plot*), Edward Bond reminds her (and us) that "translation is not of a language but of a play." While Sheila Fischman's scrupulous representation of Tremblay's work, line by line, has the marked advantage of making the reader do the work of an actor, thereby restoring some of the theatrical dimension to the play, it may also risk reducing the play to a string of language in the way that Bond warns against, and even of reducing character to a mere speaker of words. By contrast, the Talon edition of *The Coronation Voyage* is based (with the playwright's blessing, apparently) on a much-revised version prepared specially for the English language production of 1999-2000. This would seem to comply with Bond's advice to translate the play and not just the language, although it raises other concerns, given widespread and well-founded contentions (by Jane Moss in her preface to the Tremblay volume, among others) that language is a central obsession of Québécois playwrights.

Inevitably, there are some losses of nuance and subtlety in all of the translations. The title of *Song of the Say-Sayer* loses the intended redundancy and elegance of the original *Dire-Dire*, a danger that was recognized when the play was produced by the One Yellow Rabbit company in Calgary under the title *Thunderstruck or The Song of the Say-Sayer.* In *Anatomy Lesson*, the original "il s'est figé" loses its reflexive sense to become "he is frozen there." "Comment être juste" becomes "how can one be fair," and "vous le voyez" becomes "look at him." Fischman does, however, successfully and faithfully preserve the mixed metaphors and many of the idiomatic idiosyncrasies of Tremblay's speakers.

The problem of slippage is much more critical in Bobby Theodore's translation of *15 Seconds*. The mixed patois and the slang of the original are what Bond in the same letter to Landes describes as a "map reference," a product and indicator of a character's natural, social, and psychological worlds. Without this map reference, the characters in Archambault's play are left in a limbo from which no number of concerted references to Quebec can rescue them. There is, admittedly, probably no adequate way in English of conveying the use of "y" for "il y a" or of "a" for "elle," but when "Hey!" in Archambault's original becomes "fuck" in the translation, while "c'est fucké" becomes "that's fucked" and "OK,OK" in the original becomes "alright, alright" in the translation, the reader and the actor have been short-changed, cut off. "Va chier, man!" and the response "Toi aussi, man!" are reduced to the impoverished and unilingual "fuck you!" and "fuck you!"

There is little doubt that making these plays available to an anglophone readership is an important step. Perhaps it is in raising the question of when translation actually becomes assimilation, though, that these four volumes will most faithfully serve their ultimate purpose: to encourage the reader to seek out the original versions, and to try to understand these plays on their own terms, without intermediaries.

a blizzard in my eyes

Margaret Atwood and Charles Pachter
The Journals of Susanna Moodie. Macfarlane Walter & Ross $24.99

Reviewed by Jon Kertzer

From her vantage point beyond the grave, Susanna Moodie must have been dismayed to observe her fate at the hands of censorious literary critics, who have scorned her snobbery and her genteel literary pretensions; but the reluctant immigrant who

arrived in Canada armed with Voltaire's *History of Charles XII* might take comfort in her final metamorphosis into a coffee table book. Metamorphosis is a recurring fascination in Margaret Atwood's writing, especially in her eerie poetic sequence *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), where Moodie is transposed, transported, and finally translated into a Canadian oracle, the voice of the land she once hated: "at the last / judgment we will all be trees." In a further, ironic transformation, some of these trees were later turned into *objets d'art* of the kind that a proper English lady might admire. In 1980, Atwood's *Journals* was republished in an exquisite, hand-set, limited edition of 120 copies with silkscreen illustrations by Charles Pachter, in a volume praised by one admirer as "the most magnificent book ever to be produced in Canada." Under review here is a facsimile of that book, introduced by a foreword by David Staines and an entertaining memoir by Pachter. While its colours are probably less vibrant than the original, it is still a striking book, worthy of standing beside my copy of Voltaire.

More accurately, this is a *livre d'artiste*—a scrupulously crafted artifact in which verbal and visual elements collaborate as equals. In its original form, *The Journals* included what Pachter tactfully calls "Atwood's own unusual watercolour illustrations" (I like them), which provided an atmospheric accompaniment to the poems. His pictures are much more commanding in their bold colours and turbulent designs, and even in their size. Many are spread over two pages as they enfold, rather than supplement, the poems. Picture and text interact, for instance in "Dream 1: The Bush Garden," where the words are shoved into the upper right corner by a seething red and black subconscious/subterranean world, which suggests the pulsing beets and surging strawberries whose coarse fertility ("jubilant with maggots" in another poem) so terrifies the dreaming Moodie. She was, in Northrop Frye's memorable phrase, a "one-woman garrison" whose combination of self-importance, stubbornness and disillusionment condensed the literary archetype that Atwood outlined in her popular survey of Canadian literature, *Survival* (1972). In her hands, Moodie becomes a holy terror—rather like Margaret Laurence's Hagar—a repressed woman who resents her unlived life so fiercely that, perversely, she lives with a ferocity that establishes her as a national ancestor. Urged on by Atwood's hallucinatory imagery and the energy of Pachter's designs, the entire book becomes a waking dream cast in "the dark / side of light."

Pachter is well-known as a painter, printmaker and sculptor whose fondness for Canadian, and especially Loyalist, history is sometimes expressed in a mischievous resetting of national emblems: the Queen on a moose, the flag, hockey players. Although his work is displayed prominently in public locations (the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, a Toronto subway station), he seems more interested in eliciting the dark side of these brilliant public displays, as if their very brashness conceals their diffidence. Atwood gives him the opportunity to transpose whimsy into terror, or to show how the two are strangely allied. Ironic discrepancies become horrifying in the same way that a shift in lighting or perspective can make jolly circus figures suddenly appear menacing, as they do in the Charivari poem, where wedding-night revellers turn murderous. As many critics have observed, the "violent duality" that Atwood called the key to Moodie's ambiguous discovery of Canada is expressed in a rhetorical confounding of tense binary pairs: here/there, inside/outside, visible/invisible, male/female, heat/cold, and so on. After Moodie intrudes into the Canadian bush, it stealthily invades her: "In time the animals /

arrived to inhabit me." This mutual invasion is reflected in Pachter's style, which arranges off-balanced patterns, transposed colours, positives and negatives, mirror images. A stylized photograph of Moodie's face, when detached from its familiar background, looks strained. The twisting line of a human shape, seemingly drawn in a single convulsive stroke, looks anxious. A Victorian doll rests awkwardly in a dappled, forest scene. Wide-eyed faces are concealed in branches. Each picture has immediate emotional impact, but it also invites inspection, as if some secret might be discovered in its detail or texture. The eye moves restlessly back over the design. Atwood deftly cultivates the same uncanny effect in her poems:

I see now I see
now I cannot see
earth is a blizzard in my eyes

(Re)locating Irish Studies

Margot Gayle Backus
The Gothic Family Romance: Heterosexuality, Child Sacrifice and the Anglo-Irish Colonial Order. Duke $49.95

Keith Jeffery, ed.
An Irish Empire: Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire. Manchester n.p.

Louis Gauthier. Linda Leith, trans.
Travels With an Umbrella: An Irish Journey. Nuage editions n.p.

Reviewed by David Nally

Margot Gayle Backus discusses three hundred years of history which connect the destructive effects wrought by an imperial order to the persecution of the children and descendants of the Protestant settler community in Ireland. A study of tropes dominating Anglo-Irish gothic literature enables the author to delineate the political, cultural and economic imperatives that controlled the lives of a nascent minority. Through a series of sophisticated readings, Backus reveals the idioms and forms used by Anglo-Irish writers to convey meaning to their compromised and skewed existence.

Part of a series entitled "Post-contemporary Interventions," edited by Stanley Fish and Fredric Jameson, this book is hard-hitting in a number of ways. The deathly colonial spiral which "devours" children and shapes gender and subject formations invests the present with much of its meaning. According to the author, the systematic oppression of Irish women by an Irish Republican state which "legislates misogyny," is a particularly virulent register of the settler colonial's experience carried into the present.

The author's ambitious project suggests a more labile definition of colonialism and its legacy than has previously been offered. If postcolonial studies revisit the beginnings of colonial oppression, it will be recognized that the "colonial encounter" takes place within multiple sites of contestation and collusion. The colonizer, in other words, is not immune to postcolonial currents.

Keith Jeffery's thesis bears resemblance to that of Backus. The editor's introduction asserts "that Ireland was both 'imperial' *and* 'colonial.'" Here, too, the Irish people perform a role in sustaining the "British imperial edifice." While narratives of contestation are widely discussed in Irish studies, the authors often remain quiet about complicity. The editor makes explicit the omissions and inaccuracies that occur under the heading of postcolonialism (which, according to Jeffery "perhaps, dismiss[es] Northern Ireland for not having reached that level of political and cultural sophistication").

Divided into eight chapters, this book analyzes a variety of sources to advance its argument. Jeffrey Richards provides a perceptive account of how film transmits popular ideas and images. George Bernard Shaw serves as an example to convey the seductiveness of such generic stereotypes as "Paddy" and "John Bull" which originated

in popular literature and later found fame in film: "They [the audience] form themselves by playing up to it; and thus the unsubstantial fancies of the novelists and music-hall song-writers of one generation are apt to become the unpleasant and mischievous realities of the next." T.G. Fraser's chapter on Ireland and India paradoxically implicates Ireland in the growth and consolidation of imperial business while also testifying to Ireland's part in the empire's demise.

The editor provides an account of the contribution of Irishmen and women to the British military forces, which seems to have its dialogic complement in Joyce's Stephen Daedalus's contention that the quickest way to Tara is via Holyhead. Jeffery explains that the nature of Irish recruitment to the British army may be analyzed within three broad paradigms of imperial service: "metropolitan, where the process is most similar to the recruitment in other parts of the United Kingdom; dominion, where the Irish experience accords more closely to that of Canada, Australia, New Zealand or South Africa; and colonial, where the Irish soldiers are scarcely better than mercenaries, employed to do the empire's dirty work." For the most part the discussion focuses on the first two models. Jeffrey argues that the Irish were in many respects treated on a par with other enlistments. If this is indeed the case, one must wonder why there was such a pervasive nineteenth-century discourse insisting on the utter difference of the Irish people. Of course, the army is an environment where bodies can be disciplined and the unlawful "made over" into the regimented and ordered—an environment, in other words, where national blemishes can be suspended through strategy and drill-sergeantry.

Originally published in 1984, *Travels with an Umbrella: An Irish Journey*, translated by Linda Leith, is one of the few books by Louis Gauthier to appear in English. Gauthier's first book *Anna* was published in 1967 when the author was only twenty-one years old. The novella, which opens with this epigraph by Captain W.E. Johns: "If it's true that inaction is unbearable, imagine how it must torment a man with wet feet," narrates the flight of a romantic but disillusioned writer from Montreal to the wet environs of Ireland. His *Voyage en Irlande* acts as a textual ploy for a deeper heuristic journey with reflections on love, life, eternity and sorrow.

This heuristic trope is not uncommon in travel literature. To quote T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding:* "We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the very first time." However, with Gauthier's unnamed protagonist, we do not arrive anywhere. His wanderings shake up all his preconceptions of "romantic Ireland," and the writer is forced to accept that life is "fluid and mobile" and consequentially "ephemeral and insubstantial and unattainable." Life slips through his grasp like the wet shaft of his umbrella, in this warm and sometimes ironic meditation.

L'engagement littéraire

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu
Œuvres complètes, tome 10. Jack Kérouac. Éditions Trois-Pistoles n.p.

Jacques Pelletier
L'écriture mythologique: essai sur l'œuvre de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu. Nuit blanche éditeur n.p.

Reviewed by Kenneth W. Meadwell

Depuis la fin des années 1960, Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, romancier, dramaturge, poète, co-fondateur des Éditions de l'Aurore, fondateur des Éditions VLB et des Éditions Trois-Pistoles, apporte une contribution vigoureuse, originale et soutenue à la littérature québécoise. D'origine rurale et de milieu populaire, cet autodidacte a aussi

pratiqué le genre du téléroman, le scénario de film et la chronique journalistique, et entre 1972 et 1978 était professeur de littérature à l'École nationale de théâtre. Beaulieu est récipiendaire de divers prix tels le Prix du Gouverneur général du Canada en 1974 pour *Don Quichotte de la Démanche*, le Prix Québec-Paris pour *Monsieur Melville* en 1979 et le Prix Duvernay en 1981 pour l'ensemble de son œuvre. D'aucuns affirment donc que Victor-Lévy Beaulieu est le plus grand écrivain vivant du Québec. Nul ne peut nier le fait que la littérature du Québec se trouve enrichie grâce à la variété et l'unicité de son œuvre d'auteur et d'éditeur.

L'un des aspects frappants de l'œuvre de Beaulieu est l'intérêt qu'il porte au vécu d'une diversité d'écrivains. Il a en effet publié des travaux sur Victor Hugo, Herman Melville, Jacques Ferron et le romancier américain, Jack Kérouac. *Jack Kérouac*, publié originalement en 1972, est réédité dans la collection des œuvres complètes de Beaulieu. C'est l'origine franco-canadienne de l'auteur de *Sur la route* (*On the Road*, 1957), né à Lowell dans le Massachusetts, qui fascine Beaulieu. Ce dernier entrevoit chez Kérouac certains points en commun: la place qu'occupe la Nouvelle-Angleterre dans la vie familiale des deux écrivains, et la forme et le fond du roman de Kérouac *Docteur Sax* (1959), qui sont, au dire de Beaulieu, tout à fait québécois.

Dans son ouvrage qu'il caractérise d'"essai-poulet," Beaulieu se livre à une méditation sur le sort des habitants franco-canadiens obligés de quitter leurs terres pauvres pour les centres manufacturiers de Nouvelle-Angleterre au début du vingtième siècle, sur la douleur permanente d'être un écrivain alcoolique. Dès la première page de son essai, Beaulieu entame un dialogue singulier avec Kérouac, à qui il s'adresse directement en le tutoyant. Par la suite, Beaulieu choisit tout simplement "Jack" et la troisième personne du singulier pour faire allusion au leader de la Beat Generation. Le ton intime qui s'en dégage souligne non seulement que Beaulieu s'est retrouvé dans l'histoire qu'il recrée de Kérouac, mais aussi qu'il est resté très sensible à la timidité de cet écrivain qui a tourné à l'envers ses complexes pour s'en délivrer.

Des grands écrivains américains, tels que William Burroughs et Allen Ginsberg, figurent également dans l'essai de Beaulieu, pour servir de repoussoir à la figure de Kérouac et aussi pour faire état de la place importante qu'occupe Kérouac dans la littérature américaine du vingtième siècle. Les trois épouses successives de Kérouac n'ont pas pénétré la solitude de l'homme qui se disait Canadien-français, et qui, malgré sa réussite littéraire, se voyait comme un être absurde en Amérique. Son mal de vivre se résume selon Beaulieu par son aliénation linguistique. La mère de Kérouac, archétype de la mémère québécoise, l'appellera toujours Ti-Jean dans l'affection de son parler canadien-français. En effet, elle demeure un lien inébranlable avec son passé, avec ses origines franco-canadiennes. Malgré la réussite de ce héros de la jeunesse américaine, Beaulieu estime que Kérouac se retrouve chez le Gaston Miron de l'aliénation délirante.

Beaulieu livre un portrait de Kérouac, aliéné sur le plan linguistique et atteint des effets de son alcoolisme. Cet essai-poulet finit par offrir des aperçus tout aussi poignants sur la sensibilité de Kérouac que sur celle de Beaulieu lui-même. Beaulieu se retrouve chez Kérouac, et cette appréhension du double de soi explique la fascination évidente qu'a Beaulieu à l'endroit de l'auteur de *Sur la route.*

Pour ceux qui connaissent la critique consacrée à la littérature québécoise, Jacques Pelletier, auteur de *Lecture politique du roman québécois contemporain* (1984), de *Le Roman national* (1991), est bien connu. Dans son essai sur l'œuvre de Victor-Lévy

Beaulieu, Pelletier offre un guide de lecture d'une œuvre foisonnante. L'analyse de Pelletier est principalement thématique, à l'occasion structurelle, et d'inspiration sociocritique. Selon Pelletier, l'œuvre de Beaulieu est la plus importante et la plus significative de la production littéraire contemporaine au Québec, tous genres confondus. Que son œuvre soit négligée par les critiques universitaires atteste, selon lui, d'une dévalorisation de son originalité, parfois caractérisée d'une esthétique de la vulgarité par ceux qui passent sous silence ses écrits. Beaulieu est ainsi marginalisé par la place périphérique qu'il occupe dans l'espace principal de la littérature québécoise et par son œuvre qui ne se plie nullement aux normes de l'activité scripturale au Québec.

Original, profondément engagé dans l'acte d'écrire, tel Victor Hugo à qui il voue une admiration prononcée, Beaulieu est en effet une figure singulière. Dans toutes ses manifestations et toutes ses complexités, son œuvre ne l'est pas moins non plus. Pelletier passe en revue ces aspects, chronologiquement à partir des années 60 jusqu'aux années 90, et notamment en commençant par le roman *Mémoires d'outre-tonneau* (1968) qui tenait compte de la comète scintillante que laissait dans le ciel littéraire québécois *L'Avalée des avalés* (1966) du grand écrivain québécois, Réjean Ducharme. *Race de monde* (1969) rappelle par son ambition et son ampleur les grandes entreprises antérieures d'un Balzac ou d'un Zola, à titre d'exemple. Aussi Beaulieu situe-t-il son œuvre dans un cadre familial, un microcosme représentatif des destins de la communauté globale, dont les aspects sociologiques et historiques rappellent Balzac. Beaulieu choisit donc de rendre compte du passage de la société traditionnelle—celle de la culture rurale ancienne fondée sur le culte des ancêtres—à la modernité qui remet en question par la logique capitaliste cette vie.

Qu'il s'agisse de roman, d'essai ou encore de théâtre, l'œuvre de Beaulieu est sans cesse reprise et relancée. La conclusion de chaque œuvre, selon Pelletier, n'est qu'une boucle provisoire, terminant un cycle et ouvrant aussitôt un autre dans une course à relais effrenée. La marque stylistique la plus constante de l'œuvre monumentale de Beaulieu est donc le mouvement circulaire qui incorpore chaque texte dans l'ensemble de ses écrits. Cet aspect est bien entendu le signe d'un écrivain cohérent, constant dans son engagement et dans sa vision du monde.

Que l'on juge que Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, auteur et éditeur engagé, est périphérique ou central par rapport à l'espace littéraire québécois, toujours est-il que son œuvre reste constante dans sa portée historique, sociale et littéraire. On espère bien que ce grand écrivain continue à suivre son chemin.

Let my joy endure

Marie-Claire Blais. Nigel Spencer, trans.
The Exile and The Sacred Travellers. Ronsdale $15.95

Marie-Claire Blais. Sheila Fischman, trans.
Those Festive Nights. Anansi $22.95

Reviewed by Cedric May

Forty years a writer, with over thirty published works to her name, Marie-Claire Blais retains the innocence, restless energy, and faith in words as a charm against despair that characterized her earliest work. The titles reviewed here offer writing from the whole of her output, from 1962 to the mid-nineties. Throughout, great variety in theme, technique, style, intention speaks a single voice, quiet, irreverent, defiant, tender, ageless. This is the thread sustaining Marie-Claire Blais's universality, holding in tension all that a human conscience, alert, sensitive, can hope to encompass.

"The Sacred Travellers" is the text of 1962,

first published in *Les Écrits du Canada français*. Blais offers an extended metaphor of the painful divisiveness of cultural self-absorption, the pull of rival passions as the characters seek and lose each other against a backdrop of concert halls and European cathedrals. But there is much more than this in *The Exile and the Sacred Travellers*. All Marie-Claire Blais's styles and favourite characters are represented in these ten short stories. The first might well have become a sequel to *Une Saison dans la Vie d'Emmanuel* (1965), the same sardonic, truculent viewpoint, the same procession of bare-foot, flea-ridden waifs held together by clan loyalty, abandoned by parents worn down with brutish toil, neglected by inadequate priests, and championed by the visionary Judith Prunelle, determined against the odds to school her charges. In turn, Marie-Claire Blais offers us sensitive portraits of the priest tormented by the poverty of his compassion faced with a dying child; the alcoholic roughsleeper; a pair of lesbian lovers snatching the fleeting comfort and warmth of their fevered intimacy; the veteran protester whose secular asceticism and studied neglect of herself surely contribute to the cancer that carries her off; the black out-of-work waiter flaunting his fierce beauty, struggling to survive while refusing to sell himself short; the exile of the title; a father and daughter trapped in the unreality of an inauthentic relationship, the girl over-protected yet ill provided for; the draft-dodger, haunted by images of the Vietnam war, escaping into an ugly world of drug-dealing and prison; the aesthete an unconscionable time a-dying, surrounded by the loving attentions of his boys. *The Exile and the Sacred Travellers* is, of these two titles, the better introduction to this multi-talented author and her protean genius.

These short stories, exquisite miniatures, when read in juxtaposition with our second text, demonstrate how well *These Festive Nights* represents the summation of forty years of writing. Behind the carefully maintained façades of prosperous southern Florida and the uneasy luxury of the villas, lie the popular quarters with their large families, the public places terrorized by skinheads on their roller blades, a world patiently researched by Blais. This is the setting for the lonely death from AIDS of the academic, an expert on Kafka. We encounter several other of the characters in our earlier portrait gallery, but this time seen more loosely within a much more ambitious social setting, a much more extended narrative. Nothing has prepared us for writing on this scale. The reader has to work hard. There are no pointers to patterns of interpretation, few full stops to punctuate the relentless flow of words. The stream of consciousness (the epigraph is from Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*) has a shifting focus. The prose is not broken up into chapters that might allow the reader to draw breath. Woolf's waves wash on, although the otiose gentility and the studied randomness of Woolf are largely absent. The pogroms of Warsaw, the ethnic cleansing of Treblinka, the vicious retribution of Hiroshima, the torches of the Klansmen striking terror into the innocent poor (all references here) have occurred since Woolf inaugurated modern women's writing with *A Room of One's Own*.

The opening pages of *These Festive Nights* need careful reading. Claude and Renate might be a wealthy couple, escaping to the Caribbean from the pressures of work. But she is an attorney and he is a judge, and both are haunted by the cases they have heard. This is Woolf revisited by Kafka, reflecting Marie-Claire Blais's concerns with the death penalty and the many testimonies of the young in Florida penitentiaries, testimonies she has listened to. Her characters enjoy gratification and fulfilment in proportion to their ability to pay, their access to well-being and leisure, and

their degree of protection from the vicious effects of acute social inequality. Culture and civilized life depend on an uneasy truce threatened by race, crime and death in the street. Cuban boat-people are knocking at the door but not before children have drowned or died of exposure.

Blais's characters have a restless, driven quality. It is a pity the French title, *Soifs*, has not been retained in some form. Renate has had a lung removed, and she is an inveterate smoker; her thirsts are partly assuaged by whisky and the gaming tables and by brushes with low life. Music is a constant leitmotiv, but if it's Schubert then it's *Death and the Maiden* and Mozart offers us *Dies irae*, tempered somewhat by occasional references to *Jesu, joy of man's desiring* represented by the translation of the French words "que ma joie demeure." The three days or less that the narrative occupies may be nominally festive nights and "days of delight," but as seen by Bosch and Ernst (mentioned in one breath).

We live in apocalyptic times, and Marie-Claire Blais, with a mixture of compassion and dread, is their supreme chronicler.

Save and Punish

Peter Brooks
Troubling Confessions: Speaking Guilt in Law and Literature. U of Chicago P n.p.

Reviewed by Nancy M. Frelick

In this truly interdisciplinary study, Brooks explores the intersection of legal, religious, psychoanalytic and literary uses of confession. He analyzes the troubled and troubling history of confessional discourses and practices and notes their increasing prevalence in politics, popular culture and the media. His stated project has an ethical objective: to incite reflection on the problematic uses and ambiguous nature of confessional acts.

Through the examination of false confessions and coerced confessions—those of police "interview rooms" or torture chambers of the inquisition—he problematizes not only the definitions that have evolved regarding the voluntariness and intentionality of confession, but also our basic assumptions about the notion of truth in confessional acts. He examines the way in which the transferential bond that evolves out of the dependency between confessor and confessant is often (ab)used to manipulate the accused into confessing to scenarios that conform to the interrogators' preconceptions. Using speech-act theory in his analysis of various kinds of discourses, Brooks also carefully teases out important distinctions between constative truth and performative truth in order to highlight the different kinds of truth value and various levels of ambiguity in utterances from diverse discursive fields.

According to Brooks, our notions of confession are riddled with impasses. From a historical perspective, part of the problem (as well as the genius of the Roman Catholic church when it instituted confessional practices in 1215) stems from the conflation of two opposing goals: the salvation of souls on the one hand and the punishment of heretics on the other. "The urge to confess is thus put to work both toward the absolution of the sinner's individual conscience and toward the policing of religious orthodoxy." The double-bind created by this paradoxical logic is manifest in the conditions of voluntariness in today's courts: "On the one hand, the court's insistence that the subject's will remain free, uncoerced; on the other hand all the efforts of police interrogators to break the will. The law itself, in its principles and its exercise, seems to be pulling in two different directions."

A major problem Brooks identifies is the simplistic, rationalist notion of the individual that persists in the law. He suggests that legal studies can benefit from literary and

psychoanalytic theory and their post-Freudian and post-Foucaultian notions of the subject. As Brooks demonstrates in his careful readings of historical and literary examples, confessional discourses are inherently unreliable because they are based on false assumptions: "Everything we have observed in confessions, 'real' or 'fictional' (the borders tend to blur here) tends to suggest that confessions rarely are products of a free and rational will." Indeed, rather than unveiling the truth, these discourses turn out to be products of misconceptions that obscure the facts. As a result, confessions are often obtained for crimes that did not take place or for which there is no evidence. Moreover, convictions are sometimes justified on the basis of victims' alleged repressed memories for which there is no corroborative evidence.

Rather than serving as accurate reflections of any particular truth, confessional discourses thus construct troubling realities. Brooks scrutinizes these issues from a legal and ethical perspective as he reviews court cases from the archives. Then, turning to examples from literature and Freudian case notes, Brooks questions the psychoanalytic meaning of confessional discourses, asking, along with Coetzee, whether the emphasis on confessional acts in analysis aims at unmasking a truth or constructing a particular image of the self. Confessional autobiographical works, such as those of Augustine and Rousseau, have contributed to the modern sense of self and the identity of the individual in western society, suggesting that confessional practices are part of a search for moral and psychological self-definition. Yet, as textual examples show (and here again, the borders between fiction and reality tend to blur), confessional discourses cannot be taken at face value, not only because the image of the self created may be flawed, but also because they can be used (consciously or unconsciously) by unreliable narrators to manipulate listeners/readers (see Brooks on Dostoevsky and Camus for example). In these texts, as in the analytic situation, the issue of voluntariness (hotly debated in legal studies) no longer applies, as all confessions (and perhaps especially those given freely) become suspect. Their truths must be read psychoanalytically, through gaps and resistances, for what they can only say indirectly, involuntarily.

In his *Troubling Confessions* Brooks invites us to question problematic assumptions that have a profound impact on all our lives. This masterful, thought-provoking study can serve as an invaluable guide to readers of texts of all kinds and of the "realities" we construct through discourse.

Water and Bone Museum

Nicole Brossard

Musée de l'os et de l'eau. Éditions du Noroît / Cadex Éditions 95 FF

Reviewed by Susan Knutson

A playful, exploratory focus on language has motivated Nicole Brossard's writing since *Aube à la saison* (1965), and her most recent collection of poetry, winner of the Grand Prix du Festival International de la Poésie in 1999, takes that exploration further again. *Musée de l'os et de l'eau* is vintage Brossard. Like previous works such as *Le Centre blanc* (1970), *Picture Theory* (1982) or *Installations* (1989), it operates out of a central and symbolic metaphor that intensifies in significance as it is reiterated across the length of the text, evoking emotion, provoking thought, and creating a rich fabric for rereading. In *Musée de l'os et de l'eau* that central metaphor is the museum, the "temple of the muses," here primarily signifying the human body, constructed of water and bone, and housing the extraordinary artifact which is living language. This is not Leonardo's human (masculine) body, inscribed in its perfect

circle, nor is it the amorous body of Brossard's earlier work, but rather it is the human (female) body woven into a fabric of place and time, on the earth and in history.

History and human culture, archives of bones, beauty, violent acts and language weigh heavily in these poems. The living body, fragile and in permanent dialectic with this enormity, confronts mortality while its treasure of words metamorphoses into more permanent forms such as books. Dense, enigmatic and intense, these poems have affinities with the riddle—that ancient form of critical inquiry and linguistic intelligence. The purity of the language and the flashes of startling coherence recall the Arthur Rimbaud of *Illuminations*. From movement to movement, the primordial images of death, life, water and bone move through a modern world, scarred by war, exploitation and abuse, and laced with lightning flashes as the world is made and unmade in the space of each poem.

The poems are divided into seven sections, the first of which, "Musée de l'os et de l'eau," introduces the key figures of the verb, the lack and the bone:

> je le sais aux verbes qu'il me manque
> ma vie s'est endormie
> dans le contour très précis
> de la tête d'un os long
> quoique je sache encore sourire
> devant les cloîtres romans et leurs
> ossuaires
> la valeur de *je vous aime*

The language games begin with the poem's first line, which rather mischievously indicates in the subordinate phrase the part of speech that will direct the play. It is, significantly, the verb. In French, as the *Petit Robert* asserts, the verb is "the soul of a language," "le mot par excellence." From the Latin *verbum*, and related to verve, the relation between the verb and life itself is most powerfully suggested by the word's theological sense, as divinity incarnate. Somewhat more prosaically, "le propre du verbe est d'être sous-tendu de temps," so that the trajectory or arc of a verb in some sense parallels that of life itself. And verbs, of course, do signify the possible actions any human being might take. That the speaker of the poem is lacking not things, but actions, extensions across time, and dimensions, even of the soul, corresponds to one of the claims that Brossard has argued most powerfully throughout her career: patriarchal culture limits women's humanity. The poems, on the other hand, do not employ such theoretical language, and the riddling sign for the speaker's lack is an enigmatic bone. Before the walls of such bones piled high in the ossuaries of the Romanesque / novelistic cloisters, the speaker defies the given with a conjugated verb, and a particular one, of value—"Je vous aime." The conjugation brings forward the pronouns that have been so important both to Brossard's linguistic explorations and to feminist subjectivity theory, the *I* and the *you* of a discourse that brings women fully into humanity. The verb chosen to defy death—love—is leavened by laughter a few pages later when it helps to herd the goats, but the opposition between poetry, love and conversation, on one hand, and bones, prose and silence on the other, remains a serious theme.

The second poem sees the speaker counting over her verbs as if they were coins. The bone seems a sign of time's triumph, and the gifts and the debris of the dead are just across a wall of silence.

> matin froid de novembre lumineux
> je compte mes verbes
> l'os qu'on n'oppose pas au temps
>
> de l'autre côté du silence
> l'art des peuples et des os mêlés

The third poem, too, contains a pile of bones, this time in a sombre memorial in the city of Dresden:

> à Dresde un matin de suie de gare et de
> musée

je m'étais arrêtée à une carte
l'index planté dans la destruction

amas de peuples et de crânes
masse de marbre et solitude au milieu

personne ne ressuscite pour demain
reprendre la conversation là où laissée

The simple, powerfully human image of the gossip fallen silent represents the barbarity of war. Further on, in "Le présent n'est pas un livre," the idea of people talking together is valorized again when the word "culture" is teasingly replaced by "conversation": "car à cause du corps la vie cherche / la conversation d'autres disent là culture." In Dresden, the museum facilitates communication between the dead and the living, those whose bodies link them to the present tense and those who are fallen silent. This kind of communication between the present tense of poetry and archival character of place is part of the conversation, or culture, that matters. It is also one of the reasons that travel, which has been an important part of Brossard's work for years, is particularly meaningful in this collection of poems. Several of the locations which the travelling speaker writes from and about are wound into the central metaphor of the *Musée de l'os et de l'eau* as actual museums and real places which speak in startlingly articulate voices through the medium of this collection of poems.

Mystic Musings

Michael Bullock
Erupting in Flowers: Poems. Rainbird $10.00
Nocturnes: Poems of Night. Rainbird $12.00

Reviewed by David Jarraway

Longtime readers of west-coast writer Michael Bullock, a prodigious author of over forty volumes of poetry, fiction, plays and translations, will find familiar territory in his two most recent gatherings of verse under review here. Bullock, referred to previously in this journal as a writer of "gnostic visions," thus continues headlong to enlarge the mystic revelation of earlier work. A poem entitled "Leaf" about halfway through *Erupting in Flowers* frames the project precisely: "Down the river of memory . . . I strain to read [] mystic hieroglyphs . . . and no clear message / forms in my mind." Bullock's mystic musings thus proceed from that psychic "life below," as the prefatory "Empty Page" describes it, "bewildering the viewer with its multitudinous variety." And several poems mapping out the generally downward direction of their eponymous "erupting in flowers" (from "Lament for a Vanished Lover") gradually reveal that such musings can become a bewildering strain on Bullock's audience as well: "depths / from which I may never return" ("Fire and Water"); "the depths of the ocean / [where] the coral speaks to me" ("Coral"); "a tingling / ris[ing] up from the depths in response to its hidden life" ("Still Water"); "plaintive music / that seems to call from the depths of the wood" ("End of a Dream"); etc., etc. Never say once, apparently, what you might be able to say likewise at least a half dozen more times would seem to be the point of many of these transcendental effusions. Hence, "Lost Poem," whose "web of empty words" concludes the volume agonizing over poems "drifting in space," will impart an irony that perhaps even the author had not intended.

The lyrical space closing out the previous volume, the "gap in the blue" that Bullock "seek[s] to fill with words," would appear to be the provocation for his next (and most recent) set of gnostic imaginings, *Nocturnes: Poems of Night.* However, poems such as "Night's Piercing Eye" ("Reaching into the depths [for] the most hidden secrets"), "Night River" ("The voice commands me to plunge into the depths / down down"), and "Sacred Spring" ("I plunge into the depths") will quickly reveal that Bullock's most recent volume holds few

surprises. Tired of plunging into all those impenetrable depths, we may be heartened by the slight alteration in a movement *beyond* suggested by this latest work: "a world beyond the edge of night," for instance, "Perfumes of Night," or "beyond the far horizon" in "Falling Leaves." But haven't we been there before as well? The strain of repetition begins to take its toll when silliness begins to overtake not a few of Bullock's newer poems. "Falling Leaves": "Waking, the tree finds itself leafless and alone / in despair it throws itself into the river / and is carried off in pursuit of its vanished leaves." When the silliness begins to infect the prosody of *Nocturnes* ("the moon booms back like a gong" in "Echo"), or its patterning of imagery ("the refulgence / of the womb" in "Moonbeams," and "a black / womb spattered with diamonds" in "On the Beach"), it just may be time to move past the very project on offer in these two volumes, and try something new. The case could not have been made plainer than by Bullock himself when a poem entitled "The Garbage Bin of Night" pointedly concludes: "From this assemblage of sad detritus / there rises / the melancholy odour / of rotting roses."

Arcadian Adventures

Catherine Bush
The Rules of Engagement. HarperFlamingo $29.00

Will Aitken
Realia. Random House $29.00

Reviewed by Susan Fisher

Arcadia Hearne, the protagonist of Catherine Bush's new novel, is a London-based war researcher who studies the intractable problems of modern conflict: When is intervention warranted? How can disputes be resolved? Her private life is fraught with similar questions: What responsibility did she have for a duel two men once fought over her? Can she accept that her current lover forges passports for refugees?

Bush's narrative unfolds as a dialectic between Arcadia's private guilt and her professional concerns, and the local pain of a troubled heart becomes emblematic of global suffering. The novel moves forward on parallel lines, one set in contemporary London, the other in Toronto in the 1980s. Bush keeps both stories advancing on a slight curve so that they neatly converge when Arcadia returns to Toronto. But in order for the governing analogy to work, the love duel has to seem a suitable microcosm of the conflicts that Arcadia studies. Unfortunately, the two combatants are puerile, and their folly is too lightweight to justify comparison with Rwanda or Somalia. At times, as if to pump gravitas into her material, Bush resorts to a portentous style, marked by anaphora, sentence fragments and redundant adjectival pairs. Yet she can also write startlingly well: her description of a night flight over the Atlantic is breathtaking, and she makes the canals of London and the ravines of Toronto haunting vales of despair. Even so, I could not feel for Arcadia. The love duel seemed too factitious, and the novel's ambitions too conspicuous. Moral lessons that advertise their approach deliver only glancing blows, whereas those that ambush strike deep.

Will Aitken's *Realia*, which also focuses on a Canadian in self-imposed exile, makes no such claim on the moral imagination. His protagonist, Louise Painchaud, is a feckless girl from Lethbridge who, like a latter-day remittance man, is being paid by her parents to stay out of Canada. *Realia* begins as an amusing version of the contemporary Japan tale. The conventions of this genre involve, first, a Westerner who discovers that Japan is not all cherry blossoms and temples and has the ultimate tourist experience of falling in love with a Japanese person; second, satire of the rever-

ence with which Westerners have treated traditional Japan; third, juxtapositions of "old" and "new," such as a monk wearing a Walkman; fourth, allusions to Japanese literature. On all counts, Aitken delivers the goods, and with wit and energy.

First, his protagonist Louise, unencumbered by any knowledge of things Japanese, stumbles into a space-age Heian theme-park version of Japan and falls in love with a Japanese male. The second ingredient, satire of Western reverence for Japanese culture, comes through in Aitken's wonderfully wicked portrait of the Japanophile. One of the minor characters, Bonnie, has come to Kyoto to make films on traditional crafts (ranging from pottery to textile dying with goat placenta). Her sentences are peppered with Japanese words and she keeps trying to get Louise to try "authentic" Japanese food. For all her laudable efforts to connect with the real Japan, Bonnie remains ridiculous. Yet, at the same time that Aitken makes comic hay out of our infatuation with old Japan, he also elicits it: even hardened Louise, who isn't about to be impressed by anything, finds herself lingering over a shop window containing exquisite lacquerware bowls.

The third convention, paradoxical juxtaposition, comes into play when Louise becomes the English instructor for an all-girl theatre company (a parodic version of the Takarazuka troupe). The company school is located on a holy mountain just outside Kyoto, and all sorts of scandalous, technologically enhanced goings-on take place in the midst of shrines and torii gates. Louise's lover, a pop star named Oro, tends to arrive at their trysts in a Maserati or a helicopter, but then whisks her off to a private getaway complete with traditional house and garden.

As for the fourth convention, allusions to Japanese literature, there are motifs from traditional myths, references to the *Tale of Genji*, and scenes from Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* and possibly Tanizaki's *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi*. Aitken frames much of the novel as a post-modern Orpheus myth: the prologue retells the myth, and the appearance of a character named Hermiko (whose silver sneakers are adorned with wings), and excerpts from Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* reinforce the connection. This is Western content, but with Japanese connections: the novels of Murakami Haruki, which Aitken cites in the acknowledgements as a source, make frequent use of Orphic parallels.

Nonetheless, readers who have enjoyed other contemporary accounts of Japan such as John David Morley's *Pictures from the Water Trade* or Peter Oliva's *The City of Yes* may find *Realia* discomfiting. One reason is that Louise's adventures are only incidentally about Japan; the main interest is designer drugs and inventive sex. This tendency becomes especially apparent once she lures Oro, the epicene pop idol, to her futon. From this point on, *Realia* gets progressively more farcical and raunchy. What begins as amusing and outrageous becomes just plain offensive. This shift happened definitively for me when I encountered Louise's musical version of *Hiroshima mon amour*, complete with chorines in mushroom cloud headdresses. This kind of ghastly spoof can work; think of Mel Brooks's *The Producers*. But here, Louise's campy musical is treated as amusing excess rather than the nadir of bad taste.

In the end, *Realia*, for all its satiric knowingness, offers a rather shop-worn view: Japan is a grotesque theatre where foreigners enter free of charge and the natives pay with their flesh. Just as Bush attempts to give Arcadia moral consequence by placing her against a backdrop of modern warfare, so Aitken attempts to elevate Louise by making her a new Eurydice (perhaps Eurydice in drag). But in order for such parallels to work, the narrator's story must somehow resonate with the eternal or

global one. In both *Realia* and *The Rules of Engagement*, these secret harmonies are lost.

the void looks back

Lesley Choyce
Beautiful Sadness. Ekstasis $12.95

Catherine Hunter
Necessary Crimes. The Muses' Company n. p.

Michael Redhill
Asphodel. McClelland & Stewart $12.99

Susan Gillis
Swimming Among the Ruins. Nuage n.p.

Elizabeth Brewster
Burning Bush. Oberon n.p.

Reviewed by Anne F. Walker

Spaces and emptiness are important in the largely narrative poetry of Lesley Choyce's *Beautiful Sadness.* These voids are locations of ironic comprehension or ominous preparedness rather than places of despair. In "A Degree in Nothingness" the tongue-in-cheek progression moves toward the moment when a figurative university "graduate" receives a ceremonial "blossom of ashes" from the "Dean" while "unseen weapons lurk in dark perimeters":
he says,

> "someday, this will all be nothing
> and it's comforting to know
> we will have prepared some of you to
> appreciate it."

The poem's dark humour touches a recurrent theme that is replayed in various tones. In concert with more philosophic considerations of nothingness, *Beautiful Sadness* also explores the cultural emptiness of modern corporate North American life. "Best Minds" expresses this concern for social decay in an address to Ginsberg's "Howl" and uses a similar structural syntax. But although "Best Minds" serves as a vehicle for interesting and productive social commentary, its replication of form reads as derivative and reduces the authorial punch in other poems such as "Sunyata" which use a lithe tone and more meta-level philosophic probing:

> We named our daughter
> for the idea
> that the universe is mainly emptiness
> and that emptiness is filled
> with all possibility.

The spaces in Catherine Hunter's *Necessary Crimes* seem more intricately involved with language, both in content and in a meticulous attachment to the musicality of the words. The book's title derives from the lines "in school we learned the necessary crime / of writing." Although the first of the three sections, "Accidents," is a very strong work, emotionally and aesthetically haunting, the second two are less so. The second section, "Working Late," is in the mainstream domestic tradition. The third section, "Suite," is a long lyric exploration without the pulse or drive of the antecedent work. Desire, birth, family and the deserted spaces where language bridges the gaps between these primal elements fill in the early pages of this collection. In "Riverbank" the continuously melodic and sensuous language is shaped in seamlessly simple descriptions:

> You used to come to my house at dawn,
> wanting a cigarette, your sleeves stained
> with the corpses of mosquitoes.
> Full of stories and mud.

Hunter's slant-rhymes, alliteration and internal rhymes move so well with the images it is a delight to read her work repeatedly.

Disease-related gaps and spaces in memory open Michael Redhill's *Asphodel.* The first section, "Coming to Earth (Alzheimer Elegy)," uses direct language without much use of metaphor or parallel imagery. This style of writing echoes the experience of fear associated with disease by keeping selected images clear and holding them tightly. The sentiment "What we did next

or where we went / is lost as if it never occurred" highlights memory as part of the experience of witnessing illness.

The next two sections are journey sequences. "Living Among" depicts images of America and "Going Under" works off Virgil's *The Aeneid* to describe a journey into Hell. Although these might seem like two quite dissimilar journeys, Hades is found via Toronto's geography:

> I am north of Bloor, walking deeper,
> the sound of early traffic distant
> and fading. Here, always the half-dawn,
> the damp inside of a fist, world
> without gender. It is
> death, then, a vagrant self, and this
> its waters under the red brick houses.

In Redhill's variation on Virgil's story, the information sought from the father is not available because "he won't speak, / inclines his head, still suffers even here / from the forgetting that killed him in life." The Alzheimer's theme again creates important links to the collection's many strands.

The theme of the journey is central in the debut collection by Susan Gillis, *Swimming Among the Ruins*. The first poem, which describes an image of Tutankhamen's queen and its effect on the narrator, seems to motivate the travels through the rest of the book: there is an "I" at the writing table, ready to move "toward subliminity." In the first section, particularly, images of wind recur that are connected to sexuality in "Scene With The Wind," or possession in "The Dead," and potential negation in "At The Look Out." The section moves through Egyptian tombs, looking at relics of a dead culture and forming meaning from those interchanges.

Later in the collection, journeys to other parts of the world are described through some formal variation, with prose poems, lists, and some pop-icon use. In "Vapour Trails" the imagery of temporal and physical place, used as contemporary signs of availability, strengthen a love poem. Couplets are utilized to formally replicate the dramatic tension created between the narrator's internal conflict and the mundane elements of travel:

> *love.* I would like to say love
> across ten time zones, I've given you
>
> phone numbers, zip codes, itineraries
> after asking for silence, are you confused?
>
> Because I am. There's not even a hole
> where you touched me

Elizabeth Brewster's eighteenth book of poems, *Burning Bush*, is well-composed and moves with ease through the biblically inspired sections, "Invocation of Angels," "In the Beginning," and "Mosaic." There are several poems that gloss other poets in the English tradition while the majority of the collection reworks biblical stories. These poems seem to work best where they invent a contemporary human scale for the stories.

> Cain found a wife,
> and had children.
> His old nightmares went away,
> but sometimes he imagined
> he was living Abel's life.
>
> In his old age he founded a city,
> settled down,
> and was grateful for grandchildren.

The simplicity of the language here brings the narrative to an earthy and comprehensible plane and closes the spaces between history, mythology and the present moment.

Going with the Flow

Michael Crummey

River Thieves. Doubleday Canada $34.95

Reviewed by Lawrence Mathews

Michael Crummey is a younger Newfoundland writer of significant talent whose earlier work—four small press volumes of poetry and short fiction—has been

justifiably well-received. Now he's acquired a high-powered agent (the ubiquitous Anne McDermid), a major publisher, and a Giller nomination for his first novel, *River Thieves*. A promising career has achieved lift-off.

I came to this review hoping to be able to extol the virtues of Crummey's writing. But I can't. *River Thieves*, despite the care with which it has been fabricated, is tedious going. What follows must be regarded, in the light of the novel's manifest commercial and critical success, as a reluctantly composed minority report.

River Thieves is set in early nineteenth-century Newfoundland, in the Bay of Exploits region of the island's northeast coast—a backwoods whose few white inhabitants make their living from fishing and trapping, occasionally coming into uneasy contact with the last survivors of the inscrutable, secretive Beothuks or "Red Indians" as they are known to the settlers, to distinguish them from the more sociable Mi'kmaq. The two main sections feature violent white-aboriginal confrontations. In 1811 two British servicemen are killed by Beothuks; in 1819 two Beothuks are killed by whites.

But the novel is not really "about" racial conflict. The narrative focuses on the lives of four white characters: the settlers John Peyton and his father, their housekeeper Cassandra Jure, and David Buchan of the Royal Navy, who leads the ill-fated expedition of 1811 and investigates the events of 1819.

No doubt Crummey has done his homework. The descriptions of daily life have the aura of library-researched truth. I believe it when I'm told that "They worked with thirty-fathom lines, their hooks baited in the first weeks of May with mussels dug from sandy beaches, then with seine-hauled herring, and by mid-June with the capelin that came ashore to spawn . . . ." But when there's something like this on what seems like almost every page, the effect is numbing. OK, so they used different kinds of bait. One wants to skip such passages to get to the human heart of the story.

But that, frankly, is hard to find. The near-protagonist is John Peyton, and there's just not enough of him to sustain a reader's interest. Uneducated and unreflective, he's a curiously innocent man whose life is crystallized in such passages as this: "He understood the backcountry, the habits of animals, the patterns of weather. And it was this knowledge that made him feel that he was closest here to belonging, to loving something that might, in some unconscious way, love him in return." Few writers could make such a character compelling. The closest he comes to human love is his puppydog longing for Cassandra, several years his senior, originally his tutor. Yawn. He's not an unsympathetic figure, exactly; it's rather that Crummey (deliberately, it seems) gives us no opportunity to make the leap of imaginative identification that many hold to be central to good realist fiction.

Why? My hypothesis is that Crummey's goal was to write a Newfoundland variant of the very popular Contemporary Canadian Historical Novel, or CCHN. In this he has been successful. Let me explain.

The characters in CCHNs are simpler than we are, and their world is simpler than ours. We peer down at them, godlike, released from the complexities of the early twenty-first century. They're specimens, case histories. Sometimes we can be amused by the way they anticipate us. For example, if there's a major female character, she is, inevitably, A Feminist Before Her Time—independent (but heterosexual), an autodidact, possessor of a strong moral sense (without being overtly religious - that would be uncool), and (wait for it) an incest survivor. And that's Cassandra in a nutshell. Crummey, as noted above, has

done his homework.

Writing from an aboriginal's point of view is, of course, forbidden, lest Matthew Coon Come show up at your door to berate you for being even worse than other white people. So the Beothuk must remain unalterably Other. Some peripheral characters may be from minority groups (here Mi'kmaq and Irish) as long as they're drawn sympathetically. Check. Throw in authentic detail—have the Irish guy use his rosary at least once. Check. One could go on.

But the main feature of the CCHN is its lack of intellectual substance—no probing of the complexities of character, no exploration of ideas current at the time, no majestic, debatable vision of the human condition fuelling the author's imagination (writers of CCHNs are too modest for that).

Instead we have the spectacle of figures in period costume tramping through the bush with their nunnybags and costrils of spruce beer, their single-shot rifles and powder horns, keeping an eye out for the savages' mamateeks, their lives defined in terms of activities such as chipping away the ice from a beaver pelt: " . . . it was a problem with a simple, concrete solution, something he could manage without confusion or embarrassment."

That same language might be applied to the writing of this sort of novel. *River Thieves* is neither better nor worse than a number of other CCHNs that have been similarly (and for me, mystifyingly) overpraised. But I'm not suggesting that Crummey cynically jumped aboard this gravy train. In fact, he may have been pushed.

An ominous sentence on the "Acknowledgements" page gives credit to his eye-on-the-main-chance agent for "advice, from first vague notions to final draft." Hmmmm. Perhaps next time Crummey will listen to the voices of his own characters, even if they lead him away from the Giller banquet hall, deeper into the forest, farther upstream.

Théâtre d'émotions urbaines

Jean Marc Dalpé
Il n'y a que l'amour. Prise de parole n.p.

Claude Guilmain
L'Egoïste. Prise de parole $14.00

Reviewed by Alain-Michel Rocheleau

Depuis quelques années, l'apparition d'une écriture dramatique audacieuse, qui tend à s'éloigner du récit usuel pour transcender la réalité, offre au public une nouvelle perception du monde d'aujourd'hui. Que ce soit au niveau des conditions spatio-temporelles ou contextuelles, du jeu des points de vue, de la déconstruction de la diégèse ou d'un travail sur la langue de communication, les paramètres du théâtre traditionnel s'effacent graduellement dans ces créations pour dépasser l'anecdote et rejoindre les aspects fabuleux du mythe. Deux parutions récentes chez Prise de parole, *Il n'y a que l'amour* de Jean Marc Dalpé et *L'Égoïste* de Claude Guilmain, rejoignent, en partie, cette façon originale d'écrire pour la scène.

L'ouvrage de Dalpé regroupe huit pièces en un acte (respectivement intitulées *Blazing Bee to win, La Cinq, Je lui dis, La Fête des mères, La Fête des pères, Les amis, Trick or Treat* et *Requiem in pace*), trois contes urbains (*Give the lady a break, Mercy, Red voit rouge*), une communication (*Culture et identité canadienne*), de même qu'un texte poétique conçu pour une voix seule (*L'âme est une fiction nécessaire*).

Lorsque l'on dépasse la simple dimension formelle de ces œuvres de fiction, écrites sur une période de dix années d'intervalle, on se rend vite compte de l'absence de continuité logique entre elles.

Tout en exhibant quelques procédés de construction et de dramatisation différents, ces œuvres ont même, à première vue, des allures de numéros juxtaposés et de fragments alignés. Pourtant, prise isolément, chacune se présente comme un tableau vivant qui s'emploie tantôt à recréer la violence exercée dans les milieux urbains (et que l'on ressent vivement à la lecture de *Requiem in pace* et de *Red voit rouge*), tantôt à crever de douloureux abcès existentiels (comme la dépendance aux jeux de hasard dans *Blazing Bee to win*), tantôt à mettre à nu (notamment dans *La Fête des mères* et dans *Trick or Treat*) l'aliénation mentale ou sociale d'individus paumés et défavorisés, pour qui les sacres et jurons servent de langue commune et de cris de souffrance. Ce qui frappe aussi à la lecture de *Il n'y a que l'amour*, c'est le caractère tragique que Dalpé parvient à greffer à de multiples situations contemporaines, allant des frustrations d'une femme de quarante-huit ans, monoparentale (dans *Give the lady a break*), aux amours impossibles entre un homme célibataire et une femme mariée (dans *Mercy*), pour ne référer qu'à celles-ci. Dans ces pièces, où les peines de l'âme sont largement exposées, l'auteur nous rappelle, en majeur, l'importance d'aimer, d'être aimé et de nous libérer des malaises que nous accumulons tous au fil du temps. En mineur, il met en évidence ce qu'il appelle lui-même "la problématique des identités culturelles", sous-jacente aussi bien dans l'attitude que dans la langue d'usage (mi-français, mi-anglais) de ses personnages, et qu'il aborde de façon explicite dans une communication intitulée *Culture et identité canadienne.*

Les qualités de dramaturge de Jean Marc Dalpé sont évidentes. Non seulement sait-il observer l'actualité, identifier puis transposer dans son théâtre les forces et les faiblesses d'individus (anglophones, francophones et allophones) assimilés ou cloisonnés dans la culture de l'Autre, mais il excelle (plus particulièrement dans *Trick or Treat*, de loin sa meilleure pièce) à traduire ses perceptions en termes hautement théâtraux, c'est-à-dire avec un sens aigu de la situation dramatique, de la réplique bien frappée et du mouvement bien mené. De tels attributs sont également identifiables chez Claude Guilmain, auteur de *L'Égoïste.*

L'action principale de cette pièce, créée en 1997 au Théâtre Factory par Le Théâtre Les Klektiks, peut être résumée comme suit: dans un centre hospitalier de Toronto, deux frères (Yves Jr. et Marc Gagné) sont au chevet de leur père (Yves, soixante-cinq ans), impliqué dans un tragique accident de voiture et qui parvient à survivre malgré ses blessures. Moins veinard que lui, son fils Stéphane (dix ans), issu d'un second mariage, se remet difficilement d'une neurochirurgie et est maintenu artificiellement en vie. Tout près d'eux, dans une chambre voisine, une petite fille (Cindy McKay) est en attente d'une transplantation cardiaque et risque, selon le Dr. Kitchener, de ne pas passer la nuit. Cette situation fait plonger les protagonistes dans un dilemme aux prémisses encore inconnues. Les Gagné seront ainsi appelés à décider, malgré les objections de leur mère venue en catastrophe de Montréal, si le coeur de celui qu'ils croient être leur demi-frère servira à sauver leur père ou à redonner à une parfaite inconnue de dix ans un futur prometteur.

Dans les neuf tableaux que renferme ce texte dramatique de portée autobiographique, l'auteur témoigne d'une prédilection pour le dévoilement de la vérité. Car au-delà du dilemme qui les oppose (Yves Jr. étant le seul à vouloir donner le cœur de Stéphane à la jeune Cindy), les deux frères, réunis dans l'appartement vétuste de leur père situé dans un quartier malfamé de Toronto, blâment sévèrement celui-ci, se remémorent de douloureux souvenirs et se livrent entre

eux au jeu de la vérité. Suite au visionnement de photos et de vidéocassettes seront aussi révélés certains faits troublants: une rivalité fraternelle entre eux vieille de plusieurs années, les mensonges et les échecs d'un père incompétent et profondément égoïste, ses actes d'adultère récurrents (d'abord avec sa secrétaire Lorraine, qu'il épousera, puis avec Angèle, l'amie de cœur de son fils Yves), la revanche de ce dernier avec Lorraine (lors d'une brève rencontre sexuelle, durant laquelle sera conçu Stéphane), etc. En observant ces deux frères se débattre devant nous, puis devant leur mère, l'envie nous prend de répéter la célèbre expression d'André Gide: "Familles, je vous hais."

Si cette première pièce de Claude Guilmain prend la forme d'un drame familial, positionné entre la vie et la mort aussi bien qu'entre la vérité et le mensonge, la véritable tragédie qui nous est exposée prend, elle, racine dans l'âme même des protagonistes. Pour ceux-ci, le problème n'est pas de savoir s'ils croient encore aux sentiments familiaux qui les unissaient vingt ans auparavant, mais de découvrir s'ils sont capables désormais d'être fidèles à eux-mêmes. Enfin, bien que certaines répliques de *L'Égoïste* tombent à plat, l'ensemble, par contre, possède une unité et un rythme on ne peut plus soutenus. Guilmain sait bâtir des dialogues et établir des contrastes qui, en s'accumulant et en se complétant, témoignent chez lui d'un tempérament d'écrivain qui n'a rien de banal.

Fictions critiques

Robert Dion
Le Moment critique de la fiction. Les Interprétations de la littérature que proposent les fictions québécoises contemporaines. Nuit blanche
$21.00

François Dumont, dir.
La Pensée composée. Formes du recueil et constitution de l'essai québécois. Nota bene n.p.

Reviewed by Jacqueline Viswanathan

Le livre de Robert Dion rassemble un corpus d'œuvres québécoises contemporaines mettant le commentaire critique sur la littérature au cœur de leur entreprise. Dion a ainsi sélectionné un groupe de fictions (six romans et deux pièces de théâtre) qui en dépit de leur grande diversité constituent un ensemble fortement unifié. Chaque chapitre est consacré à une analyse textuelle minutieuse et fouillée. *Agonie* de Jacques Brault (1984) prend pour objet d'interprétation un poème italien des années 1910. *Copies conformes* (1989) de Monique LaRue s'attache à un classique du roman noir américain des années trente. *Le Désert mauve* (1987) de Nicole Brossard présente une série de variations poétiques sur un texte source, un commentaire de celui-ci et sa traduction plus ou moins fidèle. *Provincetown Playhouse, juillet 1919, j'avais 19 ans* (1981) et *Fragments d'une lettre d'adieu lus par des géologues* (1986), deux pièces de Normand Chaurette, cherchent à déterminer les causes d'une tragédie en recourant à un texte dont on ne possède que des parties: un début de pièce et trois commencements d'une seule lettre d'adieu. *Monsieur Melville* (1978) de Victor-Lévy Beaulieu se consacre entièrement à un des écrivains fondateurs de la littérature états-unienne. Le narrateur-personnage principal intègre dans son texte des citations d'œuvres de Melville et forge des dialogues entre l'écrivain et ses proches, ou encore entre lui-même et le créateur de Moby-

Dick. *Le Semestre* (1979) de Gérard Bessette fait état du dernier semestre d'enseignement d'un professeur-écrivain, semestre consacré tout entier à la lecture psychocritique de *Serge entre les morts* de Gilbert Larocque. À l'instar d'*Agonie*, il s'agit donc d'une œuvre et d'un écrivain réel. Comme d'ailleurs le commentaire critique du romancier autrichien, Thomas Bernhard, que développe Robert Racine dans *Le Mal de Vienne* (1992).

Le parcours dessiné par l'ordre des chapitres n'est ni chronologique ni thématique. L'organisation suit l'évolution de diverses formes d'interprétation. *Agonie* présente l'explication de texte d'un poème, approche la plus traditionnelle et la plus distanciée. Dans les œuvres suivantes, le commentaire prend la forme d'une enquête policière. D'autres romans sont des analyses où les critiques fictifs deviennent le miroir et le double des personnages-écrivains qui les fascinent. Enfin dans *Le Mal de Vienne*, l'interprète et l'interprété se retrouvent dans une parfaite superposition. Pour chaque texte, Dion adopte une méthode d'analyse différente qui paraît souvent se calquer sur la démarche adoptée par les romans eux-mêmes, ainsi, par exemple, l'herméneutique de la traduction pour *le Désert mauve* ou la critique psychanalytique pour *Le Semestre*. Dans son approche théorique, l'ouvrage se réfère principalement à l'herméneutique de théoriciens allemands tels que Jauss, Iser et Szondi.

Le Moment critique de la fiction présente donc une extension et un renouvellement importants des travaux précédents sur l'autoréflexivité et l'intertextualité littéraires. L'étude de Robert Dion poursuit notamment de façon intéressante l'ouvrage d'André Belleau sur la figure du romancier fictif dans la littérature québécoise. Cette mise en scène critique de la littérature en fait non simplement une référence mais un véritable agent du texte, soit par le rôle que joue le livre dans l'intrigue, soit par les rapports qui se créent entre le personnage du lecteur-critique et l'auteur interprété. Ainsi ces œuvres contiennent une véritable théorie littéraire implicite de la fiction. Elles opèrent des variations imaginatives sur le réel. Si cet ouvrage ne prétend pas analyser une poétique dominante de la littérature québécoise contemporaine dans son ensemble, il permet néanmoins d'éclairer certaines tendances de son évolution, telle cette prise de conscience par elle-même de la littérature. Dion met ainsi au jour une réorientation de la dramaturgie et du roman québécois dorénavant moins asservis à la quête de l'identité nationale et personnelle. Un pareil usage de la littérature comme instrument de connaissance était rare au Québec avant 1980. Bien entendu, il ne s'agit pas d'un phénomène de masse. Ces romans et ce théâtre s'adressent avant tout à un public d'intellectuels et d'universitaires. Bon nombre de leurs auteurs sont d'ailleurs à la fois professeur, critique et écrivain. Le livre de Robert Dion est conçu pour un public universitaire déjà très averti des auteurs et des œuvres dont il s'agit.

Au-delà du corpus québécois, cette étude a une portée plus générale et plus universelle en célébrant ces lecteurs pour qui le rapport au texte devient une véritable seconde vie et un instrument essentiel de connaissance. Elle sera donc d'un grand intérêt non seulement pour les chercheurs et les étudiants de la littérature québécoise, mais encore pour tous ceux que fascinent l'hybridation des genres et l'actualité internationale d'une "littérature qui se pense."

Il s'agit aussi de critique dans l'ouvrage collectif dirigé par François Dumont, *La Pensée composée. Formes du recueil et constitution de l'essai québécois*. Cette étude a pour objet particulier la mise en lumière des rapports qu'entretiennent la forme du recueil et la poétique de l'essai pendant une période cruciale pour le développement du

genre, période qui débute en 1960. Les quinze collaborateurs s'attachent à examiner la sélection, la réécriture et l'organisation des textes propres à l'édition de la "forme colligée."

En guise d'introduction, Robert Major retourne à Montaigne et insiste sur les côtés problématiques de la définition de ce genre. Dans la première partie ("Un commencement rétrospectif 1960-1966") figurent *Les Insolences du frère Untel* (1960), événement clé de la Révolution tranquille, et quelques ouvrages de la collection "Constantes" aux Éditions HMH. Avec les premiers recueils d'essais publiés par Gilles Marcotte, Pierre Vadeboncœur et Jean Simard, on assiste à une véritable institutionnalisation de l'essai dans la littérature québécoise. L'article de Patrick Guay comparant la version originale de *Convergences* (1961) par Jean Le Moyne et sa traduction anglaise (1966) par Philip Stratford présente un intérêt particulier pour les lecteurs anglophones. La deuxième partie aborde des recueils d'articles publiés avant les années 1960 mais colligés pendant la période de la Révolution tranquille. Ce décalage est révélateur de la signification de la parution en recueil puisqu'il montre l'importance d'un passé revisité dans la foulée d'une relecture de l'histoire du Québec. Les écrits épars de François Hertel, Lionel Groulx, Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau et Jacques Ferron trouvent ainsi une consécration. Enfin, la troisième et dernière partie analyse des recueils d'écrivains essayistes: Fernand Ouellette (1970), Hubert Aquin (1971) et Madeleine Gagnon (1974). À partir de cette décennie, les recueils d'essais vont se multiplier au Québec, un phénomène qui reflète, comme le faisait le livre de Robert Dion, le foisonnement des métadiscours et le poids social des professeurs-écrivains-critiques. *La Pensée composée* démontre de façon convaincante que la parution en recueil constitue un facteur décisif pour la transmutation du texte de circonstance en essai de nature littéraire. Bon nombre de ces recueils figurent à présent parmi les "classiques" de la littérature québécoise.

Pilgrim's Regress

Timothy Findley
Pilgrim. HarperPerennialCanada $21.95

Anne Geddes Bailey and Karen Grandy, eds.
Essays on Canadian Writing: Timothy Findley Issue. ECW $7.00

Reviewed by Donna Palmateer Pennee

Novel (variation) number 9 (or 10, if you count two versions of *The Butterfly Plague*) from the pen of Timothy Findley takes us once again over very familiar ground—ground that is too familiar not to seem hackneyed, unless you return to Findley's work precisely for the repeated *frisson* of royalty watching and other forms of europhilic nostalgia. If there is a difference here from the variations on themes that we've seen in his prolific (repetition-compulsive?) career as novelist, playwright, memoirist, short story and screen writer, it lies in the ambitiousness of the reach and the scale of the historical canvas (and after *Famous Last Words*, that's saying something). In *Pilgrim* and its eponymous hero, I find a sort of hyper-economy of Findley *leitmotifs* (Thomas Mann offers one of the novel's epigraphs, making explicit a debt that's been in the wings by association at least since the naming of Minna): preoccupations spread across several characters in earlier works are now located in a single character—but one who is also a time-traveller in a much more extended sense than Kurtz and Marlow were in *Headhunter*. They were let loose from their nested space in Conrad's novel, in Toronto public library holdings, in out-patient Leila's consciousness, in millennial novel, in reader's repertoire and so on: now, the evil attractions of genius show up in a prestigious Zürich psychiatric clinic where the trials of Freudian

and Jungian therapies are domesticated, and where consciousness of evil shows up in a body that has been occupied by many people over many centuries, most famously perhaps the subject of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. En route to Zürich in the decades prior to WWII (and spread across the artistic and architectural wonders of European high culture about to go up in the flames of war), Pilgrim has been an intimate of Oscar Wilde, a shepherd who was visited by an angel (the woman who would become Saint Teresa), *inter alia*; he has cross-dressed as a twin brother, contemplated alternative names for Peter Rabbit, fed pigeons, been bosom buddies with Lady Sybil Quartermaine, acquired a butler named Forster and so forth (an embodiment and enactment of "the collective unconscious" which Jung will discover in Pilgrim's journals).

The fascination-repulsion of "evil," and its embodiment in numerous historical personages, as well as the embodiment of critical consciousness of the same (frequently, but not only, in the figures of "maternal" types and friends of animals), continues to be central to Findley's imaginings, but I found the moments of genuinely moving insight into this perennial *problématique* few and far between. I didn't experience the pilgrimage's time-space compression as an immersion in the collective unconscious; my reaction took more of the form of "oh, you must be kidding!" or "and what are we today?" The shifts were too many, too fast, too predictable, too often too boring. And I much preferred Pilgrim when he was silent, which wasn't for long enough. Perhaps had I never read another Findley text, I would have been moved by the glimpses of pathos afforded by the narrative's more finely imagined moments, or I might have been more attuned to, and therefore more appreciative of, what others might see as repetition-with-a-difference, but alas, I have read other Findley texts—even written about them—in my academic youth. Perhaps, like (a) Pilgrim and all those he represents across time and space, my faith has been tried—and is now wanting.

Not so the nine critics (and many others cited) in the 1998 special Findley issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing*. Featuring primarily new PhDs whose dissertations were inspired by Findley's works, with two established Findley scholars (Lorraine York and Barbara Gabriel) and a couple of young veterans of the school of publish-something-on-everything-you-read, the collection only intermittently makes good on the editors' claims "to provide. . . original perspectives." Had they (or any of the other contributors) pursued their parenthetical remark on "marketing" as one of the things that accounts for the sensationalist forms Findley's narratives often take, then something original might have emerged. Which isn't to say that there isn't good work in the collection, just that for the most part it is ground that has already been well covered. Almost all of the papers fall into the subversion-containment model of critical argument. The essays represented in the "narrative" and "myth" sections of the collection are most reminiscent of earlier scholarship, and indeed Findley's work requires ongoing engagement with matters both of narrative form and the attractions and dangers of myth. Catherine Hunter's essay breathes creative life into commonplaces of narratological theory, though I wish the essay had made good on its subtitled promise (Findley's Work of the Sixties). Tom Hastings's argument that Findley has "adopted" the British literary tradition's Great War myth of "generational conflict" interestingly works through aesthetic questions of coloniality, but perhaps underreads the material presence in *The Wars* of things "Canadian" in the production of that war (that is, Canada is implicated despite Findley's use of the British

"literary" tradition, not least of all through the very business by which Robert Ross's father makes the family money, and the use of the railway to put down Canada's "Indian" wars).

The best work in the collection occurs in the "performance" section, particularly in Barbara Gabriel's essay where theatrical intertexts, the archived first manuscript of *Famous Last Words*, and the political terrains of "theatre" are reexamined through the semiotics of psychoanalysis—a method for reading that seems to me entirely appropriate to Findley's repeated returns to the same historical sites and the same subjects for creativity. Karen Grandy's essay on Findley as a playwright seeks to correct an imbalance in the scholarship in which "performance" is more often than not of the Judith Butler kind rather than theatre practices *per se*. Lorraine York's essay on the use of the "racialized/ethnicized other" in Findley's work likewise takes up (in a self-admittedly preliminary fashion), an underread Findley-esque repetition. A similar study is needed on matters of class—and it may well have appeared in the interim. In any case, despite what is to me *Pilgrim's* regress, the critical project on Findley continues apace.

Frye Redux?

Northrop Frye, Robert Denham, eds.
Northrop Frye's Late Notebooks 1982-1990: Architecture of the Spiritual World. Two vols. Vols. 5 and 6 of *The Collected Works of Northrop Frye.* U of Toronto P n.p.

Caterina Nella Cotrupi
Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Process. U of Toronto P n.p.

Reviewed by Graham Forst

By the year 2007, the University of Toronto Press hopes to have completed its enormous project of publishing the complete works of Northrop Frye, under the general editorship of Alvin A. Lee. Already in print are *The Correspondence of Northrop Frye and Helen Kemp, 1932-1939* (vols. 1 and 2); *Northrop Frye's Student Essays* (vol. 3); *Northrop Frye on Religion* (vol. 4); and the present volumes, *Northrop Frye's Late Notebooks 1982-1990*, meticulously edited and annotated (with two hundred pages of notes) by Robert D. Denham (vols. 5 and 6).

This massive undertaking, which will ultimately comprise thirty-one volumes, is certainly one of the most important publication ventures in Canadian publishing history, if not quite "one of the most important humanistic efforts taking place at this point in history" as Alvin Lee has called it.

Of the volumes so far published, the *Late Notebooks* supply the most persuasive evidence for Lee's claim. These volumes collect the eight journals Frye used to air out his ideas as he was writing *Words With Power* (1990) and *The Double Vision* (1991). And although much of the material contained in the almost four thousand paragraph-length notes ended up in those two volumes verbatim, they provide, in their disconnected and often aphoristic form, a fascinating insight into how hard Frye wrestled with the organization of these books, especially with *Words With Power*, the notes for which occupy about eighty-five percent of these volumes.

The ideas one finds throughout these notes are those which long-time readers of Frye would expect to find: that the unique social function of literature is to discover and recover the mythical dimensions of ideology; that the poet's claim for authority is based on his/her capacity to bridge consciousness and nature through metaphor; that mythology precedes and informs history; that the literary critic's job is to "lead to spiritual vision" by "expressing detachment without separation." And that language is absolutely central to our existence

as human beings ("Nothing is of value in life except finding verbal formulations that make sense").

Also present throughout these pages are Frye's perpetual *bêtes noires*: Marxism, feminism, fundamentalism and the fundamentalists' God (whom he variously calls an "immoralist," "that old stinker," "that blundering fool," a "blood-lover," a "tyrant," a "shitsack," and so on); and of course Derrida and deconstruction, which he calls "crap," and whose followers he calls "cult hysterics" (there are, nonetheless, numerous positive references to Derrida throughout the notebooks, revealing a grudging admiration for him).

Will, as Frye's followers maintain, the University of Toronto project lead to "a renewed recognition of Frye's true stature as at least arguably the most important critic of the century," as Boyd and Salusinszky have claimed in their introduction to *Rereading Frye*?

Maybe, but reading the notebooks leaves one with a strong feeling that there is something unavoidably archaic about Frye, with his absorption in the grand narratives of the King James Bible and the English romantics and Hegel and Spengler; with his obdurately romantic conviction that language is "a means of intensifying consciousness" that can "lift us to a new dimension of being altogether" and that literature is above all "a unified order of words."

And it hardly enhances Frye's status as a thinker that his response to deconstruction, here, as elsewhere, is so circular and *ad hominem* (for example, "I think there must be what Derrida doesn't allow: a polysemous structure that directs all the 'deconstruction,'" and "if 'deconstruction' starts with a construal text, that text prescribes a *direction* for deconstruction, otherwise you wander forever in a wilderness of words." In reference to Derrida's claim that there "are no incarnational texts," Frye makes an irrelevant reference to Derrida's Jewishness (apparently for Frye being Jewish precludes incarnationalism even in texts!) and follows with this *petitio principii*: "there can be no text that isn't incarnational, that doesn't represent the descent of kerygma into flesh." That's fine if we can agree (which Derrida of course wouldn't) that there are texts that perform this sort of theophonous revelation.

One feels that Frye's reaction to Derrida is partly owing to his ego: "I'm so lucid I seem to nag people into 'construal' readings, and they don't like it." Note his self-composed epigraph: "I had genius. No one else in the field known to me had quite that." But with the waning of deconstruction, Frye, the apocalyptic visionary, will retake part of the field, though humbled, one hopes, by the challenges that Auschwitz and the resulting criticism of logocentrism have posed.

Cotrupi, a student of Frye who now practices law in Toronto, offers neither new nor revised insights in her short book on Frye. She wants to show the "affinities" between Frye and Giambattista Vico, with a focus on Vico's principle of *verum factum* (that is, only that is true which we have made), with an eye to "extrapolat[ing] some of the implications of these affinities for critical theory and, in particular, for the poetics of sublimity."

However, the exposition of these "affinities" doesn't go much beyond what Frye himself has said about Vico's principle, especially in his paper "The Responsibilities of the Critic," and in *Words With Power*. The topic of a "poetics of sublimity" is never really broached, because she is too content with providing exegeses of Frye's and Vico's poetics, rather than developing them into a cogent thesis. As well, Cotrupi does not seem aware of how much Frye's "process poetics" owes to Blake, Coleridge and particularly Shelley, not to mention Kant and Hegel. Vico certainly confirmed

this theory for Frye, but he clearly had it in his "noddle" (as he called it) before reading Vico. Cotrupi's book suffers also from bad editing, as there are numerous misquotations, spelling errors and annoying critical neologisms.

Poégraphes

Madeleine Gagnon
Rêve de pierre. VLB $16.95

Gilbert Langevin
PoéVie. Poésie, chanson, prose et aphorismes. Éditions Typo n.p.

Reviewed by Estelle Dansereau

Tous les deux nés en 1938 et renommés comme poètes militants d'une époque révolue, Madeleine Gagnon et Gilbert Langevin nous ont légué des œuvres d'ampleur qui ont marqué et la langue poétique et l'idéologie de leur pays. Chacun à sa manière est resté fidèle à cette vision de lutte au cours d'une trentaine d'années d'activités créatrices. Tandis que la résistance qu'incarne Langevin s'est close en 1995 avec sa mort, celle de Gagnon s'enferme davantage dans un langage intime et personnel. De par leur vocation de "poégraphe," désignation apte à décrire leur motif raisonné de tracer le "sol intérieur" aussi bien que social, Gagnon et Langevin sondent et enregistrent la mémoire et la parole de leur époque.

Comme elle le faisait déjà dans ses ouvrages de questionnements féministes, Madeleine Gagnon continue d'interroger le rapport entre le langage, les êtres et les choses. Dans son recueil, *La terre est remplie de langage* (1993), elle annonçait déjà l'exploration baudelairienne qu'elle poursuit dans *Rêve de pierre* (1999): "*Les mots photographient l'âme des choses.* Selon l'angle choisi, selon l'heure du jour, entrevoir un dessin parmi le tumulte et saisir bouche ouverte le petit cri sous la mousse." Dans *Rêve de pierre*, la pierre, la mémoire, la musique, le mouvement et la lecture entrent dans un récit qui se joue à la fois sur le plan universel des éléments—le soleil, le vent, l'eau—et sur l'intime quotidien—"Partir aux alentours, pas très loin de la petite maison qui donne sur le grand large." Gagnon organise son creusement d'archéologue en quatre parties dont "Rêveries," "L'œil photographique," "Promenades" et "Lecture des pierres." Des vers laconiques, réduits à l'essentiel sémantique, caractérisent les parties qui ouvrent et ferment le recueil, tandis que les deux parties qu'elles encadrent, consacrées au mouvement et à la musique, laissent errer un discours intime et fluide.

Déjà dans *La terre est remplie de langage*, Gagnon estimait la valeur mémorielle de la pierre: "Et revenons aux pierres, amies certaines, témoins immuables de la fêlure des mondes jusqu'à la nôtre, dont stries et sédiments persistent à nous écrire." Dans *Rêve de pierre*, elle médite sur les origines, sur l'univers et le mystère de l'existence en étudiant les traces dans la pierre: "Il fallait bien / scruter la pierre"; "Je m'agenouille et palpe. J'apprends la matière avec les mains". Comme un archéologue, elle lit dans la pierre les traces des origines et de l'histoire afin de retrouver "une mémoire": "A ma question pourtant, quelque chose remue sur le sol intérieur." Les instants des âges disparus sont pétrifiés dans la pierre pour arriver au présent où ils sont révélés: "Des musiques d'aujourd'hui captent ces songes d'une mémoire enfuie"; "A la photomicrographie, la pierre pense, son âge bouge"; "Musique des humains retrouvés." Tout en laissant à ses lecteurs l'impression d'épier une quête profondément personnelle, Gagnon situe son enquête du mystère des origines et de la parole dans une lignée distinguée qu'elle identifie en note: le titre est emprunté à Baudelaire (La Beauté), tandis que les réminiscences sont inspirées par Roger Caillois, Philippe Jaccottet et Christian Hubin.

Les tourments et les bouleversements, les prières ferventes et idéalistes, et les paroles laconiques et parodiques de Gilbert Langevin (in)forment maintenant une œuvre complète. Dans cette anthologie, Normand Baillargeon présente cent un textes de Gilbert Langevin écrits entre 1959 et 1995, et qu'il réunit en trois grandes catégories dont poésie, chanson, prose et aphorismes. Cette œuvre est traversée par une quête inlassable et cohérente, marquée par la voix populaire ainsi que l'esprit ludique de Langevin. Ses lecteurs et lectrices fidèles y trouveront du familier et du nouveau, car Baillargeon dit avoir fait un choix profondément personnel tout en retenant des pièces bien connues. Le mot valise "PoéVie" du titre dit la quête intense et implacable, quasi brutale de Langevin, pour trouver le salut par un regard ironique et une parole impertinente. Que les textes soient signés Gilbert Langevin, ou Zéro Legel ou d'autre pseudonyme, ils résonnent d'une voix tout à fait sienne qu'il chante dans "La voix que j'ai":

> Cette voix usée par l'inquiétude
> par la trop longue solitude
> cette voix marquée par la colère
> et les blasphèmes de la misère
> cette voix qui se meurt de soif
> à bout de justice et de joie
> cette voix comme une espérance
> entre le nord et la souffrance
> cette voix que j'ai

Cette voix angoissée et déchirée raconte les douleurs et les désespoirs d'une existence qui ressent trop profondément l'absurdité tout en persistant à explorer de façon acharnée et implacable les rêves et les utopies. Parmi les poèmes, les paroles mordantes, détournées, parodiées côtoient les rêves et les passions: "L'instant rutile d'éternité"; "nu plaisir parmi les amertumes"; "ce grand vide au milieu de nous." Ses proses et aphorismes impertinents, irrévérencieux, réjouissent encore, bien qu'ils soient marqués de l'idéologie du poète public, ailleurs disparu. Le fait qu'il est resté fidèle à sa vision poétique pendant trente-six ans et qu'il l'a vécue implacablement accorde aux paroles de ce recueil une constance rare. En publiant cette anthologie dans un format poche à prix modique, Baillargeon respecte la politique populiste de Langevin et facilite le renouvellement de son lectorat.

Found in Translation

Paula Ruth Gilbert and Roseanna L. Dufault, eds.
Doing Gender: Franco-Canadian Women Writers of the 1990s. Associated University Presses $57.50

Reviewed by Katharine Conley

Doing Gender reflects the unprecedented critical attention being paid to women writers in Québec. As the editors Paula Ruth Gilbert and Roseanna Dufault note in their introduction, these writers are "a plurilingual lot, representing a cultural diversity that is quite extraordinary." Nevertheless, the editors underscore the fact that "women are still very much concerned with recording their contributions that were formerly omitted from historical accounts and/or perceived through a misogynist lens, and with re-presenting cultural mythology in ways that validate the female experience instead of suppressing it."

Two of the strongest essays concern works of fiction that focus on women previously left out of historical accounts. Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska's novel *L'Été de l'Île de Grâce* inserts a fictional French Canadian nurse into an otherwise accurate historical account of a cholera outbreak at a quarantine station on Grosse Île in the summer of 1847. In her essay on this work, Maureen O'Meara explains that it "addresses the erasure of women from the story of the island"; Ouellette-Michalska has responded "to this blank in women's collective consciousness" by creating "an alternative his-

tory within fiction." Similarly, Karen Gould addresses France Théoret's moving, and at first glance private, tale of adolescent revolt within the larger story of Montreal's emergence as a center of modernity. Gould shows how Théoret's "narrative connects the chronology of Laurence's private journey away from the rigid conventions of rural life and towards self-reliance in the city with momentous historical events that influenced the social conditions and cultural outlook of Québec society from the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s." According to Gould, Théoret accomplishes this translation of the personal into the public by making the city of Montreal itself into a character: "Montreal is repeatedly personified as an agent of substantial change in the lives of Québec women and men."

Set against these hopeful salutes to the ways in which women have contributed to history are analyses of novels that reveal the damage done to women by a persistently patriarchal system. Susan Ireland's excellent analysis of Gabrielle Gourdeau's *L'Écho du silence* examines how Gourdeau dramatizes the responses of five women from the same family who have all been scarred by father-daughter incest. The private traumatization experienced by these women translates into a painful national legacy within the novel. However, as Ireland suggests, Gourdeau's use of intertexuality points to a way out of the vicious cycle of abuse: "The echoes of earlier texts that run through *L'Écho du silence* mirror the ghosts from the past that haunt the daughters' lives, and by incorporating these intertextual traces into the novel, Gourdeau emphasizes the need to reread and to rewrite old scripts in order to produce new possibilities for the future."

Writing as essential to the mourning process emerges as a theme in essays on the work of Madeleine Gagnon, Louise Dupré, and Nicole Brossard. Karen McPherson comments that for Nicole Brossard "writing marks a site where our memories and our desires may actually generate change." This optimism is echoed in Peggy Devaux's conclusion to her fine essay on the previously neglected Arab-Canadian author Nadine Ltaif: "Ltaif gives birth to herself through (re)writing, seeking, and thinking." The intersection between the personal and the historical emerges as a crucial theme in Patrice Proulx's examination of Nancy Huston, who "often incorporates autobiographical elements in her theoretical studies," by a "skilful interlacing of the nonfictional journal and the critical essay, a narrative strategy reflecting the author's desire to situate her own beliefs in relation to the objects of her study."

Several papers examine writers who use the French language but whose cultural legacy, like Quebec's, is no longer exclusively French so much as linked to France's colonialist legacy: Marie-Célie Agnant, who was born in Haiti; Ying Chen, who was born in Shanghai; and Abla Farhoud, whose first novel, *Le Bonheur et la queue glissante*, dramatizes the life of a seventy-five-year old Lebanese woman whose name, Dounia, means "the world" in Arabic. These novels and the critical essays devoted to them reflect the changing face of Canadian francophone culture whose concerns have become fundamentally pluricultural—no longer circumscribed by the two-sided clash between English and French colonial legacies and languages.

Jane Moss's essay announces "the end of feminist theater as a collective project whose aims were to promote positive changes in the lives of Québec women." Moss claims that by the 1990s, "a significant number of plays by women took up the subject of 'la vie du couple'" instead of broader social topics. Nevertheless, *Doing Gender* shows the extent to which this move towards intimacy on a thematic level continues to have a political dimension. One of the best examples of this phenomenon appears in Mylène Catel's essay,

"Huguette Bertand, 'Internaute' Pioneer Poet." Bertrand uses her personal website to post her own poetry and that of other women poets. A personal website still retains a private quality, but its interconnectedness to the World Wide Web promotes "the creation and globalization of an on-line women's community."

Doing Gender succeeds admirably in showing how francophone feminism has become more intimate while retaining the public ideal of changing the way history evaluates and understands the role of women. These essays demonstrate the extent to which the rendering of women's private moments into public fiction succeeds as a sort of "translation" in which visibility and greater understanding may indeed be found.

Identity Narratives

Mary Jean Green
Women and Narrative Identity: Rewriting the Quebec National Text. McGill-Queens UP $65.00

Reviewed by Maryann Tjart Jantzen

What has been the role of Quebec women writers in both constructing and challenging the Quebec national identity narrative? How have Quebec women writers contributed to the opening up of this restricted narrative to "multiple horizons"?

Mary Jean Green addresses these crucial questions in her well-researched feminist analysis of the complex relationship between Quebec women's writing and the Quebec national identity narrative. Reminding us through references to feminist scholars such as Carolyn Heilbrun and Patricia Smart that it has "been the lot of women throughout Western culture to struggle with stories imposed on them by men," Green argues that historically Quebec women writers have been additionally constrained by the "ideological force" of an "overarching national identity narrative" which demands each individual text contribute to the whole.

Working from the assumption that the construction of a distinct national identity has historically been the primary project of French literature produced in Quebec, Green examines the strategies female writers, such as nineteenth-century novelist Laure Conan, have used to write themselves into the national text. While Conan worked within the ideological restraints of the national literary project, her strong female characters frequently exercise autonomy and agency, freeing themselves from the prescribed gender plot of "female self-effacement."

Green also examines how post-war female writers such as Germaine Guèvremont and Gabrielle Roy appropriated "the familiar framework of the *roman de la terre*" to contest "traditional values" and to present "radically new visions of women's experience." Neither author "was perceived as challenging the status quo of French-Canadian society" because of her use of "established plot structure" and "familiar characters." Similarly, mid-century writers such as Anne Hébert and Marie-Claire Blais employed a "double-voiced discourse" that integrated "the personal dimensions of women's experience" with the "dynamics of Quebec's quest for political autonomy, thereby creating a new place for women in the revolutionary identity narratives of the 1960s."

Next Green traces the way in which women's identity narratives of the 1980s increasingly rejected "limited and monolithic definitions of Quebec identity." The growing feminist writing project of the 1970s moved away from a primary identification with the national text to a "new understanding of gendered identity and its expression in language." Through "new freedom of genre and textual form," *l'écriture au féminin* of writers such as Nicole Brossard and France Théoret helped to

finally free "Quebec women from the obligation of framing their words in the structure provided by men." The 1980s also saw an increasing number of autobiographical narratives in which "the splitting apart of the narrative voice" contributed to an increased understanding of the "multiplicity of female experience." Green suggests that this "opening up of the subject" also facilitated an increased interest in exploring the multiple female voices that inhabit "a long obscured past."

Green ends her analysis with a timely examination of the contributions of contemporary women writers to a "vision of Quebec literature as capable of integrating a diversity of identity narratives." Contextualizing her discussion within the current Quebec political and cultural identity debates, she argues that both *Québécois de souche* writers whose writing reflects "the reality of a visibly cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic urban space" and Quebec immigrant women writing in French, who often either reject or ignore "narrowly conceived" concepts of Québécois identity, contribute to an opening up of the Quebec identity narrative.

Green's timely analysis not only provides a strong feminist rereading of the Quebec national literary project; it also works to bridge the gap between the "two solitudes" of Canadian literature, providing English Canadian readers with a useful introduction to the history of women's writing in Quebec (an appendix provides the original French text for all translated quotations from literary texts). Especially interesting for this English Canadian reader has been noting the similarities between the strategies Green identifies as typical of Quebec women writers and the strategies that English Canadian women writers have also employed to write themselves into the national text. Green reminds us once more of the important contribution women's writing and feminist scholarship in Canada have made to the opening up of narrowly defined national identity narratives to multiple horizons of diversity and difference.

Doubly Gifted

Naomi Jackson Groves, A. Y. Jackson
Two Jacksons Abroad, 1936. Penumbra Press n.p.

Reviewed by Jack Stewart

Two Jacksons Abroad consists mainly of Naomi's diary of a trip to Europe with her uncle A. Y. Jackson. In Arthur Lismer's dockside sketch, her profile is hawklike, eager, incisive. Her entries for January intersperse skiing in the Laurentians with lecturing at McGill and winning a travelling fellowship. The syncopated style captures the pace of her ambitious life, turning lyrical as she escapes to her "beloved North Country" or walks "in the spring woods" near Montreal. In Paris, she enjoys Cézanne at the Orangerie as much as the Group of Seven, but when she "want[s] to sketch and to go to Molière's *École des femmes*," her uncle insists on going "to the Salon and to the Folies Bergères," and when she objects that it may rain if they put off sketching, he replies: "Van Gogh painted rain." Her irritation melts as she enjoys "[the] smell of the night, the rain, the acacia." Vision and feeling merge; her hunger for cafés, concerts, and culture gives way to a pleasing Parisian "tristesse."

In Antwerp, she reflects on Brueghel and Rubens, creativity and concretization. In Dresden, she responds to Van Gogh, Ensor, Manet, Hodler, Degas, Gauguin, and Toulouse-Lautrec. In Weimar, she admires Brueghel's *Autumn and Winter*, portraits by Cranach, and "animal studies by Albrecht Durer." Their "sombre" tones reappear in her autumnal paintings, such as *The Garden Side of Goethe's House in Weimar*, one of five colour reproductions. She longs to paint the land in the "soft, muted tonality [of] 'earth colours'. . . ochre, sienna,

umber, Indian red, mild Cobalt blue . . ." Yet she complains about being "in a dark-blue room with green roses on the wall-paper—for me the Dionysian!" A motif that runs through Naomi's diary like a red thread is her passion for Van Gogh: "I like his vibrating sun eternal in the sky." In her painting, *Gelmeroda Church near Weimar* (book jacket), a dark spire thrusts up to intersect the gold-green vortex of the sky. Comic incongruities add yeast to her style, as she compares spiralling brushstrokes in a Van Gogh self-portrait to "the spaghetti with red stuff we had for lunch." She revels in adjacent tones of chrysanthemums, appreciates "separate" colours of onions, and makes a sketch of "Cabbages and Sunflowers" in "richly muted colour."

Naomi also loves music. In Montreal, she indulges in "orgies" of Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and "danc[es] up the street singing opera airs." In Germany, she condenses musical impressions—Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is "marvellous," *The Magic Flute* "bliss." Listening to Bach in Dresden's Frauenkirche, she has an epiphany, a visionary experience of the "Glory of God," induced by baroque music and architecture. The opera *Tannhäuser* is less pleasing, as Venus and her consort have "too much tummy," while the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* leaves her "totally cold."

Naomi attends the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar, studying "over 100 pages *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" in a couple of days. After discovering Ernst Barlach, she adopts the theme of *Doppelbegabungen*, or "doubly creative artists," for which she has an affinity as a "*Mischtalent*." Inner dialogues show her struggling with polarities ("Ego & Umwelt"); she sees herself as a "'double' person," "lyric" and "cheerful," but "darkly driven." She may not be "filled with daemonic genius," but her desire to be an artist is, for her, "the inner Voice." She revels in Romantic German culture, but recoils from ominous demonstrations, as in Goethe's Weimar, "full of street cars and Nazi banners, the swastika on a dark blood-red background, heavy"—ironically, to celebrate "the Week of the German Book." She attends Wagnerian opera in Bayreuth, where she experiences Der Führer's magnetic appeal, and visits Hitler Youth Camps, rejecting their regimentation. Naomi argues (in voluble German) about nationalism, derides the "official taste" in art for "blonde mothers" or "[blue-eyed 'Nordic'] soldiers," and is haunted by "the eternal marching tramp" of "goose-stepping" recruits. As an antidote, she feeds ducks in the Tiergarten. Her diary, crammed with social and cultural observations, closes on a note of "understanding myself, crystallizing, accepting."

Some sidelights are cast on A. Y. Jackson's career, by his brief diary and letters. "Unky Punk" is a good-natured professional, who saves his gifts for painting. A letter from Georgian Bay gives glimpses of hardships he endures in order to transcribe the rocky, leaf-strewn landscape. But it is his niece's love of painting, music, and literature, plus her alertness to self and surrounding culture, that make this book so readable.

Forms of Telling

Amadou Hampaté Bâ. Aina Pavolini Taylor, trans.

The Fortunes of Wangrin. Indiana UP n.p.

Reviewed by Titi Adepitan

The heritage of verbal art bestowed by the story tellers of old constitutes a major component of the character of West African fiction, which is remarkable for bridging the gap between traditional and modern (European) forms. The blurring of the fine line between fiction and fact in narrative, now fashionably called *faction*, has been there for eons in the avocation of the *griots* of the West African Sahel who insisted in

times past, as does Djeli Mamadou Kouyate, the reciter of Djibril Tamsir Niane's version of the Sundiata epic, "My story is free from all untruth. A *griot* does not know what lying is." The Yoruba (Nigerian) novelist D. O. Fagunwa built a panoply of alibis in his novels to convince his readers that his protagonists were real, and each work ended with a drawn-out moral on the benefits of good conduct as well as correspondence between the author and his fans.

Amadou Hampaté Bâ's *The Fortunes of Wangrin* is one of the more remarkable examples of the meeting points between the *griot's* insistence on history and the fabulist's licence. "This book is the fulfillment of a promise I made to a man I met in 1912," the author writes in the foreword. The man, alias Wangrin, an official interpreter to the French colonial administration, told the young man a few years later, "[Y]ou must take down the story of my life and after my death compose it into a book which will not only amuse but instruct those who read it." The author solemnly declares, "I have *faithfully* related. . . all that was told to me here and there. Let no one try. . . to look for any kind of thesis, be it political, religious, or other, in these pages" (my emphasis).

Wangrin speaks impeccable French, one of seven or eight languages he has mastered, and has everyone, superiors and subordinates alike, coiled around his little finger. There is a lot of Joyce Cary's Johnson in him, and it is sometimes difficult to see how he could possibly be less objectionable as a portrait of the small-time African colonial official than the better known *bête noire* of African postcolonial criticism. Wangrin is certainly not the kind of "hero" to admire in the face of the contemporary African leadership crisis. The delightful rogue, either in folklore or in modern literature (including the European archetypes cited in Abiola Irele's illuminating introduction), is a well-known figure. He is delightful because he blows as he bites, though his bite may carry no long-term sting. In spite of his bonhomie Wangrin is a reprobate whose antic energy and propensity for causing grievous injury run against virtually every signpost of traditional morality.

The author rejects views of Wangrin as "a vulgar scoundrel with an almost total lack of human dimension," and proceeds to list "some of his remarkably good deeds" in the afterword. Modern narrative theory would frown on such interventions, but a raconteur in a folkloric mode may not see why an afterthought should not wield the authority of a substantive text. *The Fortunes of Wangrin* is richly textured, multi-layered and rendered with a bardic élan worthy of the *griots* of old. The translation by Aina Pavolini Taylor succeeds in capturing the weightiness of traditional speech forms, but her escape route from the challenges of French patois in the original is Nigerian pidgin. Bâ (?1900-91), raconteur, folklorist, prolific author and former member of the UNESCO executive council, is also famous for making the oft-quoted statement: "In Africa, when an old person dies, it's a library burning down."

Childhood Lost

Anne Hébert. Shelia Fischman, trans.
Am I Disturbing You? Anansi $14.95

Gaétan Soucy. Shelia Fischman, trans.
The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond of Matches. Anansi $19.95

Reviewed by Cedric May

Anne Hébert showed little interest in recurrent themes in her writing, or in any thread linking her works back to the poetry of the 1940s and her first prose work *Le Torrent* (published in 1950 but written earlier). Why should she, in fact? After all, her literary output covered almost sixty years. Sheila Fischman, the excellent translator of

Am I Disturbing You?, must have been struck forcibly by the echoes of *Héloïse* (1980) in the later work. She translated the 1980 novella, set similarly in a quarter of Paris very familiar to Anne Hébert, in 1982.

Anne Hébert was haunted by lonely, neglected children, unwilling to find a place in an adult world which they reject, and this is an abiding metaphor in her work. Their plight, in the case of Delphine (a name which evokes the fictional world of Richardson and de Sade), is made much more difficult by their refusal to relate to those who contract by accident a kind of responsibility for them. This rejection of human warmth, except on intensely selfish terms, is conveyed by Delphine's anorexia, a phantom pregnancy, and panicky breathlessness. Was this story suggested by a *fait divers* as with *Kamouraska* and *Les Fous de Bassan?* It is tempting but ultimately unethical to try to pin down the sources of literary metaphor, particularly with so private a writer. Physical sensation and accompanying *états d'âme* alternate with prosaic narrative. Anne Hébert recreates in what must have been her last work a familiar aqueous, shadowy world into which occasionally bursts a riot of extreme sensation. In one brief phrase, Anne Hébert gives this story the mythical thrust we long to find articulated, relating Delphine to "Ophelia, Iphigenia, Antigone, and some other diaphanous creatures, doomed to an early death."

The theme of ancestral homes is a common one in the poetry of Anne Hébert, harking back to the seigneurial origins of Québécois society. It is in a grand house of this kind that Gaétan Soucy sets his intriguing fable. It begins with the suicide of the brutally insensitive father of the household who has made a fortune running the family mine (asbestos or nickel, one wonders). He has done nothing to prepare his clever daughter and his half-witted son for life. While the boy tries to work out how to dispose of his father's body, the girl, Alice, ventures into the outside world for the first time. The curé beats her, the mines inspector tries to rape her; so much for the representatives of respectable society.

Social structures in decay are paralleled by the decay in the physical surroundings in which the young woman and the boy live out their sorry existence with, for sole companions, an old beggar, a horse, and a frog for a pet. But there is worse to come, and Soucy is the master of slow release, unravelling the complexities of the tale, using the dawning awareness of Alice, the main protagonist, to feed imperfectly the appetite of the reader. The sinister vault in this gothic fairy tale is home to the body of the mother (enclosed in a glass coffin) and to a sequestered sister, chained in the darkness and filth as "Fair Punishment" for suspected implication in the death of the mother. And there is more, each new fact, each new feature of the plot deepening the air of mystery and suspense.

Soucy's novel appeared in France to great acclaim and its translation is very welcome. It prompted comparisons for the French critics with the work of Samuel Beckett. The obsession with decay and the playful and inventive use of language (superbly translated by Sheila Fischman, again) may appear to justify the comparison. However, the viewpoint, that of a young and passionate narrator, movingly attached to the tenants of the vault and fiercely committed to writing and the power of words, points us to another tradition altogether. The tragic orphan theme in French philosophical writing from Alain-Fournier, Cocteau, Giraudoux and Anouilh to Tournier has its Québécois counterpart supremely in the work of Anne Hébert with Soucy a worthy successor. It corresponds in French society to a sort of delinquency sanctioned by bourgeois society in exchange for strict social conformity in public. I have always thought that in Quebec culture (not just in

literature but in the cinema, too), it mirrored the extreme social dislocation resulting from the ultra-rapid modernizing of Quebec in the sixties.

The sweet pain of alienation and its evocation through the related myths of immolated children and seigneurial rooms seems still to be a statement that needs making in Quebec. We salute with the passing of Anne Hébert the one who gave these myths their chilling antecedents.

A Scar Tissue Landscape

Dirk Hoerder
Creating Societies: Immigrant lives in Canada. McGill-Queen's UP $45.00

Carlos Teixeira and Victor M.P. Da Rosa, eds.
The Portuguese in Canada. U of Toronto P $24.95

Reviewed by David Nally

Simple in its conception yet powerful in its evocation, Dirk Hoerder's *Creating Societies* explores the immigrant experience from a life-studies approach. Through the use of extant documentary evidence, including letters, memoirs, autobiographies, travelogues, diaries and jotted reminiscences, the immigrant experience is rendered in a narrative style that successfully conveys significant nuances. A Canadian identity, as evinced through these life testaments, was neither a concerted nor a conscious goal in the lives of the majority of immigrants.

More often than not, harsh necessity or the wavering hand of fate, providence, or luck intruded, and from this struggle a nascent and shared identity flowered: "The men and women . . . evaluated economic growth in terms of benefits to themselves and were ready to contribute. They did build their own lives and the sum of lives built and the relationship established created a society."

The pen weighed as heavy as the heart as immigrants literally wrote themselves and their experiences into existence. Their collective writings comprise a vivid letterpress landscape which performs behind the mushrooming of towns and the spaces of the prairies to portray the struggle of men and women, each coming to terms with the problems of language, ethnicity, gender and class in highly situated ways. By no means was this "struggle" uniform. On the factory floor ethnic differences collapsed as workers fronted solidarity in the face of oppression. The humbling geography of the west was enough to readjust the class consciousness of English immigrants. For others, the problems of acceptance and acculturation were more gruelling. The famine-stricken Irish disembarked from coffin ships in the thousands to a cacophony of racial discourse and prejudice, fuelled by fears of contagion, while Jewish and Japanese immigrants suffered the advent of intensified racism following the outbreak of World War Two. But for the majority of new arrivals, "obstacles studded life-courses, rocks the fields" and issues of nationhood and identity were a luxury they could not afford.

Although sympathetic to Hoerder's argument, I harbour some reservations. The theoretical foreword appears haphazard and somewhat misplaced, as if added to comply with contemporary exigency rather than to evince any particular stance. The author fails to explain the inherent differences between genres of writing, which include content, form, narrative style, audience, historical and social circumstances among others. For the most part, the author employs the blanket term "life-writings" to connote the various creative efforts of Canada's immigrants. Issues of embellishment and historical accuracy are left unquestioned. Nevertheless, Hoerder's exploration of daily existence casts a shadow over problematic terms such as "nationhood."

Springing from the 1997 Annual Meeting

of the Canadian Association of Geographers, Carlos Teixeira and Victor M.P. Da Rosa's study, *The Portuguese in Canada* (an effort that redresses the conspicuous absence of the Portuguese experience from Hoerder's account), is an important intervention in the historiography of both Portugal and Canada. Both editors and authors alike share the feeling that their efforts are directed at filling a vacant niche in the existing body of literature on Canadian immigration.

As a collective enterprise the book reveals a broad spectrum of viewpoints ranging from the implications of "contested belongingness," to the role of Portuguese real estate agents and "inter-ethnic networks of information" in the organization and consolidation of Portuguese urban communities. At best this assemblage brings to life the complex world of the immigrant. While part one frames the political and iconographical power of the Portuguese White Fleet, it also captures the personal relationships which remain fixed in popular memory. As Peter Collins convincingly argues, mutual respect for the sea, soccer games at the harbour edge and the development of romantic attachments were potent and vital agents in the acculturation process.

Januário and Marujo's paper entitled "Voices of Immigrant Women" is a valuable addition. Many Portuguese women left Europe in the hope of reunion with their spouses and enhanced economic opportunity. The availability of jobs and higher salaries ensure a greater participation of Portuguese immigrant women in the Canadian economy in comparison to Portugal, while the stress and security invested in family values prevents many older mothers from returning to the "old country." Mothers and grandmothers fashion bonds of affection which link lives and continents and assure the perpetuation of a Portuguese inflection on the Canadian national experience.

On a final note, it is important to commend not only the variety of disciplinary perspectives but more importantly the high number of scholarly contributors from a Portuguese background. Not only does Teixeira and Da Rosa's book recognize the importance of the Portuguese as producers of a vibrant culture—some of the problems of which are addressed by António Augusto Joel in part five—but it also represents a stir in the margins, as the Portuguese take charge as interpreters and theorists of their own culture.

Lamb with an Ego

Harold Horwood
Among the Lions: A Lamb in the Literary Jungle.
Killick $15.95

Reviewed by Claire Wilkshire

Harold Horwood has good reason to be proud of his accomplishments. A prominent Newfoundland writer, political activist and commentator, he worked as a labour organizer, served as Liberal Member of the House of Assembly (1949-1951), and wrote an influential political column for the *St. John's Evening Telegram*, which he edited in the 1950s during Joey Smallwood's time in power. An important figure in the Newfoundland cultural revival of the 1960s, Horwood published the first volume of his memoirs, *A Walk in the Dreamtime*, in 1997. Its sequel, *Among the Lions*, describes the major events in Horwood's life from the late 1950s until the present. During this period, as Horwood explains in the Preface, he "wrote and published twenty-six books"; he also helped found the Writers' Union of Canada and held Writer-in-Residence positions at two Canadian universities.

Among the Lions is the work of a monumental ego. It is littered with utterly unironic statements such as "In my time I have been helping to transform the world." At first, Horwood's undisguised self-esteem

seems pleasantly shocking; it engages trust (here is a man who'll tell you what he *really* thinks). Arrogance spread over 249 pages rapidly loses its appeal, though, particularly since many of the anecdotes highlighting Horwood's ability as a writer are not especially well written.

The back cover is a strange piece of work, more revealing than many blurbs. The jacket designer has reproduced a column of photographs of writers such as Farley Mowat, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro. Each photo is accompanied by "Horwood's comments," which range from the quirky to the wildly patronizing ("Alice Munro—Uncommon and gratifying to see a fiction writer improving as she grows older") and which culminate in pretentious gibberish with Horwood's own self-assessment ("Seeing the human mind expand into the universe—a privilege beyond anything earlier generations could have imagined").

The "lions" Horwood refers to in the title play a relatively small role in the book, with the exception of his close friend Farley Mowat. Horwood says little about enemies, but his opinions of friends condescend almost to the point of contempt. He describes Mowat as a "competent" and "fast" writer: "His style strikes me as a bit florid, his metaphors sometimes extreme, his anecdotes often exaggerated beyond credibility, but the public is obviously in love with his stuff." (Margaret Laurence was "conventional." Munro, on the other hand, Horwood clearly admires, because he keeps comparing himself to her: they both began writing at age eleven, were both influenced by Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*, both wrote extensively while travelling by train: "Such unlikely people to have such parallels," writes an unusually disingenuous Horwood.) He sees himself as an experimental writer, and he is proud of it: "I have always written against the trend, convinced that I knew exactly what I was doing, and that the rabble was doing what the rabble has always done, peddling imitations and second-hand ideas."

A firm editor could have improved *Among the Lions*; it includes far too many paragraphs like this one: "On the evening of their arrival Marguerite joined us for drinks in the Mowats' suite at the Newfoundland Hotel. Then we repaired to Bill Pruett's place for more drinks, and finally to even more drinks at Torbay." There is nothing interesting about the language or the events, nothing to make this paragraph worth writing over thirty years after the night in question. Similarly, the entire third chapter describes a trip Horwood makes in early 1965: with the Mowats in Mexico he eats delicious turtle stew and finds motel rooms at $2 a night. The seventeen-page chapter is as full of detail as any travel diary you might spruce up for publication, and about as compelling. Words such as "judicious," "editing," "selective" and "cut" spring unbidden to the reader's mind.

Readers accustomed to Harold Horwood's style will recognize in this memoir the force of his convictions; many will find that force overbearing. The title of this memoir casts Horwood in the role of innocent in a cut-throat literary world, but here is no meek lamb skittering up to the stone altar—this particular lamb has all the humility of a wrecking ball.

Flashes of Light

Nancy Huston

Instruments of Darkness. Little, Brown Canada $19.95

Reviewed by Andrea Katz

Like many of Nancy Huston's novels, *Instruments of Darkness* explores how creative agency enables women to deal with grief and guilt. The novel unravels in a deluge of memories, music and writing—each slowly transforming its protagonist. Nadia, who for years becomes Nada when she decides to give herself over to nothingness,

is a successful writer in New York. For Nada writing is a way out of the world, but for Nadia it is a way to reconcile her place within it.

The novel begins with Nada, who is full of hatred and anger, resentful of flowers and disgusted by children. More than half of the novel is a despairing account of humanity that reflects Nada's belief that the "material world conspires to defeat" her. Nada recollects how her own mother has humiliated her in such a way that her daughter will never again touch a musical instrument. Motherhood in general repulses Nada, and she considers many men in the same way as she does flowers and children; she gives herself over to "the bliss of injuring" her former husband, and longs to see "him cringe and bleed" as she slashes him with words.

It is a personal history encumbered by family, friends and lovers that Nada wishes to obliterate when she researches and recollects the public history of Barbe Durand, an eighteenth-century maid servant in France who is the heroine of Nada's novel. But instead of abetting an escape from Nada's own past, Barbe leads the writer directly into this past. While Nada writes her novel, *The Resurrection Sonata*, she also keeps a journal called the *Scordatura* Notebook. The Notebook not only provides insight into the writing process in general, but it also illuminates the ways in which Nada writes and reads her own personal history into *The Resurrection Sonata*.

Instruments of Darkness alternates between the narrative of *The Resurrection Sonata* and that of the *Scordatura* Notebook. The result is a conversation between the two narratives, a conversational exchange in which Nada's imaginary tale simultaneously reflects and influences her real life. When Barbe is pregnant and unsuccessfully attempts to miscarry, Nada remembers the abortion earlier in her own life. Nada's mother successfully organized her daughter's abortion, but Nada experiences guilt. Her guilt, however, is not about the fate of her unborn son or daughter. Instead, Nada worries about her Catholic mother's role in the abortion; Nada is certain that Elisa's deterioration, her dying memory and lapsing sanity are consequences of the overwhelming shame she experiences for arranging the "demise" of a fetus.

But as Barbe is finally freed at the end of *The Resurrection Sonata*, Nada is ultimately liberated from the torture of her own private history. When Barbe's twin brother sacrifices his own life in order to help his sister escape execution, Nada begins to feel relieved of the weight of her own stillborn twin brother. When Nada agrees to play with a neighbourhood child, she introduces herself as Nadia. That she willingly plops down on the cement steps to play with a little girl already marks Nada's transformation; however, that she re-introduces the "I" into her name suggests she is regaining a sense of herself as a subject and is no longer interested in nothing, but in something.

Nadia's observation early in the novel that her earlier humiliation will lead her never again to touch a musical instrument is not exactly prescient. Though she might not pick up a musical instrument, her written work indeed plays music. The title of Nadia's novel is, after all, *The Resurrection Sonata*. And with *The Resurrection Sonata* not only is Nadia reborn, but instruments of darkness (musical or otherwise) become "instruments in darkness." Such instruments no longer reflect darkness; instead, they represent flashes of light in the form of love, beauty and laughter.

The Real and the Other

Philippe Jacquin
Les Indiens blancs: français et indiens en Amérique du Nord (XVIe-XVIIIe siècles). Libre Expression n.p.

Mathias Carvalho. Jean Morisset, ed. and trans.
Louis Riel: poèmes amériquains. Éditions Trois-Pistoles n.p.

Reviewed by Albert Braz

Some writers can be rather reticent about the main objective of their works. That is not at all the case with Philippe Jacquin, who says in the opening line of his book: "L'Amérique a une histoire française." Ironically, the chapter of French history Jacquin explores in his fascinating study deals with the numerous Frenchmen who, between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, fell under the spell of North America's Aboriginal cultures and disappeared into them. That is, he devotes his work to those Frenchmen who voluntarily eschewed their Europeanness and became "White Indians." But as he concludes his work, "l'anthropologie des sociétés coloniales offre à l'historien une réflexion sur sa propre société."

According to Jacquin, a respected French scholar who specializes in the relations between Natives and newcomers in North America, groups like the *coureurs de bois*, fur traders, and the Métis can all generally be classified as White Indians. These are groups characterized by "l'amour du vagabondage, le goût de la liberté, l'alliance avec les indigènes. Tous sont à l'origine du mythe du transfuge, de l'Indien blanc, de l'homme civilisé qui redevient 'sauvage,' comme si hors d'Europe notre culture ne pouvait s'affirmer que par la force, la moindre faiblesse nous mettant à la merci des autres civilisations." Jacquin, who traces the phenomenon of the "White Indian" to that very first *coureur de bois*, Étienne Brûlé, also claims that it is particularly pervasive among the French. Whether or not one accepts his thesis, it is difficult to dispute his contention that one of the most compelling aspects about "Indiens blancs" is that "ils doutent de leur propre culture au moment où elle triomphe, sûre de son bon droit et de sa légitimité à asservir les autres peuples."

As mentioned, among the groups that Jacquin considers White Indians are the Métis, the mixed-race people whose nineteenth-century leader is the subject of Mathias Carvalho's *Louis Riel: poèmes amériquains.* First published in Rio de Janeiro in 1886, and now available in a bilingual Portuguese-French edition, *Louis Riel* is actually two books in one. The first part comprises Carvalho's poem and a French translation by Jean Morriset, a Quebec geographer who has written extensively on Riel as an "American writer." The second part includes a long essay on Riel by Morisset, an essay by Riel on the Métis of the North-West, and Riel's long poem on Sir John A. Macdonald.

Carvalho's poem is not particularly accomplished. Indeed, its main distinction is that it is the first known work to claim Riel as a pan-American liberator, a northern companion to the U.S. abolitionist John Brown and the Brazilian proto-nationalist Tiradentes. To quote one of its stanzas (in my translation):

> RIEL had visions! In his feverish brain
> He could feel the gallop of the splendid noise
> Of the new ideals of civilization;
> And saw Privilege struggling and dead,
> Over the immoral body of that dreadful monster
> The great festival of the Sons of Reason.

Carvalho, an obscure Brazilian poet who seems to have vanished from the annals of even his own country's literature, is not content to idealize Riel as a selfless patriot. In a characterization that would probably

come as a shock both to Macdonald and to the historical Riel, the poet presents the David of the New World essentially as a Canadian nationalist. In Carvalho's words, Riel is the "fearless fighter for Canadian independence." However, for a work composed in the 1880s, it seems surprisingly unaware not only of Confederation but also of the fact that the "sacred boreal eminence" called Canada also has a sizeable English-speaking population.

Not all the problems in *Louis Riel* can be attributed to Carvalho. For example, there are numerous grammatical and stylistic errors in the Portuguese section of the poem, which almost certainly are due to the transcription. Also, the Brazilian original is entitled *Poemas americanos I: Riel*, the first part of which translates simply as *American Poems* or *Poèmes américains*. Morisset, however, elects to use the spelling "amériquains" in order to stress the *américanité* of Carvalho and, especially, of Riel. Morisset's emphasis on the New Worldism of Riel is part of his attempt to claim the Métis leader as *Canadien* rather than Canadian. As Morriset explains in his preface, he deeply resents Riel's "nationalisation posthume à une *British America* devenue fallacieusement Canada, et incarnée par tous ceux qui, à Ottawa et ailleurs, auront ordonné son exécution."

Morisset's frustration with the appropriation of Riel by English-speaking Canadians is understandable, but not unproblematic. First, the response to the Métis leader by French Canadians/ Québécois has not always been an uncomplicated one. After all, it was the Franco-Catholic community that first demonized the politician-mystic as an apostate and to this day continues to be ambivalent about him. As Morriset concedes, while "la mort de Riel n'a jamais été aussi vivante au Canada anglais," his "vie, en effet, n'a jamais été aussi virtuellement morte au Canada français." Second, in order to re-establish Riel as a pan-American liberator, Morisset transforms him into an apostle of republicanism. This strategy is extremely unconvincing in light of Riel's life-long involvement with the Conservative party and his identification with the French royal family. Moreover, one may be willing to rationalize Carvalho's messianic republicanism, considering the time and place in which he was writing. However, it is much more difficult to accept the equation of republicanism with enlightenment, particularly by a contemporary writer who stresses the need for a New World way of seeing. As Mario Vargas Llosa has stated, in several American societies "it was during the Republic (in the nineteenth century), not during the colony, that the native cultures were systematically exterminated."

An Odd and Bitter Camp

Mark D. Jordan
The Silence of Sodom: Homosexuality and Modern Catholicism. U of Chicago P $25.00

Reviewed by George Piggford

The Silence of Sodom is essentially an extended, aphoristic, erudite rant against current injustices toward gays and lesbians in the Catholic Church. In it Mark Jordan calls for and contributes to a public disclosure of the closeted homosexuality of much of the Catholic clergy. He points out the close relationship between Catholicism and the construction of the category "homosexual," examines possibilities of living as a gay Catholic, and looks to the future with at least some hope. His intended audience is mainly gay Catholics, "half-Catholics," and ex-Catholics, those with an understandable interest in discussions of authority and responsibility in the Church of Rome, but his arguments are relevant to larger conversations surrounding queer theory, the history of sexuality, and Christian religiosity and spirituality.

Jordan writes chiefly as a latter-day Peter Abelard, calling attention to the irrationality and inconsistency of contemporary Catholic teaching on homosexuality, exemplified in the *Declaration on Certain Questions Pertaining to Sexual Ethics* (1975) and the (in many circles) infamous Letter on the *Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (1987). He demonstrates that it is useful to focus on the rhetoric of such texts rather than their content. Dominant characteristics such as "repetition, flattening, and the attitude of certainty" lead to a stupefying tedium. Coupled with official authority to censure and reprimand, these rhetorical devices often result in silence on the topic of homosexuality—the silence, variously, of anger, despair, fear, accommodation or acquiescence.

According to Jordan, the difficulty of speaking rationally and calmly on this subject in a Catholic context is the result of a history of blistering condemnations first of sodomy and later of homosexual activity on the part of the hierarchy and its designated theological spokesmen, from Peter Damian and the casuists of the Counter-Reformation to Cardinal Ratzinger and his Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Jordan points out, following Foucault, that the very category of "homosexual" emerged in contrast to a medieval Catholic model of the sodomitic "sins of the flesh." The Church took up the psychological category of "homosexuality" only belatedly and only as an "objective disorder," noting simultaneously if paternalistically that all humans, gay and straight, are "children of God." While the Church takes pains to point out the immorality of active homosexuality, it is at the same time conspicuously silent on the topic of actively gay priests and of the campiness and homoeroticism of religious and clerical culture. For Jordan, Catholic priests are both "odd"—that is, queer—and frequently embittered purveyors of campy liturgical performances that feature long, flowing robes and baroque accoutrements, all orchestrated behind the scenes by bitchy "liturgy queens." Within approved Catholic culture Jordan finds a homoerotic "paraculture": "a universal irony inside the dominant culture." Underpinning Catholic disavowal and disapproval of homosexuality is a "shadow" culture of exuberant Catholic drag, epitomized by the late "'Nellie Spellbound,' that is, Cardinal Spellman" of New York.

So what is a young, middle-aged, or elderly gay Catholic to do in this situation? Jordan suggests a number of alternatives. One can enjoy "the pleasures of obedience," a masochistic giving over of one's will to the Church troped as "cross." One might attempt reform from within, although Jordan remains deeply skeptical of this option. Finally, taking on something of the role of Martin Luther, Jordan suggests exit, pointing his readers towards groups such as the Metropolitan Community Churches, where one might discover new ways of speaking as, and thus perhaps being, both "gay" and "Catholic."

There are two main shortcomings in *The Silence of Sodom*. The first has to do with Jordan's use of authority through citation. He sometimes makes sweeping statements based on only the slimmest, often anecdotal, evidence. He claims for example that "Having a [priestly] vocation is a way to come out without having to say any risky words." This has by no means been my own and others' experience of religious formation.

Second, I find Jordan to be too wholly pessimistic about opportunities for reform within the Church itself. Certainly many models for corrective action exist in the recent history of Catholicism. Although he mentions in passing Thomas Merton and the Catholic Worker movement, Jordan examines seriously neither the contributions of Dorothy Day and John XXIII, nor the ground-breaking theologies of Karl

Rahner, Yves Congar and Johannes Metz, nor the liberation theology of Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff. Even the more directly relevant and promising work of Evelyn Eaton and James D. Whitehead is dismissed as "utopian." While some of these figures have been questioned and challenged by the magisterial Church, all remained or remain avowed Roman Catholics.

The Silence of Sodom is angry, lacking even a pretense of objectivity, but its emotional charge remains refined, clever, subtle. Jordan expresses opinions and objections doubtless shared by many gay and lesbian Catholics. His voice is thus one that the Catholic hierarchy best listen to attentively, that is to say obediently: the voice of its alienated brothers and sisters. Those of us in the midst of these debates have much at stake in their eventual outcome. We, as well as those watching our struggles from a distance, have much to learn from Jordan's rhetorical analyses and from his rage.

New and Not New Worlds

Martin Kuester, Gabriele Christ and Rudolf Beck, eds.

New Worlds: Discovering and Constructing the Unknown in Anglophone Literature. Verlag Ernst Voegel n.p.

Reviewed by Ronald B. Hatch

When the editors of *New Worlds: Discovering and Constructing the Unknown in Anglophone Literature* began this collection, they intended it as a *festschrift* to honour the sixtieth birthday of Walter Pache of Augsburg University, but Pache's sudden and unexpected death on 28 January, 2000, while the volume was still in press, meant that it has been belatedly dedicated to his memory. Walter Pache published in many fields, including Shakespeare and the Romantics, but his pioneering work in Canadian literature was especially important in fostering the present-day widespread interest in Canadian studies in the German-speaking world. Pache himself was well known for his warm welcome to scholars and writers from Canada when they were visiting in Germany. He will be missed.

The volume's subtitle suggests that the essays will deal with anglophone literature in many different countries, but in fact the main focus is Canada, with a few essays widening the field to discuss texts from the United States and India. The essays are arranged alphabetically by author, an arbitrary method, but one that in this case supplies a surprisingly happy ordering. Moreover, unlike many *festschrifts* which end up without any organizing theme, the contributors to *New Worlds* more or less stick to their stated subject matter: the new worlds emerging in anglophone literature.

In its most primitive sense, "new worlds" refers to the new/old world dichotomy, with Canada and the United States being seen, of course, as the "new world." A crucial essay dealing with the transformation of the old into the new is Gaby Divay's account of Bruce Thomson's sleuthing in the National Archives through the passenger lists of transatlantic liners to discover that Frederick Philip Grove, alias Felix Paul Greve, arrived in the new world at the port of Quebec on board the *Megantic*, a White Star liner, on Sunday, July 30, 1909. It is a critical new piece of information about Grove that puts in place another piece of the puzzle of Greve's self-transformation in the new world.

Many of the writers in the collection have interpreted the title of "New Worlds" to mean the new trends within Canadian writing, especially the new voices of multicultural Canada—the so-called ethnic and Native voices. In "Canada as an Alternative World," Ted Blodgett discusses the subject of Canadian literatures, with the emphasis on the plural. He argues that while anglo-

phone and francophone literatures, and their histories, have come to be seen as "norms" defining the country, these "norms" have been challenged by ethnic literatures written in the original languages. For his primary example, Blodgett chooses Ukrainian ethnic literature, and he has much of interest to say about the construction of a Ukrainian diasporic literary tradition. Blodgett sees these ethnic literatures as the potential "new worlds" of the volume's title, but, as he concedes, the translations into English destroy most of the sense of an alternative, and the original language texts are read only by a small number. Blodgett would seem to want Canada to be as multicultural in languages as it purports to be in cultures, which is probably a recipe for disaster. What he does not discuss, and what is probably more mainstream and more interesting in the long run, is the enormous amount of ethnic and Native writing being done in English, which is widening the anglophone mainstream appreciably—widening it so far that it may be becoming a new mainstream.

Helmut Bonheim tackles the theme of "new worlds" by offering an overview of the different handles that have been used over the years to describe and define Canadian literature. He looks at, among others, Atwood's "survival" and Frye's "garrison mentality" and notes how useful they were in their day and how they have fallen out of favour as Canadian literature has developed new directions. Yet one wonders how adequate they ever were. German students working on their Magister and Staatsexamen in the 1970s fell in love with the idea of survival as something uniquely Canadian, but most knowledgeable German and Canadian scholars looked askance at such simplicities. A more interesting approach for Bonheim might have been to examine how Canada has reinvented itself, and why earlier characterizations no longer seem to fit present-day contours, even on a superficial level.

A number of the essays apply the concept of "new worlds" to the work of particular writers. Thus, Magdalene Redekop analyzes Alice Munro's short stories for what they convey of the "new." She toys with the idea that they contain a "magic realist" element but comes to the conclusion that they have more in common with the hyper-realist paintings of Alex Colville. Yet she is loath to discard the notion of "magic," rightly maintaining that Munro's stories continually open to new worlds. What these worlds are, however, and how they are created remain unmapped.

Overall, *New Worlds* contains many insightful essays on the new terrain to be found in Canadian and other literatures, including Sherrill Grace's on women travellers in the north, Martin Kuester's on Guy Vanderhaeghe, Manfred Pütz's on Ernest Callenbach's invention of Ecotopia and Reingard Nischik on recent film adaptations of British novels. At times, perhaps, the contributors struggle a bit too hard after the new, as when Grace makes extraordinary claims for the differences between the writing of men and women explorers, or when Gabriele Christ struggles to claim greatness for the later novels of Robertson Davies, but taken altogether, *New Worlds* makes a sound contribution to many of the new areas of anglophone literature.

The one place where the editors seem to lose perspective is in the two frame poems chosen as examples of the "new worlds" of Canadian writing. Robert Kroetsch's "The New World and Finding It" is perhaps humorous enough, but Dennis Cooley's selection from his "Portuguese Journal 1995"—about a journey that he made to the old world with Kroetsch—confirms that an obsessive attempt to be new may prove embarrassing.

Trans Layton

Irving Layton. Trans. Michel Albert
Layton, l'essentiel: Anthologie portative d'Irving Layton. Triptyque $13.00

Reviewed by Kevin McNeilly

In his preface to Michel Albert's translation of a spate of Irving Layton's poems (along with sections from the autobiography *Waiting for the Messiah* and Layton's foreword to *Balls for a One-Armed Juggler*), Brian Trahearne argues that Layton is probably the architect of his own flagging critical reputation: "Jusqu'à un certain point, Layton fut lui-même l'artisan de l'oubli dans lequel il est tombé. Personne au cours du vingtième siècle n'évoqua avec plus de véhémence ni d'éloquence le dédain du poète à l'égard d'un public dépourvu d'imagination, ni n'évoqua mieux, à vrai dire, le désir instinctuel du public d'écrabouiller et de réduire au silence le poète dans son rôle d' 'immense provocateur.'" The mix of stridency and eloquence that appear to have done in Layton's reputation is largely what has also given his embittered public voice its drive. And, while I have my reservations, no doubt based on personal stylistic and ideological preferences, about some of Layton's accomplishments—I don't share Trahearne's enthusiasm for "provocative" shock—I have to agree that Michel Albert's finely attuned translations reanimate his fierce vitality.

Sometimes, only subtle shifts between languages—made possible by Layton's often Gallic or Latinate diction—intensify the lyric density toward which Layton's pre-1970 writing repeatedly aimed. This means that Albert's translation is frequently more Layton than Layton. In Albert's version of "The Mosquito," for example, Layton's description of the insect's blood-bloated thorax—"a minuscule bomb, a dark capsule" —loses the indefinite articles and the Anglo-Saxon-rooted "dark" to create a compact mesh of half-rhymes that could be only partially felt in the original: "minuscule bombe, sombre capsule." The effect is akin to what Walter Benjamin described in "The Task of the Translator" as an expansion of the original through translation, rather than its impoverishment: meaning is fleshed out, more often gained than lost. Such small but significant revisions occur throughout the collection. In his rendering of Layton's early elegy "To the Girls of My Graduating Class," Albert offers "Impudiques pucelles, nonnettes passionnées" for the original "My saintly wantons, passionate nuns," suppressing Layton's awkward Shakespearean knock-off in chiasmic word-pairs that are both sonically resonant and semantically rich; Albert gives such near-miss lines in the originals a coherence and a depth they want. That incoherence, however, is more or less deliberate in the later Layton, as his writing moves away from abstract intensity toward declamatory invective; the verbally unresolved character of a word like "dark" in the line I cited above points toward the shredding poetics Layton cultivated in the 1970s and 1980s. In the preface to *Balls for a One-Armed Juggler*, Layton laments the inability of poets to connect to our present—for him, a hellish, post-Auschwitz age—and blames the stylizations of poetic form for their disconnectedness: "La plupart d'entre eux [les poètes] ignorent que leur admirables vers, sautillants de demi-rimes, de rimes inclinées et de rimes internes, ont acquis le statut de charmant archaïsmes." Albert's translations, however intent on mimicking Layton's purported directness, actually restore and thicken those "rhymes," but rather than archaic quaintness, the effect is revitalizing. In a world of enervation, Layton has called on a generation of writers (in poems such as "After Auschwitz") to manifest a hard and energetic plainness: "My son,/ don't be a waf-

fling poet;/ let each word you write/ be direct and honest/ like the crack of a gun." The difficulty, as Theodor Adorno once argued of Bertolt Brecht, is that claims of honesty are almost always symptomatic of false consciousness. Even in a passage such as this one, Layton falls back on the associative slippage of a simile to make his point. The refusal of style is also a stylistic choice and seems to kill the voice rather than to enliven it, making Layton's poems, I think, so unpleasant and off-putting to "Canucky schmucks," readers like myself who've been suckled on "gentility." Such poetry may be satirically pointed, but it rarely works as poetry. Albert's versions, I think, aspire to restore Layton's voice to itself, to give it back the verbal push-and-shove he desired and renounced.

Earlier second-rate poems like "Elegy for Marilyn Monroe" (1962) are included among these translations, and seem to appeal to Albert for two reasons: they provide a straightforward, declarative text that lends itself to translation—which abstruse poems such as "Whatever Else Poetry Is Freedom" (not among this selection) would not—and they also have a formal affinity to Albert's own bilingual poetry, which tends toward declarative plainness. (See his *Souliers neufs sur terres brûlées*, Triptyque, 2000.) These conflicted tendencies—convolute lyricism and disdainful vehemence—find a rare balance in a poem like "The Improved Binoculars"/ "Longues-Vues Perfectionnées," where Layton discovers a fraught music in atrocity that is both honoured and clarified in Albert's bitterly abstracted tones, so that the diffidence and detachment of vision is essentially hoist by its own artsy petard, refusing to become an agent of the very carelessness that enables its contrived sales pitch: "J'ai vu un agent tasser du pied les corps/ carbonisés des orphelins, et repérer/ avec soin le site pour d'éventuelles spéculations." How, the poem asks us, can specularity ever lead to care? How can we, as common readers, accept our complicity in the atrocious? Many times Layton gave up even trying. But this interdependency finds itself mimicked, or rather incorporated, in the work of translation itself. Albert's task, I think, is to re-create that "soin," that care. In his version of "À la Vue des Statuettes d'Ézéchiel et de Jérémie à l'Église Notre Dame," Albert's French produces a reflexive turn that could not quite be realized in English: "On vous a affublés de noms français/ et faits captifs, mes rudes/ compatriotes, vous formenteurs de troubles." Layton wants to reforge an estranged Hebraic bond between his own Lazarovitch patrimony and the prophets' names, to produce an honest liberty: "[je] vous remettrais tout deux en liberté/ non plus dans le faux-semblant/ d'un monde bâti de fautes." But he ends up able to claim only an "aching confraternity," or, as Albert puts it, to cast himself as the "frère de votre détresse." A distressed collusion, a fractured captivation, characterizes the cross-talk between Layton and Albert, and gestures toward their mutual project of liberating a visceral human presence into language.

The choice of poems in this selection is at times questionable, although Albert aims for a career retrospective rather than a "best of." Among those included are such essential early texts as "The Swimmer" and "The Bull Calf," although I could have done without a version of the later "Where Was Your Shit-Detector, Pablo." And I'd like to have seen what Albert might have done with "Butterfly on Rock," "Keine Lazarovitch," "Tall Man Executes a Jig," and other anthology chestnuts he has omitted. But these are surely matters of taste; the anthology, like the selections from the autobiography, offers an outline of a major poet's sometimes tormented progress, his successes and shortfalls. Albert's translations demonstrate an empathy for their subject that is rarely seen—Derek Mahon's renderings of Philippe Jaccottet come to

mind as works of coeval brilliance. As an overview and a vital reframing of Layton's life's work, these incisive and edgy poems come to speak again.

Côté jeunesse

Françoise Lepage
Histoire de la littérature pour la jeunesse—Québec et francophonie du Canada, suivie d'un Dictionnaire des auteurs et illustrateurs. Les Éditions David n.p.

André Noël
L'orphelin des mers. La courte échelle n.p.
Trafic chez les Hurons. La courte échelle n.p.

Reviewed by Anne Scott

Maintenant que la littérature de jeunesse a trouvé la place qui lui revient sur la scène des études françaises, maintenant que ses auteurs ont fait leurs preuves et qu'ils lui ont assuré respect et pérennité, grâce à leur enthousiasme et talent, il était grand temps que l'on consacre un ouvrage de poids à une littérature qui a eu souvent une influence capitale dans le développement de l'imaginaire collectif ainsi que de l'imagination des écrivains "respectés," mais à laquelle il n'était pas bien de s'intéresser. On avait certes l'ouvrage de Louise Lemieux, *Pleins feux sur la littérature de jeunesse au Canada français*; le petit volume intéressant mais très succinct d'Édith Madore, *La littérature pour la jeunesse au Québec*; le joli livre réalisé par Francine Sarrasin à l'occasion de l'exposition itinérante, *La griffe québécoise dans l'illustration du livre pour enfants*; et le texte si stimulant de Dominique Demers, *Du Petit Poucet au Dernier des raisins*. Mais il manquait encore un panorama complet et exhaustif de l'ensemble de la production pour la jeunesse de ce côté de l'Atlantique. Longtemps attendu donc, le livre de Françoise Lepage répond largement à nos attentes.

Depuis sa publication il y a deux ans, cet ouvrage est vite devenu la bible des spécialistes et des amoureux de la littérature de jeunesse au Canada et dans la francophonie. Retraçant tous ses déboires et ses victoires, depuis ses débuts en Nouvelle-France jusqu'à la richesse qui la caractérise aujourd'hui, l'auteur nous entraîne dans une exploration passionnante de la culture, de la société et de leurs rapports à l'enfance. Que de recherches et de documentation précieuses contient ce volume! On ne peut qu'être admiratif, non seulement devant l'ampleur du travail accompli, mais aussi devant la profondeur de la réflexion, car il ne s'agit pas seulement d'une compilation de faits, si intéressants soient-ils: l'auteur se livre à un examen sans complaisance de la société canadienne-française, de ses conceptions de l'enfance et de son projet éducatif, tel qu'il est reflété de manière privilégiée dans les ouvrages destinés à la jeunesse. Françoise Lepage s'intéresse à tous les domaines indispensables à un véritable historique du matériel offert à l'enfant: ouvrages scolaires, chansons, contes populaires. Tout ceci assure une lecture tout à fait passionnante, en particulier en ce qui a trait à des aspects moins généralement connus, comme la vie dans les chantiers forestiers et leur influence sur la transmission et la survie des contes oraux. D'autres aspects sont mieux connus, comme le rôle de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste dans l'éducation et la création de textes destinés aux jeunes lecteurs. L'auteur met bien sûr en relief l'aspect fondamentalement éducatif de cette littérature, du moins à ses débuts, et signale, souvent avec humour, les excès et les erreurs. Elle fait là travail d'archiviste, de chercheur et de critique tout à la fois, n'hésitant pas à mettre en lumière les lacunes, les préjugés et les faiblesses de cette littérature encore mal connue et mal appréciée, ceci avec tact et compréhension et sans aucun des partis pris politiques qui ont animé le débat sur la littérature jeunesse en France, par exemple.

Ainsi, les analyses qui viennent appuyer ses critiques sont d'un grand intérêt, non seulement pour les passionnés de littérature d'enfance et de jeunesse, mais aussi pour tous ceux qui s'intéressent à l'histoire des sociétés, aux problèmes de la cohabitation linguistique et à la survie de la langue et de la culture en situation minoritaire, et ce par-delà nos frontières comme à l'intérieur de notre propre société.

Six chapitres sont consacrés aux différentes étapes de l'évolution de la littérature de jeunesse en francophonie d'Amérique: les premières années, la tradition orale, de la Conquête à l'entre-deux guerres, la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste et la création de L'oiseau bleu dans les années vingt, la *Légende dorée* et l'influence de l'Église, l'ouverture après la Seconde Guerre mondiale et l'influence de la radio et de la télévision, enfin le renouveau avec la fondation de Communication-Jeunesse en 1971. Deux autres chapitres sont consacrés aux ouvrages documentaires et à la bande dessinée, ainsi qu'aux autres francophonies du Canada.

La partie historique est suivie d'une longue section consacrée à l'image, où Françoise Lepage nous fait revivre la formidable évolution de l'illustration au Québec depuis les œuvres monotonement réalistes, incolores et insipides des années vingt jusqu'à ce qu'elle appelle "l'apothéose de l'imaginaire" dans ces dernières années. Elle retrace le rapport entretenu par l'Église, l'école et le public en général avec l'image, autre étude passionnante de l'histoire des sociétés et pas seulement du contexte canadien-français.

L'ouvrage est suivi d'un *Dictionnaire des auteurs et illustrateurs* tout à fait précieux. Chaque rubrique consigne soigneusement l'essentiel de la vie et de l'œuvre de chaque auteur et elle est suivie d'une bibliographie, non seulement des œuvres de l'auteur ou illustrateur en question, mais aussi d'articles et d'ouvrages qui lui sont consacrés. Bref, tout ceci constitue une mine de renseignements précieux.

Si la partie historique du livre arrive jusqu'aux années très récentes, l'on déplore le choix de l'auteur de s'arrêter, dans son *Dictionnaire*, à 1979. Sont donc exclus tous les auteurs et illustrateurs qui n'avaient encore rien publié avant 1980. Les raisons données par l'auteur pour ce choix ne compensent pas à nos yeux la lacune que représente l'absence d'artistes contemporains qui sont aujourd'hui des chefs de file dans le domaine de la littérature jeunesse au Québec.

Du côté littérature jeunesse à proprement parler, on signalera deux nouveaux titres dans la série de romans historiques d'André Noël, publiés dans la collection Roman Jeunesse à La courte échelle. Grâces aux bois magiques remis à la jeune Amérindienne Ahonque par le vieux cerf, esprit sage et protecteur, elle et son compagnon français, Pierre, peuvent chaque année rajeunir d'un an. Ils ont donc immuablement onze et douze ans respectivement à travers tous les épisodes, ce qui permet à l'auteur d'initier ses lecteurs à différentes périodes de l'histoire du Québec ainsi qu'aux us et coutumes des premiers Canadiens français, et ce par les yeux d'enfants de leur âge et dont les personnalités leur demeurent familières. On retrouve au détour des pages de ces deux nouveaux épisodes les Basques venus pêcher la baleine au large des côtes de Terre-Neuve et jusque dans l'estuaire du Saint-Laurent en 1584, les négociants en fourrure au temps de Jacques Cartier et Étienne Brûlé, trente ans plus tard. Les éléments de magie, dont l'auteur n'abuse pas, donnent aussi une ouverture sur la spiritualité autochtone. Deux aventures bien ficelées qui donnent aux lecteurs de huit à douze ans un aperçu de l'histoire de leur pays. Les illustrations en noir et blanc de Francis Back, réalistes et dynamiques, contribuent à fixer dans l'imagination des lecteurs les costumes, les

outils, canots et armes, l'architecture, le mobilier et les fortifications de l'époque.

Poètes en cage

Elias Letelier-Ruz
Histoire de la nuit. L'Hexagone $14.95

Marie Gagnon
Bienvenue dans mon cauchemar. VLB éditeur $16.95

Reviewed by Vincent Desroches

Voici deux recueils-témoignages, deux livres où la poésie est à la fois un appel désespéré et le dernier rempart face à l'atroce, deux livres cherchant à dépasser l'incarcération et la douleur.

Elias Letelier-Ruz est un écrivain québécois d'origine chilienne, qui a produit un recueil en espagnol, *Canciones del Gato* (Les Chansons du chat), en 1976 à Santiago, et deux recueils en anglais, *Symphony et Silence*, publiés à Montréal. *Histoire de la nuit* est son deuxième recueil en français, après une version française de *Silence*, en 1997. Une polyphonie semblable est rare en poésie et témoigne d'une volonté farouche d'ancrer sa vision poétique dans l'espace où il agit.

Histoire de la nuit est un livre fort curieux, dès la préface. On y apprend que l'auteur, en 1993, a découvert, dans des circonstances sur lesquelles il nous dit fort peu, un long poème écrit sur les parois en bois d'une cage suspendue au plafond d'un centre de détention clandestin au Guatemala. S'il faut en croire la préface, ces vers étaient écrits en minguny, un dialecte maya que Letelier-Ruz a pu traduire et nous restituer dans ce terrible témoignage. Seulement, après vérification, la langue minguny n'existe pas et toute l'histoire pourrait bien n'être qu'une parabole audacieuse. On pourrait crier au scandale (quoique la littérature soit remplie d'impostures bien pires), mais on se rend compte que ce subterfuge permet au poème de prêter sa voix à ces multitudes de victimes réduites à jamais au silence dans les jungles d'Amérique centrale, dans une violence si sauvage et si près de nous que nous ne la voyons pas. Cette ambiguïté dans l'identité même du poète, qui se prétend ici traducteur, c'est celle-là même de l'homme agonique, de Miron qui déclarait: "à tous je me lie/ jusqu'à l'état de détritus s'il le faut/ dans la résistance."

Letelier-Ruz, qui fut lui-même torturé par la dictature de Pinochet et entra au Canada comme réfugié politique en 1981, a pu chercher à exorciser les brûlures ineffaçables de son propre passé. Le résultat tient souvent à un délire poétique surréaliste qui s'échappe victorieusement d'un espace cloîtré et implacable et d'une temporalité suspendue, telle une antihistoire. Ces échappées surréalistes, avec une profusion d'adjectifs rares qui laissent le lecteur désorienté, peuvent distraire de l'intention plus large du recueil. Le vocabulaire, souvent épris de botanique, évoque la puissance du végétal. Mais les meilleurs passages sont ceux où se fait jour une lucidité extrême: "je connais des mondes/ d'une perfection absolue/ enterrés dans les langues stériles des miroirs;/ je sais des systèmes sans géométrie/ qui humilient la structure du chaos." Plusieurs poèmes interpellent directement le tortionnaire: "Laisse-moi partir, Capitaine./ Laisse-moi retourner où je suis attendu/ et, ensemble, Capitaine,/ devenons libres."

A l'heure du libre-échange pan-continental, *Histoire de la nuit* renouvelle de façon salutaire le discours québécois fatigué sur l'américanité. L'Amérique de Letelier-Ruz s'étend "des bourrasques glaciaires du Chili/ au grand Nord canadien de cendres boréales." C'est avant tout la voix inaudible des Indiens du continent et l'opacité de leurs langues menacées. La torsion imposée à l'horizon de lecture par le minguny fictif en fait donc partie intégrante. Le poème XXXV (il y en a trente-sept) est ainsi une

ode à Pontiac, dans un style épique dont on connaît peu d'exemples, "à l'Indien, héritier de la terre" qui "fut saigné de notre lexique américain." Le genre épique demeure en effet difficile en français, contrairement à l'espagnol, à la déclamatoire ample, et même à l'anglais. La poésie québécoise récente nous a habitué à une sobriété qui pourrait se voir bousculée par ce genre de sujets nouveaux. Rappelons Voltaire un instant de son jardin ("le français n'a pas la tête épique," disait-il) et appliquons-nous à le faire mentir. Letelier-Ruz peut apporter beaucoup à la poésie québécoise et mérite de nombreux lecteurs.

Bienvenue dans mon cauchemar est un journal poétique rédigé par Marie Gagnon, lors d'une incarcération à la prison Tanguay, la prison des femmes. C'est l'univers des murs, de l'aliénation carcérale, des amitiés furtives et blessées, mais aussi de la volonté de survivre et curieusement, d'une certaine sérénité que procure le détachement de l'écriture. Héroïnomane, avec tous les abus que cette condition provoque, Marie Gagnon ne se cache pas. On décèle dans ce livre une fierté sauvage et un amour irraisonné de l'intensité: "vive ma folie/ plus saine, plus juste/ que la dite raison." Peu de regrets ici, et les apitoiements sur soi-même ne durent guère. L'écriture parvient à médiatiser l'inacceptable, à le canaliser vers une échappatoire et un refuge: "Mes compagnons d'enfer ne me quittent pas: Artaud et Rimbaud. J'aime cette solitude à trois. Grâce à mes amis poètes, je vis l'horreur de la situation sans trop la ressentir. De plus en plus, je suis spectatrice." On trouve aussi dans ce journal un parti-pris non équivoque pour "ces insoumises, ces parias, ces putains, ces voleuses de rêve" et une révolte pleine d'ironie pour l'aveuglément bureaucratique du système carcéral et judiciaire.

Parmi les entrées non datées du journal sont disséminés vingt-cinq poèmes, beaucoup moins réussis que la prose poétique du journal, d'autant plus que plusieurs d'entre eux s'accrochent de façon navrante à la rime, qui, bien sûr, sonne faux sous la lime. Mais dans l'ensemble ce livre demeure une lecture étonnante où on peut voir une vie humaine résister passionnément à l'étiolement et faire preuve de courage, à l'aide du pouvoir des mots.

Views of the Frontier

Morag Maclachlan, ed.
The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30. UBC P $75.00 (cloth)/$19.95 (paper)

Elizabeth Furniss
The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community. UBC P $75.00 (cloth)/$27.95 (paper)

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30 and *The Burden of History* both focus on the contact between non-Native and Aboriginals, the first dealing with the building and activities surrounding the Hudson's Bay fort on the south bank of the Fraser River some fifty kilometres from its mouth, and the second looking at the modern-day town of Williams Lake just east of Fraser in the heart of the Chilcotin-Cariboo region.

Maclachlan's carefully edited text involves the daily journals of chief Fort officers George Barnston (1827-28), James McMillan and Archibald McDonald (1828-29), and McDonald (1829-30), and a leather-book and notes by McDonald (1830-31). The fur trade was the reason for the Fort's existence, and the entries provide a remarkably clear picture of the arduous task of constructing a relatively resilient and habitable establishment over several seasons (including clearing land, squaring timber, cutting shingles, digging cellars, planting potatoes and other crops) despite the vicissitudes of the weather and the river's tendency to flood in the spring. The journals also record the nature of the con-

tacts between the largely white newcomers and the Native peoples, who had used the Fraser as a food source, particularly salmon, and as a travel route for generations. Woven into a fascinating account of building and survival are insightful glimpses of interpersonal relations, trading practices, conflicts between Native groups, and the like. The Company men had come neither to an easy land nor to a peaceful domain. Through the narratives runs the necessity to survive not just in economic but in physical terms: bartering for furs and for salmon, to be laid up for the winter, was the life-blood of the Fort.

Following the main body of the journal texts is an articulate and thoughtful essay by Wayne Suttles on their "ethnographic significance," as well as appendices on the Clallam massacres, reports by McMillan (15 February 1828) and McDonald (25 February 1830) to the Company's Governor and Council, biographies of Shashia (a Cowichan chief) and Simon Plamondon, a Company employee, and a detailed study by Suttles of the names and their variants which occur in the journals. Notes, a list of references, and an index conclude the volume.

Furniss's *The Burden of History* brings the reader to contemporary contacts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the city of Williams Lake with its economy dependent on logging, ranching, and tourism. A "frontier" town emerging in 1919 with the building of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (later, British Columbia Railway), Williams Lake now sports modern malls and other signs of material progress while, as the hub for an immense rural area including the traditional lands of a number of Aboriginal groups, it also seeks to preserve its pioneer heritage, particularly through its annual Stampede. Furniss, who has established contacts in both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, offers a serious and sensitive look at the nature of the contacts and attitudes of these two groups as they negotiate for economic and cultural existence within the region. She explores some of the historical background, the treatment of Aboriginal people by urban Euro-Canadians in the city, the problem of the frontier myth, the perceived threats to logging and ranching operations in the light of land-claims, and the nature of the political discourse on both sides. Furniss's ability to convey the myriad of concerns and anxieties which abound in the social fabric of the Williams Lake area make the book particularly interesting. As she points out in this study, the lessons of Williams Lake have a remarkable resonance in many other parts of this country. Well-researched and thoroughly documented, this is a first-rate piece of contemporary anthropology which, given its often anecdotal approach, has the quality of a well-rounded narrative.

Théâtre franco-canadien

Robert Marinier
A la gauche de Dieu. Prise de parole $15.00

Louis-Dominique Lavigne et Robert Bellefeuille
Mentire. Prise de parole n.p.

Reviewed by Alain-Michel Rocheleau

Depuis plusieurs années, la publication de pièces de théâtre aux Éditions Prise de parole nous permet de découvrir la vision créatrice d'auteurs franco-canadiens, de plus en plus nombreux et productifs, et de mieux en mieux connus. Robert Marinier, Louis-Dominique Lavigne et Robert Bellefeuille sont du nombre.

Auteur de *La Tante* (1981) et de *L'Inconception* (1984), Robert Marinier, dans un texte intitulé *A la gauche de Dieu*, nous raconte l'histoire d'un homme et d'une femme qui, fortement tentés par le démon de midi, se retrouvent périodiquement pour coucher ensemble, et ce, à l'insu de leur conjoint respectif. "Lui", marié à

Diane et père d'une fille, évolue dans le monde des affaires; "Elle", épouse de Marchand et mère de deux filles, est agente immobilière. Tous deux se rencontrent successivement dans dix maisons qu' "Elle" tente de vendre, lieux temporairement inhabités, discrets et donc propices à leurs ébats illicites. Tout en construisant avec grande justesse la fable de cette histoire peu banale, l'auteur trace le portrait de deux êtres fort différents mais conjointement animés par une même passion amoureuse et qui, au fil des circonstances, se démantèlera peu à peu.

Alors que s'enchaînent les dix tableaux que composent cette pièce de facture néo-réaliste, Robert Marinier parvient à maintenir l'intérêt du lecteur. Celui-ci peut facilement circonscrire le vécu de ces personnages en quête de sensations et de bonheur passagers, bien décoder le cadre spatio-temporel dans lequel "Lui" et "Elle" évoluent jusqu'à s'opposer mutuellement, et mesurer les principaux enjeux (liés au mariage, à la famille, à la fidélité envers soi et autrui) que soulève l'auteur. Ce dernier, de toute évidence, semble comprendre que lire les formes de l'imaginaire de notre époque, telle est, entre autres, l'une des tâches sociales du dramaturge, l'idéologie pouvant se loger là où on l'attend le moins, dans la manière de percevoir et d'associer des images ou des idées, dans la façon imaginaire de concevoir la réalité de ce siècle naissant.

Cela dit, si les enjeux de cette pièce, traités avec sensibilité, humour et un soupçon de moralisme par Marinier, sont toujours d'actualité, le discours sur les rapports hommes-femmes des deux protagonistes, à l'aube de la quarantaine et placés par leur auteur à la "gauche" de Dieu, manque quant à lui d'originalité, en raison des lieux communs qu'on y décèle. Ainsi, par exemple, est-il vraisemblable d'entendre un homme d'aujourd'hui, qui n'a pas encore quarante ans, affirmer comme son grand-père jadis: "[. . .] je me demandais si les femmes étaient toujours sincères quand elles disaient aux hommes qu'ils sont bons au lit, ou si elles le faisaient par obligation" ou encore, une femme pour qui le danger de l'adultère "c'est ça qui est le fun!" déclarer tout à coup: "Ah! les hommes, vous êtes donc tous pareils. Peu importe ce qu'une femme ressent, vous vous l'expliquez toujours en vous disant qu'elle est dans sa phase prémenstruelle"?

Cette pièce, créée à l'Atelier du Centre National des Arts d'Ottawa le 17 mai 1995, est en général fort bien écrite, nonobstant les fautes d'orthographe et de syntaxe qu'elle contient, le manque de clarté de certaines expressions (quel est le sens, par exemple, de "Si pas demain, quand?") et la lourdeur de plusieurs répliques.

Mentire de Louis-Dominique Lavigne et Robert Bellefeuille est d'une toute autre nature. Sa fable prend racine dans un fait plutôt anodin: le valet Arlequin (glouton et faiseur de mauvais tours) raconte un mensonge à sa maîtresse, madame Pantalone (riche commerçante à la retraite), afin d' obtenir de quoi manger. Il lui fait croire qu'un fortuné capitaine, follement amoureux d'elle, souhaite la rencontrer. En échange d'un saucisson, elle lui demande que soit fixé un rendez-vous avec l'étranger. Pour désamorcer ce bobard et éviter d'être durement puni, Arlequin compte sur l'aide de Tartaglia (un *zanni* plutôt bavard et naïf) qui, à la première occasion, ira répéter ce qu'il sait à sa patronne, madame Dottore (médecin personnel de madame Pantalone). S'amorce alors une série de scènes farcesques et de rencontres en opposition entre trompeurs et trompés, reposant à la fois sur les procédés de la comédie classique et sur le principe d'élimination progressive des obstacles et périls. À la fin, tous découvriront que le fameux Capitaine est, en réalité, Antoine, le frère de madame Pantalone (alias Delphée), depuis

longtemps disparu.

Cette pièce, composée de vingt-deux tableaux, d'un prologue et d'un épilogue, et qui a été créée à Caraquet (Nouveau-Brunswick) le 7 février 1998, contient tous les ingrédients d'une fête carnavalesque réussie. À partir d'un noyau de sketches familiers, bâtis sur les rapports entre maîtres et serviteurs, Lavigne et Bellefeuille ont habilement su faire alterner dans leur texte les éléments nécessaires à l'intrigue avec quelques "ornements" qui, sans être nécessairement hors d'intrigue, fonctionnent comme fragments quasi autonomes (l'examen médical de madame Pantalone, notamment). Ce noyau d'unités scéniques et la rapide rotation de celles-ci favorisent, dans *Mentire*, l'organisation en ensembles contrastés des personnages qu'on y retrouve, tant au niveau des comportements que de la gestuelle et du langage, ainsi que leur présentation par grands traits pittoresques plutôt que par accumulation de détails et de profondeur psychologique. Les deux co-auteurs ont aussi le mérite d'avoir innové dans cette œuvre en féminisant deux rôles types (Pantalon et le docteur) de la *commedia dell'arte*, tout en respectant le profil fort connu de protagonistes issus d'une longue tradition théâtrale. À lui seul, le personnage de Tartaglia, qui est bien composé, met en valeur un travail dosé de figuration (ses mots d'esprit attirent l'attention) et de symbolisation qui le rend souvent très comique.

Cela étant dit, comme *Mentire* se veut un spectacle "pour enfants", il aurait sans doute été préférable de traduire en français la chanson italienne du prologue (ce que les deux auteurs ont pris soin de faire dans l'épilogue) et de simplifier l'utilisation de vocables comme *quignon, varech* et *illustrissime*. Par ailleurs, certaines intentions ou motivations, qui poussent les personnages à agir comme ils le font, ne sont pas toujours clairement exposées dans le texte. Ainsi, par exemple, lorsque madame Dottore souhaite rencontrer le Capitaine ("Et bien, moi, j'ai quatre mots à lui dire à ce Capitaine!", affirme-t-elle au dixième tableau), quelles sont alors ses intentions?

Comme en témoigne la lecture de ces deux pièces, le théâtre franco-canadien a de quoi rejoindre *l'horizon d'attente* d'un public diversifié.

Boas and Darth Vader

Ralph Maud
Transmission Difficulties: Franz Boas and Tsimshian Mythology. Talonbooks n.p.

Reviewed by David Brundage

In this short book, Ralph Maud expresses outrage over Franz Boas's 1916 volume *Tsimshian Mythology*. Boas downplayed the fact that his information came entirely from one man, Henry Tate, a "full-blood" interpreter and assistant teacher at a Methodist mission school at Port Simpson, B.C. While Tate's stories are "authentic" in their own right, they do not reveal the breadth or depth of traditional Tsimshian culture. Maud argues convincingly that Boas deprived Tate's stories of their own vitality, mangled their meaning, then presumed to extract from them an overview of culture before European contact. The result, says Maud, is stodgy and misleading.

We can accept these criticisms of *Mythology*—far more readily than Maud imagines. We are, however, left with a sense that *Transmission Difficulties* has difficulties of its own, above all that arch error to which we all fall victim: deploring most vigorously the very faults we ourselves embody.

Two central defects that Maud attributes to Boas are high-mindedness and ethnocentrism. Maud's extravagant belabouring of these perceived faults portrays Boas as a sort of Darth Vader. Seizing on this angle, the cover illustration depicts the patriarch

of anthropology in front of his New Jersey house rendered dark and spooky, a den of evil. Like ghosts in the background are the sad figures of the Native people Boas (unlike today's "good" anthropologists) has, presumably, exploited. The back cover assures us that Maud's work "unfolds like a gripping, real-life mystery story." For some readers, at least, the story may seem closer to mock-heroic. Maud vows to "persist until [he fully reveals] that this monumental work has feet of clay." He does so, believing that the Boasians have "closed ranks with a vengeance." However, Maud himself allows that Boas is criticized in Canada. This is so much the case that defending him here is more iconoclastic than attacking him. If this critical attitude is truly absent in the United States, Maud needs to make the case more fully.

Convinced of Boas's near-demonic influence, however, Maud pursues his high-minded censure with scarcely any mention of Boas's achievements, such as founding the relativistic school of anthropology (to which Maud is clearly indebted), opposing those who favoured immigration restrictions based on biological theories of superiority, or—as Robert Bringhurst reports—editing the first book by a Native American author. To balance Maud's charge of racism, we must consider that the German Nazis burned one of Boas's books and rescinded his Ph.D., outraged by his seminal belief that races do not breed cultures, that cultures can be different yet equal. Maud simply forgets that Boas was a man of his times. And in attacking Boas's dated prose, Maud overlooks that his own language has glaring problems, placing undue stress on authorial feeling in an odd concoction of slang, clichés, academic jargon, professorial rant and jarring transitions.

As for rescuing Tate's tales, readers can evaluate Maud's excerpt from one of his earlier books, *The Porcupine Hunter*. Contrasting this editorial work to that of Robert Bringhurst, for instance, may call Maud's relative literary skills into some question, if not raise certain doubts as well about Tate's merits compared to those of a Ghandl. From the political angle, First Nations critics in particular may feel that Maud gives insufficient reasons why he should serve as Tate's twentieth-century transmitter. In any case, the issue of Tate as artist in his own right seems hard to deal with in a short book simultaneously critiquing his role as anthropological informant (he even plagiarized a number of the stories). Maud finds *Mythology* disunited, but again the same could be said of *Transmission Difficulties*.

Nevertheless Ralph Maud's book provides a valid enough critique of inadequate methodology and demonstrates a sincere will to redeem work begun by Boas. Maud certainly presents his own editing work with modesty, and—most importantly—invites others to join in an overdue discovery of Henry Tate.

Integrated Archaeology

Alan D. McMillan
Since the Time of the Transformers. UBC Press n.p.

Reviewed by Linda Driedger

As an ethnographer who works with living people, studies their languages, and does so in the midst of their social relations, I have long been intrigued by how archaeologists view their scraps of non-mutable material remains as evidence. The book *Since the Time of the Transformers* provided me with a glimpse at the reflexive pond. There I surmised that archaeologists view my evidence with as much suspicion as I do theirs. Nonetheless, I have long admired archaeological approaches that attempt to integrate the histories of Native peoples, and Alan

McMillan attempts valiantly to integrate the existing anthropological, oral cultural and historical record of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht and Makah peoples of the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Since the Time of the Transformers is based on a number of academic projects, mainly a dissertation, yet it is an easy book to read. However, the section relying on linguistic and ethnographic sources needs theoretical updating. In addition the review of the quite ancient ethnographic writings lacks an awareness of how many of the assumptions underlying these works have changed significantly over the years. It is hard to know whether the imposition of ethnographic values on the archaeological record is a continuing problem or a result of using such outdated resources. However, based on the linguistic and ethnographic reviews in this book, I can only assume that little ethnographic work has recently occurred among these peoples, a lack that would pose problems in the integration of this kind of material.

In fact, the author has much evidence to support an attempt at a holistic historic development and elaboration of Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht and Makah polity. Such an endeavour would facilitate the integration of archaeological, linguistic, oral literature, historic literature and ethnography. On the other hand, such an approach would require removing the overly long chapters of site reports, and abandoning the primary valuing of archaeological facts. Most probably it would also involve the use of more recent cultural theory. Most specifically, Alan McMillan needs to rethink "scientific" collection in archaeology and the role of "interpretation" in all anthropological sub-disciplines, not just to update his sources, but because it would support a holistic academic project better than his present assumptions.

More importantly, theoretical updating would also clearly integrate the Native viewpoint into the overall work. Despite claims to the contrary, this work is primarily archaeological and more research is needed if it is to attain its holistic intra- and interdisciplinary goals. In the end, however, the project of integrating the histories of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht and Makah is a far more important project than the sub-disciplinary arguments that waylay the true purpose of this book, and I hope that Alan McMillan fulfills that purpose in his next publication.

A Congress of Words

A.F. Moritz

Houseboat on the Styx. Ekstasis Editions $12.95
Rest on the Flight into Egypt. Brick Books $14.00
The End of the Age. Watershed Books $11.95
Conflicting Desire. Ekstasis Editions $14.95

Reviewed by Chris Jennings

When a 2001 article in the *Globe and Mail* listed possible finalists for the inaugural Griffin Poetry Prize, A.F. Moritz was included among the "newer voices" rather than the "established" poets. Hardly a newcomer, Moritz has established his voice in thirteen books of poetry, including a volume in the Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets, and *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, a finalist for the 2000 Governor General's Award. The misnomer suggests that Moritz is not the kind of poet who stumbles into general success. Predominantly a serious poet (as his intense expression in author's photos attests), he is as subtle and sincere in political poems as in celebrations of love and desire. His latest four books share a range of tone and image that intimates their kinship without denying their individuality. They would be a good place to start on the volume of selected or collected poems, the prerogative of the established poet, which seems Moritz's due.

A selection of Moritz's work could be an interesting critical as well as editorial arti-

fact. Several species of dramatic monologue balance Moritz's frequent use of a vatic voice, and his quiet, harmonious or sensory poems contextualize his two favoured modes. Across these stylistic boundaries, Moritz cultivates his taste for the surreal, even the grotesque, and draws on the associative licence of visions or dreams. In the vatic poems, the surreal and associative elements bristle with metaphors, while in the dramatic poems they often project the inner workings of the speaker's mind. Moritz's visionary surrealism conveys a kind of poetic intoxication, a willingness to give the motion of the mind over to the object of attention that undermines any implication of hubris in his elevated tones. This seems to be the nexus of Moritz's versatility.

Collect the vatic poems under the epigraph "Hear the voice of the Bard!" (the first line of "Introduction" from Blake's *Songs of Experience*). Moritz seems at home in the ceremonial tones and cadences of long, rhythmic sentences that roll over several lines in a syntax complicated by prepositional phrases, participles and infinitives. Lexis matches syntax in complexity, though Moritz rarely exercises his expansive vocabulary for its own sake. This style is difficult to manage and demanding to read. Moritz turns this difficulty to his advantage by tying it to the moral demands of addressing the predatory elements of western society. The pursuit of wealth, the exploitation of political power, and the destruction of both our ecological and civic environments are his major targets.

The short poem "Social Reflection," for example, sets productive, rustic simplicity against disabling, urban poverty in image, rhythm and tone:

> You never thought of the poor of the
> earth or the toilers of the sea, did you,
> till you were one of them. Although
> you were brought up in a legless one-
> armed city with loose flaps over white
> eye sockets, unable to afford glass
> balls, and were yourself a pencil
> for sale in the blind man's old
> cigar box.

The poem moves from the anapestic first line to the blunt succession of stresses in "blind man's old cigar box." The maimed city reduces the addressee to a commodity, something to exchange or sacrifice to mitigate its own suffering. Moritz courts paradox by applying an image of homelessness to a city, but its metaphoric resonance draws out empathy as well as anger. Technically accomplished, Moritz validates his bardic austerity with emotional and logical complexity.

Devote a second section to Moritz's wide range of dramatic personae. Considerable learning resides in these poems. Silenus, the speaker throughout *Houseboat on the Styx*, is named after the wise, satyr-like drunk who was a chief comic character in classical satyr plays. His immediate audience, his beloved, is Diotima, Socrates' mentor in the philosophy of eros in Plato's *Symposium*. The relationship between wise fool and Socratic philosopher resonates through the book. At the other end of the spectrum, Moritz gives the speaker of "Kissinger at the Funeral of Nixon" the breath to damn himself in lines ripe with arrogance.

> Forbidden by our people to fight another
> people,
> at least we killed until the last moment
> possible
> and so punished both enemies. No ques-
> tion:
> praise him as one who never gave up:
> this much
> is undeniable, and admired by all.

The poem expands into a kind of visionary quest, Kissinger riding "through the country's dark interior / on a huge black horse named Credulity," that pushes beyond satirical portraits of specific people to grapple with the spiritual context that

frames them. Other poems, "The General," "The Slave," or "The Undertaker," signal this expansion grammatically, combining the definite article with a descriptive category. At their best, Moritz's dramatic personae embody his eclectic, academic learning, granting ideation the appearance of personal experience.

Neither mode, bardic or dramatic, becomes a crutch for Moritz despite their recurrence, and a miscellany section would be required for the poems that rely on short lines, crisp logical turns and sensitive, accurate description. The powerful elegiac sequence from "Night: The Conclusion of Diotima" deserves recognition, as does "The Helmet," a quiet, rational poem that has the remarkable feel of rightness, of instant recognition, that few poets can achieve. These poems showcase what Moritz does best, regardless of mode—he cultivates, and then rewards, attentive reading and rereading. A volume of selected poems would establish the kind of attention required to appreciate fully Moritz's demanding (some will say willfully difficult) gifts. It could take its title and epigraph from Moritz's "What Words Say":

> This was a song of such broad, indefinable rhythms,
> it seemed for a moment that I was only hearing the sea
> or the fluxion of traffic on highways day and night
> and not a congress of words proclaiming "hear me."

Value in Collaboration

Daniel David Moses & Terry Goldie, eds.
An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English. Oxford UP $29.95

Barry M. Pritzker
A Native American Encyclopedia: History, Culture, and Peoples. Oxford UP us$26.95

Reviewed by Megan A. Smetzer

By their very nature, anthologies and encyclopedias are open to criticism. They are questioned for their comprehensiveness or lack thereof, their structure, organization, and so on. While recognizing the obvious shortcomings, the reviewer must note that such publications can be skillfully executed. Both *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* and *A Native American Encyclopedia* provide a rich compendium of information. The difference between the two publications, one a collaboration and the other not, points to the ways in which a text can engage with current critical discussions, and as a result rise above the merely informative.

In the preface of the *Anthology*, author Daniel David Moses from the Delaware First Nation and non-Native scholar Terry Goldie discuss the rationale for their selections. As Goldie states: "One of the reasons for my getting involved in this was certainly the political agenda." Indeed, many of the poems, short stories, and excerpts from letters, books, and plays have a strong political edge. Other themes addressed include the trickster, healing, and autobiography. Pre-contact orations as well as documents from the eighteenth century are included, but the majority of the selections are by contemporary young writers. The editors state that this emphasis "contributes to the feeling of innovation and yet always [has] a sense of tradition." While the selections are drawn from First Nations across Canada, Ojibway and Cree authors are the most heavily represented. The book concludes with extensive notes on the authors, situat-

ing them in terms of education, other publications and, in many cases, political stance.

One minor shortcoming of the editorial conversation is the inclusion of some rather broad generalizations that tend to essentialize the range of First Nations experience. This is balanced to some extent by the anthology itself, as many different ways of life are examined, ranging from childhood memories of berry-picking to the often difficult issues facing those living in urban environments.

The *Encyclopedia*, written by a non-Native scholar from the United States, also begins with a preface outlining his stance toward the material, which derives from his having "always felt a share of responsibility concerning the basic methods—thievery and murder—that brought this rich land under the control of what we now know as the United States and Canada." Pritzker wishes to assist in creating "a present and future in which people work together based on mutual understanding and respect." A general introduction to the history of Native peoples in North America precedes ten chapters organized by region. Each section begins with a synopsis of the area followed by historical and contemporary information on the First Nation located there. Two appendices listing Alaska Native villages and corporations are included for no discernible reason.

At the outset, Pritzker states that lack of space will prohibit him from including discussions of archaeological and anthropological theory. Unfortunately, his errors and omissions call into question his sources as well as his awareness of current academic discussions. The *Encyclopedia* includes a staggering amount of information, and errors can therefore occur easily. The Northwest Coast section, for example, often uses names given by early explorers (such as Nootka) that do not reflect the current First Nations nomenclature (Nuu-chah-nulth). Pritzker accounts for this shortcoming by stating that material from Canada is more difficult to access. Furthermore, he neglects the role of nineteenth-century ethnographers, who were responsible for the removal of massive amounts of First Nations' material culture, and the twentieth-century response in the form of the United States' *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)* of 1990 and Canada's 1992 *Task Force Report on Museums and First Nations.* Over the past two decades, the return of objects to First Nations communities has been the subject of intense political debate.

Most problematic of all is Pritzker's non-reflexive inclusion of photography. In recent years, images of First Nations people have come under increasing scrutiny for their often negative role in constructing Euro-North American ideas about "the Indian." By disregarding this issue, and then titling photographs "Seminole Indian" or "Mangansutt Indian," where one stands in for all, Pritzker compounds the problem. Moreover, the inclusion of images of Iroquois False-Face masks reveals the author's ignorance of the controversy surrounding their display outside of ceremonial events. Museums across North America have removed these masks from exhibition at the request of Iroquois people.

In academic circles dealing with First Nations issues, collaboration is increasingly used as an important methodological tool for both political and academic reasons. Collaboration allows for differences in perspective, often leading to a more complex understanding of the material under consideration. In the *Encyclopedia*, Pritzker attempts to include a wide range of perspectives by using primary sources, including "native-written books, articles and electronic texts as well as material culture." Unfortunately, the author's omniscient manner negates any sense of contrasting perspectives. A glance at the bibliography

also suggests that few First Nations sources were employed. It is tempting to speculate how a collaborative editorial effort might have enriched the shape and content of the *Encyclopedia.*

Genre Benders

Miranda Pearson
Prime. Beach Holme $12.95

W.H. New
Stone Rain. Oolichan Books $14.95

Shani Mootoo
The Predicament of Or. Polestar $18.95

Reviewed by Allan Brown

These three collections of poetry can be seen most interestingly, and in one case necessarily, in terms of shifting genre. The first shows an expansion rather than strictly a shift, although its open-endedness hints at much to come. The second, not surprisingly, presents yet again a splendid sampling of aesthetic gymnastics. The third, the weakest, bends over backwards in order to find support, but doesn't quite achieve it.

Prime shows an interesting expansion and development from Miranda Pearson's chapbook *After the Body* (Reference West, 1995). While the earlier work depends pretty much exclusively upon a complex of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, the larger and more varied formats of the new book favour an effective reconfiguring of these themes and images. The pregnancy is viewed humorously as "the Incredible Hulk," but viewing itself then becomes thematic as the poem-speaker shifts from an entity observed as "a Kafka-esque insect on its back" to the observing entities who "flutter and gaze at the big egg." A parallel shift in perceptions occurs (in "Watching *The Lion King*") with a memory of the birth moment "when I pushed you through / that summer day" and paradoxically "*you* crowned *me.*"

Such alternations of personal centre can also occur in the book as alterations of personal awareness, shifts in recorded perceptions from seen to seeing to seer in, for instance, "Off Jericho," as "we" are "black beads to the lifeguards" while simultaneously observing how "the mountains across the bay / sat grand in their crumpled ball gowns" as "we [sat] beneath." Sometimes these careful and carefully mingled observations can substantiate theme. In another Jericho Beach poem, the desire for security of place ("We want only to be home") both depends upon and grows more effectively from a close evocation of her childhood homes, with "The *swish*/ of poplars in Saskatchewan,/ the hedges and potholed lanes of Kent" ("Rain"). The casual parallelism here offers evidence of Pearson's easy humour and on-going awareness of human weakness as she "grow[s] dreamy,/ unreliable" and then again grows even outrageously reliable as a parodic Madonna figure in her sentimentally scatological "La Pietà." Some of the rapid changes in point of view are reminiscent of Susan Stenson's recent *Could Love a Man* (Sono Nis, 2000), though Pearson's distinctive, more concise phrasings maintain her own poetic identity.

W. H. New, on the other hand—or, one is tempted to say, with many hands—intentionally slips in and out of his own and many other identities. The poems of *Stone Rain* focus on perceptions. The book opens with a set of "Storyboards," twelve doubled poems responding to and re-presenting the Northwest Coast Mask Exhibit at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1998, showing the active stasis that projects these "Prisoners of time" from Cook's eighteenth century "on [to] a television screen," with equally comic and tragic results. The stasis of "Storyboards" is balanced (very much the apt term here) by the wild motion of "Bicycle Rack," a closely worked set of twenty-four eleven-line stanzas that throws us, all eyes, into an unnamed Chinese city.

New tightly maintains a formal play as "chaos comes alive here," where even though "The *Analects* define *li* [order] . . . as agreed-upon perception," there is yet only enough order "to order *indirection,*" where "Voices carry," but "No-one speaks"—no-one except the poet, of course.

A good number of these poems speak within Vancouver's "City Limits," the vital central section of the book, consisting of a loose set of various short sequences in which New moves more generally, though still with a charming and sometimes alarming individuality, to his own voice through that of some intriguingly recognizable others. The most dynamic associations here are with George Bowering's expressionistic studies in *Urban Snow* (Talon, 1991); instances proliferate within these City Limits, including the recognition of how "Mosses twist / on paving stones" and "Nettle snatches / fabric back from a sinuate path," and including also the assertion, almost the command, that "Lined by lines the road narrows / by marquees" ("Sixteen Sidewalks"). Some of New's more casual satiric vignettes, such as "Sherwood Urban" and "You know," provide hints (memories?) of Norm Sibum's personal reflections on aspects of the city. Briefer characterizations, sharply though kindly drawn, appear in the eight-part "Stone bench, crevice, tree." There is also a somewhat darker, or at least more tightly pensive, study of "The lone American wander[ing] / hungry in the garden"("Feed Me") who might easily (or should that be, uneasily?) have been met and described by Earle Birney on his "November Walk near False Creek Mouth" in 1961. And there are a few lyrical touches also, somewhat oddly, of the smudgy impressions of Michael Bullock's *Vancouver Moods* (Third Eye, 1989). New's thematic signpost poem "Right of Way," for instance, presents a "new garden guide / [that] shows

> how to plant, . . .
> how to pollard also,
> draw bees,
> arrange rocks for nature's sake
> in casual measure.

Or, in verse like this, in any measure he cares to employ.

Shani Mootoo's new book, unfortunately, falls rather than glides between genres. The creative tension between her sophisticated imagery and the naiveté of her narrators—so effective in the fine stories of *Out on Main Street* (Press Gang, 1993) and extended through *Cereus Blooms at Night* (McClelland & Stewart, 1998)—simply does not work here. There is good narrative potential in "Or," the book's middle section, containing the title sequence, but not much development. The lyric urge is ubiquitous and sometimes neatly memorable, as with "Or"'s "drenchings in milkweed-scented breezes," but these efforts, though determined enough, tend too often to remain indeterminate.

She attempts to establish a more substantial and significant theoretical basis, a kind of re-imaged and re-imagined objective correlative template, in the three-part "Beach Composition" set. Yet the effort is too obvious, and she is finally reduced merely to listing her emotional stresses and then "realism // fiction / iconography." The hints of authorial control in such passages as this become explicit with some well effected, if not especially original, Joycean word play in "Magic Word" as "upon forecurl of tongue / the word 'please' / shapeshifted." The looser punning in some other poems also works well, as "A butch's worth: / word in the hand" ("An Attempt to Make a Promise"). Similarly effective twists in the same section of the book appear with the amusingly displayed "Language Poem" or the nicely balanced typesetter's nightmare of "The Edited" where: "deleted/words//drop hard ndfast biting met /al."

Her abstract and concretely descriptive lines do converge eventually in the penultimate "The Unshakeable Man in Aldergrove," a finely visual and easily textured instance of characterization as strong as anything in her stories. The man's clichés are natural, unforced, and deftly displayed, both as word and image as he persuasively asserts: "everything here is *like* something else // I want to be like those . . . over there (he points) . . . mountains." The more complex two-part "Game of Watch the Migrant Dream," set out almost as if for reader's theatre, again reaches back to her prose roots quite effectively, though it still seems to crave some form other than it demonstrates here.

Power Play

Klaus Petersen and Allan C. Hutchinson, eds. *Interpreting Censorship in Canada.* U of Toronto n.p.

Reviewed by Desirée Lundström

"What distinguishes the practice of censorship in liberal democracies from that in totalitarian systems," suggests Klaus Petersen, "is that the former does not allow official restrictions without due process of law." Yet, the vagaries of censorship dissolve this neat distinction. Censorship in its many manifestations has become a hotly debated issue in Canada. In a country wrestling with the principles of both liberal and social democracy, this text enters into the fray by addressing some of the arguments that have been made in an evolving "market" of censorship. While governmental control is often understood to be the primary ambit of the censor, the contributors to this volume pursue censorship through the ranks of industry, education, media and into the domain of the individual. The authors reflect on how censorship is perceived to function and they address the judicial and commercial agents of censorship.

Hutchinson argues that current debates pertaining to freedom of speech "[draw] on an inadequate set of premises and assumptions" that reflect a deficient understanding of the functioning of language in society. While the constitutional questions regarding censorship and rights of expression have been, and continue to be, argued in the courts, the proliferation of censorship in libraries, school curricula and information technology has necessitated a rethinking of not only what limits to expression and access are established by law and other means, but also how we arrive at the decision to censor and, specifically, who "we" might be.

Anti-censorship philosophies are examined in Samuel LaSelva's discussion of Canada as a cultural and geographical entity that all too frequently sees its discussion of civil liberties dominated by American First Amendment principles. He argues that Canadians and Americans are frequently juxtaposed when it comes to issues pertaining to civil liberties, partly because advocates of assimilation often erroneously suggest that Canadians are "less committed than Americans to civil liberties." LaSelva critically places his comparative discussion within an understanding of pluralism in its different contexts. Pluralism, he argues, is as much a test of tolerance as is liberalism. Moreover, Canadian pluralism is vastly different in its understanding and application from American pluralism. LaSelva consolidates the discussion with reference to the dialogue between Canadian and American jurisprudence, which, for the most part, is one-sided. He illustrates this dependence by referring to the Keegstra case in which the Beauharnais decision was evoked as precedent. Beauharnais (1952), in turn, made use of the 1942 precedent set in Chaplinsky that produced the now famous "fighting words" distinction in the applica-

tion of First Amendment law. These so-called "fighting words" were deemed to be outside the scope of First Amendment protection because they were words in a specially created judicial category distinct from other words. The evocation of what is now understood to be an outdated application of free expression principles in the Keegstra case has been widely criticized. LaSelva's argument suggests that free expression jurisprudence cannot ignore the context and relative applicability of precedent, nor the tenor of tolerance. Pluralism, by this argument, both agitates against and mitigates the scope of tolerance in a contemporary liberal democracy.

In exploring censorship issues faced by Canadian libraries, Ann Curry presents a well-articulated discussion of the role, in its many perceived guises, of libraries and librarians. She suggests that polarized conceptions of the function of a library cannot but evoke controversy and conflict. The perception of libraries as the custodians of knowledge and edification leads to a perception that they not only tolerate, but also promote and condone the content of the books on their shelves. Curry insists that libraries will not, indeed in a liberal democracy should not, act *in loco parentis*. She positions her argument regarding libraries against the perceived liberties that are accorded bookstores. She contends that libraries should be more subject to censorship than bookstores. Both, after all, are equally public.

Among others in this volume, including Mariana Valverde and Lorraine Weir, Scott Watson broaches the highly polemical issue of the censorship of pornography, an argument that engages effectively with the philosophical bases for censorship in general. The problem of defining art and distinguishing it from pornography concerns many authors in this book. The adequacy of many existing judicial definitions of pornography is persistently interrogated. Paul Axelrod and Rowland Lorimer address key issues of censorship in education; other contributors include Joel Bakan on free speech and the law, Randal Marlin, Donald Theall, Lydia Miljan and Barry Cooper on press and other media censorship, including the evolving domain of the Internet.

Small-Town Innocence

Grant C. Robinson
Great Expectations. Porcupine's Quill $19.95

Bryan R. Meadows
Not in my Backyard. Borealis. $16.95/$31.95 (cloth)

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

The small town is a focus for many Canadian novels and short stories; apart from affording an author a manageable range of characters and settings, the town has been a crucial element in our national fabric, a fascinating subject of study to be neglected or dismissed by artists at their cost and by politicians at their peril.

Grant Robinson, by profession a chartered accountant and businessman, offers a stimulating look at the fortunes (and misfortunes) of Penmaen Lithography, run not very well by Thom and Sophie Penmaen, in Glendaele Village, Ontario, as it is threatened by absorption into the urban-centred, commercial conglomerate fabric of Galen Nicholas Aldebaan. Aldebaan sends his slick point-man Geoffrey Bowles into Glendaele to investigate the worth of the little printing company and to conduct negotiations aimed at a buy-out. Small-town and village loyalties are clearly challenged by the threats of a greedy world. It is clear that the Penmaens' business could be run more efficiently: it is served by a flaky staff and hangs, because of the Penmaens' own lack of business acumen, by a slim financial thread. Thus the focus of the book provides a splendid opportunity for the study of a few interesting, even eccen-

tric characters, for a commentary on commercial practices from the silly to the solid, and for a sympathetic look at the social interplay within the village and the relationships that develop as the outside world intrudes. Even the Penmaens' sweet and sour holiday in Spain does not break the memory of Glendaele but, rather, offers the kind of perspective that such trips do in real life. One of the keys to the success of this narrative is its reality, its vibrancy of setting and character portrayal, and, in particular, the consistently deft handling of the dialogue which does so much to draw the reader into the motives and emotions of the characters. When the Aldebaan deal finally falls through many readers will be relieved—we need the Glendaeles and the Penmaens of this world, despite their frailties, and it is much to Robinson's credit that he is able to hold his audience and generate such a reaction. His tale is told, if not with Leacockian irony, with humour and with a benevolence not to be missed.

A more chilling challenge to rural innocence is to be found in Bryan Meadows's compelling *Not in my Backyard*. The pointedly named town of Crystal Springs, Ontario, has seen its gold mine closed and its economy knocked to the ropes. There is a plan for revival, however—a federally backed proposal to use the pristine environs of the community to store nuclear waste. From the first chapter, in which Burton Penner, publisher of the *Crystal Springs Examiner*, and a son encounter a hideously deformed fish in apparently lovely and inviting Wenesaga Lake, this book is a grabber. Meadows dramatically relates the events which lead to this first horrifying scene, the visit by a task force to persuade the community to accept a supposedly environmentally friendly nuclear dump, the division among the citizens (are jobs needed at any price?), and the sinister actions of the Resource Enviro Management company which covers its complicity to use the defunct gold mine shafts for the waste with an apparently harmless log-chipping operation. Penner's fight against the waste plan and the subsequent devious operations of REM is heroic but by no means implausible, and the portrayal of the effect of the situation on his family (who lose a son to radiation because of the damage to the rock structure caused by the previous underground gold mining) and others in the community is touching. Action and dialogue work superbly, and the control of the narrative's pace could not be better. Readers will hang onto the story just to see what happens. How lethal can corruption be? Will REM's efforts to brainwash opposed individuals (in a holiday retreat suggesting techniques reminiscent of *Brave New World*) be successful? This novel involves a fictional Canadian scene, but the concerns are real enough and are, indeed, of global significance. This is Meadows's first novel, and it is superbly effective, chilling, and compassionate.

Plays to the Audience(s)

Rory Runnells, ed.
A Map of the Senses: Twenty Years of Manitoba Plays. Scirocco n.p.

Glenda Stirling, ed.
NeXt Fest Anthology: Plays from the Syncrude NeXt Generation Arts Festival 1996-2000. NeWest n.p.

Reviewed by Mark Blagrave

Anthologies generally lend themselves to being read both as representative samples of larger positions, trends or situations as perceived by the anthologist, and as invitations to compare their component works with one another. In addition, printed anthologies of plays typically appeal to three natural audiences: souvenir readers who want to be reminded of a performance they saw; literary critics and theatre histo-

rians keen to produce, through close analysis, a secondary literature based on the plays and their production histories; and directors and performers looking for new scripts to produce. Serving all three does not prove easy.

Both Glenda Stirling and Rory Runnells have produced volumes of plays that are described as representative samples of larger bodies of work (Stirling's volume collects the plays presented at Edmonton's NeXt Generation Arts Festival between 1996 and 2000, and Runnells's assembles the scripts developed by the Manitoba Association of Playwrights—the "Map" of his title—over a period of twenty years). Demographically, several conclusions might be suggested by the selections. In *A Map of the Senses*, male playwrights outnumber female by a factor of two to one, while *The NeXt Fest Anthology* is slightly more predominantly male. Both volumes contain gay-oriented material, but Aboriginal issues are addressed specifically only in plays in *A Map of the Senses*. Chronologically, the selections may be less representative: Runnells prints plays that had productions in only eight of the twenty years promised by his volume's subtitle, while Stirling chooses three of her five plays from the first festival in 1996, though her volume's aim is to "highlight five plays from the past five years."

Stirling's volume contains two monologues, one play that was a monologue before it reached NeXt Fest, and one play that may best be described as a kind of narrative duologue. Four of the five are the work of recent alumni of the University of Alberta. No doubt, the homogeneity of this volume is a function of the NeXt Generation Arts Festival's focus on young Alberta talent, and of the editor's decision to feature only plays from this multidisciplinary event. In this sense, the collection is probably representative, but its potential for comparative analysis is severely limited. Moreover, Stirling's claim that it offers "a look at the first steps of the artists who will be the future of Canadian theatre" raises questions as to the value of publishing juvenilia prior to the establishment of a substantial career. On a more positive note, none of the five plays printed in Stirling's anthology appears to be available in print elsewhere, making the volume a worthwhile prospecting-ground for directors and performers. By contrast, five of the twelve plays printed by Runnells are available in other editions, which limits the collection's "prospecting" value although it may guarantee variety, substance and the potential for some meaningful comparative analysis.

Both anthologies feature extended introductions by their editors, outlining the immediate contexts in which the scripts were written and workshopped or produced. In addition, *A Map of the Senses* includes a preface (described on the cover as an introduction) by Doug Arrell of the Department of Theatre, University of Winnipeg. This contribution is limited to less than one page of text, one half of which, in turn, is given over to introducing Rory Runnells as a personality ("the heart and soul of the Manitoba playwriting community"). An academic audience may be further frustrated by the anecdotal approach of Runnells's introduction, and by his idiosyncratic style ("Back to the story"; "But to continue"; "One more item and then I tell all"), and would certainly question whether the trends in Manitoba playwriting identified in the introduction are actually borne out in the plays that follow. It is impossible, however, to doubt the anthologist's keen personal involvement and investment in the events he describes. Glenda Stirling's introduction, which includes contributions by Bradley Moss (first festival director and ongoing producer of the Syncrude NeXt Generation Arts Festival), is similarly personal in nature. Like Runnells's, her account, which

sometimes reads more like an extended set of acknowledgements than an actual introduction, is most likely to appeal to an initiated crowd of those who were there too and want to remember the exciting first steps of the enterprise. Although Stirling's general introduction may disappoint the more detached reader with such statements as "I can clearly see the impact of the festival on my career and personal life," her decision to introduce each script individually does help to shift emphasis back to the works themselves.

Both anthologists have chosen to document initial production circumstances of the plays, including venue, date, cast and direction—information of interest to the souvenir reader, and potentially of real value to the academic reader; however, it is not always clear how reliable the information is. Runnells's volume offers (in three separate places) three conflicting dates for the first performance of one play, and leaves the reader to guess at the year of another's production by Prairie Theatre Exchange. Stirling's mislabels a 1996 photograph as 1998. In some cases, the production histories acknowledge that the text that is printed in the anthology is not the text originally (perhaps ever) produced. This is true of both *Worm Moon* and *Zac and Speth* in *A Map of the Senses*. *The NeXt Fest Anthology* fails to make clear whether the texts of *SuperEd* and *The Key to Violet's Apartment* are those of their NeXt Fest readings or those of later Fringe productions, and chooses to print the Nightwood Theatre (1998) version of *Benedetta Carlini* rather than the NeXt Fest (1996) version.

The decision to print stage directions in italics but not in parentheses in *The NeXt fest Anthology* poses problems, particularly in the monologues; however, the running footers, play by play, make Stirling's volume as a whole more friendly to use than A *Map of the Senses*, where no such orientation is provided. Performing groups are also likely to find Runnells's collection an unwieldy volume to hold and work from.

Information on how to apply for performance rights is clearly provided for each play in *The NeXt Fest Anthology*, while in *A Map of the Senses* there is only a blanket statement of retention of rights. Given that only four of the twelve playwrights represented in that volume are listed as members of the Playwrights Union of Canada, obtaining royalty information for the other eight plays represents a significant challenge for the would-be performer. Similarly, anyone interested in producing or seriously studying Alf Silver's *Thimblerig* will look in vain either for evidence of the original music that figures so highly in the piece, or for information on how to obtain the music.

In the end, then, these two anthologies are most likely to find their audiences in the souvenir reader. Neither collection is fully able to serve the other two of its three likely audiences. The would-be performer will encounter a range of practical obstacles, and the academic reader will be both disappointed in the unreliable apparatus and discouraged by the lack of potential for serious comparative analysis.

Short Story Studies

Rosemary Sullivan, ed.
The Oxford Book of Stories by Canadian Women in English. Oxford UP. $39.95

W.H. New
Reading Mansfield and Metaphors of Form. McGill-Queen's UP. $55.00

Reviewed by Elaine Park

In two recent treatments of the short story genre, Rosemary Sullivan and W. H. New apply notably different critical approaches. Sullivan's anthology, which presents fifty Canadian short stories as "a collective narrative of women's experience," considers the short story primarily as a mode of

social commentary and reflector of personal experience. The introduction, by presenting the stories as a type of women's life-writing, tends to obscure issues of style, even though stylistic variety constitutes much of the book's appeal. New's book, on the other hand, raises complex questions of generic form and style. A study of Katherine Mansfield's work, it is also a radical attempt to fashion a vocabulary of short story stylistics. His study lays the groundwork for a grammar of the short story.

Sullivan has explored her interest in life-writing and women's self-definition through art in thoughtful biographies of Elizabeth Smart and Margaret Atwood and in two earlier anthologies, *Stories by Canadian Women* (Oxford, 1984) and *More Stories by Canadian Women* (Oxford, 1987). In the introductory essay of the groundbreaking 1984 anthology, Sullivan sympathetically observed that Canadian women writers have had to meet a double challenge to their creative expression: "It is possible that the status of being a colony—as women are often described—within the Canadian colony has given a particular impetus to women writers in this country." Her new anthology retains the strengths of the earlier volumes by including twenty-five of the same English-language writers and several of the same stories, while making space for twenty-five new voices. However, inclusion of these newcomers, many of them representative of contemporary writing by aboriginal women and women of colour, has meant the exclusion of women writing in French.

Sullivan's choice of writers is judicious. She selects fine stories by Traill, Johnson, Duncan and Montgomery from the pre-1914 period and by Wilson and Watson from mid-century. Wisely, however, she devotes most of the book to work produced during the past thirty years, acknowledging the strength of Canada's great women writers of the period in her selections from Gallant, Laurence, Munro, Engel and Atwood. The collection demonstrates powerfully the richness and quality of the women's literary tradition in Canada's short stories. Still, owners of the two earlier volumes may wish to note that the new book is neither different enough from the earlier anthologies to be a new volume, nor similar enough to be a new edition of the earlier work.

A more extended introduction would have been valuable, permitting clearer elaboration of the criteria that governed the selection of stories. As the collection stands, it is difficult to discern the common elements that make the stories distinctively "Canadian" and "womanly." The stories as a group do not say much to each other beyond jointly reflecting the variousness of women's life experience in Canada. Perhaps, like the Canadian Senate, the collection tries too hard to represent everybody to everybody. It offers stories from several geographical regions and ethnic environments, stories by First Nations writers, lesbian stories, stories that reflect Canada's religious and cultural diversities, yet there are few indications of how Canadian women form a writing community.

Reading Mansfield and Metaphors of Form is a critical study of the short fiction of Katherine Mansfield. Unlike Sullivan, who elides the distinction between life and art, New avoids psychological and biographical approaches to his subject and views Mansfield's short stories from a formal perspective. Although New opens with a demonstration of the shortcomings of biographically based Mansfield criticism, her humanity emerges compellingly. Mining not only the entire body of her published stories but also her journals, juvenilia, manuscripts and notebooks for evidence of her writing and revision process, New persuasively depicts Mansfield as a passion-

ately self-critical writer who struggled throughout her short life to rise to her art's demands despite the distractions of disordered personal relationships and ill health.

New arranges his study into three parts: in the first, he surveys critical assessments of Mansfield; in the second, he formulates a new reading strategy based on analysis of formal elements and achieved stylistic effects; in the third, he applies his formal reading method to selections from Mansfield's early, middle and late work, dealing with some challenging and seldom discussed stories.

The first section is delightfully cantankerous. New's judgments of previous scholarly views are underpinned by his thorough research in Mansfield manuscript archives in the Turnbull Library in New Zealand and the Newberry Library in Chicago as well as his careful comparative reading of all extant editions of Mansfield's work, so that when he points out the implicit imperialism of certain American and British commentary, and the limiting nationalism of some New Zealand views, he supports his critique with strong evidence. He counters the critical charge that Mansfield's language tends toward the mawkish by laying open sexist assumptions and canonical biases associated with such criticism. Objecting to readings of Mansfield that see her through the lens of literary influences, he takes particular aim at those who identify Mansfield as an imitator of Chekhov. As New notes, to categorize Mansfield by reference to a famous male author "at once elevates her by reference to received critical conventions yet diminishes her to the degree that she remains in the shadow of the other figure." Most significantly, New answers critics who find Mansfield's narratives lacking in plot when he points out her story structures are determinedly not plot-dependent. He claims that by creating alternative methods of narrative organization, Mansfield broke new ground for modern, non-linear fiction.

The book's second section analyzes grammar, word placement and relational language to disclose "metaphors of form" in which Mansfield "uses language in order to explore language." His discussion of her use of silence, especially as an ending device, is particularly enlightening. The final section, "Reading for Form," applies his formal theory to several elliptical stories. Particularly successful is the treatment of "Prelude" which traces analogies to musical form in the verbal strategies adopted by Mansfield; less conclusive are readings of "The Stranger" and "The Escape" which leave unplumbed some formal aspects, such as the ironies of both titles.

Crossing the Bay

Audrey Thomas

Isobel Gunn. Viking Penguin $29.99

Reviewed by Elizabeth Hodgson

Isobel Gunn is a fascinating exploration of history, culture, and the psychology of choice and loss. Thomas's novel is based on a few Hudson's Bay documents from the nineteenth-century fur trade which make reference to a Scottish apprentice who turned out to be a young woman instead of a young man. Thomas reworks this story of the cross-dressing woman, a persistent cultural narrative, into a deeply moving account of one woman's, and one man's, encounters with the limitations of their world, both in the Orkney Islands where they are born and at the Hudson's Bay fort in the early nineteenth century where they first meet.

The young woman is Isobel Gunn, the impoverished daughter of a drunken father and an insane mother, who, disguised as a boy, flees for the adventure and freedom of the colonies on a Hudson's Bay ship. Her life in Rupertsland does offer her new

opportunities, but she is discovered when the one man who knows her true identity rapes her and leaves her pregnant. She becomes an anomaly, befriended by some, prized for bearing the first white child of the fort, but also feared and despised, especially by the fort's commander. And the horrors of her life after she gives her son to the commander to be raised as a gentleman, while she is forced to return home to Orkney, are wrenching to read.

Thomas tells much of her story, Isobel's story, through the voice of another struggling soul: Magnus Inkster, the young minister and schoolteacher at the fort who befriends Isobel Gunn and her young son. For his pains he is sent back to Scotland, and Isobel herself seems unable to accept his gestures of compassion toward her. He lives the rest of his life trying to help her and trying to open his own heart, as he becomes, through his contact with Isobel, increasingly conscious of human suffering.

Thomas explores a variety of issues in *Isobel Gunn*. The first is the tangled web of people, goods and culture that bind the British Isles to early Canada. At the Rupertsland fort, Magnus and Isobel both discover the complexities of the colonial world in the interdependence of Cree and British, in the poisonous mix of missionary contempt and financial greed, in the lawlessness and elitism, and the poverty and abundance of life in the fur trade. Isobel Gunn in her male disguise loves the challenge and adventure of her new life. Later, sent to live with the Cree women after she is discovered to be female and considered dangerous and expendable by the fort's commander, Gunn is only the most visible symptom of the wild beauty and freedom, but also the inescapable hypocrisy and cruelty, of early colonial Canada.

Thomas also wants to tell the story of mothers: through Magnus's soft-hearted mother, Isobel's own mother, entangled in despair, and Isobel herself. Gunn's complicated maternal motivations and fears are the most dramatic source of tension in the novel, as she is enmeshed by her limitations while trying to protect her life and that of her son. The epilogue at the end of the novel continues Gunn's family tree to give us yet another example of maternal loss, this from the twentieth century.

Thomas also wants to make real the historical realities of nineteenth-century Scotland: its poverty and isolation, its Calvinist rigidity and the brutality of small-town life on the northern edge of the British Isles. She shows us through Magnus's and Isobel's experiences, the squalor of Old-Town Edinburgh, the filth of tenant-farmers' hovels and the prosperous arrogance of the aristocracy. Thomas does all of this in a very compact narrative, with a deft hand and a compassionate eye. Her enjambment of pain and sympathy makes this a wonderfully thoughtful story, rich and expressive.

The novel does have some rough patches. There is the occasional moment when Thomas-the-historian overwhelms Thomas-the-storyteller, as in the extensive glossary at the beginning. The narrative strands introduced in the first thirty pages of the novel are also difficult to disentangle at first. And Isobel herself sometimes seems inexplicable, even to the narrator. Finally, the novel includes some obviously didactic moments, though Thomas keeps these from feeling too pedantic.

The strengths are however considerable: a nuanced sense of history, a feeling for situation, and a capacity to communicate longing and loss. As Isobel Gunn is shipped back to England, leaving her son behind, Thomas writes that "her breasts were caked with dried milk, her face was stiff with tears." This poignant use of physical detail ("why then did she feel, so often, as though she had swallowed a stone?") binds and holds the reader to Isobel Gunn and *Isobel Gunn*. And, in the long tradition of

Canadian narratives about our foremothers' migrations (*Roughing it in the Bush, Away, Alias Grace*, to name but a few), *Isobel Gunn* certainly deserves a place.

Homecomings

Judith Thompson
Perfect Pie. Playwrights Canada Press $13.95

Ann Lambert
Very Heaven. Blizzard Publishing $10.95

Linda Griffiths
Alien Creature. Playwrights Canada Press $13.95
Sheer Nerve: Seven Plays. Blizzard Publishing $22.00

Reviewed by Celeste Derksen

A preoccupation with problematic homecomings has long haunted the literary imaginations of Canadian authors and is also central to two recent playtexts: *Perfect Pie* by Judith Thompson and *Very Heaven* by Ann Lambert. *Perfect Pie* stages a reunion between two friends—Patsy, now a farm wife and mother, and Francesca (known as Marie in her youth), now a celebrated actress—who were separated as teens after a mysterious train accident. The play is largely in a "realistic" mode, but features touches of the Thompson fantastic—for instance, Marie "passes on" her epilepsy to Patsy after the accident/separation. Moments of particular intensity surface in Patsy's monologues, in which she describes epilepsy as a stalker: "And he's always there, parked in the driveway, in his old car, waiting. I come down to turn out the lights his face, in the window, his eyes, goin through me." (Thompson has described her own condition in a similar manner: see "Epilepsy and the Snake," *Canadian Theatre Review 89.*) To extend the notion, Francesca's memories of an impoverished, persecuted youth stalk her as an adult. This "homecoming" play, then, stages a series of dark reckonings with the notion of home as safe haven.

The play also meditates subtly on the characters' relations to the domestic realm. Hanna Scolnicov has argued that, in drama, the inside of the house has traditionally been the realm of female characters and that this domestic stage space may have either positive or negative gender associations; it may be viewed as a place in which women can exercise their creativity and control, or it can be viewed as a restrictive space. *Perfect Pie* dramatizes this tension. The character who appears most grounded and inspired—at least at first—is not Francesca, the rootless urban career actress, but Marie, who has chosen a rural homelife. Yet, this is no rural, domestic idyll—there are sour stalks in Marie's "perfect" rhubarb pie.

Quebec writer Ann Lambert also inserts a note of irony in her title, *Very Heaven.* Three very different sisters return to scatter the ashes of their mother, who has died in circumstances that suggest suicide. Rose— known as "La Reine" ("The Queen") in her English- and French-speaking community —is remembered by her daughters as a tyrannical matriarch. She appears on stage in a Queen Anne chair and delivers a monologue that offers the audience a more vivid understanding of her character. Her voice is refreshingly frank:

> I leave to my three daughters my house, my property, my garden. It was my mother's house and now I leave it to you and your children. I hope my grandchildren will love it as I have and appreciate it—I worked like a navvy to hang onto it for them. Do not let them run like hellions through my garden! I have vanquished the squirrels after years of struggle and I will not have my efforts squandered.

Oddly perhaps, this matriarchal ghost strikes me as the most compelling character of the play. The sisters' conflicts over their past and present relationships, and

their mother's last wishes, dominate the action.

While men and children are central to these women's lives, however, it is the secrets and emotional legacies of the childhood home that take centre stage. The play's ending also features an interesting plot twist, as the events leading up to the mother's death—events that humanize and complicate her—act as a catalyst to the daughters' decisions about their current lives. This is a homecoming, then, that elicits confrontation, reconciliation, and change.

A homecoming of a very different sort and style takes place in Linda Griffiths's Chalmers award-winning monodrama, *Alien Creature: A Visitation from Gwendolyn MacEwen*, which has the famed Canadian poet, who died at the age of forty-six, haunt her basement apartment and those attending the visitation (or play). Griffiths (who also performs the monodrama) acknowledges that she has undertaken a daring project in depicting the prolific, vastly complex MacEwen:

> I want to address this to the people who knew and loved her and tried to help. [. . .] The person that is present that you don't know is me. She and I are doing this play. And only both of us can speak.

Indeed, *Alien Creatures* reads like a "channelling" of MacEwen's spirit before the audience:

> You're so beautiful. You look like great bunches of black grapes, you look like "renegade electrons searching for a core," you look like moon striped pieces of. . . sorry, it gets to be a habit. You look like. . . people sitting in an audience. You're very precious to me. You came. So I feel I have to warn you that I do die in the end, so things might get a little intense. I hope you're not afraid of excess. But I did not commit suicide. I drank myself to death, it's different. Don't Sylvia Plath me and I won't Sylvia Plath you.

This passage is characteristic of the monodrama, as it combines quotations from MacEwen's published work with Griffiths's (or is it MacEwen's?) humour and stagesense. The playtext begs to be seen, as it is infused with poetic stagecraft:

> *The apartment is flooded with blinding light. GWENDOLYN laughs, picks up a wand and starts blowing bubbles. She catches a bubble, which has become suddenly solid in her hand, and drops it into a secret door in the trunk. We hear the tinkle of broken glass.*

Griffiths ties theatrical evocations of MacEwen's interest in the occult to her characterization: the poet's creativity is made visible by having scarves or sparks of flame emerge from her hands; her yearning for escape is manifest in her performance of escape artistry.

MacEwen's visitation to the present also has a political edge. She returns to hex this age of globalization: "Their Global reach has no language, has no Gods. My Global reach is full of broken tongues, at least I speak them." She muses on everything from basement suites to the shrinking value of poetry, magic, and other visionary endeavours.

Audience involvement and the creation of complex biographical characters (particularly women) are recurring features in Griffiths's previous works, seven of which are collected in *Sheer Nerve*. This collection spans two decades of Griffiths's theatrical œuvre and several of the collected plays mark important developments in Canadian Theatre. The republication of *Maggie and Pierre* is particularly timely. Access to *Jessica*, co-written by Griffiths, First Nations author Maria Campbell and Paul Thompson, should also benefit readers and scholars interested in the recent surge of First Nations drama. This collaborative play—as well as *The Book of Jessica*, co-written by Griffiths and Campbell, which explores its problematic develop-

ment—offers crucial insights into the perils and potentials of culturally hybrid dramatic collaborations. Also included in the collection are *O.D. on Paradise, The Darling Family,* the monodrama *A Game of Inches, Brother André's Heart,* and *The Duchess, a.k.a. Wallis Simpson.*

Of the plays reviewed, I was most impressed with *Alien Creatures,* which marks a highlight in Griffiths's prolific career and offers a unusual stylistic and emotional portrait of a most unusual homecoming.

Innocents Abroad

Michel Tremblay. Michael Bullock, trans. *The City in the Egg.* Ronsdale Press $15.95

Yves Beauchemin. David Homel, trans. *The Second Fiddle.* Stoddart Press $29.95

Reviewed by Cedric May

Periods marked by the intense ferment of ideas throw up fantasies, utopian or dystopian. The Renaissance produced Rabelais, the Enlightenment Voltaire and Defoe, the young people of May '68 occupied the Odéon and, with the help of Barrault and Renaud, collectively rewrote Rabelais for the stage and for their day. Terry Pratchett by Boris Vian out of Eugène Ionesco might begin to describe Michel Tremblay's early (1968) excursion into modern fantasy fiction. François Laplante Jr. is the Candide of Tremblay's tale of initiation, stumbling innocently through the five districts of the city in the egg. Each district with its post-catastrophe landscape is presided over by a different deity. These vie with each other for Laplante's co-operation in a last-ditch effort to save their crumbling world and salvage their rapidly dwindling powers. At first, bewildered by an Escher-like decor of corridors within corridors, getting ever darker, he resists the call to become a Great Initiate but then is drawn breathlessly into the myth and discovers his redemptive vocation, without ever achieving the mental clarity to sift through the disinformation with which the dying gods bombard him.

The publisher would like us to believe that Tremblay here sets "the scene for his *Belles-soeurs* series in the theatre and his 'plateau Mont-Royal' novels." This isn't true nor is it strictly necessary to commend this, his first novel, to our serious attention. There is a tenuous link as Tremblay sketches in Laplante's dysfunctional family. He inherits the egg of the title, the key to the fantasy world, from a distant, rich uncle whose photo gives him the look of a sort of bogus jailbird. But this early fantasy (I've already hinted that the date of 1968 is significant) stands by itself and was certainly worth translating. The job has been superbly done with great sureness of touch by Michael Bullock.

If we can speak of Tremblay's *The City in the Egg* and Yves Beauchemin's *The Second Fiddle* in the same breath, it is because both are the work of master storytellers who proceed with great speed, lightness of touch and economy of means. Both manage to maintain an air of expectancy in spite of the at times crushing nihilism of the message. Though Yves Beauchemin deals in crude ultra-realism, at opposite extreme from the fantasy world created by Tremblay, both works are quests for meaning in the midst of a plethora of confusing signs and the cruelly playful taunts of blind chance.

Second Fiddle (this should be the title; "second fiddle" is an adverbial phrase, not a noun phrase) tells the story of a forty-five-year-old journalist who has lived his life in the shadow of a more successful writer friend. The novel begins with the death of the friend and ends on the Magdalen Islands with a group of his friends gathering, in accordance with the

terms of his will, to celebrate his life. Neatly bracketed by these two evocations of death, the novel relates the attempts of Nicolas Rivard to break free from the stifling influence of François Durivage, his dead friend. This proves difficult as Rivard has an affair with Durivage's widow, who asks him to write her late husband's biography and to deliver the eulogy at the party in his island home. Rivard seeks to break free by proving himself still attractive to women and capable of carrying off a journalistic coup to enhance his reputation and self-esteem. In the process, he loses his wife, his children, his home, his job and at times his sanity. There is real suspense as Beauchemin leads his characters through increasingly risky and foolhardy schemes. He and a fellow journalist attempt (successfully) to expose a cabinet minister involved in deception and fraud. With telling irony, fate presents Rivard with fleeting successes which soon turn sour.

As in his highly successful *Le Matou*, Beauchemin uses the device of the repeated chance encounter to bring his character to his senses. Rivard asks whether the smiling child with the red braids who pops up at key moments could be sent by God. This recurrent motif does not have the force of the alley-cat figure in the earlier novel. "I've been eating vulgarity morning, noon and night for months now!" says Rivard's wife Geraldine, appalled by the sordid turn their life has taken. You need a strong stomach for this novel at times. It has none of the delicious candour of *Le Matou*.

This is the challenge for the translator, David Homel. *Second Fiddle* depends hugely on the authentic ring of the slick, modern dialogue. To give just one example of the snares of scatological speech in translation, "merde" and "shit" have totally different resonances, a different social range, a different power to shock. Homel is not always sensitive to this, though the scale of the task must not be underestimated. Sleazy vulgarity is the currency of this novel of the crisis of ageing. Problems of taste and the delicate handling of tastelessness present themselves constantly. The mood is not always lifted by Rivard's genuine love of good literature and music. The critique of greedy materialism is not pursued energetically but there are interesting philosophical subthemes: the tragic consequences of physical beauty, the fragility of close relationships, the clash of generations, the suicidal tendencies of young people in the big city, the bulimic consumption of food and drink as a compensatory ploy. Increasing sexual promiscuity has robbed the novelist of one of the main sources of narrative tension; the endlessly inventive choreography of dalliance is a thing of the past.

Second Fiddle is a rare example of a well-constructed modern novel. The irony, the pathos, the suspense, the intricacies of the plot, the wealth of characters from the homeless alcoholic, through the street kids, to the powerful, rich and influential, from different classes and professions (there is a brief, sympathetic portrait of a retired priest)—the whole is orchestrated, and this is a big, big novel, with pace, good judgment and flair. This is Beauchemin's great strength.

Poésie francophone

Christian Violy
Les Silences immobiles. Éditions des Plaines n.p.

Marguerite Andersen
Bleu sur Blanc. Prise de Parole n.p.

Pierre Ouellet
dieu sait quoi. Éditions du Noroît n.p.

Reviewed by René Brisebois

Christian Violy, jeune poète originaire de Cap-de-la-Madeleine, chargé de cours en création littéraire à la Faculté Saint-Jean d'Edmonton, nous offre son premier ouvrage publié aux Éditions des Plaines à Saint-Boniface au Manitoba. Le récit poétique des *Silences immobiles* explore en trente-et-une étapes le domaine intime de la perte et du deuil d'un être cher que le travail de l'écriture et la recherche métaphorique, dans le prolongement de l'héritage surréaliste, permettent de vivre dans une sorte de sérénité. Ce parcours introspectif aboutissant à une sorte de réconciliation posthume se veut également pour l'auteur déambulation à travers l'espace et le paysage, que ce soit celui du pays survolé d'est en ouest ou encore lorsqu'il évoque ses promenades avec le père au bord du grand fleuve:

> Je te mêle aux foules et me remémore nos balades le long du fleuve. Nous parlions de tes amours de jeunesse. Cela m'a suffit pour oublier que tu ne me tenais pas la main quand est venu le temps de traverser la rue.

Marguerite Andersen, romancière et nouvelliste d'origine allemande, établie à Toronto depuis longtemps et qui a choisi pour nouvelle patrie la langue française, nous propose, sous la forme de fragments poétiques, un court récit autobiographique de transmission de la mémoire qui s'adresse plus exactement à sa petite-fille de vingt ans. *Bleu sur Blanc* évoque donc les sept années de sa vie de jeune femme passées en Tunisie auprès d'un mari violent, officier de l'armée coloniale française, peu de temps avant l'indépendance. Au-delà du règlement de compte cependant, cette prose poétique résolument féministe se veut plutôt, et sans "mélodrame," la narration d'instants particuliers de beauté, de bonheur et de liberté intenses, vécus au "paradis terrestre clair et simple bleu sur blanc." Par le biais de petites vignettes, et dans un aller-retour incessant entre le passé et le présent, l'auteure entend ainsi faire partager au destinaire du texte, voire sinon au lecteur, en plus des sons, des goûts, des odeurs et des couleurs ressentis comme toujours neufs, les souvenirs de ces événements ou images du quotidien de son premier pays d'exil, et qui marque rétrospectivement sa jeune vie d'adulte entre la fin des années quarantes et le début des années cinquantes:

> Le vent chaud souffle
> depuis trois jours
>
> Nous versons de l'eau sur le sol carrelé
> la couche sera de céramique et d'eau
> un drap trempé m'enveloppe
> je dors
>
> Depuis je peux dormir n'importe où

Pierre Ouellet, professeur au département d'études littéraires de l'UQAM, est l'auteur d'une œuvre prolifique composée d'essais, de romans et de récits. A titre de poète et en tant que membre du groupe multidisciplinaire franco-québécois à l'origine de la traduction la plus récente de la Bible en français (2001), il est co-responsable avec deux théologiens de la rédaction de textes tirés de l'ancien testament (*Sophonie et Esdras*). Dans la même veine de ce qu'André Brochu qualifiait déjà justement de poésie métaphysique, l'auteur nous donne avec *dieu sait quoi* un neuvième recueil en prolongement direct du premier intitulé *Sommes*. Dès l'exergue, tiré du Prologue du *Livre de Job* (1:20), le lecteur se trouve d'emblée plongé dans l'atmosphère sombre qui sera celle du livre en son

entier—c'est l'auteur qui souligne :

> Il se lève, déchire son manteau, se rase le crâne et se jette par terre, le front dans la poussière: *j'étais nu quand je suis venu au monde, c'est nu que je le quitterai.*

Pour qui a tant soit peu fréquenté la Bible, il pourrait s'agir là, à tort ou à raison, du texte à la consonance la plus contemporaine. De par son ambiguïté fondamentale et en tant que véritable interrogation crispée sur le mystère tragique de l'existence humaine, alors qu'il semble passer tour à tour d'une soumission des plus authentiques à une révolte des plus senties, le discours de Job se trouve ainsi récupérable "poétiquement" tant par les athées que par les défenseurs de la foi. Un mot qu'on voit revenir souvent, au point de nous fournir ni plus ni moins la clé de toute la poétique ouelletiste, est celui d'agonie. On sait d'ailleurs l'importance essentielle que le critique accordait déjà dans son essai au titre évocateur, *Chute, La littérature et ses fins*, au roman éponyme de Jacques Brault. L'agonie serait donc à prendre ici étymologiquement au sens d' "angoisse de l'âme," non seulement devant la mort, mais devant l'absurdité—ou "dissonance"—des souffrances de l'existence humaine. Voire encore au sein de ce qui viendrait constituer une véritable agonistique ouelletiste où tendraient à se confondre, par contiguïté et contamination d'un terme par l'autre donc, et en une sorte de diptyque, le verbe "agoniser," au sens de "combattre, endurer le martyre," avec le verbe "agonir," au sens cette fois d' "accabler d'injures" ou "faire honte." En face d'un tel déchirement tragique où se mêlent à la fois fascination et révolte devant l'héritage janséniste d'un passé religieux québécois qu'on a tenté d'ensevelir avec la révolution tranquille, on ne peut s'empêcher ici d'évoquer le poète d'*Une Saison en Enfer*, "prisonnier de son baptême." Ainsi, dans ce passage où l'auteur s'adresse de façon blasphématoire à un dieu absent et sourd—déjà malmené et mis en doute, dès le titre, par la minuscule et le jeu de mots irréligieux—à travers une question qui semble contenir en elle-même une accusation:

> Quand renoueras-tu le pacte, où s'unissent le feu au feu dans un embrassement de l'être par l'être, noués ferme sur le même bûcher, bras levés tel un seul arbre, contre lequel urinent les chiens? C'est ma seule question—question de vie ou de mort posée à ceux dont la réponse est sur les lèvres, et sur le cœur, une agonie de l'âme vécue heure par heure.

Writing Adolescent Despair

Martha Westwater
Giant Despair Meets Hopeful: Kristevan Readings in Adolescent Fiction. U Alberta P $29.95

Tim Wynne-Jones
The Boy in the Burning House: A Novel. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre $12.95

Deborah Ellis.
Looking for X. Groundwood/Douglas & McIntyre $7.95

Reviewed by Andrew O'Malley

Raising the familiar alarum that "we *are* in a state of cultural decay" and that our "values are on the verge of decline," Martha Westwater sets out to demonstrate, with the help of Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory, how young adult novelists are helping to mend the damaged souls and psyches of today's youth. Her allegorical title is drawn from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: like that novel's protagonist, Christian, young adults today are beset by myriad and often life-threatening problems and obstacles (collectively the "Giant Despair"). Westwater chooses six prize-winning Y.A. authors from different parts of the (white) English-speaking world (Aidan Chambers,

Robert Cormier, Kevin Major, Jan Mark, Katherine Paterson, and Patricia Wrightson) to illustrate different facets of Kristevan theory (for example "the chora" and "abjection"). This makes for a very neatly structured argument, each chapter comparing one author's fiction to one aspect of Kristeva's work.

An obviously sincere and humane desire to address and alleviate the desperate situations of many of today's young people motivates Westwater. As well, she has the laudable intention of helping "kiddie lit" escape its poor cousin status in the academy by demonstrating how cutting-edge and sophisticated theory can be applied to it. Children's literature, she rightly observes, has too long been either uncritically celebrated, or subjected to the type of formal criticism no longer employed by the discipline of literary studies at large.

Given the currency of the issues with which she is concerned, however, Westwater seems curiously out of step at times. The sociological and psychological studies on teen depression and suicide cited in her first chapter are from the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the novels she has chosen are from the same period or earlier (for example Wrightson's *The Crooked Snake,* 1955), and a substantial number are out of print. It is somewhat difficult to see how such texts could effect the desired intervention in the lives of today's adolescents. Further, considering Westwater's concern for the state of children's literature studies, it seems odd that she would not interrogate the politics of Patricia Wrightson, a white Australian author, writing from the perspective of an aboriginal child. In an age when the representation of race and the appropriation of culture and voice are pressing issues both in and out of the academy, to praise Wrightson for "grasp[ing] the essential semiotic nature of the Aborigines' culture" seems problematic.

Westwater has a strong command of Kristeva's complex theoretical arguments, but the manner in which she uses the theory is not always entirely effective. On one occasion, she remarks on how similar Wrightson's views are to those of Kristeva, "[e]ven though [she] has never studied Kristevan theory." Elsewhere, she describes Jan Mark as "echoing Kristevan theory." Locating echoes of theory in the work of an author, or using an author to demonstrate a theory's validity seem like narrow applications, limiting the possibilities of a political engagement with children's literature. That adolescence is a transitional phase marked by confusion over one's identity, uncertainty about relationships and, often, pain and despair is a widely held assumption in our culture. This is a belief reflected in Westwater's study, and one that lies at the heart of the contemporary young adult publishing industry, in Canada and elsewhere. The majority of recent novels written for adolescent readers deal with conflict, change and often loss, and provide resolutions in which the protagonists overcome their troubles by adapting to new circumstances. This is a formula that tends to underpin a number of ideological assumptions dear to Western, liberal and democratic sensibilities: change—as the product of development and progress—is necessary to growth; change requires pain, which builds character; young adults, as subjects claiming their individuality, need to express their independence and fight their own battles.

Two recently published Canadian Y.A. novels—multiple award-winner Tim Wynne-Jones's *The Boy in the Burning House* and first-time novelist Deborah Ellis's *Looking for X* (which won the Governor General's Award in 2000)—follow this pattern while exploring some of our society's deeply held assumptions about young people. Wynne-Jones's latest novel tells the story of Jim Hawkins, who is trying to cope with his father's disappearance one year ago. Ruth Rose, the local

Goth in their small southern Ontario town, and a young woman suffering from severe emotional and psychological problems, develops a theory that her stepfather—a respected church minister—murdered Jim's dad. Jim and Ruth Rose overcome both their own despair (the two have entertained thoughts of suicide), and the expected adult scepticisms to uncover a murder that took place twenty-five years earlier, and the conspiracy to keep it silenced.

This is a very engaging story, with the plot twists and red herrings of a good mystery novel. While it adheres to the expected formulas of award-winning contemporary young adult fiction, it also sheds light on the marginal position occupied by the adolescent subject. The twin voices of religion and psychology—historically two of the dominant discourses shaping adult perceptions of childhood in Western society—are portrayed as the forces that alienate the young protagonists, especially Ruth Rose.

Looking for X provides a glimpse into the difficult life of Khyber, daughter of a single mother and former stripper, older sister to autistic twin boys, and an eleven-year-old whose tough life and keen intellect have rendered her wise beyond her years. Khyber, whose self-chosen name reflects the armchair and atlas globetrotting she uses for escapism, embarks on a real-life adventure through the nocturnal streets of downtown Toronto. She must find her homeless friend (whom she has named "X"), the only person who can provide an alibi against an accusation that she vandalized her school.

Khyber is an intriguing children's book character: intelligent, fiercely loyal to her family, distrustful of authority figures and openly antagonistic towards the privileged middle classes. One weekend she wages a miniature class war in the nineteenth-century greenhouse in Toronto's Allen Gardens. She positions herself and brother David in the centre of the gardens, deliberately interfering with a well-heeled wedding party's photo session, and refusing to budge until bribed by the exasperated best man and photographer. On the one hand, this scene shows how the economically underprivileged child is doubly made society's other. (When trying to deal with Khyber, the best man announces "[y]ou just have to know how to talk to them." When he fails, the party assumes she must be "retarded.") On the other hand, it invests the child with an almost Blakean subversive potential to challenge power and privilege. This political potential may yet still be the young person's best defence against the "Giant Despair."

Aftermath 2001

W.H. New

Coverage in this omnibus review does not preclude individual reviews.

After the festivities and traumas of 2000, Canadian publishers seemed to want to find new voices in 2001, to highlight unfamiliar names, forecast future reputations, chart the new century from the word go. And numerous names there were—Thien, Taylor, Chung, Redhill, Payton, Crummey, Quan, McWatt, and more—some with first books, some familiar through anthologies, some with previous publications but not yet widely read. And they deserved to be, for their take on contemporary life and their individuality of voice. Among them: Patrick Roscoe's *The Truth About Love* (Key Porter), which asks *why* people love; Andy Quan's *Calendar Boy* (New Star), which examines what it means to be gay in a well-to-do Chinese Canadian family; Rebecca Godfrey's *Torn Skirt* (HarperCollins), which portrays a girl who is unrepentantly involved in violence; Brian Payton's *Hail Mary Corner* (Beach Holme), which brings to life an old form, the Catholic boys' school story, and shapes a solid, well-paced realist novel involving guilt, loss, and the slow recuperative power of time and remembrance. Kevin Chung's *Baroque-a-nova* (Penguin) is a sharply worded account of a boy-man's life so far, and of his mother's life-in-narrative, the whole book being ripe for a cultural studies analysis. Theresa Kishkan's *Inishbream* (Goose Lane) contrasts Irish and BC island life and narrative, but is better on detail than on characters' speech. Tessa McWatt's *Dragons Cry* (Riverbank) adapts a stream-of-meditation form to ask what importance love, mercy, children, death, and Barbados have in the life of a woman. Beth Follett's *Tell it slant* (Coach House), inquires into gendered choices (asking "How long can you balance on the fulcrum of a lie?"). Lola Lemire Tostevin's *The Jasmine Man* (Key Porter) dramatizes a love triangle in Paris and Morocco to examine relations between wife and husband, mother and son; if finally a little too neatly resolved, it makes interesting use of a Berber story as its narrative model. Mark Frutkin's *Slow Lightning* (Raincoast), stylish in a Hemingwayesque sort of way, looks back to the Spanish Civil War and probes the nature of victimization; while it loses some of its impetus in its final section, it sustains interest all the way through. And in her arresting, if tonally uneven, second novel, *The Kappa Child* (Red Deer)—the title an allusion to a Japanese water spirit who becomes human if it dries out—Hiromi Goto interweaves a tale of a phantom pregnancy and a parody of a settlement narrative into a memoir of a family that, having tried to grow rice in the drylands, now seeks order in idiosyncratic ways.

Many of the first books aimed either at popular appeal or at coterie readership, with fiction being the most obvious genre for this avoidance of the middle ground.

Terry Woo's *Banana Boys* (Riverbank), for example, about a group of Chinese/North Americanized university students, attempts to entertain and criticize, reading rather like a child-of-Douglas-Coupland (whose own *All Families are Psychotic* [Random House] is a Florida exercise in epithet and insult). In contrast, Susan Perly's Joycean jazz of a book, *Love Street* (Porcupine's Quill)—"Miss Mercy" remembering her New Orleans life in fragments and joys—will more likely attract readers for whom plot is incidental and strategy everything. There were novels in thriller mode, perhaps all hoping for adaptations to film—Pan Bouyoucas's *A Father's Revenge* (Guernica), Oakland Ross's *The Dark Virgin* (Harper), Charles Foran's *House on Fire* (Harper), Jocelyne Saucier's lyrically empty *House of Sighs* (Mercury), or, more substantially, Beatrice Culleton Moisoner's *In the Shadow of Evil* (Theytus). Though these dealt with everything from Greek-Québécois conflict, Hong Kong secrets, and Aztec history to incest and a predatory racism, none much transcends its form. *The Thief Taker* (Delacorte), by the pseudonymous T.F. Banks, is an exception, enlivened by its knowledge of Byron's London, and none matches the now-established Peter Robinson, whose well-written, actively paced *Aftermath* (M&S) cogently analyzes the consequences of violence more than it tracks its perpetrators, and in so doing gives voice indirectly to many of the year's political preoccupations.

Many 2001 fictions adapted the techniques of the *Bildungsroman*, though Payton's work in this genre is more accomplished than, say, Gérald Leblanc's *Moncton Mantra* (Guernica, tr. by Jo-Anne Elder from the Acadian writer's 1997 original) or even Hal Niedzviecki's *Ditch* (Random House), about a young man whose infatuation with a woman tumbles him out of adolescence into the USA and urban violence. Niedzviecki is, however, the more technically adventurous, and his narrative makes clear that in a world of violence, a conventionally conceived notion of "self" either is or seems irrelevant. What rules instead? the novel implicitly asks. The state, corrupt as it might be? Hormones? Simple might? Or does wish-fulfillment still have some force, in fact or imagination? The answer, if there is one, is not made mandatory.

To some degree ambiguity also thrives in Michael Crummey's powerful first novel, *River Thieves* (Doubleday). Here Crummey imagines the lives of the Beothuk who lived along the Exploits River in Labrador, and more particularly focuses on those Europeans who settled there and displaced them. But which persons are the "river thieves" of the title is open to reading, and the force of the book derives not so much from its relation to historical romance than from its power of psychological recognition. Competing desires rule the central characters: to control and kill, evade, contact, help, or "civilize." As with many other books of 2001, the after-effects are most in view, and after much action the book closes still in desire for that which still continues to elude. Other books consciously adapted forms of fantasy or myth—such as Alexander Scala's comedic parable *Dr. Swarthmore* (Porcupine's Quill) or Genni Gunn's encounter with the life of artifacts, *Tracing Iris* (Raincoast)—though not always successfully. Ben Gadd's *Raven's End* (M&S) anthropomorphizes ravens, perhaps with Gowdy's elephant book in mind. Ruby Slipperjack, in *Weesquachak and the Lost Ones* (Theytus), takes the trickster into the life of a young woman; somewhat mechanically written, the book still has some of the power of the oral tale. Nega Mezlekia's *The God Who Begat a Jackal* (Penguin) also tells its narrative with oral verve and stiff prose. Here a fantasy quest into eighteenth-century Ethiopia finds evil, power, new rules, and a new god. Diane Schoemperlen's *Our Lady of the Lost and Found* (Harper)

recounts the appearance of Mary in history and life, perhaps in a testament to modern times. In Nancy Huston's *Dolce Agonia* (McArthur), more clearly, God is the chief narrator, somewhat cavalier in his dealings with human beings, but fascinated by his creations (the book focuses on New Hampshire) because of their presumptions of free will.

Several familiar names of course did appear in the year's lists, though not always with their most accomplished work: Timothy Findley's sexual fantasy *Spadework* (Harper); Helen Humphreys's romance triangle *Afterimage* (Harper); Alan Cumyn's critical but not quite comic novel about a fetish, *Losing It* (M&S); Sandra Birdsell's earnest and detailed but too little enacted *The Russländer* (M&S)—even its big massacre scene seems too much explained; Rudy Wiebe's Mennonite testimonial *Sweeter than All the World* (Knopf); Joan Barfoot's *Critical Injuries* (Key Porter); Margaret Sweatman's *When Alice Lay Down with Peter*, an occasionally lyrical but altogether elongated reinvestigation of Riel and the Thomas Scott affair; and Jane Urquhart's thoughtful but alas all-too-mechanically drafted *The Stone Carvers* (M&S), which appreciates the power of the Vimy memorial, and might have said more about the horror of Dr. Barnardo's Homes, but gets stranded by the effortful antics of the parallel characters. Dennis Bock's widely distributed *The Ash Garden* (HarperCollins), like Urquhart's book, addressed some of the last century's most important political issues, but once again the concept and the rendering divide; concerned with the consequences of Hiroshima, the Holocaust, and an apparent commitment to Scientific Objectivity, the novel tracks three characters to see how their lives and the century's history intertwine. With more separation of the voices, and less reliance on arranged coincidence, the novel might have risen to the political challenge it set itself; I applaud its intent, and its seriousness, but I admire Bock's earlier *Olympia* more.

Some critics enthused over the American writer D.R. MacDonald's *Cape Breton Road* (Doubleday) as the "Canadian" book of the year, but while its virtue may lie in the way it highlights the importance of fathers' roles in the lives of their sons, the narrative does not captivate in the way that David Adams Richards or Alistair MacLeod do, at their best. And most critics enthused about Richard B. Wright's *Clara Callan* (HarperCollins), which won both the Giller and Governor General's awards. There is much to admire in this work: to start with, its handling of epistolary form, its indirect if all-too-brief glimpse of the Orange/Catholic rivalries that still affect Canadian social policy, and its skill at distinguishing among the voices of its three central women characters: a small-town Ontario schoolteacher, who suffers through rape and social disgrace; her sister, a rather more flighty New York radio serial actress; and their mutual friend, a lesbian scriptwriter for radio and then Hollywood film. Set in the 1930s, the book is an evocative portrayal of radio days, and also of the mores of the time—attitudes to abortion, propriety, wedlock, and sexuality (whether flaunted, hidden, used, or denied)—and it is an often comic comparison of the lives lived in soap opera with those lived in real life. Yet there is something of the soap opera about the novel itself, and in the long run it moves away from its potential social theme (the greater willingness of people to attach value to serial romance than to attend to the politics of Hitler, Mussolini, and Spain) to relax into the fictional formulas of lost letters, found histories, and convenient closure.

In the genre of short fiction, Lynn Coady's Nova Scotia stories in *Play the Monster Blind* (Vintage) show a talent developing; P.K. Page's *A Kind of Fiction* (Porcupine's Quill) collects her stories, but overall it's

not her most consistent form: the stories telegraph too much; Leon Rooke's *Painting the Dog* (Thomas Allen) brings back "the best stories of" to his admiring readers. Judith Cowan's *Gambler's Fallacy* (Porcupine's Quill) also gathers stories, but here the prose is laden by its verbs and (curiously) by its preoccupation with weather. By contrast, the reprints of stories by Audrey Thomas (*The Path of Totality*, Penguin) and Clark Blaise (*Pittsburgh Stories*, Porcupine's Quill)—each with new or previously uncollected work—draw attention to the brilliance of their handling of form. Blaise's work is told with bright humour and household detail; Thomas's new (and title) story tells wonderfully of how the narrator is haunted by a time which she becomes aware is passing, and by the irrepressibility of desire. Among other story collections are those by Mark Anthony Jarman, Madeleine Thien, and Alice Munro, and these, too, are noteworthy. Thien's *Simple Recipes* (M&S) won a book award and praise from many reviewers, but I find it a little overdesigned. A set of stories that tells of violence inside Chinese-Canadian families, it is at the very least uneven, and riddled with clichés ("few" cannot come without "and far between" in tow)—clichés that seem extraneous, never a conscious technique for illuminating the characters who use them. The "I" narrator (who varies from story to story) also seems like a device, never a character whom it is necessary to know. Jarman's 2000 book *19 Knives* (Anansi), by contrast, its stories spare, nonlinear, open, turn father-son relationships (love and love's mistakes, regret and uncertainty) achingly and ambiguously into art. Jarman's control asks the reader to follow voice through twists of narrative into the far corners of the mind. And the nine stories of Munro's elliptically, cogently crafted *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (M&S)—the title alludes to a children's choosing rhyme—brilliantly asks "what comes after?" After a decision, after an act, after life, after a death. To understand "after," the characters in this book seek out "before," only to discover that the details of life—those that are worth remembering—are often different from what it is that people want to remember. And any one of the stories here packs an entire history. The contrast with Wright's *Clara Callan*—with Munro's title story, for example, which also has in it a scene of malicious letter-writing—is both invidious and instructive: Munro's style is fierce with resonance, Wright's tells all directly. Wright's narrative seeks closure; Munro's stories are aware that closure is an illusion—they differentiate between inventiveness, ritual, and the mere stupidities of any age, and they nevertheless insistently celebrate the power of living and those people who (in the knowledge of sex and death) remain "calm above the surface of your life, surviving, though the pain of the cold continued to wash into your body."

In three of the most interesting novels of the year—Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* (Knopf), Michael Redhill's *Martin Sloane* (Doubleday), and Thomas Wharton's *Salamander* (M&S)—questions of death and the imagination surface yet again. All three books engage with the power of storytelling itself—Wharton's most obviously. Though it begins apparently in colonial Quebec, it flings itself rapidly into continental Europe in the eighteenth century, or at least into a tale of tale-telling that incorporates this place and time, where a printer disappears with an infinite book, a clockwork-castle-maker imprisons and nearly destroys what he loves, characters are seemingly literally absorbed into print, and love persists through libraries, Gothic plots, villains, and the ocean of story: intertexts all. Wharton's celebration of the joy of reading—and the *kinds* of story that exist to be embroidered and extended, each with a life of its own—is a narrative tour de force and

an endless delight. (In related books, Yann Martel's often very funny *Life of Pi* [Knopf] also narrates a tale in order to reveal the power of tale-*telling*; Martel's narrator, who details 227 days adrift on a raft with a tiger named Richard Parker and the wit to devise survival strategies, is ultimately disbelieved: but should he be? That's the O. Henry challenge. And in *The Gryphon* [Raincoast], Nick Bantock delightfully revisits the Griffin and Sabine series in what seems to be the initial letter-exchange of a new narrative series that celebrates the reality of artifice and the life of reading.)

Michael Redhill's often comic *Martin Sloane* tells of a man's inexplicable disappearance from the life of the woman who loved him, or who believed she did, and of the boxes of life and the small boxes of metaphor into which people pack their expectations. As the novel progresses, elegant sentence by elegant sentence (what a marvellous *writer* Redhill is!), the narrator, Jolene Iolas, must ask about truth and lies, assess the power of forgery and imitation, deal with people's ability to tell stories and leave out critical details and to retreat into silence and flight—and she must ask who steals life from whom and what this has to do with herself, with living, with or without love, friends, security. In this discovery/recovery, she comes to terms not only with herself but also with the pervasive social will to live in imitation. Taylor's novel, too, asks to be read for its inventive adaptation of other texts—in this case chess and the *Divine Comedy*—though its details of restaurant warfare, its extraordinary menus, and its allusions to a real unsolved Vancouver murder from decades past all root the text in modern empirical experience. Indeed, "where are you rooted?" is its resonant question, followed by "why" or "to what end?" God, place, space, freedom, and homelessness are recurrent themes, but at its heart it asks about the disparities that separate wealth from poverty, decay from creativity, aftermath from prologue.

As though in echo, the year saw a number of reprints of works from a different mindset as well as a different time. Among them were Marshall Saunders's sentimental tale of a mongrel who finally finds a kind master, *Beautiful Joe* (Formac), a best-seller in its day; Robert Service's *The Best of Robert Service* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson), perhaps testifying still to the power of rhythm; and John Richardson's remarkable *The Monk Knight of St John* (Davus), edited by David Beasley. With Richardson's book, a contemporary reader must be willing to entertain the "florid" conventions of nineteenth-century Gothic narrative. Beasley calls the work "protopornographic" and certainly that was more or less the book's early reputation. Nowadays its tale of love and lust during the Crusades—of a voluptuous Saracen beauty, a chaste monk converted to sex and death, thugs, heroes, a nasty countess, a corrupt bishop, Gothic tunnels, bodice-ripping, "stirrings," and kissable pageboys—reads like a cult B-movie: and yet it *could* be read as an embodiment of the anti-Catholic, anti-Turkish biases of its time, which would give it some historical sociocultural interest. Richardson enthusiasts will be happy to find the book after years of its being unavailable; others might give it a bye.

As always, anthologies glimpse both new writers and those retrieved from the past and preserved for the future. *Write Turns* (Raincoast), for example, charts "new directions," with writers such as Aislinn Hunter, Murray Logan, Anne Fleming, Annabel Lyon, Rick Maddocks, all names to watch. Maggie Helwig's *Coming Attractions 01* (Oberon), focuses on J.A. McCormack and Goran Simic: McCormack's interest in words and gendered relationships hints at early Audrey Thomas; Simic (translated from Serbo-Croatian) hints at Gallant's power of detail; both write well. Douglas Glover's *Best Canadian Stories 01* (Oberon)

seemed to me to be less consistent, though the stories by Munro, Bowering, and Bill Gaston stood out. *The Journey Prize Anthology* (M&S) of new writers brought together 13 stories by 12 writers, of whom Annabel Lyon on fish and Lisa Moore, adapting film techniques, suggested interesting directions—but in each of these cases the interests of the editor are as much in evidence as are the individual talents.

Other anthologies ranged from the "dark fantasy" stories of Edo van Belkom and others, culled from *Northern Frights* in Don Hutchison's *Wild Things Live There* (Mosaic), to Desmond Morton and Morton Weinfeld's *Who Speaks for Canada?* (M&S), a case study in national rhetoric that gathers excerpts from speeches, editorials, and songs: its real centre is multicultural, tracing national growth from racism to the present. Sabine Campbell's *Home for Christmas* (Goose Lane) brings together Atlantic writers on the subject of Christmas (everyone from Montgomery to Ray Guy); Dick Hammond's *A Touch of Strange* (Harbour) isn't strange, but does emphasize the art of the oral story-teller. Keith Harrison's *Islands West* (Oolichan) gathers a range of BC writers, many of them remarkable (Hodgins, Lyon, Ron Smith, Thomas, Adderson), though sometimes with old, familiar stories; among the remarkable new writers are Jenny Fjellgard, Danielle Lagah, Wayde Compton (with a brilliant take on cultural pretensions), and Timothy Taylor, and it is instructive to see Munro's BC connections recognized here at last. In a clever collection called *Story of a Nation* (Doubleday), twelve Canadians (Atwood, Maillet, Manguel, Turner, Saul, Findley, Carrier, Macfarlane and others) write about an historical moment, imagined or recalled. Tom Wayman edited *The Dominion of Love* (Harbour), a pleasing collection of love poems. David R. Boyd assembled twenty wonderful examples of nature writing (including work by Sid Marty, Wade Davis, Don Gayton, Terry Glavin) in *Northern Wild* (Greystone). And among other collections were several that took ethnicity as their basis: Rasunah Marsden's *Crisp Blue Edges* (Theytus), gathering non-fiction by Young-Ing, Van Camp, Armstrong, Cuthand, Ruffo, Akiwenzie-Damm and other contemporary Native writers; Armand Garnet Ruffo's *(Ad)dressing Our Words* (Theytus), a collection of aboriginal critical voices; *DraMétis* (Theytus), assembling three plays by Métis writers Greg Daniels, Marie Clements, and Margo Kane. Jeannette Armstrong and Lally Grauer brought out a contemporary anthology of 29 writers (from Chief Dan George and Rita Joe to Gregory Scofield) in *Native Poetry in Canada* (Broadview). James Ruppert and John Bernet took a scholarly approach to the adventures of Mink, Raven, and other figures from Tutchone, Gwich'in, and Tagish cultures in *Our Voices* (UTP). Judith Williams's *Two Wolves at the Dawn of Time* (New Star) is more a personal encounter with Kingcome Inlet Pictographs. And *Parchment* #9, edited by Adam Fuerstenberg, is a special journal issue devoted to contemporary Canadian Jewish writing.

In drama—of those scripts I read—Nourbese Philip's *Coups and Calypsos* (Mercury) also commits itself to issues of ethnicity, but also to questions of race and love, in Tobago after a military coup, where confinement leads to political discussion. Adam Pettle's *Zadie's Shoes* (Shillingford) is told in idiom, presenting a gambler in a synagogue. More theatrically compelling were Daniel McIvor's *In On It* (Shillingford), distinguishing between "end" and "stop," as various people try their hand at shaping the world, and Michael Redhill's *Building Jerusalem* (Playwrights), which is designed as a kind of parlour game on New Year's Eve, 1899. Four characters—a eugenicist, a suffragist, Silas Rand the missionary, and Adelaide Hoodless the agricul-

tural scientist—meet, plan the world according to their vocation, and at the stroke of midnight they suddenly glimpse the rest of their lives: a fascinating look at how social design shapes lives. Four of Larry Tremblay's powerful plays for single voices were collected in *Talking Bodies* (Talonbooks), translated by Sheila Fischman and excellently introduced by Jane Moss's comments on body, word, and identity. Among other plays were Richard Ouzounian and Marek Norman's theatrical adaptation of Carol Shields's *Larry's Party* (McArthur), which played to some success in Toronto; Brad Fraser's *Snake in Fridge* (NeWest), which opens an apartment door on all kinds of closeted violence and desperation; and Morris Panych's comic *Earshot* (Talon), about a man who hears everything, a play for solo performer.

While the comic seemed to be in relatively short supply in a year more preoccupied by pyschosis and aftermath, there were a few works (in addition to those by Panych, Taylor, and Wharton) that celebrated the vitality of laughter. To some degree this was the stance of much life writing published during the year: George Bowering's stylish and funny *A Magpie Life* (Key Porter), for example, on "growing as a writer"; or William Weintraub's lively, partly tongue-in-cheek, rosy version of himself and his friends in the 1950s (Moore, Richler, Gallant), with quotations from their often satiric letters to each other and a glimpse of their private faces. Humour also leavened Aritha Van Herk's *Mavericks* (Penguin), her self-styled "incorrigible" history of Alberta, which celebrates the province as a place "succinct as a blade, dangerously predictable as an anarchist" and Albertans as a people who "practise an astonishing degree of charity, while serving as good-natured scapegoats for the rest of Canada's wilful ignorance." An electric praise poem: incorrigible indeed.

Norman Ravvin writes glimpses of a more *Hidden Canada* (Red Deer); Stephen Hume goes *Off the Map* (Harbour) in search of Native languages, backroads, and emotional survival; Wade Davis heads into places unfamiliar to most Canadians in *Light at the Edge of the World* (Douglas & McIntyre), and in evocative essays and superb photographs invites readers to be travelling companions and interlocutors on issues of ecology and cultural learning. Courtney Milne shows us *Emily Carr Country* (M&S) in a series of fine landscape photographs, while Susan Crean, in her "journey to Emily Carr," *The Laughing One* (Harper), presents an interesting biographical dilemma: she criticizes Carr for taking too much—but even in a biography like this, largely crafted like fiction, how much does a writer about another writer presume? Among other books about art and person, the Winnipeg Art Gallery exhibition catalogue *Rielisms* (with commentary by ten artists) reveals how Riel has been visually represented in Canadian art; I am particularly struck by the work of the Métis artist David Hannan. William Gough's *David Blackwood* (Douglas & McIntyre) reveals the power of the printmaker's art, especially Blackwood's "portraits" of Newfoundland ice, and his visual narratives of death and persistence, his images of kites and butterflies. Dennis Reid and Matthew Teitelbaum collaborated on *Curnoe* (Douglas & McIntyre), surveying and evaluating the painter-writer's career. Harold Seidelman and James Turner, in *The Inuit Imagination* (Douglas & McIntyre), focus on the role of storytelling, poems, dreams, and representations of raven and Sedna in Arctic cultures, illustrating their comments with fine plates of carvings. A wonderful introduction to the art of Daphne Odjig, moreover, is to be found in the paintings reproduced in *Odjig* (Key Porter) and accompanying essays.

Other life stories focused on serious issues, sometimes seeking illumination in

the past, as in M.A. Macpherson's light narratives of James, Frobisher, McClintock, Franklin, and other Arctic explorers in *Silk, Spices and Glory* (Fifth House); or in Robert McGhee's excellent and handsome life story, *The Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (McGill-Queens); or in the second edition of Mark Zuehlke's *Scoundrels, Dreamers and Second Sons* (Dundurn), on British remittance men in the Canadian West. J.M. Bumsted wrote a solid biography on the politics of the making of a personality, in *Louis Riel v. Canada* (Great Plains). And in his immensely readable inquiry into Sandford Fleming, *Time Lord* (Knopf), Clark Blaise engages with the whole idea of "time" in Western culture; it would not be a Blaise book, however, if it were not in some sense about Blaise's life, too, and so it is: a narrative about measurement, national exactitude, and the politics of precedence, but also a narrative about the process of unravelling these ideas in biographical research. Sheila Munro's account of growing up in her mother (Alice)'s house, *Lives of Mothers and Daughters* (M&S), reflects some of this same balance between moments of observation of another and moments of discovery about the self; for Sheila Munro, an appreciation of the difficult role of artist-mother comes in retrospect, after resentment and appreciation can be reconciled. In some of these books, comedy was scarce or seemed inappropriate, though occasionally it surfaced as a survival tactic, as in the slave narratives that were reprinted this year from the nineteenth century: Benjamin Drew's *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves* (Prospero), formerly published as *The Refugee*, and Peter Meyler's *Broken Shackles* (Natural Heritage), the anecdotes of "Old Man Henson" as told in 1889 by John Frost. Anna Porter's "memoir of Hungary," *The Storyteller* (Doubleday Anchor) engages with family history in order to demonstrate how the codes of storytelling served as resistant claims upon freedom. Suniti Namjoshi writes an "autobiographical myth" about rich and poor in India, in *Goja* (Spinifex).

In criticism, many short works focused on individual writers, such as David Staines's edition of new comments on *Margaret Laurence* (U Ottawa), Adriana Trozzi's largely summary *Carol Shields' Magic Wand* (Bulzoni Editore), or the Guernica Writers Series (Christl Verduyn on *Aritha Van Herk*, Joseph Pivato on *Caterina Edwards*, Anne Nothof on *Sharon Pollock*, George Hildebrand on *Louis Dudek*, each book seeking ably to readdress critical inattention). Also in the Guernica series, Carmine Starnino's edition of comments on *David Solway* reassesses the poet-critic-satirist's many strengths, while Irene Guilford's collection on *Alistair MacLeod* tends more to the personal, even elegiac (on dignity and depth), than to the analytic. Other books, too, were personal statements: the poet K.D. Miller's *Holy Writ* (Porcupine's Quill), a series of meditative essays on the relation between writing and religious belief; Robert Adams's *A Love of Reading* (M&S), leisurely, pointed, impressionistic, summarizing reviews of Mistry, Moore, Richler, Wiseman, and others; Elizabeth Waterston's *Rapt in Plaid* (UTP), more scholarly than the other two, but just as passionately committed to her subject, Scottish tradition in Canadian romance. With a more comparative compass, the wide-ranging conference papers on children in literature—collected as *Small Worlds* (U di Navarra), ed. Rocío G. Davis and Rosalía Baena—listen closely for the power of voice and the effects of strategies of representation.

Passionate, too, and personal, are Douglas Barbour's arresting, instructive, illuminating, performative inquiries into the art and consquences of reading poetry formally, in *Lyric/Anti-lyric* (NeWest). So is Roxanne Rimstead's important *Remnants of Nation*

(UTP), a book about the relation between poverty and women in Canada, and about "class" (which I think could have been more clearly distinguished from "status") as a structuring process and attitude in writing, not merely a literary or social topic. The second edition of Jack Hodgins's *A Passion for Narrative* (M&S) is perhaps another title for this list, but it is also a pragmatic guide to thinking about writing. And in an effective study of the short story cycle and the cyclical habit of mind, Gerald Lynch writes in *The One and the Many* (UTP) an innovative study of this genre in Canada, one that is especially instructive on the stories of George Elliott. Marilyn Randall's *Pragmatic Plagiarism* (UTP) takes literary action in a different direction; hers is an important book on the nature of copyright and intellectual property, not only in historical terms but also in an age of electronic challenge. And in one of the most insightful books of the year, *Authors and Audiences* (McGill-Queens), Clarence Karr looks at popular Canadian fiction of the early twentieth century (Connor, Stead, McClung, Montgomery, Stringer), examines the milieux that constructed their popularity (agents, publishers, reviewers, readers, the film industry), and calls for re-evaluation of their social significance. Perhaps this is the appropriate critical environment within which to return to Richardson's much-enflamed Monk Knight.

Even apparently narrower subjects expand into social comment, as do two books on sport—Colin Howell's readable *Blood, Sweat, and Cheers* (UTP) and Glen Norcliffe's *The Ride to Modernity* (UTP). Howell associates the emergence of various sports with money, gender, and nationhood. Norcliffe traces the growth of the bicycle industry from 1869 to 1900 and shows how industry and cultural activity interrelate—though, despite its business detail, one could wish that Norcliffe had looked more at literary texts for an additional perspective. Although I wonder at the need to "define" at all, *Toward Defining the Prairies* (U Manitoba), edited by Robert Wardhaugh, gathers conference papers on region, culture, and history, with insightful literary essays by Alison Calder (on pop culture's systems of self-representation), Gerald Friesen (disputing the category "prairies"), and Robert Kroetsch (on himself). Critical comments appeared also in works such as Eric Ormsby's *Facsimiles of Times* (Porcupine's Quill), essays on poetry and translation, with reference to Solway (who seemed to be attracting more and more attention in 2001), Lowther, Borson, as well as Keats, Yeats, Hart Crane, and Geoffrey Hill; in an elegant, articulate format, Ormsby demonstrates how poetry works, why it works *in language*, how language functions. How "representation" functions is perhaps the implicit subject of two important reference books of the year: William Toye's *The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* (Oxford), an update as well as a largely anglophone selection from the longer text, and Derek Hayes's brilliant *Historical Atlas of the North Pacific, 1500-2000* (Douglas & McIntyre), where the plates and commentary coincide to extend and illuminate knowledge about the largest of Canada's three ocean fronts. Hayes's research has led to an exciting combination of familiar English maps with those that in Canada have been lesser known—those from Spain, Russia, and East Asia—a combination that ably reminds us that European representations of knowledge were not uniform and not alone.

On questions of perspective, moreover, Daniel Poliquin's *In the Name of the Father* (Douglas & McIntyre) should be essential reading; calling Canadian literature a "literature of the village," he goes on to urge separatist thinkers away from their nationalism (what he called a conservative and ill-con-

ceived philosophy of victimhood) and towards a different way of articulating the self. G.B. Madison et al. ask *Is there a Canadian Philosophy?*—and in answer (unfortunately in a textbookish sort of style), they probe the relation between communitarian and individualist values, the morality of rights, the necessity of co-operation in a civil society, and the contrast between pluralism and the "bureaucratic politics of difference." These differences and relationships constitute the frame against which John Ralston Saul in *On Equilibrium* also articulates his personal "commonsense meditations" on ideas that continue to matter in a modern society: ideas such as ethics, imagination, memory, reason. As in his previous books, Saul espouses codes of civility, argues that they are within Canadians' imaginative reach, and within the Canadian ethic, there to be recognized and fulfilled—not something that must be imported from elsewhere, or that imitation and self-denigration can ever achieve. The power of this book is in its musing, therefore: in the challenge that it represents to think across, and through, community.

I read some four dozen books of poetry published in 2001. I admired enormously Ken Babstock's *Days into Flatspin* (Anansi)—"The first book you truly/ understood/ sent your days into/ flatspin"—with its eye for detail and its ear for the irregular rhythms of (largely urban) life. I admire Babstock's wonderful twists of syntax ("one empty, unrecoverable/ hour of your early and/ strange." His book is largely personal, finding what matters in his experience, sight, memory, supposition; he wills language to serve him: his listeners will happily go along.

Many other books took up more specific themes, such as George Elliott Clarke's antiracist *Blue* (Polestar), which adopts a consciously political attitude: "these poems are black, profane, surly, *American*. . . ." Armand Garnet Ruffo's *At Geronimo's Grave* (Coteau) testifies to the power of the Native leader and to his ordinary human-ness: the contrast between what was and what is (inheritor of the past, participator in the present) protests imprisonment by both place and time, and despair. Connie Fife's *Poems for a New World* (Ronsdale) expresses intensity of commitment: "i wanted to write/ of the politics of your death/ i could only contemplate the pointlessness of it"—or (in its entirety), "Today": "I am busy now/ with/pride." The poems of Andy Quan's *Slant* (Nightwood) take up a different politics, that of gender categories: when Asian traditions and adolescent sexual discoveries come into conflict, rage is the first response, reconciliation coming only later. Affirming individuality becomes, in Quan's verse, a consequence of separation, resistance to the norm, and travel. In Billie Livingstone's *The Chick at the Back of the Church* (Nightwood), attitude is all: here, Toronto streets are the site for blow jobs and anger, raunchiness is the voice of a claim on independence and a refusal to be judged. Here the desire to be seen and heard—effectively, *I'll say this if I want*—takes precedence over social convention. To take up the strategy of Redhill's play, one might wonder what would result if Livingstone's figures and John Ralston Saul's were to meet at a midnight party and listen to each other speak.

Speaking personally is, of course, one of the long traditions of lyric poetry, and it is the *raison d'être* of several books this year, among them Zoë Landale's *Blue in This Country* (Ronsdale), the new poems in Raymond Filip's *Backscatter* (Guernica), and Tim Bowling's *Darkness and Silence* (Nightwood). The person is also foregrounded in works by David Zieroth, John Barton, Shani Mootoo, Travis Lane, George Amabile, Daniel Sloate, Brian Henderson, and Rhea Tregebov. In each of these, the emotional centre (often grief, sometimes

joy) derives from the poet's engagement with being-in-the-world. Zieroth's *Crows Do Not Have Retirement* (Harbour), for example—"we with our little time/ and our ideas and our blood"—brings a wonderful sense of equanimity to cope with pettiness and other intrusions; the poet chooses living, not the world of ghosts. Richard Outram's *Dove Legend* (Porcupine's Quill) is another testament to the continuity of love, marrying abstract language with concrete image and domestic ritual, turning them through formal restraint into revelations of the power to go on; as the title poem has it, the heart "may be seen . . . / by some who have eyes to see still / marvellous still beating." Barton's sensitive, evocative *Hypothesis* (Anansi) expresses tenderly the poet's love for his lover, through death and into memory, cumulatively affirming the power to continue living. Lane's *Keeping Afloat* (Guernica) begins with memories of illness, asking questions throughout, so that the reader becomes an interlocutor in the process of recuperation.

Harold Heft's *The Shape of This Dying* (Mosaic) remembers A.M. Klein's painter friend Alexander Bercovitch in Montreal; using the trope of the testimonial book, Heft constructs the voices of son, daughter, rival (and Klein) in order to find a form or frame to remember through. Tregebov's *The Strength of Materials* (Wolsak & Wynn) enquires elegiacally into the edges of the self, using a strong sense of cadence to deal with such giant themes as sympathy, politics, time, and the enigma they all lead to: "I've always been afraid/ of knowing, not knowing." Amabile's new and selected work, *Tasting the Dark* (Muse's Company), brings "chants against extinction" to moments of grief and regret. Sloate's brilliant and important collected meditations, translated as *Of Dissonance and Shadows* (Guernica), captures in inventive images a journal of "discarded personae." Lissa Cowan and René Brisebois translated Pierre Morency's *Words That Walk in the Night* (Véhicule) with careful attention to nuance. Henderson's *Light in Dark Objects* (Ekstasis), a set of lyrics for the poet's father and children, balances poems about loss and the unforgivable with others about insight and the reach of happiness. Mootoo's love poems to her partner, and her poems of family memory and displacement, *The Predicament of Or* (Polestar), deal in various ways with the problem of exoticizing the other, whether "other" means a lover or a grandmother's country. Mildred Tremblay, in a quite different and more flamboyantly direct way (shades of Dorothy Livesay?), writes in *Old Woman Comes Out of Her Cave* (Oolichan) of her mother and her mother's limitations (her "spices ranged from salt / all the way to pepper," but "One day, without warning, my mother / lay down with the earthworms"). With her own subjects ranging from alcoholism, bigotry, and Popeye to masturbation, meningitis, and the pope, Tremblay's "old woman" figure refuses a tea cosy and a weeping icon for her birthday; she wants instead a man with a kitchen table leg erection, who will (or is it even if he will?) transform "his elegant Prince of Sticks / into a miserable, shrivelled escargot."

The "other country" in which so many poets of 2001 found themselves was often as physical as this—as in Barton's work or Quan's. And as metaphoric—Harold Rhenisch translates *Peyote* (Ronsdale), a piece by the German radio dramatist Stefan Schütz, about a journey to the land of the dead in search of purity. But often it was geographic as well. The poems about living in Korea, for example, in Sonnet L'Abbé's *A Strange Relief* (M&S), like her poems of nature, are startlingly precise; their tendency to seek closure, however, suggests a fear that their point won't be heard. It will. Some books sought the politics of another place, as does the poetry of statement in Nigel Darbasie's *A Map of the Island* (U

Alberta P), set in the writer's native Trinidad. Others sought the physicality of the word in the world. Shawna Lemay's *Against Paradise* (M&S) uses Venice as a recurrent motif, conveying by monologue the dreams of makers: cartographers, glass-blowers, writers, reformers (Radcliffe, Montagu, Byron). Alice Major in *Some bones and a story* (Wolsak & Wynn) uses the stories of female saints to tell narratives of resistance and desire, while David Solway writes with energy and cynicism about the four stages of the lover, including energy and cynicism, in a respectful parody of Hogarth's "Rake" he calls *The Lover's Progress* (Porcupine's Quill). Erin Mouré (writing as Eirin Moure) freely adapts a 1946 Portuguese work into English, placing the two languages side by side, calling it *Sheep's Vigil by a Fervent Person* (Anansi) and figuring both herself and Montreal into the text; rob mclennan, in *harvest: a book of signifiers* (Talon), uses the travel metaphor to reflect on poetry as the life of daily perception and emotion, probing what it means to be in the ocean or watching it, in a hotel room or watching from it, recording a telephone call or reflecting on a recording after it is apparently over.

More openly political are the dream poems of Marilyn Dumont's *Green Girl Dreams Mountains* (Oolichan), whose power of singing provides only a partial answer to the cryptic world of the urban street that people can travel to, for on the street the language of trade is without refunds. Lorna Goodison's *Travelling Mercies* (M&S)—her first book since settling in Toronto—is a miscellany about Jamaica and observed people, strongest perhaps in glimpsing Merton, Cézanne, and Dante, the poems united by the range of rhythms the poet uses to permit people to dance themselves into song. Perhaps relatedly, Louis Dudek's selection of his own "best" work, *The Poetry of Louis Dudek* (Dundurn), affirms that "phrasing" is what matters in high modernism, and that poetry emerges from the "tremor" of each successful line. More contemporary, but also with a strong sense of cadence—the musicality of observation—Jay Ruzesky in *Blue Himalayan Poppies* (Nightwood) delights in the hint of surreal that is called pleasure: "Somewhere is a beach, a palm / and high in its branches a bird, / red feathers declaring / I am here."

With still other poets, "here" meant the page itself, the words on it, or words torn from it into sound. Perhaps most obviously—in a tour de force called *Eunoia* (Coach House)—Christian Bök delights in the orthography of meaning; each "chapter" of this book permits itself one vowel only, so that vowels themselves acquire character and consonants dance or stand. Sound acquires identity. The title (comparable to "oiseau" in French) is the shortest word in English to contain all five vowels; it means "beautiful thinking." Robert Kroetsch's *The Hornbooks of Rita K* (U Alberta P) asks for comparison with *Eunoia*. Traditionally, a "hornbook" is an alphabet, for example, or other message, imprinted on wood, covered in horn, and used as a primer; learning to "eat" the letters is a way of coming to terms with the reality that words construct. For the poet, who wants to talk about a poet who disappeared from a museum and who now exists only in words, the danger of deconstructing or of reconstructing the person—and so distorting meaning—is paramount; hence each "page" of this hornbook is numbered, but by refusing to arrange the pages in numerical order, Kroetsch seeks for the reader as well as for himself a creative ("shadowless," as it were) engagement with the past. In "Autobiography is not memory," therefore, he charges his subject enigmatically: "Poet, before I forget, tell me nothing." The result is a kind of novel-in-verse; refusing order, it nevertheless finds closure, but does so in the contexts for details rather than in the physicality of details themselves.

Language-centred as well, the first volume of Steven McCaffery's selected texts (1969-99), *Seven Pages Missing* (Coach House), affirms his fascination with words both familiar and obscure, not only for their sound and function but also for their appearance. McCaffery's work offers opportunities for serious criticism to come to terms with the mind of a designer and the implications of design. Some of the consciously visual poems here (whether arranged by drawing or by line distribution) depend on allusion (such as one on Vasarely); others depend on a comedy of juxtaposition, such as a "forecast" poem in which clouds are lined up, then added and subtracted, like an exercise in an elementary arithmetic book. This context provides an opportunity also to mention the work of Penn Kemp and the important work that is annually published in small runs and private printings. Kemp, for example—a remarkable sound poet—appeared in 1999 in *Four Women* (Red Kite P) along with Colleen Thibaudeau, Gloria Alvernaz Mulcahy, and Marianne Micros, and this year came out with *Time Less Time* (Pendas), *Incrementally* (Pendas; with an afterword by McCaffery), and—from (m)other tongue press, with Mona Fertig's designs—*Suite Ancient Egypt*, a record of the soul's journey through the past of the goddesses, towards dawn.

One of the features of these works is the quality of book design, and Kemp's partner Gavin Stairs has elegantly designed both *Time Less Time* and *Incrementally*, treating the artifact as one of the pleasures of the text. The first of these books is a "libretto for a work on Buddhist doctrine," with "electroacoustic transformations" of phonemes; it asks (and answers) "Who can imagine / groundless ground . . . ? / Begin here." Cerebrally inviting, the books make "word play" into "world play"—*men tall* > *mental* > *menthol* > *incremental*—turning (in the potter's sense) wit and pattern into meaning. Also from (m)othertongue, Daphne Marlatt's *Winter/Rice/Tea Strain* is a set of three exquisite poems for Roy Kiyooka: lovely to look at, lovely to hear. Marlatt concentrates here on the beauty of the noun, the space it creates, the problematics of space-in-relationship, and the activity of breathing as a connector. A second book, Marlatt's *This Tremor Love Is* (Talon), also reads eloquently. Informed by quotations from Irigaray, Brossard, Sappho, and Cixous—and quoting from Marguerite Duras: "Because speech is not a weapon. It is a place"—this poetry sings of a sea of desire in which loneliness and passion, grief, friendship, and empathy all swim.

After these others, then, turn to Don McKay's *Vis à Vis* (Gaspereau) and Mark Frutkin's *Iron Mountain* (Beach Holme). McKay's essays and long poem, illustrated by Wesley W. Bates, reclaim the idea and art of "nature poetry" (the book calls itself "field notes on poetry and wilderness"). McKay calls on language here not as an encouragement to forget (the frequent appeal of "aftermath") but as an apparatus to inhabit so as to become a "translator" of the world. In *Iron Mountain*, Frutkin meditates on a Chinese tale in which a traveller climbs a mountain but his presence is recorded by a trail, like the air a poem is breathed into. His poem "On Reading Submissions to a Poetry Magazine" is therefore cautionary. It begins by bewailing the "dangerous confidences" that many poets cavalierly share in verse, all of them "shamelessly / alike each other's." It then declares "I want to know no one's secrets— / I've my own, the same," and calls for exact detail instead, and imagination, and care. It's a social as well as a lyric challenge. If you see "a stub of cigar smoking still/ on the concrete," Frutkin writes, then go find the smoker: "Listen / to his voice, the river of gravel / smoking from his throat / Feast on the world. Be kind / with words."

Contributors

Articles

André **Lamontagne** is an associate professor of French at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *Les mots des autres: La poétique intertextuelle des oeuvres de Hubert Aquin* (1992). He has edited an issue of *Voix et images* on the critical reception of Québécois literature in English Canada as well as an issue of *Études littéraires* on postmodernism.

Réjean **Beaudoin** has taught French language and Québécois literature at the University of British Columbia since 1983. He is the author of *Naissance d'une literature: Essai sur le messianisme et les débuts de la littérature canadienne-française (1850-1890)* (1989), *Le Roman québécois* (1991), and *Une étude des* Poésies *d'Émile Nelligan* (1997).

Hélène **Buzelin** has just completed a Ph.D. in literature and translation from McGill University and teaches translation at Glendon College (York University). Her on-going research deals with Caribbean literature and translation theory, more particularly the role of translation in the shaping of collective identities.

Louise **Ladouceur** is an assistant professor at the University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean. Her research and publications are concerned with theatre translation in Canada from one official language to the other. She has translated six works for the stage and participated in numerous theatre events.

Roxanne **Rimstead** teaches comparative Canadian literature and intercultural studies at Université de Sherbrooke in Quebec. She has published internationally on cultural studies, feminist criticism, textual resistance, working-class culture, poverty and literature, oral histories, and Canadian literature(s). Her book *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women* appeared in 2001.

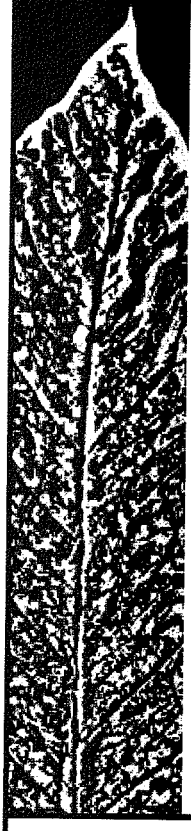
Poems

Brad **Buchanan** studies at Stanford University and Adam **Dickinson** at the University of Alberta. Catherine **Greenwood** lives in Victoria, Rochelle **Mass** in Gan Ner, Israel, and Wendy **Morton** in Sooke. Lyle **Neff** and Elise **Partridge** live in Vancouver.

Titi **Adepitan**, René **Brisebois**, Nancy **Frelick**, Bryan N.S. **Gooch**, Ronald B. **Hatch**, Elizabeth **Hodgson**, Andrea **Katz**, Desirée **Lundström**, Kevin **McNeilly**, David **Nally**, W.H.**New**, Alain-Michel **Rocheleau**, Anne **Scott**, Jack **Stewart** study/teach at the University of British Columbia, Mark **Blagrave** teaches at Mount Allison University, Albert **Braz** teaches at the University of Alberta, Allan **Brown** lives in Powell River, David **Brundage**, Linda **Driedger** teach at Athabasca University, Katharine **Conley** teaches at Dartmouth College, Estelle **Dansereau**, Jonathan **Kertzer** teach at the University of Calgary, Celeste **Derksen** teaches at the University of Victoria, Vincent **Desroches** teaches at Western Michigan University, Susan **Fisher** teaches at the University College of Fraser Valley, Graham **Forst** teaches at Capilano College, Maryann Tjart **Jantzen** teaches at Trinity Western University, David **Jarraway** teaches at the University of Ottawa, Christopher **Jennings** teaches at the University of Toronto, Susan **Knutson** teaches at Université Ste-Anne, Lawerence **Mathews** teaches at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Cedric **May** lives in North Yorkshire, Kenneth W. **Meadwell** and Andrew **O'Malley** teach at the University of Winnipeg, Elaine **Park** teaches at St. Mary's College, Donna Palmateer **Pennee** teaches at the University of Guelph, George **Piggford** teaches at the University of Notre Dame, Megan **Smetzer** lives in Vancouver, Jacqueline **Viswanathan** teaches at Simon Fraser University, Anne F. **Walker** lives in Toronto, and Claire **Wilkshire** lives in St. John's, NF.

MACLEAN HUNTER ENDOWMENT AWARD FOR LITERARY NON-FICTION

$1500 Annual Prize



Maximum 25 pages per manuscript, typed and double-spaced. Please include a cover page—the author's name should not appear on the manuscript. All work must be previously unpublished.

Entry fee: $25, plus $5 for each additional manuscript; includes a one-year subscription to PRISM international. All non-Canadian residents, please pay in U.S. dollars.

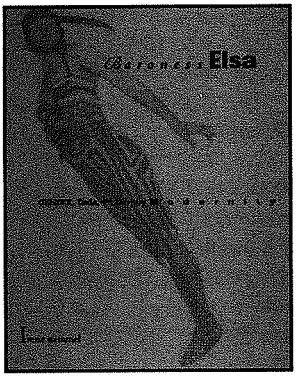
Contest Judge: T.B.A.
Deadline: September 30, 2003

Mail entry fee & manuscript(s) to:

PRISM Non-fiction Contest
Creative Writing Program
Buch. E462 - 1866 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1 CANADA

For details on our writing contests, go to:

prism.arts.ubc.ca



new from the mit press

Baroness Elsa

Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity, a Cultural Biography

Irene Gammel

"Irene Gammel's *Baroness Elsa* is a thorough and measured rendition of a life that was anything but thorough and measured, and it bears witness not only to the trials and triumphs of a major woman artist but also to a truism that never ceases to astound: that one small shift in historical perspective can yield a completely different (and much more interesting) story than the one we have always been told."
— Shelley Rice, author of *Parisian Views* and editor of *Inverted Odysseys: Maya Deren, Claude Cahun, Cindy Sherman*

"This book is a must for all scholars of literary modernism and the Dada movement, but is also terrifically entertaining to read."
— Amelia Jones, Professor, Department of Art History, University of California, Riverside

"As a language and performance artist, I have the highest respect for the early avant-garde and for dada artists. In Gammel's biography, the Baroness emerges as a truly groundbreaking force."
— Yoko Ono

472 pp., 90 illus., 16 color $39.95

To order call **800-405-1619.**
Prices subject to change without notice.

http://mitpress.mit.edu